

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

FIFTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

Wednesday, 13 December 2017

(Extract from book 22)

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By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

The Governor

The Honourable LINDA DESSAU, AC

The Lieutenant-Governor

The Honourable KEN LAY, AO, APM

The ministry (from 16 October 2017)

| | |
|---|------------------------------|
| Premier | The Hon. D. M. Andrews, MP |
| Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Minister for Emergency Services | The Hon. J. A. Merlino, MP |
| Treasurer and Minister for Resources | The Hon. T. H. Pallas, MP |
| Minister for Public Transport and Minister for Major Projects | The Hon. J. Allan, MP |
| Minister for Industry and Employment | The Hon. B. A. Carroll, MP |
| Minister for Trade and Investment, Minister for Innovation and the Digital Economy, and Minister for Small Business | The Hon. P. Dalidakis, MLC |
| Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, and Minister for Suburban Development | The Hon. L. D' Ambrosio, MP |
| Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and Minister for Ports | The Hon. L. A. Donnellan, MP |
| Minister for Tourism and Major Events, Minister for Sport and Minister for Veterans | The Hon. J. H. Eren, MP |
| Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Equality and Minister for Creative Industries | The Hon. M. P. Foley, MP |
| Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services | The Hon. J. Hennessy, MP |
| Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Minister for Industrial Relations, Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence | The Hon. N. M. Hutchins, MP |
| Special Minister of State | The Hon. G. Jennings, MLC |
| Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, and Minister for Local Government | The Hon. M. Kairouz, MP |
| Minister for Families and Children, Minister for Early Childhood Education and Minister for Youth Affairs | The Hon. J. Mikakos, MLC |
| Minister for Police and Minister for Water | The Hon. L. M. Neville, MP |
| Attorney-General and Minister for Racing | The Hon. M. P. Pakula, MP |
| Minister for Agriculture and Minister for Regional Development | The Hon. J. L. Pulford, MLC |
| Minister for 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 |

The Governor

The Honourable LINDA DESSAU, AC

The Lieutenant-Governor

The Honourable Justice MARILYN WARREN, AC, QC

The ministry

(to 15 October 2017)

| | |
|---|------------------------------|
| Premier | The Hon. D. M. Andrews, MP |
| Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Minister for Emergency Services | The Hon. J. A. Merlino, MP |
| Treasurer | The Hon. T. H. Pallas, MP |
| Minister for Public Transport and Minister for Major Projects | The Hon. J. Allan, MP |
| Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade. | The Hon. P. Dalidakis, MLC |
| Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, and Minister for Suburban Development | The Hon. L. D'Ambrosio, MP |
| Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and Minister for Ports | The Hon. L. A. Donnellan, MP |
| Minister for Tourism and Major Events, Minister for Sport and Minister for Veterans | The Hon. J. H. Eren, MP |
| Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Equality and Minister for Creative Industries | The Hon. M. P. Foley, MP |
| Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services | The Hon. J. Hennessy, MP |
| Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Minister for Industrial Relations, Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence | The Hon. N. M. Hutchins, MP |
| Special Minister of State | The Hon. G. Jennings, MLC |
| Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, and Minister for Local Government | The Hon. M. Kairouz, MP |
| Minister for Families and Children, and Minister for Youth Affairs. | The Hon. J. Mikakos, MLC |
| Minister for Police and Minister for Water | The Hon. L. M. Neville, MP |
| Minister for Industry and Employment, and Minister for Resources | The Hon. W. M. Noonan, MP |
| Attorney-General and Minister for Racing | The Hon. M. P. Pakula, MP |
| Minister for Agriculture and Minister for Regional Development. | The Hon. J. L. Pulford, MLC |
| Minister for 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 |

The Governor

The Honourable LINDA DESSAU, AC

The Lieutenant-Governor

The Honourable Justice MARILYN WARREN, AC, QC

The ministry

(to 12 September 2017)

| | |
|---|------------------------------|
| Premier | The Hon. D. M. Andrews, MP |
| Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Minister for Emergency Services | The Hon. J. A. Merlino, MP |
| Treasurer | The Hon. T. H. Pallas, MP |
| Minister for Public Transport and Minister for Major Projects | The Hon. J. Allan, MP |
| Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade | The Hon. P. Dalidakis, MLC |
| Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, and Minister for Suburban Development | The Hon. L. D'Ambrosio, MP |
| Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and Minister for Ports | The Hon. L. A. Donnellan, MP |
| Minister for Tourism and Major Events, Minister for Sport and Minister for Veterans | The Hon. J. H. Eren, MP |
| Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Equality and Minister for Creative Industries | The Hon. M. P. Foley, MP |
| Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services | The Hon. J. Hennessy, MP |
| Minister for Local Government, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Minister for Industrial Relations | The Hon. N. M. Hutchins, MP |
| Special Minister of State | The Hon. G. Jennings, MLC |
| Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation | The Hon. M. Kairouz, MP |
| Minister for Families and Children, and Minister for Youth Affairs | The Hon. J. Mikakos, MLC |
| Minister for Police and Minister for Water | The Hon. L. M. Neville, MP |
| Minister for Industry and Employment, and Minister for Resources | The Hon. W. M. Noonan, MP |
| Attorney-General and Minister for Racing | The Hon. M. P. Pakula, MP |
| Minister for Agriculture and Minister for Regional Development | The Hon. J. L. Pulford, MLC |
| Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence (until 23 August 2017) | The Hon. F. Richardson, MP |
| 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, 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 Bourman, #Ms Dunn, Mr Eideh, Mr Finn, Mr Gepp, Ms Hartland, Mr Leane, #Mr Melhem, Mr Ondarchie, Mr O’Sullivan and #Mr Rich-Phillips.

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

Standing Committee on Legal and Social Issues — #Ms Crozier, #Mr Elasmarr, Ms Fitzherbert, #Ms Hartland, Mr Morris, Mr Mulino, Ms Patten, Mrs Peulich, #Dr Ratnam, #Mr Rich-Phillips, Mr Somyurek, Ms Springle and Ms Symes.

participating members

Legislative Council select committees

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

Fire Services Bill Select Committee — Ms Hartland, Ms Lovell, Mr Melhem, Mr Mulino, Mr O’Sullivan, Mr Rich Phillips, Ms Shing and Mr Young.

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, Ms Hutchins, Mr Merlino, Mr M. O’Brien, Mr Pakula 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 Bath, Ms Patten and Mr Somyurek. (*Assembly*): Ms Asher, Ms Blandthorn, Mr Dixon 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*): Dr Carling-Jenkins and 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 Gepp 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 — Acting Clerk of the Legislative Assembly: Ms Bridget Noonan

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

Parliamentary Services — Secretary: Mr P. Lochert

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

President:

The Hon. B. N. ATKINSON

Deputy President:

Mr K. EIDEH

Acting Presidents:

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

Leader of the Government:

The Hon. G. JENNINGS

Deputy Leader of the Government:

The Hon. J. L. PULFORD

Leader of the Opposition:

The Hon. M. WOOLDRIDGE

Deputy Leader of the Opposition:

The Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS

Leader of The Nationals:

Mr L. B. O'SULLIVAN

Leader of the Greens:

Dr S. RATNAM

| Member | Region | Party | Member | Region | Party |
|---|----------------------------|--------|---|----------------------------|--------|
| Atkinson, Mr Bruce Norman | Eastern Metropolitan | LP | Mikakos, Ms Jenny | Northern Metropolitan | ALP |
| Barber, Mr Gregory John ¹ | 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 ⁷ | Eastern Victoria | Nats |
| Carling-Jenkins, Dr Rachel ³ | Western Metropolitan | AC | 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 ⁸ | 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 ⁴ | 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 | Ratnam, Dr Samantha Shantini ⁹ | Northern Metropolitan | Greens |
| Fitzherbert, Ms Margaret | Southern Metropolitan | LP | Rich-Phillips, Mr Gordon Kenneth | South Eastern Metropolitan | LP |
| Gepp, Mr Mark ⁵ | Northern Victoria | ALP | Shing, Ms Harriet | Eastern Victoria | ALP |
| Hartland, Ms Colleen Mildred | Western Metropolitan | Greens | Somyurek, Mr Adem | South Eastern Metropolitan | ALP |
| Herbert, Mr Steven Ralph ⁶ | Northern Victoria | ALP | Springle, Ms Nina | South Eastern Metropolitan | Greens |
| Jennings, Mr Gavin Wayne | South Eastern Metropolitan | ALP | Symes, Ms Jaclyn | Northern Victoria | ALP |
| Leane, Mr Shaun Leo | Eastern Metropolitan | ALP | Tierney, Ms Gayle Anne | Western Victoria | ALP |
| Lovell, Ms Wendy Ann | Northern Victoria | LP | Wooldridge, Ms Mary Louise Newling | Eastern Metropolitan | LP |
| Melhem, Mr Cesar | Western Metropolitan | ALP | Young, Mr Daniel | Northern Victoria | SFFP |

¹ Resigned 28 September 2017

² Appointed 15 April 2015

³ DLP until 26 June 2017

⁴ Resigned 27 May 2016

⁵ Appointed 7 June 2017

⁶ Resigned 6 April 2017

⁷ Resigned 25 February 2015

⁸ Appointed 12 October 2016

⁹ Appointed 18 October 2017

PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

AC — Australian Conservatives; ALP — Labor Party; ASP — Australian Sex Party;
DLP — Democratic Labour Party; Greens — Australian Greens;
LP — Liberal Party; Nats — The Nationals;
SFFP — Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party; V1LJ — Vote 1 Local Jobs

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WEDNESDAY, 13 DECEMBER 2017

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Wednesday, 13 December 2017

The PRESIDENT (Hon. B. N. Atkinson) took the chair at 9.33 a.m. and read the prayer.

PETITIONS

Following petitions presented to house:

Rural crime and drug use

To the Legislative Council of Victoria:

The petition of constituents in the rural communities of Gunbower and district draws the attention of the house to the spiralling crime rate and drug use in rural communities which has resulted in residents living in fear.

The petitioners therefore request the Andrews Labor government to:

- increase police presence and numbers in rural communities;
- improve response times to 000 calls;
- harsher penalties for crime to reflect community values in sentencing criminals;
- increase rehabilitation and support resources for drug users in rural settings who have committed crimes.

By Mr O’SULLIVAN (Northern Victoria) (12 signatures).

Laid on table.

Voluntary assisted dying

To the Legislative Council of Victoria:

We, the undersigned citizens of Victoria, implore the members of the Legislative Council of Victoria to vote against the Andrews Labor government’s so-called Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill which is in fact a method of state-sanctioned killing and which:

- is unsafe, effectively supporting a form of euthanasia;
- is flawed, in that there are inadequate protections against duress and pressure being brought to bear on vulnerable patients at the end of life;
- will see lethal drugs stored in homes for long periods, opening the risks of deliberate and accidental misuse;
- fails to recognise the diversity of cultural practices and beliefs which surround death and dying and the irreplaceable role of family in our diverse multicultural society; and
- fails to recognise and respect deeply held religious convictions and faith.

By Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) (33 signatures).

Laid on table.

PAPERS

Laid on table by Clerk:

Interpretation of Legislation Act 1984 — Notice pursuant to section 32(3) in relation to the Waste Management Policy (Resource Recovery Facilities).

Ombudsman — Investigation into the financial support provided to kinship carers, December 2017 (*Ordered to be published*).

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

Severe weather event

Mr GEPP (Northern Victoria) (09:42) — My members statement is about the rain event over the weekend of 2 December. The Bureau of Meteorology issued stark weather warnings prior to that weekend. We have heard some views expressing a bit of disappointment that the predicted rainfall did not occur, but in many parts of my electorate it did occur. I want to recognise the tremendous efforts of our State Emergency Service volunteers and professionals over that weekend. In parts of my electorate things looked quite dire for quite some time. Echuca broke century-old rainfall records, as did Euroa.

One constituent informed me of a farm rain gauge near Stanhope recording 189 millilitres in a 24-hour period. That is near enough to 7½ inches on the old scale. Rochester is one area that was under potential flood alert in the days leading up to the rain event with evacuations likely. Fortunately the worse there did not eventuate, but that did not mean that our tireless volunteers had any less to do. Sandbags were distributed, public meetings were conducted, limited evacuations were performed and all the minor emergencies that come with torrential rain had to be attended to.

I commend all volunteers who gave up their weekend to put their community first. Their commitment is what makes our state great and keeps our community safe.

Jerusalem

Dr CARLING-JENKINS (Western Metropolitan) (09:44) — I rise today to add my voice to the current debate around the location of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. The Trump administration in the US have shown their strong support for Israel by declaring that they would move their embassy to Jerusalem — the true capital of Israel. President Trump said this:

This is a long overdue step to advance the peace process. And to work towards a lasting agreement.

Israel is a sovereign nation with the right, like every other sovereign nation, to determine its own capital.

Acknowledging this is a fact is a necessary condition for achieving peace.

The Australian Conservatives have called upon the Australian government to match US President Donald Trump's move and to commence relocation of their Israeli embassy from Tel Aviv to that nation's true capital, Jerusalem. I will take the opportunity today to commend Matthew Guy, the Leader of the Opposition, for his courageous stance against his federal party policy recognising that it was, and I quote Matthew Guy, 'respectful to recognise Jerusalem as Israel's capital'.

I urge the Victorian Parliament to support this move, and I for one stand here today in solidarity with Israel and with the many people in Melbourne who believe in Jerusalem as that nation's capital.

Collette Tayler

Ms LOVELL (Northern Victoria) (09:45) — As a former Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development, I wish to acknowledge the very sad passing of Emeritus Professor Collette Tayler. Professor Tayler made an extraordinary contribution in the area of early childhood education and care not only in Victoria but also at a national level. I wish to particularly thank her for her role in the design and implementation of the national quality framework and her work on the E4Kids project. As a minister I always valued and welcomed any advice from Professor Tayler. I extend my condolences to her family, friends and colleagues. Professor Tayler will be sadly missed.

Emergency services workers

Ms LOVELL — As we near the end of the year I would like to extend my gratitude to all emergency services workers for the work they have done throughout the year to keep our communities safe. In the coming weeks we head into a period where their work is highly likely to increase due to the high fire danger period and the number of Victorians on holidays at our beaches, in our river lands and in our bushlands. Emergency services workers work across a number of organisations: as firefighters with the Country Fire Authority, the Metropolitan Fire Brigade or government departments; in search and rescue through the Australian Volunteer Coast Guard, the Victoria State Emergency Service or the two independent rescue squads in Shepparton and Echuca; as lifesavers through Life Saving Victoria, Ambulance Victoria or St John Ambulance; and as community protectors through Victoria Police.

Whether they are volunteers or career members of their organisation, I thank them for their work and hope they remain safe as they undertake their extremely valuable work this summer. I would also like to wish them and their families a very merry Christmas and a safe, happy and prosperous new year.

Marriage equality

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan) (09:47) — Last week the Australian Parliament passed the Marriage Amendment (Definition and Religious Freedoms) Bill 2017. It was wonderful to see the outpouring of joy and exuberance on the floor of the House of Representatives, which voted overwhelmingly in favour of the legislation, with only four people, sadly, calling for a division on the bill.

The bill that passed last week overturned the change to the Marriage Act 1961 that was pushed through by the Howard government in 2004, which specifically defined marriage as between a man and woman — a very regrettable decision. That bill was opposed by only six people in the federal Parliament: three Greens and three Australian Democrats. I would like to pay tribute to everybody who has worked for the past 13 years to overturn that decision of 2004 — the marriage equality groups, the people in the Greens and other parties who have brought about this momentous change, with the legislation that was passed in the federal Parliament last week.

I look forward to a large number of weddings occurring, probably from 9 January and then into perpetuity. Australia has now become the 26th country to introduce marriage equality, and I think it is absolutely fabulous.

Federation Training

Ms SHING (Eastern Victoria) (09:48) — It was an absolute joy to attend the Waratah Restaurant at Federation Training's Morwell campus to announce \$3.1 million in funding to assist students across Federation Training's campuses to reach their potential, with language, numeracy and literacy assistance and additional support officer assistance, which is intended to operate not just in the classroom but also beyond.

Holmesglen TAFE

Ms SHING — On another matter it was a wonderful thing to drop in to the Morwell Club on 6 December to see the solar panel photovoltaic system installation training, which is taking place to upskill local electricians. There is a great demand for solar

panel expertise in and around the Latrobe Valley, as this industry really is taking flight. It was wonderful to see that Holmesglen TAFE is partnering with Federation Training to provide this training to the many businesses which have reached out to and sought the assistance of the Latrobe Valley Authority so they can upskill people to provide these services to people in Gippsland, as well as in the industry more broadly, and that includes workers who are skilled and want to hit their stride as far as additional skills are concerned.

Ladder

Ms SHING — It was really wonderful to join with the AFL's Ladder program, a not-for-profit organisation and the arm of the AFL which assists people to reach their best, to announce the Latrobe Valley pilot program over the next 18 months to assist young jobseekers not just to be matched with employment opportunities but also to minimise their risk of homelessness and to provide mentoring, role modelling and active assistance to them to reach their best.

Andy Brittain

Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria) (09:50) — I would like to use my members statement this morning to recognise a very special person. I first met Leading Senior Constable Andy Brittain at the Anzac Day service in Geelong earlier this year, where he was with 14 disadvantaged young people who were preparing to walk the Kokoda Track. Andy's infectious passion for helping disadvantaged and disengaged youth in Geelong led to the Geelong Kokoda Youth Program being established in 2013. With support from O'Malley Fitness, the Department of Education and Training, Ambulance Victoria and local businesses, the program has evolved into a very successful and proven initiative assisting disengaged youth through a formal connection back to their local community. Many of these youth face issues of truancy, antisocial behaviour, low-level offending, suicide, family violence and homelessness, among many others.

This was the driver for Senior Sergeant Michael Reid and Andy Brittain to build a sustainable youth program in Geelong and on the Bellarine and the Surf Coast in 2012. For five years Andy and 14 mentors have taken 14 disadvantaged youth on the Kokoda Track for 10 nights and 11 days as part of their youth program each year. Twenty weeks of personal training leading up to the trek, with other activities and the support of local businesses, helps prepare the trekkers.

I attended a breakfast last week run by Victoria Police that showcased the impact of the Kokoda experience. There were 200 people in attendance. Each participant told their own story of how the Kokoda Track experience changed their lives and created a positive and life-changing experience that helped them re-engage with their school, employment, family and community. Many of us were in tears as we heard the stories of these young people from broken homes who have been impacted by family violence and feeling unwanted. They now have positive futures and want to re-engage with society and take leading roles all because of the Kokoda youth program experience.

These life-changing experiences that the Geelong Kokoda Youth Program offers and the success given to many disadvantaged in the Geelong region are due in no small part to Leading Senior Constable Andy Brittain. It is no surprise the Blue Ribbon Foundation has nominated Andy as policeman of the year. To me he is a legend and now has his name and acknowledgement in *Hansard*, which is my small contribution to his commitment to helping our disadvantaged youth in the Geelong region.

Employment

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) (09:52) — Recently this month the Australian Bureau of Statistics confirmed that Victoria has created 284 000 new jobs since November 2014. This is the highest in the nation in both absolute and percentage terms and equates to 250 jobs a day since the Andrews Labor government came into government. It is not by coincidence. This is by a government actually doing things, actually building much-needed public transport projects, building much-needed schools, building hospitals, renovating the existing infrastructure, building roads and putting Victoria back to work. There have been 250 jobs a day created by this government. Once again this is an indication that in eight or 12 years — whatever — when this government may unfortunately move on it will go down as clearly one of the greatest, probably the greatest, government this great state has ever been lucky to have. It is led by one of the greatest premiers, probably the greatest, this great state has ever had.

Gambling regulation

Ms HARTLAND (Western Metropolitan) (09:54) — Last week when we were talking about the gambling bill I made a statement on behalf of Cr John Hedditch. He has asked me to clarify with the chamber that everything that he wrote, which I read out, was his personal belief rather than his view as a councillor.

I have had a lot of correspondence with councillors in the past week about the gambling bill, and they are really quite horrified and quite shocked by what went on during the debate last week and how it is going to affect their communities. They have asked me to urge the government to look at the dangers of that bill and at how they can mediate it and actually start talking to the councils that are profoundly affected by this legislation, such as Brimbank, Wyndham and Moreland, all of which wrote to us. So my plea for today is for the government to think seriously about the dangers of that bill and actually talk to the councils that are seriously affected.

Hanukkah

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) (09:55) — Yesterday was the start of the Jewish festival of Hanukkah, celebrated by millions of Jews around the world. On behalf of the Victorian coalition, I would like to extend our best wishes for Hanukkah, wishing our Australian Jewish community and the people of Israel every opportunity for peace and good health in the forthcoming year.

Felicitations

Mrs PEULICH — I am privileged to represent South Eastern Metropolitan Region, which is comprised of 11 lower house seats, like every other. In alphabetical order they are Carrum, Clarinda, Cranbourne, Dandenong, Frankston, Keysborough, Mordialloc, Mulgrave, Narre Warren North, Narre Warren South and Rowville. Currently Labor holds 10 of the 11 seats in my region and half the Labor MPs do not live in their electorates, which means those Labor MPs do not get to hear the frustrations and problems facing our communities each and every day.

We are very excited about preselecting a new crop of Liberal candidates for seats in our region who actually care about their committees and want to give their communities a voice. On their behalf I wish to extend my very best wishes and their very best wishes for Christmas and the New Year to their electorates. As the shadow Minister for Multicultural Affairs, I know that our religiously diverse communities celebrate and mark the significant events of other faiths and cultures as a mark of inclusion and respect and get into the Christmas spirit even though they may not be Christians.

To all of the members of Parliament, their families, their staff and Parliament House staff, have a safe and prosperous Christmas, a restful Christmas season and a very happy and safe 2018 new year. Lastly to my

family, team and staff, supporters and their families, thank you. You are all gold. Merry Christmas and a happy 2018.

Economy

Mr MULINO (Eastern Victoria) (09:57) — Can I briefly add to some of Mr Leane's observations in relation to the Australian Bureau of Statistics recent release of the national accounts. As he indicated, Victoria remains the powerhouse of the nation economically. Real gross state product (GSP) grew by 3.3 per cent in 2016–17, which exceeded budget forecasts, and indeed real GSP growth in 2015–16 was revised up to 3.5 per cent. This is in stark contrast to the anaemic growth that we inherited. Economic growth in 2016–17 was broad-based with positive contributions from household consumption, dwelling investment and business investment. As Mr Leane indicated, this is reflected in many, many economic indicators, but the most important one for us as a government is the fact that over 280 000 jobs have been created since November 2014. This again is in stark contrast to the previous government, under which unemployment rose from 4.8 per cent to 6.7 per cent.

Country Fire Authority Flinders station

Mr MULINO — It was a pleasure to officially open the new Flinders Country Fire Authority (CFA) station on behalf of the Minister for Emergency Services in the other place. This brigade was formed in 1929 and joined the CFA in 1944. The funding from the government of \$600 000 provided the community with a new Colorbond fire station. Importantly the community itself raised \$150 000 in an incredibly short period of time to add an extra bay to that station. The brigade has many members who have served for decades, and their service was also honoured at the event on the weekend.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Written responses

The PRESIDENT (09:59) — Yesterday I took on notice a request from Mr O'Donohue for reinstatement of his supplementary question to the first question posed in question time yesterday. In response to the supplementary question Minister Tierney indicated that she was not in a position to respond to that question because of a suppression order, and I undertook to have discussions with the minister to satisfy myself as to the extent of that suppression order.

What eventuated was that the Clerk, on my behalf, did have some discussions with the minister's office. Based on those discussions I am of a view that the minister may well have an opportunity, notwithstanding that suppression order, to actually respond to the matters that were raised in the question by Mr O'Donohue. On that basis I reinstate that question as a supplementary question to the first question asked yesterday.

GREAT FOREST NATIONAL PARK

Mr O'SULLIVAN (Northern Victoria) (10:00) — I move:

That this house —

- (1) opposes the creation of a great forest national park in Victoria;
- (2) notes that the creation of a great forest national park would —
 - (a) destroy the timber industry in Victoria;
 - (b) result in the loss of up to 40 000 direct and indirect jobs in Victoria;
 - (c) significantly increase the threat of bushfires around the outer north-eastern suburbs of Melbourne, putting lives and property at risk;
 - (d) result in timber products needing to be sourced from countries that do not meet the same environmental and management practices adhered to by Victoria's forest industry; and
 - (e) impose substantial additional demand on resources available for existing park management.

The great forest national park is a term that has been thrown around a little too generally in this state. Everyone is referring to the great forest national park as if it already exists. It does not exist, and I get a bit annoyed when I hear people referring to the great forest national park as if it is out there, it is already in operation and people can go to it, as if they can walk up there and they will see a sign at the front saying 'Great Forest National Park' or if you look at a map, you will find an area which is referred to as the 'Great Forest National Park'. You cannot do that; it does not exist. It only exists in the minds of those people who would like to see it exist.

So I am very happy to move this motion today, which opposes the creation of the great forest national park, or whatever park it is. It probably should be referred to as the Central Highlands proposal for a national park, which the Greens, to their credit, have pushed very well and they like to talk about. I understand the reason for doing that, but there are many people who have a

different view to that of the Greens. I respect the view that the Greens have, but I would hope that they would also respect others who have a different view to the one they have in relation to the national park.

On 6 December this year all members of Parliament received an email which I am going to quote from; in fact I am going to read out the first two pages of the email that we received. The email came from a group called the Institute of Foresters of Australia (IFA). This is a group based in Macquarie in Canberra. They have done some work in relation to the proposed great forest national park and I want to talk about that for a moment. I am going to read out the first two pages of that email:

Dear member of Parliament

Position on the proposed 'great forest national park'

The Institute of Foresters of Australia (IFA) is the professional body representing over 1000 members who are forest scientists and managers operating in all aspects of forest, natural resource management and conservation in Australia.

Over the decades, foresters have been good stewards of the forested landscape. These forests have yielded a wide range of benefits from timber to honey, from tourism to conservation and from four-wheel driving to firewood. Our members, informed by the science of natural resource management, play a crucial role in shaping the future of sustainable forest and land management for community benefit.

The IFA position is that multiple-use forests in the Victorian Central Highlands offer more public benefit than a huge new national park. We believe that the current mix of public land tenures allows a good balance between conservation and other (multiple) land uses. There is no need to create a 'great forest national park'.

Creation of a new national park is not supported as:

the proposal provides no major additional conservation or biodiversity benefit.

the proposal, without substantial extra investment in fire prevention and maintenance of access, may potentially increase the risk of large, severe bushfires which would have huge impacts on biodiversity, not least on the endangered Leadbeater's possum.

there are already extensive national parks and other permanent reserves in the Central Highlands which, combined, provide a far greater range of community values and material benefits than a single-purpose national park.

around 70 per cent of the region's mountain ash forest (current or potential Leadbeater's possum habitat) is already permanently reserved from timber harvesting.

the proposal would significantly reduce the supply of high-quality eucalypt logs, thus severely damaging the

native timber industry that currently contributes \$573 million to the Victorian economy.

the proposal would restrict or prevent a number of legitimate public land uses, such as hunting and prospecting, and greatly overestimates additional tourism opportunities.

In summary, the proposal would not optimise social, environmental, biodiversity, economic and public benefit outcomes for the Victorian people.

Note that the IFA supports the current government study into extra plantation development, and the current review of the conservation status of the Leadbeater's possum.

This is signed by Euan Ferguson, the chairman of IFA Victoria. I think that is a pretty reasonable summary of why the establishment of the great forest national park would not be an advantage to Victoria and why in fact it would have a detrimental impact on Victoria in so many ways. I want to touch on some of those today.

The report that was provided by the Institute of Foresters of Australia goes into a lot more detail on each of those aspects, giving extensive scientific detail as to why they have taken the position that they have. Some would say you would expect that from a group that has close links to the forest and timber industry, but I want to read out again what the Institute of Foresters of Australia is actually made up of. It is:

... the professional body representing over 1000 members who are forest scientists and managers operating in all aspects of forest, natural resource management and conservation in Australia.

This is not a group of haulage and harvest contractors; this is a group of people who use science and who work in the natural resource management and conservation area. When they come up with a proposal or say something, they actually back it up with fact. They have done that extensively throughout the report they have provided to us.

One of the things I am always having to debate is when you can apply the science to the actual outcome to come up with a position that can be substantiated. I think that the Institute of Foresters of Australia have done that exceptionally well in this document. In fact I think it is one of the most proficient documents that I have used in terms of a resource element in this area. It provides detailed analysis and reference as to why it comes up with the positions it does.

One of the other aspects of the motion that I have moved today is in relation to jobs that are created in this industry that would be severely impacted. Just recently this chamber of Parliament held an inquiry into the operation of VicForests in terms of its management of

Victoria's native timber harvesting. As a part of that we had many people come in from both sides of this debate, but one that has certainly resonated with me was when the CEO of the Victorian Association of Forest Industries, Tim Johnston, came in and presented to us. Mr Johnston, when the question was asked of him, 'What would the creation of a great forest national park mean for employment, for jobs, in Victoria?', said that the forest, fibre and wood products industry directly employs around 21 000 people across the state and indirectly supports another 40 000 to 50 000 jobs through flow-on economic activity. That is a lot of jobs — 21 000 directly employed is a lot — and then the flow-on in terms of all the other supporting industries, supporting jobs and supporting businesses around the whole of Melbourne is a big slab of jobs.

Further, when it was investigated and he was asked questions in relation to that, to the great forest national park being established, he said that that would all go. There would be tens of thousands of people in the unemployment queues because they would be out of a job. If it is 21 000 employed directly and then another 40 000 to 50 000 employed indirectly, that is potentially up to something like 70 000. Even if it is half that, even if it is 35 000, that is a large town in regional Victoria that essentially would just be wiped off the face of the earth in terms of employment.

If we talk to the Greens and others who support the creation of a great forest national park, Sarah Rees, who presented at that same inquiry, said that the creation of the great forest national park would create about 700 jobs. I am not sure about everyone else's maths, but my maths is actually reasonable. We are saying that there are potentially 35 000 people who would be in the unemployment queue, and then there are their families, who rely on them to bring home the money, put a roof over their heads and feed the children. Compare that to creating the great forest national park, which would create 700 jobs. I think that is pretty substantial in terms of the difference. To kill an industry and kill absolutely tens of thousands of jobs to create another national park for just 700 jobs is just absolutely crazy.

Sarah Rees went on to say that creating these 700 jobs and creating the great forest national park would contribute about \$70 million to the local economy. Just to go back to what the Institute of Foresters of Australia said, the current native timber industry contributes \$573 million to the economy, so you have got a difference of \$500 million. It is a \$500 million difference between what the current industry provides to the economy and what the creation of a new national park would provide. That absolutely makes no sense on an employment basis and absolutely makes no sense on

an economic basis in terms of what a great forest national park would deliver for this state. It would actually take us backwards, and I do not think that anybody wants to go backwards in this state in terms of employment or in terms of economic activity. I would think that even the Greens would agree with that.

Mr Gepp interjected.

Mr O'SULLIVAN — Mr Gepp, who also represents Northern Victoria Region, would certainly agree that we need more economic activity and employment in this part of the world. We might hear a contribution from Mr Gepp later on in this debate.

In terms of the Leadbeater's possum, that is something that I want to talk about this morning as well, because that is certainly an issue that keeps coming up in relation to why a great forest national park should be created. There have been many, many hearings and inquiries where people have made comment about the Leadbeater's possum, and the inquiry into VicForests operations was one of those. I was on that inquiry, and I listened to all the people talk about everything that has been done for the Leadbeater's possum and about what should be done to protect it in the future. I think it is fair to say that everyone agrees that the Leadbeater's possum needs to be protected — and it is. People say that it should be protected more and that we should create a national park to protect it more. I am not sure that that would actually make a difference.

The Leadbeater's possum is certainly being looked after pretty well right now. There is no doubt that in the past it was not protected as well as it should have been, but things have changed. Back in 1999 the possum was listed as a critically endangered species under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999. Back at that time it was probably fair to say that it was pretty scarce, but as we know, the community has evolved, and we have come up with better ways to do things differently to bring a different result. As we know, there has been a lot of effort put into protecting the Leadbeater's possum.

We should also remember that the greatest enemy of the Leadbeater's possum is bushfires. Bushfires wipe out their habitat, and then they have nowhere to live, and the fires probably burn a few Leadbeater's possums along the way as well. One of the most fundamental things we can do to protect the Leadbeater's possum is minimise bushfires. As we know, one of the problems with national parks is that they are harbourers of bushfires. If a bushfire gets going in a national park, they are very, very hard to put out, because quite often we see that the parks are not managed well enough.

They have a build-up of fuel load, and once they catch fire they burn very intensively. When they burn so intensively, the old-growth logs that the possums like to live in burn — all those trees that are 100 to 200 years old. They have their habitat in the trees. The trees burn very well, and that destroys the habitat of the Leadbeater's possum.

Since we became more aware of the Leadbeater's possum and its situation, there have been many things undertaken to look after them. One of the things I was involved with when I worked for the Minister for Agriculture was the implementation of exclusion zones — the 200-metre exclusion zones — around the Leadbeater's possum colonies. I remember when we were putting that in place there were about 100 colonies that we were aware of. We said we would have exclusion zones of 200 metres around those colonies, which would give the possums plenty of space to work with. At that time we said, 'When we get to 200 colonies we'll have a review of how this is going'. That was just in the last term of government, only about four or five years ago.

Do you know how many colonies we are up to now? We are now up to 649 colonies. What I find fascinating about this is that there are 649 colonies that we actually know of, because what we also know is that the actual amount of native forest that gets harvested in any given year is about 0.05 per cent of Victoria's forests, so in terms of where that work is done, in actually understanding where those coupes are, we are looking in the areas where the logging actually occurs and that are available for native logging. We are not even considering the 70 per cent of native forest that is not appropriate for logging and that is protected. We are not even looking in those areas. If we were to look beyond where the native timber industry works, I think we would find a whole lot more coupes than just those 649 that we are already aware of.

What we have also come to understand in the last little while is that the possum numbers have increased significantly. At one stage there were reports that possum numbers during the 1980s peaked at about 7500. That is terrific, but we know that they did take a bit of a nosedive after that. In 2014 the species population was estimated to be 11 000 individuals, and that is according to the Leadbeater's Possum Advisory Group numbers. Since then 354 new possum colonies have been discovered. There could be something in the realm of 20 000 individual Leadbeater's possums in the forest out there that we are aware of right now, but I suspect it could be even more than that because, as I said, 70 per cent of the forests have not been looked at in terms of finding where those coupes are. I suspect

the numbers of the Leadbeater's possum are much greater than what we know and that they are doing a lot better than we think they are.

As we know, the timber industry go in and do preharvest detection before they do any harvesting of the native timber. We know that as a result of doing that, whenever they find a colony, there is an exclusion zone put around it. The industry work under a whole range of different internal regulations as well as laws and regulations — both state and federal — which give them plenty of regulation to ensure that they are doing everything they can to protect the possum itself. So possum numbers are in good stocks because of all the work that is being done.

There has been a lot of work done by the timber industry itself, by VicForests and other groups, but there has also been some good done by the Greens and other groups who are doing whatever they can to protect the Leadbeater's possum. As we work together — the industry and the people who are trying to protect the possum, as we all are — we are getting a good result for the possum, so I am very pleased to say that that is working. And we should continue to do that. What we need to ensure is that there is a balance and that we can operate a native timber industry in this state which employs tens of thousands of people, which sustains families and local communities and which has a real impact in terms of economic prosperity in this state — some \$550 million to \$570 million, as we know.

Just going to one of the other aspects of this motion, in relation to the management practices in current national parks and reserves, no-one is against national parks when they are managed properly. One of the things that we see is that they are not managed properly now. There are not enough resources available for national parks to be managed appropriately. They are not managed appropriately. So there is no point creating a new national park, because I do not feel, and I do not think anyone else would feel, that there would be the appropriate resources to maintain it.

When national parks, reserves or whatever they are are not managed properly, that is when they start to become a risk on a whole range of levels. They do not have the proper fire mitigation measures in place. The tracks become overgrown so you cannot get anyone in there even if there is a fire in those areas. Also, the people who might want to walk into these areas cannot get in there because there are not the appropriate facilities, they are not encouraged to or the walking tracks and so forth are overgrown because there is just not the management in place to ensure that that is done as well

as it could be. It is a pity to see our natural vegetation and our natural environment not well looked after. As we know, landowners themselves do everything they can to look after our natural environment. Governments also need to do their bit to make sure that it is managed appropriately. We have not got enough resources to look after the parks we have now, and we certainly should not be creating any new ones.

To allow other people to speak on this motion, I repeat that the great forest national park does not stack up on any measure. Financially it would be a drain of about \$500 million in lost economy to this state. In terms of employment there are somewhere between 20 000 and 70 000 people who would directly lose their job as a result of this. Even if it is half, even if it is 35 000, that is too many. We could never, ever sustain that. In terms of protecting the Leadbeater's possum, that is happening now better than it has ever happened before. If the numbers of Leadbeater's possums were in a nosedive and they were about to become extinct, I could understand there would be an argument in that direction. That is not the case. The numbers are more healthy than they have ever been, by a factor of two, three or four.

So this motion makes absolute sense — that this house opposes the creation of the great forest national park. The Liberals and Nationals will certainly be voting for this motion, because we think it is the right thing to do. It is the right thing for that part of the world, it is the right thing for employment, it is the right thing for the economy and, very importantly, it is the right thing to do for the protection of the Leadbeater's possum going forward.

Ms DUNN (Eastern Metropolitan) (10:24) — I rise to speak to Mr O'Sullivan's motion, which of course has a number of points opposing the creation of the great forest national park in Victoria. I have to say that there is a curious obsession in this chamber with the great forest national park. It seems that every year when Christmas rolls around someone in this chamber feels the need to have a motion attacking the proposed great forest national park. There clearly must be something in their Advent calendars that reminds them that they cannot let the year fade without spending the better part of the day making unsubstantiated exaggerations as to the impacts of this park.

Last December it was Mr Young from the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party who launched a motion that falsely claimed that the great forest national park would be a Christmas Grinch and steal everything that any child could possibly enjoy doing in the outdoors — everything from fishing and hunting to trail biking,

horseriding and gold fossicking. Mr Young must have become as red-faced as Santa Claus when it was pointed out to him that the comprehensive plan for the great forest national park has provided for all of these activities to take place with better management than is currently provided for in the state forest.

I see that a couple of red herrings that Mr Young threw around have been preserved, cellared and reheated for serving today in Mr O'Sullivan's motion: the logical fallacy that because national parks are currently underfunded we cannot possibly have another one and the complete fabrication that national parks lead to higher fire risks. I look forward to deconstructing these lies, and I promise to do so with great merriment and gusto. I must say, and appropriately for Christmas, it brings me great joy when these motions roll around. I love talking about the great forest national park and its many benefits to community and to the conservation of the environment, and I will very much enjoy taking a substantial amount of time talking on this subject.

Brace yourself for the first point of this motion, which is that the creation of a great forest national park would destroy the timber industry in Victoria. As it is crafted, this is a nonsensical claim. Clearly Mr O'Sullivan does not understand the impressive breadth of the timber industry in this state. As a member of the National Party and as a representative of Northern Victoria Region, one would think he had a bit more of a clue. Indeed it extends from the hardwood and softwood plantations in western Victoria to the plantations and timber mills of East Gippsland. We have a remarkable plantation-based industry in this state, which produces high-quality structural timber for the building industry and provides much of the pulp needs for paper and packaging material production.

The creation of the great forest national park will have no impact whatsoever on the plantation industry. Indeed there will be a higher demand for plantation products once the unsustainable practice of native forest logging ends. The hardwood and softwood products that come from our plantation industry will continue to be produced. The investments that are forthcoming from the private sector and from the state government will continue. There is a bright future ahead for the plantation sector in Victoria, just as there is a thriving plantation sector in places such as New Zealand, where there is no native forest logging.

With this motion Mr O'Sullivan seems to be asserting that the only existential threat to native forest logging is the great forest national park. He is wrong of course. Scientific research has shown that the greatest threat to logging has been logging itself. We have overlogged

our native forests for decades. The warning signs have been there. The forestry science at our most august institutions has been telling us this for decades. The mountain ash ecosystem is now so threatened by native forest logging and the increased risk of bushfire due to logging that the entire ecosystem is now listed as critically endangered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature, the peak conservation body that assesses the vulnerability of species and ecosystems. This is a shocking assessment of the stewardship by successive state governments of this one-of-a-kind forest. We have bled it for so long that it is now at serious risk of total collapse.

The great forest national park is many things, but chief amongst them is that it is the great hope for saving the living remnants of the mountain ash ecosystem and preserving them for future generations. It is an initiative with wide support in the community. The great forest national park would protect the watersheds that provide Melbourne and Gippsland with the cleanest drinking water in the world. It would sequester huge volumes of carbon, and very importantly it would preserve the only home to dozens of vulnerable species, including the Leadbeater's possum, the mountain brushtail possum, the barred galaxias, the greater glider, the sooty owl, the powerful owl and the masked owl.

I want to turn now to point (b) of Mr O'Sullivan's motion today, which is that the creation of the great forest national park would 'result in the loss of up to 40 000 direct and indirect jobs in Victoria'. My, this has constantly been a contested figure. Even as recently as this morning that figure has increased up to 70 000 on no basis at all, just on the whim of a contribution by Mr O'Sullivan. There has never — and I repeat, never — been any substantiation of the claim that the end of native forest logging would mean 40 000 direct and indirect jobs would be lost.

Forty thousand is a huge number of people. I ask: where is the substantiation of this claim? There is none. Even Ms Pulford, the Minister for Agriculture, this Parliament's most ardent supporter of unsustainable native forest logging, has never been so spurious as to claim there are 40 000 jobs in logging. The largest figure the minister has ever quoted was 21 000 jobs in logging. Of course Ms Pulford could not adequately substantiate it, nor could she refute the statistics provided by the government's own logging company that prove the number of logging workers is in the mere hundreds.

The pro-logging lobby in this house has never let the facts get in the way of a headline. It is a pity for them that in the lengthy debate on this motion they will be

caught out yet again without any substantiation of their very major claims.

Let us put this 40 000 figure in context. It is the same number of people that the Productivity Commission expected would lose their jobs with the closure of the motor vehicle manufacturing plants and the rationalisation of firms in the supply chain across the entirety of Australia due to the shutdown of motor vehicle manufacturing by the Abbott Liberal-National coalition. That is right; apparently the native forest logging industry in Victoria is of the same scale as the once mighty vehicle manufacturing industry that produced 167 538 vehicles in 2015.

Forty thousand is the same number of people that are regulars or active reservists in the Australian Army. That is right; apparently the number of workers in the native forest industry in Victoria is great enough to take on the 12 active brigades of the venerable Australian Army — and even more, as it is now 70 000. Forty thousand is 11 000 more people than are employed by Qantas, the country's largest airline. The supposed 40 000 jobs in logging is 10 per cent greater than the entire employment of the seven departments that make up the core Victorian public service agencies. Apparently it takes fewer people to run the state than it takes to chop down trees.

That is right: Mr O'Sullivan would like to claim that the creation of the great forest national park would lead to a loss of jobs in the state of Victoria that would be larger than the closure of the largest hardware chain in the country or the abolition of the Australian Army or the dissolution of the seven largest state government departments — or the very real and very costly shutting down by the Liberal-National parties of the vehicle manufacturing sector across Victoria and South Australia.

While he was Minister for Agriculture, Peter Walsh, the member for Murray Plains in the Assembly, procured the services of Dr Jacki Schirmer of both the Australian National University and the University of Canberra. Dr Schirmer analysed, in a report titled *Socio-economic Characteristics of Victoria's Forestry Industries 2009–2012*, employment across the forestry sector, including plantation forestry and native forest logging. The Schirmer report shows that in Victoria 2284 people were employed in the native forest growing, primary processing and support services. That is the sum total of the direct and indirect employment in the native forest industry. That is far shy of 40 000 jobs. Indeed it is a mere 5.5 per cent of the jobs that Mr O'Sullivan has attributed in this motion to the native forest logging

sector, which are the only jobs that would be lost if the great forest national park were to be created.

If I recall correctly, it just so happens that the report from Dr Schirmer was commissioned by Mr Walsh, and his chief of staff at the time was — who was that chief of staff who commissioned that? — it was Mr O'Sullivan, the very same Mr O'Sullivan who now claims that the figure is 20 times higher than the figure arrived at in the report commissioned by his old boss. Mr O'Sullivan must know that the 40 000 figure is a complete lie, because the Schirmer report would have come across his desk. Let us hope that with his loose understanding of the facts the chief of staff role is as close as Mr O'Sullivan ever gets to a ministerial office.

But I call out this claim of 40 000 for what it is, and I call out Ms Pulford's oft-repeated claim of 21 000 jobs in the native forestry sector for what it is. Both of these claims are unsubstantiated. It is clear they are a complete and utter fabrication. Mr O'Sullivan and Ms Pulford should be ashamed at repeating them in this place. Both of them have no excuse for not knowing better. Even VicForests's own failed application to receive Forest Stewardship Council certification in 2014 indicated that the number of forest workers working in the scope of the certificate was 447 male workers and 38 female workers — a princely sum of 485 workers.

To return to the Schirmer report, another interesting conclusion was that there were 3733 people involved in the growing, primary processing and supporting industries for hardwood and softwood plantations. This is great news. These jobs are set to expand once native forest logging ends and the great forest national park is created. They will continue to grow their timber and sell it to the construction industry, other manufacturers and for export. The secondary processing of timbers will remain. They will switch to domestic plantation forestry or sustainable imported timbers from countries such as New Zealand, the United States and Canada, which is where we get the bulk of our imported timber from.

I now turn to point (c) of Mr O'Sullivan's motion, the idea that the creation of the great forest national park would 'significantly increase the threat of bushfires around the outer north-eastern suburbs of Melbourne, putting lives and property at risk'. At the heart of this claim by Mr O'Sullivan is an incessant and hurtful lie that is unthinkingly promulgated by some members of the Liberal-National coalition and some of the other less scientifically inclined members of this chamber. There is no scientific evidence that logged forests are better at resisting bushfires than native forests in

national parks. There is not a skerrick of credible, peer-reviewed scientific evidence that this is the case. This is a lie repeated in this chamber ad nauseam without any data to substantiate the claim. There is ample evidence to prove the claim is incorrect and indeed to show that our mature wet native forests do us a great service in repelling fire. They retain so much water in their substructures, understorey and soil that they are resistant to the spread of bushfire — far more resistant than logged forests.

In the years following the Black Saturday bushfires scientists from the University of Melbourne, the Australian National University and other institutions conducted in-depth research to examine how mountain ash forests have recovered from those fires. One of the best compendiums of this research is a book published in November 2015 titled *Mountain Ash: Fire, Logging and the Future of Victoria's Giant Forests*, authored by David Lindenmayer, David Blair, Lachlan McBurney and Sam Banks. It compares post-2009 forests in the state to baselines developed over 25 years of research. The research is ably summarised in the 2009 publication *Forest Pattern and Ecological Process: A Synthesis of 25 Years of Research*, which was also edited by Professor David Lindenmayer.

I have cited some of this research before, but I feel the need to do so again considering that there is a continuing ignorance in this place of the fire resistance of mountain ash forests. I encourage my colleagues in the house to delve into this research and I would be happy to provide them with copies of it. For their edification, the research shows the following: the interaction of fire with logging has left the forest in a perilous state and past clear-fell logging operations have resulted in mountain ash forests being at significantly greater risk of crown scorching fire. This elevated fire risk persists for more than 40 years as the forests regrow. The combined effects of widespread logging and wildfire mean that just 1.16 per cent of the mountain ash forest ecosystem is old growth. This is one-thirtieth to one-sixtieth of what historically once existed. Once again this is a reason to create a great forest national park — to preserve these remnants and to take the pressure of logging off them.

Vegetation studies in mountain ash forests show that logging of burnt areas directly after the 2009 wildfires — termed 'salvage logging' — had an enormous impact on native plants. Populations of important plant species such as tree ferns were depleted by 95 to 99 per cent in comparison to burnt but unlogged areas. Overall, species diversity — that is, the number of different native plant species — is reduced by up to 30 per cent in post-fire salvage-logged areas.

These changes will have long-term negative impacts on the architecture of mountain ash forests. This scientific research shows that intact mountain ash forests are denser, wetter and more resilient to bushfire than logged remnants; therefore if we are to better prepare and protect against bushfires, the state of Victoria must leave mountain ash forests to mature and densify. If we allow them to grow to their full potential of maturity, with deep, wet understoreys and highly biodiverse communities of flora, we will maximise their potential for rainwater retention such that they stay wet even during the driest of summers. That is the best protection to bushfire you can possibly get, and it is an ecological service provided free of charge by nature.

Another claim of logging proponents is that a side benefit of native forest logging industries is that they provide roads that allow access to fires. However, building roads does the opposite. It dewateres the topsoil through the creation of drainage channels, and it allows the drainage at the sides of the roads to dry out through exposure to the sun. Logging roads only go where logging trucks want to go: where the logging coupes are. It is a funny coincidence, but no-one lives where the logging coupes are. Sometimes communities are unfortunate to be within hundreds of metres of logging coupes, but the logging roads are no use in providing access to their houses because their houses are already on a road. Logging roads only intensify the potential for fires to start in the first place.

Then there is the matter of fires starting due to the practice of logging on high-risk days. VicForests has a habit of getting exemptions to operate on total fire ban days, such that VicForests and its contractors have actually started fires in logging coupes. These fires, unnecessarily started by the practice of native forest logging, detain appliances that should be deployed elsewhere to protect communities.

As evidence to this effect, I would like to note that I have a photograph which was taken at the Learmonth Creek Road fire near Powelltown on 27 January 2014. In this photo you can clearly see a truck being loaded with logs while a fire blazes away in the background. This fire was started by logging machinery on that very coupe. This fire attracted a huge amount of resources, with 58 firefighters from the then Department of Environment and Primary Industries, Parks Victoria, Melbourne Water, the Country Fire Authority (CFA) and VicForests being deployed. They were backed up by air support. As a result, they were not able to attend other fires which were burning concurrently.

It is unfortunate that we cannot incorporate photos into *Hansard*, but there might be a day when that comes.

The interesting thing about this photo is that the truck that is being loaded while those fires blaze is emblazoned with the name of the company that runs it: Blackwood. That is right: Blackwood Haulage, owned by a relative of the member for Narracan in the other place. There were fires caused by logging that day, and the resources of the CFA were directed to fight them instead of fighting other fires across Victoria. If The Nationals were truly concerned about fire risk, perhaps they would encourage this industry not to log during high-risk weather.

I want to turn now to the fourth point in Mr O'Sullivan's motion — that old chestnut that timber products would need to be sourced from countries that do not meet the same standards as Victoria's industry. One of the false arguments used in this place when discussing native forest logging is that without it we would increase the amount of timber imported from the Asia-Pacific region. There is a whiff of xenophobia that attends this claim. There is the arrogance that sustainability practices in Asia could not possibly be up to scratch in any circumstances, but the truth holds that there are some accredited timber sources in South-East Asia. The Forest Trust is one organisation that has done some exceptional work in improving the sustainability of timber and pulp plantations. That work is to be commended.

There is of course illegal logging in South-East Asia and Melanesia, and it is rampant in some of those countries. One country of particular concern is Cambodia, where illegal logging has ramped up due to a recent ban on unprocessed timber exports in neighbouring Laos. Teak and rosewood logs in Cambodia are hauled to Vietnam where they are processed into finished products, typically furniture. It is this type of product, far removed from its illegal origins, that has a habit of getting around Australian customs. This type of timber is not the feedstock that supplies the wood processing industries in Australia, and it is not the feedstock that supplies the paper processing industries in Australia, nor will it ever be, because we have greater protections than that when it comes to the importation of raw logs.

Let us be clear: most of the logs imported to Australia come from New Zealand, Canada, the United States and Chile — countries which impose very rigorous environmental controls on their plantation forestry. It is completely false to claim that if native forest logging of the central highlands ended tomorrow, we would suddenly be swamped with illegally felled teak and rosewood from old-growth forests in the Mekong region, Indonesia or Papua New Guinea. That is simply not true. The reality is that we would continue to be

partly dependent on imports from well-regulated export markets.

And now to the fifth point on Mr O'Sullivan's motion — that the creation of the great forest national park would impose substantial additional demands on resources available for existing park management. On this count Mr O'Sullivan is somewhat correct. It is true that our existing national parks do not have all the resourcing they need to maintain the parks at their optimum. That has been due to degradation by state governments in the staffing and funding of Parks Victoria. The Greens have repeatedly called for better funding of our national parks, state parks and municipal parks. The cuts to the budget of Parks Victoria were assessed in an article in the *Age* by Josh Gordon entitled 'Victoria's national parks in jeopardy after deep funding cuts', which noted that Parks Victoria's direct funding from the state government collapsed by 37 per cent in nominal terms over three years from \$122 million in 2011–12 to \$76.8 million in 2014–15. Hence if Mr O'Sullivan has an axe to grind when it comes to resourcing national parks and state parks, he should look to his own party.

These cuts have had massive consequences. The Victorian National Parks Association (VNPA) investigated these cuts and reported in March 2016 that huge reductions in Parks Victoria's operating budget have compromised or even stopped management programs which, to be at all effective, must have secure, long-term recurrent funding. Inevitably service delivery has suffered. Community engagement programs have been axed, maintenance of many assets has been deferred, visitor information has been scaled back and ecological management programs like weeds and feral animal programs have been cut — almost to nothing in some instances. With fewer staff expected to do more, morale within the organisation has suffered as well. A report by the Victorian Public Sector Commission shows that 60 per cent of staff feel workplace stress is an issue for them and many are considering leaving.

The VNPA director, Matt Ruchel, commented on the 2016–17 state budget, stating that:

The \$20 million funding boost over four years to revitalise parks infrastructure announced in today's state budget is a step in the right direction, but Parks Victoria still needs a significant increase in core operational funding ...

Victoria's parks service has been severely damaged by savage staff cuts over many years. It needs at least \$30 million a year for core operational funding just to reverse the damage caused by former state government cuts.

This claim was repeated in the VNPA's comments on the 2017–18 budget:

... increased short-term core funding for Parks Victoria are welcome, but our magnificent national parks estate needs more secure and far more substantial long-term core funding.

But the current deficit of funding for national parks and state parks should not be a reason to prevent the creation of the great forest national park. It is not as if there is a capped amount that can be spent on park management in this state. We can increase it and we should increase it, and one very good reason for doing that is that national and state parks are a driver of the economy.

In 2015 Parks Victoria released a report titled *Valuing Victoria's Parks*, which found that the direct and indirect economic benefits to Victoria were huge. Tourists spend \$1.4 billion a year visiting parks in Victoria, adding 14 000 jobs to the state's economy. This benefit is concentrated in the Grampians, on the Great Ocean Road, in the Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges and in Gippsland. There were 17 million visitor nights by interstate and international tourists to the state parks. Our parks contain over 1 million hectares of catchments, supplying water use for drinking, food production and other industries. The nine most important parks for water catchment provide 3400 gegalitres, which is 16 per cent of the state's total. This includes the Yarra Ranges and Baw Baw national parks, which would be incorporated into the proposed great forest national park.

The value of water filtration services provided by parks is estimated at \$83 million per year. The Victorian parks network is a major carbon sink, with at least 270 million tonnes of carbon stored in land-based parks. An indicative analysis suggests that avoided healthcare costs and productivity impacts associated with undertaking physical activity regularly in Victorian parks could be up to \$200 million per annum.

That is an exceptional list of economic benefits. Let us compare the sum of those benefits to the value of native forest logging. Earlier this decade VicForests commissioned Deloitte Access Economics to assess the economic benefits to the state of Victoria from native forests logging. The report concluded that the native timber industry in the Central Highlands added \$357 million to the state economy in 2013–14. Those are the figures from the industry itself, and they are definitely on the high side and do not take into consideration the long-term economic losses caused by native forest logging.

I note that the amount spent by interstate and international tourists in our parks — \$1.4 billion per year and growing — far exceeds the value of the native forest logging industry to Victoria. That is correct: the money brought into this state by tourists wanting to see our forests and coastlines and our Indigenous heritage outstrips the value of native forest logging by a factor of four. Those tourist dollars are virtually an endless supply. Well-managed tourism does not need to come at the cost of our native forests. It will bring in billions of dollars year in, year out, yet native forest logging is fundamentally unsustainable and is demolishing our remaining native forest stocks, which will lead to the industry's own demise as well as the unforgivable loss of our precious native species.

Let us turn specifically to the economic benefits that would come from the creation of the great forest national park. Nous Group was commissioned to undertake a comprehensive study using exceptionally conservative assumptions to determine the economic benefits of the great forest national park. It found that the gross value added impact of the park would be over \$70 million in today's dollars. This figure did not include the wider economic benefits that would be achieved, including environmental services and the health benefits of increased recreational opportunities provided by the park.

There have been some critiques of the Nous report that say that it is far too conservative in its assumptions and that the benefits to small to medium enterprises that would be created to service the park and industries built around it would be very significant indeed. It is also important to note that this investment and revenue would recur year on year on year, instead of petering out before the middle of the 2020s, as will inevitably occur with native forest logging once the mountain ash and mixed forests collapse.

Just in terms of addressing some of the points that Mr O'Sullivan raised, it is curious that a couple of weeks ago there was an article stating that the Leader of the Liberal Party is in fact a tree hugger. Who knew that Matthew Guy was a tree hugger? Yet here we have Mr O'Sullivan saying the Liberal Party and National Party are supporting this motion today. I am not sure how the Leader of the Opposition in the other place reconciles that with himself, because it certainly seems counter to what Mr O'Sullivan is saying today. Maybe it is a pitch to the leafy east — we are very fond of our trees out there.

I would also issue a word of caution around quoting the Institute of Foresters of Australia, because these are foresters who endorse forestry even if it causes fire risk.

They say it is okay to proceed with thinnings even though there is a fire risk to local nearby communities. When I talk about that, I am talking quite specifically about Toolangi, so I would be very, very cautious in terms of quoting those particular documents.

I think I heard Mr O'Sullivan say that Sarah Rees presented to the inquiry into VicForests operations. Ms Rees did not present to the inquiry into VicForests operations, so I am not quite sure where he is coming from there.

It is pretty extraordinary that, even today, we saw an escalation of 40 000 jobs up to 70 000 jobs. I think it just goes to show the rigour with which this matter is being approached by the Liberal-National coalition.

I wanted to particularly turn to the Leadbeater's possum — the now critically endangered Leadbeater's possum — which the Liberal-Nationals seem to think are exploding in numbers and claim there are thousands of them. Well, I suggest they go and check the peer-reviewed science on that. There is no doubt that bushfire is a key threatening process to the Leadbeater's possum. Another key threatening process to the Leadbeater's possum is certainly logging. We know the interaction between logging and forests. It creates a high fire danger, so to suggest that it is only bushfire is only perhaps a half-truth.

Members may be confused by all this chatter around new colonies and lots more identification of Leadbeater's possums out in the field. Well, there is a reason for that. More than ever people are actually looking to find Leadbeater's possums, and when we look for something in a habitat it lives in, we tend to find it. Let me explain. These are not new animals; they are animals that have always lived in the forest. It is just we have never surveyed them before, so they are not new. They have always persisted there. We have just never looked for them in the past. Now we are looking for them, and guess what? We have found them where we think they live. That is science for you. There are not thousands of them. What I think is one of the most distorted and perverted quotes is that one animal is a colony. One animal does not represent a colony; it just does not work. You cannot perpetuate a species if there is only one of them. I think we all know that. They are definitely not a colony. It just does not work. It probably goes to the heart of the science that The Nationals are drawing on at the moment, which is spurious at its very best.

The reality is this motion is out of step with the Victorian community. We know there is deep and broad support for the creation of the great forest

national park amongst Victorians. The recent by-election for the seat of Northcote, where my colleague Lidia Thorpe, the member for Northcote, achieved a resounding victory, showed that the great forest national park is an issue that matters to voters. They want action to stop native forest logging, and they are sick of the Andrews government dragging its feet on stopping the logging and perpetuating industry lies.

Mr Young interjected.

Ms DUNN — Mr Young, I need to take up your interjection. Just to explain, the possum cloak that the member for Northcote was wearing was in fact New Zealand possum because, as we know, in Australia native animals are protected. Native animals are protected in this country unless you are a logger. They are not protected if you are a logger, because — do you know what? — when they log our forests they are exempt from federal environmental laws. The reality for our Indigenous community is that, because native species are protected, they cannot use those pelts from those animals. However, of course, if you are a logger it is fine to cut down those trees and see species perpetuate into extinction. That is not a problem, because the exemptions that apply to logging are extraordinary when you consider all the environmental laws that apply to everybody else.

Indeed the Victorian people want Daniel Andrews to be a good Christmas elf and give us a Christmas present and announce the transition plan out of native forest logging and the protection of our remnant mountain ash forest through the declaration of a great forest national park. To do anything less is the height of environmental vandalism.

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) (11:00) — I had an old draft of what Mr O'Sullivan put on the notice paper. I appreciate he has amended it. I was a little bit confused with the original notice that said, 'This house condemns the creation of the great forest national park in Victoria'. It is a bit rich to condemn the government when they actually have not done something. I could not think of anything, but I am sure Mr O'Sullivan could think of other things to condemn the government over. I appreciate that he has amended his motion around the great forest national park.

It might surprise Mr O'Sullivan, but the government cannot agree to this particular motion. I want to commend Mr O'Sullivan for his consistency around this particular area. I want to commend Mr O'Sullivan for taking on his coalition partners as well in this particular area. On 10 November there was quite a long article about Matthew Guy, the Leader of the Liberal

Party. The title of this article is ‘The secret life of Matthew Guy, Liberal leader’, and it does mention the great forest national park and what he may actually think about it.

Mr Young interjected.

Mr LEANE — Mr Young, I will get to that. I need to refer to some original aspects of this particular article to give some groundwork before we get to that. It is a very longwinded article that tries to unpack, as it says, the secret life of the Liberal leader, Mr Guy. And it starts —

Mr O’Sullivan — Where’s the article from?

Mr LEANE — It is by Farrah Tomazin and Royce Millar of the *Age*. It is from 10 November 2017.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr LEANE — On reading it, it sounds like it is an article on which Mr Guy actually worked with them. He actually gives them quotes. I am not too sure that, as you are saying, it is just because it is a certain newspaper. This is the first line:

Matthew Guy kneels by the stream and takes a drink, awestruck by the mountain ash trees towering above.

He is the Marlboro Man. He kneels beside a stream and he scoops out some water and he drinks it. It goes on to say:

He’s on a trek along the south face of Mount Donna Buang near Warburton, east of Melbourne.

That is fantastic. If he was thirsty and there was a stream and he was feeling a bit like Marlboro Man, that is fantastic. But in the context of this particular motion, it tries to say that he is actually quite the environmentalist. There is a quote from environmental lobbyist Sarah Rees, who the article says ‘has become an unlikely friend for the head of Victoria’s conservatives’. The article quotes her as saying:

I think he sees nature as a place of respite, in contrast to the busyness of his life.

Ms Rees goes on to say, ‘He loves trees’. Ms Rees says he, Matthew Guy, loves trees. Someone who the article says is an ‘unlikely friend’, an environment lobbyist, says he loves trees, and then the article says:

Victoria’s state opposition leader gets into the bush whenever he can.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr LEANE — Taking up the interjections, including ‘Bully for him’, I think we all love trees. He gets into the bush whenever he can, that is fantastic. This article goes on to refer to the great forest national park, if members will bear with me. It talks about trying to reach the right balance, about loving trees and all that sort of stuff, and then it says:

He has solar panels on his house and privately supports the idea of a great forest national park to protect high conservation areas. Just don’t expect him to be vocal about it because it’s at odds with the views of his coalition partner, The Nationals.

So once again —

Ms Pulford interjected.

Mr LEANE — In saying that we do not support Mr O’Sullivan’s motion, I do commend him for being consistent. I commend him for actually externalising his views that he honestly believes in. I commend him because if you read this newspaper, the Leader of the Opposition is very scared of Mr O’Sullivan and The Nationals. I commend him for that. I do not know why, but obviously he must be very scared. So according to this article — and this probably goes to why no Liberal Party members actually want to support Mr O’Sullivan on this particular motion, because they should be vocal about it — every chance Mr Guy gets, he gets into the bush, and bully for him.

When it comes to the great forest national park I think the government has been consistent. I feel a little bit like piggy in the middle being between Ms Dunn and Mr O’Sullivan while there is vigorous and informed debate between the two of them. I come to the realisation that being in the middle of where we are is probably exactly where we need to be, and I commend the Minister for Agriculture and the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change for listening to all parties on all sides of the argument. We understand it is a passionate issue when we are looking at the environment versus the timber industry, and a number of members have seen that firsthand in recent committee hearings. We understand that there needs to be a balance. As I said, when we have either side of the extremes of the debate arguing against each other, I feel pretty comfortable that our government is somewhere in the middle. I think that probably points towards us getting it exactly right.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr LEANE — We have probably got it exactly right at this point. But with the great forest national park, we are talking to all parties about the potential for

this coming to fruition again. There is a lot of work, and the forestry task force has been doing a lot of that work.

Mr Ramsay interjected.

Mr LEANE — Mr Ramsay, it is a difficult area and there are complex issues that have to be resolved, and they have been left unresolved for decades. It is not something that this government has all of a sudden created. It is not a new phenomenon; there have been complex issues around this area for decades. Once again I commend the government, which I am lucky to be part of. It actually has a task force that is trying to endeavour to work through all these complex issues.

Ms Dunn — They haven't met for months.

Mr LEANE — I will take up the interjection. Just because people might not meet at certain points does not mean they are not doing the actual work.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr LEANE — I was going to take up the interjection, but I am just dwelling on Mr Guy scooping up that water out of the stream. He seriously is the Marlboro Man. Sorry, I am stuck on this article. This article says Mr Guy is a 'shape shifter'. I do not even know what that means, but it is in the *Age*. The only thing I can think of is that maybe at parties he is the one who walks around with the bowl of Pizza Shapes and moves them from group to group. That is the only thing I can think of. I think of him on one knee, scooping up the water. He loves trees.

Mr O'Sullivan, I have said before that I am not too sure of your qualifications to be able to declare that a species of animal should no longer be on the critically endangered list.

Mr O'Sullivan — There's thousands of them.

Mr LEANE — There are thousands of them, Mr O'Sullivan says. I am happy to confess that I am not too sure what the process is for an animal to be put on the critically endangered list, and I am not too sure what the reverse process is to take that particular species off the list. But I am not convinced that Mr O'Sullivan is the appropriate person to declare that they should be taken off the list by interjecting that there are thousands of them. I am not too sure if that is the process, but when Mr O'Sullivan sums up I am more than happy to be corrected.

In relation to Mr O'Sullivan's concerns around jobs in the timber industry, this government has not been sitting on its hands in respect of a future industry that

we want to see flourish. In only the last budget there was \$110 million for plantation trees. If anyone can show me where there has been more money put into plantation trees in the past, then I am happy for them to point to that, but the government really wants this industry to continue in our state, and I think the government has shown its bona fides. As much as there is controversy around it, as much as there are people with different points of view, when it came to the Heyfield timber mill I do not think the government could have gone any further than it did. I do not think the government could have gone any further than ensuring that that particular mill —

Mr O'Sullivan interjected.

Mr LEANE — I will take up Mr O'Sullivan's interjection. I actually do not like going back to 'the previous government did this' and 'the previous government did that'. I like to look forward, but I think I need to go back. Ms Dunn mentioned Mr O'Sullivan's occupation in a previous government as a chief of staff to Mr Walsh, and I think she was quite fair in saying that maybe some things did not come to his attention because probably not everything comes to the attention of the chief of staff. I think at that particular time a lot of people in that area were having a bit of a hoot because of the Office of Living It Up on the Taxpayer or whatever it was called. It was probably keeping everyone pretty amused and busy. It would have been fantastic.

To get to the point where the government had to do what it did to ensure the Heyfield timber mill actually had a future, there were some grave concerns around the operations of the previous government and around certain promises and certain commitments that the previous Minister for Agriculture, Mr Walsh, had given that particular mill and that particular enterprise going forward and how those particular commitments seemed to not come to fruition. We had the CEO of Australian Sustainable Hardwoods, Clinton Tilley, a very passionate man, saying on 17 March 2017:

... the prior ... government promised they would do certain things. Peter Walsh allowed a contract to be signed with us and then did not sign the indemnity at the close of government, despite promises, undertakings and gentlemen's handshakes. That man, Peter Walsh — do not vote back in, voters — he is the biggest liar you will ever come across and will lie and lie.

I do not know if anyone has actually given me a tap-up like that. That is a decent tap-up.

This government has shown its bona fides around a timber industry that we are continuing to support whenever we can. I have mentioned the Leadbeater's

possum. I am not one to really want to go backward — I think we should look forward — but I need to go back to when the 200-metre buffer zone was implemented. Before it was implemented it was recommended to different players in the government — obviously the agriculture minister and the environment minister. Advice from particular departments was not to embrace the 200-metre buffer zone. But once again coalition angst may have played out. The member for Warrandyte in the Assembly, who was the environment minister at the time, had his one win.

Ms Shing interjected.

Mr LEANE — He had two wins; he got cows in the Alpine National Park. Then the cows left, but they were in there for a while, these special cows that knew what type of grass was an endangered species and what type of grass was all-you-can-eat. He had one and a half wins, and this may have been the win that he had around the buffer zones, but now we come to a place where Mr O'Sullivan feels that he needs to move a motion around concern that there may be another national park which could affect the timber industry and another national park that may go a long way towards supporting the ongoing future of a number of species. I think his concern and angst probably seeds back to the point in time when the environment minister had a win over his minister. I find it hard to believe that actually happened, but that was the case.

When it comes to this motion, if Mr O'Sullivan wants to draw a line as far as the Leadbeater's possum goes and what that means, I think we need to take into account that it was not this government that implemented a buffer zone. This government wants to see that particular species maintained and see it flourish.

Getting back to where I started, I do not think it would be any surprise to Mr O'Sullivan that the government is not supporting his motion today, but I want to reiterate that he has the strength of his conviction to say what he honestly believes. He has the strength of his conviction to take on his coalition partners. He has the strength of his conviction to take on the Leader of the Opposition, who loves trees. It says in that article that he loves trees. It says that secretly Mr Guy supports the concept of the great forest national park. He has surprising allies — surprising friendships — with environmentalists, and he gets into the bush every chance he gets.

I commend Mr O'Sullivan on taking on this challenge and on the strength of his convictions. We cannot support the motion. I think it is a shame that we get these longwinded articles. Mr Guy should have strength

of conviction and come out publicly and say that he supports the concept of the great forest national park. But he has not got the strength of conviction Mr O'Sullivan has got.

I know these longwinded articles. This one is titled 'The secret life of Matthew Guy, Liberal leader'. I know these articles can go off on different tangents and say some weird stuff. I will never forget a big, longwinded article about Tim Smith, the member for Kew in the Assembly, before he came into government. It has been rumoured that there is a deal between Michael Kroger and others that Tim Smith might be the next leader. There was one line in the article that said Tim Smith had been toughened up by the Scotch College rowing program. I thought, 'That's pretty tough'. Tim Smith was toughened up by the Scotch College —

Mr O'Sullivan — On a point of order, Acting President, it is a wideranging debate. I know there is a bit of latitude, but I think Mr Leane has taken that latitude and he has smacked it well out of the park like we have never, ever seen before in terms of talking about the most contradictory element you could ever get to this motion. I would ask that you bring him back to the motion.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Ms Dunn) — Mr Leane is in fact the lead speaker on this particular motion, and although that does allow a bit of latitude, I would just draw Mr Leane's attention to the motion.

Mr LEANE — I appreciate that, and I am about to wind up. I think I have made my arguments quite succinctly in my contribution. Tim Smith has been toughened up by the Scotch College rowing program. I wonder if one day he turned up and they told him he was going to be coxless. I wonder if —

Ms Crozier — What?

Mr LEANE — He might have been in the coxless four, and he probably thought, 'That's a bit tough', because he actually relied on his cox. That would be a toughening experience, but I could not think of anything much more that would toughen you up. Anyway, good for him. Once again, I cannot support the motion, but I commend Mr O'Sullivan on his conviction.

Mr YOUNG (Northern Victoria) (11:24) — I have to say one thing, Mr Leane: you are, if nothing else, entertaining. You did bring up a couple of points that I was going to mention myself, including the original drafting of this motion and the way in which it was worded, condemning something that has not actually

happened, which I thought was a bit suspicious. I am very glad to see that Mr O'Sullivan has in fact redrafted that into something that is quite an impressive motion. It is a very, very important motion in relation to a matter that we have laboured on quite a lot in this chamber — possibly too much for what seems to be something that is very simple to understand and something that we should not have to labour on so much.

I too, Mr Leane, was perplexed when I read that same article covering the views of Mr Guy, the Leader of the Opposition. I was wondering where the political fallout would come on that one, and you have provided it today. I have certainly explored ideas of how I can implement that myself, but I have not needed to.

It is good to see Mr O'Sullivan with his convictions today standing up to whoever may try to stop him from pressing forward with this motion and pressing forward with the opposition's opposition to the great forest national park. It is important to continue to note that this is just a proposal; it is not actually a national park as of yet, and hopefully it never will be. That is important to note, because we all talk about the great forest national park, and for anyone who may be reading this later or listening now it is important that they know that it is a proposal we are talking about, not in fact something that has been put into place.

This motion to call on the house to oppose the creation of the great forest national park in Victoria is actually something that we have dealt with a number of times. It was dealt with very, very well by a previous motion that was put up calling for a moratorium on the creation of a great forest national park. That was a motion put up by me. The Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party believe that this is one of the key threats to the area in terms of a lot of the things, a lot of the people that we represent and a lot of the activities, be they industrial or recreational, that take place in those areas. It is very much a threatening thing to the lifestyle of individuals who live in those areas. It has been an important part of our platform, and it has been a great motivation for me in my time here to make sure that this park never goes ahead.

It is great to see a reiteration of my former motion, which called for a moratorium and did a number of things. This motion, although it goes toward the same point, very much focuses on one aspect of my motion of last year, and that is the impact on the industry. However, there are a number of other impacts that have to be talked about, and some of them Ms Dunn has touched on, but unfortunately not a lot. People seem to lose sight of the wider implications of such a park and

what it would do — they lose sight of the fact that not only is this going to have damning impacts on an industry that is actually one of the sustainable industries we have, but it actually branches into other things and other ways in which our livelihoods will be affected.

The motion that I in fact put to the chamber touched on industry, which I will leave aside a little bit in my contribution today, it having been laboured upon very well by Mr O'Sullivan — and I thank him for making those points — and somewhat countered by Mr Leane. My motion also focused on the recreational impacts of creating a great forest national park; the risk of bushfire, which has been somewhat laboured on today; and the problems with pest animals. In terms of recreation, that is something that people are only really made aware of when they are involved in those activities. It seems to be one of those things these days where someone will have an issue with a proposal such as this having a great impact on what they are doing, and if you are not involved in the recreation that is actually affected, often you do not know about it. Support can be drummed up for these proposals without people knowing the actual impacts of what is going to happen.

It is very easy to run a campaign asking pointed questions like, 'Do you support the creation of a great forest national park because it will save the Leadbeater's possum?'. Who would not want to save the Leadbeater's possum? But you have to ask the questions that underlie that. Is the Leadbeater's possum actually threatened? Will the great forest national park save the Leadbeater's possum? What implications are we going to see as a result of the establishment of the great forest national park? How many thousands of jobs will be lost? How many recreational activities will no longer be able to be participated in? What risk will it have to bushfire management and preparedness? In the case of a catastrophic event, what impact will bushfire have on people's lives and their livelihoods? What problems are created by pest animals in national parks? These are the questions that are not explored when a simple poll is done on the question, 'Would you support the creation of the great forest national park to save the Leadbeater's possum?'. Everyone gets a warm, fuzzy feeling about it, and they think they are doing something good, when in actual fact they are not.

That brings us to the question of why we are looking at this proposal. This proposal has been going on for some time. I want to be very clear that this proposal is not about saving the Leadbeater's possum. It is a front. This proposal is about destroying the timber industry, and it has been put forward by people who are ideologically opposed to the timber industry. They do not like it, so they want to stop it. It is not fair to simply want to stop

something because you do not like it. It is very curious when we have a campaign such as this centred around the Leadbeater's possum, because I have no doubt that there are other endangered species in the area. There are probably some endangered arachnids and maybe even an indigenous slug that are in need of some protection, but you do not see those kinds of things at the forefront of a campaign, because they are not cute and fluffy. They do not tug at the heartstrings of people.

It is no different to when campaigns are run against, say, duck hunting using images in the propaganda of little baby ducklings that are all fluffy and cute, when in actual fact they are never at risk from duck hunting. That is why we have seasons at certain times of the year to avoid that; we do not hunt little baby ducks. It is that simple. But those images are used in the propaganda, and this entire debate about a great forest national park has been very, very well run using that kind of propaganda. We have a lovely fluffy animal that we can put up in front of everyone, and when you ask such a pointed question in a survey — 'Do you support the creation of a great forest national park to save the Leadbeater's possum?' — and you show them a picture of a fluffy animal, most people will go, 'Yes, all right. I suppose so'. It brings a tear to your eye, but the reality is that it is bigger than that; there is a bigger picture.

To go back to how long we have been talking about this, I have not been in this place for very long, but it has been going on for the entire duration I have been here. This government, when they were in opposition under the previous government, had a policy, which they have implemented, to set up a task force to look at the forestry industry. They did that. They set up a task force. That task force met a couple of times and argued, bickered, probably threw foul language around and screamed at each other more so than we do in this house. They stopped meeting and have done nothing since.

Ms Bath — Diametrically opposed.

Mr YOUNG — They are absolutely opposed. They put two people in a room who will never agree with what the other one wants to do. They will absolutely never agree. There is no middle ground on this. We are dealing with ideology, and for that reason it has stalled. That task force has stalled. They did, however, come up with a list of things that they wanted to do and things they wanted to achieve. They wanted to put some things in place to improve the industry, and no-one is disputing that. The industry is not disputing that there are things it can do to improve. Not once have I had a conversation with anyone from the industry who said, 'We don't want to improve; we don't want to make

things better'. But there is no middle ground. There is no room to improve and transition when you have someone who is diametrically opposed to this and screaming for it to be ended altogether. That is why we have the great forest national park proposal, because it is a blanket wipe-out. It does not move into any other forms of industry. It does not transition. It is a blanket wipe-out.

That task force came up with a list of things that they wanted to talk about outside of the industry, which is very curious. When you get a task force set up to look at the forestry industry and you put in the room people from the industry and people who are acting on behalf of the environment, or so they claim, they should be looking at the implications that the industry has on those pieces of land and in those areas and trying to improve that, but this task force decided they would take it upon themselves to make recommendations, which they have not made. They said they were going to. They touted that they were going to make recommendations, but they have not. It has all gone very quiet.

They wanted to make recommendations on new parks and what would happen to land in the event that the timber industry changed its practices and moved out of a certain area. They wanted to make recommendations on what would happen to that land. I thought it was something that absolutely needed to be brought up at the time. This is an industry group and an advocacy group for environment purposes getting together to talk about the forestry industry. They should not be and have no place making recommendations on what happens to public land if the forestry industry is not actually working on it. There are other processes for doing that, and that is an issue for government and an issue to be discussed in this place. It is not an issue to be discussed in back rooms between unions, industry people and environmentalists.

We brought that to the attention of this house, and it seems to have just gone quiet on that front. It seems that no-one really cares what that task force is doing. They were not doing anything anyway, so it has gone away. Even Ms Dunn knows that they have not met for a number of months, which is no surprise to anyone, because they are only going to get together and reach the same conclusion they did last time — that is, there is no conclusion. They cannot reach a middle ground.

That is what the government has had a policy of doing. In essence that policy is just simply to stall and to buy time. They do not want to go down the path of opposing a great forest national park because that is going to hurt them politically in inner-city seats, where

there is strong support for this park — maybe — from people who have been asked pointed questions about a fluffy animal. The government is looking towards that political implication and does not want to commit either way. They do not want to say no to all of those workers who should be represented by their unions and by a Labor government. They do not want to say to them that they are going to impose a great forest national park, but they also do not want to say, 'We're not going to do the great forest national park', because that damages their chances of winning inner-city seats. It is very interesting to watch the politics at play behind this issue and how that affects the government's movements.

At the same time the current opposition had a policy going into the last election of no new national parks, as I have been told. It was a good policy, in my eyes. National parks have a number of inherent problems, and we have brought that issue up several times. It is a good policy to have, but they were pretty quiet on it for a while. I do not blame them for being quiet on it, because I did not think this government would be stepping into the realm of entertaining the idea of a great forest national park, but as we go on it is becoming more and more apparent that this government is implementing Greens policies. It is probably only a matter of time before we see them move on a great forest national park. So I am glad that the opposition has brought this issue to the house again in order to reinforce the position that there should be no more national parks, not until we can fix the ones that we have got and not until we can ensure that we can afford them, that we can manage bushfire risk and that we can manage pests. There should be no more national parks.

The Shooters and Fishers Party at the time — now the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party — brought a motion to the Parliament last year, which was supported by the majority of this house. That was great to see. It showed that there is no appetite in this house for a new national park. It showed that a new national park cannot guarantee it will address all of the issues that were raised. That was really, really great to see, and I hope we get the same, if not better, results today with this motion, although the last one put forward by me was calling for action in the shape of a moratorium, which I thought was a pretty sensible measure for the government, who are stalling. They are stalling on the issue with this task force. My motion sought to put in place a moratorium until the government can sort all these things out. That would have worked pretty well. I think it was pretty sensible. This motion, although also very agreeable, is simply opposing the creation of a great forest national park.

I move now from what the opposition and government were doing pre-election and on to the Greens. The Greens are probably the only party apart from us that have been consistent on this. They have been consistently vehemently supporting a great forest national park, as vehemently as we are opposing it. They seem to ramp up their advocacy on the issue at very, very pointed times when it suits them. I could forgive everyone in this chamber for not noticing the last attempt by the Greens to ramp up this issue, which was in the lower house of the Parliament, when they raised for discussion a matter of public importance.

The reason why I forgive everyone in this chamber for not knowing about it is that we were in the throes of debating the euthanasia bill. That was being forced upon us very quickly in an attempt by the government to get a nice, handy announcement on a Saturday morning of a by-election. It was also a matter for the lower house having time taken up in political pointscore by the Greens trying to get a handy announcement for the Northcote by-election. If anyone was not aware there was a by-election on that weekend, they surely had blinkers on. The political pointscore that was being attempted in this place and the lower house was just phenomenal.

The Greens put up the motion at that time, right before the Northcote by-election, because they knew that in the seat of Northcote and in other seats that they hold, like Melbourne and Prahran, this is an issue that people may support, a great forest national park, so they were playing on that. That is really unfortunate, because this is not an issue for the people of Northcote, Prahran and Melbourne. This should not be an issue for the people of Northcote, Prahran and Melbourne. This is an issue for people in the Central Highlands, this is an issue for people in Gippsland who work in the timber industry and this is an issue for people who will have their lives impacted on by the loss of their jobs, not by getting a warm, fuzzy feeling by answering a survey with a picture of a fluffy possum on it.

I was really disappointed to see that attempt in the lower house to try and gain some votes for a by-election. I do not know how the procedure down there works. It was only in my research for this motion that I came across the mechanism for debating a matter of public importance in the lower house. I hope the result was that people threw out as a waste of time that idea in a positive motion for a great forest national park.

To move to the impacts of the great forest national park and what is trying to be achieved by it, the Greens and other proponents of this park seem to believe that this is going to bring in a plethora of new jobs to replace the

thousands that will be killed off by it. They believe there will be a plethora of new jobs in different areas, in different places, in different industries and for different people in most cases. They believe that this will drive different types of tourism to the areas. The Greens have some utopian idea of pristine national parks where there will be all sorts of activities out there that will create visitation and tourism. There will have to be park managers to manage it, experts in the environment and people employed in those spaces, with probably 150 cafes spread out amongst the 355 000 hectares of bush where nobody will go to visit a cafe.

The reality is that the jobs that may be created by a national park will not be the same as the jobs that are lost. People have been in jobs in the forestry industry for decades, their entire lives, and it is a generational thing. People are entrenched in that industry; for a lot of people, it is all they know. They will have that ripped away from them and be forced in a different direction in their life. That may involve retraining. If you are lucky, you may be able to be retrained and get a job as a barista, which probably will not pay the same as for a forestry worker. For many people you get to a certain age where a major career change is not an option. You cannot just retrain and take up a job as a park manager and you cannot retrain and take up a job as a niche tour guide with bushwalking and birdwatching experience. It just does not work like that.

We are tearing down a solid foundation of working people and trying to force them in a different direction. It just is not going to work. It is going to create heartache; it is going to cause all sorts of problems. These are people who need to be looked after, and it needs to be made sure that they can have jobs and provide for their families, not have those jobs stripped away.

It is not just the jobs. That is the focus of Mr O'Sullivan's motion: the industry and the jobs in that industry and what will be lost. The creation of a national park also brings with it a whole set of new rules, different from the rules we have. The area proposed for the great forest national park is 355 000 hectares of mostly state forest, with a few other types of land tenure in there. They have vastly different rules from those for a national park. That is the reason why a national park has been chosen, because one of the implications will be canning logging and removing that industry.

There are a lot of different rules for all sorts of other things and there will be a number of other recreations that will be banned outright or seriously impacted — hunting, for example. The area in question in the

Central Highlands is one of the most prized areas for deer hunting in the state, probably the country, and it is probably even on the global map as far as being a premier deer hunting location. We do a lot of hunting there. Last year the number that was produced for deer harvested by hunters was up to 100 000, which is an absolutely incredible number. This is some of the wildest, most pristine country, and it is great to have people out and about in those areas pursuing their recreation but also doing something that will be of benefit to the environment, and that is removing pest animals or deer, which are one of our premier game species.

That will be outright banned in a national park. It is very, very difficult to get any type of hunting up in a national park. It is very difficult to have rules changed or bent to allow it. Even when it makes sense, and even when we are doing it for reasons to protect peatlands in the High Country or other areas that are being impacted by invasive species, it is very hard to change rules for a national park to allow hunting. This is not going to be an easy task with the creation of a new national park, especially one of that size that covers such a vast area of current hunting land.

There are also a number of other activities that will be affected. Horseriding will be a big issue. I know a lot of people who run businesses off horseriding, taking people out on trekking adventures on horseback and even running businesses of packing in and out for hunters into places where you cannot get vehicles. They will be impacted by the rules for a national park. Four-wheel driving and fishing will be impacted. A lot of people will yell and scream and say that they will not be, but the reality is that when a national park is in place there are issues with accessibility. There are always issues with accessibility. Parks Victoria seem to like closing places and making sure no-one can go in there, for whatever reason they justify that with. So four-wheel driving and fishing, whilst they may not be made illegal, will be severely impacted.

You will not be able to walk your dog. It is as simple as that. I am talking about some specific recreational activities, but you will not be able to walk your dog in this place because it is a national park. You will not be able to go camping in a lot of places. We are seeing with draft management plans for a number of areas that dispersed camping is now frowned upon by land managers. We are moving towards putting people into designated camping sites. We are moving towards having people paying to use those designated camping sites. That is an issue that is getting trotted out at the moment — 'These fees are just so we can put in place a booking system' — but no, it is just revenue raising. It

is revenue raising because we cannot pay for the parks we have got. It happens in national parks more than on any other land. Where you have camping sites, parks management will say, 'You can't camp here. You must camp in this spot, and as a result we're going to charge you for it'. So camping is going to be affected.

It seems the only activities that are not going to be affected by the creation of this national park are those that are greenie approved. We refer to them as greenie-approved activities. If they do not like it, you are not allowed to do it; if they do like it, it is okay. You can walk in the bush. You can bird watch if you want — I do not know if anyone actually does that. Recreational activities will be impacted, and the examples that I have given today are only very specific examples and only a few examples of the wide number of activities that will be impacted.

Pests will be a problem; pests will run wild in this national park. We just recently had a government reference to a joint committee of the Parliament for an inquiry into pest management, specifically on the point of using hunters for pest management, so it was not a wideranging inquiry. However, when you start talking about pest management, people want to talk about all aspects of it, and in some ways it did cover everything, from pest species to vegetation, and the information that was provided to that committee was really wideranging.

The committee made a number of recommendations for changes through which we can make pest management better, and a lot of that was on the back of a recognition that hunters can contribute. In many cases, for most species, they cannot be the sole management process, but they can make a great, positive contribution, with the added benefit of mostly being free. It is a free service provided by volunteers instead of paying someone. I guarantee you will not be able to pay enough people to make up for the 50 000 licensed game hunters in the state, not including people who just hunt pests and do not have a game licence. We will never be able to pay for it. This is a free service being provided which will keep numbers of pests and numbers of deer, which are game species, down in national parks.

A prohibition on hunting in this area is going to have a drastic impact on the way in which we manage pests. I sat on the inquiry of that joint committee of the Parliament, and we received lots of information about the differences between certain areas, whether it be state forests or national parks, and how in national parks it seems that pests are running rampant, whereas in areas of state forest that are hunted they seem to be less of a problem.

This motion — moving back to it — is very pointed. It is focused on the industry, and I have talked a bit about some of the other aspects. It is very focused on the industry in that area, namely the timber industry. There are other industries that will be impacted, but it is a real shame that we have to have this discussion about a successful industry, an industry that is thriving, an industry that is sustainable and an industry that we should be looking to improve, not shut down. It is an absolute shame that the Greens have this mentality of trying to shut down an entire industry like that, because they do not want to transition. They do not want to move into something that is better. They just want it gone.

Most of the proponents of this proposal come from a background of trying to shut down logging. There is no middle ground with these people. They do not want to negotiate. They have tried with me. They have tried a number of times with me. They have tried to incorporate hunting into the plan in an attempt to get me to support it. We all know it is not going to happen. There is no negotiating. You say to them, 'Take away the national park part of your plan and we might look at it, because the rules are different with other land tenures', but it does not work. It is an absolute shame that we are having to negotiate on this instead of just moving forward with improving industry.

We are negotiating it on the back of inner-city votes in Prahran and Northcote and places like that amidst the political fallout of those at-risk seats, and we are having to negotiate over people's lives, people's livelihoods. People rely on these jobs. People want jobs to feed their families. The people in these areas are good, hardworking, honest people. It is easy to sit in this place or sit in a cushy office in Melbourne, where your environmental group may reside, and condemn people for working in this industry. It is easy to do that when your job is not at risk and you are not at risk of losing that job and the ability to feed your family.

This goes back to something I experienced with the debate and the inquiry I sat on in relation to the coal seam gas issue, where I actually had someone tell me that it was a disgrace that anyone would want to work in that industry. I was perplexed by that statement. This person obviously did not like coal seam gas, but to say it is a disgrace for someone to seek a job — to be a hardworking, decent person and to seek to earn a living for your family without having to rely on welfare — perplexes me. What I consider a disgrace is to be ideologically moving on these issues to take jobs away from people. That is the disgrace.

We are moving on this. We are having lots of debate about this issue, lots of debate on the back of ecotourism. 'Ecotourism' is a funny word. I love talking about ecotourism because it does not work. It does not work when you implement it like the people who want ecotourism want you to. People who want ecotourism, like the Greens, have this weird view of it. It is this sort of utopian view of ecotourism — that everything is lovely and only the people they want come in and visit these places — but I have to tell you that they are wrong about what ecotourism is, because hunting is ecotourism; horseriding in the bush and four-wheel driving are ecotourism. All those activities that would be banned under a national park are ecotourism. They are people enjoying the wild places in our state, people enjoying being in the bush and people using the environment as their place of leisure. Just going camping is ecotourism. It is not simply restricted to activities like birdwatching, bushwalking or getting into lycra and riding a bike; those are not the only activities that you can partake in as ecotourism.

I have spent a lot of time in wetlands. I have spent weeks and weeks at a time in wetlands. I have spent so many weekends in wetlands that I cannot count them. Do you know who I see in wetlands using them? Duck hunters — they are the only ones; you never see anyone else. You get the occasional ranger coming through, who is employed to be there, but duck hunters are the only people that you see; they are the only people that use those places. If you were to implement ecotourism in the way the Greens and the environmentalists who want the great forest national park view it, it would exclude those people and these places would be only open to birdwatchers. In all my years of spending time in wetlands I have never seen anyone out there birdwatching — not once.

If you go up to the Kerang lakes and the areas in northern Victoria, you will see there is a bit of infrastructure that has been built for birdwatchers. There are raised platforms, timber walking bridges and things so that you can get out on the water without leaving a footprint, but I have never seen them worn out. I have seen them rotting away; I have never seen them being worn out. I have never seen them at the point where they are getting so much use that they have to be replaced. It does not work. I have never seen a birdwatcher in a swamp. I cannot say I have ever had a conversation with someone where I have asked them, 'Hey, what do you do for fun?', and they have said, 'Birdwatching'. I ask lots of people. I ask people all the time, 'What do you do for fun?', for this exact reason. No-one says 'Birdwatching'. Heaps of people say 'Duck hunting', but no-one says 'Birdwatching'. They are few and far between, if they exist at all. But I tell

members that I have never seen them out actually doing it.

Ecotourism only works with a very narrow view. If you ask the Greens, it only works when certain activities are allowed. I say to those who want ecotourism in that form, 'Go and tell that to the people of Barmah, who several years ago had their state forest turned into a national park'. Go and tell that to the people who were relying on tourism dollars coming in, but under the guise of ecotourism a national park was created and look what has happened. The national park is mismanaged; Parks Victoria does not have enough staff to do any management projects in there and Parks Victoria does not have enough money to implement them.

One of the greatest tourism drivers for the area were the Barmah brumbies. What have we got now that it is a national park? We have movements by Parks Victoria to kill them. They literally want to kill the major thing that was bringing people into that area for tourism. They are killing off the tourism of that area under the guise of ecotourism. I am not saying we should not manage them. But guess what? When those brumbies are gone no-one will go there, because you are not allowed to duck hunt either and they were the only other people who went there. When those brumbies are gone you will not go there for anything else. This is hurting the people of Barmah. They were promised that the creation of a national park would bring in ecotourism, and it has not happened. To the people of Barmah I will just say that you are one of the main reasons we are opposing the great forest national park; you are the driver, and we are defending the people of the Central Highlands because of what has happened to you.

I would just like to make one final point in relation to the motion moved by Mr O'Sullivan. Recently I was given an answer to a question about the great forest national park proposal by the Leader of the Government in this house. It was about the type of land tenure that was chosen for it, being a national park. I asked the Leader of the Government, representing the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, whether any other types of land were even looked at, and the answer was really no. I asked what protections would be provided. In the answer the minister said that there are environmental protections that would apply to a species such as the Leadbeater's possum regardless of where they may be found in the landscape — whether that is in a national park, whether it is in a state forest or whether it is in Prahran or Northcote. It is probably not likely to be found in Prahran or Northcote; most of the people there have probably never seen one. But

protections will be afforded to them regardless of where they are, and for that reason there is no need for a great forest national park.

Business interrupted pursuant to sessional orders.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Western Metropolitan Region crime

Dr CARLING-JENKINS (Western Metropolitan) (12:00) — My question is for the minister representing the Minister for Police, Minister Tierney, and concerns the heightened crime wave in Western Metropolitan Region. On Saturday night in Braybrook a man was killed and his brother was left fighting for his life after a gang struck them with a car and then assaulted them with weapons. On Saturday night in Hoppers Crossing an elderly woman was injured when a gang of youths broke into her home. On Monday, outside a Sunshine West shopping centre, a 22-year-old man was slashed with a machete and robbed. Over the past 12 months just in the suburb of Keilor one in every 32 homes has been burgled. These are just some examples of why my constituents are scared, are reluctant to go on the record with their concerns and feel unsupported by police command, who in response to a recent carjacking incident stated dismissively, and I quote, ‘This seems like a one-off incident’. Minister, what is the Minister for Police doing to immediately address the increasing incidence of violent crimes in the west?

Ms TIERNEY (Minister for Training and Skills) (12:01) — I thank the member for her question. As it directly relates to her electorate, I will refer the matter to the Minister for Police, who will provide an answer within the guidelines.

Supplementary question

Dr CARLING-JENKINS (Western Metropolitan) (12:02) — Thank you very much, Minister, for your concern and for referring that question. In asking a supplementary I point out that in my substantive question I noted the dismissive nature of Victorian police command in responding to my constituents’ concerns. This has left it up to a mother and daughter, who escaped a recent attempted carjacking that I was referring to, to now warn people to lock their car doors. These constituents of mine are too scared to even allow the local paper to publish their names for fear of retribution. What will the Minister for Police do to immediately address this attitude within police command, because presently many of my constituents feel as though they are unsupported and feel as though

they need to take law and order matters into their own hands?

Ms TIERNEY (Minister for Training and Skills) (12:02) — I thank the member for her question. The member raises a serious allegation, and that is an allegation that local police and police command are dismissive of crime matters in her electorate. I am sure that the Minister for Police will take that seriously and will provide a response.

Child abuse national redress scheme

Ms PATTEN (Northern Metropolitan) (12:03) — My question is for the Attorney-General represented by Minister Tierney. On Friday the Royal Commission into Institutional Child Sexual Abuse will present its final report, ending that intensive and often traumatic four-year investigative process. One of the commission’s major recommendations is the creation of a commonwealth redress scheme. The scheme requires that each state government refer powers to the commonwealth in order for the national redress scheme to be created. At this stage no state, including Victoria, has indicated that they will sign up to the scheme. In April the Attorney-General stated, ‘Victoria remains open to a national redress scheme, but it’s time we saw details and dollars from the federal government’. Now that the commonwealth government has committed funds and outlined that detail over two months ago, why has the state government not yet committed to the scheme that will benefit hundreds of victims of institutional sexual abuse in this state?

Ms TIERNEY (Minister for Training and Skills) (12:04) — I thank the member for her question. This is an issue that has had a lot of discussion across the jurisdictions for a considerable length of time. Victoria did indicate in-principle support for a national redress scheme at a meeting of attorneys-general back in 2015. It remains our view that a national scheme is the best outcome for victim survivors. Whether a national scheme is possible, however, depends on the costings and design work provided by the commonwealth. We are currently working through the detail before making a final decision about whether to opt in or pursue a state-based scheme at this stage.

Supplementary question

Ms PATTEN (Northern Metropolitan) (12:05) — Thank you, Minister. It was great to get such a fulsome answer, if somewhat disappointing. As a supplementary, as has been noted publicly, state jurisdictions including Victoria have been undertaking their own actuarial analysis to determine the extent of

likely claims, so my question is: has the state of Victoria finalised this analysis, and what figure has it determined to be the likely extent of institutional sex abuse claims?

Ms TIERNEY (Minister for Training and Skills) (12:05) — I can advise Ms Patten that I am not across the detail of the particulars that she raises, so I will refer the matter to the Attorney-General. But we are determined to introduce a scheme to ensure victims of institutional child sexual abuse get the support that they need.

Family violence

Ms SPRINGLE (South Eastern Metropolitan) (12:06) — My question is to the minister representing the Minister for Multicultural Affairs. Last week the minister announced a funding package of \$10.5 million for a range of community-led prevention programs and specialist support services, with the primary aim of family violence prevention and support for Victorian multicultural communities. The funding includes a \$1.8 million pilot program which will create links between five established organisations; provide support for key representative groups to meet the needs of Victoria's Indian, Muslim and African communities; provide \$1.2 million for the government's multifaith advisory group; provide support for the capacity building and participation program; and fund a grants program opening in early 2018. Have the five established organisations and key representative groups been determined yet, and if so, who are they?

Mr JENNINGS (Special Minister of State) (12:07) — I thank Ms Springle for her question, which is a form of question that normally Mr Davis asks in the chamber — a fairly esoteric question in relation to the level of detail that you would be expecting to be at my command and immediately available to respond to your question. I will take advice from the minister and make sure it is shared with you.

Supplementary question

Ms SPRINGLE (South Eastern Metropolitan) (12:07) — Thank you, Minister. I appreciate you following up that answer. My supplementary question is: what criteria were used — or will be used — to determine which organisations were chosen and who will be funded through this initiative?

Mr JENNINGS (Special Minister of State) (12:07) — I am certain that there would be some criteria where in fact any funding, grant proposals and programs that are outlined do have funding guidelines and criteria of assessment that would actually be published at the time when the program was opened, so I am certain that they exist, and I am certain that my ministerial colleague will be able to furnish you with that advice as part of the written response.

VicForests

Ms DUNN (Eastern Metropolitan) (12:08) — My question is for the Minister for Agriculture. Can the minister advise why VicForests is cutting into the contracts of smaller mills, diverting larger logs, to fulfil Auswest contracts?

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Agriculture) (12:08) — I thank Ms Dunn for her question. I must confess to being a little uncertain as to what Ms Dunn is referring to. VicForests honour all of their contracts and manage the resource cognisant of their responsibility to do so.

Supplementary question

Ms DUNN (Eastern Metropolitan) (12:09) — Thank you, Minister. Perhaps have a conversation with the small mills about what is going on with their contracts. However, my supplementary is: is the shorting of supply to smaller mills part of the government's strategy as owners of the Heyfield mill to squeeze small mills out of the industry so their wood contracts can ultimately be diverted to Heyfield?

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Agriculture) (12:09) — I thank Ms Dunn for her further question. In her question Ms Dunn asserts that mills are being shorted on their contracts. All contracts are being fulfilled; all contracts will be fulfilled. I think Ms Dunn might, if she has some evidence — any evidence at all — of small mills having their contracts cut short, provide that evidence to me.

Questions interrupted.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The PRESIDENT (12:10) — I note that former minister Ms Christine Campbell is in the gallery today. She is a wonderful Melbourne supporter; next year will be good.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Questions resumed.

Early childhood education

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (12:10) — My question is to the Minister for Training and Skills. Minister, last week you notified Victorian training providers that the Andrews Labor government is cutting funding and enrolments in the certificate III and diploma of early childhood education and care. Minister, why have you made these callous cuts to such an important industry?

Ms TIERNEY (Minister for Training and Skills) (12:11) — I thank the member for her question. In terms of Skills First contracts, this is a process that is undertaken by the department, and it is about ensuring that you have the skills you need for the jobs that you want. The Andrews Labor government is restoring trust, confidence and pride in Victoria’s training and TAFE system to give people the skills that they need for the jobs that they want. So the fact of the matter is, like last year, that the department has run a rigorous and fair assessment to contract quality training providers. The Department of Education and Training has undertaken this assessment with each —

Mr Dalidakis interjected.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Just a minute, Minister. Mr Dalidakis, this is not the YMCA. Frankly, you are drowning out the minister next door to you. I understand there was some provocation, but none that would require that level of participation.

Honourable members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT — Thank you. The minister to continue, without assistance.

Honourable members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT — I emphasise: without assistance.

Ms TIERNEY — The fact of the matter is that training providers with a proven track record for quality training and delivery have been offered vocational education and training (VET) funding contracts. The vast majority of applications from existing contract holders were deemed suitable for the 2018 and 2019 period. This reflects an increasing commitment across the market to quality training.

Based on feedback from training providers about the need to provide greater certainty and allow providers to invest in their business to deliver quality training, contracts offered to successful applicants are now for a two-year period: 2018 and 2019. Training providers which are successful in their applications can still deliver fee-for-service training in Victoria and will have the opportunity to apply again.

The fact of the matter is that more than 80 per cent of existing contract holders have been deemed suitable. If there are issues that people have in respect to particular matters, then they are able to contact the department. It is a process that is being conducted by the department similar to what happened last year, and we will make sure that that process is one that is full of integrity and has got all of the hallmarks of a proper process.

Supplementary question

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (12:14) — Thank you, Minister, for your answer. I note that Minister Mikakos is assisting you in your answering, but I ask by way of supplementary: the Andrews Labor government have announced that instead of continuing with Skills First investment in these qualifications there will now be a focus on unqualified training delivery. As such, Victorian training providers with a proven track record of quality training delivery who have been offered a 2018 and 2019 VET funding contract have now been allocated funding for roughly 10 per cent of their projected 2018 childcare enrolments. I ask: what consultation did you as minister specifically undertake with early childhood training providers prior to these savage cuts?

Ms Mikakos — Wrong information.

Ms TIERNEY (Minister for Training and Skills) (12:15) — I thank the member for her question. I agree with Ms Mikakos that Ms Crozier has got it wrong yet again. The fact of the matter is that part of Skills First is about aligning industry needs and the skills and training that are required for that to occur so people can get jobs. There is actual data available of courses and graduates and jobs that is now starting to indicate where there is not a proper alignment. The fact of the matter is that there are a number of courses that are currently available that are in oversupply. This government is about providing courses that directly relate to jobs that are available. We are not about putting government funds into training for training’s sake.

Early childhood education

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (12:16) — My question is to the Minister for Early Childhood Education. Minister, training providers are saying Labor’s funding cut to the certificate III and the diploma of early childhood education and care is, and I quote, ‘ill-informed, short-sighted’ and that the childcare industry and families and children will be gravely impacted. They say:

The —

federal —

government has recently invested in the new funding model to give parents financial relief to meet the cost of child care ... however, with these dramatic cuts to childcare training —

by the Andrews Labor government —

it is highly likely that in the foreseeable future, childcare centres will be hugely understaffed and will have to cut enrolment numbers due to a lack of qualified staff and their inability to maintain required staffing ratios.

Minister, what guarantee can you give that the Andrews Labor government’s cuts to early childhood education training will not affect the ability of any Victorian to secure child care for their children?

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Early Childhood Education) (12:18) — The member is ill-informed. She clearly has her ears painted on, because she clearly did not understand Minister Tierney’s response. Whilst this is in fact in Minister Tierney’s portfolio responsibility — she has responsibility for Skills First — I want to reiterate to the member, who clearly did not understand Minister Tierney’s response, that what has happened is that the vast majority of applications from existing contract holders were deemed suitable for a 2018 and 2019 contract; in fact more than 80 per cent. Minister Tierney and the Department of Education and Training have put in place a system that responds to demand in different workforces. In fact training providers will still be training students in early childhood education well in excess of projected job needs in 2018 — well in excess.

Ms Crozier can come here and peddle misinformation and demonstrate how ill-informed she is about these matters. We know she is not interested in facts; she has demonstrated that time and time again. But the department has forecast demand of approximately 2000, and in 2018 there will be 2000 diploma and 1500 certificate III places offered, and it is likely that there may be a further 1500 full-fee-paying places across both qualifications.

So in fact the department is anticipating that there will be students being trained in these fields well in excess of projected job needs in 2018.

What we have got here is a member who continually comes into this house and peddles misinformation. She is never interested in the facts, and she clearly has not understood that we need to have a system that has integrity. We need to have a system that has training providers that have integrity and that provide quality courses. Minister Tierney has been doing an excellent job in cleaning up the industry and weeding out the shoddy providers. This is a system that you allowed under the previous government to have dodgy providers out there offering courses. We are cleaning up your mess. Minister Tierney has done an excellent job in this portfolio in making sure that young people and those who are seeking a career change have the opportunities to train up.

I value the work that our early childhood professionals do. That is why as a government we delivered more funding to ensure that kindergarten teachers got a pay increase under their enterprise bargaining agreement, despite Ms Lovell as minister having a pay dispute go on for more than two years. We provided extra funding — this was unfunded under the previous government — to deliver improved ratios for our kindergartens. We have delivered scholarships and funding support to our early childhood professionals to give them the ability to enhance their capability and their skills and training. We continue to make the investment that we need in our early childhood education system, including record funding in the budget this year of more than \$202 million to implement a groundbreaking early childhood reform plan.

Supplementary question

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (12:22) — I note my question was not answered, nevertheless my supplementary is: Minister, the CEO of Suzan Johnston has said that the Andrews Labor government funding and enrolment cuts will mean:

... a disproportionate amount of inexperienced and unqualified educators will be allocated to rooms, where the quality of care and the safety of young children will be at risk.

Minister, what assurances can you give Victorian families that under your new model of inexperienced and unqualified educators in child care every Victorian child will be safe, be protected and receive quality early childhood education?

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Early Childhood Education) (12:23) — First of all, the preamble and the question are complete nonsense from the member in relation to the claims that she is making that somehow unskilled workers are now going to be working in our early years services. In relation to the service provider that the member referred to, I have received in the last 24 hours an email from this individual, and I have sought to have my department make contact with this person. The matters that they have raised of course fall within Minister Tierney’s portfolio responsibilities. But the point that I make is the member continues to peddle misinformation here. I have explained to the member that we are putting record investment into early childhood education and care. We are putting in groundbreaking reforms, including the introduction of needs-based funding, that will see our kindergartens receive 10 per cent extra funding. We are also supporting our workforce in many ways.

Honourable members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT — All done? That does not reflect well on the Parliament.

Maritime Union of Australia industrial action

Mr O’SULLIVAN (Northern Victoria) (12:24) — My question is to the Minister for Agriculture. Minister, today agricultural produce is rotting in its containers as a result of the current illegal blockade at the port. What have you done to assist the agricultural businesses whose perishable goods are stuck at the port of Melbourne due to this union blockade?

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Agriculture) (12:25) — I thank Mr O’Sullivan for his question. As Mr O’Sullivan would probably know, because the state of Victoria referred its industrial relations powers to the commonwealth in 1996 — an action of the Kennett government — the Victorian government has no industrial relations powers as such to end this dispute. What the government has done to help is repeatedly offer, including as recently as yesterday, to bring the parties together and bring in Industrial Relations Victoria as a mediator. This has unfortunately been rejected by the company that is involved in the dispute, but I want to stress that the offer remains open to both parties to the dispute.

I am advised that the matter was the subject of Supreme Court hearings yesterday, and the government certainly expects all parties to this dispute to abide by the court’s rulings. I am also advised by the acting Minister for Industrial Relations that the matter is before the Fair Work Commission and that the process is ongoing.

Supplementary question

Mr O’SULLIVAN (Northern Victoria) (12:26) — Minister, the Mulcahy family, who run Kyvalley Dairy near Kyabram, have three containers of fresh milk sitting at the port, spoiling as we speak. All they want to do is remove the containers so they can dispose of the contents of those containers before that milk goes off and get the containers home ready for the next shipment. Last week they contacted your office for assistance. They were told by your office that you did not want to get involved in the dispute. Why have you refused assistance to businesses like Kyvalley Dairy who have produce stuck at the port of Melbourne?

Mr Dalidakis — Were you not listening yesterday? How many times have you rung Michaelia Cash, given that they have got the industrial relations powers?

The PRESIDENT — Without assistance.

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Agriculture) (12:27) — I thank Mr O’Sullivan for his further question. I can only imagine that in taking that inquiry my office was cognisant that I actually have no powers under the commonwealth industrial relations legislation. I have had the opportunity on a previous occasion, though, to meet the operators and owners of Kyvalley Dairy. Their production is exemplary, and the produce that they are exporting is something really for us all to celebrate.

As I indicated, the government has offered, and the offer remains, to mediate — to support the parties in a mediation. These matters are before both Fair Work and the Supreme Court. I certainly hope, as I am sure everyone does, for a resolution to this dispute at the earliest possible opportunity. Perhaps I would take up Mr Dalidakis’s interjection and suggest that Mr O’Sullivan may also wish to pick up the phone to the federal minister for industrial relations.

Maritime Union of Australia industrial action

Mr O’SULLIVAN (Northern Victoria) (12:29) — My question is to the Minister for Agriculture. Minister, what advice —

Mr Dalidakis interjected.

Mr O’SULLIVAN — Do you want to ask the question or do you want me to?

Mr Dalidakis interjected.

The PRESIDENT — Mr Dalidakis, thank you.

Mr O'SULLIVAN — Have you finished, or have you got more to say?

The PRESIDENT — Mr O'Sullivan!

Mr O'SULLIVAN — My question is to the Minister for Agriculture. What advice have you had about the illegal blockade of the port of Melbourne and its economic impact on Victoria's vital agricultural export industry?

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Agriculture) (12:29) — As I indicated in my answer to the earlier question, the government has offered, and continues to do so, to play a role as a mediator in this dispute. The Victorian Parliament chose many years ago now to refer Victoria's industrial relations powers to the commonwealth. As the Minister for Agriculture and as the Minister for Regional Development, obviously I have an interest in the resolution of this dispute, as I am sure do many businesses and many people who are impacted, but I have no powers whatsoever to intervene in this industrial relations dispute. The advice that I have been given, which has informed the answers that I have provided previously, is on the nature of the Victorian government's powers, the nature of the Victorian government's offers to assist the parties to resolve this dispute and the current standing of the various matters that are being heard both by the Fair Work Commission and in the Supreme Court.

Supplementary question

Mr O'SULLIVAN (Northern Victoria) (12:31) — As a supplementary question, Australia Fruits has \$45 000 worth of pears in containers stuck in the port of Melbourne due to the illegal blockade. This is just one example of businesses and produce impacted by this action. Victorian exporters are calling customers across Asia to tell them their shipments will not arrive because of the illegal blockade. Many of these customers will now look elsewhere to fill their orders. Minister, why have you not intervened to help stop the illegal blockade at the port of Melbourne, given the massive harm it is doing to the agricultural industries both here and overseas?

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Agriculture) (12:32) — I thank Mr O'Sullivan for his supplementary question. Having timely access to market is incredibly important for our fruit producers. We compete predominantly with Chile and with South Africa, and being able to get to market ahead of those key competitors is a very important thing, but I would refer Mr O'Sullivan to my previous answers to his questions. I would encourage Mr O'Sullivan to familiarise himself

with the constitution and the referral arrangements that govern industrial relations laws as they apply in Victoria.

Industrial relations portfolio

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS (South Eastern Metropolitan) (12:32) — My question is to the Leader of the Government. Yesterday in question time the Minister for Small Business said — and indeed the Minister for Agriculture has virtually repeated it today — that this government 'has no responsibility for industrial relations'. Why then does the government have a Minister for Industrial Relations?

Mr JENNINGS (Special Minister of State) (12:33) — It is a very intriguing and humorous question that Mr Rich-Phillips has asked, because he —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr JENNINGS — It is humorous because in fact he knows that within the Victorian public sector there is a very ongoing and enduring role to play in relation to human resource management and industrial relations across the public sector, which is an extremely large sector of the Victorian economy in its own right. A primary responsibility that the Minister for Industrial Relations has is what is in fact the nature of enterprise agreements and the quality of the engagement that may be a feature of the public service in terms of the conditions of employment of public servants. That would be a key organising principle of why any state government would have a Minister for Industrial Relations who would have a responsibility to oversee the central collective bargaining framework of the government in relation to dealing with those matters.

Beyond that there are a number of other areas of responsibility for the Minister for Industrial Relations. Indeed a piece of legislation was introduced in the other place during the course of this week in relation to labour hire reform, which deals with circumstances where there are opportunities within the referral powers and the constitutional arrangements where there can be interventions and statutes actually created within this Victorian jurisdiction that deal with the conditions of employment in a variety of other settings. So that is a specific example where there is a head of power that is available to the Minister for Industrial Relations in Victoria, and that is an example —

Ms Shing — Long service leave.

Mr JENNINGS — another example — that may apply inside and outside the public service.

Ms Shing — State-based frameworks that exist under section 26 of the Fair Work Act.

Mr JENNINGS — Ms Shing is helping me give a thorough answer. I appreciate her support. Can I say, this is one area of perhaps a knowledge base that is not only in the frontbench but probably in the backbench as well. There is a fairly well established knowledge of industrial relations matters and the limits of referral powers in the state and commonwealth jurisdictions, so my ministerial colleagues are well-versed in these practices.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr JENNINGS — Yes, we are pretty much well-versed on this side of the chamber in what we can and what we cannot do under the combination of state and federal laws. So I would maintain — with the support of my colleagues, who have outlined what the limits of our constitutional obligations are in relation to industrial relations — that it does not mean that we are disinterested in industrial relations. It does not mean that we are passive in this space when we have the appropriate head of power.

Supplementary question

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS (South Eastern Metropolitan) (12:36) — I thank the minister for his answer. He is quite right in talking about the public sector role for the Minister for Industrial Relations, and to his credit, unlike his colleagues, he did not seek to use the referral to the commonwealth as a shield for the Victorian government not to intervene. I note that previously the Minister for Industrial Relations has actively intervened in disputes, such as when she supported the picket at the Carlton & United Breweries (CUB) site during the CUB dispute last year. Why then has the acting minister, given the circumstances, not actively intervened to end the port of Melbourne dispute?

Mr JENNINGS (Special Minister of State) (12:37) — I thank Mr Rich-Phillips for his question. In terms of what role and influence the Victorian minister may have in any dispute, that is actually based upon the advice that the minister would receive in relation to the appropriateness of those interventions and what the limits may be. So on the basis of an assessment in relation to the appropriateness of the intervention ministers will act accordingly, and I believe that my ministerial colleagues would act upon that advice within the influence they could bring in relation to any industrial dispute outside the Victorian public sector.

Written responses

The PRESIDENT (12:38) — In respect of today's questions, I direct written responses to Dr Carling-Jenkins's questions, both the substantive and the supplementary questions, to Ms Tierney, which involve a minister in another place, two days; Ms Patten's supplementary question to Ms Tierney involves another minister in another place, two days; Ms Springle's substantive and supplementary question, two days — also another minister in the Legislative Assembly; Ms Dunn's substantive question to Ms Pulford, that is just one day; Ms Crozier's supplementary to her first question — the supplementary question to Minister Tierney — that is one day. The question went to what consultation had been undertaken, and whilst the minister provided an answer, there was no reference to any consultation that had been undertaken.

Ms Wooldridge — On a point of order, President, I wanted to bring to the attention of the Minister for Families and Children and the house that I have 41 questions on notice that are well overdue. In fact four of them are the first on the list and date back to May 2015, 15 are pre-2017 and there are 41 overall. I have alerted both the Minister for Health and the minister in this house representing the Minister for Health to the failure. The questions are on very important issues such as patient transport, pharmacy provision, dental wait times and so on, and I ask that the minister be asked — and this has been a repeated request — to answer these questions in accordance with the standing orders.

Ms Mikakos — On the point of order, President, I thank the member for raising this matter with me and I acknowledge being copied into her email to the Minister for Health. I do not have any advice to share with the member at this point in time, but I will endeavour to raise the matter with the Minister for Health in terms of seeking a response to these matters. But I take the opportunity to advise the house that I personally have responded to more than 1000 questions on notice.

Ms Wooldridge — On a further point of order, President, I am wondering if I can also raise with the minister the fact that there are three adjournment matters for the Minister for Health that are overdue. They are adjournment matters from 21 March, 8 September and 19 October 2017. These are now further overdue, and it would be appreciated if the minister could provide a response in accordance with the standing orders.

Ms Mikakos — It is outside the standing orders.

The PRESIDENT — It is outside the standing orders. I am not in a position to make any directions at all or even to seek explanations in respect of adjournment matters that might be outstanding.

Mrs Peulich — On a point of order, President, I wrote to you in relation to a request that certain questions be reinstated due to the minister's failure to provide satisfactory responses for the reasons which I have outlined in a table to you. Have you had the opportunity of having a look at that, President?

The PRESIDENT — I only received that late this morning and I have not had an opportunity yet to actually examine it, but I will make a determination later in the day.

Mrs Peulich — Thank you, President.

Mr O'Donohue — On a point of order, President, during the committee stage of the Crimes Legislation Amendment (Protection of Emergency Workers and Others) Bill 2017 that was before the house yesterday I asked the Minister for Training and Skills a number of questions. Two of those questions related to the number of emergency services vehicles, especially ambulance and fire vehicles, that had been rammed. Rather than report progress when that information was not to hand at the end of the consideration of the committee stage, the minister undertook to get that information to me, I assumed by the close of business yesterday. I am yet to receive that information. It is unfortunate that Minister Tierney has left the chamber before question time has concluded, but I raise by way of point of order my concern about not having that information.

The PRESIDENT — Can I say first of all that in respect of matters that might be raised in the committee stage and indications by ministers that they will provide further information, again I have no authority to actually make a direction in those matters. It depends on the courtesy of the minister to actually meet any assurances that have been made during that committee stage. It is not for the Chair to intervene in those matters. Ms Tierney, I understand you may wish to comment on this.

Ms Tierney — On the point of order, President, I did give an undertaking that as soon as that material was available I would provide it. Mr O'Donohue, right at the end of the committee stage, sought clarification as to that information and again I advised that I did not have the information at hand. He accepted that and accepted the fact that I had said on record that I would provide that information as soon as it was provided to

me. At no stage did he indicate that he would report progress. He just asked for that information, which I complied with in terms of that undertaking. To actually come in here today to raise this point of order I think is absolutely shameful.

CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS

Eastern Metropolitan Region

Ms WOOLDRIDGE (Eastern Metropolitan) (12:44) — My constituency question is for the Minister for Sport. I ask why the government has only committed a quarter of the funds that were requested and are needed to upgrade the 40-year-old Diamond Valley Sports and Fitness Centre. The government were asked to contribute \$10 million this year to this \$30.1 million redevelopment of the centre. The upgrade will deliver a contemporary indoor sports stadium catering for basketball, netball, badminton, table tennis and a range of other sports. However, as it commonly does to Eltham projects and Eltham residents, this government has short-changed our community by contributing only 25 per cent of what was asked for. This government has a history of failing to deliver the necessary money to properly fund Eltham amenities. Two similar projects are the Bolton Street upgrade and the Eltham North Reserve.

We want to understand why Eltham is continuing to miss out on vital government funds. I ask the minister to explain this significant underfunding of the Diamond Valley Sports and Fitness Centre.

Eastern Victoria Region

Ms SHING (Eastern Victoria) (12:45) — My constituency question today is for the Minister for Sport and Minister for Tourism and Major Events, Minister Eren, and it relates to an \$85 million investment that the Andrews Labor government is making into the Gippsland-Latrobe Valley region, which includes the Baw Baw Shire Council, Latrobe City Council and Wellington Shire Council areas.

Noting that we just recently announced the location for the new Gippsland regional aquatic centre in Traralgon, I would like to ask the minister how this project will be managed to make sure it is delivered as quickly as possible and with maximum benefit to people throughout Gippsland, including through the use of local labour, and how this can work in with the other sporting announcements as part of this \$85 million package.

Southern Metropolitan Region

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (12:46) — My constituency question is to the Minister for Planning, and it relates to the Virginia Park site in East Bentleigh. In answer to a question I asked of Minister Merlino earlier this year around projected enrolment numbers to schools in the area, a response I received in March included:

The planning for the Bentleigh East industrial precinct is still in its early stages, and housing numbers are yet to be determined. This information, when available, will help inform the department's advice around the scale and type of facilities that could be delivered.

At a community meeting last week it was indicated that several towers will be built on the site along with a vertical school. Could the minister therefore provide me with the projected housing numbers for the site, as referred to in the Minister for Education's previous answer to me?

Eastern Metropolitan Region

Ms DUNN (Eastern Metropolitan) (12:47) — My constituency question is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. Constituents in my electorate of Eastern Metropolitan Region have inquired as to whether acquisition notices provided to them with regard to the north-east link project are both final and the full extent of acquisition that will be undertaken. The uncertainty around the issue has caused a great deal of emotional distress and has also made it hard for residents to voluntarily move from the area due to the devaluation of their homes.

Will the minister or the North East Link Authority confirm whether all those houses that have received partial or full acquisitions will definitely be acquired, when the families will be forced to leave and whether there will be any further acquisition of businesses or houses as part of the project?

South Eastern Metropolitan Region

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) (12:48) — My constituency question is directed to the Treasurer, and it is a follow-up of the dilemma faced by a constituent, Simon Johnson, on whose behalf I have raised the matters in relation to an ongoing dispute with United Energy. United Energy is attempting to squeeze out of him \$100 000 for the replacement of an electricity pole which is not on his property in return for them issuing a no-go zone permit. This is an attempt to defray the costs of what should not be paid for by the consumer. It is a matter that I think deserves serious

investigation, and I am asking the Treasurer whether he would call on the Auditor-General to investigate this arrangement where there have been attempts to defray the cost of infrastructure to the consumer, unfairly causing lots of hardship and cost to this individual.

The PRESIDENT — I am not sure whether that should be directed to the Treasurer or the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change.

Mrs PEULICH — I have directed a previous question to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, and I believe the minister is not in a position to resolve that issue because of the conflicting roles of organisations under her jurisdiction.

Western Metropolitan Region

Ms HARTLAND (Western Metropolitan) (12:49) — My question is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. People in my electorate are facing years of living in a construction zone if the West Gate tunnel goes ahead. They are currently in the dark about exactly what the plan is and how it is going to happen. The government has announced that it intends starting construction work in January, but residents have not actually been informed what that will mean for them. Of course there is going to be construction site clearance, relocation of services and issues such as the relocation of the north Yarra main sewer. What is the government's communication plan for residents who will be profoundly affected by this project if it goes ahead?

Western Victoria Region

Mr MORRIS (Western Victoria) (12:50) — My constituency question is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and it relates to the government's plan to vandalise Sturt Street in Ballarat. Rather than recognising the historic nature of the magnificent boulevard of Sturt Street, the government is intending to close six of the north-south crossings to traffic and insert a god-awful, ugly orange bicycle path up the median strip of Sturt Street.

VicRoads conducted what they called a community consultation, and the view of the community was clear: the community does not want the north-south roads closed, they do not want Sturt Street vandalised and they do not want an ugly bike path painted yellow in the magnificent median strip. So the question I ask the minister is: will the government now abandon its plan to vandalise Sturt Street and hear the view of the community?

Western Victoria Region

Mr PURCELL (Western Victoria) (12:51) — My constituency question is for the Minister for Agriculture, and it relates to the number of angling clubs in Western Victoria Region. Back in 2015 the minister announced the appointment of the special coordinator to implement Target One Million to grow recreational fishing in Victoria. Amongst other initiatives Target One Million's objective was to increase the number of recreational fishers to 1 million and to develop new children's programs. However, the angling clubs in my region are telling me that they are being held back from being able to run these children's programs due to a lack of finances because of the sharp increases in insurance costs for their members, with insurance costing more than club membership in most circumstances. Therefore I ask the minister: is there any assistance for these clubs to cover the insurance of members or are there other ways to reduce the significant costs to the angling clubs?

Western Victoria Region

Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria) (12:52) — My constituency question is to the Minister for Agriculture. I refer to the problem we have in Western Victoria Region in relation to army worms. Army worms are on the march. The question I pose to the minister is: what advice is the department providing to the minister in respect of the damage that has been caused by army worms to crops and grasses in western Victoria, and what will be the response the department is going to advise the minister of in relation to the support they can give to farmers across Western Victoria Region that are suffering considerable damage due to the army worms eating grasses and crops?

Southern Metropolitan Region

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) (12:53) — My question is to the Minister for Public Transport, and it concerns the sky rail gantry crane and straddle carrier, which are currently operating within metres of the Longford gas transmission pipeline in the area around Lorne Street and Girdwood Avenue, Carnegie.

On 21 July 2017 the Level Crossing Removal Authority formally took control of Glen Eira City Council land on Lorne Street and Girdwood Avenue over which the sky rail permanent structure is being built, despite having commenced construction nearly a year earlier. Glen Eira City Council has advised locals that they received no consideration for that land, so I ask: given the transmission pipeline lies within a metre of this land, can the minister confirm that all regulatory

requirements, consents and approvals from the pipeline owner and regulatory authority were in place in the required time frame, and will the minister also provide the dates on which these approvals were granted?

GREAT FOREST NATIONAL PARK

Debate resumed.

Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria) (12:54) — I do want to indicate that the Liberal Party is supporting Mr O'Sullivan's motion that this house opposes the creation of a great forest national park in Victoria. I see Mr Leane is about to trot out, but I do want to acknowledge his contribution. Ms Dunn, I see, is also here. Members that live in Doncaster and Wantirna South seem to know all about what is good for those of us in regional Victoria, invariably where these national parks are situated. Mr Leane in his contribution went through a lot of great fanfare about how Mr Matthew Guy enjoys travelling into the hinterland, and he made a mockery of the fact that he does so. I am not sure why, but I do encourage Mr Leane to get out of his Wantirna South habitat and actually go into the environment and some of our national parks and actually smell the leaves — not just the marijuana leaves that Ms Dunn and others are good at smelling, but in fact gum leaves — and enjoy some of the beauty that these forests have.

I have to say that as a farmer I have long been supportive of trying to create an environment where there is an appropriate balance of nature and production. It is something that the Greens will never understand, because their ideology is to lock up the state of Victoria, stop anyone being able to have access and stop any profitability or production opportunities that we might have in the state of Victoria. They refuse to eat meat. We all have to eat lentils and all the other things that maybe the herbage might provide. The Labor Party's desperation to cling onto power in these potential Greens seats is such that they have actually joined forces in coalition to lock up more forest.

Ms Dunn will have you believe that in fact Victoria has hardly any national forests in it and that the community of 5 million or 6 million people in Victoria does not have access to the forests in Victoria, so I would just like to advise the chamber of what we actually do have in Victoria in relation to state forests and national forests. President, this in fact might well go past 1 o'clock because the list is extensive, so I give you forewarning, but you will cut me off when you feel it is necessary.

In the state of Victoria we have national parks: Agnes Falls, Albert Park, Alfred, Alpine, Banksia, Baw Baw, Brisbane Ranges, Mount Buffalo, Bunurong, Cape Howe, Churchill, Kinglake, Lake Eildon, Little Desert, Lind, Cooracambra, Corner Inlet, Croajingolong, Dandenong, Discovery Bay Marine, Errinundra, French Island, Grampians, Great Otway, Greater Bendigo, Hattah-Kulkyne, Heathcote-Graytown, Chiltern-Mount Pilot, Tarra-Bulga, St Arnaud, Snowy River, Port Phillip Heads, Port Campbell, Point Nepean, Point Hicks, Point Addis, Lower Glenelg, Mitchell River, Mornington Peninsula, Morwell, Mount Eccles, Mount Richmond, Murray-Sunset, Organ Pipes, Twelve Apostles, Wilsons Promontory, Yarra Ranges and The Lakes, just to name a few national parks that we have in Victoria. I think I named about 46.

So the point is there is no need to have yet another national park to be able to provide the sort of sanctuary that Mr Leane is so encouraging our leaders of our respective parties to enjoy. It is just a pity Mr Andrews does not take the same opportunity Mr Guy does to take his family out into the national parks and bond with nature, because I think from a health point of view it would be very good. So I certainly support Mr O'Sullivan's motion in opposing the creation of a great forest national park, as we do in the Liberal Party.

I also note that the Greens are hell-bent on closing down our timber industry in Victoria. They would much prefer to get paper from Nippon in Japan and have it carted here. That would be great, except we have a picket now down on the docks, so there is no way we would be able to get our office printing paper from Japan, because it would not be able to get off the dock. I know that the Labor Party is excited about the fact that there would be 40 000 indirect jobs and direct jobs lost through the loss of the timber industry.

I know in fact that bushfires are not a concern of the Greens. They prefer to lock everything up and not have any fuel reduction burns at all, except that when there is a fire they are the first ones to scream because the animal habitats would be in danger. Ms Dunn has been banging on for the last three years about the Leadbeater's possum. If she had actually taken any notice in relation to the previous minister for the environment's instructions, there was to be a review once the time limit had expired for that 200 —

The PRESIDENT — Order! This is an appropriate time to break for lunch. Mr Ramsay will resume when the chair is resumed at 2 o'clock.

Sitting suspended 1.00 p.m. until 2.02 p.m.

Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria) (14:02) — I am going to summarise now, because I do understand there is a need to put this motion to the test in the chamber this afternoon. Just prior to lunch I identified a number of national parks that we already have here in Victoria. In fact I identified 52. Mr Jennings might dispute one or two of those that have changed status, but nevertheless we have extensive national parks already here in Victoria. We know Parks Victoria do not have capacity to manage those parks appropriately. Many of the parks are infested with pests, weeds and vermin, and the staff resources are not sufficient to look after the parks we have already.

We do need a sustainable timber industry. The Greens will tell us there is no room for a sustainable timber industry in Victoria. They are more than happy to import paper from countries that have lower environmental standards than ours. But so be it; that is their wish. We do need to support private land forestry. I have been a strong advocate for providing the tools and mechanisms to allow farmers, particularly landholders, to invest in farm forestry so we can take some of the pressure off some of our public lands. We do need to, as I said, increase the budget of Parks Victoria so they can actually manage what we have presently, far less extend our national parks.

I do make the point again that the Greens' ideology really will not permit any more logging in our public forests. The arguments around the Leadbeater's possum or other supposed protected species are merely just a smokescreen to stop logging in those forestry catchments. I understand that, and it is just a shame that Labor has seen fit to join the Greens in a coalition on this misdirected ideology, which clearly has the political basis of trying to save Labor-held seats in Greens-threatened electorates.

I understand the political dilemma that the Labor Party are in in relation to potentially not supporting this motion, but nevertheless let us hope their idealism will separate itself from the Greens at some point and common sense will prevail in the management and sustainability of our national parks. As I said from the outset, those of us on this side in the Liberal Party support Mr O'Sullivan's motion to oppose the great forest national park in Victoria, and we support his concerns outlined in paragraph (2) of his motion.

Mr O'SULLIVAN (Northern Victoria) (14:06) — I just wish to sum up on the motion, and I would like to thank all the speakers who made a contribution on this motion. I would like to touch on a couple of the comments that have been made. In relation to Ms Dunn's contribution, there was nothing there that

persuaded me against my existing views in relation to this matter, although she did try hard. There was nothing there that convinced me at all. What I did learn is that the Greens want us to source our timber and paper products from Asia, and she wants us to source our possums from New Zealand. That is something that we will certainly not be agreeing to.

Mr Leane has shown us today that the Labor Party are just going to sit on the fence. They believe in nothing when it comes to sustaining jobs in this state, and they are happy to sell out their base constituency for the sake of getting some Greens preferences and Greens votes in the inner city. The Northcote by-election was very much the proof of this in terms of some of the policies we saw the Labor Party come out with during that by-election. I thought the Labor Party were a party for workers, but clearly they are not a party for anyone who works in the timber industry in terms of what Mr Leane said today.

Mr Young has proved again today that he actually knows what he is talking about when it comes to matters of this sort. He goes out and visits these areas. He uses these areas frequently and actually understands the principles; he goes out and does it in practice rather than doing it in theory, as many others do around here.

One thing that is interesting for me is that the Galaxy poll that was released this week showed that 77 per cent of regional Victorians think Daniel Andrews has duded regional Victoria. What we have seen in here today from the Labor Party is the reason why people in regional Victoria have that opinion of the Premier. I think that is why the Labor Party is going to retreat from regional Victoria at the next election and try and compete with the Greens for those inner-city seats; it will continue to try and out-green the Greens. I am not sure it is going to work, but it will certainly work for the Greens.

One thing that I think we can certainly assume is that if the next election goes in the wrong direction and there ends up being a Greens-Labor coalition, which I think is about as good as the Labor Party could hope for, there is no doubt the Greens will insist that a great forest national park happens and happens very quickly. I think they will also want to shut down the native timber industry. The Greens will ensure that the Labor Party bans duck hunting. The Greens will ensure that there are further restrictions in relation to public land use. There will certainly be threats to hunting, fishing, camping and any four-wheel driving. There will be a ban on live exports in Victoria and there will be further shutdown of the brown coal industry in the Latrobe

Valley. No doubt there will be additional pressure on the intensive animal farming industry.

In terms of this vote, whatever happens afterwards in the next year or so there will need to be an assessment by the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council. As I am aware, that has not happened and I do not know whether that is even close to happening, but I hope that that process would need to be undertaken before we go down this path at all. But it should not get to that, because we do not need it, as I have already said in my contribution. I commend this motion to the house and ask members to support it.

House divided on motion:

Ayes, 18

| | |
|-----------------|----------------------------------|
| Bath, Ms | O'Donohue, Mr |
| Bourman, Mr | Ondarchie, Mr |
| Crozier, Ms | O'Sullivan, Mr (<i>Teller</i>) |
| Dalla-Riva, Mr | Peulich, Mrs |
| Davis, Mr | Purcell, Mr |
| Finn, Mr | Ramsay, Mr |
| Fitzherbert, Ms | Rich-Phillips, Mr |
| Lovell, Ms | Wooldridge, Ms |
| Morris, Mr | Young, Mr (<i>Teller</i>) |

Noes, 18

| | |
|---------------|---------------------------------|
| Dalidakis, Mr | Mulino, Mr |
| Dunn, Ms | Pennicuik, Ms (<i>Teller</i>) |
| Eideh, Mr | Pulford, Ms |
| Gepp, Mr | Ratnam, Dr |
| Hartland, Ms | Shing, Ms |
| Jennings, Mr | Somyurek, Mr |
| Leane, Mr | Springle, Ms |
| Melhem, Mr | Symes, Ms (<i>Teller</i>) |
| Mikakos, Ms | Tierney, Ms |

Pairs

| | |
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| Atkinson, Mr | Elasmar, Mr |
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Motion negatived.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND SOCIAL ISSUES

Reference

Dr RATNAM (Northern Metropolitan) (14:15) — I move:

That, pursuant to sessional order 6, this house requires the Legal and Social Issues Committee to inquire into, consider and report, no later than 19 June 2018, on the Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation in relation to —

- (1) its effectiveness in developing transparent risk-based approaches to licensing and compliance;
- (2) its existing funding and administrative model;

- (3) its effectiveness to carry out its functions;
- (4) its adequacy to protect the Victorian community from the harms associated with the misuse and abuse of liquor and gambling;
- (5) its suitability to measure and publicly report on its performance to provide genuine insight into its effectiveness as a regulator in minimising harm; and
- (6) the option of dismantling the commission and creating a separate compliance body.

In my previous work as a social worker and a councillor at Moreland I have seen firsthand the damage that pokies can cause to our local communities. From working in drug and alcohol rehabilitation centres and in mental health services and with people seeking asylum and refuge I know the pokies do not hold back on taking hostages. Last year I worked with a young man denied the right to make a home in Australia after fleeing torture and persecution. Left in limbo by a draconian and punitive asylum seeker policy, he had little resources for food and shelter and was addicted to gambling on the pokies.

I know there will be some who will want to blame the victim, to somehow offer that these problems are solved by saying that people have a choice. Those who think that the issue of problem gambling can be fixed by individuals making choices expose that they know little about addiction. They demonstrate that either wilfully or otherwise they deny the clear evidence that we have that these gambling machines have been designed to deceive people as much as possible. They are designed to cause maximum damage, and what they do is wreak havoc in our communities and ruin the lives of so many people. Those who say this is about individual choices do not understand addiction and do not understand how aggressive the gambling industry really is.

Australia has more poker machines per person than any country in the world, excluding casino tourism destinations like Macau and Monaco. It has nearly 200 000 machines, one for every 114 people. The amount lost per pokie gambler just in pubs and clubs in both New South Wales and Victoria is around \$3500 per year, or around \$65 a week. To put this into some perspective, the average Australian adult spends \$1245 on electricity and gas in one year, and while we now have concerted government action to reduce energy costs, for example, the regulatory reforms required to reduce the amount of losses for pokie gamblers are not on the legislative agenda in most of Australia. We need only to look at the recent passage of the Victorian pokies legislation by the old parties last week that will allow the pokies industry to soak \$70 billion from Victorians over the next 25 years, with the government

pocketing about \$30 billion of those losses as the key in the industry, which amounts to nothing less than state-sponsored abuse.

The losses by Australians on pokies outside of casinos dwarf those of any other comparable country. They are 2.4 times greater than those of our nearest rival, Italy. Australians lose three times more than New Zealanders, 4.1 times more than Canadians, 6.4 times more than the Irish, 7.5 times more than the British and 9.8 times more than the Americans. For each problem gambler six other people are affected, for each moderate-risk gambler about three others are affected and for each low-risk gambler an additional person is affected. Among the 8 per cent of adults who typically use pokies once a month or more, 6.2 per cent of them are categorised as problem gamblers and another 35.3 per cent experience some level of harm.

Pokies in particular are concentrated in areas of stress, places where people are socio-economically disadvantaged or experiencing stress of other kinds. For example, outer suburban areas often have a significant concentration of pokies and high losses. People in these suburbs are not necessarily socio-economically disadvantaged. They may, however, experience stress from such phenomena as long travel times, the difficulties of managing two-income families, significant mortgages and childcare issues. It is probable that pokies are concentrated in stressed areas because they provide some relief for people living under difficult or stressful circumstances.

Areas with more poker machines also have higher rates of domestic violence. Research undertaken in 2016 found a significant correlation between poker machine density and police-recorded domestic violence rates amongst postcodes. In terms of relative risk, the police recorded 20 per cent fewer family violence incidents and 30 per cent fewer domestic violence assaults when postcodes with no poker machines were compared with postcodes with at least 75 pokies per 10 000 people. Similar patterns were evident when the number of poker machine venues were analysed instead of the number of poker machines.

The research suggests that the uneven spread of poker machines across Victoria may be contributing to the incidence of domestic violence in areas with many poker machines. This should perhaps not come as a surprise. Previous research in Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania has shown that more than half the people receiving problem gambling treatment have recent experience of domestic violence either as survivors or as perpetrators. While the research did not make the case that poker machines cause violence directly —

gender inequality is clearly the root cause of domestic violence — it is apparent from the decades of research that many other factors are indirectly implicated in the population-level evidence of domestic violence and that poker machines may be part of the mix in Australia.

So why do the major parties refuse to act in spite of the evidence? It is quite simple really: they are completely captured by the political donations from the pokies industry. They are not free agents but instead extensions of the gaming industry, the pokies lobby. That is particularly so at a state level, where the industry returns \$1 billion every year just to Victorian state government coffers. Until we get big money out of politics in Australia the old parties will continue to serve their paymasters in the gambling lobby and Australians will keep getting ripped off.

Putting the community first means not only standing up to clubs, the casino and the Liberal and Labor parties to reduce the number of pokies in our states; it also means being a voice for the community when people have information about the gambling lobby that the public deserve to know about. Not only are we committed to ending political donations from the gambling lobby and getting big money out of politics; we are committed to protecting whistleblowers who have information about these highly addictive machines and the industry that backs them and to cleaning up this harmful industry.

In Victoria a coalition of local councils and their peak bodies launched the Enough Pokies campaign in an attempt to change the way electronic gaming machine (EGM) entitlements are decided. In Victoria applicants lodge an application detailing their proposal, and local governments have the right to respond to this within 60 days and may object. The matter is heard and decided by the Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation, the VCGLR. If either party is dissatisfied, there is an avenue for review by the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal, VCAT.

In Victoria applicants are overwhelmingly successful despite often well-argued and expensive cases run by councils. Between July 2008 and September 2014 there were 154 VCGLR decisions on new venues or increases to venue size. Of these, 140, or 91 per cent, were granted in full; three, being 2 per cent, were partly granted; and 11, being 7 per cent, were unsuccessful. Of 68 cases where the council opposed the application, 57 were wholly successful and three were partly successful.

Only eight were unsuccessful. The success rate where a council opposes the application is thus a little less favourable to applicants than that overall, but not by

that much. A submission prepared for the Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission (VCEC) in 2012 found that the average cost to councils of a VCGLR submission was more than \$37 000, with a range from \$10 000 to \$110 000. This does not include the cost of VCAT appeals. Where applicants have the luxury of employing solicitors, barristers and expert witnesses and claim expenses as a business cost reduction, councils struggle to find the resources to adequately fund their cases.

The test to be met is that the application, if granted, would result in no net detriment to the local council area. This test is inadequate and lacks precision, because we see that in many cases applicants rely on quantifiable factors, such as the amount to be spent on the renovations, the payment of a modest community benefit or some calculation of the jobs to be created by the proposal. Social impacts are minimised and inadequate data on local suicide, divorce, bankruptcy or problem gambling rates are generally negated by the alleged economic benefits. That such social impact data, particularly data on problem gambling prevalence, is ignored and research findings are not considered unless they relate specifically to the venue or area demonstrates the inherent shortcomings of the no net detriment test.

Also, the community of interest for these decisions is the entire council area. However, it is very often the case that many metro councils are far from socio-economically cohesive. I saw personally the failure of the regulation progress firsthand as a councillor. In 2015 Moreland City Council strongly opposed the application for an increase in the number of EGMs at a local RSL club. The VCGLR approved the application. Council then refused the planning application that was associated with it for the machines to go ahead. Moreland council had done some groundbreaking work in strengthening its planning scheme to reduce the number of EGMs, particularly in areas that were facing socio-economic disadvantage. This was also a council that had previously had a differential rating system, whereby properties and venues with pokie machines paid higher rates in order to disincentivise those pokie machines from Moreland.

Mr Young — On a point of order, Acting President, I have been listening to the speech from the new Leader of the Greens for 11 minutes, and it appears that she is slavishly reading from a preprepared speech. I am wondering if you could make a ruling on that, please.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Morris) — Thank you, Mr Young, for your point of order. I too have observed what you have observed. I do note that

Dr Ratnam will be making a significant contribution, so I encourage her to continue with her contribution on the motion she has moved.

Dr RATNAM — The differential rates system was stripped away by successive state governments, taking away the little power that local councils had to protect their communities. A new planning scheme provision had now been incorporated into Moreland's planning scheme that allowed council to assess applications for new EGMs against it. The planning officers, councillors and the community were united in their absolute opposition to this application. Council rejected it; the venue appealed the decision to VCAT. Surprise, surprise, VCAT approved the application citing that, despite the approval going against what was now part of planning law in Victoria, because the VCGLR had given approval they were comfortable with the approval as well. Moreland council felt so strongly that errors had been made in the decision-making process that it has now appealed the decision to the Supreme Court and is awaiting its ruling.

This is not just happening in Moreland. From Whittlesea to Darebin, from Woodend to Hobsons Bay, to Geelong and so much further, if you look up councils that are fighting the pokies, the list is very long. They are taking action because the state and federal governments before them have let their citizens down. That is what councils do: they pick up the pieces and take up the challenge to stand up for their communities. Greater Geelong City Council fought more pokies at the Portarlington Golf Club, for example. Council said no, the community said no and the VCGLR said yes. Bass Coast Shire Council appealed an application for more pokies at the Wonthaggi Club. Council said no, the community said no and the VCGLR said yes. I could go on and on with that list.

I ask you: what is our community supposed to do when the system is stacked against them? It is not just the community that is saying that these things are broken; for years there have been calls for a broad-based inquiry into the gambling industry. While governments have been complicit in denying the problem, more and more evidence has emerged about the cracks in the system that is designed to protect the community. One of the big problems we have with the system is the regulation system. I think it is fair to say that the Greens are not alone in their criticism of the VCGLR and its effectiveness to fulfil the role of investigator and regulator.

In February this year the Victorian Auditor-General's Office (VAGO) slammed the VCGLR for failing to scrutinise money laundering and problem gambling at

Crown Casino. It criticised the VCGLR for not having a specialist team of inspectors covering the world's 11th largest casino and stated that it had not paid sufficient attention to key areas of risk in Crown's operations, also including detecting people such as criminals and underworld figures who are excluded from the casino by Victoria Police.

The report rightly identified the need for the VCGLR to improve its oversight of the casino and outlined other serious concerns, including that problem gamblers and intoxicated casino patrons were not properly supervised; that money laundering audits have not been conducted three times since 2012 because the VCGLR did not have enough staff who knew how to conduct such probes; that standard audits on premium players, table games, money counting and casino surveillance stopped for almost a year until September 2014; and that the VCGLR's compliance team made three attempts to improve inspections at the casino but their proposals were ignored. Citing the VAGO report, it states clearly, and I quote:

VCGLR has not adequately monitored compliance with gambling and liquor legislation.

Compliance activities are not sufficiently risk based because VCGLR has focused on meeting a target number of inspections, rather than directing inspections to where non-compliance has a high risk or high potential for harm. This approach to compliance does not support the legislative objectives for harm minimisation.

VCGLR has not adequately managed its compliance monitoring functions due to longstanding serious and systemic weaknesses in the design and operation of its compliance activities.

Key issues that VAGO cited were:

inflexible allocation of resources to compliance activities ...

a management approach and culture focused on meeting quotas, which encourage superficial inspection activities rather than activities to address harms;

inadequate guidance and training for inspectors;

unreliable data about liquor and gambling inspections.

Reporting on performance, the VAGO report states:

VCGLR's publicly reported performance information provides limited insight into its effectiveness in meeting legislative objectives relating to harm minimisation. VCGLR largely measures and publicly reports on activity rather than its effectiveness or impact. It includes some information in its annual report on actions relating to its effectiveness. However, its emphasis on counting activities such as the number of compliance inspections has encouraged operational behaviour that focuses on matters with little relevance to, or impact on, harm minimisation.

Ultimately the report concludes that:

VCGLR is not able to demonstrate that its casino supervision is efficient or effective as is required for best practice regulation of a major participant in Victoria's gambling industry.

Only after this scathing report from the Auditor-General did we hear of the deeply troubling allegations from whistleblowers regarding deliberate tampering with poker machines at Crown Casino in October. While Crown has rejected the claims, former staff allege that they were instructed to use tools to shave down the buttons so that they could be held in place to keep the machines playing continuously.

Perhaps the most disturbing claims are by former workers that VCGLR inspectors did not act when they detected gaming machine technicians deliberately disabling several punting options on the gaming machines. The evidence provided by the whistleblowers said that, when VCGLR inspectors saw the buttons were disabled, they immediately ordered the machines to be fixed but took no further action. Additional allegations of deliberate manipulation and tampering of poker machines in Crown Casino were made by a fourth whistleblower last month, who claimed that last year he and other technicians were instructed to remove betting options on the Players Choice Super machine because punters were winning too much. In another case he said technicians removed multiple spin options on machines so that only the maximum and minimum bet options remained.

After these deeply troubling allegations were made my Greens colleague Colleen Hartland wrote to the Ombudsman raising concerns about the VCGLR and its alleged failure to properly investigate and take appropriate enforcement action against Crown Casino. While the Ombudsman has not ruled out investigating the matter, as it stands the only investigation currently afoot is by the VCGLR into itself.

The Auditor-General's lashing of the VCGLR and mounting whistleblower claims have reduced public trust in this industry to an all-time low. The Greens believe that the seriousness of the allegations made against Crown Casino demand a response that is more than a tokenistic investigation by the VCGLR. It demands a detailed, forensic and independent inquiry, and it demands it now. The inquiry that we are seeking to establish has to happen because the allegations levelled against Crown Casino by former employees and whistleblowers are so serious in nature. The VCGLR has been accused of being complicit, so for the government's only response to be for the VCGLR to investigate itself is woefully inadequate and will not do

anything to restore the public's confidence. If there is a slight chance that their claims might check out, it would be a complete failure of government not to implement an independent inquiry or take steps to prevent these alleged actions from occurring again in the future.

We are not actually asking for a lot today for members to consider given what has just happened, which members might not know about, in Tasmania. The Tasmanian Labor Party today have announced that they are going to ban pokies and remove pokies from venues outside casinos within the next five years. What we are seeking to initiate today is an important first step towards investigating the suitability and effectiveness of the VCGLR to regulate and minimise harms caused by pokies to Victorian families and the community. Surely we owe them this much. I appeal to my colleagues across the chamber: if your colleagues across the sea in Tasmania have the courage to take on this industry and protect their communities, I ask you to do the same.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Morris) —

Thank you, Dr Ratnam. I do note that it is the practice of this house to refer to notes rather than to read from them. I have had the opportunity to review some rulings by the Chair which are certainly to that effect. In the future I would encourage you to refer to notes rather than read from notes, as Mr Young made the point in his point of order.

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) (14:37) —

This is quite a detailed motion that has been moved by Dr Ratnam in relation to the operation of the Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation (VCGLR). The VCGLR is the regulator. The job of the regulator is to apply the law and regulate the industry. What Dr Ratnam spoke about in her contribution were policy issues. She spoke about councils not wanting pokies in their areas, which gets back to the planning scheme and how many electronic gaming machines there are in Victoria. The regulator's job is not to make determinations about how many electronic gaming machines there should be or the pros and cons of electronic gaming machines in a particular area. As a regulator, it is there to apply the law and the regulations as they stand at that time. So I think there is a fundamental disconnect between Dr Ratnam's motion and her speech. In her speech she spoke about policy and her motion speaks about the operation of the regulator — a very clear flaw, in my view, in what we are debating today.

Dr Ratnam's motion talks about the effectiveness of the VCGLR in carrying out its functions, its adequacy to protect the Victorian community from the harms

associated with the misuse and abuse of liquor and gambling, its suitability to measure and publicly report on its performance to provide genuine insight into its effectiveness as a regulator in minimising harm, and the option of dismantling the commission and creating a separate compliance body. That is something Dr Ratnam did not even talk to. That final limb in her preprepared speech was not referenced even once in her 20 to 25-minute speech. So there is a clear disconnect between the issues that Dr Ratnam has raised in her contribution and the motion. She pleaded with members across the chamber to side with her, but the arguments she gave did not even relate to her motion. There is a clear disconnect.

Dr Ratnam spoke about the Greens' desire to get big money donations out of politics and out of gambling. I draw Dr Ratnam's attention to an article from 1 February this year by Tom McIlroy published in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, and I quote:

The Greens received more than \$1 million from two big donors last financial year, helping bankroll the party's campaign for the 2 July federal election.

Wotif founder Graeme Wood donated \$600 000 to the party, the largest contribution to the Greens' \$3.9 million in donations and other payments in 2015–16.

It goes on to say:

Reclusive Queensland mathematician, investor and high-end gambler Duncan Turpie continued his large contributions to the Greens, donating \$500 000 —

\$500 000 from a high-end gambler to the Greens —

... before the 2 July election.

The Gold Coast-based ... specialist is a member of the secretive Punters Club gambling group ...

Mr Turpie ... has donated to a range of progressive and left-wing causes in recent years, including Greens' branches around Australia, activist group GetUp! and online magazine *New Matilda*.

It then goes on to say:

His latest donations came in the form of \$100 000 in February 2016, another \$150 000 two months later and \$250 000 two months after that.

So before Dr Ratnam opined from on high and lectured the rest of us about the moral high ground of the Greens, why did she not disclose that \$500 000 was donated to the Greens before the 2 July 2016 federal election by a high-end gambler — the sort of person who makes his money from the legalised gambling that Dr Ratnam is railing against. Her hypocrisy is absolutely breathtaking — absolutely breathtaking!

Let us just get the facts on the table here. The Greens were fighting for seats in Victoria at the last federal election. This may have helped them win the seat of Melbourne. It may have helped bankroll their massive campaign that turned out to be a dud in the federal seat of Higgins. It may well help them if there is a by-election in the federal seat of Batman, one of their biggest —

Mr Mulino interjected.

Mr O'DONOHUE — Indeed. I am now speculating. But the point is that a high-end gambler may well be one of the biggest bankrollers of the Greens and the Greens are a direct beneficiary of someone who is making a squillion out of gambling. I mean, spare me the lectures and the rank hypocrisy.

If we turn to the motion that is before us, as Dr Ratnam I assume knows, the VCGLR has only been in operation now for five-odd years. The VCGLR came into operation following Michael O'Brien's clear blueprint for reform of the regulation space, merging the gaming regulator with the liquor regulator and realising the clear synergies in regulating two industries that have such significant overlap. Like all mergers, that was a challenging process, but I think on any objective analysis it has delivered a better regulatory model.

After several years of implementation and all the challenges that brings, Dr Ratnam now wants to start all over again. She wants to start all over again, but she did not reference paragraph (6) of her motion once or make the case in any way for the dismantling of the current regulator. Dr Ratnam has spoken about many policy issues, and we can debate policy issues. The policy issues she has raised may or may not be worth consideration, but that is not the motion before us. The motion before us is about the operation of the regulator, and we did not actually hear any critique of the regulator's role. The only critique of the regulator was that Dr Ratnam did not like the outcomes the regulator gave. But the regulator relies on the rules that apply, which the regular itself does not set. Dr Ratnam has an issue with policy and she wants it fixed by the regulator, which is not the regulator's job. On that basis the opposition will oppose the motion.

Mr MULINO (Eastern Victoria) (14:44) — Can I just start with a couple of contextual remarks before going to the motion. I want to put on the record something that I think all of us in this place would agree with, and I want to put it on the record because I do not want our opposition to this motion to in any way imply that there is a divergence on some of these key issues. We agree that there is an issue with gambling in

our society and that it needs to be looked at. I think everybody in this place would agree that it is a social issue. It is a social issue that falls disproportionately on some parts of our community. I think we would all agree with that and we would all want to put into place effective regulatory mechanisms that deal with that. I also suggest that we would all agree in this place that we want an effective regulator. I am just putting that on the record before looking at the specifics of this particular motion.

Before looking at this motion, one thing I will agree with Mr O'Donohue on is the importance of —

Mr O'Donohue — Acting President, I draw your attention to the state of the house. There is no minister in the house.

Ms Mikakos — No, I am actually here. I am in the house, thank you very much. I do not need to be listening to a contribution.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr MULINO — I feel confident the minister was listening to my contribution.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Morris) — Mr Mulino to continue. It would be helpful if the minister was visible to other members of the house.

Mr MULINO — It is important when we consider this motion that we move beyond that common understanding to ask whether or not a case has been made to examine the activities of the regulator, and as Mr O'Donohue said, there is a distinction between matters of policy and specific matters of regulation. Indeed if we go to Dr Ratnam's speech, I think she spoke at quite some length about issues of policy and then at the end of her speech she made a number of references to a particular case, the Crown Casino case, and suggested that that particular case motivated the need for an inquiry at this point. But as we can see, there is no reference to that particular case in this motion. This motion actually talks about an inquiry into the overall effectiveness of the regulator. I do think it is critical that we move beyond what I think would be a common understanding and a common agreement on the importance of this issue to whether or not the case has been made for this specific motion.

I am going to talk in turn about the words of this motion, which are whether we should give one of our upper house committees responsibility for an inquiry into the effectiveness of the regulator. What I will argue is that the Victorian Auditor-General has just conducted such an inquiry, so it would be, firstly, premature, and

secondly, inappropriate for a committee to conduct such an inquiry given that the Auditor-General is the right place for that function. After having looked at the issue, I will deal more specifically with the Crown case, which Dr Ratnam has raised as a particular issue.

There are six subparagraphs to this motion. It refers to the need to look at the Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation (VCGLR) in relation to a range of its operational aspects: one is its effectiveness in developing transparent risk-based approaches; two is its funding and administrative model; three is its effectiveness in carrying out its functions — an overall kind of metric; four is its adequacy to protect the Victorian community from the harms of problem gambling; five is its suitability to measure and publicly report on performance; and six is the option of dismantling it. We would probably agree with Mr O'Donohue that that is not something that we need to look at this particular point in time.

What I will argue is that the very recently handed down Victorian Auditor-General's report has indeed covered off on those very issues. For that reason I do not think it would be appropriate for the upper house committee to examine these issues. The Victorian Auditor-General looked at the operation of the VCGLR as a result of the importance of this issue in our community. I am going to draw the attention of the house to some of the findings from that inquiry and indeed cross-reference them to some of the subparts of this motion.

I quote here from the Auditor-General:

VCGLR's plans and actions to further develop its risk-based approaches to licensing and compliance are largely sound, and its recent focused attention to improving the way it manages, develops and deploys its regulatory staff, particularly compliance inspectors, is encouraging.

There is one quote. Another quote is:

The compliance division has ... started a wide range of actions over the past 12 months to review and improve its activities so they are more flexible and risk based.

So here we have conclusions from the Auditor-General which match almost directly with subparagraph (1) of this motion. Unless there is some reason to believe that the Victorian Auditor-General's Office (VAGO) in its report somehow did not look at this issue appropriately or thoroughly or diligently, I think it would be inappropriate to essentially revisit all of that work so soon after it has been completed.

Subparagraph (2) is that the administrative model and funding model should be looked at. If you go back to the VAGO report, it found that the VCGLR has made

progress over the past two years in reorganising the licensing division, training staff and providing guidance material to support a move to a more risk-based approach to licensing activities. It also found that there had been a considerable improvement in the stability of the senior management team. Again, it made direct findings in relation to the funding and the administrative model.

In relation to its adequacy in protecting the Victorian community from the harms associated with the misuse and abuse of liquor and gambling and also to the commission's overall effectiveness, there were a number of findings. One is, for example, that the VCGLR's relationships with the department and Victoria Police are effective in supporting its role as regulator. Another is that the VCGLR and Victoria Police have made various efforts to improve collaboration, and so on.

In relation to subparagraph (5), on the commission's suitability to measure and publicly report on its performance, the Auditor-General found:

VCGLR has improved its internally reported performance measures by introducing indicators that seek to measure the impact and effectiveness of its regulatory activities.

There are actually findings from the Auditor-General which match up quite directly with each of the subparagraphs of this motion. I think it would be redundant firstly and secondly inappropriate for us — unless there is a strong case; unless there is a case that the Auditor-General in this major inquiry did not do its job properly — to then step in and replicate all of that work when the Auditor-General frankly has a strong track record of examining issues like that.

I want to briefly touch on a couple of things that have happened since the tabling of the report. The VCGLR has made further improvements to its operations since that report was tabled, including implementation of new risk-profiling tools, increased internal management reporting and a new process of random auditing. The VCGLR last month hosted an interjurisdictional compliance conference. Indeed it is fair to say that the VCGLR is on track to implement all recommendations of the VAGO report by June 2018.

There has been a major report. It found in many respects that the VCGLR had made considerable progress in relation to many of the issues raised in this motion or that it was already satisfactorily performing in relation to those issues. I think frankly it would not be an appropriate use of the committee's time to replicate all of that work just undertaken by VAGO or indeed an appropriate way to treat that organisation. That is the key reason why I think this motion should

not be supported, notwithstanding the fact that I actually agree with a lot of the policy context that Dr Ratnam raised in the first part of her speech.

I will not speak at length on the Crown allegations, but I do feel, given that it has been raised, the need to make a couple of points in relation to that. Firstly, I would recommend that in raising these allegations we be careful about the way we frame them. I do think we need to be careful about using words like 'complicit', which are quite strong words in this context. In the ordinary usage of that term, complicit I think in most people's understanding means more than simply turning a blind eye, but rather being almost actively involved in something. I think we have got to be careful about what it is specifically that we are alleging. Whether we are alleging that a regulator perhaps was not as diligent as they should be, that is a serious enough allegation in itself. I do think we need to be very careful about saying that the VCGLR is 'complicit' in these activities.

Secondly, I think it is important to put on the record that the government is not aware of any evidence of the commission being complicit or being involved or even indeed being negligent. We are confident that they are the most appropriate body with the expertise to conduct an investigation into these particular allegations.

The commission maintains constant oversight of Crown by undertaking regular inspections and audits each year. I do think it is also important to reflect that Mr Wilkie, who has been one of the leading advocates for an investigation into these particular allegations, has indicated that he is confident that the investigation by the commission will result in progress and that he has received a positive response from the VCGLR. I do draw members' attention to comments from Mr Wilkie, who I think has certainly been an actor in this particular issue.

In summation, I would simply say that there are lots of issues that have been raised here today that probably do go beyond the motion, and I would agree with a lot of comments made by people throughout this place on some of those broader contextual issues, but I certainly do not agree that it would be useful for the Legal and Social Issues Committee to undertake an investigation of matters that have only recently been the subject of an investigation by VAGO, and when VAGO's findings so neatly match up with the very issues raised by this motion, I believe that a much stronger case would need to be made that somehow that inquiry had gaps or deficiencies in it if we were to agree to a motion of this sort. The government will not be supporting this motion.

Dr RATNAM (Northern Metropolitan) (14:57) — Thank you very much for the contributions that have been made by our colleagues here. I will respond to a number of matters that have been raised. Firstly, in relation to providing a context, I think it is really important that we provide a context in this debate, and context does involve policy, because the policy settings, the mechanisms that have been used and have not been regulated properly, the action that has been refused to be taken through policy is the reason why we are getting such breaches of trust and faith in the system that we have now, as exemplified in the recent Crown Casino case. That is potentially the tip of the iceberg. There are so many cases that happen across this state that are not being investigated and regulated properly. That is our concern and what brings us to move this motion here today.

In relation to the Victorian Auditor-General's Office (VAGO) and the audit that was conducted, yes, VAGO has a role in the audit and review process, but it is an auditor — it has an auditing function. I have worked very closely with VAGO in my time in council. I have a great working relationship with them, and I have seen the depths of their work; however, they are limited in their capacity to act on those findings. They can make a series of findings and recommendations and investigate things, which they have done in this case, and they have been scathing in their report and in their recommendations that there needs to be urgent and significant reform of our regulator — the only regulator that we have to limit the harms that pokies cause in our communities — but they cannot act on those findings.

As a result of those findings we have to ask ourselves who will act on those findings. We are asking the regulator that we have found to be ineffective in a number of areas to examine itself. Is that really the best response that we have? Do we ask some body — a body that we know is not working that well — to now try to understand its own issues and fix itself without providing any extra assistance or resources? That is the situation that we have before us.

This is not a small issue that we are talking about. We are talking about an issue that harms Victorians every single day. Every single minute that we sit here thousands of dollars are mounting up in terms of losses on the pokies. Lives are being harmed and lives are being ruined. Yes, we have the VAGO audit and recommendations, but now we have to ask ourselves: who is going to act on those recommendations? We cannot ask the regulator that has been found to be inefficient to investigate itself solely. That is why we need a parliamentary inquiry.

I was citing the recent excellent decision just today by the Tasmanian Labor Party, who have announced that they are going to place a ban on the pokies and remove poker machines from venues within five years. That is a really courageous decision, but do you know how that decision was arrived at? It was after a parliamentary inquiry. This is what sets these things in train. Citizens and communities look to us as parliaments across this country to take action on great social harms that are being caused.

I thank both Mr Mulino and Mr O'Donohue for their contributions, but I just say to my colleagues on the right here — Mr O'Donohue and his colleagues — that in terms of what they provided for their response I heard a lot of personal attacks and party politics. I might be relatively new to this place, but I have been around long enough and I have been around politicians long enough to know that when you start talking about process you potentially have nothing to say about the substance. And that is what we are seeing year after year.

Major political parties in this country are closing their ears to the clear evidence before us that the system is failing people. Every day we sit on our hands and say, 'Oh, but there's been a bit of an inquiry there. That should sort it out. Oh, there's been a bit of a breach, there's been a bit of tampering there. That's okay. Let the regulator that hasn't been doing that well investigate this', and every single day that we let case after case go before us and do not take any action, we are harming people, we are harming individuals, we are harming communities and we are harming lives. Some people take a long time to recover from very significant pokies addictions. We just saw that discussed in the last two weeks in the debate in this house, when licences were locked in for an extra 20 years unnecessarily.

The reason we talk about the policy context and the reason we talk about donations is that we are talking about influence. There are so many of us asking: why do people refuse to take action when the evidence is so clear? There is clear empirical evidence that when you reduce pokie bet limits you reduce spending and you reduce problem gambling. The science is in, the evidence is in and our politicians and decision-makers refuse to listen.

In Tasmania they had the courage to have a parliamentary inquiry that has led one of the major political parties in the state to say that as an election platform they are going to ban the pokies. Let us hope they are an example for their Labor colleagues in this state, who claim that they are a progressive

government. I hope they have the courage to stand by their progressive principles and back this inquiry.

House divided on motion:

Ayes, 7

| | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Dunn, Ms | Purcell, Mr (<i>Teller</i>) |
| Hartland, Ms | Ratnam, Dr |
| Patten, Ms (<i>Teller</i>) | Springle, Ms |
| Pennicuik, Ms | |

Noes, 31

| | |
|-----------------|------------------------------|
| Atkinson, Mr | Morris, Mr |
| Bath, Ms | Mulino, Mr (<i>Teller</i>) |
| Bourman, Mr | O'Donohue, Mr |
| Crozier, Ms | Ondarchie, Mr |
| Dalidakis, Mr | O'Sullivan, Mr |
| Dalla-Riva, Mr | Peulich, Mrs |
| Davis, Mr | Pulford, Ms |
| Eideh, Mr | Ramsay, Mr |
| Finn, Mr | Rich-Phillips, Mr |
| Fitzherbert, Ms | Shing, Ms |
| Gepp, Mr | Somyurek, Mr |
| Jennings, Mr | Symes, Ms |
| Leane, Mr | Tierney, Ms |
| Lovell, Ms | Wooldridge, Ms |
| Melhem, Mr | Young, Mr (<i>Teller</i>) |
| Mikakos, Ms | |

Motion negatived.

PRODUCTION OF DOCUMENTS

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan)

(15:09) — I move, in amended form:

That, in accordance with standing order 11.01, the Leader of the Government table in the Council by 12 noon on Tuesday, 20 February 2018 —

- (1) the contract, in full, signed by the Napthine government to host the Australian Formula One Grand Prix in Melbourne from 2016 to 2020;
- (2) the contract, in full, signed by the Andrews government to host the Australian Formula One Grand Prix in Melbourne from 2021 to 2023;

and any response should conform with standing orders 11.02(3) and 11.03(1)(a).

For the information of the chamber, I have moved an amended motion only in that the date for the tabling of the documents has changed from October this year to February next year.

Members will know that I have moved similar motions before in former years in this Parliament calling for various governments — in fact every government since I have been in the Parliament — to release the grand prix documents to the public, in particular the contracts which the government signs on behalf of Victorians, signing up Victorians to spend hundreds of millions of

dollars on this event. In fact this year, 2017, we had the most expensive grand prix ever. That is in the context of the cost of the grand prix escalating and increasing every single year, certainly since I came here in 2007. In fact if you go back to 2007, what is called the 'government contribution' was nearly \$35 million.

In the first few years of the race it was only around \$3 million, \$4 million, \$7 million — that type of contribution. But this year, 2017, the grand prix cost taxpayers an incredible \$97.2 million to stage — nearly \$100 million — but only managed to raise \$32 million in ticket sales and \$8 million from so-called 'other sources', leaving Victorian taxpayers to cover the event with a \$57.12 million contribution. The cost to taxpayers could be even higher for this event because buried in the *Australian Grand Prix Annual Report 2017* are the contributed capital and the cash flow hedge reserve, which total more than \$40 million, and they are listed in the notes of the financial statements. That is actually a cost that is transferred from the Australian Grand Prix Corporation to the taxpayer, again taking us back to the fact that \$97.2 million of taxpayers money has been spent on one race that goes for two days in Melbourne. Of course this money is going overseas into the pockets of already very wealthy individuals, and I will get to that in a minute.

The last six grand prix events have cost taxpayers around \$350 million. It is an absolutely scandalous waste of taxpayers money that both Labor and Liberal governments have presided over for 21 years. Bearing in mind that even if we just talk about current costs and not what we expect, which is that they will go up every year, if this continues the grand prix will cost Victorians at least another \$250 million in the next five years. That is \$600 million if added to the last six years. In fact my calculations are that from the start of the grand prix to now the grand prix has cost Victorians \$1.4 billion — \$1.4 billion!

Mr O'Sullivan interjected.

Ms PENNICUIK — No, that is the net cost. That is the cost after what it has brought in, Mr O'Sullivan. Get your figures right. That is the cost to Victorians — \$1.4 billion — which could be spent, firstly, on other sporting and cultural events in the community that do actually bring some benefit to the community and, secondly, on other things like much-needed public housing. We are told we do not have any money for public housing, but we have certainly got another \$250 million, if the contract runs through to 2023, to spend on a grand prix.

Victorians are totally sick of hundreds of millions of dollars of their money being squandered on this event every year for the sake of a dwindling number of spectators and absolutely no benefit to the vast majority of Victorians. As I have raised in this place many times before — and I have asked the government to do something about this — the Australian Grand Prix Corporation is not even required to accurately count the number of attendees, like all other sporting events do, despite the massive cost to taxpayers. It just estimates attendances every year. This year's estimated attendance of 296 000 fans is not believable or independently verified. It is physically impossible for that number of people to have attended the grand prix. If you look at the photos of the first day, there is hardly anyone there. They would be lucky if there were a couple of thousand people strolling around in the vast expanse of Albert Park.

Mr O'Sullivan — Have you been there?

Ms PENNICUIK — No, I have not. I have certainly been outside protesting against it. The actual venue can only hold a certain number of people, and over two days that adds up to about 140 000 if it is full, which it never is. Yet the government, the grand prix corporation and the media all trot out this estimation that 296 000 people have attended. It is just physically impossible, and it is just a lie. It is scandalous that they are allowed to get away with this and are not required to put in barcode counters and actually count how many people attend the event. They can do it at the cricket. They can do it at the football. They can do it at any other event. At the tennis and at rock concerts they know exactly how many people are there. But no, the grand prix corporation just makes it up every year. It is completely scandalous. They should be made to be fully accountable in this regard, but both governments have refused to act on it.

This motion is about the government becoming more open and transparent about this secretive event and releasing documents to the community. It is interesting that the new boss of the Formula One Group, Mr Chase Carey, who has taken over from Bernie Ecclestone, whose pockets Victorian taxpayers have lined for the last 27 years, has said that a decision about making the hosting fees and the contract more transparent would be fine. He is actually not opposed to releasing the contract. As I have said before, contracts are actually released in other countries; it is only in Australia that they are not.

I also thought it was quite funny that so-called Aussie Formula One ace Daniel Ricciardo said that he did not know the ins and outs of Melbourne's race contract but

agreed that taxpayers deserve to know how much they were tipping into the event. He said, 'I don't really understand why the secret'. Thanks, Daniel. It is good to have support from someone who is actually involved in the event and understands that taxpayers should know how much money is being forked out in these contracts.

One of the most interesting things in the contract is what the exit fee would be if we were to negotiate our way out of the contract to prevent Victorian taxpayers having to put another \$250 million into this race. That is certainly something people are interested in.

Earlier this year I asked the Minister for Tourism and Major Events if he would release a report by Ernst and Young and the Victorian Major Events Company on the Australian Grand Prix Corporation. The minister replied that he was unable to provide a copy of that report because it was commercial in confidence. The government is always going back to commercial in confidence.

In terms of this event there is only one provider, which is the Australian Grand Prix Corporation and the international Formula One federation. There is no other provider. It is not as if there is a competitive tendering process for who is going to provide the Formula One grand prix in Melbourne. There is also no other state that wants this event. The government are always saying it is commercial in confidence and they have to keep it secret because other states might want to host the grand prix. Who would want to host a race that is going to cost them \$97 million per year? Nobody does. Years ago they may have, but now, with the escalating costs, it seems impossible to run this race for anything less than \$70 million, \$80 million or, as was the case last year, \$97 million. What other state would want to take that on? No-one would want to take that on.

This year the Minister for Tourism and Major Events called for an evaluation of the holding of the Logies and decided that after 30 years and \$30 million the cost to stage the Logies could not be justified. I thought, 'Wow, that's nothing compared to the cost of the grand prix'. I asked him if he would do a similar evaluation of the grand prix. Certainly it would have to come back saying there is no benefit to Victorians and there is an awful cost to taxpayers every single year with the staging of this event. But he refused to do one.

I will finish on a historical note. Back in 2007 the Auditor-General did look at the grand prix and concluded that it provided no discernible benefit to Victorians. The whole idea that it provides incentives for tourists to come to Melbourne was not supported.

There is absolutely no evidence for it, and I think everybody can understand that that is entirely the case. People overseas may watch the event, but they do not all then come flocking to Melbourne.

At the time, the Auditor-General said there should be a proper cost-benefit analysis conducted on the grand prix. The Premier at the time, Premier Bracks, told Parliament that he supported the findings of the report and would specify more the value of those events to the community and the environment more broadly. Nothing has happened in the 10 years since, except that the cost of the race has escalated every single year. It is now around \$1.4 billion that taxpayers have spent on it, and I think the taxpayers of Victoria are entitled to know what the contracts are and what is in them.

I should say the costs that I am talking about are only the ones that are actually released in the Australian Grand Prix Corporation annual report. There are a whole lot of other hidden costs, so the figures I have been citing are the minimum amount that Victorian taxpayers are contributing to this outdated and anachronistic event. I call on the government to release the documents that I ask for in the motion.

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) (15:23) — I expected Ms Pennicuik to speak for longer, not that I am too disappointed. I have spoken about Mr O’Sullivan being consistent on an issue, and Ms Pennicuik has been consistent on this particular issue and on seeking documents around the grand prix. She has always been pretty open about her dislike of the grand prix. I have responded that when it comes to calling for documents, the Labor Party has been consistent, whether it be in opposition or in government. The Labor Party does not oppose calls for documents in this house. We never have — in the time I have been here, at least — but we have always said, whether it be in opposition or government, that we respect that the executive of the government needs to be able to operate. So we respect that there will be some commercial-in-confidence and some cabinet-in-confidence documents that cannot be handed to the chamber. But we respect the right of this chamber to call for documents.

With these two particular documents that Ms Pennicuik is calling for, while I am not part of the executive, I could crystal ball and probably flag that there will be an issue in handing them over because there is a real chance it could put in jeopardy the successful venture that the Australian grand prix has been.

I appreciate Ms Pennicuik’s concerns that there could be adverse effects for the Albert Park Lake precinct, but

as I have mentioned a number of times when speaking on these issues, I have actually been personally involved and I have friends who have been personally involved in the set-up and decamping of the facilities at the grand prix. It does open up a lot of construction jobs in that process, it opens up a lot of jobs in running the grand prix and it increases the economic input to the whole of the city. It increases tourism. This particular event gets beamed around the world probably more than any event that we do hold in Melbourne. It is a great advert for Melbourne and tourism. The hotels are full, the pubs are full and motor racing enthusiasts come from all around the world to see this particular event.

Getting back to the concern around it maybe having an effect on the actual precinct, I can happily report to Ms Pennicuik that earlier this year my daughter got married at a function room right on Albert Park Lake. The wedding photos around the precinct came out beautifully, so —

Ms Shing — You were the loveliest thing there, Mr Leane.

Mr LEANE — Yes, especially the father of the bride.

Mr Ondarchie — Did you cry?

Mr LEANE — No, I did not cry. I save that for politics, Mr Ondarchie!

As I said, as much as we respect individual members of the chamber’s right to call for documents, we have always had the rider that the executive has got to be able to function. People that do business with the government of Victoria have to have the security that their commercial-in-confidence information will not be used elsewhere. We have also got to protect the economy of the state and the tourism that comes from this particular event. That is all I would like to say on this issue. As I said, we are not going to oppose a call for documents — we have not before and I cannot see us doing it in the future.

Mr ONDARCHIE (Northern Metropolitan) (15:27) — How terrific it is this afternoon to talk about one of my favourite events in Melbourne, the Australian Formula One Grand Prix. As members would know, I am a substantial motor racing fan, and I try to follow —

Ms Shing — You are certainly substantial, Mr Ondarchie.

Mr ONDARCHIE — Well, there you go. The value that is often added through interjection.

I am a big fan of motor racing and try to follow the Formula One as much as I can. Members would know that I follow the Formula One not just here but also overseas. Australia's track is probably the best track in the world behind Abu Dhabi's Yas Marina Circuit, which I attended in 2016.

The grand prix is the oldest surviving motor race here in Australia. It has been held 79 times in Australia since it was first held at Phillip Island. The race became part of the Formula One world championship in 1985, when it started in Adelaide, and from 1996 it has been held here at Albert Park, running on that great circuit. The winner of the Formula One grand prix here in Australia gets presented with a lovely circular plate known as the Jack Brabham trophy, and it is a design based on the steering wheel of the great Jack Brabham. The track is over 5.3 kilometres long and they travel 58 laps. Just this year we saw Lewis Hamilton in his Mercedes take pole, and at the end of the race Sebastian Vettel finished first. Lewis Hamilton and Valtteri Bottas finished second and third on the podium.

Ms Shing interjected.

Mr ONDARCHIE — I am sure you will get your chance, Ms Shing.

Of course there was that great lap by Kimi Raikkonen in the Ferrari — I think he pulled a lap of 1 minute and 26.538 seconds, which was a very quick lap for our circuit.

Ms Pennicuik talked about the number of spectators that have attended the event here since 1995. There have been substantial numbers. I remember in 2010 there were over 300 000, as there were in 2012, 2013 and 2014. In 2015 I think there were just under 300 000 attending, and in 2016 there were 272 000, 90 000 of which were on race day. It is a very popular sport, and let me tell you, Ms Pennicuik, I would be delighted to take you there and show you around on race day. It is a great event for Melbourne.

If we think about some of the great winners there, of course there was Seb this year in his Ferrari, Nico Rosberg last year in the Mercedes, Lewis Hamilton the year before in the Mercedes, Nico Rosberg again in 2014 and Englishman Jenson Button in the McLaren-Mercedes won it in 2012 with a great run. He won it a couple of years before that as well, I think. No, maybe the year before that was Sebastian Vettel and then Button before that. We have seen some great wins there. The great Michael Schumacher won there four times, in 2000, 2001, 2002 and 2004, and I think David Coulthard was the one in the middle in 2003.

Mr O'Sullivan is watching intently. He is somewhat surprised by my knowledge about this particular race.

Mr O'Sullivan — I want to hear about Mark Webber running fifth.

Mr ONDARCHIE — Mark Webber, interestingly enough, in 2005 — as I pick up Mr O'Sullivan's interjection — as part of a promotion drove a Formula One car over the Sydney Harbour Bridge to promote the great race here in Melbourne and bring more tourism dollars and spending to Melbourne. As Mr O'Sullivan talks about Mark Webber, it is appropriate that I congratulate Mark on his appointment to the Australian Grand Prix Corporation board for the next three years. He will join Kimberley Brown and people like John Harnden, Gillian Franklin, Laura Anderson, Mick Doohan, Mark Green, Kate Lundy and Trent Smyth on the board. He is going to add significant value given his global experience.

As members are aware, I am an ambassador for Guide Dogs Victoria. It is a delight to advise the chamber that for the second year running Guide Dogs Victoria is going to be the chosen charity for the Australian Formula One Grand Prix. There will be lots of opportunities to generate money for Guide Dogs Victoria for the great work that they do across Victoria. You will see guide dogs and helpers at the track. Please, those visiting the grand prix in 2018, dig deep and give for the work of Guide Dogs Victoria.

Ms Shing interjected.

Mr ONDARCHIE — Thank you, Ms Shing. When I get compliments from you it makes my day just special, really.

Ms Shing — I live to make your day special, Mr Ondarchie.

Mr ONDARCHIE — Thank you. Can I take the opportunity at this time to congratulate a great Australian, Roger Chirnside. Roger Chirnside might not be known to many of you, but he has been an outstanding volunteer in terms of flag marshalling for the Australian Formula One Grand Prix. In fact he was chief marshal at the 2017 Formula One Rolex Australian Grand Prix, and he has worked at every Australian grand prix since the race became part of the Formula One championships in 1985. For that he was awarded just recently in Paris the FIA Outstanding Official of the Year Award for 2017. What a great Australian, and I take the opportunity to congratulate Roger on his great work.

Regarding the motion specifically and the documents that Ms Pennicuik seeks to get released, one thing worth reminding those in the chamber and particularly Ms Pennicuik about is that this race is tremendous for Victoria. It adds significant economic value, significant tourism dollars, and it puts Melbourne and Victoria on the map. We will not be opposing your motion today, Ms Pennicuik, because I think we should long celebrate the race that is here until at least 2023 and, with my desire, hopefully longer.

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan) (15:34) — I thank Mr Leane for supporting my motion yet again. I think there are quite a few that I have moved to try to get these contracts released to the Victorian public. I also thank Mr Ondarchie for his comments. In terms of what Mr Leane was saying, again he trotted out the old chestnut of commercial in confidence. But I have already explained it: there is no commercial in confidence here, particularly when we have an event that costs Victorian taxpayers such a large amount of money. To have that kept secret from the Victorian public is completely inappropriate.

I do have to respond to some remarks made by Mr Ondarchie when he was referring to the attendances at the grand prix. As I mentioned in my substantive contribution, nobody knows who attends because the grand prix is not required to accurately account for who is attending. Whether they have been given free tickets or whether they have bought tickets, the grand prix does not have the tickets passing through a barcode scanner, a counting machine or anything like that like every other event does. They are just allowed year after year to go on making the numbers up. Mr Ondarchie said there were 90 000 at the event. He cannot say that with any confidence, because there is no accurate count done.

As I say, there is hardly anyone there on the first day, so the overinflated claimed attendances by the Australian Grand Prix Corporation, by successive governments and by the media are just not credible or verifiable. They should not be used, because it is completely dishonest. I would be happy if they accurately counted it. Then I would accept how many people were there, but I do not think anyone — politicians, the media or anybody — should be quoting figures that cannot be verified for an event that costs hundreds of millions of dollars. It is a serious matter that I am raising here.

Taxpayers are completely in the dark, and it is about time, with the exorbitant amount of money that is being spent on this event, that the contracts are released and that the whole costing of the event is made transparent,

because it is currently not and never has been. I just think that to keep going on for another five or six years with this event costing Victorians another \$300 million or \$350 million in addition to the already exorbitant costs that we have racked up on this event for so long, we do need to make the process much more transparent for Victorians.

I have to pick up on Mr Ondarchie's final remarks about putting Melbourne on the map. If I hear that again! Well, it does not put it on the map. Many studies have shown that the number of people who watch the event overseas is not very many. It is nothing. The government says it is 400 million people. That is the number of people who watch all of the grand prix events across the whole year, not the number of people who watch the Melbourne event, which is a very small number of people.

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms PENNICUIK — Okay, there are two people who watch the Melbourne event, but it is nothing like the figures given. I think the government needs to stop using figures that are completely wrong and inaccurate when speaking about this event, as it has been doing for many years. I commend the motion to the house and look forward to the contracts that were signed by this government and the previous government being tabled and released to the Victorian public.

Motion agreed to.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE ECONOMY AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Reference

Mr ONDARCHIE (Northern Metropolitan) (15:38) — I move:

That, pursuant to sessional order 6, this house requires the Economy and Infrastructure Committee to inquire into, consider and report on, at a date to be fixed by the committee, the operation of LaunchVic in relation to —

- (1) governance, business activities, recruitment, funding criteria and the appropriateness and use of funding provided by the Victorian government in the context of its objectives;
- (2) its relationship and activities with StartCon;
- (3) the contract, funding and integrity between LaunchVic, 500 Startups and its former Australian CEO;
- (4) the relationship and activities of other organisations where contractual arrangements have been required to be altered;

- (5) the Minister for Innovation and the Digital Economy's involvement with LaunchVic activities; and
- (6) any other consequential matters the committee may deem appropriate.

It is interesting to see that we are at this point. I can summarise the reason that we are at this point: because the coalition have asked the minister a number of questions relating to every one of these paragraphs in today's motion, and we cannot get answers. If there were a dance contest in Parliament, Minister Dalidakis would win it for the greatest dodger and weaver we have ever seen. We simply cannot get the answers. I know that other members of this chamber, such as my colleagues — one of them particularly is a member for Northern Metropolitan Region — have asked questions themselves about the activities of LaunchVic and cannot get a straight answer. So what do we do? We have asked a number of questions over a number of weeks, months and years about the activities of LaunchVic and cannot get answers.

The last answer we got of any substance in this place was by the minister, who said, and I paraphrase, 'I'm not going to answer any more questions, but I'll offer you a briefing from LaunchVic'. So what did we do? The shadow minister for innovation, David Southwick, wrote to the minister and said, 'We would like that briefing from the LaunchVic CEO, and here are the people who are going to attend'. The minister then went back to Mr Southwick and said, 'No, no. You're not getting all those people. You're only getting one, and that's all that's going to meet with the CEO of LaunchVic'.

We then reminded the minister by letter that in fact LaunchVic, as he quotes, is a private organisation and should be subject to whoever wants to meet with them. The minister conceded, and a LaunchVic briefing date was set. I am advised that about 35 to 40 minutes before the briefing was to take place at 10 o'clock on a Monday morning in this building, Mr Southwick received a phone call from either LaunchVic or the minister's office to confirm that we were ready for the briefing that morning, which Mr Southwick confirmed. About 6 or 7 minutes before the briefing was due to take place, Mr Southwick received a call from the LaunchVic office that said, 'Ms Cornick, the CEO, is sick today and won't be able to attend the briefing'. Since then Mr Southwick has had no communiqué from LaunchVic, not a date to try and reschedule, not an apology, not a way of getting around this either by email or face to face or something to reset a date — absolutely nothing.

Mr O'Sullivan — Nothing at all?

Mr ONDARCHIE — Mr O'Sullivan, nothing at all. We got a call about 35 minutes beforehand: 'Are you still ready for the meeting?'; 'Yes, we are'. Then 5 or 6 minutes beforehand: 'Sorry, they're sick; they're not turning up today'. Far be it from me to be a cynic in this place — through you, Chair — Mr O'Sullivan, but one has to say that something does not add up here, particularly about the fact that subsequent to that we had had absolutely no dialogue with LaunchVic saying, 'We apologise. What's a new date we can set?'.

Maybe the dodge and weave continues. Why does it continue? Why does this happen? Well, there are so many dubious things happening here. Just in the last sitting week I reminded the minister about his claim in his travel report that was widely promoted in the media as well that he went overseas and won the Girls in Tech conference for Melbourne. 'It has never been held in the Southern Hemisphere before', he said, 'and I've won it for Melbourne for 2017'. I asked him, 'As we get to the end of 2017, Minister, where exactly was this conference held in Melbourne?'. In his first answer he was not clear; he said he would need to go and find out. I reminded him that we actually knew that it was held in that wonderful Melbourne suburb of San Francisco. He said, 'Oh, there've been some changes to the contract, and it's probably going to be held in 2018'.

This is the man who stood up and claimed to the media and said in his travel report, 'I personally secured the conference for Melbourne in 2017'. It was held in San Francisco. We asked him to be accountable for his vast travel bill and said, 'Where is it?'. He could not respond. It turns out that it did not happen in 2017. He dodged and weaved around that answer. Hence the reason we need to go through this process. The Economy and Infrastructure Committee, as Mr O'Sullivan, Mr Finn, Mr Leane and others well know, is very busy. But in the absence of any answers, in the continuing dodging and weaving by the minister, we have to take it through this process because Victorian taxpayers need to know what has happened to their money.

Let us not forget that once again the minister was left red-faced after another blunder when he stood on the steps of the Sydney town hall and gloated that he had won the StartCon conference for Melbourne. He was allocating \$1 million to bring the StartCon technology conference to Victoria from New South Wales. He offered tickets, I think, to the New South Wales minister to come down to Victoria. When we asked him if any taxpayers money was spent on securing the deal for StartCon — which did not happen in Melbourne but happened in Randwick, New South Wales, despite him confirming it was going to happen here — he said, 'No,

no taxpayer money has been spent'. So I said, 'Well, how did you get to Sydney? How did you travel from the airport to the meetings? How did you travel from the meetings back to the airport and back to Melbourne? How did you do that?'. He said, 'Well, I spent it out of my ministerial budget'. I had asked him, 'Was it taxpayers money?', and he said, 'No'.

Maybe there is a bit of confusion in the government about what is taxpayers money and what is not. We see that more and more and time and time again. Just yesterday we added up the numbers on cost blowouts of projects in Victoria. I think the number was —

Mr O'Sullivan interjected.

Mr ONDARCHIE — Mr O'Sullivan interjects with \$5 billion. You're not even close to the mark, not even the nearest the pin.

Mr O'Sullivan — Ten?

Mr ONDARCHIE — Not even \$10 billion, Mr O'Sullivan. You'll have to have another shot at goal. You're not even close. The real answer —

Mr O'Sullivan — Twenty?

Mr ONDARCHIE — He says \$20 billion, but once again he's about 8 feet short of the pin. It is \$23.93 billion in cost blowouts. The reason is that the government does not understand it is taxpayers money.

There are other associated issues. On this bungle around StartCon, there is a bit of doubt about who was telling the truth here, because the people from StartCon made some claims about the government changing their way through the discussion and about changing the rules on which the contract was signed. The minister had other claims about how this all happened post the deal.

I have to say that in the chamber here when we were asking Minister Dalidakis the questions, he had all the attributes of Homer Simpson in answering these questions. He could have been quite open with us and just gone 'D'oh', because quite frankly he did not know. He has talked about a number of things that he is going to do for Victoria, and he has not delivered on any of them. He talked about the FinTech hub in Docklands and how great that is going to be, but we are yet to see anything happen. The FinTech hub was announced in June this year, and the competitive tender process closed in July. The government said they would evaluate what was going on in August and enter into an agreement by September with the hub to open — and this is their catchphrase — as soon as possible. Over

three years in, and we are still waiting to hear. They have said the decision has not been made yet because they were looking for experienced innovation hub operators in Goods Sheds North in Docklands, which is also home to the Data61 Cyber Security and Innovation Hub, and they are yet to come good with it — another example of where things have fallen over.

When it comes to start-up businesses in Victoria, I guess the message to the minister is, 'Could you start up? Could you actually do something?'. I have to say that with LaunchVic, which is the nub of this inquiry, something does not seem right, because they have just lost another director. I think the number is something like 11 directors, including the chair, who have gone since LaunchVic started. They have just appointed Laura Anderson to be the new chair after Ahmed Fahour left, but the board members are reduced to only five. So what is going on? There are some dubious things around contracts, there is some uncertainty about the minister's involvement, and its relationship and activities with StartCon have ebbed and flowed, like the moon, I guess. We are yet to get any substantive answers out of the minister. A number of board members have resigned. What is going on?

That conference that I talked about, Girls in Tech, has just gone absolutely awry. As I said, the minister said he secured the exclusive rights for the Girls in Tech Catalyst Conference in Melbourne and he entered into a contract, and it did not happen in 2017. I have to say he has spent so much time and so much money and accrued so many frequent flyer points travelling the globe despite being asked by the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee about what his forward plans are for his travel to drive economic value to Victoria and saying he could not tell us because it comes along as it comes along. He has spent so much effort. Never has Victoria had a minister that spent so much time, so much money and so much effort securing opportunities for other economies.

I think he needs to be reminded that he is the trade minister for Victoria. He is not the consultant trade minister for other economies. He travels the globe in first class or business class — or who knows — getting chauffeur driven to the airport and probably going into the chairman's lounge at Qantas and having a jolly good time, all of it on the taxpayers dollar, and we are yet to see any decent delivery.

When it came to 500 Startups there were some real challenges, and I know others in the chamber have asked about this from time to time. It did not seem right. Mr Dalidakis boasted to anyone who wanted to hear that he had done a great job in securing

500 Startups. It is a mess, and it was a mess from the start. Mr Dalidakis comes into this chamber with his sleeves rolled up and his tie loose and says, 'I'm a real worker for the people of Victoria', and he sits here and he says, 'I'm doing great things, and I'm travelling. I don't like being away from my family, and I'm travelling again somewhere else', and he claims he is doing lots of stuff. When it came to 500 Startups there was this big smiling photo of him almost like he had won the Brownlow Medal or the gold Logie and was doing some wonderful things for Victoria. Maybe — perhaps this is more important, Ms Shing — he is even claiming he won an Academy Award for great acting. But he delivered a basket case with 500 Startups. What has happened is it has sent a terrible message to conference organisers and the start-up community, the innovation community, right across the world that Victoria just cannot get its act together.

Interestingly enough after that whole 500 Startups thing went messy a former board member of LaunchVic was appointed as the chief executive of the Australian arm of 500 Startups. Shortly after 500 Startups had been awarded \$2.9 million by LaunchVic — and Ms Rachael Neumann was on the board at the time — when the whole thing went belly up she was appointed as the CEO. I could join the dots here. I could join the dots that the minister will deny. It just does not add up, so we asked in question time why this had happened and Mr Dalidakis — sleeves rolled up, tie dishevelled — gave me a diatribe about how dare I impugn the name of Rachael Neumann. I was not, and I did not. I simply asked: how did a former board member of LaunchVic who awarded \$2.9 million to 500 Startups suddenly become the CEO of its Australian arm? I am sure the people of Victoria are not silly. They can join the dots here.

When I challenged him on this in this place he got really cranky. He got really upset about it. It was just a simple question: how does someone who was in governance with LaunchVic, who awarded \$2.9 million, suddenly become the CEO of that organisation they awarded \$2.9 million to? I think it is a reasonable question, but he got really angry about it and he talked about the skills that Ms Neumann had to become the CEO of 500 Startups. I was not doubting her skills. I was not diving into her CV to check whether she was qualified to do this job or not. I was just simply drawing a link between her time on the board, the awarding of some money and her appointment as CEO.

During some of his response to me, when he talked about her skills, he talked about one of the skills and competencies that she had in her skill set being the fact

that she was a member of the LGBTI community. He said that to me in the Parliament. He said he would take the question, and he said that they needed a number of skills and that — I quote:

... Ms Neumann had a distinct set of skills, including diversity and inclusiveness as a result of her experience as a member of the LGBTI community.

I found that really curious. I found it really curious that Mr Dalidakis would say one of the reasons for her appointment and one of the skills that she brought was her experience as a member of the LGBTI community.

Ms Shing — What's the full quote?

Mr ONDARCHIE — I just read it to you. If you were listening, I read it to you. I had trouble understanding that. I had trouble understanding why someone's membership of a community such as the LGBTI community would be one of a set of skills that would be needed to lead 500 Melbourne.

Ms Shing — You're getting the wrap-up.

Mr ONDARCHIE — No. In fact quite the opposite. Sit down and put your seatbelt on. Why would this person be offered the job? And I still find that curious. I find it curious that Mr Dalidakis would include that as part of the skill set required. I ask: has the governance of LaunchVic and its selection process changed so that part of the skill set required to be a CEO of an organisation that they will align themselves with is someone's sexual orientation? I find that bizarre and frankly quite offensive. I find it offensive.

I did ask at the time about Ms Neumann's direct role, and the minister made some dubious response about the time gap between being a board member of LaunchVic and joining as CEO of the Australian arm of 500 Startups, and that could well be fair. But he did say that part of the criteria in reallocating this money to help 500 Startups get along was that Rachael Neumann became CEO of 500 Startups. Now, that is a really interesting contractual variation to have: that a government organisation that provides significant funding would say, 'We'll only give you the money if our choice' — the captain's pick — 'is the CEO of this organisation'. I could join the dots once again, but it stands out, doesn't it? It stands out that something is just not right here.

On behalf of the taxpayer, as this house of review is designed to do, we asked the minister questions about this. How did that work? How did you put in the contract that we will only give you the money if you appoint this person to lead? How is it that you put in the

contract that we are selecting this person because of her skills and experience in the LGBTI community? That is not fair on Rachael Neumann. Rachael Neumann could well have had the right skills and attributes to do this job. For the minister to say, 'We'll only give you the money if you're going to appoint her' and 'We'll only give you the money because a set of skills she has in relation to the LGBTI community meets our needs', is bizarre. Apart from Mr Dalidakis, there is probably no-one in this house who is not shaking their head right now and going, 'What was he talking about?'. We do not know what he was talking about, and we could not get anything more from him. That is part of the drive to ask the Economy and Infrastructure Committee to inquire into its operations.

Mr Southwick has asked a number of questions through me and also directly to the minister about the activities of LaunchVic and its funding. We simply cannot get answers. Yes, I acknowledge how busy the Economy and Infrastructure Committee is. I acknowledge the workload before Mr Finn, as chair, and Mr Gepp, Mr Leane and others on the committee. I acknowledge how busy they are. But we tried to prosecute this case at a Public Accounts and Estimates Committee (PAEC) hearing, and we just could not get answers. When I challenged the minister about this he said flippantly, 'You're not listening. You don't understand English, so maybe I should speak in Thai or Greek'. What a smart alec this bloke is. He could easily have said, 'I don't know' or 'I got it wrong', but he will not. Yet at times, as he told me on 8 March this year when I asked him about his involvement with LaunchVic and its decisions, he says, and I quote:

The fact of the matter is that LaunchVic was incorporated as a private company separate to the department.

If it is a private company separate to the department, why then would Minister Dalidakis get directly involved in some of the decisions they make around who they fund and the criteria around who they fund if it is a private organisation that makes recommendations to the minister? Something does not make sense here. Pradeep Philip left as the interim CEO of LaunchVic and was replaced by Dr Kate Cornick, who I understand is a professional, experienced and capable individual. There is some suggestion that in fact Dr Cornick is being paid less than Dr Philip was paid when he was in the role. Here is a government that talks about equal opportunity for all, gender equality and making sure everybody gets the same deal —

Ms Shing — There is some suggestion, is there?

Mr ONDARCHIE — There is some suggestion —

Ms Shing — What's your assertion for that?

Mr ONDARCHIE — Well, the minister will not answer the question. When we ask him a direct question — through you, Acting President, to pick up Ms Shing's interjection — he will not answer it.

Ms Shing — That's not a suggestion. You're just making this up.

Mr ONDARCHIE — There is some evidence that suggests otherwise.

Ms Shing interjected.

Mr ONDARCHIE — Are we going to have a game of table tennis here, Acting President, or can we let Ms Shing just hold fire?

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Ms Patten) — Please continue, Mr Ondarchie.

Mr ONDARCHIE — Thank you. We asked the minister a direct question —

Ms Shing interjected.

Mr ONDARCHIE — I am sure you are welcome to put your name on the list, Ms Shing. You can respond in any way you like. In fact I suggest, for the benefit of this chamber, that Ms Shing would be a lot more articulate than Mr Dalidakis has ever been. You are welcome to put your name on the list and respond accordingly. You are more than welcome to.

We asked that question again and again, and in the way of the Australian DanceSport Championships, the minister foxtrotted his way around, dodged and weaved and would not answer the question. We also asked about Dr Cornick's relationship with the Australian Labor Party, given that she was an adviser to then Senator Conroy — a deputy adviser, as was Mr Dalidakis at some point a deputy adviser to Dr Cornick. I have no way of suggesting that there was something untoward there, but we simply asked a question, as the media did, and we got nothing in answer to the question. We could not get an answer.

How did we do this? We asked at the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee (PAEC) for some direct answers from the minister. He went on the attack and did not answer any questions. We asked him about his overseas travel and how it was related to LaunchVic activities. He did not answer; he just went on the attack. We asked him about certain parts of his travel and how that related to specific activities of LaunchVic. He said, 'Well, just read my travel reports'. That was his answer

to the Victorian Parliament's Public Accounts and Estimates Committee.

One lives in hope that he might take seriously the inquiry by the Economy and Infrastructure Committee into the activities of LaunchVic, because he disrespects this house. He disrespects the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee. I have to say on behalf of Victorian taxpayers —

Ms Shing — Everyone disrespects the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee, Mr Ondarchie. I'm a member of that committee, and I have suffered and suffered enough.

Mr ONDARCHIE — I was also a member of the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee, and I never saw a minister before the committee with the same degree of arrogance that I saw with Mr Dalidakis. Nonetheless, we have tried everything. We have been up hill and down dale, trying to get this minister to do the simple thing that Victorian taxpayers expect of him, and that is to be accountable and to tell the truth, both of which are missing from this place. PAEC tried it; we have tried it here in the chamber. He has left us little alternative than to take it to the Economy and Infrastructure Committee to inquire into it.

There are other ways we could do this if we wanted to go further. There are several other ways that we could delve into this. We could refer it to IBAC if that is what it would take. But there is something that does not feel quite right about this. If you hear things once, you think, 'Yes, maybe'. If you hear it twice, you think, 'Maybe'. But when you hear three times from three different people about the activities of the minister and LaunchVic, it poses some questions. They are the questions we will look to prosecute at the Economy and Infrastructure Committee.

When we talked about StartCon, the CEO of StartCon, Matt Barrie, was quite open both on social media and through the general media about the relationship Mr Dalidakis had with StartCon. When we challenged Minister Dalidakis about this, he said, 'It's not me; it's LaunchVic'. Yet Matt Barrie wrote directly about his relationship with Minister Dalidakis, so it does beg the question: is LaunchVic a private company, as Mr Dalidakis indicated to this place, that makes its decisions and is overseen by the minister, or is LaunchVic just another arm of the minister's own office? Something just does not add up.

Interestingly enough, the minister goes out publicly and waves the flag about what a great job he is doing. If I may sort of paraphrase the words of people in the

Australian Labor Party, he is the greatest self-promoter they have ever met. He talks about all the great things he has done, yet when it goes belly up cue the sound of crickets. We do not hear a word from him. He does not come into this chamber and say things have changed, he makes no public statement that things have changed and when he is challenged on it he turns into Aggro Phil. He uses words like 'grub' and 'clown' and a number of other things which I will not say here that have not ever been recorded by Hansard but have clearly come across the chamber to me.

I have to say, for me anger is deferred guilt. The minister's only response when he is challenged on these things, which are substantive questions that the taxpayer should know about, is to get all personal and angry about it. And so when we have a minister of the Crown who will not be accountable, who will not answer questions, who becomes aggressive and turns the answer away from what the real question is, we have to find a way to dig deeper just to find out what is going on, because the simple answer is this minister will not tell us. It is not that he gives us bad answers; he gives us no answers.

When I talk to members of the minister's own team across the aisle from here, when I see them from time to time, they have a lot of comments about him and his capacity. There is a thing called the Dunning-Kruger effect that I think Mr Dalidakis suffers from. That is where people estimate their capacity to be higher than it actually is. I think if we were going to summarise that effect here in the Victorian Parliament, it would be Philip Dalidakis. The problem is his side know it as well; they know it as well.

There are some questions to be answered around the minister's involvement in LaunchVic's activities. What directly does he do to influence some of those decisions? It is interesting. We cannot get answers, but we look to do this in the Economy and Infrastructure Committee inquiry. I wonder about LaunchVic's governance. The fact that they have lost so many directors in such a short period of time says that something is not going right there. I worry about how they recruit people, in the absence of justifiable answers by the minister. I wonder about the funding criteria and the appropriate use of Victorian taxpayers money by way of funding when we have the minister standing on the steps of Sydney Town Hall waving to everybody, securing conferences for Melbourne and offering tickets to the New South Wales minister and the whole thing falls over because it was held in Randwick. When we challenged the minister on this he said it was everybody else's fault but his. How incongruous that on one hand he claims he made it happen and then when it

did not happen he said, 'It had nothing to do with me'. This is happening time and time again, and frankly I am — and I am certain the marketplace is — fed up.

The speakers on behalf of the government today will get their turn to either defend Mr Dalidakis or to in fact concede that there are some issues to be resolved. But there is one way we can resolve this today. The one way we can resolve all this today is to invite Mr Dalidakis to put his name on the speakers list and talk to this motion directly. But that is up to him. And we will know by whether he chooses to do this how important this motion is. If Mr Dalidakis comes in and chooses to speak to this motion, we will welcome that. But if he does not, it just adds another dimension to this whole inquiry. It surely does. All Mr Dalidakis had to do in the life of this Parliament was to answer the questions directly — wrong; it did not happen. Answer the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee questions directly — wrong; it did not happen. Tell the truth when he is asked about stuff — it has not been happening. It is time for this inquiry. We have had enough. The market has had enough.

Ms SYMES (Northern Victoria) (16:11) — I rise today to make a very brief contribution to the motion moved by Mr Ondarchie this afternoon. I will say at the forefront that we do not support an inquiry as per the wording that Mr Ondarchie has put forward in his motion. I must say that his contribution was very much a trip down memory lane of the past year in terms of question time. I think he had printed out all of the questions and answers he had exchanged with Minister Dalidakis during the sitting weeks this year. Mr Ondarchie just not liking the answers he is getting is not a reason that we should implore a parliamentary committee to use its resources to seek the answers that Mr Ondarchie wants to hear.

I did seek some information. There was an allegation that Mr Ondarchie put forward in relation to the alleged inability of a briefing to be set up for Mr Southwick in the Assembly. I understand —

Mr Ondarchie interjected.

Ms SYMES — Well, the information you put on record, Mr Ondarchie, that I listened to was in relation to Mr Southwick's briefing. So I sought some advice on that because I thought that sounded a bit unusual. The advice I have back is that Mr Southwick's executive assistant wrote to LaunchVic on 30 November saying that she would check with Mr Southwick about the revised date of 23 January. I am advised that there has been no further correspondence from his office saying whether this date is —

Mr Ondarchie — When was that?

Ms SYMES — On 30 November there was correspondence from Mr Southwick's executive assistant, and my advice is that LaunchVic is currently waiting for confirmation from his office about the date that has been proposed.

Mr Ondarchie interjected.

Ms SYMES — No, 30 November; today is 13 December, Mr Ondarchie.

Victoria's start-up community has never been more important and visible, and LaunchVic continues to be the force behind its success. I have got to say it is one of those areas of policy that I was not particularly familiar with. I have been a little bit educated by the exchanges between the minister and the shadow minister in this house, and I am starting to learn some of the jargon that goes with the tech industry. I did not even know what start-ups were until I was elected to Parliament.

Mr Ondarchie — He should have come in and done this, not you. He should have come and done it.

Ms SYMES — No, I have learned now. I am saying that I did not know until —

Mr Ondarchie — He is abrogating responsibility once again. Once again he is abrogating responsibility.

Ms SYMES — No, I want to talk about start-ups because I am quite excited about them now that I have learned what they are. One of those things about getting elected to Parliament is you learn these things that you never realised you would know about, and start-ups was kind of one of them. Firewood and super cars are other things that I have learned about in the last three years that probably were not on my agenda until being elected to this place.

The Labor government understands that when it comes to making Victoria a global leader in innovation a one-size-fits-all approach simply will not work. That is why we have had some grant rounds, led by LaunchVic, that have been specifically tailored to reach a certain cohort of our innovation ecosystem. I have got to say that 'innovation ecosystem' is not something that I would have expected to be saying either, but that is the terminology that is used in this field. It is a very exciting and dynamic field.

A number of programs in rounds 1 and 2 of the grants supported under-represented cohorts, particularly female founders, international students and Victorians with a disability, and we should be particularly proud

about supporting those endeavours. A specific grant round focused on delivering programs to improve participation in the start-up ecosystem for new migrants and refugees. That is also a very honourable area to be pursuing. Regional communities have been supported to boost local start-ups, including a grant provided to La Trobe University for a regional accelerator program, and this is something that is of particular interest to the electorate of Northern Victoria Region obviously. Announced last week in Geelong, the sixth grant round focused on supporting local council start-up communities to develop and grow. I saw some of the images from social media coverage of that announcement, and it was very well attended. There is a lot of momentum around start-ups, and LaunchVic are leading the way in this regard.

In addition to the published funding rounds, LaunchVic also auspices a range of initiatives to support capability and excellence in the Victorian start-up ecosystem. Some of the examples are particularly around the fintech community. In partnership with the Victorian government, LaunchVic developed a new fintech strategy to guide further investment and development. They supported the establishment of FinTech Victoria and FinTech Melbourne, which is the Australian fintech meet-up group that has grown its events the most in 2017. LaunchVic funded the inaugural Collab/Collide summit. I really like the language in this portfolio — it is cool.

Mr Ondarchie — What was that summit?

Ms SYMES — It was the Collab/Collide summit. It was one of the largest gatherings of domestic and international fintech players in the country and provided a major boost for the local fintech community. I do not have a record of how many attended that summit, Mr Ondarchie, but I am sure if you wanted to seek some more information on its attendees that is something we could provide.

LaunchVic only has 11 staff. I am on three parliamentary committees — sometimes four, because I have been on some of the select committees. When these committees seek documents this can be particularly burdensome on the departments and organisations from which we seek them. That is not a reason not to seek documents, but I do think it is important to note that for a staff of only 11 a request to participate in an inquiry would be incredibly onerous and would distract them from getting on with the business that they are set up to do.

LaunchVic is an organisation that has considerable governance reporting processes in place, and importantly they have already been independently reviewed, as is standard for any government business enterprise. That is a particularly important point: they have been reviewed recently as part of the Victorian Auditor-General's Office standard and randomly allocated reviews of government bodies. Under that review there were two recommendations, which were rated as low risk. Recommendation 1 was that general journals should be prepared by someone other than the chief financial officer (CFO) and that the CFO should instead be the person reviewing the journals. Recommendation 2 was that minutes of board meetings should be signed by the chairperson as evidence that the minutes have been reviewed and acknowledged as true and correct.

Just to repeat, the Victorian Auditor-General's Office has conducted a review and found two areas to improve. These were very minor areas, and the recommendations have been accepted and implemented by the organisation. LaunchVic's annual report 2016–17, their two-year strategy 2017–19 and their financial statements are all publicly available, and they document the governance arrangements of this organisation.

The Minister for Innovation and the Digital Economy took on the panel's pledge to make sure that more female leaders from science, technology, engineering and maths and from business are represented in Victoria's industry panels and conferences. Joining key leaders across a number of sectors, the minister only chooses to participate in panels and consider government funding for conferences and events that have clear 50-50 gender representation in their speakers. The policy applies to all conferences and events sponsored by the department, and additionally the policy has been adopted by LaunchVic.

We have heard numerous conversations involving toing and froing between both sides of the house in relation to the activities of StartCon. The length of the answers to those questions means I do not need to review the *Hansard* and put on the record again those conversations between pretty much two individuals in the house.

LaunchVic terminated its funding agreement with 500 Startups in August of this year. LaunchVic recommended that we fund this specific start-up, which we did, but when they recommended we pause funding we as a government accepted their recommendation to terminate that arrangement.

Mr Ondarchie — Why?

Ms SYMES — That is a question that you have asked in the house, Mr Ondarchie.

Mr Ondarchie — But he wouldn't answer it.

Ms SYMES — He has answered it.

Mr Ondarchie — What did he say, then?

Ms SYMES — You have read out all of his answers today. I do not have the *Hansard* on me and I do not want to misquote the minister, but he has responded many times.

Mr Ondarchie interjected.

Ms SYMES — No, you just don't like the answers that you are getting.

Mr Finn — We're not getting any answers. That's why we're not liking them. We're not getting any.

Ms SYMES — Just because you don't like them doesn't mean that you have to tie up the Parliament to implore —

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms SYMES — I am not taking it as abuse.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Ms Patten) — Mr Finn!

Ms SYMES — I am working through the list of points in Mr Ondarchie's motion. I am up to point (4), which is:

the relationship and activities of other organisations where contractual arrangements have been required to be altered ...

LaunchVic is obviously an independent body and is responsible for contractual arrangements with grant recipients. From time to time amendments may be negotiated with LaunchVic where appropriate, and amendments to any contractual arrangements require the approval of LaunchVic's board. Regardless of any conspiracy theories that Mr Ondarchie would like to promote in the house, it is pretty standard practice of a board to have these responsibilities. That is what they do.

On the Minister for Innovation and the Digital Economy's involvement with LaunchVic activities, LaunchVic falls under the portfolio responsibilities of the minister. It is more than appropriate for the minister to engage with key stakeholders under his responsibility, and of course this includes LaunchVic.

One of the things that keeps coming up in the terms of reference proposed for upper house committees in particular is something that seems rather innocuous but actually in practice tends to cause some conflict within committees — that is, when you add things to the bottom of motions that say 'any other consequential matters the committee may deem appropriate'. On the face of it, that does not sound unreasonable, but in practice what that does is effectively leave members of committees to have to argue about what is in and what is out of terms of reference. Basically it means that it is very difficult to have an end to such inquiries, because certain members of the committee may argue that you have not reached a conclusion because there are other matters that they may wish to pursue. I find that can often be quite unhelpful for the progress of our inquiries, so I would certainly discourage the use of this 'and anything else' type of approach that is becoming a frequently appearing sentence at the bottom of motions that are proposed.

With that, I will conclude how I started: government members will not be supporting the inquiry as proposed by Mr Ondarchie for the upper house committee. I would urge members in the house to oppose Mr Ondarchie's motion.

Ms SPRINGLE (South Eastern Metropolitan) (16:24) — Thank you, Acting President —

Ms Shing — Oh, God! Another one!

Ms SPRINGLE — I have not even started talking yet. I have not even said a word.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Ms Patten) — Please continue, Ms Springle.

Ms SPRINGLE — Thank you, Acting President.

Mr Ondarchie interjected.

Ms SPRINGLE — Thank you, Mr Ondarchie, for your kind advice that I am now going to ignore.

LaunchVic was established last year. It is quite surprising that it has already caused so much anxiety within the coalition ranks, and there has been so much attention on it. Its CEO, Kate Cornick, has been in the role for a year. I met Kate yesterday. I had a briefing with LaunchVic. They kindly came to my office and brought their key people to give me an outline of their work and their governance structure. They were delightful. I would suggest that they were very willing to answer any questions that I had.

Mr Ondarchie — Then why won't he?

Ms SPRINGLE — I am not going to speak for Mr Dalidakis, Mr Ondarchie; that is not my role. What I can say is that in my view LaunchVic is a much-needed initiative that aims to support Victorian start-ups and entrepreneurs and in turn develop a wider start-up culture and ecosystem in Victoria.

Mr Ondarchie interjected.

Ms SPRINGLE — No, it is not actually. I do kind of resent the implication that I am an apologist for something, because I am actually just speaking to the motion from a genuine place.

I did have this meeting with LaunchVic, and I could see that the role they play is really critical in how we are advancing technological innovation in Victoria. I understand that there have been concerns about key appointments and governance in that structure, particularly around governance. They are legitimate. We should all be concerned about how organisations that are funded by government are structured and about their accountability and transparency mechanisms. I think that is a really valid concern.

I would say from my perspective, in talking to them, they were very willing to answer the questions that I had around those issues. I will be honest: like Ms Symes, I have not followed the questioning and the ins and outs of Mr Ondarchie's concerns over the last six months with LaunchVic. There has been a lot of activity in the chamber, and from my perspective some of it has been pure politicking. I think that is a bit of a waste of time.

What I think I am more concerned with is if this is the right structure to get the outcomes that the government is looking for in this particular sector. From one briefing I am not going to pretend that I am an expert on that, but I can say that my interest in the technology and innovation space has dipped in and out over the years. The start-up space is quite different to other areas and business sectors. It is more dynamic, it needs to be more flexible, it needs to be nimble and it needs to be able to respond to the market if it is going to be successful.

PricewaterhouseCoopers has estimated the Australian tech start-up sector has the potential to contribute \$109 billion, or 4 per cent of gross domestic product, to the Australian economy and 540 000 jobs by 2033, so this is an enormously important sector that we are talking about. The caveat is that achieving this kind of growth requires a concerted effort from entrepreneurs, educators, the government and corporate Australia. Those figures relate to the tech start-up sector alone,

and it is worth pointing out that LaunchVic's mandate is much broader than that. Make no mistake — this sector is vitally important to the future of our communities, to jobs and to the Victorian economy. It is a sector that has faced serious setbacks over the last decade.

Australia's resilience during the global financial crisis had a largely negative impact on the tech start-up sector, with leading game studios closing down their operations in Melbourne. Huge amounts of creative and technical talent relocated overseas and are now supporting start-up economies in South-East Asia, Europe and the United States. In a number of those economies, government-funded start-up incubators have performed an important function in supporting entrepreneurship and social innovation, and they have been doing this for some time. LaunchVic is similar in some ways to established organisations in Malaysia and in the UK, both of which have played a key role in supporting and developing the start-up culture in those countries. For all of these reasons and more, LaunchVic is exactly the kind of initiative the government should be supporting.

In the short time LaunchVic has been around, it has brought together an impressive range of expertise to develop the organisation and its strategy, and its focus on supporting diversity as an important component of Victoria's start-up culture is particularly welcome. They were very keen to talk about the second round of funding grants that they put out to migrant and refugee communities. They offered tours, briefings and all sorts of things.

I would encourage Mr Ondarchie and his colleagues to pursue a briefing with LaunchVic. I suspect that a lot of the questions that you are saying you have not had answered could be answered in a session like that. That being so, I think from my perspective this motion is premature.

Mr Ondarchie interjected.

Ms SPRINGLE — My understanding is that briefings were offered to the opposition and they are scheduled for February.

Mr Ondarchie interjected.

Ms SPRINGLE — Okay. I stand corrected. I am certainly not going to vouch for something I know absolutely nothing about.

I know that Ms Patten has also had a briefing with LaunchVic and that that happened relatively easily and

seamlessly — as was my briefing yesterday; it was relatively easy to set up.

In my view sending something to an inquiry, to a committee, is actually quite a substantial undertaking and an enormous amount of work for a lot of people, and we all know how overworked and under-resourced our upper house committees are. If that conversation has not had been had, then this motion is clearly about undermining the credibility of LaunchVic and the government and not actually examining and solving a problem. Based on the available evidence, an inquiry is entirely disproportionate to the concerns raised.

I have to say they were quite open. There were two quite low risk concerns that were picked up recently by the Auditor-General's office in the audits that they did, and those issues are now being addressed by the organisation, so they certainly were not adverse to admitting that they had had some issues. LaunchVic have only been around for a very short time, and I understand that some of the fluctuating numbers on the board have been due to a specific structure that they chose to enable them to build capacity. The reduction in that board was actually staged and planned, which might account for some of the movement in that regard.

It is really important at this stage to point again to the dynamic nature of the environment that LaunchVic is working in in the start-up and innovation sector, dealing with start-ups and entrepreneurs, some of whom have amazing ideas that may have incredible impact on their communities and perhaps even the world. It is a dynamic environment, and not all ideas, individuals and companies will achieve the change and success they envisage. That is the very nature of start-ups.

LaunchVic has a significant challenge on its hands in managing the expectations around growth, investment and delivery of tangible outcomes, and it has to balance these expectations with the reality that its mandate is to build a culture that is vital to our future. Building that culture and supporting those that will help it grow is not an easy task, and the milestones and outcomes along the way will not always be comparable to large-scale investments in other sectors.

Launch Vic has strong governance structures in place that support independence and accountability, and it has an experienced leader at the helm. I was actually quite robust in my questioning of the team that came to give me the briefing yesterday. I certainly did interrogate some of those mechanisms that they had put in place in terms of their accountability, what happens when feasibly things do not go the right way and whether there are criteria in place to interrogate where funding is

placed, who it is given to, what those criteria are based on and what mechanisms there are if that all goes awry. They were able to answer all of my questions to my satisfaction in that briefing.

I think it is really important to outline the complexity of the environment that they are working in. That structure is a corporate structure, so it is sitting outside government. It is wholly funded by government, but it is sitting outside government with an independent corporate board. In that environment the need for them to be flexible and agile in the way they operate is highly appropriate. The alternative, I suppose, would be for them to be sitting inside government, and that slows down with bureaucratic structures, as we all know, and in that environment that would be quite detrimental to their functioning.

On that note, the Greens will not be supporting this motion. Our commitment to transparency and accountability mechanisms is well known. That is not really, from my perspective, the issue here at this point. If Mr Ondarchie brings back a motion in six months after he has had briefings with LaunchVic and other bodies that can give some more substance to what the allegations are, then we would be prepared to look at it again, but at this point in time the Greens will not be supporting the motion.

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) (16:37) — I have to say at the very beginning that I am very tempted to vote against this motion. In fact I was asked not so long ago by the Leader of the Government if indeed I would vote with him on this occasion, and I said that I would keep my options open. The time has come for me to make a decision. I have to explain why I am keeping my options open on this. Basically the Economy and Infrastructure Committee is absolutely snowed under for work. We are investigating a number of projects which are exceedingly dodgy, none more dodgy than the West Gate tunnel project. That alone would keep us busy for the next 12 months without taking anything else on. There are more questions surrounding the West Gate tunnel and who has done what to whom and how many times than we strictly have time for. When I say I am tempted to vote against this motion, I do that through a sense of —

Mr Jennings — Deja vu?

Mr FINN — No, not deja vu — through a sense of perhaps necessity. But if curiosity killed the cat, it may have the same impact on me, because I am actually going to support this motion. I am going to support the motion moved by Mr Ondarchie because I have a

certain curiosity, and this investigation will hopefully satisfy my sense of curiosity.

My first question is: does Minister Dalidakis know anything about LaunchVic? That, I think, is a really important question, one that we have not been able to establish in this house at this point. As far as we know he does not even know what LaunchVic is. He has not the first idea what LaunchVic is. For all intents and purposes, that would appear to be the situation as it stands at the current time.

As chair of the Economy and Infrastructure Committee I would love to get Mr Dalidakis before the committee to sit across the table from me and other members and I would like to ask him, 'Do you know anything about LaunchVic?'. I would be fascinated to know; I would be fascinated to receive an answer from him and hopefully a more satisfactory answer than he has been able to give this house to this point because, quite frankly, the answers he has given to this house to this stage have been pathetic. They have been absolutely pathetic and have left us in significant doubt as to whether he has any idea what is going on in his own portfolio.

That leads us to the second question that I would like to ask the minister. That question is clear: does he know anything at all about his portfolio?. That is something that again we need to ask because over an extended period of time in this house he has shown, let us say, less than a firm grasp on the details of his portfolios — it does not matter whether it is innovation and it does not matter whether it is small business. Get him on small business and he has not got a clue. That is a fact, and it is rather sad to see.

I have an enormous amount of respect for the small business community. Small business is the engine room of the Australian economy. Without small business the nation would be stuffed, and to have this minister as Minister for Small Business is, I think, an insult. I think it is an insult to every small business person in this state. It just goes to show how serious the Andrews government is about small business. They have no regard and they have no time for those people who stick their necks out, open up their own businesses, work like dogs night and day, often seven days a week for 12, 15, 18 hours a day. These are people who should be respected; these are people we should hold up high as people to be admired in the community. These are great Australian heroes; small business people are great Australian heroes.

But what does this government do in terms of putting up a minister? They put up Philip Dalidakis. I talk

about Mr Dalidakis as small business minister; I actually mention small business and Mr Dalidakis heads for the door. He is out of here. He is headed for the door. He may be going to look it up, he may be reaching for the Funk & Wagnalls as we speak to look it up and to see exactly what small business is and to discover for himself exactly what his job is. That would be, I would suggest to you, a very significant advance on anything that he has put forward to this point, because he has shown no indication that he knows what he is doing and he has shown no inclination that he wants to know what he is doing.

Mr Ondarchie interjected.

Mr FINN — Mr Ondarchie makes a very good point — an exceptionally good point. Mr Dalidakis seems to think that he is in the ministry for frequent flyer points. That seems to be the reason he thinks he is a minister. It is so that he can head out to Tulla — and he is welcome in my electorate anytime — and he can get onto the plane and turn left. That is what he likes to do. More than anything else in the world he likes to get on a plane and he likes to turn left. The movie, the champagne, the whole thing — he reckons it is Christmas. Every week with him it is Christmas because he is always getting into business class. If he can get into first class he will, but I am not sure if they make pyjamas in his size. But if he cannot get into —

An honourable member — You can talk.

Mr FINN — I don't know — I honestly don't know. I am doing all right, thank you very much. I have to say I have never travelled first class. I have heard about these pyjamas, but I have never actually travelled first class so I cannot actually put my finger on it. That is what this bloke is on about. He thinks the more frequent flyer points you attain is in some way indicative of your success as a minister. That is the way he thinks and that is the way he operates. That, unfortunately for the small business community of this state, is what they are stuck with, at least until November next year, when we will have some people in charge who do know about small business and who do care about small business.

The small business community can certainly look forward to 24 November next year when we have a change of government in this state and we have people in charge who know and care about the importance of small business to this state. So that is the second question that I want to ask the minister in that committee hearing: does he know anything at all about his portfolio?

There is a third question, and I think an exceedingly important question, that I want to ask him. I want to look him in the eye and I want to say, ‘Minister, can you give a straight answer to anything?’, because I have seen absolutely no evidence in this chamber since he has been a minister that he has the time, the inclination or anything else to answer questions in a straightforward, frank and honest manner. I would really love to see his reaction in that committee.

Mr Ondarchie interjected.

Mr FINN — Mr Ondarchie points out that we might not get a straight answer then either, but it is worth a try. I am an eternal optimist, and I hasten to remind Mr Ondarchie that after 37 years Richmond won the premiership this year and I never lost faith. So if I can stick with Richmond for 37 years and they win a flag for me after all those years, I reckon we can get a straight answer out of Mr Dalidakis.

Mr Ondarchie interjected.

Mr FINN — I know it could be. When the time comes, Mr Ondarchie, we will get you before the committee and I know we will get a straight answer out of you. I know that, and that is something I am looking forward to, I have to say. It will be good to deal with you as the appropriate minister. But I want to get this Philip Dalidakis chap before the committee and just ask him straight out if he is capable of answering a question in a straightforward manner. I have to say that to this point in time I have seen absolutely no evidence that he knows anything about LaunchVic, I have seen no evidence that he knows anything about his portfolio and I have certainly seen absolutely no evidence at all that he can give a straight answer. Anybody who even casually listens to or views question time in this place will see Minister Dalidakis in action. They will see his abusive, belligerent and arrogant manner towards members of his own party.

Mr Mulino interjected.

Mr FINN — I think Mr Mulino is adding another couple of words there that perhaps should not be picked up by Hansard, because I do not think they are very complimentary. Nonetheless he may have a good point, because the fact of the matter is that members of the minister’s own party cannot abide him. In a quiet moment they will say, ‘God, I wish he’d go away’. They will say he is a giant pain in the butt. That is what they will say.

Mr Melhem — How would you know?

Mr FINN — Mr Melhem comes in just at the appropriate time. It is good to see him here. That is what they say about Minister Dalidakis. Perhaps that is another question we can ask him in the committee: why do members of his own party loath him so? Why would members of his own party like him to go away and not ever come back? That is putting it in a very polite form considering some of the things that have been put to me by members of the Labor Party when talking about Minister Dalidakis.

Mr Dalidakis, world-famous for his exceptional impersonation of Sir Les Patterson, has a tremendous capacity to get people offside because, unlike Sir Les, he is not funny and nobody finds humour in what he says or what he does. Unfortunately he is doing it courtesy of the Victorian taxpayer, and that makes a hell of a difference. As I said, it is little wonder that members on both sides of the house find him abrasive, extraordinarily difficult to deal with and impossible to get an answer out of. I notice that members of the government have gone very quiet while I am saying this, and I think that tells a story in itself.

Mr Jennings interjected.

Mr FINN — If Minister Jennings wishes to refute what I have to say — and I doubt he can — he would be very welcome to do so. But I do not think he will. I do not think he will get up and say that what I have been saying here for the last few minutes is wrong, because he knows the Labor Party only too well and he knows what members of the Labor Party think of Minister Dalidakis.

As for people in the general community, anybody who has dealings with him in the general community almost unanimously — in fact I have to say unanimously, because I have not yet come across anybody who has a different view — regards him as somebody who is totally self-absorbed, somebody who regards their concerns as unimportant and somebody who is looking at something that is totally different to what actually matters to people in the Victorian community.

These are issues that I would like to see put on the table by the Economy and Infrastructure Committee. I think it would be fascinating. I think Mr Leane, Mr Gepp and Mr Elasmarr would enjoy dealing with the minister on this committee. I support the motion moved by Mr Ondarchie.

Ms PATTEN (Northern Metropolitan) (16:52) — Sadly I do not think I will be nearly as entertaining as our previous speakers, but I will have a go. This is an interesting motion, and it is an area that I am very

interested in. I have to say that the industry association that I worked with prior to coming into this place was, some would say, a leader of innovation in many ways. I recall attending many new tech and innovation conferences in the US and in Europe over the years looking at the way that the industry that I formerly represented led in innovation.

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms PATTEN — I can see that Mr Ondarchie has just clicked. Listening to this O v. D — Ondarchie versus Dalidakis — conversation, it was interesting to hear that time line again of the questions that Mr Ondarchie has continually asked Mr Dalidakis. I have some sympathy for Mr Ondarchie in that question time is not answer time. I quickly found out in this house that we may ask many questions but the answers always seem to be somewhat elusive. Certainly I put questions about LaunchVic to the minister in October — so just a couple of months ago — and what I was interested in was how we were measuring LaunchVic and how we knew whether it was succeeding. I certainly think that LaunchVic is a great idea. I think helping incubate start-up companies in this 4.0 time of technology is something the government should be supporting and something we should be doing, and it is great. But I just could not get a handle on how we were measuring the success and how we could understand that \$11.4 million that we invested in the start-up ecosystem.

I take Ms Symes's point that some of the lingo and jargon that is used around LaunchVic and in that area sometimes sound like weasel words, and it is very hard to understand how they are investing, how they are measuring that investment and how we can quantify the success of LaunchVic or any of the other companies, start-ups and incubators that LaunchVic is investing in.

Certainly when I was looking at LaunchVic and they were talking about this new start-up ecosystem, one of the funding rounds was that LaunchVic provided \$100 000 to the provider Social Traders. This was to:

... strengthen the pipeline of accelerator-ready social enterprise ideas through workshops, networking events, clinics and pitch fests ...

So \$100 000 was spent by Social Traders on providing four workshops and some networking events. I asked the minister if he could detail how well these workshops were attended and what tangible outcomes were achieved from this investment.

Ms Bath — What did they serve for lunch?

Ms PATTEN — I cannot say that I even got the lunch menu, Ms Bath, nor that I got much of a response. But to the minister's credit he did arrange for a briefing with LaunchVic and with the CEO, Dr Kate Cornick, and she brought her staff. This occurred on 2 November. I have to say it was a very intelligent and informative briefing. Unfortunately there were some chamber duties, so I was in and out of that briefing. I would certainly like to revisit some of the questions and concerns that I had, but I did leave that meeting with many of my concerns somewhat allayed, notwithstanding that I think things like 'the start-up ecosystem' are weasel words and do not help. But I do not think my concerns about the measurability of LaunchVic were met. I think this is actually a larger issue.

There just seems to be this general avoidance in getting transparent and clear information. It is possibly because I come to this place from a different avenue, but I found even in the much-maligned Public Accounts and Estimates Committee that asking questions does not seem to receive answers. Even looking at the budget papers what concerns me is that there are no forward measures there. We would look at what was going to happen in the next 12 months — possibly four years, but that was very unusual. We would usually only get projections for 12 months or possibly two years. I do think this lack of transparency is something that has been a growing concern for me.

Like Ms Symes, I am on many committees — four in fact — and I do repeatedly feel that when we speak to public servants and some agencies the last thing they want to do is answer questions. The last thing they want to do is provide fulsome information. That is not all the time, and many times I feel like I am getting good information, and I have been very well informed and have learned a lot from some of the briefings that we have had during the committee process, but there are many times when I just feel that that is lacking.

Business interrupted pursuant to standings orders.

STATEMENTS ON REPORTS AND PAPERS

Department of Treasury and Finance: budget papers 2017–18

Mr MORRIS (Western Victoria) (17:00) — I am going to make a statement today on the state budget for 2017–18. In commenting on what was a very disappointing budget not just for Victoria as a whole but more specifically for regional Victoria, not only are we seeing the government waste money, but we are also seeing them spend money in places where people

do not want it. There is no better example of that than what the government is attempting to do in Ballarat right now, and that is the Andrews government's attempt to destroy the magnificent boulevard of Sturt Street in Ballarat, not just one of the most magnificent boulevards in Victoria or in Australia but indeed one of the most magnificent boulevards in all of the world. We have one of the most historically significant boulevards, a magnificent street that everyone in Ballarat and everyone in Victoria should be exceptionally proud of, and the Andrews government is trying to tear it up.

The Andrews government is trying to close six of the north-south intersections at Errard Street, Raglan Street, Lyons Street, Windermere Street, Talbot Street and Ascot Street and, in the middle of Sturt Street, attempt to place a painted orange cycling path. One might understand that this could happen if there was an increased number of cyclists in Ballarat, but unfortunately what we are actually seeing in Ballarat is a decrease in the number of people cycling. Only 0.9 per cent — less than 1 per cent — of commuters in Ballarat cycle. Despite this the government seems hell-bent on attempting to throw millions of dollars at a project that nobody wants. Nearly 70 per cent of commuters drive. People are voting with their feet in terms of the type of transport they are using. Not only do we have less than 1 per cent of commuters on bikes in Ballarat; there has actually been a 20 per cent reduction in the number of people commuting on bikes since 2001. So people in Ballarat are choosing to drive and not choosing to ride.

Now, one would expect that a government would accept the will of the people and put their money into infrastructure that supported the way people were living in their communities rather than trying to dictate to them how it is that they should live their lives, but unfortunately that is what we are seeing from this government. There are a few numbers that have backed up what has happened here, and these numbers come from the *Ballarat Cycling Action Plan 2017–2025*, which was published by the Ballarat City Council in March 2017. In this particular document we see that in 2001 there were 1.2 per cent of people in Ballarat commuting by bike and 67 per cent by car. In 2006 again 67 per cent were travelling by car and again 1.2 per cent by bike. In 2011 there were 68.1 per cent travelling by car and 0.9 per cent by bike, so again a reduction. We see furthermore that in 2015, when the Super Tuesday bike count was conducted, there had been a 9 per cent reduction since 2014.

We are seeing that a tiny number of people in Ballarat choose to cycle. People might say that this infrastructure will help facilitate people choosing to

cycle. Well, it is just not true, because when people were asked why it was they were not riding to work 33 per cent, a third, said it was too far, and destroying Sturt Street is not likely to help that; 6 per cent said they were not fit enough, and I do not think the destruction of a magnificent boulevard will help people with their fitness levels; 7 per cent do not consider cycling for transport, and this is not going to help them; and 13 per cent said it was not safe.

Of the 13 per cent who say it is not safe there may be a tiny fraction whose trip may be improved if this monstrosity were to be built. There were 3 per cent who said there are no facilities and 18 per cent who do not own a bike. We are seeing that there is a tiny fraction of people who might be encouraged to ride because of this plan of the Andrews government, at the expense of destroying one of the most magnificent boulevards in the world. I have certainly had a lot of correspondence from my constituents who are opposed to this plan. I hope Daniel Andrews and his government hears this very loud and clear. Let us not move on with this project.

Ombudsman: Implementing OPCAT in Victoria: Report and Inspection of the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan) (17:05) — I would like to make a statement this evening on the Victorian Ombudsman's report *Implementing OPCAT in Victoria: Report and Inspection of the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre*. I note that in fact the Minister for Corrections is in the chamber. I want to make a statement on this report today because I think it outlines what are going to be quite groundbreaking changes to the oversight of corrections in Victoria. I quote from the executive summary:

This report considers the practical implications of implementing the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT) in Victoria. It sets out:

practical changes needed to implement the OPCAT protocol;

the results of a pilot OPCAT-style inspection at Victoria's main women's prison, the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre (DPFC).

OPCAT is an international human rights treaty that aims to prevent abuse of people in detention by opening places where people are deprived of liberty — prisons, police cells, psychiatric hospitals and so on — to regular independent inspections by:

a United Nations (UN) committee of international experts;

local inspection bodies called national preventive mechanisms (NPMs).

In February 2017, the commonwealth government announced that Australia will ratify OPCAT by the end of 2017.

In Victoria, this means the Victorian government will need to open places of detention to the UN committee from 2018. The Victorian government will have three years to 'designate' or appoint one or more local NPMs to conduct regular inspections.

Implementing OPCAT will require changes. While Victoria already has human rights laws and monitoring bodies, OPCAT will introduce more rigorous standards for inspecting places of detention.

I think this is going to make a big change to the public knowing what is actually going on in our correctional facilities and detention facilities. A couple of times in this place I have called for the establishment of an independent body to oversee the corrections system, as happens in other jurisdictions, because we do not have openness or transparency in the operation of the corrections system. The Ombudsman does have jurisdiction. They have, and particularly of late, used the powers under the Ombudsman Act 1973 to look at, for example, the youth justice centres and, in this report, the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre.

Other countries have implemented OPCAT. I think 65 countries have implemented it, including New Zealand and the United Kingdom. They also inspect:

secure health and disability facilities, and secure accommodation for children and young people;

places where people are detained temporarily, such as prison transport vehicles or court cells.

Some countries also inspect care facilities such as aged-care homes where residents are not legally detained, but are not free to leave because of locked doors or other restraints. This is sometimes called 'de facto detention'. While these facilities are not traditionally seen as places of detention, they may fall within the definition of 'deprivation of liberty' for OPCAT purposes.

There are going to be some changes needed. The Victorian government will need to decide which body or bodies to designate as its NPMs. It could create a new body for OPCAT inspections — as I say, an independent body to oversee our prisons and places where people are detained — or it could appoint one or more of the existing monitoring bodies. Many countries have designated ombudsman institutions either to perform as NPMs on their own or with the assistance of other bodies, such as in the United States and the UK. Whatever model the Victorian government chooses there will need to be legislative funding and operational changes, and there needs to be legislation to give NPMs a clear mandate and unrestricted powers to carry out

OPCAT inspections. NPMs and other monitoring bodies should also have legislative authority to share information so they can work collaboratively in the interests of human rights.

This is a very comprehensive and long report. I have just outlined briefly the framework that will need to be set up when OPCAT is implemented in Victoria. I commend people to read the report. The other part of the report goes to an inspection of the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre. I will also be raising with the minister some of the recommendations that have resulted from that report.

Environment, Natural Resources and Regional Development Committee: sustainability and operational challenges of Victoria's rural and regional councils

Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria) (17:10) — I would like to speak on the interim report of the inquiry into the sustainability and operational challenges of Victoria's rural and regional councils, which was tabled in the last sitting week. I want to flag a couple of issues that have come out of this interim report. They are in relation to the increases in revenue from rates and charges. When this report was tabled I spoke about the difficulty regional councils are having in finding sustainable long-term funding aside from rates. I talked about the disappointment of regional councils at losing the country roads and bridges funding, which was \$1 million a year to councils to enable them to allocate funds for the upgrade of local roads and bridges. I also commented on the freezing for two years of the federal assistance grants, which created some budget problems for councils during that time. Nevertheless, the federal grants are back onstream now with CPI increases, so the councils need to play catch-up.

The issue I want to flag today is about rates and charges. We know farmers are paying a disproportionate amount of rates, and that was borne out by a number of submissions and verbal testimony to the committee. If you use Ararat as an example, farmers from a demographic point of view provide 24 per cent of the ratepayer base yet are paying over 38 per cent of revenue to councils. That is disproportionate and inequitable, and that is actually templated across a number of regional councils.

Having been a mayor in the past, Acting President Purcell, you would understand that the farming community often has to bear the brunt of an inequitable rating system. So my hope is that with the full report to be tabled next year we will actually look at different rating structures apart from the differential rate

and different capital improved values and valuations. It is very disappointing that this week we have seen that this house — not the coalition, I might add — has seen fit to support annual valuations, which again add more cost to the ratepayers, not to mention local councils, which have to bear the administrative costs associated with annual valuations while also being somewhat removed from the process. Previously they have been heavily engaged, using contractors of their choice; now the valuer-general it would appear is going to take over that responsibility.

That aside, my hope is that we are able to have time to look at a whole new structure in the way that local government is funded. Without making any predeterminations about what the committee might recommend, some of the ideas that have come forward are about a portion of GST to help provide sustainable and long-term viable funding for local governments. There could be a relook at the different grants systems that are currently available and others that might better provide a sustainable and viable financial footing for councils.

I hope in the mix we also look at strange little local government areas (LGAs) like the Borough of Queenscliffe, which has only 3200 residents. It has five councillors, a mayor and a CEO, who is on \$340 000, at a cost of about \$80 a head per ratepayer. When you put in the councillors' costs, it takes the administrative costs of that council up to about \$200 per ratepayer. There is no doubt that there is a very strong feeling even in the Queenscliff community that we should relook at that LGA and encompass it, as has happened before, in a larger Bellarine LGA, where there are common interests right across the sea coast of Queenscliff, Bellarine and the Surf Coast. I just flag that as potentially an opportunity through the local government review to look at whether in fact the ratepayers of the Borough of Queenscliffe are getting a fair return on their investment and also those in the City of Greater Geelong who actually live in that coastal area and who do not have common interests with the City of Greater Geelong and do not feel served by that LGA. So there are opportunities aplenty for this committee to look at having potentially more common-interest LGAs across the spectrum and reducing administrative costs in providing better managed and more productive LGAs.

Department of Treasury and Finance: budget papers 2017–18

Ms LOVELL (Northern Victoria) (17:15) — I stand to speak on the state budget 2017–18, which raises the budget for policing in this state and supports policing in

Greater Shepparton. The reason that I want to speak on the police budget is that I believe we do need additional resources in Shepparton. The latest crime figures show that there are some worrying trends within the Greater Shepparton local government area in the heart of my electorate. Total crime in Greater Shepparton has gone up by over 26 per cent since the election of the Andrews government. Assaults have increased by 2.5 per cent over the last 12 months, theft has gone up by 1.2 per cent and weapons offences have increased by 33.6 per cent.

As worrying as the upward trajectory of these offences is, the significant drop in detected drug trafficking is also of significant concern to me. A drop of 14.1 per cent in drug trafficking offences in Greater Shepparton in the 12 months would be applauded in some quarters, but in this case it actually should not be. I do not think that anyone believes that there is less drug dealing going on in Shepparton than there has been in the past. I certainly do not think so. With the emergence of ice in recent years we all know that drug trafficking is a greater problem than it has ever been before. So why the drop in drug trafficking offences?

Well, in Shepparton the answer is simple. There are inadequate resources specifically tasked to conduct drug investigations in the Shepparton police service area compared to what they were 10 years ago. In 2006 the divisional response unit was a small group of police members taken from the Shepparton police uniform strength. Investigators of the rank of senior constable were seconded to the unit for a minimum of 12 months. The investigators were supervised by a sergeant who was responsible for the operation of the unit and whose tenure was generally two years. While the unit was used to work on specific operations that coincided with major events in the area, its primary responsibility was to conduct investigations into alleged drug activity within the Shepparton police service area and also as far away as Echuca and Cobram. The majority of these investigations stemmed from information received through the Crime Stoppers system, as well as information gleaned from other police members.

In 2006 this unit was staffed with one sergeant, three investigators and a dedicated analyst. We must remember that ice was relatively scarce in the community at that point in time and it was several years before the crystal methamphetamine explosion that is now such a large part of our Victorian communities. Only the best and brightest young police members were chosen to be part of this unit, and they worked hard. In 2006 the unit executed on average 20 drug search warrants a month.

So now let us have a look at what is happening in 2017. The divisional response unit is now known as the divisional tasking unit (DTU). While the name change is subtle, in practice it is quite significant. The tasking unit still investigates drug activity within the Shepparton police service area but operates with fewer members than the divisional response unit did 11 years ago.

Let us just think about that fact for a minute. In 2006, prior to the ice epidemic that continues to ravage our state, the unit had three investigators and a dedicated analyst. In 2017, in the midst of the greatest drug crisis we have ever seen, the unit has just two investigators as well as a supervisor. Effectively this means a third less drug investigations are conducted than were conducted in 2006. To make matters worse, as the new name suggests, the DTU is regularly tasked for duties other than conducting drug investigations. While I would never question the operational decisions of the great men and women of the Shepparton police, the reality is there seems to be less time dedicated to drug investigation in the Shepparton police service area than there was many years ago.

The impact of ice on our communities, particularly regional communities, is beyond words. Police, paramedics, health professionals, teachers and ex-addicts all acknowledge it is the greatest crisis and challenge we face as a society. Violent crimes are more prevalent, families are breaking down, people are facing financial ruin, jobs are being lost and lives are being destroyed — all because of this dangerous, insidious drug.

What we need is a holistic response to actually deal with this drug. Not one single approach is any less important than the others. Without a multifaceted attack I am afraid we will fail to rid ourselves of this frightening epidemic. The local police do the best job they can with limited resources, but it is time we all acknowledged that police detection with adequate resources plays just as important a role in combating the drug epidemic in this great state as anything else.

Environment Protection Authority Victoria: report 2016–17

Ms BATH (Eastern Victoria) (17:21) — I rise this afternoon to speak on the Environment Protection Authority Victoria 2016–17 report. In doing so I would like to make some comments about the initial executive report in the front of the book. It states in the executive summary:

Our role was to be an effective environmental regulator and an influential authority on environmental impacts. This was underpinned by the following outcomes:

clear air —

and that is what I wish to concentrate on in my discussion shortly —

healthy water;

safe land;

minimal disturbance from noise and odour.

The CEO, Nial Finegan, commented in his report that:

While EPA's focus is on preventing harm, we continue to hold polluters to account in a strong, consistent and proportionate manner. In 2016–17, EPA was successful in all 11 prosecutions finalised in the courts and handed out more than 13 000 fines for breaches of the Environment Protection Act. We also issued almost 300 pollution abatement notices and over 150 clean-up notices for sites around Victoria.

Protecting Victorian communities from pollution is the core role of Environment Protection Authority Victoria (EPA), and it should also be the core business of the Andrews Labor government. In March this year the Andrews Labor government shut down the Hazelwood coal-fired power station, and with it went 22 per cent of dispatchable power. They also, in putting up those coal royalties to a burdensome status, lost 750 direct jobs and thousands of downstream jobs. What does that mean for our local businesses? It means that people who are already struggling to find a wage and a job in this regional space in the central Latrobe Valley are also now having to pay higher and higher costs for their electricity.

AEMO, which is the Australian Energy Market Operator, has predicted that there will be 72 potential days of shortfall in electricity over the summer. That means in effect we will be asking businesses to load-shed. It also means that this government has had to sandbag the electricity supply. In order to do this AEMO has gone out to Aggreko to install over 100 diesel generators on the site of the former Morwell power station — that is, the Energy Brix site in Commercial Road, Morwell. Despite this, back on 22 March this year before the Hazelwood power station closed we had Minister D'Ambrosio assuring us that there would not be any diesel backup:

... because we are building the generation and storage necessary to protect Victorian consumers.

Clearly this is a monumental backflip. What is really galling to residents in the Latrobe Valley, and particularly in Morwell, is that there was no consultation on this. There was no briefing. There was

no communication. It just happened. Indeed the Minister for Planning, Mr Wynne, used his powers to bypass the Latrobe City Council planning process, leaving the community voiceless to object without appropriate consultation. Mr Wynne has gone in saying that there is an urgency to mitigate the risk to the reliability of Victoria's electricity supply over the summer period.

One of the biggest concerns for the Latrobe Valley, and particularly Morwell residents, is air omissions and indeed the pollutants that occur from the diesel generation. Hydrocarbons burnt in diesel fuel will produce some rather nasty pollutants. In fact the EPA's own works approval has stated that the approval for 114 diesel generators will and can produce nitrogen oxides, meaning nitric oxide and nitrogen dioxide; sulphur dioxide; carbon monoxide; and volatile organic compounds and fine particulates, including formaldehyde and benzene.

The nitrogen oxide is certainly going to be the larger output in terms of those pollutants. Nitrogen oxide certainly has an effect on the lungs if it is in a high enough emitting factor and people in that direct area breathe it in, and indeed there are homes and businesses only 1 to 1.5 kilometres away from where these diesel generators will be producing. This is a concern. The community has not been consulted. The EPA will certainly be nice and busy, but it is in the wrong direction and this is not appropriate. The community feels ripped off, and I concur with them.

Standing Committee on Legal and Social Issues: youth justice centres

Ms SYMES (Northern Victoria) (17:26) — I am speaking this evening on the *Inquiry into Youth Justice Centres in Victoria: Interim Report*. It is of course a very short report, only three pages long and pretty much covering two topics. The first topic I want to speak on tonight is in relation to the extending of reporting dates and the fact that the report cites delays in receiving evidence requested by the committee from the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Justice and Regulation. I just wanted to put on record that I acknowledge the cooperation of both departments in the provision of thousands of pages of evidence to our committee, many of which required redactions of personal information or security-sensitive information in compliance with Victorian laws.

I think I have reflected on a contribution earlier today where we talked about the inquiries that are given to our upper house committees, and it is an onerous exercise for our departments and our government

bodies when we request documents from them. I am not saying that we should not do that, but we cannot expect them to turn them around quickly without applying a proper process, which can be time-consuming. Particularly in relation to this situation, there were machinery of government changes between the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Justice and Regulation, so I think the amount of material that was requested and the amount that was provided is something that certainly needs to be acknowledged.

The other matter that the report refers to is the fact that the committee resolved to refer a matter to the Ombudsman. This is in relation to some allegations that were made by Mr Murray in evidence before the committee. The committee discussed at length its job in terms of whether it could pursue this matter or not. Basically we determined that we probably did not have enough time to revisit this because obviously the allegations put forward by Mr Murray were strenuously refuted by the department, and we would have been engaging in a to-and-fro discussion between the parties on who was right and who was not. I would note that Mr Murray has of course had an opportunity himself to refer matters and has chosen not to.

Having said that, there was no opposition to a referral. However, I must note that the government members were not afforded the opportunity to decide on that matter because there was a diary miscommunication and that meeting that actually made the final determination to refer it to the Ombudsman was not attended by government members. I was receiving text messages from members in the meeting saying, 'Are you coming to the committee?', and I said, 'I thought it was tomorrow'. These things happen, but I just did want to put on record that there were no government members at that meeting.

In fact the first time I heard about the resolution of the committee to formally refer it to the Ombudsman was via the minister's office. They contacted me saying, 'We've just been contacted by a journalist asking about your committee's referral of this matter to the Ombudsman'. That was a surprise to me, and it was very unwelcome advice from the minister's office. I sought to raise the matter with the chair, because we have had a few leaks from our committee. Unfortunately with the previous leak an email was sent around to everyone asking, 'Did you leak?'. Everyone responded by saying, 'No, it wasn't me. I didn't leak', and there is not much you can do about it. In this matter the conversation between the chair and me was, 'What's the point?', because when there is a leak there

is not much you can do about it because no-one is going to admit they leaked.

I am very concerned about the culture that is developing in our upper house committees. I had a wonderful experience with the Legal and Social Issues Committee in the end-of-life choices inquiry. It was very respectful and very tight. At the moment we have a committee where I do not trust that information that is discussed in that committee is not going to be leaked to a journalist. Unfortunately the Parliament seems to have no power to stop these leaks. I know that the President made a really strong statement yesterday, but I suspect that a culture has developed that you can get away with leaking, so why wouldn't you? I think that is very unfortunate.

Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning: report 2016

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) (17:31) — I wish to speak on the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning annual report 2015–16, specifically in relation to the operations of local government, an area that Mr Ramsay spoke about, and particular issues to do with governance. I note in the annual report there has been a change in minister; Natalie Hutchins has been replaced by the Honourable Marlene Kairouz. I certainly hope that the new minister will take the issues of governance very seriously. I know that an exposure draft of the new Local Government Act has been distributed for comment, and this will help to address some of the issues. But in the meantime there are significant concerns about the operations of individual local governments.

The one I would like to mention today is Kingston City Council. I actually live in the City of Kingston. I served as a councillor on its predecessor council, the old City of Moorabbin, many moons ago, and my son served on the Kingston City Council but is no longer there. The issues that are now emerging there appear to be a strong record or evidence in the minutes of bloc voting on fairly substantial and significant issues. Unfortunately the councillors concerned are all either Labor or Labor-aligned councillors, and the issue that has been raised with me is that there is some evidence of caucusing, which under the existing Local Government Act 1989 would not be allowed.

The issue that has been raised with me is that a couple of the councillors — Cr West and Cr Oxley — ran as candidates in the 2014 election to harvest preferences for the successful ALP candidate. Good luck to him. He won. It is part of the democratic process. But

nonetheless, I think it is necessary to recognise the political activism and affiliation of those councillors.

One of the issues that has been drawn to my attention by lots and lots of people is the way in which this council is attempting to hijack the issue of the cycle route along Beach Road. Despite there being two rounds of community consultation which found that 85 per cent of people said they were opposed to the new council plan, the majority of councillors now say they will not be swayed and will complete their agenda as quickly as possible, with some of the consultations scheduled for the dead months of the summer holidays. I understand the same five councillors are demanding dates for planning meetings required to expedite their plan to be dragged forward into February, across the time when many people will be on vacation.

Other areas of concern include a recent motion moved by the mayor, and supported by the same bloc of five councillors, in support of the National Union of Workers in its negotiations with Amazon, which has been established outside the city. It seems to me that this is a little bit outside the bounds of local government, and clearly there is a conflict of interest. There has always been a strong emphasis in the Local Government Act that councillors should not use their position to advantage or disadvantage an individual or group, and this seems to be contrary to that. There are also some fairly confidential matters, contractual matters, that have been raised — the details of which I am not privy to, given that they are subject to confidentiality provisions — that will have a significant financial impact on the ratepayers. The allegation that is being made is that much of this is being driven by ideological and political interests that require close monitoring.

A number of residents have approached me to call on the minister to consider appointing a monitor for the foreseeable period and to make sure that these governance issues are addressed and that the council continues to function effectively in the interests of all ratepayers in the City of Kingston. I certainly have evidence of that bloc voting. I think there is an opportunity for the minister's department to investigate these matters before considering the option of a monitor. But rather than see it fall into complete dysfunction, timely intervention is necessary. I would like to use the opportunity of this statement to call on the minister to appoint a monitor in a timely fashion.

Department of Health and Human Services: report 2016–17

Ms FITZHERBERT (Southern Metropolitan) (17:36) — I rise to make some comments about the Department of Health and Human Services annual report 2016–17 and in particular the parts of that report which pertain to public housing. Public housing of course has a number of major challenges and has had for some time. We have a waitlist; I believe the most recent waitlist, although it is under reconstruction and out of date, suggests that some 35 000 people are waiting for public housing places. We have a growing population and we have an ageing stock of public housing. Everybody acknowledges this problem.

Most recently the government has been pursuing the public housing renewal program, as it is called, which covers a number of sites throughout Melbourne, and there are plans to extend it to regional areas. This is part of the government's efforts to address this problem. In short, the plan is to give the sites to private developers, who will dramatically expand the size of the buildings on the sites and in a way that would be in breach of existing planning requirements under local council control, except that the Andrews government has given itself planning control over these sites as it has decreed that they are of statewide significance.

The government's intention is to have buildings that will cover more of the land than those that are currently there, as well as having more storeys than are currently there and indeed more than are allowed under current council regulations. This will result in a modest increase in the number of public housing dwellings but a reduction in the number of bedrooms for public housing residents. On a number of sites, where we already know what the numbers of bedrooms are likely to be, there appears to be confirmation that there will be a reduction in capacity for public tenants.

Information about this is dripping out, but we do know that at Heidelberg West, Brighton, West Brunswick and Northcote there will be fewer bedrooms for public housing tenants than there are now. Understandably local communities are very unhappy about this, not because they stand in the way of public housing but because they see what is planned as being a poor deal for public housing residents, communities and the public purse, and I agree with them. Despite the concerns about the program, the Andrews government is rushing ahead and during November has literally started knocking on doors to start telling people that they will be moving.

The government when in opposition did not tell anyone before the election that it was going to undertake a public housing renewal program. In fact the Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing, the member for Albert Park in the Assembly, actively campaigned against the sale of public housing in his own seat. The Albert Park electorate of course has a very high proportion of public and community housing, and the local member regularly campaigns directly to public housing tenants when he is facing an election. In fact I would say he uses this as a premise for running a pretty grubby scare campaign.

I have with me a letter that the member for Albert Park posted out to public housing residents in September 2014, and it says:

The Napthine Liberal government is refusing to back down on a range changes that threaten your right to secure and affordable housing in this community.

Unlike Labor, Mr Napthine and his government refuse to rule out the following ...

Then there is a list, which includes:

wholesale sale of housing stock —

and —

selling off of public housing management to private owners/organisations.

It goes on:

Our inner city estates sit on the most valuable land and most under threat from being sold.

I raised this issue in Parliament on behalf of residents but am yet to receive a clear response from the minister.

Mr Foley then suggests that a way to stand up against this is to vote for Labor at the election. I think this is pretty shameless.

There is also a flyer which purports to come from a public housing tenant. It is entitled 'Respect my home', with the words 'Sorry I missed you' written on it, and it has key messages that are remarkably similar to what the member for Albert Park has in his own communication.

Mrs Peulich interjected.

Ms FITZHERBERT — Absolutely. Similarly it says that the best way to stand up against this attack — the selling off of public housing management and public housing stock — is to vote Labor.

The flyer ends with the words:

For more information please contact the office of Martin Foley ...

There you go. I think this is not only really grubby politics but also absolutely breathtaking hypocrisy, because after the election the member for Albert Park became the Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing, and he is personally overseeing the massive sales of public housing.

So my question is: was the minister prepared to say anything before the election to save his seat or was he forced into this by the Premier and cabinet? The minister also has some explaining to do about public housing in his own seat. Will his seat become part of the next round of the public housing renewal program or is he quarantining it? I guess my other question is: will the minister actually have the audacity to run his usual scare campaign with public housing residents in his seat during the next campaign?

I look forward to seeing answers to all of that. I am sure it will become clearer next year in the run-up to the next election. But as I said, it is breathtaking hypocrisy to say one thing — to accuse others of threatening vulnerable tenants — before an election and to then actually do that thing that you have accused others of doing after the election.

STATE TAXATION ACTS FURTHER AMENDMENT BILL 2017

Assembly's amendments

Returned from Assembly with message agreeing to Council's suggested amendments.

Ordered to be referred to committee on next day of meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms TIERNEY (Minister for Training and Skills) — I move:

That the house do now adjourn.

Adjournment matters and constituency questions

Ms LOVELL (Northern Victoria) (17:45) — My adjournment matter is for the Premier, and it relates to the large number of adjournment matters I have raised and constituency questions I have asked in this place that remain unanswered. The action I seek is for the Premier to reprimand ministers who have blatantly

disregarded the standing orders and the good workings of the Victorian Parliament by failing to respond to constituency questions and adjournment matters and for him to require them to provide responses to all unanswered matters.

The primary role of our Parliament is for democratically elected representatives to advocate for their respective communities. We are all but servants to those communities, proudly and passionately representing all people of our electorates. One avenue available to us for the resolution of issues raised by our constituents is to ask questions and seek an action of a minister through constituency questions and adjournment matters in Parliament. The practice makes ministers aware of the issues and allows them to provide advice to be taken back to the constituent. The convention works very well until members' questions are ignored by ministers, and this has happened with many issues I have raised in 2017.

On 8 June during an adjournment debate I asked the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, Minister Kairouz, to develop a policy regarding gambling advertising at AFL games. Six months later I have still not received a response. On 18 October during an adjournment debate I called on the Minister for Police, Minister Neville, to commit to an upgrade of the Whittlesea police station. No reply has been forthcoming. On 2 November I asked the Minister for Agriculture, Minister Pulford, to support King Valley wineries. Again I am yet to receive a response.

The biggest culprit for not replying to matters I have raised is the Minister for Health, Minister Hennessy. As members in this place will know, I continue to campaign long and hard for radiotherapy services to be established in Shepparton. As part of my advocacy, I have utilised adjournment debates to retell the personal stories of Goulburn Valley cancer patients who have been forced to travel long distances at great expense to receive this life-saving treatment.

On the following dates — 8 August, 22 August, 6 September, 19 September, 17 October, 18 October, 31 October and 1 November — I directed adjournment matters on this issue to Minister Hennessy, seeking a commitment from the Andrews Labor government to establish these long-overdue services. In a show of contempt to both the practices of this Parliament and the people of Shepparton and the Goulburn Valley, Ms Hennessy has completely ignored the issue and has failed to respond to any of my adjournment matters. This behaviour is completely unacceptable because my

constituents deserve better. It is time the Premier brought his ministers into line.

Ms Shing interjected.

Ms LOVELL — I also note that Ms Shing has constantly throughout my contribution chosen to belittle the issues that I have raised on behalf of the people of Shepparton and shows disrespect for the workings of this Parliament.

I call on the Premier to act on the action that I set out at the beginning of my adjournment matter.

Gippsland public transport

Ms SHING (Eastern Victoria) (17:48) — I rise tonight with a matter for the attention of the Minister for Public Transport in the other place, Minister Allan, and it relates to the record investment of \$535 million into improving the Gippsland rail line, in addition to the \$9 million that was allocated in the last state budget for the purposes of duplication of sections of the track, improvements to the number of car parks available for people on the Gippsland line as well as the addition of extra platforms for people along this line, which we use and rely upon.

One of the issues that I wish to raise with the minister, however, is the use of social enterprises to make sure that we make the most of the workforce that is available in and around the Latrobe Valley to provide goods and services in much the same way as has been done throughout the level crossing removal project. In this regard I note that the publication of printed material as well as landscaping and nursery work has been done to great effect and to great social benefit, as well as environmental and community benefit, in the course of this work that has been undertaken within the metropolitan area.

I ask the minister to give positive consideration to the way in which we can engage to best effect with social enterprises throughout Gippsland to make sure that people working within this supported workforce — and that includes organisations such as Latrobe Valley Enterprises, Interchange Gippsland and others — have the best possible opportunity to be recognised for their work and the value they can bring to the community as the rail line is improved and upgraded and to make sure that we continue to support social enterprises in the meaningful way that we have committed to as part of increasing workforce participation more broadly but specifically in the area of this really important infrastructure upgrade and investment.

Fiskville former training site

Mr MORRIS (Western Victoria) (17:50) — My adjournment matter this afternoon is for the attention of the Minister for Emergency Services, and it relates to the former Country Fire Authority (CFA) Fiskville site and the future use of that site. I was fortunate to meet with the mayor and CEO of the Moorabool shire on Monday of this week, along with our candidate for Melton, Ryan Farrow, who is an exceptional young fellow. I think he will do an excellent job representing the people of Melton after it has been neglected by Labor for so long.

I note that the future use of the Fiskville site has not yet been determined by this government. Unfortunately they are seeking to spend millions of dollars remediating the site without knowing what its future use will be. This is a horrible waste of taxpayers money. Indeed before the money that has been budgeted for is spent on the Fiskville site a future use of the site should be determined.

One excellent proposal for the site is that Fiskville become a motorsport facility. For many years the Ballarat council has been working on developing a regional motorsport facility in or around its municipality. I believe at this juncture the council has recognised that the facility is unlikely to be developed within their municipal boundaries, and they are seeking that an adjoining council take up the mantle of developing a motorsport facility.

Moorabool shire, under the excellent leadership of Cr Paul Tatchell, has taken up this mantle and is willing to press ahead with the future opportunity for a motorsport facility at Fiskville, but unfortunately we have seen a lack of movement from this government on this potential use of the site. The government has a problem regarding the future use of the site at Fiskville, and there is a very obvious solution to that problem that the government can avail themselves of.

The action that I seek from the minister is that he work with the Moorabool Shire Council and have further discussions with them surrounding the development of the former CFA Fiskville site as a motorsport facility.

Country Fire Authority Lilydale and Chirnside brigades

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) (17:53) — My adjournment matter is directed to the Minister for Emergency Services, James Merlino, and it concerns recent newspaper reports as well as discussions I have had with individuals regarding bad blood between the

Lilydale and the Chirnside Country Fire Authority (CFA) brigades. Articles have been published regarding arguments about fundraising zones and a number of other things, which is quite a concern going into the fire season.

The action I seek from the minister is that he get the hierarchy of the CFA to work with these two brigades as diligently as they can to make sure the brigades, being neighbouring brigades, can work together in a fashion that would be of benefit to them and the communities they represent.

Latrobe Valley energy production

Ms BATH (Eastern Victoria) (17:54) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, the Honourable Lily D'Ambrosio. The action I seek from the minister is that she provides the people of the Latrobe Valley, the Latrobe Valley community, with a transparent briefing of the government's plans to install diesel generators into the community at the old Energy Brix site and provides a full and comprehensive outline as to what potential impacts that this could have. It could include, but would not be limited to, the pollutants emitted into the air, the noise pollution and the cost impost to those people.

It is interesting that on 22 March this year the minister categorically stated:

We're not considering any diesel backup because we are building the generation and storage necessary to protect Victorian consumers.

Despite this, we have had the Australian Energy Market Operator predicting that there will be 72 potential days of shortfall of electricity, and therefore the Andrews Labor government has had to sandbag Victoria's basic energy security. What they have done is request that Aggreko place over 100 diesel generators on the old Energy Brix site. So what does that mean? That means that people have not been consulted. They are quite distressed. The only consultation that has taken place has actually been when Aggreko came to Energy Brix's forum and basically took over proceedings to explain what was happening.

The government can create policies to shut down the Hazelwood power station. The government can override local planning laws with planning permits in order to fast-track this. In fact Mr Wynne has tracked over, overpassed and gone around and through Latrobe City Council so that there are no council permits required. They can do this, but the minister cannot actually identify the health consequences early enough

to inform the residents of the Latrobe Valley, particularly Morwell, about them or just let them ask questions about anything they feel concerned about. I think that is actually appalling. Minister, there are also potential hydrocarbon emissions that can occur from this. The community needs to be told how the diesel generators will affect them. There are people who live only 1 to 1½ kilometres away from these generators, and people require proper respect and proper consultation.

Hume City Council

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) (17:57) — I raise a matter this evening for the attention the Minister for Local Government. Municipal councils pride themselves on being local government. Some in fact say that it is the most important level of government because it is local. It is the closest level of government to the people, as we are often told. It seems to me very clear that representatives in local government should be just that — they should be local. The matter that I raise tonight has been a matter of some rumour and discussion around Sunbury for quite some months. The first I heard about it was in April, and at the time I dismissed it as fanciful, thinking that nobody would have the gall to actually try this on. But it seems, given the evidence that I have seen over the last few days, that in fact there is significant evidence to lead me to raise this matter for the minister this evening.

It is now clear that a councillor on the Hume City Council, Cr Ann Potter, not only does not live in the municipality of Hume but does not even live in the state of Victoria. She spends more than half her time in Cairns. I have no objection to people living in Cairns. I find the northern beaches of Cairns to be quite a nice spot, particularly in winter, but I would have thought that if you wanted to live in Cairns and you wanted to be involved in local government, perhaps you should run for the Cairns Regional Council and not the Hume City Council.

This leads me to believe that the people of Sunbury, those in Jacksons Creek ward in particular, are being short-changed by the fact that Cr Potter is not spending her time in Hume, much less in Victoria, representing her constituents on the Hume council, as indeed she should. This is a matter that I believe should be investigated by the minister. It is a matter that absolutely shocked me. As I say, I did not think anybody would try something like this on, but clearly Cr Potter has had other ideas and is doing just that. So I ask the minister to investigate and ascertain without doubt exactly what the position of Cr Potter's residence is. If she is proven to be living even for the majority of

the time in Cairns, then I ask the minister to step in and dismiss Cr Potter from her position on the Hume council and to find an appropriate local replacement for that position.

Black Rock Life Saving Club

Ms FITZHERBERT (Southern Metropolitan) (18:00) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Emergency Services, and it is in relation to the Black Rock Life Saving Club and their quest to find funding to urgently upgrade their clubrooms. The club was founded in 1928. It has had a very long period of continuous service to the local community since that time. It was recognised as a clubhouse in urgent need of renewal in the Life Saving Victoria statewide audit of 2011. In fact it was one of the eight listed as most in need. Sadly since then it has not been able to get funding in any of the rounds of funding made available for upgrades. They say that they are delighted that others have received funds for renewal, but they have concerns about the decision-making process that has happened. They describe it as opaque, so they wish to emphasise the urgent need for Black Rock.

Last year the club provided 2399 hours of volunteer service to the local community. They have given first aid; they have rescued swimmers; they have families as members; and they have provided a very active Nippers program, which is a terrific way of encouraging water safety in young children and teenagers. I want to acknowledge the work done by Emma Olivier, who is a member of the club and has been very active in running the campaign to better fund an upgrade of the facilities. Her own story is inspiring in terms of how she qualified as a lifesaver although she is missing one arm — a huge effort to be providing this kind of service to her community.

Earlier this month Life Saving Victoria released its drowning report. This highlights the importance of the work that is done on a volunteer basis by lifesaving clubs like the one in Black Rock. The drowning death toll in Victoria has reached the second worst level in a decade. Some 45 Victorians drowned last year, which is some 20 per cent above the long-term average and is reported to be an alarming rise in the number. There is also an alarming rise in the number of toddlers and elderly people who have struck trouble in the water, so this work is urgently needed.

In particular the clubhouse is currently used by a variety of other community organisations, and the club fear that this contact and revenue stream will disappear if they cannot have some urgent upgrades provided. The clubhouse is very dilapidated — it is in constant need of

repair, which is a bit of a waste of money in their view — and their first-aid room is regularly flooded and unfit for purpose. Losing the clubhouse, if it becomes increasingly unusable, would mean the loss of nearly a century of service to the Bayside community. The action I am seeking from the minister is funding for the redevelopment of the Black Rock Life Saving Club.

Sherwood Avenue, Chelsea, drainage

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) (18:03) — The matter that I wish to raise is for the attention of the Minister for Water, and it is in relation to constituents who have contacted me, residents of Sherwood Avenue in Chelsea, whose property has been subjected to flooding for some time. In one instance they lost all of their furniture and had to sleep on concrete slabs for a number of weeks. More recently they had the Victoria State Emergency Service called out a number of times. They have set up three pumps overnight, and whenever there is a downpour they have to rely on their neighbours as well to keep the water out of their house. The issue appears to be caused by a drainage problem involving stormwater on Crown land, so it is not on their property.

They have contacted me in desperation. I have seen some photographs. It is pretty appalling. We have got Christmas coming along. These are elderly folk. They have tried to contact the Kingston City Council on several occasions. Whilst they have a job number, there has been no response since then, and the initial response was that there was not the money in the budget to fix the problem. So I am asking the minister to take the matter up with South East Water, Melbourne Water or whatever the appropriate authority would be to see what can be done to address this drainage problem, which is causing a health problem. It is also placing Mrs Faye and Mr Graeme Howroyd under substantial pressure both financially and in terms of their health and wellbeing. I ask the minister to see what she can do to intervene. It would be a nice Christmas present if it could be fixed and indeed if their fears, concerns and discomfort could be allayed in the lead-up to Christmas.

Boris and Lana Zaitzen

Ms DUNN (Eastern Metropolitan) (18:05) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation. Lana and Boris Zaitzen have endured the horror scenario of paying hundreds of thousands of dollars for the construction of their dream home only to have the builders do a shoddy job and the building surveyor fail to properly assess the breaches of construction

standards. The partly constructed home is deemed uninhabitable. The Zaitsens have pursued this dodgy builder through multiple avenues, but the system has so far failed them.

The Zaitsens have been seeking to benefit from the professional indemnity insurance held by the building surveyor from two engineers and a draughtsman. However, after two years at VCAT with legal fees of over \$300 000 the Zaitsens have been advised that they will need a further \$750 000 to prosecute their case. That is a lot of money, enough to build a new house, and it is money they do not have after this horrible experience. The action I seek is that the minister direct Consumer Affairs Victoria to ensure the Zaitsens are able to benefit from the insurance coverage, such that they can build a new house and get on with their lives after this dreadful episode.

Responses

Ms TIERNEY (Minister for Training and Skills) (18:06) — There were nine adjournment matters this evening. The first was from Ms Lovell to the Premier, asking for responses to constituency questions. The second was from Ms Shing to Minister Allan, requesting a plan of engagement with social enterprises in Gippsland; that is linked to rail upgrades and general infrastructure upgrades. Mr Morris asked Mr Merlino to meet with the Shire of Moorabool in respect to the future of the former Fiskville site and sought support for a regional motorsport facility on that site. The fourth was from Mr Leane to Minister Merlino in relation to the Lilydale and Chirnside Country Fire Authority (CFA) brigades, asking for the hierarchy of the CFA to work in with both brigades so that they have a workable relationship leading into the fire season. Minister D'Ambrosio was asked by Ms Bath to conduct briefings on the installation of diesel generators. I note that in 2014 the coalition had diesel generators located there, and that was when Hazelwood was operational.

The sixth matter was from Mr Finn to the Minister for Local Government, asking the minister to investigate the eligibility of a particular councillor on the Hume City Council. The seventh matter was from Ms Fitzherbert to the Minister for Emergency Services, calling for funding for upgrades at the Black Rock Life Saving Club. The eighth matter was from Mrs Peulich to the Minister for Water, and it concerned residents in a particular street in Chelsea who have a property that is prone to flooding. It is alleged that the flooding is a result of drainage issues that are located on Crown land, and Mrs Peulich sought for the minister to intervene. The ninth matter was from Ms Dunn to the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation in

relation to a case that a couple have been pursuing through VCAT for the last two years in relation to a dodgy builder. The request, or the action, was for the minister to direct Consumer Affairs Victoria to ensure that insurance coverage is properly claimed so that they can rebuild and get on with their lives.

There are three responses to adjournment debate matters: Mr Morris on 31 October 2017; Mr Ramsay on 15 November 2017; and Ms Lovell on 16 November 2017.

The PRESIDENT — The house stands adjourned.

House adjourned 6.09 p.m.

