

**PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA**

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES  
(HANSARD)**

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**

**FIFTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT**

**FIRST SESSION**

**Wednesday, 20 September 2017**

**(Extract from book 16)**

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## **The Governor**

The Honourable LINDA DESSAU, AC

## **The Lieutenant-Governor**

The Honourable Justice MARILYN WARREN, AC, QC

## **The ministry**

(from 13 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 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

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(to 12 September 2017)

Premier .....	The Hon. D. M. Andrews, MP
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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
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Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services .....	The Hon. J. Hennessy, MP
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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 Barber, 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** — #Mr Barber, Ms Bath, #Mr Bourman, Mr Dalla-Riva, Mr Davis, Ms Dunn, Mr Elasmr, #Ms Hartland, Mr Melhem, #Mr Purcell, #Mr Ramsay, Ms Shing, #Ms Symes and Mr Young.

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

# participating members

### Legislative Council select committees

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

**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 Elasmr 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 Elasmr, 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:**

Mr G. BARBER

Member	Region	Party	Member	Region	Party
Atkinson, Mr Bruce Norman	Eastern Metropolitan	LP	Mikakos, Ms Jenny	Northern Metropolitan	ALP
Barber, Mr Gregory John	Northern Metropolitan	Greens	Morris, Mr Joshua	Western Victoria	LP
Bath, Ms Melina <sup>1</sup>	Eastern Victoria	Nats	Mulino, Mr Daniel	Eastern Victoria	ALP
Bourman, Mr Jeffrey	Eastern Victoria	SFFP	O'Brien, Mr Daniel David <sup>6</sup>	Eastern Victoria	Nats
Carling-Jenkins, Dr Rachel <sup>2</sup>	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 <sup>7</sup>	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 <sup>3</sup>	Northern Victoria	Nats	Peulich, Mrs Inga	South Eastern Metropolitan	LP
Dunn, Ms Samantha	Eastern Metropolitan	Greens	Pulford, Ms Jaala Lee	Western Victoria	ALP
Eideh, Mr Khalil M.	Western Metropolitan	ALP	Purcell, Mr James	Western Victoria	VILJ
Elasmr, Mr Nazih	Northern Metropolitan	ALP	Ramsay, Mr Simon	Western Victoria	LP
Finn, Mr Bernard Thomas C.	Western Metropolitan	LP	Rich-Phillips, Mr Gordon Kenneth	South Eastern Metropolitan	LP
Fitzherbert, Ms Margaret	Southern Metropolitan	LP	Shing, Ms Harriet	Eastern Victoria	ALP
Gepp, Mr Mark <sup>4</sup>	Northern Victoria	ALP	Somyurek, Mr Adem	South Eastern Metropolitan	ALP
Hartland, Ms Colleen Mildred	Western Metropolitan	Greens	Springle, Ms Nina	South Eastern Metropolitan	Greens
Herbert, Mr Steven Ralph <sup>5</sup>	Northern Victoria	ALP	Symes, Ms Jaelyn	Northern Victoria	ALP
Jennings, Mr Gavin Wayne	South Eastern Metropolitan	ALP	Tierney, Ms Gayle Anne	Western Victoria	ALP
Leane, Mr Shaun Leo	Eastern Metropolitan	ALP	Wooldridge, Ms Mary Louise Newling	Eastern Metropolitan	LP
Lovell, Ms Wendy Ann	Northern Victoria	LP	Young, Mr Daniel	Northern Victoria	SFFP
Melhem, Mr Cesar	Western Metropolitan	ALP			

<sup>1</sup> Appointed 16 April 2015

<sup>2</sup> DLP until 26 June 2017

<sup>3</sup> Resigned 27 May 2016

<sup>4</sup> Appointed 7 June 2017

<sup>5</sup> Resigned 6 April 2017

<sup>6</sup> Resigned 25 February 2015

<sup>7</sup> Appointed 13 October 2016

**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; VILJ — Vote 1 Local Jobs

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**Wednesday, 20 September 2017**

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

**PETITIONS**

**Following petitions presented to house:**

**Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances  
Amendment (Pilot Medically Supervised  
Injecting Centre) Bill 2017**

Legislative Council electronic petition:

The petition of certain citizens of the state of Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Council that preventable heroin overdose deaths are occurring in Victoria at an average of three per week.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Council pass the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Amendment (Pilot Medically Supervised Injecting Centre) Bill 2017.

**By Ms PATTEN (Northern Metropolitan) (439 signatures).**

**Laid on table.**

**Ordered to be considered next day on motion of Ms PATTEN (Northern Metropolitan).**

**Crime prevention**

To the Legislative Council of Victoria:

The petition of residents in Victoria calls on the Legislative Council to note that there is a crime tsunami engulfing Victorians. Small businesses are regularly being targeted, residents feel unsafe in their own homes and going to work and Victorians are losing faith in our justice system.

The petitioners therefore respectfully request that the Legislative Council calls on the Andrews Labor government to match the coalition policy and introduce mandatory sentencing, toughen up the justice system and hold criminals to account.

**By Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (48 signatures).**

**Laid on table.**

**Greensborough, Montmorency and Eltham  
railway stations**

To the Legislative Council of Victoria:

The petition of residents in Victoria calls on the Legislative Council to note that:

car parking at the Greensborough, Montmorency and Eltham railway stations is inadequate;

these carparks are full early each morning with commuters resorting to parking along nearby roads and shopping centres, thereby restricting access for other road users.

The petitioners therefore call on the members of the Legislative Council to urge the government to provide additional parking at these stations so commuters can park and use public transport in a safe and convenient way.

**By Ms WOOLDRIDGE (Eastern Metropolitan) (188 signatures).**

**Laid on table.**

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

**PAPERS**

**Laid on table by Clerk:**

Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978 — Ministerial Orders for the following approvals —

A lease and licence in relation to Lower Reserve, dated 3 September 2017.

Leases in relation to Moorooduc Recreation Reserve and Williamstown Botanical Gardens, dated 3 September 2017.

Heritage Council of Victoria — Minister's report of receipt of 2016–17 report.

Statutory Rules under the following Acts of Parliament —

Borrowing and Investment Powers Act 1987 — No. 95.

Racing Act 1958 — No. 94.

Sex Work Act 1994 — No. 93.

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 —

Documents under section 15 in respect of Statutory Rule No. 93.

Legislative Instrument and related documents under section 16B in respect of the City of Greater Geelong Act 1993 — Greater Geelong City Council — Mayoral and Deputy Mayoral Allowances, dated 12 September 2017.

**MEMBERS STATEMENTS**

**Political donations**

**Ms WOOLDRIDGE (Eastern Metropolitan) —**  
This week we have once again seen the Andrews Labor government say one thing in public but behind closed party doors and in intimate settings do the complete opposite. In July the Leader of the Government,

Mr Jennings, attended a boardroom fundraising lunch, talking about Victoria's infrastructure pipeline, at a cost of \$2475 per person. Will the Leader of the Government, who has responsibility for integrity, do what his side is asking of the opposition? Will he release the guest list? Will he detail what was discussed at the lunch and what was promised in exchange for the donations?

At the same cost per person was Minister Dalidakis's own boardroom fundraising lunch in November. We know the minister has built a portfolio of scandals and broken promises. What did he promise in return for the donations?

Minister Pulford does not escape, charging \$750 per head for attendees to gain insight into multimillion-dollar government funds, as the flyer describes. Will Minister Pulford come out today and say that none of those attendees that donated to the Labor Party at her fundraisers have received government funding or favour from the Andrews Labor government since?

We did get a laugh out of the flyer for Minister Mikakos, as there was no cost; her event was free. I am surprised that it did not say, 'We will pay you to come and listen to her'. She is clearly not a money-spinner. I wonder why. Those opposite can throw the rocks, but Victorians know well that when it comes to being dodgy, it is in Labor's DNA.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The PRESIDENT** — That is more than enough. I think I have heard enough of this for the day.

### Workplace deaths

**Mr GEPP** (Northern Victoria) — It is with sadness that I rise to talk about another workplace death in Victoria last week. A 39-year-old male worker has died in hospital from his injuries after an incident on 11 August, when the elevating work platform he was operating was struck by a car at Braeside. This is a tragedy for his family, his friends and his workmates. Everyone in this state has the right to return home from work. Last year was the worst year since 2009 for workplace deaths, with 26 deaths. The vast majority of these happened in construction and agriculture. One death in the workplace is far too many, and there have been 18 already this year. I send my condolences to all the affected families and workmates involved in this ongoing and very needless waste of life.

### Threatened species

**Ms PENNICUIK** (Southern Metropolitan) — International research led by Oregon State University and supported by the University of Sydney and Deakin University, which was published this week in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, found that the world's smallest and largest creatures are at the greatest risk of being wiped out. Researchers say that the smallest creatures are being ignored and there will be dire implications for Australia's ecosystem. The study found that across the world the largest vertebrates are most likely threatened by direct killing by humans, whereas the smallest species are more likely to have restricted geographic ranges, which is an important predictor of extinction risk, and be threatened by habitat degradation.

Dr Thomas Newsome from the faculty of science at Sydney University and Deakin University found that 55 per cent of species in Australia are threatened by biological resource use, which includes hunting, logging and fishing. The largest vertebrates are in most danger from habitat loss and modification stemming especially from pollution, agricultural cropping and logging. Threats that are facing our smallest mammals in Australia and Victoria such as the Leadbeater's possum and greater gliders include logging in the Central Highlands and East Gippsland. Australia also stands out in that a high proportion of species are also threatened by invasive species such as feral cats and wild dogs.

### Connor's Run

**Ms FITZHERBERT** (Southern Metropolitan) — Last Sunday, on a beautiful spring day, the fifth annual Connor's Run was held in my electorate. In the last five years Connor's Run has raised more than \$2.1 million for research into brain cancer in young people. This year 922 people participated in Melbourne with a goal of raising \$600 000. To date Sunday's runners have raised more than \$773 000. The route retraces the steps that 17-year-old Robert Connor Dawes took in September 2011 from his home in Sandringham to the Yarra boatsheds. He did not like running, but he was training to get into the rowing team at his school. Two months later he was diagnosed with an aggressive brain tumour which later took his life. His mother, Liz Dawes, says:

What started as a small event in our local community now includes thousands of people from all over Melbourne and shadow runs across Australia and the world.

We're achieving fundraising benchmarks we never thought possible, meaning we can support more projects to end this awful disease.

Proceeds from the run go towards the AIM BRAIN project, and recently the federal government matched the foundation's donation of \$1 million towards this project. This means that Australian and New Zealand children with brain cancer will now have a very early assessment of their tumours, which gives them the best possible individualised treatment and chance of survival.

I want to acknowledge and congratulate Connor's family — Nick, Liz, Hannah and Scott Dawes — and especially Liz Dawes for her extraordinary leadership in response to great loss.

### **Men's sheds**

**Mr MULINO** (Eastern Victoria) — It was a privilege last week to attend the opening of a new men's shed facility to be operated by the Willum Warrain Aboriginal Association in Hastings at its Aboriginal gathering place. The association will benefit from \$36 864 in funding. It is already a remarkable place where they have preserved a walking track and created a number of traditional buildings. The organisation runs a number of programs for Aboriginal men in the area, ranging from young to middle-aged and through to older than middle-aged. It is a very vibrant community. It also runs a number of programs for young people in the area.

A related grant, also part of the men's shed program, was to a men's shed in Mooroolbark which gained \$60 000 in funding. This is a men's shed program that is creating toys for the local community as well as possum boxes. It is an amazingly vibrant group that needs more space. The place that it is in can only be described as congested and somewhat dilapidated. The \$60 000 will go a long way to helping that organisation get more suitable facilities.

### **Bayles Regional Primary School**

**Mr MULINO** — Finally, I would like to congratulate Bayles Regional Primary School on receiving a grant of \$400 000 for a new building which will be used for art and related activities, provide new toilets and remove existing buildings that contain asbestos, a critically important safety issue for many workplaces.

### **Australian marriage law postal survey**

**Ms HARTLAND** (Western Metropolitan) — Over the weekend I was involved in doorknocking for the yes for marriage equality vote in Yarraville, Seddon, Footscray, Williamstown and Ascot Vale. The response we received was overwhelmingly supportive and many of the comments were interesting. People were saying to us that everybody should be treated equally, from parents who did not understand why one of their children would be allowed marry but not the other. They asked why the government was spending \$122 million on a postal vote when they should just be getting on with their job and bringing forward a bill. People had many suggestions for what the money could be spent on, including hospitals, transport and schools.

I have been with my Victor for 37 years, and everybody should be entitled to the love, support and fun that I have in my marriage. Why is it that I am allowed to marry but my friends are not? The government should just be getting on with this and bringing forward a bill.

### **Rohingya refugees**

**Mrs PEULICH** (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I commend the federal government for its postal vote. It would have been a plebiscite if the Labor Party had not opposed it.

Australians are deeply concerned about escalating violence in the Rakhine state and condemn the attacks on civilians and security forces and the displacement of over 350 000 Rohingya people. Reports of violence against civilians and the displacement of 350 000 people are deeply concerning, and those responsible must be held to account. Violence is not the solution to the Rakhine's complex challenges, and Australia has expressed to the Myanmar government concern that it could fuel radicalisation in and against Myanmar. The Myanmar government has committed to ensuring that humanitarian assistance reaches all communities in need without putting people at further risk. Aid needs to flow quickly to the vulnerable communities that we have seen on our TV screens. Australia has provided more than \$32 million in humanitarian and development assistance to Muslim and Rakhine communities in the Rakhine state since 2012. It has provided \$16.5 million in assistance for the Rohingya refugees and affected communities in Bangladesh since 2013, and the federal government is exploring options to provide further humanitarian assistance to those who have recently crossed the border.

### Diwali festival

**Mrs PEULICH** — I would also like to take the opportunity to extend my very best wishes to the Victorian Hindu community on the occasion of Diwali, which will be celebrated over the coming days and weeks, in some instances. I invite and encourage all members of Parliament to share in the rich culture and heritage of India. I encourage all members of Parliament to attend Diwali events in their own electorates, and I also draw attention to the Annakut exhibition in Queen's Hall and encourage everyone to enjoy it.

### Jewish New Year

**Mrs PEULICH** — Lastly, and for those celebrating Jewish New Year, which is today, Rosh Hashanah!

### Bellbird Dell Reserve, Vermont South

**Mr LEANE** (Eastern Metropolitan) — Last Saturday I was very happy to be an attendant at the 40th anniversary celebrations of the Bellbird Dell advisory committee. Bellbird Dell is a beautiful piece of land, a beautiful piece of natural history in that area. It has been preserved in its natural state. I really appreciated the advisory group asking me to be part of their celebrations. I know that they are very appreciative of the intersecting land, which was the Healesville freeway reserve, being preserved and being changed to Crown land by the Andrews government. Members of the group mentioned in their speeches that it is important to maintain open space wherever that is possible, especially in inner-city suburbs like this area where open space is quite minimal compared to other areas. I am glad that the Andrews government managed to come into power and stop the previous government from flogging off that land to developers. They gazetted that they were about to flog off to developers land that was important to people in the community. Whatever vehicle they were using — whether it be a conversation at the Lobster Cave or a conversation in a private penthouse — I am glad that our government got in and managed to stop whatever deal those opposite had made.

### Road safety

**Mr RAMSAY** (Western Victoria) — The call by Victoria Police to reduce the speed limit on all unsealed country roads to 70 kilometres an hour is problematic in many ways. Firstly, I appreciate the position of the Assistant Commissioner of Police, Doug Fryer, that all efforts must be made to save lives on Victorian roads. But reducing the speed limit on these roads is not the

answer. Accidents can happen at 40 kilometres per hour, 50 kilometres per hour or 100 kilometres per hour on any road or highway. Any road can be unsafe if the driver is unsafe. The real problem here is the state of the roads. There are sealed country roads where this government has seen fit to reduce the speed limit to 60 kilometres per hour because they are in an unsafe state. They have deteriorated to the point that they cannot be used as intended. We are dealing with unsafe roads and a lazy government that has withdrawn vital funding to local councils to maintain many of the roads in question.

This government has announced it will allow heavier loads for farmers transporting grain. This is great for the farmers that have trucks that are not as old as 15 years but not good for the roads already struggling with potholes, poor drainage and crumbling edges. The recent rains have further broken up susceptible roads, adding to the maintenance burden that already looks mountainous. There is a distinct lack of funding from a city-centric government to make these roads safe. This government withdrew the \$160 million country roads and bridges program and now wonders why it has a problem with road safety. The freeze on federal assistance grants has not helped either. Lowering speed limits will make long journeys in the country even longer, reducing efficiencies. The Andrews government is clearly more concerned with building tunnels and taking tolls than it is with making country roads safe. Unfortunately Victoria Police is being made the scapegoat.

**The PRESIDENT** — Thank you, Mr Ramsay, your time has expired.

### Australian marriage law postal survey

**Mr DALIDAKIS** (Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade) — I rise to speak in favour of the marriage equality vote. I say at the outset that I oppose the fact that we are being given a questionnaire to determine what is basically a human right — a freedom for people to choose their own path. It is a right that somehow discriminates against two people because of the sexuality they ascribe to as distinct from the fact that they are just people. I find it reprehensible that the campaign by the Coalition for Marriage has put an extraordinarily dishonest campaign out there, so much so that the campaign has continued to engender stereotypes that are unfair and quite frankly abusive towards people of same-sex persuasion.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr DALIDAKIS** — I want to point out that there have been a range of interjections that if Hansard has picked up will echo exactly what I have been talking about — that dishonesty. I implore everybody to take part in this questionnaire and vote yes to provide people the rights that we experience ourselves.

### Youth justice facilities

**Ms CROZIER** (Southern Metropolitan) — Minister Mikakos has a habit of continually declaring that events in youth justice facilities have not occurred, but in fact she has proven been to be wrong yet never admits so. She comes into this place and hides under parliamentary privilege, and she has done so repeatedly with inaccuracies.

In my role as shadow minister I requested a visit to Parkville and Malmsbury on 13 July 2015. I did not hear anything back, so I wrote a second letter of request on 12 August 2015. On 29 January 2016 I visited the Parkville youth justice facility and on 16 February 2016 I visited Malmsbury.

Of course we know that there have been a number of riots and mass escapes and many issues have occurred in the last two years under Minister Mikakos's watch. I requested a visit to Parkville and Malmsbury on 18 May this year. Again I received a reply from her chief of staff, Mr Jacob Clifton, saying, 'I will raise these requests with DJR and come back to you'. I have heard nothing since. I got a response from the minister after I raised it again, saying:

I am advised the member has already visited Parkville, Malmsbury and Greenvale youth justice precincts at least four times during this term of government.

...

We are not in the business of conducting a youth justice custodial tourism program.

I find this response highly offensive and inaccurate, and I ask the minister to correct the record. This is on the parliamentary record, and she needs to come in and correct the record as it is an inaccuracy.

### Black Caviar Trail of Champions

**Ms SYMES** (Northern Victoria) — I want to use my members statement to talk to the house about my region's newest tourist attraction, which is well and truly ready for visitors and will get them into the spirit of spring racing. It was a pleasure to formally open the Black Caviar Trail of Champions last Thursday at Mitchelton Wines, which is one of the touring sites along the trail. The Black Caviar Trail of Champions is

a 250-kilometre trail through Victoria's premier thoroughbred region. It features racing sites of significance, renowned wineries, restaurants, natural attractions and of course the beautiful statue of Black Caviar on the shores of Lake Nagambie.

The trail starts at Flemington Racecourse and journeys through my electorate and past my home, through Kilmore, Northwood, Avenel and Nagambie before heading up to Seymour and finishing at Wine by Sam. It features 25 sites, which is a significant number and is the number of races that Black Caviar won in her unbeaten career. The full touring route takes 3 hours to complete, but there is online information and pamphlets, which means that you can customise your own tour and spend as long as you like in the region and visit as many or as few of the sites as you like. You can return to the trail on many, many occasions.

I would like to thank the project team, because it was delivered by the committee of Nagambie Lakes Tourism and Commerce, and I particularly thank John Beresford and Sissy Hoskins. They have done good work, and I hope to see many members on the trail in coming months.

### PRODUCTION OF DOCUMENTS

**Mr DAVIS** (Southern Metropolitan) — I move:

That this house, in accordance with standing order 11.01, requires the Leader of the Government to table in the Council within 14 calendar days a copy of the Allard report into the critical modelling on the government's West Gate tunnel/distributor project, including all traffic projections and appendices and modelling of toll collections, and any available associated projections of tolling payments over future decade(s) in the southern and eastern suburbs of Melbourne.

What I am seeking through this motion — and I believe that this motion is very much in the public interest — is the Allard report, a report that has a very significant role. It is the peer reviewing into the traffic modelling for the government's West Gate tunnel — West Gate distributor — project. Of course the government went to the election in 2014 with a small slip-road called the West Gate distributor. What is now being proposed is something fundamentally different. It is a massive road, but a road that comes to a T-intersection. The point about this road is that it was not agreed to by the community, and more importantly the assessment of this road ought to be in the public domain.

The Allard report is the peer reviewing of the projections. The traffic projections, the appendices and the modelling are also important. What is significant here is that there are likely toll estimates as well. Those

toll estimates, whether on the western side of the city or on the eastern and south-eastern, ought to be in the public domain. It is pretty clear that this road would not stack up if the south and south-east were not included and indeed if tolls were not to be slapped on people in the south and south-east for a decade or perhaps as much as two decades into the future beyond the end of the contract.

Of course it is likely that the government will need to extend this contract under the Melbourne City Link Act 1995, and they will need to table the actual deeds and changes that are made in this chamber. They are disallowable instruments under that particular act, but it is pretty clear from what is in the public domain that there are real questions about the government's modelling on this matter. The City of Melbourne, in its submission to the environmental effects process, not only points to the loss of 750 trees and damage to the Moonee Ponds Creek corridor, which the council plans to regenerate, but also points to the likelihood that this will have very significant negative effects on streets like Gatehouse Street, Arden Street, Queensbury Street and Victoria Street, suggesting that they will be jammed with traffic for between 12 and 14 hours every day.

The project infrastructure will also compromise plans for new neighbourhoods such as E-gate, near Docklands, and Arden. The government says it wants to densify Melbourne. Well, Fishermans Bend is an opportunity and E-gate is an opportunity. The government is passing up that opportunity with this road. The elevated road — the Footscray tollway — was also criticised as creating a significant barrier for its 100-year life, undermining any potential development of land within 5 kilometres of the city centre.

The transport chairman at the City of Melbourne, Nick Frances Gilley, said the tollway goes against years of policy. But what is important in this motion is the modelling that impacts on peak and other times. That modelling, the assessments of the modelling and the peer reviewing of the modelling ought to be in the public domain. The West Gate tunnel benefits are believed to be deliberately distorted. I note the comments that were made by Mr William McDougall to a Senate inquiry. He made previously confidential evidence public. He is described as a respected transport planner and engineer who was hired by the government to assess the process by Transurban. He worked on CityLink and EastLink. He is known to Mr Pallas. Mr McDougall last week was described by Mr Pallas in the *Age* as:

... an engineer who has done considerable work for the state ... I have a lot of respect for his advice.

The article says:

Mr McDougall was contracted in 2015 to review traffic modelling for the West Gate tunnel business case.

But Fairfax Media revealed this month that Mr McDougall was removed from assessing the road when he personally raised his concerns about it with Mr Pallas ...

Here there is actually a punishment of this individual — a respected traffic engineer — for his expression to the Treasurer of a contrary view, and then he is quickly zapped out of the equation. The *Age* article continues:

In his evidence, Mr McDougall said the justification for taxpayers spending billions of dollars of public money on the proposed road was 'based on flawed traffic modelling and cost-benefit analysis'.

I pay tribute to Jane Hume for chairing that Senate committee and to the work that has been done by that Senate committee. Mr McDougall's written evidence to the Senate says that traffic numbers produced by consultants show the need for the West Gate tunnel was significantly higher than recent travel surveys showed. The *Age* articles continues:

... consultants PwC used these 'fudged' figures in their cost-benefit analysis of the road, and also incorporated overseas guidelines for assessing the road that showed a higher benefit than local guidelines.

This added to \$780 million of extra supposed economic benefit to the business case.

'No other Australian cost-benefit analysis I am aware of has incorporated this effect', he writes. 'Its inclusion has overstated the benefits of the [West Gate tunnel] compared to other projects'.

Parts of the business case also used a 'technicality' to exclude the massive costs to Melbourne's transport network that would result from the extra traffic that would be generated in the west when the project opened — thereby rendering any benefits short-lived.

...

Mr McDougall said appraisals of toll roads often suffered from 'optimism bias'.

'This is a polite term for what I consider to be deliberate distortion and misrepresentation of traffic forecasts and the economic benefits that flow from them', he said.

The coalition roads spokesperson has pointed out concerns with this approach of the government. The article quotes him saying that this 'should ring alarm bells for Victorians footing the bill' for the road via tolls. Importantly former VicRoads employee and expert Doug Harley has also put on the record a series of comments about this particular road.

Mr Harley is quoted in an *Age* article by Clay Lucas of 17 September saying he is:

... extremely concerned about the methods used to compile traffic projections for the West Gate tunnel — which are being done by the same companies ... that worked on the east–west link.

We seem to have a different response from the government now. The article continues:

His concern was with secrecy surrounding how the numbers had been produced.

‘It is a secretive model that cannot be checked or assessed by anyone else’, Mr Harley said.

He said the transport modelling being used for the West Gate tunnel was done by a private firm, whose work could not be scrutinised even by many within the government.

This was despite there also being a publicly owned traffic modelling system, paid for by taxpayers.

‘Computer programmers know: garbage in, garbage out’, he said.

‘I can’t say whether the results that it’s producing are good or bad, because I cannot operate it’, he said of the private modelling used to justify the West Gate tunnel.

He said that this was closely guarded. He said that we are spending taxpayer dollars and that he always understood there should be open review and scrutiny so you do not get corruption of the system — and I am paraphrasing him there. Again the opposition roads spokesperson, Ryan Smith, has made it clear that this is now a third traffic expert who has questioned the West Gate tunnel’s business case, the modelling and the projections underneath.

**Mr Dalidakis** — Who?

**Mr DAVIS** — The opposition spokesperson on roads, Ryan Smith, has pointed to the fact that there is now a third traffic expert questioning the West Gate tunnel’s business case.

**Mr Dalidakis** — Do you mean the guy that killed the timber industry?

**Mr DAVIS** — Well, we know you have deserted the Victorian Association of Forest Industries. Importantly back in August —

**Mr Dalidakis** — He was irrelevant as an environment minister and he is irrelevant as a shadow minister — that bloke.

**Mr DAVIS** — My points here are very clear. This is an important motion. It is in the public interest. The West Gate tunnel is not the road the government went

to the election with. It is based on a set of projections. We have credible and senior traffic experts and engineers in the public domain pointing to flaws within the government’s analysis. The analysis, particularly the peer review document, the Allard document, ought to be, in my view, in the public domain.

This chamber has the power to get that document, to see that document and to make sure that that document is able to be analysed and scrutinised to see what is in the public interest. This chamber may well have a role in making decisions as to whether under the Melbourne City Link Act 1995 toll extensions are granted. This chamber has the power for disallowance, indeed, within six days of the tabling of those documents. Those documents may well require us to closely examine these points, and for that reason and for broader public interest reasons this Allard report, all of its traffic modelling and projections and all of its appendices, is sought today in the chamber. Indeed any toll collection modelling in the west, in the east and in the south ought to be in the public domain. This is an important motion. It is a motion that is in the public interest, and I ask the house to support it.

**Mr MULINO** (Eastern Victoria) — This is not an important motion. This is a disingenuous motion because we have people opposite whose gall is remarkable — these people standing up here talking about transparency and the importance of putting documents in the public realm.

**Mr Finn** interjected.

**Mr MULINO** — I would love the vociferous Mr Finn to put in the public realm anything he has in his possession around the east–west project. I would really love to see that. He is making a whole lot of noise when it comes to this motion, but if we put on a desk in this chamber what we have already put on the public record in relation to the West Gate tunnel, I would love to see how that stacks up against what Mr Finn, Mr Davis and that ragtag bunch opposite put on the public record when they were in government. I would love to see it.

Those opposite make all these noises and put all these motions — these fancily worded motions about transparency. Mr Davis is the worst offender here. He speaks at great length — actually, it feels like great length — about transparency. His record as a minister is absolutely appalling when it comes to providing documents. Let us not get into the content. Let us not get into his actual performance when it comes to dealing with ambulance drivers or nurses or the actual content but consider it just in terms of documents. I will

deal with the merits of this motion in a moment, but I do think context is important. Those opposite are making a lot of noise, but they should just turn their minds back three years. They should ask themselves what exactly it is that they put on the public record about a project that produced 45 cents in public benefit for every dollar spent.

Mr Davis talks about all these really interesting public policy concepts, like optimism bias. Is that 45 cents in benefit after the optimism bias or before the optimism bias, I am curious, when it comes to the east-west link? If that includes optimism bias, I would love to see what that project produces in terms of public benefit before you have optimism bias. Mr Davis talks about his doubts about this project and its public policy benefits. Let us look at the very non-transparent project that they championed and took to the last election, and let us look at its public policy benefits to the extent that we can gauge them, given how little has been put on the public record — garbage in, garbage out. The numbers that we have seen when it comes to the project that they championed are garbage numbers; let us put it that way.

Let us just add a little bit of context here about this particular project, and then we will get on to the specific documents that Mr Davis referred to. The Andrews Labor government will build this project because drivers in the west and Geelong desperately need an alternative to the West Gate Bridge. This project will also take trucks off roads. This project will also produce significant benefits for the community in terms of amenity. This is a critically important project, a strategic project, and now is the time for us to progress.

This is a tunnel alternative to the West Gate Bridge which will slash traffic congestion on the M1 from Geelong to the city and all the way through to Pakenham. We know that transport networks are interdependent, and this will have positive impacts on one of Australia's major arterial roads all the way out to Pakenham, where my office is and where people are experiencing so much travel time as a result of population growth. This will benefit people right across the city. The project will slash 20 minutes travel time from a return trip to the city from the west, from Geelong or from Ballarat. Not only will it slash congestion and increase productivity, it will lead to a cleaner, healthier and safer inner west, with 9000 trucks off local roads and a 24/7 truck ban in 2022 to improve safety and reduce noise.

Importantly the project will also create 6000 new jobs, including 500 apprentices — 6000 new jobs. This is a key driver of the economic benefits associated with

this. If you look at the government's significant infrastructure agenda, we are creating literally thousands of jobs across projects, be it level crossings removal, be it the Melbourne Metro or be it public transport or major roads projects such as this project. Six thousand new jobs is a huge contribution to creating new jobs in this state. I will not go into that separate issue of jobs creation, but more than 250 000 jobs have been created since this government came to power. It has been a remarkable performance, and when you look at the performance of this state relative to the rest of the nation, jobs creation has indeed been one of this government's stand-out achievements.

This is a project that does stack up in terms of public benefit. The West Gate tunnel project has a business case, which we have released. Again we go back to the record of those opposite.

**Mr Finn** interjected.

**Mr MULINO** — Mr Finn is sitting there rambling away. I cannot quite hear what he is saying, and I am happy to remain in ignorance, but the volume — even the fact that he is babbling on — is a sign of his audacity.

**Mr Dalidakis** — Desperation.

**Mr MULINO** — That is right, Mr Dalidakis. He is on the defensive. He is embarrassed. He is obviously embarrassed; he is on chamber duty at a time when road projects are on the agenda, and he cannot stand it because he knows those opposite took to the last election a project with a shocking cost-benefit number. This one is delivering a benefit of \$1.30 for every dollar of investment — more than one; that is something those opposite would have dreamed of in the previous term — and a project that is boosting the Victorian economy by more than \$11 billion. This is a much-needed project. It has a very strong economic benefit, but it is also a project that has a number of other benefits — adding redundancy to the system and adding strategic benefits.

**Mr Rich-Phillips** interjected.

**Mr MULINO** — This is very significant. Again Mr Rich-Phillips interjected. I did not quite catch it, but those opposite —

**Mr Dalidakis** — You missed nothing.

**Mr MULINO** — Yes, I suspect I did not. It is interesting. Those opposite are genuinely on the defensive on this one, and they are doing all they can to

try and disrupt, because they do not want the facts about this project on the public record.

It is important that we put on the record again that the project they championed was roundly condemned by both the Victorian and the commonwealth auditors-general. It was not supported by Infrastructure Victoria as a priority project relevant to other road projects. Indeed Mr Davis's speech would have been a lot shorter if he had instead spoken about the experts that supported the east-west project and said that it should have been a priority. That would have been a much pithier, much briefer contribution. I think those opposite would be better focused on having a bit of a look in the mirror and turning their attention to why it is that they are supporting a project with such a shocking cost-benefit ratio and such low public benefit.

They not only support a dud project, but again it is important to point out that their record on transparency is so laughable. We go through these motions, these little rigmaroles, every other week on a Wednesday with those opposite putting up motions. I think it is important to put on the record that we do support transparency, and we have put into the public realm on issues such as this a greater range of documents. We have complied with a greater degree of transparency than previous governments, but it is important to stress that those opposite continually putting up these kinds of motions and speaking at length in a holier-than-thou manner is really a bit much to stomach.

They support projects in principle. They support improving our public transport, they support improving our roads system and they support removing level crossings. But again — and Mr Davis is often guilty of this — they oppose everything in the particular. He is always a disrupter, always a negative force. He is always somebody who in theory supports projects, but when it actually comes to doing anything, he is always an obstructionist and always somebody finding fault. That is actually quite consistent with a government whose track record four years ago was to not do anything. They are always finding reasons not to do anything, but the irony of course is the only thing they wanted to do was something where there was not a case to do anything. The only thing they picked out to take action on, the only thing they actually did rally around, was something with an appalling public policy case.

Let us have a look at the independent inquiry advisory committee that was established to scrutinise this particular project. It had the power to request the documents in question and more broadly. They chose to not direct the production of the peer review and associated documents. It is important to stress that the

peer review will be reflected in the business case. In making their decision they said no evidence was called to directly challenge the model or its outputs.

The government is not going to oppose this motion. As I said, we discuss documents motions of this nature regularly in this place, and we do support transparency. While we will not oppose the motion, it is important to stress that there are likely to be constraints on certain documents as some documents are going to have cabinet-in-confidence constraints and some documents are going to have commercial-in-confidence constraints. We have, for example, already put a range of documents on the public record subject to some minor commercial-in-confidence aspects being removed. There will be other documents that are part of the deliberative process that will have cabinet-in-confidence status. That is something which the minister will have to have a look at when considering this request, and I think it is something which is always important to put on the record as a relevant consideration when documents motions of this nature are put forward. I think it is also important to note that the documents that are being talked about were prepared for an earlier design of the project. Many of the issues were in fact addressed, and so some of the issues that are being flagged will no longer be relevant.

The traffic modelling that underpins the project was exhaustively examined during the independent panel hearings, and the weight of expert evidence shows that indeed this project does stack up and that the public benefit is there. More than a dozen experts, many with decades of experience, have worked on the modelling and the economics that underpin the project. Veitch Lister Consulting, the company responsible for the transport modelling, have presented to the independent inquiry and advisory committee and have been subject to cross-examination where they comprehensively addressed matters raised by the peer reviewer.

I will not speak for much longer. I will just sum up by saying that I think all of us in this place agree that transparency is important. Transparency is important on large projects, and I think when you look at what has already been put on the public record in relation to this project, it stacks up very well compared to previous governments. That is not to say that that necessarily means it is enough. I am simply saying for context that a lot has already been put on the public record in relation to this project, and with those opposite coming in here and giving lengthy speeches about transparency, it is important to note that they have a less than sterling track record when it comes to similar large road projects.

This is a project that will produce many significant benefits: the direct economic benefits of employment, traffic benefits but also very strategic transport benefits associated with an additional river crossing. I stand here today in support of this critically important project, and I think it will be very much in the interests of the community as it continues to be advanced by this government.

**Ms HARTLAND** (Western Metropolitan) — I am fairly amazed by the hypocrisy that I have heard from both sides today. This government is not transparent in regard to this project. While the Greens —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Ms HARTLAND** — Other people might think this is a laughing matter, but it is actually my community that it affects, so it would be, I think, better if my contribution could be heard rather than laughed at. But that just goes to the hypocrisy of both sides as well.

The government is not transparent on this project. The Greens completely support this call for the Allard report. I have attempted to have the government release this report myself, and they have refused. They have refused to release it to their own planning panel. How can they expect the planning panel to work without this information?

**Mr Dalidakis** — It's not necessary.

**Ms HARTLAND** — I will take up that interjection. I find it really amazing that Mr Dalidakis believes that this report is not necessary for the government's own planning panel, the panel that is supposed to bring forward all of the work that proves whether this is a project that is actually going to deal with very serious issues that have been ignored and neglected by both governments over decades in terms of the 21 000 truck movements a day that go through that area. So I think to release the report would be the logical decision, and that way it can be proved as to whether this is a project that is going to actually have benefit, because that has not been proved at this stage.

I have gone to many of what the government refers to as consultation sessions. I think they have been extremely ineffective. They have attempted to keep people in the dark. I call it outrage mitigation, where you give communities just a little bit of information but you do not actually tell them what the project is going to do and how it is going to fix the problem — especially the problem of the 21 000 truck movements through the inner west every day. The only people that I feel will benefit from this project are Transurban. They are going to make a massive amount of money out of it,

but the government has not proved that the project is actually going to resolve the problems that we have.

Also I will go to the hypocrisy of Mr Davis's motion. I think it is pretty amazing, considering that the Liberal-National coalition, when they were in government, did exactly the same thing in regard to the east–west link. They did not release documents that were asked for, yet they stand here talking about the current government being hypocritical for not releasing documents. What is fair for one side is fair for the other side.

I would also like to remind Mr Davis that when he was Minister for Health he refused after repeated questions to do anything about diesel pollution or to actually look at the fact that the World Health Organisation had listed it as a carcinogen. He did not think that it was a particular problem, even though there was a massive problem in the inner west with those 21 000 truck movements a day. I think I asked Mr Davis — and I am quite happy to get out the *Hansard* references — at least five or six times, but he just did not think it was a problem, even though the world health authority clearly said that diesel particulates were a problem, and even considering that in the inner west we have the highest rates of hospitalisation of children because of respiratory illness — he did not really think that was much of a problem.

The Greens do support this motion, but I think I have outlined fairly clearly what I think is the outrageous hypocrisy on both sides. I would like to see this document because the government should prove that this project is worthwhile, and you cannot prove it if you will not release the documents.

**Mr DAVIS** (Southern Metropolitan) — In very brief conclusion, this is an important motion, despite what Mr Mulino had to say. I find it extraordinary that he opposed the eastern Victorian perspective in terms of the east–west link. I just put that on record. I agree with Ms Hartland on some points she made, particularly about the failure to provide the report to the planning panel. How can a planning panel do its work satisfactorily when key documents — absolutely central and critical documents — are not provided? That has been a factor in me bringing this motion to the chamber.

I want to take issue with Mr Mulino. In the last period of government we did provide many more documents than had been provided in previous times.

**Ms Hartland** — No, you didn't.

**Mr DAVIS** — Yes, we did. On each occasion when we did not provide a document we communicated to the chamber the reasons and sought the chamber's support for the non-provision of the document. On each occasion we made that point very clearly, respectfully asking the chamber not to insist, and the chamber never did insist.

I make the point very clearly here that this set of modelling is absolutely central to the way forward. Mr Mulino is trying to argue now that there is a different project — that this modelling will not be appropriate for the project. Let us see the modelling. It will at least as a minimum provide relevant contextual matters for examination in terms of any project that the government and its friendly partners, Transurban, come forward with. With those short comments, I will seek the chamber's support.

**Motion agreed to.**

## STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING

### Reference

**Mrs PEULICH** (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I move:

That, pursuant to sessional order 6, this house requires the Environment and Planning Committee to inquire into, consider and report on, no later than 1 August 2018, issues relating to the impact of higher energy prices in Victoria for households, business, community, not-for-profits, hospitals, schools, aged-care facilities and government, including but not limited to the impact following the closure of the Hazelwood power station and any other matter the committee considers.

There is no issue that has consumed more commentary, political discourse and media coverage than the energy crisis that we as a nation are facing, but of course especially here in Victoria. Part of that is being driven by the huge increase in the cost of energy and its impact on households, Victorian families and businesses and the cascading effect on various organisations and levels of government. It has a cumulative effect, and it is punitive. It is soaking up an enormous amount of resources from families to the extent that I hear on a daily basis of older people sitting wrapped in their blankets watching TV, rather than putting the heaters on, and of people going to bed earlier or spending their spare time in shopping centres, which are heated, rather than going home, where they may have previously put the heater on, because they simply cannot pay their bills.

Only last week I visited with the state Leader of the Opposition and our new candidate for Cranbourne, Ann-Marie Hermans, a young family that runs a gym. From one quarter to the next their business energy bill had increased by 50 per cent, from \$600 to \$900. During the previous couple of weeks I attended a South East Melbourne Manufacturers Alliance annual general meeting, and this was the topic that was being discussed by absolutely every business. One business in my electorate shared concerns about its annual electricity bill increasing from \$750 000 a year to \$1.5 million a year, all off the bottom line. As a result of that, many jobs will be shed and many businesses will not survive the hit.

We can take different perspectives and speculate as to why this is occurring, but I think there is an emerging view that policy failings, policy uncertainty and government intervention may have been a significant contributing factor to distortions of the market. Everyone wants affordable and accessible energy, and everyone wants emissions —

**Mr Dalidakis** interjected.

**Mrs PEULICH** — Bless you. Hopefully someone has got the Glen 20 and will give this room a bit of a spray a little later on.

Everyone is supportive of cleaner emissions, and everyone wants this to occur. Everyone wants to look after the planet, but there is concern about the effects of subsidising renewables. The concern is that this is actually pushing up power prices for consumers. There is also concern that with reduction in coal generation the value of companies that generate coal-powered energy is actually increasing, so they are able to rake in more profit, more revenue, for a reduced asset. Whether in actual fact it is the subsidies on renewables or whether it is the closure of the Hazelwood power station, which has reduced base load by 25 per cent, we can argue that and we can try and establish some consensus going forward.

What we know is that a lack of consensus is going to impact on investment — the investment that this state needs going forward. We cannot afford to have jobs being shed, households cringing under the pain of skyrocketing energy bills and the health of Victorians declining. I recall reading also that in homes which have a temperature of less than 18 degrees inhabitants can be subjected to greater vulnerability, so clearly that may impact our older Victorians.

The committee has the opportunity to consider this reference on the impact of high energy prices, what the

causes may be or indeed any matters that the committee may consider. It is the most important issue that is being talked about in the community apart from law and order. Obviously drawing on Maslow's hierarchy of needs, the most important one is food and shelter —

**Mr Barber** — Re-election in your case.

**Mrs PEULICH** — What was your interjection?

**Mr Barber** — Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

**Mrs PEULICH** — In Maslow's hierarchy of needs food and shelter are obviously the most important, the highest order of need, and then safety and security are the next. At the moment I think it is an interesting reflection of where we are at that in fact Victorians are struggling to have their most basic needs met — and they are food and shelter, and safety and security. Energy of course is a huge issue, as well as concerns about law and order.

This committee has an opportunity therefore with this referral, if agreed to by the house, to look at the effects of subsidising renewables and whether they are pushing up power prices for consumers, both householders as well as businesses, and the cascading effects on not-for-profits, hospitals, schools, aged-care facilities and governments. So much extra of our resources is being gobbled up in higher energy prices. Also, increases to state and federal renewable energy targets will mean ever-increasing subsidies. No doubt this will further hurt taxpayers and hit power bills. Subsidies and guaranteed market share for renewables also drive out low-cost competitors such as gas and coal.

The reality is that Victoria is rich in resources of coal and gas. It seems extraordinary that we may have — and there is a difference of opinion — between 550 years and 1000 years of brown coal reserves in Victoria. It is a very cheap resource, and affordable energy is a very, very important input into business. In a First World country such as Australia one of the three challenges for us being competitive in a globalised economy is cheaper inputs. Of course one of the biggest input costs is the cost of labour, and Victorians and Australians want a well-paid workforce. The other input is energy. We actually have cheap energy on our plates —

**Mr Dalidakis** — You hate unions. You are anti-union.

**Mrs PEULICH** — If unions preoccupied themselves with representing only workers rather than their political party, I would have no difficulties with that. In my view the future of unions depends on them

becoming politically disconnected from the Labor Party. At the moment they are interchangeable. The unions have a 50 per cent vote in the preselection of Labor Party candidates. They hold the power. In my view the unions are just an arm of the Labor Party.

We have brown coal reserves in abundance, but what the government wants to do is shut down the coal industry. What it wants to do is send our Victorian jobs offshore. What it wants to do is close down industry. What we are doing is punishing households — Victorians and their families, our grandmothers and grandfathers and of course our organisations. By closing down Hazelwood and reducing baseload capacity —

**Mr Dalidakis** — I suggest that you do not use David Southwick's notes.

**Mrs PEULICH** — I am simply referring to the motion. What we are doing is driving jobs out, punishing Victorian families and endangering Victoria. We will have blackouts. Blackout Bill in Canberra is making sure that we will have blackouts. Victorians, especially young Victorians — and their future is in our hands — will see the wisdom of making sure that we use those resources, which we have in abundance.

We also have a lot of gas. We all agree on the moratorium in relation to fracking; Victoria does not need to frack. But it seems to me extraordinary that we are shutting down, reducing or undermining the viability of important resources, conventional gas, by not allowing exploration onshore, and of course —

**Mr Dalidakis** interjected.

**Mrs PEULICH** — You had a White Australia policy pre-1975.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Melhem)** — Through the Chair, Mrs Peulich.

**Mrs PEULICH** — Mr Dalidakis will have his chance. The Labor Party supported the White Australia policy until 1975, especially the unions, because they did not want foreign workers coming into Australia.

**Mr Dalidakis** interjected.

**Mrs PEULICH** — That is right. This committee will have an opportunity to look at what role government policy had in bringing forward the closure of Hazelwood, in particular with the \$252 million coal tax and the various ideological energy policies.

**Mr Jennings** interjected.

**Mrs PEULICH** — Australia continues to export coal to other countries in abundance, so it is okay for developing countries in the Third World to build coal-fired power stations, and I think China is building something like 220 coal-powered generators —

**Mr Dalidakis** — I think you made that up.

**Mrs PEULICH** — No, no. It is okay for us to be exporting coal to them, but as minuscule contributors to emissions it is not okay for us, basically because the Socialist Left and the Greens want to deindustrialise this nation, and I cannot understand the motive. These ideological energy policies are creating uncertainty, undermining investment and undermining what is a priority for all of us — that is, affordable, accessible energy.

We saw the royalty rate increase from 7.6 cents to 22.8 cents per gigajoule. If we actually wanted to revive, and we should not have to, an industry based on an abundance of natural resources, we should stop punishing it with the coal tax and with royalties. With the closure of Hazelwood, 22 per cent of Victoria's energy has basically vanished and jobs in the valley are gone. This royalty rate was of course the nail in the coffin for Hazelwood and its operator, Engie.

Baseload power is important as households need to be able to turn on the lights, turn on the heating and turn on the cooling, and businesses need to be ticking over. What is interesting is — and I am sure that others will speak on my behalf — that the lack of reliability of renewables means that we will always need coal-powered energy. The closure of Hazelwood has undermined base load in this state, and if Labor's energy targets are going to be met in the future, we would need to close other power stations in the valley. There is no doubt that coal — and there is an abundance of it in Australia and Victoria — is a critical component of base load, as is gas, and both are far more reliable.

The reality is that when the sun is not shining or the wind is not blowing renewables are unreliable, and whilst having an element of renewables is good, stability in our power system is vital for consumers. We see the example of South Australia. If we want to look at our future, we look at South Australia, which has invested heavily and disproportionately in renewables and paid the price with increased blackouts and brownouts and a system in chaos. We do not need to replicate a system which is as unstable as the one in South Australia. However, the actions of the current state government are disturbing.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mrs PEULICH** — The interjections are proof of this ideological, chaotic policy direction of the Labor Party, supported by their mates in the Greens, and no doubt the by-election in Northcote will be a competition to see who is even madder.

Cost increases in energy and the effects on households, businesses and other organisations have been horrendous. The average household is experiencing a \$300 increase in their energy bill this year, according to the St Vincent de Paul Society. Some businesses are facing power price rises of 250 to 350 per cent. A Liberal-Nationals government will abolish the Victorian renewable energy target to stop power prices from soaring.

I commend the Prime Minister on his recent action in attempting to bang some heads amongst energy companies, who may be seen as exploiting their opportunities by jacking up the prices and by not informing consumers of the best deals that are available to them. This committee will have an opportunity to look at all of those factors — the generation of energy, the impacts on various consumers — and come back to this chamber in terms of how we can get a better outcome for Victorians and Victorian business. Anyone who cares about Victorian families and Victorian business will support this motion. Anyone who wants to stick their head in the sand on these critical issues that affect absolutely everyone will not support it. I commend the motion to the house and urge everyone to support it.

**Mr BARBER** (Northern Metropolitan) — The reason we do not need what would be the umpteenth inquiry into energy policy in Australia is that we already understand the problem and we already understand the causes. I will come back to the problem in a moment, but the cause is quite clear. It is the Liberal Party, along with of course the National Party attached to their trouser leg like a hysterical toddler. If this inquiry were to get up, which it well may even though it will not receive the support of the Greens, all they really need to do is pull together the collected transcripts of Tony Abbott and maybe my Kiwi bro Barnaby, the Deputy Prime Minister, and just read the amount of drivel that has come out of the mouths of those two people in relation to energy policy over the last 10 years to understand why investors in the energy market are completely at sea as to where and how to invest. That, at the end of the day, is the core of our problems.

I have just learned that there is someone in this Parliament who understands even less about energy policy than David Southwick in the Assembly, and it is the mover of this motion. There is no threat to energy security here in Victoria, unless of course David Southwick ever does become minister for energy, in which case I will be down at Aldi stocking up on candles.

**Mrs Peulich** — For you it's a joke.

**Mr BARBER** — I hear an interjection from Mrs Peulich, saying, 'For you it's a joke'. During the contribution from Mrs Peulich I did not actually hear the words 'global warming' come out of her mouth. We know in this place that there is a history — it is almost continuous — of coalition MPs treating global warming, the single biggest threat to humanity's survival that we have ever faced, as a joke. For Mr Finn it is a comedy routine.

**Mr Finn** — It's a commoner scam.

**Mr BARBER** — 'It's a commoner scam', he says. No wonder Mrs Peulich did not dare speak the words 'global warming'; she would have immediately been howled down by Mr Finn. He comes in here with his regular comedy routines, and the rest of them just laugh along. The most serious threat to humanity's survival that we have ever faced is out of control global warming. The mover of the motion could not mention it, and Mr Finn is cackling in the corner as we speak.

It has also been noted in the federal Parliament that whenever this topic comes up coalition MPs start acting like kindergarten kids on their first day. You might think about Nero fiddling while Rome burnt if you want to understand how this could be seen a couple of centuries down the track.

When my colleague Senator Whish-Wilson in the federal Parliament called for recognition of Australia's climate scientists, Liberal Senator James McGrath read his party's talking points. I do not know if the coalition in Victoria have actually got talking points on climate change. I think there are no talking points. There is a great big piece of gaffer tape across their mouths, and they were last seen running screaming for the hills. During Senator McGrath's contribution he read the talking points into the record in a monotone but stopped a number of times to smirk and chuckle.

The leader of the Australian Conservatives, Cory Bernardi, interrupted to say that it was he who had been raucously laughing. When again the Greens in the federal Senate raised the question of Great Barrier Reef bleaching they were offered a box of tissues. Federal

MP Josh Frydenberg, who has also got carriage in this area, thought it was a good laugh to talk about another MP who had referred to the loss of the ski season. And who could forget federal minister Peter Dutton, who managed to be both deeply terrifying and at the same time deeply profound when he was caught on a live mic joking about sea levels rising in the Pacific while that other guy — what was his name? — Tony Abbott laughed along. So much for global warming and the role that it might —

**Mrs Peulich** — There has not been much of it here this winter.

**Mr BARBER** — 'There hasn't been much global warming this winter', says Mrs Peulich. In fact it is the hottest winter on record. It is psychological denial. The technical term is 'cognitive dissonance', which was first coined by a group of psychologists who were studying a UFO cult outside Chicago in the 1960s. But if those researchers were still around today and they wanted to do a follow-up on their study — reproducibility of course being one of the hallmarks of scientific results — we could invite them into the Liberal party room and see if they can confirm that yet again we have got a case of cognitive dissonance going on. That is where you believe something and simply reject every piece of evidence that contradicts your existing belief system. That is all right for the man on the Bell Street bus, but when you are a potential future government you are actually about the most dangerous thing imaginable.

Mrs Peulich says we have got 500 years of coal, maybe 1000, but I wonder if Mrs Peulich is aware of how long we have got under her federal Liberal government's own targets to reduce emissions. Do you know? Are you aware of how quick the cuts have to be?

Mrs Peulich says we are all in favour of emissions cuts, but is she aware of how fast those emissions cuts have to occur in order to —

**Mrs Peulich** — On a point of order, Acting President, I just draw your attention to standing orders in relation to relevance. Mr Barber is talking about a whole host of related issues but not the motion. He is asking me questions which I think the committee, which is the subject of this motion and this referral, would be best placed to consider and answer.

**Mr BARBER** — On the point of order, Acting President, the motion itself somewhat unusually lays out the subject matter and then in the very last phrase says, 'and any other matter the committee considers'. I do not know if there has been a word dropped off the end of that, but my reading of this motion is that

technically there could be an inquiry into absolutely anything the committee considered.

**Mr Dalidakis** — Further on the point of order, Acting President, I also acknowledge that when Mrs Peulich stood up she spoke to a broad range of matters. In fact she attacked many generations of Australians in her contribution. Given that it has been a broad-ranging debate and given that Mr Barber has correctly pointed out that the final line of the motion is ‘any other matter that the committee considers’, he is well within the scope and should be afforded the right given to any member of this place to speak to the matter at hand.

**Mrs Peulich** — Further on the point of order, Acting President, Mr Dalidakis is actually verballing me. I did not attack generations of Australians, and I ask that you ask him to withdraw, because it is actually a complete distortion of anything I said.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Melhem)** — I do not uphold the point of order.

**Mr BARBER** — If Mrs Peulich is interested in the question of how deep those emission cuts need to be, there are any number of data sources she can go to. I have got one here from —

**Mrs Peulich** — New German coal power stations have 50 per cent fewer carbon emissions than previously.

**Mr BARBER** — I do not know if there is some sort of German study tour planned as part of this inquiry as well. No doubt it will be via Rio de Janeiro to pick up some felt-tip pens and then a quick stop in New York for lunch, followed by dinner in London. When you put up a committee of inquiry that allows it to inquire into energy and ‘any other matter the committee considers’ — who knows? — you could burn quite a bit of kerosene and go around the world four times in search of the answers. Or you could jump on a website such as [ndevr.com.au](http://ndevr.com.au). I know that props are not permitted in the chamber, but if Mrs Peulich is interested in the facts, she could have a look at one of the charts that indicate what Australia’s emissions are actually doing, what her own party’s federal commitment is and what would need to be done in order to achieve the 2 degrees Paris commitment.

**Mrs Peulich** — Why are you afraid?

**Mr BARBER** — Well, the reason we do not need an inquiry is that under any of these scenarios —

**Mrs Peulich** interjected.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Melhem)** — Order! Mrs Peulich, you have made your contribution. I cannot even hear Mr Barber’s contribution. I advise everyone that Mr Barber does not need any further assistance and that he may contribute his contribution in silence.

**Mr BARBER** — Under any of these scenarios, there is no 500 years of burning coal in the Latrobe Valley. It does not fit in under any scenario proposed by any government, let alone the Liberal government. It is all right if members want to propose inquiries into things. It does not absolve them from educating themselves on the topic before they arrive here in the Parliament.

There are a number of other mythologies that the mover of the motion needs to go away and swot up on before suggesting that it is the Parliament itself that needs to be educated on these matters. One is the question of cost. We have seen and have transparently exposed a number of auctions for the provision of renewable energies recently. They include both the provision of the electrons themselves and of course the renewable energy certificates under the agreed scheme of the federal coalition government — the federal renewable energy target that The Nationals have now gone cold on.

In fact renewables are plunging in cost. The figures that coalition MPs like to come in here and quote only need to be a few years out of date to be radically erroneous. As a number of auctions go through — the ACT government, for example — there are disclosures by electricity retailers themselves, which of course have to buy electricity and have to also provide renewable energy certificates. I would like to see the Victorian government disclose the results of their two recent auctions for wind farms, because Mrs Peulich would then learn, without requiring a bunch of other MPs to come along with her for the ride, that the price of renewables is plummeting. The price of solar panels has plummeted even in the year and a half since I put them on my roof. We are getting auctions for wind farms now where the combined electrons and renewable energy certificates are down around \$60 per megawatt hour. It is just stunning how fast the price of renewables is falling.

Then we get the baseload myth. In a short discussion Mrs Peulich basically tumbled over and garbled a whole set of different related energy market concepts that she equated to being all the same thing. Basically she showed fundamentally that she did not understand how energy systems, much less energy markets, work. She said we always need base load. Well, it is just false.

Base load is a form of energy designed to be switched on and then left on with very little interruption. It is more technically known as ramp rate — the ability to move the output of that station up and down quickly. Many of the old clunker boiling-kettle, coal-fired stations that we have got in Victoria and Australia are getting up to 50 years of age. They were designed to be cheap and designed to be polluting. Many of them were designed to be very labour intensive and designed to be switched on and left on without a great need to ramp them up or down.

A solution to that base load, which of course produces huge amounts of excess energy at times when we actually do not need it, was to change our patterns of energy use to use the excess — for example, off-peak hot water systems put on at night. We heated up the water during the night because it was too slow and too inflexible to be turning those coal-fired power stations up and down. They just were not designed that way. That is base load. That is a completely separate question to the question of reliability, which itself is a separate question to that of dispatchability — the ability for a particular generator to go on and off quickly. Mrs Peulich just sort of smears them all together into this one big concept; hence my not completely jovial comment that if she was in charge of the electricity system, I would be stocking up on candles, because we do not actually need more base load at the moment. In fact with an increasing component of renewables coming into the grid —

**Mrs Peulich** — Subsidised.

**Mr BARBER** — Well, no, I just dealt with the cost question, Mrs Peulich, and it just went straight over your head. I do not know how many energy market investors Mrs Peulich consulted with when she decided this inquiry was needed. I do not know if she sat down with AGL. I do not know if she sat down with any of those from retail, wholesale, the distributors, transmission, the banks, the financiers, the technicians or the engineers. I do not know how many of them she spoke to, so I am just having to sort of make out my case here.

If you have got an increasing component of renewables in your grid, which are variable — they are variable, but they are predictable — it is reasonably easy to predict that the sun is going to come up tomorrow morning. If it does not come up, then we have got bigger problems than what Mrs Peulich is alluding to. It is reasonably easy to predict the output of a wind farm. You just have to ring up Adelaide and ask, ‘How’s the wind over there at the moment?’. Add a day and a half, and it will be pretty clear that those wind farms will be

going flat out in Victoria. Just like all the variable demands that come into the grid — like the various other issues that occur with hydro, with these old coal clunker stations and with fast start-up gas stations — there is a constant task across that energy grid to understand when all these different loads and demands will be coming and going.

Renewables are an increasing component of the grid. They will continue to be driven into the grid even more due to that federal scheme that Mrs Peulich did not want to talk about but that her party agreed to. So what we need is less base load, and we need more dispatchable — that is, power supply that can be turned on and off and ramped up and down at particularly short notice. If what you are saying is we need more base load, it is like the old joke: if I was trying to get there, I would not start from here. Well, you have started in the wrong place, Mrs Peulich, and there is absolutely zero chance you are going to find your way through this unless you sit down and maybe read some of the endless screeds of submissions to these multiple inquiries into the energy market that we have had. If I was an investor in the energy market, I just do not think I could bear it to have to turn around and do another submission to yet another government inquiry into the energy system. I would just be saying, ‘Get on with it, guys’.

Base load and backup are not the same thing. In fact in many ways, if you look at the existing fleet of coal-fired power stations, they are actually the opposite. Base load is the opposite of backup, because it cannot be turned up and down. So that is the cost issue, and that is the energy security issue. What the coalition had to say there was basically that you would be even more confused than when you started.

I said I would talk about what the actual problem is as opposed to talking about the cause. I have explained the cause; now I am going to talk about the problem. The problem at the retail end is that there is very poor competition for the provision of retail electricity to ordinary households. That problem has been in place ever since privatisation, which of course was delivered to us by the Liberal Party. The Liberal Party constantly told us that the amount of churn going on between customers and the electricity market was a sign that there was healthy competition. In fact we now understand it is the opposite, and the Labor Party have now belatedly decided they are going to bring some regulation into this area. I welcome that, but I am looking forward to seeing what it is.

In fact what happens is retailers just spend an increasing proportion of their funds on trying to flog you with

what looks like a fantastic deal. They have had armies of backpackers going door to door and lying to you about your electricity bill for so long, to the point where the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission has actually fined some of these companies millions for systematically misleading customers. So much for the retail end of things. We definitely need a bit of well-designed regulation there, because that competition is completely fake.

At the distribution end — those poles and wires that run down your street to deliver you the electricity — there is massive gold plating. It should never have been sold off, because it is a natural monopoly. Even Jeff Kennett understood this. He could not help himself because of the amount of money that he was offered for it. It should never have been sold off. It is massive gold plating as they have gamed the regulator, underspending on maintenance but overspending on capacity. The underspending on maintenance, as we all understand in this place, led to some tragedies during the Black Saturday bushfires, but the overspending and the increased capacity ahead of energy demand has created a huge cost, particularly so here in Victoria. Some would say it is possibly worse in New South Wales, where the poles and wires are government owned.

Then there is transmission — those really big pylons you see out there going across paddocks and sometimes across suburbs that carry the electricity from the generators to the smaller substations. Of course that was all originally built to serve the old baseload model — a great big coalmine with a power station next to it and then great big wires going out in all directions to deliver that out to where people need it. But that system is also technologically obsolete, because we know where the renewable energy sources are. They are spread across the whole landscape. They are tidal, they are wind and they are solar. They may be geothermal. They may even be sustainable biomass. Due to being so thinly spread out there across the landscape, they will increasingly generate electricity in the same place that we use it, so that transmission system is now no longer suitable for our needs.

Is there any plan being put forward by any government? You would think maybe a federal government would, given that this is one of the most interconnected transmission systems in the world. Of course they are not. They are sitting on their hands. These transmission operators — again, natural monopolies — are waiting for a direction. They are waiting for a signal.

They may have a few renewable generators come and say, 'I want to connect to that 220-kV line, please'. It would be first in, best dressed. We would connect those generators, and then when another generator comes along they would be told, 'Bad luck. We can't connect you. We haven't been told to upgrade our capacity. You'll never fund the upgrade, because you're just that last generator that comes along at the end and wants to add another 100 megawatts'. So of course that part of the system is completely stuffed. The Victorian government, although they do not talk about this, have worked it out. They can see that all the renewable fuel sources are in the south-west, the west, the north-west and even to a certain extent the north-east, but there is no plan in place to upgrade transmission.

And then there is generation. That is the one that gets all of the attention, but these other parts of the value chain are just as problematic. It is pretty simple when it comes to generation. You just simply need to line up all of these coal-fired power stations in the order that they were built and then add 50 years. They were probably intended to last about 40, but you can almost see them dropping off one by one with precision timing when they hit the age of 50. That is where Hazelwood finally met its maker. That is what is happening with the Liddell power station. It has hit the end of the term of its natural life, and the coalition has spent the last week and a half just freaking out about it and threatening to renationalise the thing and keep it pumping for a little bit longer.

Just for the exercise, take a look at Victoria's power stations, particularly Yallourn, and look at its age and its intended natural life. I can guarantee you it will not see much past 2020. The closing of these old coal-fired power stations is no longer a question of debate. There is not a thing that any Australian government will do to attempt to keep one open. It is game over. They are suffering a severe case of market forces, and there is very little that anybody is going to do about that. The question does arise: when they close, what are we going to replace them with? That is a serious debate, but to come in and simply try and stand here like King Canute and say, 'No, I don't like it. It's freaking me out. I can't bear it', and therefore everything has just got to stay where it is, and we will pay endless and increasing amounts, in the billions and billions of dollars, to try and keep a few coal-fired power stations on life support —

**Mrs Peulich** — To keep the lights on.

**Mr BARBER** — Well, even if that is Mrs Peulich's aim, it is not going to work by what she is proposing.

The Victorian electricity grid is an extremely reliable grid. Power is delivered 99.998 per cent of the time. During the 0.002 per cent of time that it is interrupted, three-quarters of that is actually due to problems with the local poles and wires. These are just known facts. Is there any risk to the electricity supply in Victoria in coming years as a result of the lack of generation? No, there is not. It is very, very clear. You can start to predict a few years out that at certain times of the year — maybe 20 hours of the year — there might be a slight deficit, in which case we would be importing electricity from other states, but that is the whole point of projecting a few years out. No-one is suggesting we do nothing when these old coal-fired power stations inevitably close down. No-one is suggesting we do nothing. We are debating what we ought to do, unless you are in the coalition, in which case you are saying, 'Stop the world, I want to get off. We're going to take off to Venus or somewhere when this planet is cooked'.

We have well in hand a number of proposals to improve generation in Victoria, but it will not be based on what Mrs Peulich calls base load. It will be based on dispatchable power — power that can be ramped up and down quickly. It will be based on fast start-up — and we have got quite a few very already — and currently very under utilised gas generators in Victoria. We have gotten quite an amount of hydro recently. We have got the renewable sources, which are becoming cheaper every day. They are variable — that is true — but they are also highly predictable, and predicting what is going on in the energy market is quite a business for energy market traders and energy operators. There is nothing scary there, nothing unusual.

We really ought to move forward as a Parliament to systematically bring in these measures that are well understood. We are going to have a renewable energy target bill come up pretty soon from the lower house. I will save my comments on that for when we get to that. The technologies are mature, and they are plummeting in price. With the exception of an objective around avoiding catastrophic global warning, the grid operator actually has a series of incentives in place. The rule changes need to occur to provide that batteries can come in and even wind farms themselves can come in and take on some of the grid-balancing operation that is necessary.

It is all there for people who want to make the effort to understand it. Mrs Peulich and her mob's task in life is to make everybody get confused about it and to get scared about it. You heard a whole bucketload of different rubbish get thrown on the table here this morning. You have got to give it to Tony Abbott and

my Kiwi bro, the other guy. Tony Abbott was out there again this morning. He is absolutely brilliant at generating slogans. He is absolutely terrible at organising anything beyond a chook raffle, let alone a country and let alone something as important as an electricity supply. It is for that reason, with possibly more words than I needed to use, I inform the chamber that the Greens will not be supporting this motion.

**Ms SHING** (Eastern Victoria) — I am going to, without needing to comb through the entrails of a seagull in the way that the seers did in ancient Roman times, have a crack at trying to predict how things might go in the event that there is a further inquiry into the subject matter which is set out in this motion. Here goes.

I predict that in the event that there is a further inquiry, the reports might almost already have been written. They will come down as such: the coalition members of the committee to which it has been proposed to send this inquiry will come back and say lines that have been recycled in a way that might in fact give them green credentials if they were to try to apply them beyond this place and beyond the rhetoric that comes out whenever the question of energy supply and energy resourcing is raised, whether in this place or whether in Canberra. They will come out with a report that says that in fact Victoria needs to sustain investment in coal-fired power generation; that it needs to in fact maximise the policy levers and all opportunities to secure further opportunities for coal-fired power now and into the future; that in the event that this is not done, in fact we will face some sort of apocalyptic consequence which will mean that homes will be plunged into darkness, that Whyalla or its equivalent on the Victorian map will be wiped off the map — we have all heard and seen the songs about the Whyalla wipe-out — and that in fact lamb roasts will go beyond \$100 each, and we know that from the discussion and the debate on the carbon tax; and that in fact without the coalition supporting baseload and backup energy requirements through coal we will see the standard of living drop and old people freezing in their homes over winter and sweating into heat exhaustion in the summer because they are unable to in fact afford the peak and off-peak requirements associated with energy supply.

That is my prediction. I am pleased to have been able to pop that onto the record, and in fact what the coalition members will probably also report on is the fact that the closure of Hazelwood was occasioned through an increase in the coal royalty and that in fact this has led to a state government-led response to energy needs in Victoria that has significantly increased unemployment, that has left the Latrobe Valley with no future and that

has resulted in massive increases to the costs of doing business and to the costs in relation to infrastructure and services and program delivery across essential services and through our frontline workplaces, such as hospitals and health services, with these services grappling with such costs as things get more dire without any level of support being provided. That is the report that I can imagine that the coalition would come up with.

If you are after any sort of —

**Mr Mulino** — Sounds pretty boring.

**Ms SHING** — It sounds boring, to pick up the interjection. You are right, Mr Mulino, but it is also really predictable. It is predictable because it is a script that has been rolled out a thousand times before.

**Mrs Peulich** — Because it's fact.

**Ms SHING** — I will take up Mrs Peulich's interjection. She said, 'Because it's fact'. It is nice, in fact, to have confirmation from a member of the opposition that this is their position — 'We already know the answer' — because the very mover of the motion has come out and said that everything that I have just described in relation to the coalition's position is fact. It is very good to know, and it is also very good to have that popped onto the record today too.

What I would also like to do, for the sake of expediting any process that might require extensive resources being used in yet another inquiry, is to have a think about what it is that The Nationals side of the coalition might want to say about this particular issue. I note that the Leader of The Nationals has in fact recently issued a press release that has called upon, again, the relevant policy levers and assistance to be provided by the government here in Victoria, the Andrews government, alongside support from Canberra, to create a new coal-fired power plant in the Latrobe Valley, and in fact for this to happen we will require everyone to work together, but it will provide a significant solution to the costs associated with energy, the energy supply issue and the jobs component of what is claimed to be a glaring abyss for this part of the world, being the valley, which it is facing at present as a consequence of what no doubt The Nationals will continue to describe as Labor's responsibility, that being due to the closure of Hazelwood.

We will see The Nationals also attempt to walk along the top of the fence without falling off and without coming away splintered to say that on the one hand they have nothing against renewables — and that is something which the member for Gippsland South in the Assembly, Danny O'Brien, says repeatedly —

whilst on the other hand listening to old mate Mr Joyce in Canberra refer to the fact that he and The Nationals will, as per their recent vote at their conference, cease all subsidies for renewables in five years within their party's platform and that their policy in this regard would be in fact to not have anything against renewables but to do everything possible to disallow any investment to take place or get up around renewable energy generation and transmission.

In addition to this, what we will also see from The Nationals — and again to put my speculative hat on and comb through the entrails of what I suspect might well end up being a Nationals contribution to the report in the event that this inquiry goes ahead in the terms proposed — is another discussion around why coal is so important and why in fact it is important that we subsidise and invest in this particular resource.

Just for the sake of clarity let us be very, very specific about the differences between the ideological obsession with coal on the one hand — around Adani, around tax breaks and around enticements being offered at a federal level — and the way in which this will fail to actually have any translatable relevance to Victoria. For those of us here who have not gotten themselves acquainted with the coal supply, the resource and the quality of our commodity here in Victoria, let me spell it out thus. Here we have brown coal. This is not the same as black coal. It is a different standard and a different commodity to that which is exported. We have a different type of commodity, which means that the brown coal here is like coffee grounds. It is not the black lumps that we see immortalised in cartoons that show Mr Joyce and Mr Turnbull talking to the value of this particular commodity. It is not the thing which was brought into the commonwealth chamber as a prop and placed ceremoniously upon the tables of the chamber to illustrate its importance in the course of that debate and in the course of the Finkel report and the government's response on the proposed clean energy target. It is a very wet product. It is a product which is like coffee grounds. It is a product which requires significant treatment in order to be able to generate power.

For many generations in fact we have seen that the Latrobe Valley has been able to do this. It has done this, however, at great cost — not just economic cost but environmental cost, community cost and health-related cost — for those of us who live in the region. We have seen in the recent release of the primary data around health information that we have a greater incidence of respiratory challenge in the Latrobe Valley region, which has a causal link to aspirated coal and PM2.5 particulate in the area. We also have significant evidence as borne out by the second tranche of the

inquiry after the mine fire in Hazelwood, which burnt for weeks before anybody in the then coalition government had any sort of plan that did not involve suggesting that people borrow others' holiday houses in the event that they wanted to breathe some clean air. In fact there were deaths that occurred and were hastened and/or contributed to by the mine fire itself.

It is very, very easy for those opposite to say that in the terms of the motion that has been proposed we should look into the availability of coal in terms of higher energy prices in Victoria for households, business, community, not-for-profits, hospitals, schools, aged-care facilities, government et cetera following the closure of the Hazelwood power station but we should not consider this in the broader context in which it arises for those of us who live and work in Gippsland. Those who would seek to engage in a further investment in coal-fired power are ignoring a number of key facts.

Firstly, there is no global appetite from those who can finance large-scale coal-fired power projects to put their hands in their pockets in a form that would enable \$1 billion to be allocated to coal-fired power in Victoria. In fact this is not something which is particular to this state. We have seen just recently that the Liddell plant in New South Wales has become a bit of a hot potato politically for Mr Joyce, despite the fact that it is nowhere near New Zealand, and for the current Prime Minister, Mr Turnbull, in his discussions with Andy Vesey and AGL around continuing the operation of Liddell or opening it up for potential expressions of interest and/or sale.

We see in fact that AGL is like a number of other generators working to move along the same lines as global energy producers in many other countries — away from coal-fired power and into renewables. We see that organisations such as AGL are continuing to understand and acknowledge the importance of coal-fired power as part of delivering on baseload energy requirements but that this needs to be done against the backdrop of improving and increasing the technology that is available through renewables, of a better mix of energy sources to meet supply and demand and of the importance of investing in technology, research and development for better transmission, for better storage and for better availability.

This has resulted in a number of considerations at a corporate level and within the private sector that show that industry is in a significantly different place to those from the coalition, who remain ideologically wedded to the 1950s in so many ways, but in relation to energy

supply in particular, and we see that this obsession continues at the expense of being open to considering — beyond saying that they have nothing against renewables — in a real, practical and resourced sense what might be done to in fact solve the challenges around supply, around demand and around transmission.

We see that energy companies are now spending millions in the way that they diversify their production and supply. We see that there is capacity for research and development in how we might innovate using our existing commodities, including coal, and we see that there are advantages to continuing investment in opportunities for generation and for coal-fired power technology that might reduce emissions, that might make the footprint less significant and that might in fact enable savings to be made on carbon as it is released into the atmosphere to in fact then provide greater supply into the future through that diversified mix of sources. But on the other hand what we also see is that the coalition is knee locked against doing anything in substantive, practical or resource terms that will enable energy to be provided, generated and secured through other means.

What we have here is a policy vacuum. We have in fact nothing from the opposition as far as an energy policy is concerned. If you think for a moment that the National Party media release calling for relevant policy levers to be put into place to create an environment whereby \$1 billion might in fact be spent on a new high-efficiency, low-emissions energy coal-fired power plant for the Latrobe Valley is an energy policy, then you are kidding yourselves. If you think that is in fact something that is available or accessible or something that is more than pie in the sky, more than snake oil sales or more than in fact false hope for a series of communities within the valley and within regional Victoria more broadly that have been sold these ideas time after time, without any translation into jobs or into economic prosperity, then again you are kidding yourselves.

We have in fact an effort by the opposition, and in particular by those who are speaking in support of it, to use parliamentary resources to create a policy for themselves where in fact they have none. You have got to admire the strategy behind it. It is a good way perhaps to require a committee of the Parliament to do the heavy lifting, but what it does do is it speaks to the fact that those opposite have no plan, they have no policy and they have no strategy other than saying, 'We'll send it off to a committee, we'll get the committee to do the work, from that we'll come up

with probably a cute set of three-word slogans and from there we'll roll on to the election'.

Oh, I am sorry. Did people not realise that perhaps this was a proposed inquiry that has a particular lead-up to the state election next year? In fact if you needed any assistance in understanding that chronology, then I should probably also spell that out too for the sake of completeness. Bottom line: requiring the committee to report, as is proposed by this motion, no later than 1 August 2018 would in fact mean that there would be a series of hearings. Based on my previous experience on this particular committee as the deputy chair, we have had a series of hearings in metropolitan areas, a series of hearings in regional areas and then deliberations which have often extended over a period of months and have often necessitated requests for extensions of time after submissions numbering in their hundreds, and in a couple of cases thousands, have been received by this particular committee.

I can again predict that in the event that this inquiry does proceed we will receive hundreds, if not thousands, of submissions on this, and it would probably be a cut-and-paste job from those who have already provided submissions to previous inquiries undertaken — including at a state level; including as part of the Finkel report and review process; including as part of the way in which federal policy and energy discussions have taken place to date; including as part of the way in which the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission has conducted its inquiries and fined retailers; including as part of the way in which the bipartisan approach to energy pricing and retailing opportunities and options in Victoria has been undertaken and the review done by Mr Mulder and Mr Thwaites into the way in which retailers are in fact inflating prices for consumers within the state; including as part of the development of the Energy Watch site, which has enabled Victorian consumers within moments of accessing this online material to be able to find an array of options that reduce the cost of their energy bills; including as part of the coalition's scrapping of the Greener Government Buildings initiatives; and including as part of the federal government's ongoing refusal to acknowledge unanimously that climate change is having a real and substantive effect and impact on the policy settings which it refuses to evolve to meet these challenges.

We have here, though, a process which would take us, dear listener, up to 1 August 2018, and there is a good possibility that in the event that the committee were not in a position to issue a final report — and I can suggest that that might in fact be the case — the time frame might be pushed out. Quelle surprise! We would see

then that this would coincide probably rather neatly with the commencement of the caretaker period and the campaign for the next state election.

While we are on the subject of the use of parliamentary resources, let us have a think about that. It would be a parliamentary committee that would be charged with looking at this particular reference — which again, as I have indicated extensively, has been the subject of enormous, substantive and detailed contemplation and consideration across the state and at a federal level — and its report being released just before a caretaker period.

Does that not make for an interesting set of campaigning opportunities for those opposite? Does that not make for a significant set of opportunities for those who currently have no policy other than to say of renewables, 'Yeah, sure, they're not bad, but they're not all that good, and we're not going to put any money into them'. They say a renewable energy target, which they will oppose, should be wound back, that the moratorium on onshore conventional gas should be wound back — because that is what Canberra says and that is what Melbourne says — and that this is a sensible course of action.

I can tell you, having been involved in the inquiry into onshore unconventional gas and conventional gas, which was the subject of an extensive inquiry by this very committee of which I am a member, that it revealed the absolute lack of social licence — of any permission from the communities within the Otway and Gippsland basins — for any form of onshore unconventional gas. We heard from farmers who had taken dozens of politicians around their farms to show them changes to the aquifer and the impact of changes to the landscape occasioned by flare pits and by wells that had been sunk and to explain the time spent in understanding the impact of a licence on their land and the way in which that may well pose significant risks for the clean and green value of the livestock and horticultural product that they produce. We have seen this, and we have seen it loud and clear.

We have had legislation that has in fact made its way through the chamber in the first instance in the lower house with a position from The Nationals that seemed to change on the moratorium between its passage from the Assembly through to the Council. Now we see, despite the fact that this legislation is up and despite the fact that we have just recently celebrated the one-year anniversary of the Andrews government's confirmation of a ban on fracking — making us a world leader in this regard and giving so much certainty and so much comfort to those primary producers — that those

opposite actually want to wind this back in the context of the moratorium, that those opposite are not wedded to the legislation in the form that it currently sits and that in fact they believe there is scope for this to be dismantled.

Against the backdrop of the absence of any meaningful or detailed policy that sets out a rationale for meeting supply and demand, we have an opposition that is prepared to put anything back on the table for the sake of a three-word slogan and for the sake of a campaign that it intends to run that is based not in fact, as was claimed by the mover of the motion earlier, but on concerns that are not borne out in reality.

In fact let us have a look at where we are at now in relation to the work that is being done. We have got a shadow minister who is all too keen to talk at rallies, tweet and pose for photos alongside solar panels while being prepared to tear up any commitment to renewable energy policies. We have got a shadow minister for energy and resources who on the steps of Parliament House on 9 February 2016 addressed the rally in relation to banning onshore gas and growing renewables. I am going to quote this because again it is really important to pop it onto the record. He said:

Victoria and Australia are experiencing a renewables revolution, and it is a revolution that is led by the people because the people want it. The voters want it. The community want it, and that's what we need to be focused on.

That is the shadow minister for energy. So what we see is the shadow minister for energy saying one thing while the rest of the opposition say something completely different. While everything in fact is up for grabs as we head into a period wherein the scaremongering will reach epic proportions and —

**Mrs Peulich** — Heading for blackouts.

**Ms SHING** — I will just pick you up on that point, Mrs Peulich, 'Heading for blackouts'. There we go again. I cannot wait for people to talk about South Australia and to say that this is in fact where we are heading. Again this speaks to the abject ignorance of those opposite as to how the system actually works, as to how the national grid actually works and as to how it is that Victoria in fact contributes to exporting energy — as we did last summer to New South Wales — within the national grid. Members opposite are conveniently and blissfully in denial about this, and it is a shame that their rhetoric, as renewable as it is, is not able to be used to generate anything productive, because if it could, perhaps we could include that in the mix of options that is available to meet supply requirements into the future.

The shadow minister for energy also went on to say on the steps of Parliament House on 9 February 2016:

If the Andrews government is serious, they will release the plan, show a vision and show how they are going to manage to get to that plan and ensure that more people are able to take up clean energy for the future.

**Mrs Peulich** — You're so silly. You're just being silly.

**Ms SHING** — I will take up the interjection from Mrs Peulich, who said, 'You're just being silly'. In fact these were the words of the shadow minister for energy, so it is unfortunate that in fact Mrs Peulich is at such ardent points of difference with the shadow minister for energy. Perhaps that speaks to the deep rifts and division within the opposition in failing to be able to come up with any cohesive narrative whatsoever around the importance of securing energy supply into the future. Just a few months later the shadow minister announced that the Liberal-Nationals would scrap the 'unrealistic' Victorian renewable energy target (VRET) scheme.

Our plan is in fact out there. Those opposite have a number of colleagues in the other place who are in the process of discussing this in the Assembly, and on that basis I look forward to seeing the contributions that they have made in that place and seeing how they match up when this bill comes before the house. That will enable us to see just how ideologically opposed they are. Our legislation is in fact going to be debated in this place in the coming weeks.

I cannot wait for those opposite to bang on about how it is that the state will be plunged into darkness, that we are going to have blackouts, that this is just a whole set of fictions around climate change being man-made, that the data has all been manipulated, that there is no problem and that we should just persist with what we have been doing, whilst on the other hand not having any plan to meet future energy needs for the state. Although they do say, and they are happy to say on social media — maybe it is the hip thing to do — that they have nothing against renewables.

You know what? You should start doing something that gives you credibility in this space, because at the moment your stock is not trading high. You would think that if you were going to enter into a debate around this particular issue you would be able to have something on the table that represented more than just saying, 'Yeah, but nah', but in fact that is all you have got. All you have got is a 'Yeah, but nah' argument. You know what? It is kind of comical, because at least it is a three-word slogan and those opposite have

released their energy policy, which as it stands comprises nothing more than the three words ‘Yeah, but nah’.

What we should do is have a think about how you can pop that onto bumper stickers, get a nice little set of DLs and then get them out to constituents and say, ‘Yeah, but nah. We don’t support anything to do with providing a greater mix of energy resource other than to say, “We have nothing against renewables”. But, nah, we’re actually going to be supportive of any wind-back of subsidies on renewables, because that’s what Uncle Barnaby Joyce up in Canberra has to say about it, and we’re all really, really happy with the current Leader of the Opposition winding back the VRET and not providing any support for initiatives such as Greener Government Buildings’, which those opposite scrapped. So they did do something; they scrapped the Greener Government Buildings project.

It was fascinating just last week to see the current Leader of the Opposition, Mr Guy, the man who currently wants to be Premier, come to Gippsland and talk about the cost of energy prices for hospitals. I know that this is part of the motion being moved in this place today, on the same day that the Andrews government confirmed that we are putting more than \$3.9 million into Gippsland hospitals and health services to enable them to run without any energy cost after five years and run to a profit for the 10 years after that particular job has been completed.

What we have here is a situation of those opposite being obsessed with a three-word slogan — and, just for the sake of clarity and reminder, ‘Yeah, but nah’ is the coalition’s policy on energy. We have a situation where Mr Guy, the current leader, was in the process of saying, ‘This is going to cost Victorian hospitals so much’. He was in Gippsland. The Wonthaggi health service is going to be feeding power back into the grid once it has neutralised the cost of solar panels, which we are investing in.

Let us have a think about what those solar panels actually do. Well, they are solar panels which are linked up to provide security and certainty of energy. Those opposite probably stopped talking about solar technology and stopped listening to the advances in solar technology 10 years ago, because the phrase ‘Where the sun doesn’t shine and the wind doesn’t blow, renewables aren’t reliable’ in fact entirely misses the point. I would invite those opposite to go to a solar organisation. For example, Gippsland Solar is a small organisation that began in Mirboo North and has expanded to new digs because the demand is extraordinary. It has a range of options that have it run

off its feet in relation to residential, commercial, light industrial and industrial solar, and in fact it pays for itself and then puts money back into the grid.

We have got a situation where if those opposite are interested in doing anything other than having a policy that comprises the cute little three-word slogan ‘Yeah, but nah’ they should in fact head along to Gippsland Solar or to an equivalent solar power generating company that has the technology so they can understand just how far it has come, because — you know what? — those opposite, stuck in the 1950s in so many policy areas, have an opportunity now to see just how far the world has come.

This may be news to those opposite, and it may be news to those who are busy screeching down the VRET in the other place at the moment. Those opposite do not have information that is current about just how far we have come. To that end I cannot wait to see how they might be enlightened if they choose to actually do any work in creating a policy setting that does not rely upon sending a motion off to a committee to do its heavy lifting and to extend the reporting date just before caretaker begins next year. I cannot wait to see those opposite do some homework that does not involve getting Labor Party members to do their work for them and to see them come along and assist with writing the sort of report that I indicated at the outset the government is moments away from issuing.

**Business interrupted pursuant to sessional orders.**

## QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

### Child sexually abusive behaviours

**Dr CARLING-JENKINS** (Western Metropolitan) — My question today is for the Minister for Youth Affairs, Minister Mikakos. Minister, according to a recent report from the Crime Statistics Agency, assaults on Victorian schoolgrounds have increased by 37 per cent over three years to an average of five sexual assaults per week. I note that in August you announced that the government is strengthening treatment services for young people who show sexually abusive or concerning behaviours and present risks to other children. Your announcement included the funding of sexually abusive behaviour treatment services to address this increase in destructive behaviour. Minister, what are the factors influencing the increase in these assaults, causing the need for these treatment services, and how will these funded treatment services address these factors?

**Ms MIKAKOS** (Minister for Youth Affairs) — I thank Dr Rachel Carling-Jenkins for her question. Can I just say at the outset that I was very disappointed last sitting week not to be asked a question on both the Thursday and Friday that we were sitting, because what I would like to put on the record is my admiration of the member for the personal explanation that she gave to the house during the last sitting week. I was disappointed not to have had that opportunity to express that in a more contemporaneous way at that time. I certainly want to put on the record, as I have expressed to her personally, my admiration for the courage that she has demonstrated in speaking publicly about a very challenging set of personal circumstances.

I thank the member for her interest in this matter. It is very challenging for any parent, for school communities and for the community more broadly to be confronted with children and young people who are exhibiting sexually abusive behaviours. I am very pleased that the family violence royal commission did specifically address this, because of course we know that sexual assault is a form of family violence, and they did make a very explicit recommendation in the family violence royal commission in relation to these matters. They specifically did recommend that the sexually abusive behaviours treatment services (SABTS), which are funded through my department, extend their scope from the age of 15, when they previously ended, to the age of 17.

I can advise the member that the Andrews Labor government has strengthened treatment services for children and young people who exhibit sexually abusive or concerning behaviours. The budget this year did provide \$5.7 million to help 11 agencies to deliver this SABTS program across the state for the next three years. The largest recipients of that funding included the Royal Children's Hospital and Monash Health. This will mean that over 500 additional episodes of support will be able to be provided.

SABTS is an important service, working with parents, carers, schools and the community in providing a developmentally appropriate response that addresses the child's concerning behaviour as well as their broader needs, and it helps families and carers to understand and support a child to change their behaviour. It can be accessed either voluntarily or through a court order.

The member also asked about the factors that are causing this type of behaviour. It is very difficult to pinpoint this precisely. In fact the royal commission itself in making this recommendation, on my understanding, did not itself identify causal factors, but

certainly it is important that as we get more reports and the community is more aware of these issues as a result of both the family violence royal commission but also the royal commission federally into institutional child sexual abuse, and as we get more reports from child protection and more reports through mandatory reporting by teachers and by others, there are appropriate services there to respond. I can advise the member that of course there has got to be a watching brief around research around these matters, but certainly we are responding to a growing need.

*Supplementary question*

**Dr CARLING-JENKINS** (Western Metropolitan) — I thank the minister for her comprehensive answer, and I look forward to that research in this space. It sounds like the services that are being funded are a reaction to the problem, which is, as you have explained, very much needed, but I wonder if you could make some brief comments on what proactive preventative work is occurring in this space.

**Ms MIKAKOS** (Minister for Youth Affairs) — Of course with the treatment response it is very important that we try and nip these issues in the bud. Sometimes it is sibling abuse that is going on sometimes it is children abusing other children that they may not be related to, and it is important that we address these issues so that we do not have these children growing up to become adult sexual offenders.

The preventative work goes to programs like the Respectful Relationships program. We are rolling out a range of materials in our schools to explain to children that sexual assault is a form of family violence and it is an unacceptable form of behaviour, so there are programs operating in our schools. There is one program called Feeling Safe Together run by the South Eastern Centre Against Sexual Assault in a small number of primary schools in Melbourne's south-east, for example, that also specifically addresses issues around sexual assault or abuse. So there are a range of programs, and I am happy to provide the member with further details.

**Parks Victoria camping fees**

**Mr YOUNG** (Northern Victoria) — My question today is for the Leader of the Government representing the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change. In 2015 your government took steps to decrease fees for camping areas in national parks and some other public land and even abolished fees in areas that did not provide infrastructure to users. This was

after much outrage and lobbying by frequent users, making the case that camping with one's family should not be cost prohibitive. Recently public land managers have been threatening to impose camping fees on areas of public land, in particular along the Murray River and other areas within the scope of the river red gum parks management plan. These are areas that have traditionally been freely available to camping families seeking a cheap way to holiday. Minister, will you rule out reintroducing new or increased camping fees along the Murray River or within the river red gum parks?

**Mr JENNINGS** (Special Minister of State) — I thank Mr Young for his question. I am pleased that in the early part of his question he acknowledged the initiative made by this government in relation to reducing the costs of camping and of recreational pursuits through the Victorian landscape. I am pleased that he recognises that.

I also think that he is quite right to say that there is an appropriate policy setting for government to be supportive of our citizens to be able to pursue their recreation and their camping opportunities within our beautiful landscape, within our public land, and that sometimes leads to great pressures in terms of the quality of facilities. They cannot be unregulated to lead to environmental damage, so I am sure he is mindful that all families and all of those who go to the Victorian public land estate hope there is the appropriate degree of environmental protections and sustainable practices applied there, and that has some resource allocation that is required to support the facilities that support that.

You would hope to do it in a way that reduces the cost to families and to recreational users. You would hope that there would be sufficient budget support to support that. That is not always necessarily the case; you have to find ways of being able to fund the facilities, to be able to fund that environmental protection and the sustainable practice and to keep these beautiful locations open to the public. I acknowledge the public policy pressures. I acknowledge the resource requirements. I thank Mr Young for identifying that the government has already taken positive action in relation to this.

The final thing that he has asked of me to guarantee in relation to what might happen in the future, I will talk to my colleague about to make sure that the confidence that Mr Young is seeking to obtain in relation to this can be provided by the appropriate minister.

*Supplementary question*

**Mr YOUNG** (Northern Victoria) — I thank the minister for his answer and his endeavour to find more information. My supplementary question is: Minister, noting the growing community concern that Parks Victoria is increasingly trying to discourage recreational activities in parks, can the minister provide an assurance that fees proposed for the river red gums parks and along the Murray River are not part of a wider agenda to lock people out of our park system?

**Mr JENNINGS** (Special Minister of State) — I can assure you that it is not the intention of the government, nor should it be the intention of Parks Victoria, to prevent people from being able to get access to the park system.

**Questions interrupted.**

**DISTINGUISHED VISITORS**

**The PRESIDENT** — It is with great pleasure that I extend a very warm welcome to the chamber today to some visitors from Botswana in a delegation led by the Honourable Speaker, Madame Gladys Kokorwe. We also have with us the Consul General for Botswana here in Victoria, Heddie Goldberg. Members of the delegation are spending some time with us this week. In fact two of the delegation will be staying on with us next week and being involved in some of our department activities to learn a little bit about the way we go about some of our processes and also to share, obviously, some of their experience and knowledge as well. I welcome Madame Speaker, Your Excellency and the delegation today.

**QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE**

**Questions resumed.**

**Fawkner land contamination**

**Ms HARTLAND** (Western Metropolitan) — My question is for Mr Jennings, who is acting on behalf of the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change. The site at 88 and 100–102 McBryde Street, Fawkner, used to be the Nufarm chemical factory, which has a long history of contamination. There are now plans to develop the site. It was in fact sealed in 1995. My question is: will the government order a full statutory environmental audit in accordance with the requirements and guidelines of the Environment Protection Bill 2017, and will Environment Protection Authority Victoria (EPA) ensure effective testing of the whole site, including the nature strip? And the testing of

course should be consistent with today's standards, not those of 1995, as has been quoted to the council and the residents.

**Mr JENNINGS** (Special Minister of State) — I thank Ms Hartland for her concern. She is on her traditional ground, and good on her for being somebody who has been mindful of and concerned about over many, many years appropriate environmental protections and the quality of life of our community to make sure they are protected from contaminants or pollution. In fact that has been a recurring element of Ms Hartland's political career. In fact I sincerely congratulate you on that concern.

In relation to the issue about statutory obligations that the EPA are obliged to undertake and the form of consideration of the review in terms of acquitting statutory obligations under the Environment Protection Act 1970, the Planning and Environment Act 1987 or the planning approvals act, I would have the expectation that our agencies would comply with all of those. In relation to the specific elements of the land parcel in question and the way in which that review will be undertaken, I will take some advice from my colleague the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change and confirm the details of what approach will be taken by her agencies.

### Heyfield timber mill

**Ms DUNN** (Eastern Metropolitan) — My question is for the Minister for Agriculture and Minister for Regional Development. Now that the Andrews Labor government has completed its nationalisation of the Heyfield mill, could the minister confirm that the state government is providing loans to the new co-owners, members of the pre-existing management team, to enable their purchase of shares in the mill, and can the minister confirm the value of these loans?

**Ms PULFORD** (Minister for Agriculture) — Minister Noonan and I have already confirmed that there are no loans that are made available as part of the arrangements for the purchase of the mill at Heyfield. As Ms Dunn, I imagine, knows, we have also indicated that the basis of the purchase and the structure within, in terms of management share, are matters that are and will remain commercial-in-confidence.

### *Supplementary question*

**Ms DUNN** (Eastern Metropolitan) — I thank the minister for her answer. Could the minister confirm that the state government has taken responsibility for debt

liabilities of Australian Sustainable Hardwoods and confirm the value of that debt?

**Ms Pulford** — On a point of order, perhaps, President, as I indicated to the house yesterday and as the government indicated in a media release last Friday, the arrangements governing the management of the mill and the structure for the new company are now a matter that is the responsibility of the Minister for Industry and Employment. As the Minister for Agriculture, my responsibility is the regulation of the timber industry and support for the timber industry. I seek your guidance on this question.

**The PRESIDENT** — I could take that as a point of order, and it does have some substance as a point of order, but it also, I would have thought, completed an answer, so from that point of view I think that the answer is discharged as much as any point of order on this occasion.

### Political donations

**Ms WOOLDRIDGE** (Eastern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Leader of the Government. Minister, in 2015–16 the federal ALP donated more than \$105 000 to the Victorian Labor Party branch. Will federal-state party transactions, as described, be banned under your proposed electoral reforms?

**Mr JENNINGS** (Special Minister of State) — The answer to the question is yes.

### *Supplementary question*

**Ms WOOLDRIDGE** (Eastern Metropolitan) — Thank you for that very definitive answer. Minister, given that the federal Labor Party will still be able to collect substantial union donations, uncapped, what measures will be in place to ensure that union funds funnelled to the federal Labor Party are prohibited from being spent in Victoria, servicing the Andrews Labor government's re-election campaign?

**Mr JENNINGS** (Special Minister of State) — My substantive answer clarified that matter.

### GOTAFE

**Mr O'SULLIVAN** (Northern Victoria) — My question is to the Minister for Training and Skills. Minister, when did you first become aware that GOTAFE may have rorted the Victorian training guarantee?

**Ms TIERNEY** (Minister for Training and Skills) — I thank the member for his question. The department has a division within the higher education and skills group that looks at and monitors all training providers, whether they be registered training organisations or TAFEs. The department did identify an issue and is working with GOTAFE to resolve it.

The extensive monitoring undertaken by the department, as I said, examines the contractual arrangements and the quality of training delivered to ensure that students' interests are protected. The concerns identified by the department include the use of third parties involved in recruiting students claiming more funding than they were entitled to and the suitability and appropriateness of the training undertaken. GOTAFE has cooperated fully with the department in resolving the issues, and the department has not suspended or instructed GOTAFE to suspend or freeze commencements in any programs. The freeze on commencements has been a decision of GOTAFE as part of its response to the department's concerns. GOTAFE is currently reviewing its systems and processes to prevent these types of incidents from recurring. Current students undertaking these courses are not impacted by the freeze. Their training will continue and be delivered by GOTAFE.

This is a continuing investigation that is being undertaken as we speak on these issues, and I am awaiting its outcome. I have asked for this investigation to be finalised as soon as possible.

*Supplementary question*

**Mr O'SULLIVAN** (Northern Victoria) — Thank you, Minister, for covering the subject but not actually answering my question. I will ask a supplementary question if I can. Minister, can you guarantee today that delivery of GOTAFE's training packages is compliant across all other courses?

**Ms TIERNEY** (Minister for Training and Skills) — That is the subject of the current investigation. That is part of the investigation that is taking place; it is not just in terms of what has come to light as a result of the department seeing a spike in enrolments in particular courses. We are looking at the overall operation of GOTAFE.

**GOTAFE**

**Ms LOVELL** (Northern Victoria) — My question is also for the Minister for Training and Skills. In an email to staff Margie Fixter, a senior manager at GOTAFE, said the organisation had been issued a

formal reprimand pertaining to training package compliance, enrolment in courses appropriate for the learner cohort and interstate enrolments. Minister, how many students, both current and past, have been caught up in this roting scandal?

**Ms TIERNEY** (Minister for Training and Skills) — That is the subject of the investigation too, Ms Lovell. There are a number of issues that have been raised, and as I said, I am awaiting the outcome of those investigations.

*Supplementary question*

**Ms LOVELL** (Northern Victoria) — Minister, what is the value of the student training subsidies that have been identified so far in this roting scandal?

**Ms TIERNEY** (Minister for Training and Skills) — Again, this is a matter that is being investigated at the moment, and I have not been provided with that level of detail at this point in time.

**Ms Lovell** — On a point of order, President, regarding the minister's answer, there are a number of leaked emails et cetera that have been reported and that are finding their way around the community. I caution the minister that if any of these actually contain a dollar figure her answer may be misleading Parliament. I give her the opportunity to say what the figure that has been identified so far is.

**The PRESIDENT** — That is not a point of order.

**Kindergarten fees**

**Ms CROZIER** (Southern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Minister for Families and Children. Minister, under your watch kindergarten fees have risen in some local regional and rural areas by over 30 per cent since the election of the Andrews Labor government. Kindergarten managers are informing parents that the Andrews Labor government is telling them that they need to raise their early education fees a further 5 per cent in the coming year. With Victorian families already being hit hard by cost-of-living pressures and rising power bills due to Labor, I ask: have you or your department directed any kindergarten managers to increase their fees beyond CPI in 2018?

**Ms MIKAKOS** (Minister for Families and Children) — The answer is no. The shadow minister, after nearly three years in the role, does not understand that early childhood services are not run by my department. In fact they are in large part either not-for-profit community-based early years services or in some cases not-for-profit or for-profit long day care

services that also offer kindergarten programs. The member opposite has no idea when she comes here and asks questions about kindergarten fees. Kindergarten fees are set individually by each particular kindergarten. Some are set by their cluster managers and some are run by volunteer-based parent kindergarten committees.

So I remind the member opposite, who comes in here and peddles mistruths day after day, that we have in fact provided a record amount of funding to our kindergarten services as part of our Education State *Early Childhood Reform Plan* that I released with the budget this year. We released \$202 million of new funding for our early years services, including more than \$100 million of new funding for our kindergartens.

We as a government are proud to be leading the nation in introducing Australia-first reforms in early childhood education, including the introduction of school readiness funding that will see kindergarten funding across Victoria increased by more than 10 per cent. On a needs basis they are going to be able to obtain funding to pay for things like speech therapists, child psychologists and additional early childhood experts to come in and provide support to children undertaking kindergarten programs.

We have also provided more funding to our regional kindergartens. The member referred to regional kindergartens. I can advise the member that under her government we did have kindergartens that were struggling and that had to fundraise to pay for their kindergarten teacher's salary. We introduced funding through our previous budgets that effectively pays for the kindergarten teacher. They are guaranteed a base rate of funding of up to 18 enrolments, regardless of whether they have got two or three children enrolled in that kindergarten. As a result of that additional funding we have seen kindergartens actually reopen in Victoria in rural communities.

The member opposite may not understand the early childhood portfolio, but we have put in record funding and groundbreaking reforms in the early years childhood space to provide more support to Victorian children and parents. We are getting on with providing more funding to our kindergartens in Victoria whilst the member opposite does not even understand who sets the fees.

*Supplementary question*

**Ms CROZIER** (Southern Metropolitan) — The cost of kindergarten for many Victorian parents, who may be above the threshold to be eligible for a healthcare card but who are still battling with disadvantage, is

becoming increasingly difficult. Minister, what assurances will you provide that all Victorian children will be able to participate and all Victorian families will be able to afford vital four-year-old kindergarten programs, especially with the rising cost of living and increased kindergarten fees under Labor?

**Ms MIKAKOS** (Minister for Families and Children) — The irony of this member asking these questions around these issues! The member does not understand that those who have a healthcare card are entitled to free four-year-old kindergarten in Victoria and they can access free kindergarten services across Victoria. If they choose to enrol their children in a long day care service that offers a kindergarten program, there may be additional costs because there is a long day care program in there that is federally funded. We continue to advocate to the commonwealth for affordable and accessible child care for Victoria. But the member opposite does not understand that we have brought in record funding for our kindergartens in Victoria, for both regional kindergartens and kindergartens right across the state, and we are delivering on groundbreaking reforms.

**School cleaning contracts**

**Mr ONDARCHIE** (Northern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade. Minister, Fazzino Cleaning Services is a small family business that provides cleaning services to 17 primary schools. Likewise George Stamatakos of Alpine Chemicals and Cleaning Supplies in Preston has serviced local schools in and around the northern suburbs of Melbourne for decades, building a strong rapport with them. Cleaners do so much more than just cleaning — they put out the school flags, they fix shelves, they respond to after-hours alarms and they do a whole lot of things. They buy assets like polishers to run their businesses.

As the minister for small business, can you explain to Mr Fazzino, Mr Stamatakos and all the small cleaning business owners you claim to represent what you will do for them as they now face the removal of all their income due to the Andrews Labor government cancelling Victoria's small business school contracts that they hold till 2020?

**Mr DALIDAKIS** (Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade) — I thank the member for his question. I am happy to take the question on notice and ask Minister Merlino.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr DALIDAKIS** — Well, Minister Merlino is responsible for the contracts that the member is discussing. The contracts fall under the Minister for Education's portfolio, and I am happy to refer the matter to him for an answer.

*Supplementary question*

**Mr ONDARCHIE** (Northern Metropolitan) — Minister, this decision to smash small business school cleaning contracts is another example of a union clearly flexing its muscles to dictate policy decisions to the Andrews Labor government. Why have you, as the minister for small business — the minister at the cabinet table who is supposed to represent each and every one of these businesses — washed your hands of your responsibility and been happy to see these small businesses go down just to appease your Labor union mates?

**Mr DALIDAKIS** (Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade) — I thank the member for his question. The fact of the matter is that the member still fails to understand the delineation of portfolio responsibilities. The fact remains that the awarding of contracts or otherwise for the Department of Education and Training is looked after by the minister responsible, being Minister Merlino in the other place. Let me say that in relation to the reforms that Mr Merlino is pursuing they are as a result of people having been taken advantage of. These are the very people that we had a question about moments ago asked by a previous shadow minister, who asked about the working class. Now they wash their hands of the working class. So on the one hand, in one question, it is okay for those over there to pretend that they care. They pretend that they care about the working class, but when the government pursues a policy of another minister to try and protect people from being taken advantage of by these types of companies then we all of a sudden have crocodile tears.

**Written responses**

**The PRESIDENT** — That completes questions. In respect of today's questions I would request a written response from Mr Jennings, which in fact he has volunteered to do at any rate, in respect of the substantive question posed by Mr Young, and that is two days; Ms Hartland's substantive question to Mr Jennings, again involving a minister in another place, and that is two days; in regard to Ms Wooldridge's question to Mr Jennings, the supplementary question, that is the minister's own responsibility, so that is just one day; and Ms Lovell's question to Ms Tierney, the supplementary question, one day.

In relation to Mr Ondarchie's question, both the substantive and supplementary questions, I am allowing two days to allow the minister to actually have a discussion with Mr Merlino in the sense that he might be able to provide some information that is useful to the house and worthwhile for the house; however, I do note that the question was about what the minister in this chamber was going to do to represent small business rather than seeking information on the contract decisions of the Minister for Education. In considering a written response I am certainly happy for the minister to perhaps have a conversation or receive further information from the Minister for Education in the other place, but I would ask him also to reflect on the question itself, which was about what he might do in terms of representation to that minister or indeed others in respect of small business matters; that is two days on that basis.

**Ms Bath** — On a point of order, President, I ask the house to take note of the Minister for Agriculture's response to my question of 8 September where she responded in writing and said in relation to the Hazelwood Pondage and the barramundi that an external contractor was paid over \$57 000 for removal of the fish, transportation of the fish and holding of the fish in a frozen state. I ask that the house take note of that response.

**Ms Wooldridge** — On the point of order, President, yesterday Mr Davis tried to take note of a minister's answer when there was a written response requested. Your commentary at the time was that it was perhaps too far in advance of seeing a written response to be able to take note of it. Ms Bath is now seeking to take note of a written response, given that we had a humorous response at the time but not a response to the specific question. So we are seeking to be able to take note of that answer now that we have a written response.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! On the basis that this is the first opportunity on which the member and therefore the house has had an opportunity to view a response to that question, I believe it is in order for the member to move a take-note motion.

**Ordered that written response relating to Hazelwood Pondage be considered next day on motion of Ms BATH (Eastern Victoria).**

## PRODUCTION OF DOCUMENTS

**The Clerk** — I have received the following letter from the Attorney-General in relation to Pride Centre documents:

I refer to the Legislative Council's resolution of 6 September 2017, seeking the production of the following:

a copy of the full business case prepared for the Pride Centre; and

copies of all agendas and minutes of meetings for any advisory committees, the minister, departmental officials or the Victorian commissioner for gender and sexuality that considered, examined or discussed the Pride Centre and any consultancies, advices or studies that were obtained for, or formed part of, any decision-making or discussion concerning the Pride Centre.

The Legislative Council's date for production of the documents by 12 noon on 21 September 2017 does not allow sufficient time for the government to respond to the Council's resolution. The government is in the process of collating and considering the relevant documents for the purpose of responding to the order. The government will endeavour to provide a final response to the order as soon as possible.

## CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS

### Northern Metropolitan Region

**Ms PATTEN** (Northern Metropolitan) — My question is for the Minister for Education. My constituent, a primary school teacher from Melbourne's inner north, has contacted me to follow up on an issue raised in an *Age* article back in May 2016 titled 'White flight: race segregation in Melbourne state schools'. That article reported on unofficial racial segregation that was occurring in schools proximate to the commission flats. My constituent pointed to a 2015 report by the Stanford Center for Education Policy Analysis which confirmed that racial segregation in schools and its relationship with poverty was the most significant cause of education achievement gaps. He said nothing has changed since the *Age* report and asked, 'What is the government doing to curb racial segregation in our state schools?'

### Eastern Metropolitan Region

**Ms WOOLDRIDGE** (Eastern Metropolitan) — My constituency question is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. It relates to traffic modelling for option A, one of four proposals being considered by the North East Link Authority as a possible ring-road to ease the congestion in Melbourne's north-east. Option A proposes to follow the Greensborough bypass southwards to connect with the Eastern Freeway near Bulleen Road. My question is: can the minister please

outline what proportion of vehicles travelling south would turn left when they reach Bulleen Road at the Eastern Freeway intersection towards Ringwood and what proportion of vehicles are expected to turn right to head towards the city as a result of the modelling that has been undertaken by the North East Link Authority? This option is expected to carry 100 000 to 120 000 vehicles a day 10 years after opening. We are seeking to get a sense of what proportion of cars will be turning right versus left when they reach the Bulleen Road intersection.

### Northern Victoria Region

**Mr GEPP** (Northern Victoria) — My constituency question is for the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change in the other place. In February the minister called for expressions of interest to build Australia's first grid-scale battery storage facility in the north-west or south-west of Victoria. Energy storage of course plays a vital role in better integrating renewable energy generation. It ensures reliability of supply and keeps power prices in check, especially during peak demand periods. This initiative follows a recent Labor government announcement of \$25 million for large-scale battery storage which will enhance the performance and security of the grid. It is a huge win for Victorian jobs and energy consumers. Can the minister update the house and me on this announcement and tell us how it will contribute to ensuring the people in my electorate of Northern Victoria Region have secure and reliable energy moving forward?

### Southern Metropolitan Region

**Ms FITZHERBERT** (Southern Metropolitan) — My constituency question is to the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation. It is well known that residents from the George Hotel in Fitzroy Street, St Kilda, have safety and amenity issues because outsiders apparently have easy access to common areas in the residential parts of the building. Residents also believe that there are repeated breaches of the downstairs venues licences from the Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation. They are assured that there are investigations, but nothing ever appears to happen as a consequence of these, if they are occurring. I ask the minister for a full explanation of investigations by the commission at the George over the last three years, including how many investigations have been undertaken and what the outcomes of these were, as well as any findings of licence breaches and the consequences of these.

### Southern Metropolitan Region

**Ms PENNICUIK** (Southern Metropolitan) — My constituency question is for the Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing. On 8 March I asked the minister what he was doing to ensure that the 80 former residents of the Gatwick Hotel had been provided with fit-for-purpose housing. On 2 May he responded that the government had commissioned St Kilda Community Housing to help current residents move to safe and stable housing over the coming months. My question for the minister is: has everyone who was a former resident of the Gatwick Hotel been housed, and are there processes in place to ensure that they continue in housing and do not become homeless?

### Eastern Victoria Region

**Ms BATH** (Eastern Victoria) — My constituency question is for the Minister for Agriculture. As a result of a reduction in timber supply to 80 000 cubic metres, staff redundancies are occurring at the Heyfield green mill. Some of my constituents have raised concerns in relation to the current redundancy packages on offer, which are not as initially promised and contain far less financial compensation than initially negotiated. The Andrews Labor government, as a major shareholder of the mill, is a key stakeholder in these negotiations. Employees maintain that the government and the CFMEU should be working to achieve the best outcomes for workers who will lose their jobs due to the loss of timber. My question to the minister is: will the minister ensure that the CFMEU and the state government, as the new owner of the mill, ensure that the timber mill workers receive all redundancy outcomes as initially promised?

### Western Victoria Region

**Mr MORRIS** (Western Victoria) — My constituency question is directed to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety; however, it does involve the Minister for Public Transport as well, I suppose. It is in relation to the condition of the road between Ballarat and Hamilton. I have had in the past couple of weeks multiple constituents contact me with regard to the bus journey between Ballarat and Hamilton, but more specifically regarding the condition of the road. These constituents have been full of praise for V/Line staff and the coach drivers more generally but are very concerned about the condition of the road and how uncomfortable the trip is. The question I ask is: can the minister detail what is being done to fix the condition of the road between Ballarat and Hamilton?

### Eastern Metropolitan Region

**Ms DUNN** (Eastern Metropolitan) — My constituency question is on behalf of a constituent in Nunawading and is directed to the Minister for Public Transport. The question pertains to a new shared path between Blackburn and Nunawading stations, which are part of the level crossing removal project. The minister previously advised that the new path was expected to require the removal of residential fences along parts of Laughlin Avenue. However, during construction it was found that the path could be built without having to remove fences. The minister also admitted that in some cases the height difference between the path and neighbouring properties has affected the privacy of some residents. Considering the changing design of the path and the unfulfilled promises of the Level Crossing Removal Authority, could the minister simply commit to the full funding of a new boundary fence 2.1 metres in height and made of lattice or louvre panels for the Nunawading end of the shared pathway to ensure privacy for residents and in particular to ensure that my 97-year-old constituent is not further burdened with anxiety around this issue?

### Southern Metropolitan Region

**Mr DAVIS** (Southern Metropolitan) — My question is for the attention of the Minister for Public Transport and concerns VicTrack land in Windsor and in particular the VicTrack land that abuts 20 Chapel Street, Windsor. An application has been made, as I understand it, to VicTrack for access to the rail corridor and in particular air rights over that particular section. I also understand that discussions have occurred with the City of Stonnington. What is required here is for the community to know what concession is being offered in this case and what air rights at what cost and at what impact to the community this is occurring. My question to the Minister for Public Transport is: will she release the arrangements under which these air rights are being given as a concession to a development group for a 20-storey tower over the rail corridor near Chapel Street, Windsor?

### Northern Victoria Region

**Ms LOVELL** (Northern Victoria) — My question is for the Minister for Education. Mansfield Secondary College, like many regional schools, suffers from ageing facilities. Thankfully the 2016 budget saw \$3.4 million granted to the school for a badly needed upgrade. While the money was welcomed, more funding is needed to complete the upgrade to satisfy the educational needs of Mansfield students now and into the future. The school community requires an

additional \$4 million to \$5 million in next May's state budget to fully address the school's glaring needs.

A master plan for the additional funds has been developed to complete the upgrade of ailing classrooms, construct an indoor gymnasium and expand the technology and art spaces of the school. The additional money will ensure the full upgrade occurs in one time frame rather than as a staged project. The member for Eildon, Cindy McLeish, has advocated for this additional funding, as she knows it will provide Mansfield Secondary College with the opportunity to produce even better educational outcomes. Will the minister provide a commitment for the 2018–19 state budget to fund an additional \$4 million to \$5 million in order to complete the upgrade of Mansfield Secondary College?

### Western Metropolitan Region

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — My constituency question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. The mystery surrounding the government's West Gate tunnel project grows deeper by the day. The proposal by the then opposition leader, now the Premier, was described before the last election as 'shovel-ready'. The West Gate distributor became the western distributor and is now the West Gate tunnel. We should not be surprised if another name change were on the cards. The secrecy surrounding the involvement of Transurban continues, even though the company would appear to be the sole beneficiary of the project. So-called consultation with local residents has been cursory at best, and they are as much in the dark as anyone else. Will the minister come clean on what the government has already committed to with the West Gate tunnel and what it has in store for locals and motorists alike?

## STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING

### Reference

#### Debate resumed.

**Ms SHING** (Eastern Victoria) — It is nice to return to the subject matter we were on immediately prior to the commencement of question time and to the most recent reference to what I suspect is or will back in as being the coalition's energy policy in the lead-up to the next election, that being the three-word slogan 'Yeah, but nah'. To this end I look forward to seeing that come to fruition.

What I would like to do, though, in continuing to speak to this very important motion on energy pricing and related matters, is go to the prices that have been the subject of various contributions within this place in the course of today's debate, not least of which was the starting point of the mover of the motion, who was followed in the debate by Mr Barber in relation to the way in which prices have changed and evolved over time. In this sense I note that it is important to get some facts on the table in relation to energy pricing, because we do, against the backdrop of extensive scaremongering and misinformation, have a vacuum around the causes and effects of changes to energy pricing and supply. In terms of the drivers of energy prices, we need to break these down into three particular areas. I will go to these areas now, because they are of direct relevance to the issues which are being proposed to be ventilated in the course of yet another inquiry.

Energy prices relate in the first instance to gas. We know this because we have seen extensive investigation and analysis of the availability of natural gas to consumers — domestic and residential on the one hand and commercial and industrial on the other — that has given rise to various concerns about whether that will impact upon policy settings at a local level such that the moratorium on onshore unconventional gas will be lifted and whether in fact the current Leader of the Opposition, perhaps under the dictates of those from Canberra, including Mr Joyce, who is ideologically and intractably opposed to any subsidy on renewables and who will wind this back, might lead the way to the dismantling of the legislative ban on onshore unconventional gas. That is the fracking ban, which has at last provided certainty and a sense of peace to many people on the land throughout the Gippsland and Otway basins in particular, who have been fighting for many years for this issue to be resolved.

In essence we see too much gas being exported. We see over three times more gas than what is used locally being exported, and the way in which this can be purchased for lower prices internationally than it can be procured here speaks to a significant disjunct in the way in which the market is being regulated. So the extraordinary lack of investment and policy certainty at a federal level has resulted in prices being pushed up. The other part of this is that where we have these massive deals that mean that you can get Australian gas more cheaply on the Japanese market than you can get it here, there is understandably an enormous level of frustration. There is an enormous level of frustration because, again, we see a policy vacuum. We see a black hole from successive coalition governments at a state

and federal level around addressing the issue of supply and around addressing pricing in any meaningful way.

When Daniel Andrews, our Premier, took a plan to the Council of Australian Governments to in fact address this with a cap on exports and a tradeable permit system, it was rejected out of hand by Prime Minister Turnbull and by others who sit around his cabinet table. They are, quite simply, not remotely interested in doing anything at a policy level or in doing anything at a regulatory level in Canberra other than to create an opportunity for the resource to be exploited more readily and for external pricing mechanisms to continue to increase. To that end they are happy to sell residents, consumers and businesses, which those opposite say that they champion, up the river. It is in fact the Australian consumer and the Australian market that suffer because of a combination of what I see as the ineptitude and the ignorance of those who are quite happy to sit in Canberra and wilfully turn a blind eye to the importance of implementing change now to shore up supply and provide certainty and consistency.

To that end, when we have a huge call from those opposite as to the fault of the Andrews Labor government for changes to energy prices, they are unable to take the log out of their own eye or in fact to do any work to provide greater certainty through lobbying their own federal coalition counterparts to improve the situation. These are the drivers that will in fact mean that where work is done proactively to create greater market certainty for our domestic components and consumers within the grid, this will drive prices down. It is economics 101, and unfortunately those opposite do not in fact see that these are the impacts of the policy settings that are being discussed. No doubt, to go back to the point with which I started my contribution, this will form part of any coalition report that is generated as a consequence of yet another inquiry in the terms being proposed by the mover of the motion.

While Mr Turnbull and others in Canberra go around verballing the CEO of AGL about Liddell and go around talking about how coal-fired power will continue to operate and continue to be viable long after the estimates that the company and the owner themselves have put on the life of the plant, on safety and on volume and on the capacity to meet demand in the market, and while those in Canberra continue to provide that misinformation and continue to go to war with corporations that are making their own decisions about pulling away from coal-fired power, about diversifying their technology and about investing in a mix of energy resources to meet supply demands into the future, we are in fact working with that same

company, with AGL, on a game-changing proposal for a gas import terminal at Crib Point in Western Port Bay.

This is a coup for Victoria — not that you would hear anyone opposite recognise that as an important achievement for us in the gas pricing and supply environment. It has the potential to change to an enormous extent the future of gas prices and to ensure that we have an additional reliable supply of gas that will withstand any attempts at vandalism, whether through omission or through active vandalism, by those who sit on coalition benches, whether here in opposition or in Canberra. It will in fact mean that we will continue to reform the national gas market from within Victoria to ensure greater transparency and to ensure that we are meeting the needs of consumers into the future.

Let us be really, really clear: the Andrews Labor government will not allow fracking in Victoria. We said it when we announced a response to the inquiry undertaken by the Environment and Planning Committee, the very committee to which the mover of the motion seeks to refer this further inquiry into energy prices. We said it when we proposed and put the legislation that banned fracking in this state — a world first in terms of onshore unconventional gas exploration and extraction and a world first in the context of the discussion around further work and resourcing to investigate and to make absolutely clear that onshore conventional gas markets will be the subject of further research and further hydrogeological understanding of the resource that is there in order to put to rest conclusively the argy-bargy that goes on around the extent to which there are commercially viable quantities of conventional gas in Victoria, because effort, energy and resourcing is required to do these things properly, and that is what we are doing.

We are not just making it up as we go along. The energy policy of the Andrews Labor government is not like what I suspect it will be for those opposite — the ‘Yeah, but nah’ three-word slogan. What we are doing is making sure that we provide certainty to our agricultural communities and to our regional landowners and making sure that we protect the resource that is available above the ground for those communities who contribute enormously to the commodities that are provided to our local and international markets. We will make sure that people are under no illusion — states that allow fracking have higher gas prices than Victoria anyway. It does not work, and it will never happen here under Labor’s watch. The same cannot be said for those opposite, and to that end it will be an extraordinary test of the

coalition's preparedness to tell the truth and to be candid with Victorians when we head toward November 2018 as to whether it is in fact a possibility, a probability or already planned that the coalition will lift the ban on fracking and wind back the legislation.

### **Sitting suspended 1.01 p.m. until 2.03 p.m.**

**Ms SHING** — Before the suspension for lunch I had been talking to the gas price issue and to the availability of gas that will be realised following the Crib Point AGL investment. I would also like to talk about energy prices and the impact occasioned on energy prices by retailers. You will note that the second factor driving up energy prices is the behaviour of electricity and gas retailers, something which again those opposite and again those in Canberra refuse to acknowledge because it is not consistent with the coalition's all-but-confirmed 'Yeah, but nah' policy on energy that they will take to the next election.

Our government has in fact been very concerned about energy retailers and pricing for some time, and there was, as I referred to earlier in my contribution, a bipartisan review undertaken to investigate this. Rather than just going by the scuttlebutt, the anecdotal evidence, the Facebook posts or the keyboard warriors talking about their perceptions of the issue, we looked at hundreds and hundreds of Victorian bills. The thing that was discovered in the course of the analysis of these bills was that amongst other things households and businesses are paying up to 21 per cent more than the best offer on the market and that these costs are largely being added on by retailers using the same resource that is available to everyone under the grid but pumping it up as part of what they provide to consumers.

This effectively means that the market is not working to deliver the efficiencies that it needs to and that people deserve, and that, concerningly, those opposite do not really care. They do not care about this because to call industry out on failing to deliver actually means that they would have to hold to account some of their nearest and dearest stakeholders.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Morris)** — Order! Thank you, members. I am having difficulty hearing Ms Shing's contribution. If we could keep the noise down to a dull roar, that would be fabulous.

**Ms SHING** — You would be the first one to say in fact that you are having trouble hearing me, I think, ever in the history of any contribution I have made in

this place or anywhere else, Acting President, but to that end I am grateful for the call.

In this setting I note that those opposite will go on and on and on about increases to the cost of living. They will go on and on and on about the hardships faced by people in making ends meet, whilst at the other end of the debate they are more than happy to argue hand over fist for negative wages growth, hand over fist for industry and hand over fist for subsidies and exemptions for large corporations whilst doing absolutely nothing. Again it is a policy black hole, and again it is another tired, sad excuse to roll out a three-word slogan or two or 10, to post all sorts of misinformation and to use various calls to scaremonger and to present inaccurate detail.

I will note for the record that in fact the contemptometer should reflect that communities are sick of this. They are sick of the misinformation. They are sick of the politicisation. They want action that makes a meaningful difference in what they are paying, in the information available to them, in security of resources and in reliability of supply. And that is in fact exactly what is being delivered. What we are doing is acting in the face of a hostile federal coalition government and in the face of hostile inaction from Canberra, whereby people are unable or unwilling to unpick themselves from the ideological obsession with coal at the expense of any sensible debate, contribution or policy development across a mix of energy sources and resources. In Victoria, however, we are growing a flourishing renewable sector thanks to the work that we are undertaking across the whole of government. We are delivering up to 650 megawatts capacity, which will drive up to \$1.3 billion of additional renewable energy investment.

Those opposite like to selectively quote people from the government, they like to verbal people and they like to make things up on the hop. I would hope that amongst their efforts to do this — and to scaremonger and to create misinformation in the name of the three-word slogan that they will probably run to the next election — they do not forget that \$1.3 billion of additional renewable energy will create around 1250 additional two-year construction jobs and 90 ongoing jobs in regional Victoria.

**Mr Davis** interjected.

**Ms SHING** — I note the interjection from Mr Davis opposite. He said, 'Let's call her Hazelwood Harriet'. Now, it is interesting. I note that there is a parliamentary ruling in relation to not using members' first names, but in this instance I would like to overlook

that in favour of talking about Hazelwood and the work that has been undertaken to date. Unlike those opposite — none of whom live or work anywhere near the Latrobe Valley, none of whom give a tinker's cuss for the people who rely upon government to do the right thing and none of whom are responsible in any way, shape or form for delivering any sort of substantive investment in long-term intergenerational growth and improvement — in fact Hazelwood Harriet has been more than happy to talk with communities about the frustration, the anxiety, the distress and the upset occasioned through successive governments failing to do anything about the Latrobe Valley's prospects into the future. Do you know what? Malcolm Turnbull himself has been more than happy to say —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Morris)** — Order! Mr Finn! Mr Ramsay! Thank you, members. We all know interjections are unruly.

**Ms SHING** — Malcolm Turnbull himself is on the record as saying:

AGL and Engie and Hazelwood have had changes occur as a consequence of commercial decisions. This did not occur —

newsflash to those opposite —

as a consequence of anything done by the state Labor government.

So that would put the current Prime Minister —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Morris)** — Order! Thank you, members. It is quite difficult to hear what Ms Shing is saying. I would like to be able to hear what Ms Shing is saying, so I would like members to please refrain from interjections, and I would ask Ms Shing to refrain from inciting those opposite.

**Ms SHING** — On a point of order, Acting President, I am not inciting anything. I am making a contribution, so I would seek some guidance from you in relation to that remark.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Morris)** — Thanks for your point of order, Ms Shing. I was just referring to your taking up interjections from those opposite and continuing on with those in debate. Ms Shing, I would ask you to refer back to the motion.

**Ms SHING** — Thanks very much for that clarification that it was not my remarks but rather the fact that the constant barrage from those aggrieved

opposite is something that should remain exactly where it lies, in the sawdust of this particular debate that those opposite are seeking to make into some form of policy. Do you know what? Good luck. Congratulations.

**Mr Ramsay** — On a point of order, Acting President, I note Ms Shing has 5 minutes and 4 seconds to go. My point of order is based on relevance. I could see no relevance in the last piece of her contribution to the motion at hand moved by Mrs Peulich. I ask you, Acting President, if you could bring her back to the motion at hand. And I will have five or six more points of order possibly in the next 4 minutes, as she exercised in my last contribution on the firefighter bill.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Morris)** — Thank you, Mr Ramsay. I do note that this has been a wideranging debate, but in light of that I would ask Ms Shing to concentrate on the motion and not take up those interjections from those opposite.

**Ms SHING** — I will refrain from taking up any interjections in the remaining time that I have available to me. I would like to quote the Prime Minister, Mr Turnbull, on 3AW on 24 March 2017, who for once gave an honest answer on this issue when he said:

... the closure of Hazelwood is a decision of the owner, Engie. It's a commercial decision that they have taken.

...

... the responsibility here is fundamentally that of the owners, Engie, and of course they have made a decision about this plant, which is the oldest coal-fired power station in Australia and has been slated to close for a very long time.

The cost of keeping it running runs into hundreds of millions and the cost of rehabilitation, which obviously a new owner would have to take over, is approaching a billion dollars.

Mr Turnbull then went on to say:

... the Victorian government I know has had extensive discussions with Engie over some time, and they have shown a complete determination to close the plant.

So in fact Engie made the decision to close Hazelwood. What we did in response, in a way that everybody opposite and everybody in Canberra said we could not and said we would not, was negotiate a worker transition scheme, the first of its kind in Australia, between contractors, between the distributors, between the operators and between the unions — oh, the deadly word there; call out 'Bingo' somebody — to make sure that people would have options and opportunities to grow in their employment. We have put \$266 million, a record investment, into transition for the Latrobe Valley. We are diversifying the economy. We are making sure, as part of a succession of record budgets

and initiatives and investments in this part of the world, that we do far more than the empty rhetoric, the side remarks, the three-word slogans and the catchcries of those opposite that mean absolutely nothing in making sure that people who live in my region — people who live and work and make a contribution in Gippsland — have the opportunities that they were denied when the last government was in power and that they were denied when the mine was on fire, when the coalition was missing in action and when they repeatedly failed to get investment from successive budgets under the coalition.

They were duded by the former government. They are being duded by a policy vacuum from those opposite now. They are being duded and sold up the river in exchange for safe coalition aspirations, in exchange for sandbagging in New South Wales and in Queensland, in exchange for a paltry contribution that we have fought tooth and nail with Canberra to provide certainty and security on. It is an absolute disgrace and it beggars belief that those opposite would seek to have yet another politicised process that will result in sound and fury that signifies, to quote Shakespeare, absolutely nothing.

What we will see ultimately is nothing that improves the lives, the prospects or the opportunities of those who deserve better. What we will see is nothing that substantively results in a lower cost of running a home or a lower cost of running a business.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Ms SHING** — Those opposite can yell, scream and bellow all they want, and they can get hot under the collar all they want, but unfortunately the energy that they create and produce there is not in and of itself renewable. It is not in and of itself able to be harnessed, and if it were they would be making a contribution to this grid that far outweighed any substantive offering that they have ever had to put on the table, not just now but when they were in government. When they had an opportunity to do something, they did absolutely nothing. We have people in the Latrobe Valley who were not given anything other than a mop and a bucket and a pair of gloves and told to clean up the ash in their houses and who had no idea about evacuation measures. Pregnant women, elderly people and children had no access to health care and no access to information or assistance around the time that Morwell was covered in smoke, and it was a disgrace.

**Debate adjourned on motion of Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria).**

**Debate adjourned until later this day.**

## BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

### Standing orders

**Ms PATTEN** (Northern Metropolitan) — I move:

That in relation to the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Amendment (Pilot Medically Supervised Injecting Centre) Bill 2017, standing orders be suspended to the extent necessary to allow for further debate on the question 'That the bill be now read a second time' to which members are limited to 15 minutes each.

**Motion agreed to.**

### DRUGS, POISONS AND CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES AMENDMENT (PILOT MEDICALLY SUPERVISED INJECTING CENTRE) BILL 2017

*Second reading*

**Debate resumed from 22 February; motion of Ms PATTEN (Northern Metropolitan).**

**Ms SYMES** (Northern Victoria) — It is a pleasure to rise to make a contribution on the private members bill before the house at this time. Of course every life lost to overdose is an immensely sad tragedy. Drug and alcohol problems, including those that result in overdose, are extremely complex. They affect not just individuals but their families, their friends and their communities. Before us is a private members bill that proposes to amend the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981 to provide for the licensing and operation of a medically supervised injecting centre for a trial period of 18 months in the suburb of North Richmond.

It was certainly a very worthwhile experience being involved in the inquiry into the private members bill. We heard from residents, traders, community health experts and police, and we visited the Sydney injecting centre in Kings Cross. We also heard compelling evidence from the Coroners Court, which has now examined three deaths that have led to the recommendation that a safe injecting facility be established. Our committee made 11 findings in relation to this matter, and I think finding 6 is quite a good place to start in relation to my contribution today.

We found that drug use in North Richmond has reached crisis level. It is a major concern for residents, business owners and emergency services. This crisis was certainly evident in North Richmond. Some members of the committee carried out a site visit of the surrounding streets of the intersection of Victoria and Lennox streets. We saw parks, alleyways, the

neighbouring streets, schools — just normal streets on the surface. We were accompanied by Mr Greg Denham, the executive director of Yarra Drug and Health Forum, and Judy Ryan, a resident who lives in the area, and she is part of a group called the Residents for Victoria Street Drug Solutions. They were very familiar with locations known for heroin use. However, it was evident to any passer-by that this was a centre of drug activity. There were people clearly affected by drugs, there were open drug deals occurring and probably the most obvious evidence of all was the discarded syringes or parts of syringes littering the streets. I clearly remember the little orange safety tips that come off the syringes that were scattered in the gutters of the surrounding streets.

The radiating impact of drug taking was just so evident. Of course it is really easy to empathise with the hurt and pain suffered by those with a drug dependency and their families and even the strain on our health services and emergency services, but it is not until you look closely at the community of North Richmond that you realise that the impact is on so much more than those who are directly affected by drug taking. The community have to look at their feet when they exit their home to ensure they do not stand on a discarded needle. They are constantly worried that they will have to call an ambulance or even resuscitate a person who may have chosen their driveway or their front yard as a semi-safe place to inject. We saw evidence of residents having to disable their front water taps because to enable heroin to be injected it has to be dissolved in water, so in terms of access to water in the community people were taking it into their own hands to try to prevent drug users from jumping the fences to access their taps.

We were talking to many residents. We are talking about really regular families going about their everyday business — off to school, off to work, just out for an outing — and these people are living every day having to worry about what they may confront on their front doorstep. Our report has acknowledged the hardships and dangers faced by local residents as a result of the drug activity. State Coroner Sara Hinchey classified these concerns as ‘a health-related issue for those who are exposed to the debris associated with injecting drug use’. We did have a close look at lots of the coroner’s submissions and data, and coronial data has shown that overdose deaths have increased over recent years, with 477 overdose deaths in Victoria in 2016, which was up from 379 in 2009. Judge Sara Hinchey told our committee that the figures for heroin overdose deaths in particular had actually remained relatively stable since

2009 until it peaked with increases between 2014 to 2016. She told us that:

Heroin re-emerged as a central focus in the Victorian Coroners Court in 2016 when evidence mounted of an unusual increase in heroin-related harm. Data from the court’s overdose deaths register showed that 172 overdose deaths occurred in 2015 involving heroin, which was an increase of 26 per cent compared to the 136 deaths which had occurred in 2014. As well, the court received calls from concerned members of the alcohol and drug treatment sector who had noted elevated levels of heroin use and related harm, particularly in public places in the North Richmond area.

It was certainly a frank and compelling discussion that we had at North Richmond Community Health. There were a number of local agencies and service providers, including North Richmond Community Health, the Yarra Drug and Health Forum, the Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association, Victoria Street Drug Solutions, the City of Yarra, the Youth Support and Advocacy Service, St Vincent’s Hospital, the Fitzroy Legal Service, the Neighbourhood Justice Centre and Cohealth Limited. They explained their services, their struggles and their daily interactions helping people with drugs and other health-related problems in the area.

We were shown a needle dispensing service. They reported that an average 150 clients per day access this service. That is a staggering 60 000 to 70 000 syringes that are distributed to people in the area each month. The policy rationale for needle and syringe programs is clear. They are given to users to ensure that they are using clean equipment and not sharing needles with other users, so this of course reduces the transmission of bloodborne diseases, such as HIV and hepatitis. The Victorian government certainly supports programs like this. Harm minimisation approaches are certainly something that should be encouraged and promoted.

Of course we consider that this is first and foremost a health issue. We are funding programs that reduce the risk of bloodborne viruses. We invested more than \$19 million into the needle and syringe program in the 2017–18 budget. There are other harm reduction activities funded by the government, including outreach workers and other staff, overdose education and a range of locally tailored responses to drug use.

We continue to explore new responses that can further reduce drug-related harm. For example, in February this year we announced a \$1.3 million package of new harm reduction measures to reduce drug-related harm and fatal overdoses across Victoria, including the overdose awareness campaign, six new peer-led networks to support those at risk of overdosing and initiatives to

expand access to the life-saving drug naloxone. Of course these are very worthwhile programs.

As I said, not only are needle exchange programs supported by this government but they are widely accepted across much of the world as an appropriate health measure. However, for many, providing syringes to people with the full knowledge that they will be used to inject potentially dangerous substances creates the logical policy extension that if you provide a safe instrument why would you not follow that with providing a safe venue? The evidence before the committee was overwhelmingly in favour of introducing a safe injecting facility in North Richmond. During our extensive consultation we received about 50 submissions and also held public hearings. This is also an issue that is alive and well in the community.

I want to put on the record all of the people, and in particular agencies, who have come out publicly in support of a trial of a medically supervised safe injecting room. They include UnitingCare; the Australian Medical Association; the Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association; the Youth Support and Advocacy Service; Professor David Cooper from the Kirby Institute; the faculty of medicine at the University of New South Wales; Major Michael Coleman, state social commander, the Salvation Army; Levinia Crooks, the CEO of the Australasian Society for HIV, Viral Hepatitis and Sexual Health Medicine; the Yarra Drug and Health Forum; Phil Dunn, QC; the director of the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre; Bernie Geary, AO; Odyssey House; Professor Margaret Hamilton, AO; the Centre of Perinatal Excellence; the Victorian Trades Hall Council; Dr Jennie Hutton, emergency physician at St Vincent's Hospital; Dr Marianne Jauncey, the medical director of the Uniting Medically Supervised Injecting Centre in Sydney; Simon Judkins, clinical director of emergency medicine, Austin Health; Windana Drug and Alcohol Recovery Inc.; North Richmond Community Health; Judy Leitch, the retired former CEO of the Wesley Mission, Melbourne; Professor Simon Lenton, director of the National Drug Research Institute; the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners; the agency Turning Point; addiction studies at Monash University; Anglicare; the United Firefighters Union; addiction medicine, Western Health; Ambulance Employees Australia, Victoria; the World Federation of Public Health Associations; Dr David Morawetz, a psychologist and economist, and founder and director of the Social Justice Fund; Cohealth; the Australian Drug Law Reform Foundation, Victoria; the Drug Policy Modelling Program; the director, National Centre for Education

and Training on Addiction; the Alcohol and Drug Foundation; Brian Rolfe, a retired barrister and solicitor; Simon Ruth, the CEO of the Victorian Aids Council; Victoria Street Drug Solutions; Drug and Alcohol Nurses of Australasia; Australian Drug Law Reform Foundation; the mayor of the City of Yarra; the Public Health Association of Australia; the Centre for Social Research in Health; Tony Trimmingham, the CEO and founder of Family Drug Support; Matthew Townsend, a barrister; Gino Vumbaca, CEO of Harm Reduction Australia; and Dr Alex Wodak, emeritus consultant, alcohol and drug service, St Vincent's Hospital, Sydney.

There are some very eminent people and some prominent organisations on that list — people and organisations that have far more expertise in this area than many of us mere politicians. I would like to thank them for the contribution they made to our inquiry in supporting this important issue on the public record.

The committee report does not make a recommendation as to whether a medically supervised injecting centre should be introduced, but it does canvass some of the potential benefits of introducing such a centre. Specifically the committee found that medically supervised injecting centres improve the health of injecting drug users and reduce signs of drug use in surrounding streets. Evaluations of medically supervised injecting centres in Sydney found evidence of public amenity benefits to the local community and reduced demand for ambulance services. The evaluations did not find evidence of the centres having a honey pot effect on crime.

We found clear evidence to support the success of the centres, including improved public amenity, health outcomes and public order. However, we did note that there were relatively few gold standard evaluations of such centres. In relation to service design the government believes it is important to consider the views of the local community when deciding on the location of services. That is not a requirement of the current bill, but it is part of the New South Wales legislation.

The committee report notes the strong support from local North Richmond residents for a medically supervised injecting centre, but the view of local traders was slightly unclear. There seemed to be a lot of support for the centre, but traders were very concerned that it might be on Victoria Street. It is important that we get clarification as to exactly what the traders are saying. The recent campaign has been supportive of a centre, but there was some doubt around the concerns

of traders about location. This is something that the government should investigate to make sure that we know what the views of traders are on this matter.

The report notes that the submission from Victoria Police did not support or oppose a centre. It gave a useful summary of policing approaches in the local area but did not provide a yes or no response in terms of the views of police. However, the police effectively said that they considered this predominantly a health issue and that they would respond appropriately to any decision the government made regarding a trial.

The government has six months to respond to the committee's report in relation to the status of this bill. However, I can confirm that the government takes this matter very seriously and knows that there is immense community pain and concern about it. We intend to respond very quickly on this matter. At this time I cannot provide support for the bill because it is still being considered by the government, and as I said, the government will be providing a response to the Parliament in the very near future.

**Ms HARTLAND** (Western Metropolitan) — I found Ms Symes contribution very interesting today, because she basically outlined every single reason why it is that we need a supervised injecting room. I am a bit surprised that the government at this stage is not prepared to say what it is that it intends to do. The Greens' support for a supervised injecting room is very simple, and we have been campaigning for this for 20 years. It goes back to my time in Footscray, when the street heroin trade was at its absolute worst and when people would buy their drugs at Footscray station and come into my street and often onto my front verandah to inject. I did not know anything about drug use in those days, but unfortunately I had to learn very quickly. I was part of the campaign for a supervised injecting room in Footscray.

But when I visited people in Richmond it was just so much worse. Richmond is at crisis point, and it is beyond my understanding why it is that the government is continuing to allow a major public health crisis to continue in Richmond. As Ms Symes said, an amazing array of people gave evidence to the inquiry, and I know that my colleague Ms Springle found the evidence incredibly compelling.

If you look at the list of people who are supporting it, it includes the Victorian branch of Ambulance Employees Australia, the Victorian branch of the United Firefighters Union, the Victorian branch of the Pharmacy Guild of Australia, the Victorian AIDS

Council, the Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association, the Royal Australasian College of Physicians, the Public Health Association of Australia, the Victorian branch of the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists, the Victorian Trades Hall Council, the Victorian branch of the Australian Nursing & Midwifery Federation and the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners. This is not just the Greens saying this. This is not just Ms Patten from the Reason party saying this. This is a group of eminent experts, people who deal with this every day. That is not to mention a range of research institutes, community legal centres and community health organisations.

The government falls back the whole time on the fact that it has been Victoria Police that has opposed a supervised injecting room, and now they do not even have that. Just a few days ago we saw that Police Association Victoria had changed their position and will not oppose a supervised injecting room trial. Police Association secretary Wayne Gatt says that:

The association recognises that heroin overdoses are predominantly a health issue that commonly cause death and leave our members and other emergency service workers frequently picking up the pieces when lives are tragically lost.

It is unconscionable to ignore all of these experts who deal with injecting drug use on a daily basis. Our role as MPs is to listen to the experts. I do not believe we should be ignoring the evidence, as this government and previous governments appear to have done. For the Labor government and the opposition to reject what the experts are saying is simply unacceptable.

It would seem to me that what is being said is that if you are a person with a drug addiction, your life does not matter and you do not deserve health care, support and the chance to survive and recover. The government is saying that it is okay for local residents and traders to literally clean up the mess left behind in their front yards, on the streets, in their laneways and on their footpaths. I do not think that it is okay for parents to walk their kids to school in the mornings scanning the footpath and hoping that their children will not pick up a dirty syringe.

The government is clearly saying that it is okay for paramedics to risk needlestick injuries as part of their job and risk contracting bloodborne diseases. As we learned in the inquiry, this is exactly what happened to paramedic Lucy, who suffered a needlestick injury when attending a heroin overdose. The hospital confirmed that the patient she was treating had hepatitis C and HIV, and now, many months later,

Lucy is still undergoing tests to see if she has contracted either or both of these diseases. If that drug addict had had a supervised injecting room to go to, they could have used their drugs, they could have been supervised and nobody else would have been at risk.

Last week I attended an Australian Medical Association president's function. AMA Victoria president Lorraine Baker delivered a speech. She was scathing of the Labor and coalition parties' inaction on this issue. She said:

... I deeply regret that we cannot persuade the major political parties of the need for a trial of supervised injection facilities in North Richmond.

The intransigence on this issue is unreasonable and inexplicable — and I am personally incensed that doctors and other healthcare workers from North Richmond Community Health Centre are put at physical and professional risk resuscitating patients in an exposed and unprotected environment on the street and in the carparks —

of Richmond.

How can the government ignore the evidence of a Victorian coroner into the death of Ms A? Coroner Jacqui Hawkins said:

... I am convinced that a safe injecting facility in North Richmond is an essential intervention that could reduce the risk of future heroin overdose deaths occurring in circumstances similar to those of Ms A.

The evidence is simply overwhelming. The experts are united in their support. There are simply no grounds on which the government can reject this trial.

It is not like it has never been done in Australia. In Sydney they have had a supervised injecting room for 16 years. I was able to go there quite recently, and I saw how it works. You could walk past that place half a dozen times, and if you had no business there you would not know what it was. It saves lives.

On the issue of saving lives, let us think for a moment that in Richmond last year there were 34 people who died on the streets. Those 34 people would be alive today had they had access to a supervised injecting centre; 34 families and communities out there would not be grieving and struggling with the pain and trauma of losing a loved one.

I get quite cross here because so often the death of someone from an overdose is somehow seen as not being the same as death from a car accident or cancer. It is exactly the same for that family. They have lost someone they love. It does not matter how they lost them; they are still gone.

Again let us look at Sydney. When they opened their facility 16 years ago ambulance call-outs to the area dropped by 80 per cent. What an amazing saving that would be to the Victorian ambulance service. I do not understand why we cannot learn from that in Victoria. We used to be the leader in harm minimisation. We had an incredibly successful needle and syringe program operating for decades. But what is the point of giving someone a clean syringe and then expecting them to go to a dark lane to use the drugs and then possibly die alone in that dark lane? That person's family is then in enormous grief.

I think the government has to see sense. This is a major issue. This is about harm minimisation. It has nothing to do with law and order. I know the opposition will make it into a law and order issue. It is about keeping people alive and it is about harm minimisation — that is the way we should treat drug addiction.

**Debate adjourned on motion of Ms SHING (Eastern Victoria).**

**Debate adjourned until later this day.**

## SOUTH MORANG RAILWAY LINE

**Ms PATTEN (Northern Metropolitan) — I move:**

That this house notes that —

- (1) there are no express services on the South Morang train line during the morning and afternoon peak travel periods (in the direction of peak travel);
- (2) all peak direction express services that run between Clifton Hill and Jolimont stations are Hurstbridge line services;
- (3) as a consequence of (1) and (2), South Morang line passengers are disadvantaged as compared to Hurstbridge line passengers both in relation to travel time and overcrowding;
- (4) overcrowding during the morning peak has meant that some passengers are unable to board inbound carriages at Merri and Rushall train stations;
- (5) these issues stand to worsen once the Mernda extension is completed;

and calls on the Minister for Public Transport and the Andrews Labor government to work with Public Transport Victoria and Metro to amend the South Morang line timetabling to include express services at peak times.

I rise to speak to my motion regarding the South Morang train line. This is a train line that runs through the heart of my electorate, Northern Metropolitan Region. It runs through one of the fastest growing regions in Australia. In highlighting this issue today I

hope to contrast the South Morang train line with the Hurstbridge train line, its sister service, which shares some lengths of track from the CBD to Clifton Hill.

In short, the South Morang line is bursting at the seams and changes urgently need to be made. Not only is it bursting at the seams right now and people actually cannot get on the train in the mornings and in the evenings; that line is about to be extended by another 8 kilometres within two years, opening early in 2019.

**Mr Ondarchie** — If you're lucky.

**Ms PATTEN** — Indeed, Mr Ondarchie. I hope that I am not being optimistic and we will see an extension of that line opening in early 2019, which is just going to further exacerbate the problem.

I am not asking for a lot in this motion; I think it is a very commonsense and reasonable motion and a reasonable call. Currently there are no express services on the South Morang line during the morning or afternoon peak travel periods. All peak-direction express services that run between Clifton Hill and Jolimont are on the Hurstbridge line. As a consequence, South Morang line passengers are extraordinarily disadvantaged compared to Hurstbridge line passengers both in relation to travel time and in particular to overcrowding. Overcrowding during the morning peak has meant that many passengers — and I have had many constituents speak to me — are just unable to get on the train. This happens particularly at Merri and Rushall train stations. As I mentioned, this will worsen once the Mernda extension is completed.

Before I go on I would really like to express my gratitude to Mr Ondarchie, who raised this matter with the minister just a couple of months ago via a constituency question. He was kind enough to share the response he received from the minister. He was seeking clarification again on what the government was going to do about the overcrowding and the lack of express trains on the South Morang line. The government responded, saying that they would look at this once the Mernda extension was in place — that they might look at this in 2019. This needs to be looked at now. This is absolutely urgent now. There is no point waiting until another 8 kilometres of track are built and we have tens of thousands more people trying to cram onto those trains making it absolutely impossible. We have a situation that is urgent now; we cannot wait for two years.

When I looked at the passenger data, which I will talk about a little bit later — as I mentioned, I have spoken to many commuters and the Public Transport Users

Association — the answer is in some express services. Express train services, as we know, do two things: they are a little bit quicker in that they take off a minute for each station they do not stop at; but I think what is most important is that they help redistribute passengers according to the sections of the line they service, and this helps prevent the overcrowding that we are currently facing.

For those at the outer end of the South Morang line, this would make their transit somewhat quicker. For people at the inner end of the line, they might actually be able to get on board the train and hopefully not endure the crushes that they are currently experiencing. If you try and get on one of those trains early in the morning, it is like getting on a Tokyo Metro train. You are a sardine; you are incredibly up close and personal. In the morning everybody is fresh out of the shower, but in the afternoon on a hot summer's day, it is not quite so. The crush is absolutely extreme.

Currently the Hurstbridge line is privileged over the South Morang line in terms of the volume of services and the express services. This does not make sense. I understand from speaking to Tony Morton at the Public Transport Users Association that this is historical. In the past they did not use express trains on the Epping line because it was shorter than the other lines and they said that it had different journey characteristics. They felt that people living around the Epping line were less likely to use trains to commute into the city, as opposed to the population in the north-east, which in those days was considered to have a larger proportion of city commuters.

But that is not the case now. South Morang is the largest growing area in the country. You can watch it grow. You can be sitting out there and you can almost see it. Mr Ondarchie and I go to citizenship ceremonies out in that area, and each month there are 150 or 160 wonderful new citizens from a multitude of countries populating that area, not to mention around the inner-city areas where the infilling is going on at an enormous rate. We are seeing the population in those inner suburbs grow substantially — not quite at the same rate as we are seeing in the outer suburbs, but certainly at a very substantial rate. Every day you see another house go down and plans for another dozen apartments on that house block go up.

Our current networks and services in the north are built on historical ideas of transport demographics that do not reflect the reality of today. The South Morang line is now as long as the Hurstbridge line, and there are many more commuters on it, as I said. I will make a quick comparison, looking at the numbers. This is to

understand why we need to focus on the South Morang line. The Hurstbridge line is 49 kilometres from the city and has 28 stops. The South Morang line is 42 kilometres and has 26 stops, so they are fairly similar. The Mernda rail extension will add another 8 kilometres of track and three stations to the South Morang line within two years.

Surprisingly Public Transport Victoria (PTV) has not released passenger statistics for these lines since 2014, but what we could see in the trends in those is that passengers on the Hurstbridge line were actually declining while passengers on the South Morang line were steadily increasing. Even without those numbers we can see that.

Just going into slightly more detail on this specifically, the South Morang line now has 17 outbound services in peak times and the Hurstbridge line has 18. In that period all South Morang line services stop at all stations between Jolimont and Clifton Hill while only one of the Hurstbridge line services does this. So the South Morang line is picking up every single passenger in those inner-city suburbs of Richmond, Collingwood and Clifton Hill — very large and growing communities who use public transport. Bearing this in mind, the South Morang line is also servicing the vast majority of the 12 000 or so people who use the shared stations up to Clifton Hill. As I have noted, this is a major problem. We are seeing express services on the Hurstbridge line but none on the South Morang line.

I can understand that this is a complex issue. Ideally what we need are more peak services. We would need a service every 10 minutes. I am sure, Acting President Morris, that your electorate would only dream of having services every 10 minutes, and certainly we can only dream of that on the South Morang line. I do appreciate that the government is doing work on the level crossings and the Metro Tunnel and that that will assist us in increasing the number of train services on these suburban lines, but I believe we could really accommodate some adjustments fairly easily just by adjusting train services and express services on the South Morang and Hurstbridge lines.

I tried to talk to PTV about this, and they were not that interested in talking to me. In fact they did not get back to me. If we could basically provide some express services on the South Morang line, taking them off the Hurstbridge line and balancing this out, it would not be a perfect solution but it would be a short-term solution that would certainly meet the needs of what is a crisis of overcrowding that we are currently experiencing.

Accordingly this motion calls on the Minister for Public Transport and the government to work with Public Transport Victoria to amend the South Morang line timetabling to include express services at peak times. As I have said, this is probably just taking express services off the Hurstbridge line and creating a better balance between the two lines, balancing out the share of who is picking up those passengers from Jolimont to Clifton Hill. I look forward to hearing other speakers on this. I am sure Mr Ondarchie has got a lot more to contribute in this area.

**Ms DUNN** (Eastern Metropolitan) — I rise to speak on the motion put to the house by Ms Patten today in relation to the South Morang train line. The motion correctly states that there are no express services on the South Morang train line during the morning and afternoon peak travel periods in the direction of peak travel. It also correctly states that all peak-direction services that run express between Clifton Hill and Jolimont stations or vice versa are Hurstbridge line services. It then claims that South Morang line passengers are disadvantaged as compared to Hurstbridge line passengers in relation to travel time and overcrowding.

The claim is not wholly correct. While the schedule for South Morang services that stop at each station between Clifton Hill and Jolimont indicates that they lose 2 to 3 minutes as compared to the express Hurstbridge services, this is not always borne out in practice. The Hurstbridge line has poor reliability. Like much of the metropolitan network, including the South Morang line, it has a major maintenance deficit. However, it is particularly hamstrung because it is single track for much of its length.

I welcome the investment by the government to duplicate the track between Heidelberg and Rosanna on the Hurstbridge line. This duplication project needs to go further and address the single track from Greensborough out to at least Eltham and possibly even to Diamond Creek. The express services on the Hurstbridge line therefore play an important role in allowing this line to catch up in case of a cascaded delay further up the line.

The motion is correct in that South Morang services are overcrowded. The motion is also correct in that we can expect overcrowding to get worse on the South Morang line once the Mernda extension is complete. I note, however, that the current situation in which trains are so overcrowded by the time they arrive at Merri and Rushall stations that further passengers cannot board will not be fixed by running services express from

Clifton Hill to Jolimont. The services may run 2 to 3 minutes faster, but they will be just as overcrowded.

I also note that running South Morang line trains express from Clifton Hill to Jolimont will disadvantage passengers boarding at the Victoria Park, North Richmond and West Richmond train stations. At present passengers boarding at these stations have 17 services during the 2-hour morning peak. To maintain this service frequency with South Morang trains running express it will require Hurstbridge trains to stop at these stations. This is just pushing the inconvenience from one set of passengers to another.

Furthermore, for the reasons outlined above, the Hurstbridge line is less reliable, and so delays up the line would concertina down to those inner-city stations, meaning their actual level of service would deteriorate even if their scheduled level of service remained what it is now.

There is only one thing that will fix overcrowding on the South Morang Line, and that is to increase the capacity of the lines by running high-frequency train services. There are, however, three major obstacles to this. Firstly, there is the large number of level crossings on the South Morang line. There are 10 level crossings between Merri station and Preston station. Aside from being dangerous, level crossings reduce the reliability of the line by increasing the risk of delays due to interactions between vehicles, pedestrians, cyclists and trains. The only way to have high-frequency train services is to remove level crossings.

The Andrews Labor government made announcements last year that it would remove the High Street and Bell Street level crossings. However, because this government tends to ignore the northern suburbs because they are considered safe Labor seats, these level crossings have been pushed to the end of the list in terms of priority. The residents of the north will be lucky to see an announcement of a solution to these level crossings before the 2018 state election.

The Victorian Greens think that safety and train service reliability should be the highest priorities when it comes to level crossing removals and should not be subservient to political expediency. If such apolitical criteria were applied, level crossings on the South Morang line would be further up the priority list than at present.

The second obstacle to running more trains is the decrepit state of the track between Merri and Clifton Hill stations. This section of rail is in such poor condition that services have to slow to jogging speed to

navigate the curves. This section of track is so bad that an X'trapolis train, the most modern train set in the fleet, derailed on the line on 6 February 2016. Witnesses to the derailment said they heard a loud bang before the train jumped off the tracks, which would have been very disconcerting for the passengers. More than 100 passengers were on board and had to wait for emergency services crews to arrive with stepladders to allow egress from the carriages. The unsafe situation must be addressed immediately with maintenance and upgrades of this section of track, including realignment of the track if required. Unfortunately there has been no action on this front by the government.

The third limitation to running more trains on the South Morang line is the ancient analog signalling systems on the Melbourne metropolitan rail network. All of the stations between Jolimont and Regent stations had their signalling systems installed in 1920, and there has not been an improvement in functionality since. To run more frequent train services we need high-capacity digital signalling. Such signalling technology connects sensors along the track with in-cab signalling so drivers know at all times how fast they can accelerate and decelerate and their maximum permissible speed. This technology has been rolled out across Europe and Asia. There is no reason why we cannot start investing in it here. High-capacity digital signalling could allow up to 35 services per hour on a single line. At present the South Morang line only gets 14 services over the 2-hour morning peak from 7.30 a.m. to 9.30 a.m. The South Morang line could more than double the number of services to 30 over that 2-hour peak and still meld successfully with the Hurstbridge line at Clifton Hill if high-capacity digital signalling were rolled out.

The history of high-capacity digital signalling in this state is a curious one. In the 2015 state budget it was announced that it would be piloted on the Sandringham line. In May 2016, under questioning at the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee by my colleague Ms Pennicuik, the Minister for Public Transport admitted that the Sandringham pilot had been scrapped and instead the technology would be installed on the stretch between Lalor and South Morang stations. But that too was scrapped. Residents of the northern suburbs would be confused to hear that the Mernda extension, at a cost of \$600 million, will get the same old conventional analog fixed-block signalling technology that was first devised in the golden age of steam locomotion.

In July this year the Andrews government decided that the Melbourne metropolitan train network will have to do without digital high-capacity signalling for another decade because it has decided to limit the rollout to the

new Melbourne Metro rail tunnel. There is no technical reason why high-capacity digital signalling cannot be piloted and progressively rolled out across the metropolitan rail network now. It was in the Public Transport Victoria (PTV) development plan of 2012. That is a plan developed by engineers for engineers with a mind for what is technically feasible.

The 2012 PTV development plan stated that it was possible to roll out high-capacity signalling on the Clifton Hill trunk, the Sandringham line and the Sunshine to Dandenong corridor by 2022 at the latest. It also said that by 2027 it could be rolled out on the Upfield, Craigieburn, Williamstown and Werribee lines and on the South Yarra trunk. What will we get by 2027 under this government? We will only get one-eighth of that technically feasible rollout. If the Andrews government had stuck to the PTV development plan, we would already have high-capacity digital signalling on the Clifton Hill trunk, such that both South Morang and Hurstbridge line services would already be more reliable.

It is right to raise the issues that are plaguing the South Morang line. Sadly they are issues that are familiar to passengers across the metropolitan rail network; however, the approach is wrong for solving the problem. Shuffling around timetables will not fix the woes of passengers on the South Morang line. What is needed is a major investment in passenger rail, something the Victorian Greens have been calling for in this place for more than a decade now. This investment needs to comprise high-capacity digital signalling, fix the maintenance deficit that is crippling our rail network, provide more trainsets and further invest in level crossing removals.

**Mr ONDARCHIE** (Northern Metropolitan) — I rise to support Ms Patten's motion regarding express services on the South Morang rail line. I commend Ms Patten for bringing this to the Parliament today. Whilst it is called the South Morang rail line, I suspect in government it is called the 'Safe Labor' train line, because there is little focus by this government on the people of the north. They are just regarded as a safe Labor area.

We are talking about a line that starts 23 kilometres away from the central business district in South Morang. It is, as Ms Patten rightly points out, the fastest growing suburb in the nation. In fact it has grown so significantly that it is up to over 64 000 people. In the City of Whittlesea, of which South Morang is a part, they welcome 173 new residents every single week. It is a fast-growing area; it is the fastest growing area in the nation. It is home to schools, to the South Morang

Football Club and to the South Morang Cricket Club, of which I was senior coach for three years. I live in South Morang, I raise my family in South Morang and I commute on this train line from South Morang to Parliament.

I take slight issue with Ms Patten's motion today because it indicates that during the morning peak some passengers are unable to get on the train at Merri and Rushall train stations. I say to Ms Patten that that is not quite correct, because the carriages actually fill up well before then. When you get on at South Morang — and that car park is full very early in the morning — you have difficulty getting a seat. By Epping you are really struggling. By Lalor station there is some room for people to get on the train, but it is getting fuller and fuller, as it is at Thomastown, Keon Park and Ruthven. Reservoir station is right beside Ms Mikakos's office — and I expect she will speak to this today because if she is silent, we will know that she does not care about it.

**Ms Mikakos** interjected.

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — We expect her to speak to this today. But I bet she does not; I bet she runs out of the chamber just as the heat gets turned up.

When you get to Reservoir station the train is chockers. If Ms Mikakos looked out of her office window at Reservoir train station, she would see how full that train is.

**Ms Shing** interjected.

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — Whilst the continual interjector continues to try to disrupt proceedings today, I suspect that Ms Mikakos has never even walked across the road and had a look at what is going on at that train station. I use this train to come in and go out of the city.

**Ms Shing** — No, you don't.

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — You can put that on the record if you like, Ms Shing, because I do use it. I would put to Ms Patten that part of the problem is that the Australian Labor Party treat it as a safe Labor train line and they just do not do anything about it, because from when they announced that they were going to extend the line from Epping to South Morang it took 13 years. It took 13 years from the date it was announced, which was under a Labor government, to the day that former Minister for Public Transport Terry Mulder opened the South Morang train station. They come in here feigning that they care about the northern suburbs, but the reality is, and I will pick up words that

Mr Finn has used in this place before, they do not give a stuff. They just do not care about the north. But then, if you look around the marginal seats, they are worried about Ivanhoe, Eltham and Yan Yean. Those areas along the Hurstbridge line get some attention because they are worried about them.

Ms Patten presented a very solid motion to the chamber today and reflected on the answer that I received to a constituency question on 6 June, when I asked the Minister for Public Transport what the government are going to do about South Morang, the postcode in which I live and raise my family. Like Ms Patten I have had many, many constituent inquiries and pleas for help about how we get on the train and how we squeeze in. Ms Patten compared it to the Tokyo service, where they are sardined in. I put it to you that it is much worse than that. They are squeezed up against the windows as they come down the train because there is just no room at all. And what do we hear from Ms Mikakos? That is right, cue the sound of crickets — nothing. But I expect her to stand up today and stand up for her constituents. But I tell you what, as a punter — and you know that I am a punter — I will put money on it that she does not.

When I received a response from the Minister for Public Transport, she said, 'Well, we hope the South Morang line will be extended to Mernda in about 2019, and we'll have a look at it then', so it is at least two years before they even want to have a look at it. Well, the reality is — and I see Mr Finn nodding away here — by the time this train line comes into service this mob will not even be in government. It will take a Matthew Guy coalition government to fix this up. That is the issue here before us, because this government does not care. The fastest growing suburb in the country gets no support from this government, and I do not know why.

You just have to try getting on the train from South Morang in the morning and you know how quickly it fills up. You just have to try getting onto Plenty Road to drive in the morning. Out in the north 5.30 a.m. is the new 6.30 a.m. People are getting out of bed early to get on the road at 5.30 in the morning. I know because I do. If you get out on the road after 5.30 in the morning in South Morang, you have got no hope of getting to the city in a reasonable time — no hope whatsoever. So you are in trouble if you get on the train, and you are in trouble if you get on the road. And what do we hear out of this government? Absolutely nothing.

The South Morang area takes in a total of 60 square kilometres, making it one of Melbourne's largest suburbs. Until recently when people turned up to the train station in the morning they had no hope of even

getting a car park, but the Napthine government started the process to increase the car parking out there. Some is being leased from Westfield across the road next to the council offices, but that is still filling up as well. I have to say this government is just doing nothing about it. Ms Patten knows, as she spends time with me out there, that Melbourne's outer north spreads across a number of greenfield subdivisions, including Craigieburn, Epping and South Morang. It has seen its population in the past decade grow by over 100 000 people. So I wish Ms Patten's motion very well.

I would expect to see Ms Mikakos and Mr Elasmara, members for Northern Metropolitan Region, stand with Ms Patten and me today if there is a vote on this and say, 'Yes, we support this. We take note of the poor services on the train line out there'. We are asking for an express service, not on every train and not all through the day but to cater to the masses who are trying to get to work — to the mums and dads and families that are trying to make their way to work every morning and have to suffer through this. The local Labor Party members are simply not listening. So, Ms Patten, I wish you well with this motion. The Liberal-Nationals coalition will stand with you on this. We, like you, demand that this government turn their attention and provide some good and appropriate services to the South Morang train line.

**Mr LEANE** (Eastern Metropolitan) — Unfortunately the government is in no position to support Ms Patten's motion, because of pure logistics about how train networks run. I am sure the coalition have no idea how train networks run, and they showed that in the time they had. In the few opportunities they have had of having a go at it, they have actually shown that they have not understood it.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr LEANE** — I am always happy for the opposition to shout out interjections about public transport, because this government has shown its bona fides on public transport with the amount of capital works funding it has committed to, which is obvious.

If you want to talk about the north, you only have to look at what is happening to the Hurstbridge line. This is a line that has had a single bit of track on its way into the CBD forever, because where it travels through a hill it has been limited to one tunnel and one line. If opposition members want to go and have a look at what is happening with that particular line that travels to the north, that track is currently being duplicated and two level crossings are being removed as we speak. That is

an Andrews Labor government project which we committed to as part of our removal of 50 level crossings over two terms. We committed to 20 in the first term, but we will actually deliver 26.

**Mr O'Sullivan** — Will you really?

**Mr LEANE** — Of course we will. The interjection was, 'Will you really?'. My oath we will. Twenty-six will be delivered when we originally committed to 20.

I appreciate Ms Patten's intent with the motion, and I think it would be a good thing if there could be some express trains on the South Morang line. The problem is that if there were express trains, with capacity at the moment and the way the timetables run in the peak the express trains would run up to trains that stop at all stations, so there is a huge issue there. But I think in fairness to Ms Patten, the Minister for Public Transport is more than happy to sit down with Ms Patten to outline the capacity and timetable constraints on the particular group that runs through Clifton Hill. I would hope that Ms Patten would be able to take that option up.

Any bona fide suggestions for improvements on the train network this government is happy to look at. Unfortunately, as I said, logistics mean that regarding this corridor this particular motion cannot be agreed to today, but we are always prepared to look at improving the network through bona fide suggestions for solutions that we can deliver on and can work towards.

As residents of Melbourne travel around on public transport or in their vehicles they can see the Andrews government's commitment to public transport. The public transport network has been in need of a lot of capital works for a long time, and this government is prepared to put funding towards it and to put effort towards it.

The government is open to criticism on a number of fronts. It is amazing that this government has committed to doing the work and is doing the work after other political parties, in particular the coalition, have called for projects. They are fantastic at calling. They are always calling for something. The opposition call for things, and when the government actually acts — the Labor Party governments — and goes ahead and does the work, then they start calling out that they are unhappy about the work and the way things are being done. It must be a miserable, miserable world that these poor people live in. It must be a sad world when they are calling for the duplication of train lines, when they are calling for level crossing removals and when they are calling for extra capacity.

The Andrews government committed to the Melbourne Metro Tunnel and the Melbourne Metro project with five new stations to increase internal capacity by 150 per cent. They called for that, but then when the project started they called for it to stop because they found there was one little aspect that a couple of people were unhappy with, and it is all doom and gloom and all terrible. I think the best thing for the Andrews government to do, as far as interacting with the coalition is concerned, is to not put too much weight on their grief and to not put too much weight on what they call for but to do what the good people of Victoria want us to do, which is to get on with these projects, get on with improving the network and continue with the program we have set and which we believe and know that future Victorians will see as being more than acceptable.

**Ms PATTEN** (Northern Metropolitan) — I thank my colleagues for their contributions on this motion. Frankly this was a simple, reasonable, short-term solution for what is an urgent problem now. Unlike Ms Dunn, I am not trying to solve the whole public transport system problem in Victoria. I think that quite often we hear this from the Greens. Their desire for perfection gets in the way of the good — 'We can't do anything unless we have this, this, this and this' — whereas what I am saying is that the simple solution for a current, existing, urgent problem is purely a timetabling solution. This is simply about adjusting some of the timetables to help with what is a growing problem. I take Mr Ondarchie's point that it is a growing problem not just at Rushall and Merri stations; this is a growing problem at Reservoir and the rest of the way down. Unless you are travelling at 5.00 a.m. you are going to find it very difficult to get on a train.

It was interesting when I went and looked at the population figures. We are seeing population declines around the Hurstbridge line and population explosions on the South Morang line. I take up Mr Leane's point and the invitation to meet with the minister. I appreciate that and would very much like to meet with the minister to discuss this. Unfortunately we currently have the response that the minister gave Mr Ondarchie only a month ago, saying that they would look at this in early 2019 once the Mernda extension was built. I think this is far more urgent than that.

As I said, I am very happy to work with the government to find a solution, but this motion is calling for a simple, reasonable, commonsense approach to an existing problem, recognising that we are going to see new signalling, recognising that we are seeing level crossings being removed under this government and recognising that we are seeing the Metro Tunnel being

built, which will assist us in creating a much better public transport system. However, this motion is about something that we can do right here, right now, to fix the problem. I commend the motion.

**Motion agreed to.**

## STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING

### Reference

#### Debate resumed from earlier this day; motion of Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan):

That, pursuant to sessional order 6, this house requires the Environment and Planning Committee to inquire into, consider and report on, no later than 1 August 2018, issues relating to the impact of higher energy prices in Victoria for households, business, community, not-for-profits, hospitals, schools, aged-care facilities and government, including but not limited to the impact following the closure of the Hazelwood power station and any other matter the committee considers.

**Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria)** — I support this motion. I do so on the basis that Mrs Peulich's motion states that the house:

... requires the Environment and Planning Committee to inquire into, consider and report on, no later than 1 August 2018, issues relating to the impact of higher energy prices in Victoria for households, business, community, not-for-profits, hospitals, schools, aged-care facilities and government, including but not limited to the impact following the closure of the Hazelwood power station and any other matter the committee considers.

The reason for this, obviously, is that in the state of Victoria households are looking down the barrel of increases in electricity power prices way over and above the inflation that was foreshadowed by the Premier. In fact the Premier foreshadowed a 4 per cent potential increase with the closure of Hazelwood. Now we know that many households are facing a 20 or 30 per cent increase. We know that many businesses are facing around a 150 per cent increase. We know that many very energy-intensive processes are facing increases of \$1 million to their bottom lines with the increase in electricity power prices.

If you believe Ms Shing, all is well with the world and in fact renewables are going to be our saviour and the state Andrews government has created this wonderful policy that is going to drive prices down —

**Ms Shing** — On a point of order, Deputy President, to quote Mr Ramsay back at him, 'If you believe Ms Shing, all is well with the world'. In fact he is verballing me. That is precisely not what I have said,

and I would in fact seek that he withdraw that remark on the basis that it misrepresents what I said.

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT** — There is no point of order, Ms Shing.

**Mr RAMSAY** — If Ms Shing wants to play that game, we can play it tomorrow. We can raise points of order so that they will get one bill passed. If she wants to run that game, we can play it tomorrow.

As I was saying, there is no doubt about and there is plenty of evidence to suggest that many households, many businesses and many public instrumentalities are facing significant increases in energy prices and power prices. Most consumers do not understand the complexity of the pricing. Retail pricing is hugely complex, and I want to congratulate the Prime Minister for calling on retailers to be more competitive in the marketplace and encouraging people to seek the best price from their electricity retailers. But even I do not understand, Ms Shing — and I think I am a reasonably intelligent person — the discounting that goes on with the different retail products in the energy sector. I suspect most average Australians would not be able to understand the way the retail market operates, the discounts that are provided and the impact of actually shifting from one retailer to another. Nevertheless, the Prime Minister is doing his best in a very difficult environment to try to optimise the reduction in costs of energy to the normal household.

As we know, and as Ms Shing has told us — and I am certainly not verballing her in this respect — the Andrews Labor government in Victoria is going it alone. They are going it alone with a state renewable energy target (RET) of 40 per cent renewables in 2025. Now we know, and Mr Barber will know this, that renewable energy is providing about 7 to 8 per cent of the energy market at the moment, so the expectation is that in eight years we are going to produce 32 percentage points more renewable energy into the electricity grid.

No other state, whether it is Labor or Liberal, would want to follow that nonsense. Ms Shing is right in that they are going it alone. They are not going it alone on climate change policy, they are going it alone on industry policy. It does not make sense, because we know that even if Victoria said, with hand on heart, 'We're going to achieve 40 per cent renewable energy in 2025', it is not going to make one difference to the greenhouse gas emissions nationally, of which we produce about 1 to 2 per cent globally. While Ms Shing might feel good that they are going to run to a RET target in 2025 of 40 per cent — which will be totally

unachievable, by the way — it will not make one iota of difference to greenhouse gas emissions or change anything significant in relation to climate change.

I would say it is fraudulent behaviour. The Andrews government is running a scam. Like they do with their roting MPs, they are running a scam on this closet climate change policy of a RET target which they know is totally unachievable. They also know that there is no other state that would dare try to con communities to run such a bad policy.

I have talked about the retail competition. It is interesting; there has just been an inquiry led by John Thwaites. The recommendation from that inquiry was to actually regulate the retail market, strangely enough, moving away from market forces to a regulation environment. I am not sure, given that would incur a price-setting mechanism, that that would actually achieve any of the aims that would be sought even by Finkel and his review in relation to the RET targets and price fluctuations.

I have talked about the retail market, which I do not wish to go into any further, but I do want to talk about the Finkel report and his approach and his recommendations to a national approach and national consensus, which to me is better policy. It is one that we as a coalition will be seeking to achieve, as is the Turnbull federal government in relation to having all the states move towards a national consensus of reducing greenhouse gas emissions in this country rather than having the states stand alone like Victoria under the Andrews government. All it is doing is driving up prices. It is dragging efficient renewable technologies that are not heavily subsidised from other states into Victoria because they see the glow of the subsidised dollar. So here you have all this good work and technologies in all these other states in transitioning to renewable energy leaving those states, coming down to Victoria and grabbing the dollars — the subsidised dollars that have been put out there in the form of renewable certificates — to provide their bases here to extort the taxpayer in this sort of unachievable shine of renewable industries.

Having said that, though, I must say that I fully support an appropriate balance of energy generation with a mix of coal, gas and renewables — and no doubt wind. I place a particular emphasis on wind energy because it produces about twice as much as solar in relation to generation currently. I do support the appropriate balance with the use of wind energy, solar, potentially hydro and obviously gas.

I want to make a comment about gas because Ms Shing in her contribution went into some length about who said what to whom and whose position it is on gas. Certainly I have long held the view that the science does not provide us with any sort of confidence that fracking is an appropriate mechanism to extract gas onshore, but certainly there has been a lot of scientific work done in the last year and a half to indicate that there could be, under the right circumstances, gas extraction onshore that would provide both safety in the environs but also much-needed replacement of energy due to the loss of Hazelwood. I am pleased to see that that research work is continuing, and it would seem at this early stage that in fact that review process and the recommendations will find that we can extract gas onshore safely, and it will provide an important part of the baseload generation that we need here with the loss of Hazelwood.

It is interesting; the modelling that the Labor government has done here in Victoria in relation to its RET appears somewhat flawed in that it does not include the generation costs. It does not include the base generation paying for the renewable energy costs. It appears to lack any sort of substance in relation to generation to transmission costs and line loads, and we are still not clear exactly what the total cost is on that modelling. I would be fairly adventurous to suggest that you would incorporate a very high renewable energy target, having the appropriate financial modelling done, and we can see that there are many bits and pieces that have actually not been a party to that modelling, so it will be at a greater cost than what the government has foreshadowed.

They are spending significant amounts now in relation to buying renewable energy certificates. In fact in my own area \$180 million for a 44-turbine wind farm seems a very high price to be paid for intermittent energy that will only be provided either when the wind blows or when the sun shines, and usually when that happens of course we have significant heatwaves and of course there is strong demand for our cooling systems. So it seems a bit of an oxymoron that the Labor government are relying on wind and solar — intermittent energy that they have been unable to store at any great capacity — at a time when we will have our heaviest energy loads. The backup systems certainly are not there and are not available for the state as we drag towards what I believe is an unachievable renewable energy target.

Another thing I just want to mention about the Finkel report, which has been mentioned in other contributions, is that in fact a renewable energy target was not foreshadowed in that report, and purposefully

so, because Finkel even recognised that in fact the only way to have any sort of demonstrable improvement in greenhouse gas emissions is to have a national approach. And that is why I said right from the outset of my contribution that this is bad policy. This is policy driven not by climate change concern but more by industry concern and political concern to aid and abet the Greens in fending off any potential attacks on their inner-city metropolitan seats. And I see Ms Patten giving a wry smile there, but she knows I am speaking the truth. Mr Barber is unusually quiet; he knows I am telling the truth.

**Ms Shing** interjected.

**Mr RAMSAY** — And poor Ms Shing! I have made her speechless — which is quite an achievement — because she knows I am telling the truth. Everyone knows this is bad policy, and that is why Mrs Peulich has seen fit to actually allow a committee to investigate and delve into why electricity prices are on the increase, what the impact of a bad policy like an Andrews government RET will have in the long term, what the Finkel report actually means in relation to a national consensus and what our contributions to greenhouse gas emissions are from a state and national basis, and to try and develop good policy — good energy policy that is sadly lacking in the Andrews government.

In respect of time I am going to allow my parliamentary colleague Ms Bath to have an opportunity to talk about the concerns, particularly in East Gippsland. Why the Andrews government wants to attack East Gippsland all the time is beyond me. They are not satisfied with only closing down a coal-fired generator; they want to close down a timber mill as well. They want to close down forests so that we cannot actually access the timber to produce paper. They prefer to import it from Nippon over in Japan. Talk about balance of trade. Why would you not want to use a natural —

**Ms Shing** interjected.

**Mr RAMSAY** — You do not like natural resources, Ms Shing. That is your trouble. You do not like anything natural; it is all artificial — a bit like your RET.

But anyway, in closing I commend Mrs Peulich for moving this motion. I think it is important for the Environment and Planning Committee, which I might add I am a participating member of. If this motion gets up, it will have some input into the work that that committee will be directed to do from this Parliament. Certainly I am sure those households and businesses

that use a lot of energy, the communities, not-for-profits —

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

**Ms BATH** (Eastern Victoria) — I am pleased to rise to speak this afternoon on Mrs Peulich's motion. I would like to read part of the motion and indicate that The Nationals will be endorsing this motion and hope it gets through to the upper house committee, of which I am a full member. I would love to investigate this and look at the ramifications of the increasing electricity prices on a range of people and institutions, so I will read it:

... issues relating to the impact of higher energy prices in Victoria for households, business, community, not-for-profits, hospitals, schools, aged-care facilities and government, including but not limited to the impact following the closure of the Hazelwood power station and any other matter the committee considers.

I listened to the debate with interest earlier on, before lunch, when Mr Barber from the Greens and Ms Shing from the government quite deliberately pontificated about their position and how they hold the high moral ground in terms of energy policy and the rest of us are all just wandering around somewhere. Well, I find it very interesting that in doing so I recognised that only once in Mr Barber's contribution did he actually use the word 'household', and not once did Ms Shing go into any depth — and she had an hour to do it — or great detail around the impact on businesses, on not-for-profits, on hospitals, on schools et cetera.

So we can stand up on the high hill and we can say how great our policies are if we are a Green or if we are in the Labor Party, but we do not actually address what is happening on the ground in homes and communities and small businesses right across Victoria as a result of this haphazard lack of policy by the current government.

Let me quote Premier John Brumby back in 2010, when he said:

... we are committed to the staged closure of Hazelwood.

So back in 2010 the former Premier had a plan. He had a plan to turn off Hazelwood in a sequential staging. He would have staged it and it would have been phased; it is actually quoted in *Hansard* in 2010.

What has happened since then? The Andrews Labor government have got in, and as a result of that Minister D'Ambrosio's green agenda has seen the fact that not only did they close it but they closed it within a

five-month period. Not only did they close it but they cast out 750 in-house workers and hundreds and hundreds of contractors. That has had a downstream effect in the Latrobe Valley, unprecedented I would say in the last 10 years. What has happened to these people?

In relation to that power going offline, we lost 22 per cent of our baseload power. We have seen prices rise like never before. In fact the Premier got on radio with Minister D'Ambrosio and said that any increase would have somewhere in the vicinity of a single-digit effect on prices.

**An honourable member** — Four, wasn't it?

**Ms BATH** — Four to eight, in or around — 'You will hardly notice it'. Well, there are businesses across this state that are struggling under the burden of the new impost on the cost of electricity. I will give some examples of where some have gone out of business.

In fact one is in South Australia, so I will cross over the border for an example. A plastics business that had been running for about 35 years had had an annual electricity bill of \$80 000. Over the last few months and year it has gone up by \$100 000. This is a recycling plant. We should be supporting these plastics recycling plants. They have been in business for decades, they have employed people and now they are shut. To my mind, that is indicative of what is going to happen on an ongoing basis if this madness continues to take effect.

Locally in terms of our local businesses and our engineering companies in the Latrobe Valley, there are a number of them that I have spoken with that are really struggling to maintain their current level of staff. They were contracted to the mine to work in terms of maintenance and upgrades and engineering works, and they have had that totally taken out from under them. So what are their results? What do they do? They are struggling to keep their employees in work, and they are going backwards in terms of their own business, and this is widespread.

Let me look at some other examples here. In relation to some media that was aired recently on the ABC, on 7 July it was reported that:

Victorian businesses are struggling to cope with their power bills, with new analysis showing wholesale prices in the state have more than tripled since 2015.

Analysis from energy consultancy company Global-Roam shows wholesale power prices soared 63 per cent in Victoria between the second quarter of last year and this year.

When the second quarter of 2015 is compared with 2017, the wholesale price more than tripled — rising 238 per cent to \$104 per megawatt hour.

Again from the ABC, on 4 August:

Customers in South Australia and Victoria may be asked to cut power usage at peak times in return for discounted bills.

Both states are contemplating summer without a power supply from the Port Augusta power station in South Australia and from Victoria's Hazelwood power station.

What could be happening is that elderly people, who are already struggling and who are on the pension, may be incentivised to take up the option to turn off their power in the heat of summer and go without air conditioning and greatly suffer. This is where we have come to. We were once upon a time the cheapest source of electricity in the country, and now we are fast becoming the dearest. And what are we doing potentially to our elderly who want to take up these offers? We are making them suffer. I just think this is appalling.

Let us look at some other examples. The other issue is around the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) predicting that there will be 72 days potential shortfall in the market over summer, so we could have brownouts and we could have load shedding across the board.

A recently completed Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry survey shows that 1 per cent of businesses are considering shutting down because of the high energy costs. I have outlined the one in relation to the South Australia recycling factory. Another 41 per cent are expected to absorb the costs. People in small to medium-sized businesses — and there are 4500 roughly in the Central Gippsland region — have to absorb those costs, and that is what 41 per cent of them will do. Twenty-one per cent are likely to pass on the cost to consumers. So not only are their profits going down — their costs are increasing — they are also having to pass that on to consumers. Some 15 per cent said that they would try to manage the increase in cost without switching energy providers, and the concern for businesses is that that is impossible in terms of growth and staffing levels.

What I know in relation to other businesses in the Latrobe Valley that I have spoken to — for example, a very popular takeaway food establishment — is that their monthly power bill has gone up by 55 per cent. Once upon a time they would have been frequented by Hazelwood workers coming in to get their meat pies or their coffee scrolls, but their business is down and their

costs have increased. We are asking people to bear the burden of Labor's failed policy.

Let us talk about energy poverty, and this is where I am getting to. In terms of members of our community, they are struggling to find these day-to-day costs. I note that Foodbank Victoria is looking to move to the Latrobe Valley to support people who are requiring daily necessities and provide that conduit for them in the Latrobe Valley because the need is so high.

I am aware from speaking with constituents that there is a single mother in my electorate who has spoken of her struggles to meet energy costs and said that she showers at the local gym just to save money on her electricity bill. I have spoken to postal workers within the Central Gippsland region, and what they tell me is that they hate delivering mail now because there are people who just do not want to receive that electricity bill. They find that whilst they love their job and they love their commitment to community, they hate delivering those bills that are just creating so much havoc in our population.

The other point that I would like to raise is in relation to dairy farms. There has been a Dairy Australia briefing note published recently which speaks to the current costs of both gas and electricity for dairy processors. It is about \$170 million per year. The briefing note outlines that the costs are set to rise up to 70 per cent in the next financial year — a 70 per cent increase for dairy processors. There will be employee lay-offs, for sure.

If we look at what this would mean for Australian dairy farmers if they had that sort of cost impost, there could be an average of \$4840 added to their annual shed power bills — their milking sheds et cetera. They have had an average cost of around \$24 000 per year over the last three years. Dairy farmers will effectively pay twice with lower farm gate prices and higher power bills.

In the terms of the Leader of The Nationals, the Honourable Peter Walsh, in his electorate of Murray Plains the Kyvalley Dairy Group employs about 100 people in Kyabram. This company's dairy energy bill rose \$50 000 a year. That is an increase of 23 per cent. That is much more than single digits.

Let us look at another example around hospitals. It was only this week that the *Great Southern Star*, Leongatha, highlighted the fact that power bills for their local hospital have gone up around 70 to 80 per cent. Indeed if I quote the article, it states that Danny O'Brien in the Legislative Assembly:

... is concerned local health services will be negatively impacted as Victoria's skyrocketing energy costs take their toll.

Gippsland Southern Health Service is facing an annual increase of \$150 000 — a figure that concerns chief executive officer Mark Johnson.

'GSHS has forecast a break-even budget for 2017–18 based on revenue of approximately \$34 million. Any increases in operating expenditure will place pressure on the operating budget and risk pushing the organisation into deficit', he said.

We have a motion here that would review what is happening out in the community and would review what is happening in small business and our homes. It would look into and assess the impact of the Hazelwood closure and the impact of other potential long-term ramifications if Yallourn came off the grid. It is important that we really let the Victorian people understand the future and what it can look like. We also think it is important for people to have a voice and to voice their concerns in relation to Labor's failed policy on energy production in this state.

One final thing I would like to mention is that the Liberal-Nationals are not against renewables. We want to see a great positive mix where there is stability of power, where there are jobs in Victoria, where there is security, where there is reliability, where there is base load and where there are renewables in terms of solar, wind, hydro et cetera. Let us work all of them in, but let us work them in so that we do not create this pain within our community, our businesses and our industries and go from being the cheapest power option state to the dearest. In effect we can meet the market by sending businesses and industry out of production, and that is what we do not want. We need to see this motion go through. I endorse it and thank Mrs Peulich for raising the issue.

**Mrs PEULICH** (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I would like to thank those who spoke on this motion and say how disappointing it is that the contribution of my good friend Mr Barber, a member of the Greens, actually ignored the referral and went to the substance of what should be careful deliberations and listening to the experts. His colleague Colleen Hartland spoke about the importance of listening to the experts on another motion earlier today. If he feels that people in this chamber are not sufficiently informed or enlightened by the wisdom of the Greens, then this would have been a very good opportunity for everyone to get onto the same page and to develop a greater consensus given the problems that we have seen with increasing costs of energy to households, to families, to businesses and to other organisations, including hospitals, schools and other levels of government. All

of these are cumulative — they have snowballing effects — and they are soaking up enormous amounts of financial resources, leaving families struggling and bringing many businesses to their knees.

The Greens have always tried to present themselves as being intellectually gifted and not afraid of having an intelligent debate, but they have turned the other way in this instance. The Greens have turned the other way when it comes to having their policies and their views scrutinised through a committee process.

Could I lay on the table the fact that I am not a member of this committee. Mr Barber's comments about how this is just some opportunity for members of the committee to go on a junket were perhaps a little cheeky, but they were also offensive. Once upon a time people were paid for service to committees, but now they are not. They serve on committees because they believe that it is a part of their job to get to the bottom of difficult issues — in some instances, hopefully, to reach a consensus, but in other instances not.

This is an important issue, especially given the increasing costs and the threats to accessibility, both in winter and summer, and the forecasts of blackouts during the summer as well as brownouts. There needs to be a change in the mix of energy generation, but these problems also need to be constantly monitored.

I was disappointed that Ms Shing spent all of her contribution bagging the opposition. Both the Greens and the Labor Party have used this motion for political attacks. The attempts to shut down consideration of policies and to shut down consideration of the problems caused by inconsistencies in policy and failings of the government are very, very disappointing. This was simply a referral motion to a committee on a very important issue.

Can I forecast that I believe this will be the issue of the 2018 state election. Investment in companies is affected by failings and inconsistencies in government policy, especially in the area of energy generation. People say that this is also the result of market failings. The market is distorted by high taxes, which we have seen imposed on the coal sector, as well as subsidies, which make investment in renewables more attractive. These cause market distortions. This committee process would have been an opportunity to consider not only the impact of these policies but also how we can move forward.

I am disappointed that it appears this motion is going to be voted down. There is no more important issue facing Victorians and their families, including young families with children. I have heard lots of stories of people

being very resourceful in how they can cut down their energy costs — bathing at local pools, going to local shopping centres, going to bed early so they do not have to put on heaters and indeed sitting and watching TV covered in doonas and blankets. This appears to be the Greens' preference when it comes to moving forward with energy policy — more of the same.

Our concern is the fact that electricity is becoming horrendously unaffordable. People are being brought to tears, businesses are being destroyed and shut and jobs are being lost. The consequences of blackouts on hospitals, for people who are in emergency care and on the security of food are very, very substantial problems that this Parliament needs to contend with.

Of course we want to see cleaner or reduced emissions. Recently I read about a \$1.2 billion investment in Germany. Germany had initially closed down all of its coal-powered generators, but it is now building a coal-powered generating facility for \$1.2 billion, which produces 50 per cent of the emissions of previous technologies. This is a missed opportunity. I call on members to support this motion. You should hang your head in shame if you are sticking your head in the sand on this issue.

#### House divided on motion:

##### *Ayes, 20*

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

##### *Noes, 20*

Barber, Mr	Mikakos, Ms
Dalidakis, Mr	Mulino, Mr ( <i>Teller</i> )
Dunn, Ms	Patten, Ms
Eideh, Mr	Pennicuik, Ms ( <i>Teller</i> )
Elasmar, Mr	Pulford, Ms
Gepp, Mr	Shing, Ms
Hartland, Ms	Somyurek, Mr
Jennings, Mr	Springle, Ms
Leane, Mr	Symes, Ms
Melhem, Mr	Tierney, Ms

#### Motion negatived.

## GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — I move:

That this house notes the roting of taxpayers money by members of the Andrews Labor government for political and personal benefit, including:

- (1) the roting of staffing entitlements to employ Labor Party campaign workers;
- (2) the roting of ministerial vehicles to chauffeur pet dogs;
- (3) the roting of the second residence allowance by the former Speaker and former Deputy Speaker;
- (4) the roting of electorate office printing budgets to fund Labor Party branch stacking; and
- (5) spending on failed Supreme and High Court actions to block the Ombudsman's investigation into Labor staffing rorts.

Victorians are more than entitled to ask: just how corrupt is the Andrews Labor government? It is interesting that they would ask that question. They do not ask: is the government corrupt? They know that the government is corrupt. They are aware that the government is corrupt, but they are asking: just how corrupt is it? That is a question that perhaps we might not be able to answer this afternoon; we might not be able to answer it until such time as the Ombudsman conducts her investigation into the government, if indeed we get an investigation into the latest set of allegations as well.

But there is one thing that the people of Victoria are aware of, and that is that the Labor Party is still the guilty party. They were the guilty party 25 years ago, and they are still the guilty party a quarter of a century later. You have got to give the Labor Party points for consistency. They are right on the money. They were guilty back then, and they are still guilty now, and everybody is aware of it.

It is not just this government; you have got to realise that. It is the Labor Party, because the Labor Party has running through it a thick vein, which is a culture of corruption. It goes back to what you would call, I suppose, institutionalised corruption within the Australian Labor Party. It is in the DNA of the ALP to have corruption. If you were to extract DNA from the Labor Party and examine it closely, you would find corruption oozing from every pore, if indeed DNA has pores.

This culture of corruption was probably best summed up by a former senator from New South Wales, who Minister Jennings might not be familiar with, a bloke called Graham Richardson. He may not be

Mr Jennings's cup of tea, I am suggesting — well, not his political cup of tea anyway. He wrote a book a few years ago in which he said, 'Whatever it takes'. That is what it was called, *Whatever it Takes*, and that is the philosophy of the ALP. Across the factions, federal or state, whatever it may be, that is the philosophy of the ALP. They will lie, they will steal, they will cheat, they will do whatever they have to do, whatever it takes to win, and that is what we have seen time and again under this government.

Indeed one of the most appalling actions by any government in recent years, the scrapping of the east-west link, was a classic example of that, because that was expenditure of public moneys to the tune of \$1.2 billion to try to save some Labor seats in the inner city. That did not even work; they still lost the seat of Melbourne. If the Labor Party are going to use that sort of money, at least use it effectively. But the Labor Party does not care very much about that. It is not their money. They do not care, and if it is somebody else's money, they will use it for whatever they like, and we have seen that again and again throughout the life of this government.

As I said a moment ago, the culture of corruption runs deep within the ALP. We just have to go back probably 10 years, maybe a little less, to the Brimbank City Council. Ms Shing might not remember the Brimbank City Council, so I will enlighten her, and I am very happy to do that. She may have been too young to remember what happened with the Brimbank City Council, but I will put money down that Mr Jennings remembers what happened at Brimbank. He was in this house in fact, and we spoke at length about the Brimbank council to the point where the Labor Party was so embarrassed that they actually sacked the council. The trouble is that they sacked the wrong council. The council that did all the dirty deals, the council that did the people of Brimbank in the eye, they got away totally clean —

**An honourable member** — Scot-free.

**Mr FINN** — Scot-free, that is it; thank you. The new council that replaced them were the ones that were sacked, and they had not actually done anything. It was quite extraordinary. It is quite extraordinary the way the Labor Party treat people who are found guilty of the sort of corruption we saw in Brimbank — the sort of corruption we have seen in so many instances in the Labor Party over the years.

There was a family involvement, let us say, in Brimbank that was quite often described as the Suleyman empire. We had Hakki out there. Hakki was

working from the office of former Minister for Planning Justin Madden. I do not know whether Justin Madden actually knew this because Justin I do not think actually knew where his office was out in Keilor. But Hakki certainly did because he was directing traffic from it and he was branch stacking, he was recruiting and he was playing games with money from the council and all sorts of wonderful things. And of course his daughter was the mayor of Brimbank during that time. She was the mayor of an entirely corrupt council. The Ombudsman's report into the Brimbank council only touched the surface. It totally condemned the council, but it only touched the surface of what the council had done.

When it was exposed and the government of the day, the Brumby government, went on to dismiss the Brimbank council, what do you think happened to that mayor? You would imagine that somebody who oversaw the degree of corruption and shysterism that was afoot on that council would be regarded by any reasonable person with contempt. They would treat them with contempt and they would shun them; I certainly would. If I knew somebody who was involved in that sort of thing, I would shun them. I would condemn their activity and I would send them to Coventry.

But what did the Australian Labor Party do? They gave her the safe seat of St Albans. They gave her one of their safest seats in the state, can you believe it, if you do not mind, umpire? It is just absolutely extraordinary that we would have a situation where a mayor is found to be leading a council which is totally corrupt, totally crooked, and she is rewarded by the ALP by being given a safe Labor seat.

I have been told by local members of the Labor Party — who were not all that happy about this, it has to be said — that it was not a preselection, it was more a —

**Ms Fitzherbert** interjected.

**Mr FINN** — It was more an anointing. As Ms Fitzherbert says, it was an anointing from above. Along came Ms Suleyman and into St Albans she went. The locals, as I said, were not very happy. When I asked why the Labor Party would do this in St Albans for somebody who had basically disgraced themselves — they disgraced the council and they disgraced the ALP — it was explained to me thus: 'Hakki knows where the bodies are buried. Her father knows where the bodies are buried'. That was the explanation that was given to me by the local members of the Labor Party.

It is not just the state Labor Party that we are talking about here, because Hakki Suleyman controlled numbers that took his influence and his power even into the federal cabinet room during the Rudd and the Gillard governments. Even now, the man who sees himself as being the next Prime Minister of Australia according to the polls, Bill Shorten, was put there by Hakki Suleyman's numbers. So there we had a bloke, Hakki Suleyman, working out of Justin Madden's office — a minister of the Crown in a Labor government — running a council, running preselections, doing numbers, stacking branches and doing all the things for which the Labor Party is so well known. He was directly responsible for the preselection of Bill Shorten in the seat of Maribyrnong.

We had a situation where Hakki Suleyman not only got his daughter into Parliament but could get Bill into the Lodge. If that is not a culture of corruption, I do not know what is. That is a culture of corruption that has the show by the throat. It is beyond all understanding how this could happen.

Next door there is a bloke called Josh Bull, who is the member for Sunbury. There are bulls all over the place out there. Josh Bull has recently —

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Mr FINN** — Mr Bull. Yes, J. Bull. Mr Bull has recently put out a couple of letters. This has been circulating —

**Mr Jennings** interjected.

**Mr FINN** — This is something that you might find interesting, Mr Jennings. This has been circulating in Sunbury among the younger groups, and it has been brought to my attention by my daughter. Mr Bull sent out a letter — this is Josh; we do not want to get our bulls confused. There is Bull Shorten. There is a lot of bull out there; there is no doubt about that. Mr Josh Bull has sent out two letters. The first is one welcoming new voters to the roll. We all do that. That is fair enough, and a very good thing it is too. But he has also sent out a letter recently urging his constituents to vote yes in the postal survey.

**Mr Ondarchie** interjected.

**Mr FINN** — It is a federal matter totally, Mr Ondarchie, paid for by Victorian taxpayers. I think it is totally unwarranted and not something that should be endorsed. But interestingly enough when one compares the signatures on the two letters, they are totally and completely different. One Josh Bull signature is quite legible, and another one is

hieroglyphics. If I was unkind, I would suggest that Mr Bull has a signature for each face, but I would not say that. It is just extraordinary to me that here is a member of Parliament who clearly has a situation where somebody is forging his signature.

**Mr Ondarchie** interjected.

**Mr FINN** — Indeed, I had not thought of that. Mr Ondarchie points out it may well be a part of the printing deal. It is not far from Keilor and in the Socialist Left faction, so it may be a part of the Mammarella deal that they have put together out there, and they may have gotten a bulk purchase. Perhaps we could examine that a little bit later on.

Corruption of course is something that we have come to accept as part of the ALP in the western suburbs. It runs through various councils, it runs through members of Parliament and of course it runs through preselections that we see in the Labor Party quite frequently.

There is an interesting chap out in Wyndham. He is a councillor, apparently, called Intaj Khan, the King of Bling. You might know him, Mr Jennings. Do you know the man at all? I know the Premier knows him. He is very close to the Premier. I will not make reference to the charges that this particular councillor is currently facing, but he is involved in a stoush out there with his federal colleague, the member for Lalor, Joanne Ryan, who called Cr Khan out for being the undesirable individual that he is. Ms Ryan is apparently going to be sued by Cr Khan, so that is going to be good. How do you defend that? You have got to have a character before you can be defamed, so I do not know how he is going to get away with that, but good luck to him.

That is what we have come to expect from the Labor Party in this state. Out in the west that is the way of life; that is just the way they are. When you talk about branch stacking, it is a way of life for many — it is a pity that Mr Somyurek is not here, as he might be able to tell us a little bit more about it — and it is a way of life for the ALP. In this particular instance the rorting is of each other. They are rorting each other — and I use the word ‘rorting’ — and cheating against each other in preselections. It is quite amazing to see what they do to each other.

There is a chap called Bob Kernohan, who I think Mr Melhem might know. I have had a couple of chats with him, and he is quite a learned man on the ways of the ALP. He has a number of stories that really should go into a book. I look forward to buying that book if and when they ever do. I think that would be well

worthwhile, and I would be first in line to buy a copy of that book. Sometimes Liberal Party preselections are a bit mysterious, but I have to say that Labor Party preselections are quite awesome in the true meaning of the word; they fill me with awe.

You see what goes on in the ALP at preselection time, and you say to yourself, ‘How did they do that?’, and then you think to yourself, ‘How do they get away with that?’, but they do every time. And some of the people that come out of those preselections and are elected to Parliament are just extraordinary. You just have to look around some of the chambers of the parliaments in Australia to see some of the people that are products of preselections, most of them put there by dodgy backroom deals and crooked factional warlords giving their largesse and paying off people here, there and everywhere for their support.

**Mr Jennings** interjected.

**Mr FINN** — I have not mentioned former federal member Stephen Conroy once, Minister, so I wish you would not raise his name.

I think what happens in regard to preselections within the ALP is indicative of the level of ingrained corruption and deceit that the ALP seems to thrive on. The more corrupt it is, the more deceitful it is, the more dishonest it is and the stronger it seems to become. That is, as they say in the classics, the Labor way. That is something we have come to expect over many a long year.

For the life of me I do not understand why certain members of the Labor Party — and I have spoken to these people out in the western suburbs, particularly in the Wyndham area — stick with the Labor Party, despite the fact that they are treated abysmally. You have got to remember that there is a preselection, for example, going on out in Tarneit at the moment. This is to replace a bloke who had to resign because he was rorting the taxpayer. We will get to that in a little while.

**Mr Jennings** — That’s on the motion. You’ve got to the motion.

**Mr FINN** — No, we are talking about things that are included in this. This preselection is to replace a bloke who was rorting the system big time. Of course who puts his hand up for this preselection? None other than Intaj Khan. So you could have a situation where you have got one bloke who is on the way out for having his snout in the trough to be replaced by another one who is going to do it even better. That, I suggest to you, is the Labor way. They have got an extraordinary talent for putting people into Parliament who know how

to rort the system, rip off the taxpayer and milk things for all they are worth, all for their own benefit without a thought for what is good for the state or what is good for the people of this state. That is the Labor way.

I well remember a former minister in the Cain and Kirner governments when I was first elected — a long time ago now — and he was actually done over for preselection by said gentleman. He said to me, straight out, ‘This bloke’s a crook’. He picked it years ago.

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Mr FINN** — No, it was not Peter Spyker. Peter Spyker was not a crook, he was just stupid. That would be 20 years ago, so, as I said, this is not new. This is something that has been going on for a very, very long time. It is a culture that is rooted within the ALP.

**Ms Shing** — I knew you’d get there eventually, Mr Finn.

**Mr FINN** — It is true; it is rooted within the ALP. We are talking about the rorting of staff entitlements, and we saw that before the last election.

**Ms Shing** interjected.

**Mr FINN** — No, I am speaking on the motion, Ms Shing.

**Ms Shing** interjected.

**Mr FINN** — You should calm down; it is all right. What we saw before the last election was just amazing. Here we had a group of people putting their hand up to be the government of Victoria. They said, ‘We want to look after the interests of Victoria and Victorians’; however, they went out of their way to rort the system, to rip off the taxpayer, to ‘employ’ — and I use that term in inverted commas — people in electorate offices for MPs, and of course the MPs never met them. They put red shirts on these people and sent them out to campaign for the ALP.

When this was discovered it was referred to the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman said, ‘Oh, this is very interesting’, and she decided that she would investigate it, and that is not surprising given that that is her job — that is her responsibility — to which the Premier had kittens on the spot. He went to, and still does go to, extraordinary lengths to hide what he did. So not only do we have the corruption of the original act; we have the cover-up. As we know, and as we saw with Watergate all those years ago — there is another classic case of corruption — it is not the original act that gets you; it is the cover-up. And that is what is going to

happen to this bloke, because he has spent far, far more trying to cover up his misdeeds than he did originally in the red shirt incident. They have been to the Supreme Court of Victoria to stop the Ombudsman investigating this action.

**Ms Shing** — You could use the word ‘imbroglio’, perhaps.

**Mr FINN** — We will get there. When the Supreme Court decided that indeed the Ombudsman had an absolute right to investigate this matter, did the Labor Party accept it? Did the government accept it? Not on your nelly. They went straight off to Canberra to the High Court of Australia. How much would it cost? I do not know, but it would cost a fortune. You are a lawyer, are you not, Ms Shing? You could tell us how much. A good QC would cost probably \$70 000 a day or something. These are huge sums of taxpayers money for this cover-up, going to the Supreme Court and the High Court.

There must be a lot on the line here. There must be some really dirty deeds, unfortunately not done dirt cheap on this occasion, because it is costing us all an arm and a leg. We must be looking at millions of dollars now in legal fees to cover up this appalling act. I am hopeful that we might get to the bottom of this at some stage, hopefully before November next year, but I suspect that if that is not the case then the Guy government will after the election discover the truth and expose the Labor Party for their corrupt and crooked actions of which they are guilty. They will receive justice. There are no two ways about that. Whether it be before the election or after the election makes no difference to me, but they will all receive the justice that is their due. There is no doubt about that at all.

Then of course we had one of the more, would you say —

**Ms Fitzherbert** — Colourful?

**Mr FINN** — No, I would not say colourful.

**Ms Fitzherbert** — Dodgy?

**Mr FINN** — I would not even say dodgy. It was bizarre. I think ‘bizarre’ would probably be the best word. We had the rorting of a ministerial vehicle for the transport of dogs to and from the country compound of a minister. Not only that, but we had the minister directing his driver to walk the dogs. You wonder what else the minister directed the driver to do. You would understand how the driver felt; the driver is employed to drive a minister. All of a sudden he or she finds

themselves behind the wheel of a car with a couple of woofers in the back.

It is just extraordinary to think that the Labor Party and a minister of the Labor government thought they could actually get away with this. That is the thing about the Labor Party — not that they commit these crimes, but that they actually think they can and they will get away with it. And on this occasion clearly the minister did think that, but he was wrong, as he was on so many other things. He was totally and absolutely wrong, and strangely enough he is no longer in this house. He lost his ministry and is no longer in the house. We do not miss him greatly, but he now has plenty of time to take Patch and Ted for a walk whenever he wants to.

Can you imagine the amount of money that has been spent and what we could have used it on just in those last two incidents — in the legal costs and the cost of the driver of the dogs? In my own portfolio interest area of autism we could use that money. God, could we use that money! That would just do so much for so many. It is just a criminal waste. It is an outrageous waste, but I will go with 'criminal waste' because I think it is criminal. I think that it should be investigated fully and we need full accountability and transparency. This government likes to talk about accountability, but that is all it does: talk. When it comes to actually being accountable, when it comes to actually being transparent, forget it. It is not even mildly interested. Is that surprising? If I was as crooked as they are, I would not be interested in accountability or transparency either. I would want to cover up my crimes and my misdeeds. My very word, I would.

I mentioned before the crimes and asked the question: how do these people in the Labor Party think they can get away with it? The big question hangs over this one, because we had the rorting of the second residence allowance by the former Speaker and the former Deputy Speaker. It has to be said that they lost their positions over this. Mr Languiller fell on his own sword; Mr Nardella is still screaming like a stuck pig over there that he did not do anything wrong. Well, I think the majority of people in this state have a very different view. You talk about the pub test — this does not come anywhere near passing the pub test. In fact you would not get through the front doors of the pub with this one. It stinks to high heaven.

Interestingly enough Daniel Andrews is over there in the other place taking their votes every day — accepting the votes and accepting the support of Mr Languiller and Mr Nardella. He is condemning them and saying, 'Come on, friends, let's go'. While Mr Nardella has apparently left the Labor Party, he still

votes with them, he still dines with them and he still drinks with them. He is for all intents and purposes a member of the ALP. That is the bottom line. Until such time as the government moves to expel Mr Nardella from the Parliament, then we can assume that he is still in bed with the ALP. It is just one of the more blatant and outrageous rorts that I can ever remember, conducted by two people who hold a responsible position, people who would normally be presenting the face of the Parliament.

**Ms Fitzherbert** — A position of trust.

**Mr FINN** — They are in a position of trust, as Ms Fitzherbert points out. They abused that trust, and they misused that trust. That did not pay anywhere near the price that they should have, and the government is still benefiting from the fact that they hold their seats.

We could talk about — and I have just touched on it a little — what is happening in Mr Languiller's seat at the moment as the Labor Party rip into each other during the preselection process in Tarneit, and we could talk about what is happening in the ALP in Melton, which is a doozy. The Mammarellas, as we know, have been eyeing the seat of Melton for many years. I should give a bit of background on Mr Mammarella. Mr Eideh's eyebrows are raised all of a sudden. Mr Robert Mammarella — who I have to say I know and is quite a nice bloke — of course works for Mr Eideh and has worked for Mr Eideh for some years. He has been working 'assiduously' — and again I put that word in inverted commas because he has been more than working. He has been stacking, and he has been doing all sorts of weird and wonderful things out in Melton in order to get his son Justin Mammarella, a former mayor of Melton, preselected. Again I know Justin Mammarella, and he is quite a nice bloke. But you have got to put the personal side to one side, because on this occasion there are things afoot here that involve taxpayers money. There are things involved here where the Labor Party and members of the Labor Party are again rorting the system. They are again ripping off the Victorian taxpayer. That is something that we should not tolerate.

**Mr Jennings** — On a point of order, Acting President, Mr Finn should be aware that I have been particularly generous in allowing him to say whatever he likes up until this moment. I think we should all be mindful of unsubstantiated matters that are in the public domain and are subject to investigation. So if Mr Finn wishes to assert allegations as fact, I think he should reflect on that and if need be, seek the guidance of the Chair in relation to him transgressing by repeating what are allegations and stating them as fact. No facts have

actually been provided, as I understand it, in relation to these matters, and he is asserting —

**Mr Ondarchie** — What is the point of the point of order?

**Mr Jennings** — The point of order is that Mr Finn is effectively — I have not said he is lying, but he could be lying unless he has substantive evidence.

**Mr FINN** — On the point of order, Acting President, there is no point of order. That is clearly a point of debate, and Mr Jennings is well within his rights after I have finished my contribution to get up and refute the point that I made. So I would suggest to you with humblest respect that there is no point of order involved at all.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Elasmarr)** — Order! My understanding of the point of order raised by Mr Jennings is that you should just be aware, Mr Finn, of what the situation is. I am aware of it and everyone in the house is aware of what is going on around it, so just come back to the subject without concentrating on the other matter.

**Mr FINN** — I would refer you, Acting President, to paragraph (4) of the motion that refers to the rorting of electorate office printing budgets to fund Labor Party branch stacking. That is allegedly a direct result of an attempt to win Mr Justin Mammarella the preselection for Melton. Is it on tonight?

**Mr Ondarchie** interjected.

**Mr FINN** — It is not on tonight? That is perhaps an ongoing matter. Mr Leane is highly amused over there, and I can understand why, because he knows what is going on out there. I challenge Mr Jennings to get up in the house — he can do it now via a point of order, and I will give him leave to do it if he likes — put his hand on his heart and say that he knows for a fact that the Mammarellas are not involved in any branch stacking in Melton. I think Mr Eideh was laughing out loud. I mention the branch stacking and the Mammarellas, and Mr Eideh laughs out loud. I mean, that says it all. Everybody over there knows exactly what has been going on, whether they choose to admit it or not.

**Mr Jennings** — On a point of order, Acting President, I am responding, by leave, to Mr Finn's suggestion. I take to the floor to actually say: I do not know what you are asserting I know.

**Mr FINN** — Well, you should have a chat to Mr Eideh. He knows a fair bit about it, because it has been happening under his roof for quite some time. But

truly, why should the people of Victoria have to fund this nonsense? Why should the people of Victoria, who are out there working as we speak to pay tax, allow this sort of corrupt nonsense to continue? Why should the people of Victoria be expected to put their hands in their pocket to pay these shysters for their activities? What is the reasonable standard that this government is setting? There is none. They have no standards. As I said earlier, they will do anything. It is the Labor way to do whatever it takes, and on this occasion, to win the preselection of Melton and probably Tarneit as well, it will be very much a case of whatever it takes.

**Mr Leane** — It's on tonight.

**Mr FINN** — It's on tonight, is it?

**Mr Leane** — I don't know. You're telling the story.

**Mr FINN** — I am interested to know. I tell you what, can somebody ring Sportsbet and get the latest odds, because I would like to know.

**Mr Ondarchie** interjected.

**Mr FINN** — I would not be surprised to hear that Mr Mammarella is unbackable, because his old man is very good with the numbers. When a branch is stacked by a Mammarella it stays stacked. You know that, Mr Eideh. They are very, very good at it, and there is no shortage of people out in the western suburbs who I have spoken to who know that to be true. There is no shortage of people who will testify that certain people, in fact quite a number of people, in the ALP out that way are up to all sorts of shenanigans, which is how I think we would describe them.

I move now to the last paragraph of this motion, and I might have already covered it a little bit, which is:

- (5) spending on failed Supreme and High Court actions to block the Ombudsman's investigation into Labor staffing rorts.

I mentioned the pub test. This is a relatively new thing in the public arena whereby journos are sitting around discussing an issue on camera and they throw in the pub test, which asks what is acceptable in the eyes of the average person. If by some extraordinary circumstance the average person were to accept that what the ALP did before the last election was okay — that is, rorting the taxpayer to employ people so they could be full-time campaigners — there is no way on this earth that anyone could possibly accept that it was okay to spend millions of taxpayer dollars going to the Supreme Court and High Court of Australia to stop an investigation. It goes to the very heart of accountancy and transparency.

The average person in the street might not use those terms. In fact they might be far more direct. They might refer to somebody who was involved in such activity as a thief, they might refer to them as a charlatan, they might refer to them as a crook or they might refer to them as any number of things. In fact some of the things that I have had to delete from my Facebook page have been from people describing this government in a way that, even for you, Mr Jennings, would curl your hair. They do not muck around. The people in the street and the average voter in Victoria do not muck around when referring to the government, and they certainly do not muck around when referring to a Premier who they, quite frankly, despise. I do not think that is too strong a word. This bloke has built up a reputation for himself that is second to none on a number of fronts, and average people out there detest him.

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Mr FINN** — Most of them over the other side do as well, that is true. I do not know whether it is too late to dump him before the next election. Is it too late now? I do not know whether it is too late. Mr Jennings is indicating that it may not be. We will see.

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Mr FINN** — I do not know whether Minister Allan would knife a colleague. Would she knife a colleague? I suppose knifing colleagues in the Labor Party is pretty much a way of life. That is the way it operates. As I was saying a moment ago, the average person in the street has had a gutful of this government. They have had a gutful of the rorts, they have had a gutful of the cover-ups, and I tell you what, this last one of going to the Supreme Court and the High Court to stop the Ombudsman — the independent umpire — from investigating what is possibly the greatest rort of all is something that sticks in the neck of every Victorian.

To anybody over there on the other side of the house, do not think that the people of Victoria will not be reminded about this in the lead-up to the next election, because we as an opposition will gently tap the people of Victoria on the shoulders and say, ‘Don’t forget your government, the Labor Party, is corrupt. It is crooked. Don’t forget what they have done. Don’t forget the dogs, don’t forget the staffing rip-offs, don’t forget the rorting of electorate office printing budgets, don’t forget Telmo Languiller and don’t forget Donnie Nardella and his caravan down at Ocean Grove’. I have to say on that one, in terms of its ingenuity: criminal mastermind. That is something it would never have occurred to me to do, I have to say. It would never have occurred to me. I like the beach a lot, but I do not think

if I had sat down and thought about it for years I could have come up with a scheme that would have seen me paid extra to live outside my electorate by the beach at a caravan park that does not allow long-term residents anyway.

As I said earlier, it is in their DNA. For us on this side of the house, it would not occur to us to do those sorts of things. It is absolutely incredible, as I have said on a number of occasions now, not only to think that they would do it but to think that they would actually get away with it. To try it on in the way that they have is just awe-inspiring. It is more gall than all of France, you would have to say. It is just extraordinary what they have done.

The people of Victoria see their roads deteriorating.

**Mr Ondarchie** — Western distributor?

**Mr FINN** — Don’t start me on the western distributor. That is another one. Remember before the last election, when the Premier, the then Leader of the Opposition, was running around saying anything and everything, usually without the knowledge or consent of his colleagues? He said, ‘We’ve got a West Gate distributor ready to go. It is shovel-ready’. Well, I know what he was shovelling, and it had nothing to do with the road. But he said at the time it was shovel-ready. Here we are nearly three years later and there is nothing — absolutely nothing.

But there is something humming along in the background, and I can hear Transurban and the boys in the boardroom at Transurban thinking that it is Christmas. They are sitting around, and they have got their plans for what is now the West Gate tunnel. It went from being the West Gate distributor to the western distributor, and now it is the West Gate tunnel. But it is only Wednesday, so there is an opportunity for a name change yet this week. The government is in league with the boardroom at Transurban. They have just let that boardroom have their way, and they are rubbing their hands together. The only thing you can hear down in the Transurban head office is singing from the boardroom — *It’s Beginning To Look A Lot Like Christmas*.

They honestly believe that because the only beneficiary of the West Gate tunnel is going to be Transurban, because it is not going to do anything for the people of the western suburbs. It is not going to do anything for the people who live around there. It is not going to do anything for traffic congestion for either east–west or south–north travel. It is not going to do anything for anybody except the people who run Transurban, who it

is going to make very, very rich — or, should I say, much, much richer than they already are. They are going extraordinarily well.

**Mr Ondarchie** interjected.

**Mr FINN** — Mr Ondarchie reminds me, and I am glad that he did, of the Werribee South youth justice centre, which was a classic example of a government that really decided that its safe seats do not matter. ‘Werribee? Doesn’t matter’ — that is their attitude. I remember the day they announced this. I was listening to the radio, and they said, ‘There’s a big announcement coming. There’s going to be a youth justice centre, and it’s going to be in Werribee South’. I said, ‘What? That can’t be right. I must have misheard that’, so I went to the net, and sure enough they said indeed it was going to be in Werribee South.

**Mr O’Donohue** interjected.

**Mr FINN** — In the electorate that Tim Pallas allegedly represents and, rumour has it, he has been seen in from time to time, maybe twice or three times in the last 10 years. He has been there, but as for actually living there, you have got to remember he is in the Labor Party and he is in the western suburbs, and that does not work.

**Ms Lovell** interjected.

**Mr FINN** — Indeed. That is the way. We all live in our electorates, but in terms of electoral integrity and actually representing their constituents the ALP is not all that interested in doing that. This instance of the Werribee South youth detention centre is a classic example of that. We saw, when I was down in Werribee one cold and wet Tuesday night, some 7000 or 8000 people out in the streets of Werribee — as I said on a cold and wet Tuesday evening. They gathered in very large numbers to let the government know that they were angry and they were not going to put up with being treated in the way that this government treats the rest of Victoria. They sent that message right here to Spring Street. They were very loud, they were very vocal and they made it very clear what their views were. And they are just one section —

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Mr FINN** — Yes, indeed. It was heard in Williamstown, so Mr Pallas did hear it.

**Ms Lovell** — What a lovely spot.

**Mr FINN** — It is a lovely spot, and Mr Pallas will tell you all about it if you give him half a chance.

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Mr FINN** — You cannot walk down the Strand on a Saturday morning without tripping over Labor MPs. That is very true.

**Ms Lovell** — Does Wade Noonan know where Williamstown is?

**Mr FINN** — Wade would not have a clue, no. I think he lives in Werribee South; I am not sure. But that would not surprise me.

We have a government that has lost the respect of the electorate. The people of this state do not trust this government. The people of this state detest this government. They detest the Premier. They just want this government gone because they know that this government is corrupt. As I said at the beginning, it is not a question of whether this government is corrupt; it is a question of: how corrupt is this government? I would suggest to you very strongly that this government is extremely corrupt. It is corrupt to the core, and it is something that the people of Victoria are going to scream very, very loudly about in November next year.

**Business interrupted pursuant to standing orders.**

## STATEMENTS ON REPORTS AND PAPERS

### Department of Treasury and Finance: budget papers 2017–18

**Ms LOVELL** (Northern Victoria) — I rise to speak on the budget papers 2017–18, which raise the funding to provide services in public housing and also homelessness in this state — an area where this government is completely failing the people of Victoria. We can see the evidence on our streets. The increase in people who are sleeping rough on our streets is blatantly clear to us as we walk around the streets of Melbourne. But this is not just me observing this or making these things up. They actually do a street count of the homeless people on the streets of Melbourne, and in 2014 when we left government there were 142 people sleeping rough — too many, I admit. We were working to reduce that. In 2010 we had inherited 190 people sleeping rough, and we had managed to get that down a bit. In the first two years of this government — they do these street counts every second year — the number blew out from 142 in 2014 to 247 in 2016. That was a 74 per cent increase that directly correlates with the election of the Andrews Labor government.

This is because this government actually has no homelessness strategy whatsoever. And Labor has form on not having homelessness strategies. During the Brumby government years there was a period, quite an extended period, where then Minister for Housing Richard Wynne did not have a strategy to address homelessness. He promised one, and he kept promising it. He kept missing his own deadlines, and finally just days before the 2010 election he produced a strategy that was rejected by the sector because the sector had not been involved in the development of it. They felt it was a strategy that would not address homelessness, and they were quite insulted by it.

On coming to government I immediately scrapped that strategy and set about working towards developing a new homelessness action plan with the sector, which we implemented in 2011. That ran from 2011 through to July 2015. But since that action plan that I wrote expired in July 2015 we have seen nothing from this government. For over two years now there has been no strategy to address homelessness in this state, and that is why we are seeing such a huge increase in people who are sleeping rough on the streets. Some of the data behind that is really quite concerning as well. If you look at the age of the people who are sleeping rough on the street, 78 per cent of them are aged between 26 and 60, so it is no longer elderly alcoholic men, which is the perception, but a whole range of people who are sleeping rough on the streets. In fact 57 per cent of that group — that 78 per cent that are between 26 and 60 — are actually under 40. Forty-nine per cent of them were sleeping rough on the streets, 20 per cent in parks and 31 per cent in other locations, and the majority of them were sleeping in the CBD.

Really concerning is the amount of children who have been sleeping rough under this government. In fact in the 19 months from July 2015 — and I am quoting data from a new report, the *Rough Sleeping in Victoria: Situation Appraisal — May 2017* — 580 children aged up to 14 years slept rough on the streets. That is an indictment of this state and this current minister, who has no strategy to address this issue. I call on this minister to actually finally produce a strategy that will assist in reducing homelessness.

Last year during the Australian Open Tennis Championships we saw a lot of negative publicity for our city about the number of homeless sleeping in our streets that went international. Local government, the City of Melbourne, took the flak for that. They should not have; this is a state government responsibility, and this government needs a strategy.

### **Auditor-General: *Effectively Planning for Population Growth***

**Mr ELASMAR** (Northern Metropolitan) — I rise to speak to the Auditor-General's report tabled in this Parliament on 23 August 2017, *Effectively Planning for Population Growth*. Victoria is presently experiencing its largest ever population growth. It is anticipated that by 2031 our current population, which is 6.1 million, will increase to 7.7 million. So far the population growth has been evidenced in the seven greenfield growth zones on Melbourne's fringe. These areas are expected to share 42 per cent of the state's future growth in Melbourne. Maribyrnong, Port Phillip, Stonnington and Yarra are predicted to experience 14 per cent of the state's growth, and while this is great for our Victorian economy, rapid growth also creates massive challenges for the government and for the people who deliver essential services.

The timely provision of birthing, maternal and child health and funded kindergarten services is vital to the viability of these rapidly increasing suburban municipalities. These fundamental services contribute to the health and wellbeing of babies and young children, particularly as they can identify health and developmental risks in children at an early stage. The Auditor-General reviewed several agencies' roles and responsibilities for strategic land use, implementation planning for population settlement and appropriate service planning for birthing, kindergarten services and maternal and child health services. Responsibility and accountability for the planning and provision of these services is shared across a number of state government agencies and local councils.

The report stated that there is a degree of uncertainty regarding the provision and oversight of birthing, maternal and child health services and funded kindergartens, and that this needs to be addressed. There was a general acceptance by these agencies of their looming responsibilities, and it has been agreed that a joint action plan is the way to proceed and that an appropriate collaborative strategic process will enable these future plans to be implemented.

Better information sharing is a major key to the success of any future strategy to accommodate incoming family residents' needs in Victoria. I am encouraged by the relevant agencies' willingness to achieve greater oversight of statewide and strategic planning and better information sharing with individual health services, together with the creation of the office of suburban development in May 2016. I feel confident that supportive collaborative arrangements will improve the transparency and coordination of decision-making on

local service delivery and investments in Victorian infrastructure. I thank the Auditor-General for this timely report.

**Economic, Education, Jobs and Skills  
Committee: community energy projects**

**Ms BATH** (Eastern Victoria) — I rise this evening to make some comments on the *Inquiry into Community Energy Projects* released this week in Parliament. I thank the chair of the committee for putting up his commentary on it earlier in the week.

I would like to start talking about some of the renewable energies that the report went into, looking at a whole range of renewable types of energy in terms of solar energy, wind energy and bioenergy. There are a couple of examples of great businesses in my electorate of Eastern Victoria Region in relation to solar energy. Gippsland Solar, which was first established in Mirboo North, is doing a tremendous job, in both domestic and industrial settings and across schools, to make a whole range of businesses far more energy efficient, and I commend it for its work.

Also, in relation to wind energy, the Bald Hills wind farm is not too far from me. It is on a beautiful patch of land near Cape Liptrap, which I often visit in summertime, but sometimes you see that those 50 turbines are still and not moving or creating energy.

The other point that the report goes to is bioenergy. I note that the report refers to Australian Paper, again in Morwell, and talks about its production. Australian Paper produces 50 per cent of its energy needs from biomass waste. I think there is a great development that Australian Paper have got coming on in relation to a waste-to-energy plant on a much larger scale. I commend them for their work and also for the funding that is coming through from both state and federal governments.

We also have a range of geothermal energy sources that I think is interesting, but it probably does not pertain to Victoria as much as it does South Australia, where there is a load of potential energy tucked in under the surface of the earth.

In relation to some of the report's recommendations, the first recommendation is:

The Victorian government support the recommendations of the Finkel review that aim to enhance system security and reduce consumers' electricity bills, while being mindful of the cost impact on renewable energy development.

I want to stay on this for a minute. In relation to the Finkel report, the Finkel report's key points include

increased security, future reliability, rewarding consumers and lower emissions. I note that it talks about the Australian government. It looks at the Paris agreement, which is to have emissions reduced by 28 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030. It does not go to the Victoria renewable energy target, which is being debated this week in the other place. It does not go to placing a huge burden on Victorian consumers in terms of their energy costs and the impost on families, businesses and industry.

But before I go to that, I just want to make a couple of comments in relation to the Hazelwood power station and the closure of Hazelwood. It was indicated to me before, when I made a contribution on the previous motion moved by Mrs Peulich, that I may have been fabricating things, and I want to put this on record. As recorded in *Hansard*, former Premier John Brumby stated in relation to a staged closure of the Hazelwood power station:

The second way in which we will achieve that target —

and that is talking about their energy target, which I would like to speak on if I have the time, the previous Labor government's energy target that they did not meet —

is by reducing emissions from brown coal, with the commitment to reduce emissions by up to 4 million tonnes by 2014.

That did not happen. He continued:

As I have spelt out publicly on a number of occasions, that is equivalent to the closure of two units of the Hazelwood power station, and we are committed to the staged closure of Hazelwood.

This is a government that says one thing and does another. Mr Brumby back then said that this would have facilitated their Victorian renewable energy target. They did not meet it then and this government have false hopes of being able to meet it now, but in the process of trying to meet a renewable energy target they will burden families, they will burden consumers and they will burden industry and businesses. It is just about saying something for the media release, but this will not occur, as indicated in the past by the Brumby government's failure to live up to a renewable target as well.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Purcell)** —  
Thank you, Ms Bath.

### **Economic, Education, Jobs and Skills Committee: community energy projects**

**Mr RAMSAY** (Western Victoria) — It would seem it is the day for debate on energy, and I too would like to make a small contribution to the report of the inquiry into community energy projects by the Economic, Education, Jobs and Skills Committee. I was going to thank — and I will, but I would have liked him to be in the chamber — Mr Elasmr as chair of that committee for the work that he and his committee have done in relation to providing the report to the Parliament. I actually enjoyed reading it, because I am very supportive of local community energy projects. Certainly in my region of Western Victoria Region we have a number of small communities that are actually involved in community energy projects. Obviously Daylesford comes to mind in relation to the use of very small, unobtrusive wind turbines to provide power for the local community.

We have other areas across the region that are involved in renewable energy. I am reminded of the Beaufort hospital, which is actually using mulch under incineration for energy generation. Other hospitals are using solar panels, which are providing partially their energy needs to run their hospitals. Up at Nhill they are creating gas out of methane — out of their waste products. Even an abattoir I was involved in in Colac is using green waste to provide energy.

So there are lots of good things happening locally, and I do encourage the government to continue to — as I see in this report — not so much grant funding but actually provide loan funding, whereas some of these energy projects have to stand up on their own two feet and have to be repaid for the investment, just like any commercial arrangement for the investment made for the revenue generated. I think that is a good system to incorporate into these projects, where the loans provide both greater governance and greater oversight, certainly through key performance indicators in relation to that investment and the rate of revenue returned.

I did want to refer to a couple of the findings, which I found interesting given the debate we have had on Mrs Peulich's motion this afternoon, when I indicated through my contribution that I was very concerned about the government's ideological push to a renewable energy target that would saddle Victoria with a 40 per cent renewable target by 2025 — that is, in less than eight years — and doing so on its own. There is no other state in Australia that has those sorts of financial obligations put on by their local communities in relation to those sorts of targets without having a national consensus in relation to looking at a consensual

approach to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. There is nothing to say a renewable energy target would actually achieve that.

Finding 1 reads:

The national energy market's transition to cleaner energy may have an impact on energy security and affordability due to the intermittent nature of renewable energy generation and the uncertainty of future electricity demand.

That was part of the discussion we had this afternoon, knowing that currently 70 per cent of renewable energy, out of the 8 per cent generated, is based solely on wind power, and we know that if the wind does not blow, then there is no energy produced. The capacity of batteries is very small in that they can provide a quick blast of energy but no long-lasting storage, so we cannot rely on batteries. Certainly this committee has found that there is some risk in relying solely on wind particularly and to a lesser extent solar as part of the renewable mix in providing ongoing security of energy generation as well as in being able to meet future demand.

I also note that in chapter 4 on page 68 the report states:

The VRET is a commitment to derive at least 25 per cent of Victoria's electricity from renewable sources by 2020 and 40 per cent by 2025. Up to 1500 megawatts of new large-scale renewable energy capacity is required by 2020 and up to 5400 megawatts by 2025 ...

As I have already said in an opinion piece in the *Weekly Times*, that is going to require about an extra 3000 wind turbines if we are going to rely on wind.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Purcell)** — Thank you, Mr Ramsay.

**Mr RAMSAY** — Can you imagine what the rural landscape around Port Fairy would be like, Acting President, if we were to place 3000 wind turbines there?

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Purcell)** — The honourable member's time has expired.

### **Department of Treasury and Finance: budget papers 2017–18**

**Mr MORRIS** (Western Victoria) — It was a lovely photo you had in the paper there too, Mr Ramsay, I must say. I rise to make a contribution with regard to the state budget papers 2017–18 —

**Mr Finn** interjected.

**Mr MORRIS** — I cannot remember which tie. It might have been purple or pink — I am not sure.

In regard to the state budget of 2017–18 I note that one of the projects in Ballarat associated with that particular budget is the redevelopment of what was formerly termed Eureka Stadium and is now termed Mars Stadium, and the new facilities there. It was promised by this government that there would be two AFL games played there this year. As we know there has only been one AFL game played at Mars Stadium this year. That is just one in the long litany of broken promises that this government has left in its wake in Ballarat.

However, one of the worst elements of what we have seen transpire with the development of Mars Stadium has been the North Ballarat Roosters, the VFL football club, losing its licence to compete in the VFL. This is something that has greatly distressed the many members and supporters of the Roosters football club and indeed has left many people in Ballarat asking questions around how it is that this has occurred and what role the government has played in the demise of the Roosters in the VFL.

What we do know is that when the government made this commitment, it was an ill-thought-out commitment, and it was one where, instead of working with all and sundry with regard to this, the government decided to go to war with the North Ballarat Football Club. This resulted in the Ballarat City Council being placed in the invidious position of having to compulsorily acquire the land for the North Ballarat Football Club that was previously owned by the club itself. This was a considerable outlay for the council. I am led to believe that it was several million dollars of ratepayers money that this government forced the council to part with as a result of having to acquire this land. As a result of this, we have the North Ballarat Football Club losing its landholding there, and we also have a football club that then went on to lose its licence to play in the VFL.

One would not have to do too much work to connect the dots and realise that it is in fact the state government that is responsible for the North Ballarat Football Club losing its licence through this shambolic deal to redevelop the former Eureka Stadium, now Mars Stadium. As a result there is no anchor tenant left at the Mars Stadium — no tenant who is going to be there in the long term. There may be two AFL football games played there this year; however, there is not going to be a club that is going to be associated with it day in, day out playing in the VFL next year. This is deeply concerning. It is something that I have certainly had raised with me by a number of constituents with

concerns surrounding what has happened and how it is that this has happened here.

I personally believe that the government has some serious questions to answer about how it is that this has occurred. How is it that the government has overseen this redevelopment and then the loss of the VFL licence for the North Ballarat Roosters? It is a terrible thing that has happened, something that has deeply affected many in the Ballarat community. I do hope that the government does come clean with regard to its dealings with the North Ballarat Football Club and how it came to this terrible position that a much-loved club in Ballarat lost its licence to compete in one of Australia's second-tier football competitions.

### **Fire Services Bill Select Committee: final report**

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — I rise this afternoon to again speak on the final report of the inquiry into the Firefighters' Presumptive Rights Compensation and Fire Services Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2017. I have to say that I am deeply disturbed by this report, by the seeming attempt by the Department of Premier and Cabinet to interfere in this process and indeed obstruct the committee and by the suggestion that the Premier's office and department are indeed in contempt of Parliament.

On page 75 of the report, in point 5.3.3, it states:

Parliamentary privilege, which extends to parliamentary committees as delegates of the Parliament, protects persons from repercussions for what they write in a submission. It is a contempt of Parliament to interfere with or obstruct a person from giving evidence to a committee or to take action against a person for giving evidence. This, for example, protects a person from their employer disadvantaging them for contributing to (or attempting to contribute to) an inquiry.

The report goes on to say that in the view of the committee:

The actions of DPC constitute a material obstruction of the processes of the committee, including the giving of evidence, insofar as they:

led to the receipt of hundreds of duplicate submissions, impeding the committee's processing of all submissions;

may have deterred some witnesses from making submissions by misleading them into believing submissions had to be made via DPC; and

may have deterred some witnesses from making submissions by misleading them into believing submissions had to be made two days earlier than the actual cut-off date.

I feel like I am continuing on from where I left off a little under half an hour ago, because this action that the

Department of Premier and Cabinet, and presumably the Premier's office, has been involved in seems to me on the face of it to be an act of corruption of the process. Indeed recommendation 10 of this report is a recommendation that the:

Legislative Council refer the Department of Premier and Cabinet to the Legislative Council Privileges Committee for investigation of its interference with the committee's inquiry.

I have been reading these sorts of reports for many years, and I think this is the most serious condemnation that I have ever seen in any report. To suggest that the house refer the Department of Premier and Cabinet to the Privileges Committee, with a possible charge of contempt of Parliament hanging over it, is I think extraordinarily serious. Unfortunately it is reflective of the whole attitude of the Premier and his office, and the government I should say, to this whole issue. From day one this whole issue has been marked by heavy-handed tactics — by bullying and by actions which are to say the very least untoward and I believe in most instances quite unethical. We are talking about the sacking of a minister, the sacking of the board and the sacking of a CEO. Wherever the Premier has gone on this particular issue the bodies have marked the way. It concerns me enormously that we now have a report which is recommending that the Premier's department actually be investigated by the Privileges Committee.

I have lost any faith that I ever had in this government. It is a government that proves again and again and again — and it has done so in this particular instance — that it cannot be trusted. This government cannot be trusted with the Country Fire Authority, and it cannot be trusted with the legislation that is currently before the house and that we might vote on sometime before Christmas next year. It cannot be trusted on anything. This is a government that has to go.

### **Department of Treasury and Finance: budget papers 2017–18**

**Mr DAVIS** (Southern Metropolitan) — I am pleased to make a contribution to statements on reports and papers, and I am pleased specifically to talk about the state budget papers 2017–18. My particular focus today is the crime and justice section of the budget — the government's focus on trying to keep our community safe. It is very clear to me that the government is not achieving its objectives to keep our community safe. Increasingly we have seen crime of a very serious nature impact on our community. I know that in recent weeks and months we have seen carjackings and home invasions — serious crime. This chamber passed a motion in the last sitting week dealing with the issues in the City of Stonnington, and

it laid out a plan for more resources and for the reopening of the police cells in the Prahran police complex. I note that this apparently occurred just in the last few days, so there has been a soft reopening of the police cells in Prahran, which have been closed since June 2015 under this government. So that is one step.

I must say that whatever municipality I look at in Southern Metropolitan Region I see very significant change. The figures for March this year and the change from December 2014 are extraordinary: a 20.5 per cent increase in reported crime in the City of Bayside, a 26 per cent increase in the City of Boroondara, a 45.16 per cent increase in the City of Glen Eira, a 21.98 per cent increase in the City of Kingston, a 12.77 per cent increase in the City of Melbourne, an 18.18 per cent increase in the City of Monash, a 12.4 per cent increase in the City of Port Phillip, a 22.4 per cent increase in the City of Stonnington and a 12 per cent increase in the City of Whitehorse. The growth in reported crime is 20 per cent statewide. In my municipality it is 18.03 per cent, so that is not dissimilar to the rest of the state. But with some notable hotspots in the City of Glen Eira, there are real issues for the community.

This is felt by traders, but it is also felt by ordinary people. A constituent of mine, a young person, has been hit by this crime wave. I want to give some flavour of this crime wave to the community. The young man said to me:

... I was viciously assaulted in a spontaneous and unprovoked attack outside Oakleigh station. There were two guys, and one of them was armed with a metal pipe or similar instrument. He struck me with it twice — once across the back of my leg and once against the side of my head — causing substantial pain and significant bruising/damage to my ear (photo attached, open at your own risk). The other guy didn't touch me. but he was certainly complicit. I was thoroughly drenched in blood and really thought I was going to die. I had to run across the street and flag down a car for help. The driver of the car which pulled up next to me turned out to be the mother of a girl I went to primary school with who had recognised me. She drove me further up the road to my house, where my brother called 000. Before I knew it, my house was swarming with paramedics and police officers. I was put in a neck brace and taken to hospital where I was checked for internal injuries and given preventative medicine. I was lucky enough to be able to go home that night but had to return to hospital the next day for surgery.

His ear was stitched, and I have since seen the chap and seen the horrific nature of the injury he had. He continues:

To make such a bizarre situation stranger, neither of them said a word to me during the ordeal. I might have understood if they had asked me for my phone or wallet or shoes.

He talks about the look of pure evil in their eyes. It is really quite extraordinary, and this is increasingly what we are hearing. This is in one of those underpasses that we are going to see many more of with the massive sky rail being built in the areas of Hughesdale, Carnegie and Murrumbeena.

Violent crime is up significantly: murder, 19 per cent, and attempted murder, 141 per cent. Rape is up 40 per cent under the Premier, Daniel Andrews; assault, 34 per cent; and aggravated assault is also up by 34 per cent. These are massive increases with little response. The government has got to take responsibility for these matters. I say that enough is enough, and the community is sick to death of this crime —

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Purcell)** — Thank you, Mr Davis.

## ADJOURNMENT

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

That the house do now adjourn.

### Plenty Valley Cricket Club

**Ms LOVELL** (Northern Victoria) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Sport and involves the installation of additional turf playing wickets and practice wickets by the Plenty Valley Cricket Club at Yarrambat War Memorial Park. My request of the minister is that he immediately commit funding toward the establishment of 10 turf practice wickets by the cricket club at the memorial park.

The Plenty Valley Cricket Club is based at the Yarrambat War Memorial Park oval, which is the only cricket facility with turf playing wickets in the Shire of Nillumbik. These five wickets were installed at the ground in 2012, funded solely by the Plenty Valley Cricket Club at a cost of \$30 000. The installation of the turf wickets allowed the club to field three teams in the women's premier cricket competition, the highest level of cricket in Victoria and the highest level of sport played in the Nillumbik shire. The club meets the full cost of maintaining these turf wickets. Apart from participating in the women's premier competition, the Plenty Valley Cricket Club has a proud involvement in women's cricket over the years, with Victorian and Melbourne Renegades player Kirsty Lamb being a product of the club.

The Yarrambat ground sees some of the best female cricketers in the world play there on a weekly basis, including Australian captain Meg Lanning. In order to

ensure the future of the ground as a venue for women's premier cricket and the club's admittance into the men's premier cricket competition, the Plenty Valley Cricket Club needs to upgrade its training facilities at Yarrambat War Memorial Park. The club is working extensively with Cricket Victoria to increase the number of turf playing wickets and the installation of 10 turf practice wickets at Yarrambat, with Cricket Victoria supporting the installation of the practice wickets as well as contributing funds for the playing wickets.

The Plenty Valley Cricket Club first applied for Sport and Recreation Victoria (SRV) funding for the practice wickets in 2016 with the assistance of officers at Nillumbik shire. SRV rejected this application on the basis of inadequate support, despite the view of shire officers that the application included all the detail required. The club submitted a second application to SRV in early 2017 via the Community Sports Infrastructure Fund, with both the cricket club and Nillumbik shire each committing the required 20 per cent of the \$130 000 cost of the project. On 24 August 2017 Plenty Valley Cricket Club was informed that their application had again been rejected by Sport and Recreation Victoria, despite strong support from Nillumbik shire and Cricket Victoria. No reason has been given by SRV for the rejection.

The delay in funding this project has seen three of the club's women players recruited by other clubs on the basis of better training facilities, threatening the club's future in the women's premier cricket competition. Plenty Valley Cricket Club cannot wait for the next round of SRV funding in 2018; a commitment is needed now to ensure the viability of premier league cricket at the ground.

### Bus safety

**Ms DUNN** (Eastern Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Public Transport. Yesterday it was revealed that a spot check by Transport Safety Victoria of Transdev's bus fleet found 33 defective buses, with 12 in such poor condition that they were ordered off the road for urgent repairs. Defects included engine and transmission faults, fluid and air leaks, loose-fitting panels and suspension faults. Transdev operates one-third of Melbourne's bus network, including the Doncaster area rapid transit buses, which are the only public transport option for much of my electorate. The action I seek is that the minister launch a comprehensive audit of bus safety across Victoria and investigate why the safety and inspection regime did not reveal these safety issues earlier.

### Ballarat bus services

**Mr MORRIS** (Western Victoria) — My adjournment matter this evening is for the attention of the Minister for Public Transport. It relates once again to the urban bus network in Ballarat.

On an almost daily basis at this point in time I hear complaint after complaint, issue after issue as a result of the redrafting of the bus routes and the changing of the timetable in Ballarat. It appears that there is not a single person who is happy with the changes or who is seeing them as an improvement. I have only heard from people who have seen them as an abject disaster, whether it be the conga line of buses that invade Lydiard Street North, the brilliant heritage street — it is a magnificent street, but unfortunately we have queues of buses a mile long now — or whether it be the residents of Lake Gardens, who are no longer being appropriately serviced by the bus network, along with others in Delacombe and Sebastopol whose services have certainly been reduced by the changes to the bus network, the timetables and the bus routes.

The action I seek from the minister is quite simple: that she works with Public Transport Victoria, goes through a true community consultation process to find out what it is people want from the bus network in Ballarat and, once that information has been gathered, implements a bus network that is going to service the people of Ballarat rather than hinder them.

### Violence against women

**Dr CARLING-JENKINS** (Western Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter tonight is addressed to the Minister for Police. It is with regard to Rekihah O'Donnell, a 22-year-old woman who was murdered by her partner in 2013. What I am calling on the minister to do is simply meet with her mother, Kerryn Robertson, to discuss this.

Her mother would like to speak to the minister about how Rekihah endured months of abuse before being shot in the head by her partner, who was subsequently only charged with manslaughter. His defence in court included, 'I didn't know the gun was loaded' and 'I was scattered after coming down from ice'. Therefore the jury had no option really but to clear him of murder. His previous violent history, including threats to Rekihah, and his criminal record were also not allowed to be made known during the court case.

Rekihah's death has sparked a lot of media attention and in fact her mother has written a book about this. She has a large following on social media, as well as a large

change.org petition with 40 000 signatures. It has started a social movement, in a way, called 'Rekihah's law'. My office has attempted to facilitate this meeting for months now; however, there has been no response from the minister's gatekeepers, which is why I am bringing this as an adjournment matter tonight.

I call on the minister to meet with Rekihah's mother, Kerryn Robertson, who is seeking simply to give a voice to those who suffer as a result of these types of violent acts, and to discuss with the minister possible changes that could be achieved to unite around this issue, because women like Rekihah quite simply deserve better, and we want to start that conversation with the minister.

### Glenormiston Agricultural College

**Mr RAMSAY** (Western Victoria) — The action I am seeking tonight is from the Minister for Training and Skills. In fact the minister is here, so that is good. She might well want to discharge her response tonight. It concerns Glenormiston Agricultural College. The Labor government and the minister have much heralded the fact that the college will be reopened under a Labor government. It will provide an education hub, providing all sorts of courses for those in the south-west community. It will accommodate up to 150 students on site, it will have an education provider and part of the college will be sold to a consortium, which I understand will be the Dean Montgomery's Volume consortium.

Interestingly enough I investigated what sorts of courses may well be provided by the college, and I was advised that they would be basically certificate III agricultural courses. I then spoke to a number of other providers, both private and public, and my understanding is that the demand for certificate III courses in agriculture is very low. In fact that is why South West TAFE originally decided not to continue its lease at the campus. They were able to better serve their community by providing online accredited courses in agriculture. So I am somewhat mystified that suddenly the minister has been putting out press releases saying that they have done the deal, the college is sold, there will be up to 150 students accommodated, there will be a certificate III course provided and there will be some sort of quasi-relationship with Racing Victoria, not dissimilar to what has been happening up at Wangaratta.

The action I seek is clarification from the minister of whether in fact there will be 150 students accommodated seeking certificate III in agricultural service delivery this year, as mentioned on the website, and clarification of what arrangement has been made

with Racing Victoria in relation to providing some sort of accredited courses that I would assume are somewhat similar to what is provided at Wangaratta. I would also like clarification — in fact this is all one action, President — of whether the college has been sold or will be sold under this arrangement.

### Doctors in Secondary Schools

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — My adjournment item this evening is for the Minister for Education. I received earlier today a very angry call from a constituent in Werribee. Both he and his wife last night, they informed me, attended an information session on the general practitioners in schools program that is about to begin. They informed me that under this program children from 11 years of age can access the school GP without their parents' knowledge or consent and that visit can be charged through the parents' Medicare. They informed me that children from 11 on can be referred to specialists without their parents' consent or knowledge. They also informed me that a child — and I say 'child' advisedly — can be given medication without a parent's consent or knowledge.

This program is an outrageous attack on families and the rights of parents to raise their children as they see fit. This government is implementing a series of hardline, left-wing, ideological assaults on our children and on families in general, and it has to stop. This has caused great distress in the Werribee community among those who attended the information session last night and those who found out about it today because, as you would imagine, there has been a great deal of discussion in the Werribee area as a result of what they were told last night. As I was informed today, parents right across that region are fuming. They are very angry, and my view is that they have every right to be angry.

This is an assault on parents' rights to raise their children, to protect their children and to do the right thing by their children, and — not just on behalf of the constituents who raised it with me today but every responsible parent across Victoria — I ask the minister to act now to stop this program, to ensure that this program is not implemented and to ensure that the rights of parents to protect their children in the way that they see fit are protected in this state.

### Bolte Bridge safety barriers

**Ms FITZHERBERT** (Southern Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and it is in relation to the *VicRoads Bridge Public Safety Barrier Policy*. I recently became

aware of this policy, which I was not previously aware of, and I understand that it is not publicly available but it is not a secret. The minister referred to it when responding to my queries about a recent tragic suicide at the Bolte Bridge. I acknowledge that Transurban is responsible for the management of the Bolte Bridge, and this extends of course to safety. The minister has advised me, and I quote:

Transurban follows strict policies put in place by VicRoads regarding public safety on bridges as outlined in the *VicRoads Bridge Public Safety Barrier Policy*.

In my view the policy document cannot really be described as containing 'strict policies'. It is five pages long, and most of this is taken up by the introduction; the purpose; the scope; the context, which is various research papers; responsibilities; related documents, which are other policies on suicide prevention more generally; contact details; and version control. The basic policy, as I read it, is something like this:

... there is no commonly agreed figure for the number of suicides at a particular site that would define it as a hotspot.

But:

... VicRoads will monitor any sites with one or more suicides and will investigate ... to determine whether the structure itself may have been a contributing factor ...

The policy does, however, note, and I quote:

... more than one suicide at a given location should be considered cause for concern.

And later it states:

The agencies and individuals involved in managing a suicide hotspot will vary ...

But:

VicRoads will work collaboratively with other agencies and groups to consider potential infrastructure treatments for existing bridges identified as suicide hotspots.

VicRoads 'can' check the Coroners Court's coroners prevention unit's data on suicides. There may be a need to consult the community — I am paraphrasing — and VicRoads will monitor and review the impact of any changes taken to prevent suicides from bridges. There is also a section about existing bridges where conditions change and about new bridges, and obviously neither of those apply to the Bolte Bridge.

That is the outline of what the minister calls the 'strict policies' put in place by VicRoads. They are not strict policies; it is a vague outline of possible actions that gives full discretion to VicRoads or, in this case, Transurban. I note that the Bolte Bridge has restricted

access for pedestrians, CCTV surveillance and automatic detection systems if someone does walk on the bridge. They also apparently use radar technology to monitor the bridge, and there are incident response teams, but plainly this is not working.

The communication that I have had previously from the minister on this indicates that he is washing his hands of it and relying on an incredibly lightweight policy and on VicRoads and Transurban to identify other measures that need to be taken. The policy I have referred to does not include any provision for identifying or quantifying failed attempts at suicide or the impact of this, and it was due to be reviewed in June 2015, which does not appear to have happened. The action I am seeking is for the minister to consult with Transurban and VicRoads and ensure that there is immediate and active consideration of safety barriers on the Bolte Bridge.

### **Ormond railway station development**

**Mr DAVIS** (Southern Metropolitan) — My matter for the adjournment tonight is for the attention of the Minister for Planning in the other place. It relates to Glen Eira planning scheme amendment C170, which has been gazetted today. This is the planning instrument by which the minister lays out what will happen on the VicTrack land at Ormond railway station and surrounds. It applies to the parcels of land at Newham Grove, North Road and Katandra Road, Ormond. It lays out in parallel with an incorporated document from June 2017 in the Glen Eira planning scheme the North Road, Ormond, comprehensive development plan. What in fact will occur is a 13-storey tower in precinct A and a 76-square-metre precinct on North Road. Further back there will be eight to nine storeys on precinct B and C respectively in the sequence bounded by Newham Grove in the west and Katandra Road in the east.

The process behind amendment C170 has been a travesty. The minister has retrospectively provided planning cover for the building of the foundation, which I am reliably informed will carry a 20-storey building and will be constructed as part of the process of building the rail-under-road model at Ormond — a supported model. What was not supported by the community in and around Ormond in Glen Eira is the building of the pad before the community knew and before indeed the council knew and then, finally, the planning approval for a 13-storey tower and other towers along the corridor.

I make the point that I am not opposed to sensible, practical, transport-oriented development, and I am not opposed to it where it has proper community input.

What I am seeking from the minister — and I note that his standing committee has seen this, but seen this after the footings and after the announcement of a 13-storey tower — is that he conduct a review into this process and that he also release as part of that review the full set of working documents on which he relied for these decisions and the details of what consideration will be given to the constructors for the concession that is being applied for this. How much has been scooped back? This crossing was paid for by the last government in a budget allocation. The rail-under-road model is supported, but he needs to review this and, as part of this, provide transparency on these matters.

### **Gippsland family violence services**

**Ms SHING** (Eastern Victoria) — The matter I have this evening is for the attention of the Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, Ms Hutchins, in the other place. It relates to the implementation of the 229 recommendations set out in the Royal Commission into Family Violence and in particular the engagement that is set out in the report and in a number of recommendations that is required to make sure that wherever possible there is community co-design in localised options to provide better services and response across the board.

To this end, I ask that the minister meet with family violence representatives and organisations that service the Gippsland area to get acquainted on a first-person basis with the needs and challenges that exist within our region as they relate to the tyranny of distance. Too often resources and services are spread out over large geographic areas. I ask her to meet with our significant Aboriginal community and populations throughout the region of Gippsland and also the members of our LGBTIQ community across Gippsland, who in fact also have a need to access support and resources, which are often spread over those large areas. I would welcome the minister to come to Gippsland and to meet with these representatives and organisations to continue the fine work that the government has undertaken to date in implementing these recommendations in preventing and stopping the intergenerational scourge of family violence in its tracks.

### **Eastern Domestic Violence Service**

**Mr LEANE** (Eastern Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter is also directed to the Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, Natalie Hutchins. I want to congratulate her on picking up these portfolios and carrying on the great work of the previous minister, who passed away. My adjournment matter regards the Eastern Domestic

Violence Service, EDVOS, which is led by a fantastic advocate in this area, Jenny Jackson. I ask if the minister could meet with EDVOS, Ms Jackson and others so they can outline to her some of the work they have been doing in this area, particularly a number of pilot programs.

One of the pilot programs they have undertaken involves training local hairdressers to identify, through their discussions while attending to their hairdressing duties, indications that a woman may have been mistreated in the home. This is a program that has been identified amongst a number of other programs where people who are exposed to women who are unfortunately in abusive relationships are trained to identify the telltale signs and suggest ways for them to get help if possible. My adjournment matter request is that the minister meet with EDVOS and work together with them in doing the good work they are doing.

### *Olinda Golf Course Precinct Plan*

**Mr O'DONOHUE** (Eastern Victoria) — I raise an adjournment matter for the attention of the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change. The action I seek is that the minister put on hold the implementation of the Olinda precinct master plan until there is further community consultation about the implementation of that master plan. The beautiful Dandenong Ranges has one of the jewels in the crown in the precinct in Olinda that includes the National Rhododendron Gardens, R. J. Hamer Arboretum and the 34-hectare former Olinda golf course site. The golf course was closed in 2012, and there has been a lot of community discussion both within the hills but also more broadly around Victoria about the future of the site and what it should look like.

Parks Victoria has undertaken a process to examine the best ways for future use of that land and how to reincorporate and make the most of that precinct in totality. The master plan was published in May this year. To the shock of the local community, a very large fence was soon erected along the new boundary of the Rhododendron Gardens on part of the former golf course land. This has led to a great deal of concern about what may be coming next without the knowledge of the community, because of course there was very limited consultation with the community, if any, about this new fence.

Local community members have raised a number of issues with me about the master plan as it currently sits and the way it contradicts Parks Victoria and Yarra Ranges Council policies — or so it is said — and the way there has been a lack of detailed studies on land

use planning; the impact on the economic activity of the area; transport, including the impact on local roads and parking; bushfire management; the environment et cetera. Obviously there are lots of competing interests for that land, but it is absolutely clear that this precinct is a beautiful area that needs to be preserved. The community needs to have confidence in the way it is going forward and have ownership of the future use of that former golf course land. For that reason I ask that the minister put on hold the current implementation of the master plan until there is further community consultation about the plan.

**Adjournment interrupted.**

## RULINGS BY THE CHAIR

### Questions on notice

**The PRESIDENT** — Just before I call the minister to respond to the adjournment matters, I indicate that Ms Dunn has asked me to reinstate a question on notice that she raised, question 11 019. She has provided me with that question and the answer she has been given. The question was to the Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade for the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. The question essentially concerned two different blocks of land. The minister has provided an appropriate answer on one of those parcels of land but did not include in the answer any comment on the second parcel of land, which is on the corner of Maroondah Highway and Healesville-Koo Wee Rup Road. It is presumably in the vicinity of Healesville. At any rate, I will reinstate the question, but only in respect of that second parcel of land, so I am narrowing the question down.

## ADJOURNMENT

**Adjournment resumed.**

### Responses

**Ms TIERNEY** (Minister for Training and Skills) — This evening we had 11 adjournment matters. The first was from Ms Lovell to the Minister for Sport, seeking a funding commitment to the Plenty Valley Cricket Club for turf wickets and training facilities.

Ms Dunn asked that the Minister for Public Transport take action to provide an audit on all buses as a result of defective buses that were identified earlier last week.

The third matter was another matter for the Minister for Public Transport. It was from Mr Morris and was in relation to the urban bus service in Ballarat, with respect to timetable and bus route changes. He is

seeking community consultation and that there be further changes based on that community consultation.

The fourth matter was raised by Dr Carling-Jenkins, and it was for the Minister for Police. The action she was seeking was for the minister to meet with Ms Kerryn Robertson.

There was another matter raised by Mr Ramsay that I will return to.

Mr Finn raised a matter for the Minister for Education, and the action he was seeking was for the GPs in schools program to be stopped.

Ms Fitzherbert raised a matter for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. The action she called for was that the minister talk with Transurban and VicRoads in particular about suicide prevention barriers on the Bolte Bridge.

The eighth matter was from Mr Davis, and it was to the Minister for Planning in relation to a C170 matter in the City of Glen Eira. He was seeking that the minister conduct a review of this matter and for the minister to also release working documents used to base any decision on.

The ninth matter was from Ms Shing, and it was to Minister Hutchins. It was about the importance of community co-design, and it was for the minister to go to Gippsland and meet with representatives of various Gippsland organisations — Indigenous, non-Indigenous and LGBTIQ organisations — to talk about the specific issues that they have in regard to access to support services in line with the Royal Commission into Family Violence recommendations.

The tenth matter was raised by Mr Leane and was also to Minister Hutchins. It was for the minister to look at training for people who often come into contact with people who are victims of domestic violence and to offer appropriate supports that are required in their workplace.

The eleventh matter was raised by Mr O'Donohue, and it was for the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change. It seeks that the minister hold off on the Olinda precinct master plan and that there be further community consultation on that matter.

The matter raised by Mr Ramsay is the matter of Glenormiston Agricultural College. That college was actually closed under the former government. We went to the last election saying that we would reopen Glenormiston, and on 1 September this year I had the opportunity of being at Glenormiston with the South

West Institute of TAFE and a number of local farmers. Racing Victoria was present, as were a number of local racing clubs. We also had a variety of organisations from the agricultural sector present. The fact of the matter is that we have been able to secure an arrangement whereby training will continue at Glenormiston. We made that election commitment, and we are now fulfilling it.

I am really excited about it. The certificate III in agriculture that Mr Ramsay referred to is an important certificate because it actually aligns with what is required locally. There are four employers that are signed up to this very important course. This is the very first time that a course has been tightly connected to what is required in the local agricultural industry, and for Mr Ramsay to raise these concerns tonight absolutely demonstrates to me that he has no connection with the people that have been in the conversations we have been conducting. We have had a very active reference group of local industry representatives and employers, who have formed an ongoing group to have discussions and develop the types of courses that they need in their local communities.

In terms of the historic memorandum of understanding with Racing Victoria, I think all of us, particularly those that are representatives of Western Victoria Region, would agree that racing in our local economies is so important. For us to now be seeing South West TAFE partnering with Racing Victoria to identify those skills gaps and job needs in the industry can only be good. It means that our young people in particular will be able to stay home and participate in an industry that is local and vibrant, and not only that, there is a real chance now to have serious career paths, not just jobs, in the racing industry in south-west Victoria.

So I am absolutely gobsmacked that a representative of Western Victoria Region can come in here tonight and try to trash what we have been able to bring together for Glenormiston. You only have to read the media responses to the announcement to see that they have all been incredibly supportive. You only have to look at the commentary from locals and local farmers about how the local economy will benefit from it. It is a very, very welcome initiative that we have endeavoured to deliver.

**Mr O'Donohue** — How many students? Twelve students?

**Ms TIERNEY** — We are starting with a number of students.

**Mr O'Donohue** — Fourteen students?

**Ms TIERNEY** — It will only grow, Mr O'Donohue. I ask you: what are you doing about TAFE? Are you continuing to trash TAFE? Are you continuing to trash opportunities for regional Victorians? Are you continuing to trash opportunities for young Victorians? I am absolutely gobsmacked, as I said, that you can stand there and interject in the way you are at the moment. You should actually be behind this. This is a great initiative, and we are really looking forward to seeing training being delivered again at Glenormiston. I think it has a fantastic future, and I applaud everyone for their efforts so far in making sure that we have the matching of local industry needs with local training and with local kids who are going to have great jobs and great futures in western Victoria.

**The PRESIDENT** — On that basis, the house stands adjourned.

**House adjourned 6.11 p.m.**