

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

FIFTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

Wednesday, 7 June 2017

(Extract from book 11)

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

By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

The Governor

The Honourable LINDA DESSAU, AC

The Lieutenant-Governor

The Honourable Justice MARILYN WARREN, AC, QC

The ministry

(from 10 November 2016)

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

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

Standing Committee on Legal and Social Issues — #Mr Barber, #Ms Crozier, #Mr 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.

Joint committees

Accountability and Oversight Committee — (*Council*): Mr O’Sullivan, Mr Purcell and Ms Symes. (*Assembly*): Mr Angus, Mr Gidley, Mr Staikos and Ms Thomson.

Dispute Resolution Committee — (*Council*): Mr Bourman, Mr Dalidakis, Ms Dunn, Mr Jennings and Ms Wooldridge. (*Assembly*): Ms Allan, Mr Clark, Mr Merlino, Mr M. O’Brien, Mr Pakula, Ms Richardson and Mr Walsh.

Economic, Education, Jobs and Skills Committee — (*Council*): Mr Bourman, Mr Elasmr and Mr Melhem. (*Assembly*): Mr Crisp, Mrs Fyffe, Ms Garrett and Ms Ryall.

Electoral Matters Committee — (*Council*): Ms Patten and Mr Somyurek. (*Assembly*): Ms Asher, Ms Blandthorn, Mr Dixon, Mr Northe and Ms Spence.

Environment, Natural Resources and Regional Development Committee — (*Council*): Mr O’Sullivan, Mr Ramsay and Mr Young. (*Assembly*): Mr J. Bull, Ms Halfpenny, Mr Richardson and Mr Riordan.

Family and Community Development Committee — (*Council*): Mr Finn. (*Assembly*): Ms Britnell, Ms Couzens, Mr Edbrooke, Ms Edwards and Ms McLeish.

House Committee — (*Council*): The President (*ex officio*), Mr Eideh, Ms Hartland, Ms Lovell, Mr Mulino and Mr Young. (*Assembly*): The Speaker (*ex officio*), Mr J. Bull, Mr Crisp, Mrs Fyffe, Mr Staikos, Ms Suleyman and Mr Thompson.

Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Committee — (*Council*): Mr Ramsay and Ms Symes. (*Assembly*): Mr Hibbins, Mr D. O’Brien, Mr Richardson, Ms Thomson and Mr Wells.

Law Reform, Road and Community Safety Committee — (*Council*): Mr Eideh and Ms Patten. (*Assembly*): Mr Dixon, Mr Howard, Ms Suleyman, Mr Thompson and Mr Tilley.

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee — (*Council*): Ms Patten, Ms Pennicuik and Ms Shing. (*Assembly*): Mr Dimopoulos, Mr Morris, Mr Pearson, Mr T. Smith, Ms Staley and Ms Ward.

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

Heads of parliamentary departments

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

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

Parliamentary Services — Secretary: Mr P. Lochert

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

President:

The Hon. B. N. ATKINSON

Deputy President:

Mr K. EIDEH

Acting Presidents:

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

Leader of the Government:

The Hon. G. JENNINGS

Deputy Leader of the Government:

The Hon. J. L. PULFORD

Leader of the Opposition:

The Hon. M. WOOLDRIDGE

Deputy Leader of the Opposition:

The Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS

Leader of The Nationals:

Mr L. B. O'SULLIVAN

Leader of the Greens:

Mr G. BARBER

Member	Region	Party	Member	Region	Party
Atkinson, Mr Bruce Norman	Eastern Metropolitan	LP	Mikakos, Ms Jenny	Northern Metropolitan	ALP
Barber, Mr Gregory John	Northern Metropolitan	Greens	Morris, Mr Joshua	Western Victoria	LP
Bath, Ms Melina ²	Eastern Victoria	Nats	Mulino, Mr Daniel	Eastern Victoria	ALP
Bourman, Mr Jeffrey	Eastern Victoria	SFFP	O'Brien, Mr Daniel David ¹	Eastern Victoria	Nats
Carling-Jenkins, Dr Rachel	Western Metropolitan	DLP	O'Donohue, Mr Edward John	Eastern Victoria	LP
Crozier, Ms Georgina Mary	Southern Metropolitan	LP	Ondarchie, Mr Craig Philip	Northern Metropolitan	LP
Dalidakis, Mr Philip	Southern Metropolitan	ALP	O'Sullivan, Luke Bartholomew ⁴	Northern Victoria	Nats
Dalla-Riva, Mr Richard Alex Gordon	Eastern Metropolitan	LP	Patten, Ms Fiona	Northern Metropolitan	ASP
Davis, Mr David McLean	Southern Metropolitan	LP	Pennicuik, Ms Susan Margaret	Southern Metropolitan	Greens
Drum, Mr Damian Kevin ³	Northern Victoria	Nats	Peulich, Mrs Inga	South Eastern Metropolitan	LP
Dunn, Ms Samantha	Eastern Metropolitan	Greens	Pulford, Ms Jaala Lee	Western Victoria	ALP
Eideh, Mr Khalil M.	Western Metropolitan	ALP	Purcell, Mr James	Western Victoria	V1LJ
Elasmarr, Mr Nazih	Northern Metropolitan	ALP	Ramsay, Mr Simon	Western Victoria	LP
Finn, Mr Bernard Thomas C.	Western Metropolitan	LP	Rich-Phillips, Mr Gordon Kenneth	South Eastern Metropolitan	LP
Fitzherbert, Ms Margaret	Southern Metropolitan	LP	Shing, Ms Harriet	Eastern Victoria	ALP
Gepp, Mr Mark ⁶	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 ⁵	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			

² Appointed 15 April 2015

³ Resigned 27 May 2016

⁵ Resigned 6 April 2017

⁶ Appointed 7 June 2017

¹ Resigned 25 February 2015

⁴ Appointed 12 October 2016

PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

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

CONTENTS

WEDNESDAY, 7 JUNE 2017

GAME MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY AMENDMENT BILL 2017 <i>Introduction and first reading</i>	3197
PAPERS	3197
STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND SOCIAL ISSUES <i>Membership</i>	3197
MINISTERS STATEMENTS <i>State Motorcycle Sports Complex</i>	3197
MEMBERS STATEMENTS <i>National Reconciliation Week</i>	3198
<i>School breakfast clubs</i>	3198
<i>Give Me 5 for Kids</i>	3198
<i>Shepparton rail services</i>	3199
<i>Healesville-Koo Wee Rup Road</i>	3199
<i>Eastern Victoria Region sporting club grants</i>	3199
<i>Latrobe Valley new energy technologies</i>	3199, 3200
<i>Alex McCallum</i>	3199
<i>Gippsland Farmer Relief Incorporated</i>	3199
<i>Warragul Drouin Pistol Club</i>	3200
PRODUCTION OF DOCUMENTS	3200
COMMUNITY SAFETY.....	3202, 3225, 3235
ABSENCE OF MINISTER.....	3219
QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE <i>Home education</i>	3219
<i>Timber industry</i>	3219, 3220
<i>Winton Wetlands</i>	3220, 3221
<i>Corrections system</i>	3221
<i>Brighton incident</i>	3222
<i>Parole programs</i>	3222
<i>Prison programs</i>	3222
<i>Parole conditions</i>	3223
<i>Written responses</i>	3223, 3265
QUESTIONS ON NOTICE <i>Answers</i>	3223
CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS <i>South Eastern Metropolitan Region</i>	3224
<i>Eastern Metropolitan Region</i>	3224
<i>Southern Metropolitan Region</i>	3224
<i>Northern Metropolitan Region</i>	3224
<i>Western Victoria Region</i>	3224, 3225
<i>Northern Victoria Region</i>	3224
<i>Western Metropolitan Region</i>	3225
PROCEDURE COMMITTEE <i>Reference</i>	3228
TAFE SYSTEM	3242
STATEMENTS ON REPORTS AND PAPERS <i>Standing Committee on the Economy and Infrastructure: Domestic Animals Amendment (Puppy Farms and Pet Shops) Bill 2016</i>	3254
<i>Auditor-General: Managing School Infrastructure</i>	3254
<i>Department of Treasury and Finance: budget papers 2017–18</i>	3255, 3258
<i>Department of Health and Human Services: drinking water quality report 2015–16</i>	3256
<i>VicForests: report 2015–16</i>	3256
<i>Commission for Children and Young People: The Same Four Walls</i>	3257
ADJOURNMENT <i>Australian Hazara Women’s Friendship Network</i>	3259
<i>Heatherdale railway station</i>	3259
<i>Bendigo Health</i>	3259
<i>Drug driving</i>	3260
<i>Gippsland offshore wind farm</i>	3260
<i>Kindergarten funding</i>	3261
<i>Tram priority signalling</i>	3261
<i>Victorian Institute of Sport</i>	3261
<i>Domain railway station</i>	3261
<i>Latrobe Special Developmental School</i>	3262
<i>Hume drug rehabilitation centre</i>	3262
<i>Ararat Rural City Council</i>	3263
<i>VicRoads Sunshine office</i>	3263
<i>Taxi and hire car industry</i>	3264
<i>Responses</i>	3264
JOINT SITTING OF PARLIAMENT <i>Legislative Council vacancy</i>	3266

Wednesday, 7 June 2017

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

The PRESIDENT — Order! I remind members that there will be a joint sitting today at 6.15 p.m. in the Assembly chamber to choose the person to hold the seat in the Legislative Council rendered vacant by the resignation of Mr Steven Herbert. Our procedures today have been changed by way of a motion proposed yesterday by the Leader of the Opposition to enable us to clear our business and to attend that joint sitting.

GAME MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY AMENDMENT BILL 2017

Introduction and first reading

Mr YOUNG (Northern Victoria) introduced a bill for an act to amend the Game Management Authority Act 2014 to make provision in relation to the Game Management Authority and for other purposes.

Read first time.

PAPERS

Laid on table by Clerk:

Auditor-General's Reports on —

Technical and Further Education Institutes: 2016 Audit Snapshot, June 2017 (*Ordered to be published*).

Universities: 2016 Audit Snapshot, June 2017 (*Ordered to be published*).

Racing Victoria Limited — Modification of Racing Victoria Limited constitution pursuant to section 3B(2) of the Racing Act 1958.

Statutory Rule under an Act of Parliament — Rooming House Operators Act 2016 — No. 37.

Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001 — Government response to the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council's Historic Places Investigation, Final Report.

Victorian Law Reform Commission — Review of the Adoption Act 1984, February 2017 (*Ordered to be published*).

STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND SOCIAL ISSUES

Membership

Ms WOOLDRIDGE (Eastern Metropolitan) — By leave, I move:

That —

- (1) Mr O'Donohue be discharged from the Standing Committee on Legal and Social Issues; and
- (2) Mr Morris be appointed to the Standing Committee on Legal and Social Issues.

Motion agreed to.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS

State Motorcycle Sports Complex

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Regional Development) — I rise to update the house on an exciting prospect that the government is now part of. The opportunity that exists for Broadford is very exciting and is potentially the next big thing in motorsports. There are plans afoot to expand the State Motorcycle Sports Complex to attract more large events and additional visitors to the region.

I am pleased to announce that the government has provided \$50 000 towards the development of a feasibility study for expanding the existing complex. Member for Northern Victoria Region Jaclyn Symes has been a big advocate for this project and for this study.

The Mitchell Shire Council and Motorcycling Victoria will assess the potential expansion of the State Motorcycle Sports Complex and the development of adjacent vacant land into an industrial park and training facility with accommodation. Located just 1 hour's drive from Melbourne on one of the state's most significant rail and road routes, Broadford is already an ideal destination for motorsports and other major events, and an expanded complex could be just the ticket for increased economic gain. Motorcycling Victoria has relocated its head office to Broadford and is committed to developing the complex to meet the needs of its members and the broader motorsports fraternity. In addition, a number of new events have now committed to the facility for the next three years.

The government is supporting this project through the \$500 million Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund, which is making regional Victoria an even better place to live, work, visit and enjoy motorsports. The

Victorian government is committed to investing in infrastructure projects that help regional economies to grow. Sites like the State Motorcycle Sports Complex have enormous potential to support employment growth, to drive tourism and to deliver strong economic benefits to this region.

I thank Ms Symes for her advocacy on this project, and I congratulate the project proponents and wish them well as the study is undertaken.

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

National Reconciliation Week

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan) — This year National Reconciliation Week coincided with some very significant anniversaries: 27 May marked the 50th anniversary of the 1967 referendum to amend the Australian constitution to include Aboriginal people in the constitution and to allow the commonwealth to create laws for them, which won the support of more than 90 per cent of Australians and all states; 3 June marks 25 years since the Mabo decision of the High Court that found that terra nullius should not have been applied to Australia and that recognised that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have rights to the land that existed before the British arrived and still exists today; and 26 May marked 20 years since the *Bringing Them Home* report was tabled in the Parliament of Australia, chronicling the devastation that was wreaked on Aboriginal people by the forced removal of Aboriginal children from their families.

There is still much to do to achieve justice. The gathering of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders at the First Nations National Convention at Uluru produced the ‘Uluru statement from the heart’. The statement calls for the establishment of a first nations voice enshrined in the constitution and calls for a Makarrata commission to supervise the process of agreement making between government and first nations and truth telling about our history.

The statement from the heart I think goes to all of our hearts. It says:

In 1967 we were counted, in 2017 we seek to be heard. We leave base camp and start our trek across this vast country. We invite you to walk with us in a movement of the Australian people for a better future.

School breakfast clubs

Mr MELHEM (Western Metropolitan) — I rise to commend the Andrews Labor government on the overwhelming success of the school breakfast clubs

program in Victoria. This program was introduced by the Andrews Labor government in the 2015–16 state budget and has since served more than 2 million meals across Victoria.

Breakfast, as we all know, is the most important meal of the day. Our children need it to perform at their best. In Victoria we know that one in seven children goes to school with an empty stomach. This inhibits their ability to concentrate, learn and thrive. This issue is particularly prevalent in areas of high socio-economic disadvantage, which are areas where the relationships between parents, schools and communities are sometimes fractured.

This program has gone a long way in rectifying this issue. Fifty thousand breakfasts are served every week in 500 of Victoria’s most disadvantaged schools. Students are now getting the energy they need to achieve their goals. Teachers have been reporting improved concentration, increased attendance and stronger bonds with their students. This allows teachers to get on with the important job of educating our kids. In my own electorate of Western Metropolitan Region over 60 schools have adopted this initiative. Schools like Taylors Lakes Primary School and Werribee Primary School are now seeing better outcomes and better results in the classroom.

This is just another perfect example of how this Labor government is fighting disadvantage in our community. Unlike those opposite, we will always look to give a helping hand to those who need it — because we believe that children, no matter their postcode, should be given every opportunity to fulfil their potential. I commend the overwhelming success of this program and thank this government for its excellent work in nurturing our youth.

Give Me 5 for Kids

Ms LOVELL (Northern Victoria) — I was pleased to be invited last week to take part in the annual live broadcast from Goulburn Valley Health’s children’s ward for the Shepparton Give Me 5 for Kids appeal. The annual appeal, run by local radio station 95.3 MMM, is the major local fundraiser for Goulburn Valley Health’s children’s ward. Last year the appeal raised in excess of \$121 000 and this year is on track to exceed that amount. I would like to make a special mention of Paul Archer from Natrad in Shepparton, who is a major supporter of the appeal, who drove all over the state and southern New South Wales to collect car batteries which are sold for recycling and the money donated to the appeal. This year Mr Archer raised over

\$59 500 for the appeal, bringing his total to over \$170 000 over the past six years.

Well done to everyone involved in this year's appeal, especially MMM announcer Mike 'Locco' O'Loughlin.

Shepparton rail services

Ms LOVELL — Last week I spoke to a user of Shepparton's rail services who lamented many problems with the line, including Melbourne–Shepparton rail stock breakdowns. The most recent incident of this was last Tuesday, when the service that was due to depart Spencer Street at 7.08 p.m. broke down. The constituent said it is quite a regular thing for trains to break down and for passengers to have to be transferred to buses. She said that there was no-one assisting the redirection to buses; passengers were just expected to know where they were supposed to go or follow the crowd and hope they were going to the right place. She said they were forced to wait on a cold platform for the train electrical fault to be repaired. The lights came on, so passengers got on the train, but were then told to get off and transfer to a bus. However, the train fault must have been rectified shortly after, because when the bus got to Murchison station the train overtook it — and arrived in Shepparton before the bus did. This is yet another example of Shepparton rail line passengers being treated like second-class citizens by the Andrews Labor government.

Healesville-Koo Wee Rup Road

Mr MULINO (Eastern Victoria) — I am pleased that the government has boosted safety for drivers on Healesville-Koo Wee Rup Road, completing a package of upgrades to reduce the risk and severity of crashes. Two lives were lost on Healesville-Koo Wee Rup Road last year, with 18 crashes occurring over a five-year period to December 2015. The upgrades follow extensive community consultation and address the main types of crashes that have occurred on the 9-kilometre section between Greenhills Road and Manks Road. New rumble strips, guide posts, reflective markers and speed signs have been installed. These upgrades follow other recent improvements, such as new guard fencing, flexible safety barriers, shoulder sealing, street lighting and road surface works.

Eastern Victoria Region sporting club grants

Mr MULINO — Sports participation is a crucially important social activity and underpins the health of our community. Through the sporting club grants program, a large number of sporting clubs in my electorate have

received funding for equipment and uniforms, including Bunyip Football Club, Catani Tennis Club, Officer Senior Football Club, Garfield Netball Club, Baxter Netball Club, Safety Beach Sailing Club, 1st Mornington Scout Group and Mount Evelyn Netball Football Club.

Latrobe Valley new energy technologies

Mr MULINO — It was an honour to attend the Latrobe Valley new energy technologies round table with the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, Lily D'Ambrosio, at Federation University in Churchill. Over 180 people attended, which reflects the considerable interest across the community in the industries of the future and the ways in which the valley can benefit from the promotion of these industries. It was also exciting to hear of the proposed major offshore wind farm that proponents will bring to state and federal governments in the near future.

Alex McCallum

Ms DUNN (Eastern Metropolitan) — I rise today to pay tribute to Greens member Alex McCallum, who suddenly died a couple of weeks ago. Alex lived in North Warrandyte and was a committed member of the Nillumbik branch of the Greens. In fact he was a member for so long that that branch has also been known as the St Andrews and District and Nillumbik North branch. He was a passionate bike rider for all that time and was passionate about the A Metre Matters campaign, amongst a whole range of other campaigns. He was always going that extra mile for the Greens and was deeply committed to progressing Greens values. In fact he was so committed to the A Metre Matters campaign that his family insisted that in lieu of flowers donations be provided to the Amy Gillett Foundation, which of course has been instrumental in advocating for A Metre Matters laws in this state. I pay tribute to Alex and his contribution to the Greens and express our deepest sympathies to his family and friends.

Gippsland Farmer Relief Incorporated

Ms SHING (Eastern Victoria) — I wish to pay tribute to and congratulate Gippsland Farmer Relief Incorporated, which continues to provide assistance to and support for farming families throughout Gippsland who have borne the brunt of the milk price drop and the associated financial hardship that has made it very difficult for people throughout the region to make ends meet in recent months. The forums that they have planned and are in the process of rolling out from Traralgon to Sale, Leongatha and Warragul are to be accessed as a way to get more support, more

communication and better community connection as far as dealing with these difficult times. I congratulate Gippsland Farmer Relief Incorporated for everything that they do in the community.

Latrobe Valley new energy technologies

Ms SHING — It was fantastic to have the new energy technologies round table and forums take place in the Latrobe Valley last week, bringing together well over 100 participants to talk about options for growing our energy availability and supply and at the same time to hear of Minister D’Ambrosio’s work in securing the best possible opportunities for offshore wind generation and energy that will continue to meet our base load and other power requirements in the future.

Warragul Drouin Pistol Club

Ms SHING — It was a joy to attend the Warragul Drouin Pistol Club to confirm that they will receive funding to upgrade their clubhouse, target wind back and rifle range facilities. This is an area which is used by Victoria Police as well as by people who want to train in a safe, well-regulated environment. I congratulate them on achieving this grant.

PRODUCTION OF DOCUMENTS

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I move:

That, in accordance with standing order 11.01, the Leader of the Government table in the Council by 12 noon on Monday, 7 August 2017, the following documents relating to the proposed changes to the Country Fire Authority (CFA) and Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB) in the Firefighters’ Presumptive Rights Compensation and Fire Services Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2017 —

- (1) all expert reports relied upon in consideration for the changes of the CFA structure;
- (2) all expert reports relied upon to establish a panel to review the current fire services boundaries;
- (3) all correspondence between the office of the Minister for Emergency Services and —
 - (a) Emergency Management Victoria;
 - (b) Country Fire Authority;
 - (c) Metropolitan Fire Brigade;
 - (d) Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria;
 - (e) United Firefighters Union;
- (4) all briefs within the Department of Premier and Cabinet or Emergency Services Victoria;

- (5) any correspondence regarding the contract of the chief executive officer of the CFA, including additional bonuses to remain in the role;

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

I will resist the temptation to go into the substantive issues surrounding the CFA issue because this documents motion is not the time for such a debate, but it is fair to say that over the last two years we have seen played out in Victoria an extraordinary set of circumstances surrounding the government’s, or the Premier’s, intention to deliver an enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA) or to force an EBA onto the CFA at the behest of the United Firefighters Union (UFU).

This started out with a scenario of the government and the former Minister for Emergency Services opposing the EBA that the UFU were looking to have introduced to the CFA. Following an apparent meeting between the Premier and the head of the UFU, we saw the government’s position on that EBA backflip. The government went from opposing that EBA to wholeheartedly supporting that EBA. As a consequence of the shift in the government’s position, or the Premier’s position, on that EBA, we then saw a remarkable chain of events surrounding the Premier’s desire to prosecute and deliver that EBA.

We saw the acrimonious resignation of the former Minister for Emergency Services. We saw the removal of the CFA board. We saw the resignation of the then CFA chief executive officer. We have seen subsequently a number of other senior office-holders, either in the CFA or the MFB, leave office. We saw the CFA chief fire officer, Joe Buffone, leave. We saw the MFB chief officer, Peter Rau, and the deputy chief officer leave. We saw the CEO of the MFB leave. We saw the acting chief officer leave. There have been a number of significant senior office-holders from both organisations depart MFB and CFA.

We have seen the former minister depart her role. We have seen the commonwealth Parliament intervene to change its Fair Work legislation which would prevent that particular EBA being forced on the CFA to the detriment of volunteers. The response from the Victorian government was to introduce the legislation which is referred to in this motion, so that it can then continue to force that EBA onto the Victorian Country Fire Authority with the resulting impact on the volunteers.

The question has to be asked: why? Why has the government taken this course of action in the face of a number of reports into the CFA, none of which

recommended the structural changes which the government is now seeking to pursue through this legislation, none of which on the face of it make sense, and none of which on the face of it appear to be in the interests of the CFA and the delivery of volunteer fire services in Victoria? Why did the Premier change his position after meeting with the head of the UFU? Why has he been so strident in the face of what is apparently in the best interests of the CFA and what is apparently in the best interests of his own government? Why has he pursued this course of action leading to this legislation that the Parliament is being asked to deal with this week?

This document's motion is quite straightforward. It seeks a range of documents which go behind the government's decision to introduce this legislation and go behind the government's decision to pursue this EBA at the behest of the UFU, apparently in the face of logic, in the face of the government's own interests and certainly in the face of the CFA's interests. I hope that this motion has the house's support. The provision of these documents as listed will go a long way to providing insight into the government's thinking and decision-making around this issue. If the house passes this motion today, I hope that we also see the government respond and comply with the spirit of this motion in being transparent on this issue by providing these documents to the house so that for the first time in two years the Parliament and the Victorian public can understand why this government has taken the course of action it has around the CFA and why it is now proceeding with the legislation that the Parliament is being asked to deal with this month.

This is a simple documents motion. It seeks a return from the government when the house resumes after the winter recess. We hope that in the spirit of transparency this documents motion is supported by the house so that this information is made available to the house and to the public and that the government is also responsive and transparent in answering the many questions that surround the direction it has taken with the CFA over the last two years.

Ms DUNN (Eastern Metropolitan) — Mr Rich-Phillips's motion moved this morning goes to the core of the house of review and the scrutiny of government functions that are the hallmark of this house. In terms of the Greens, we have always supported open and transparent process. This particular motion before us seeks to access a range of documents in relation to the Country Fire Authority, the Metropolitan Fire Brigade and the bill coming before us, the Firefighters' Presumptive Rights Compensation

and Fire Services Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2017.

In terms of that particular issue, we know that there is an enormous interest in it, and that is reflected in our inboxes, and there are a full range of views on the issue. I think in terms of unpacking that and understanding how we have got to this place, this motion seeks to do it by requesting that range of documents. The Greens will certainly be supporting this motion. We think it is important that there is that level of transparency between the government and this house, and that this house does have an important role to play in terms of scrutiny around decision-making.

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Agriculture) — The government will not be opposing this request for documents motion. As is the usual practice we will take the resolution before us and thoroughly consider the request and decide which documents are appropriate for release in the usual manner.

Our government is determined to modernise Victoria's fire services. At the heart of our aspiration here, of course first and foremost, is community safety. We will continue to support volunteer firefighters and we will continue to support career firefighters to do what they do best. But these matters have had a very long, difficult and challenging history. I think, in my experience, that the firefighters I talk to want a resolution of these matters. They want to stop being kicked around as a political football, and they want to get on with doing what they are passionate about and what they are highly capable of, which is protecting the community.

The work of all of those involved in our fire services is extraordinary. We only have to cast our minds back to the horrific events around the Black Saturday fires to be reminded of scenes that will I think be seared in the memories of Victorians forever. We need to continue to support the modernisation and evolution of our fire services.

There has been a great deal of work done by my colleague the Deputy Premier and Minister for Emergency Services, James Merlino, which has culminated in the release of the Victorian fire services statement a few weeks ago. This includes a significant boost in support for volunteer firefighters, the restoration of the Country Fire Authority (CFA) as a volunteer organisation, and some new consideration of boundaries. When we look at the boundaries between the CFA and the Metropolitan Fire Brigade as they currently stand, what we have is a picture of what Melbourne looked like in the 1950s — about the time

they were planning to build Monash University, which was at the time on the very far outer edges of Melbourne. This area is now very much our middle suburbs. There are 35 integrated stations in Victoria, including my own local brigade which supports fire services for what is very much an urban population of 100 000 people. We are determined to resolve these issues. I think the work that the minister, the Deputy Premier, has led will certainly place our fire services on a much better footing going forward.

Of course part of this also is a resolution of that longstanding desire of firefighters to have their rights recognised where they have contracted illnesses, and in particular certain types of cancers, from repeated exposure as a result of their work. We certainly want our firefighters, whether they are career firefighters or volunteer firefighters, to be able to avoid the very lengthy arguments and protracted business with medico-legal reports to establish the basis of a claim for a cancer.

I think the science and the work done by the commonwealth government and other jurisdictions now tell us that there is very good reason to reverse the onus and for the presumption to be in favour of the link between the disease, the repeated exposure to firefighting and of course the exposure to chemicals that are involved in that.

So our government is determined to support our firefighters to do what it is that they do best. Our fire services do need to be modernised. We are determined to ensure that the community is safe, that the CFA is enshrined as a volunteer organisation, as it should be, and that there is a recognition that the shape of Victoria's population and the shape of Melbourne have changed a lot. That means that we need to adapt significant funding as part of the fire services statement as well to ensure that volunteer brigades have the equipment that they need to fight fires and to keep the community safe.

Motion agreed to.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — I move:

That this house notes —

- (1) the failure of the Minister for Police, Lisa Neville, to commit to reopening the police stations that have either been closed or had their opening hours cut under Premier Daniel Andrews;

- (2) that several closed police stations have been attacked with graffiti, including recently at Burwood and Heidelberg West;
- (3) that the Minister for Police, Lisa Neville, has failed to honour her promise, made repeatedly both prior to and after the 2014 election, that the Portarlington, Drysdale and Queenscliff police stations would be open 16 hours a day, every day;
- (4) that under Premier Daniel Andrews, crime is up over 20 per cent in just two years while the number of police per capita has been cut;
- (5) the comments of the Minister for Police, Lisa Neville, who admitted in March 2017 that Victorians are living in fear in their own homes;
- (6) that Victoria currently has a part-time Minister for Police and a part-time Minister for Corrections with other unrelated portfolio responsibilities;
- (7) that according to the most recent Victoria Police figures, the number of protective services officers has been cut;

and calls on the Premier, Daniel Andrews, to make community safety the number one priority of the government.

This motion has various limbs to it in relation to the law and order crisis in Victoria and the failures of the Andrews government when it comes to the management of community safety. Let me say at the outset how lucky we are to have such a dedicated, professional and courageous police force — men and women who do put themselves in the line of risk to protect all of us. One of the cornerstones of a well-functioning society is a police force that stands up for the community, represents the community and enforces the law. That is what our police do. They do a great job, and we have seen that and their great courage on display in recent days. So I just want to make that opening remark in relation to our wonderful police.

Paragraph (1) of my motion talks about the failure of the Minister for Police, Lisa Neville, to commit to reopening the police stations that have been closed or have had their opening hours cut under the Andrews government. This is particularly pertinent when you look at paragraph (3) of my motion and the promises that Lisa Neville made in her own electorate in regard to the opening hours of police stations in her community.

Before the election in 2014 and after the election as a minister of the crown in the Andrews government, she committed unequivocally that the Bellarine stations of Portarlington, Queenscliff and Drysdale would be open 16 hours a day every day — no ifs or buts, no qualification, no exceptions. And did Ms Neville not make political hay out of that issue prior to the last election? Yet here she is today as the police minister of

Victoria, and she has absolutely failed to deliver on the promise she made to her own constituents. Can there be any greater slap in the face for your own community than to fail as the responsible minister to honour a commitment you make to your own constituents?

When Ms Neville is questioned about police station opening hours now, she says, 'It's got nothing to do with me. It is a matter for the chief commissioner'. I did not hear her saying that before the 2014 election or indeed after the 2014 election when talking about this matter in relation to her own constituents. She has failed to honour that promise, and she has failed to be truthful to her own constituents about this issue.

But it is not just those police stations where the opening hours have not been at the level that was promised by the government. A range of other police stations have either seen their opening hours reduced or been closed, and I will run through some of those. We have seen the Endeavour Hills police station have its opening hours cut on the weekends — this despite rampant crime in the City of Casey, despite the City of Casey growing enormously and despite the City of Casey having just three police stations to service hundreds of thousands of people, with significant growth in both population and crime.

The Burwood police station has effectively been closed since early 2015. Pointing to paragraph (2) of my motion, the Burwood police station has been repeatedly subject to graffiti attack. How can it be that the police minister says, 'No, no. There have been no police stations closed. No, we haven't closed any police stations', yet we have police stations that have been graffitied and they stay graffitied for days until it becomes a matter of public interest? It is a very bad message to send to the community, it is a very bad message to send to criminals and it is consistent with the proliferation of graffiti right across our community. We really need to get tough on this sort of illegal behaviour. The community does not like it. It does not have to be this way. It is not this way in other places. It is not just the product of being a big city. It does not have to be like this. To have police stations graffitied, like the closed Burwood police station, is unacceptable.

The Ashburton police station has a long history. Under the former member for Burwood in the Assembly, Bob Stensholt, the opening hours for Ashburton police station were slashed. The new member for Burwood, Graham Watt, advocated for extra resources and secured capital funding for the upgrade of the Ashburton police station, and its opening hours were restored. Under the Andrews government, those hours have been slashed again. From being open five days a

week, the station has been reduced to opening on just a couple of days a week. The Ashburton community has spoken out on several occasions about their concern about that.

Similarly at Carrum Downs the opening hours on the weekend have been reduced, despite Carrum Downs being a fast-growing area. The Mount Waverley police station similarly has seen reduced opening hours, from 16 hours a day to 8 hours a day. We have had a range of 24-hour stations that have either been forced to close for periods of time due to member shortages or have been operating with the door closed when they are one member up. It is not possible to go into these stations unless you go through security and the like because they are one member up. That is not what the community would expect of a 24-hour police station. Just over the electorate boundary of the police minister, the Waurin Ponds police station has also seen its opening hours reduced on the weekend.

The Nunawading police station has been closed. It still houses and is an administrative base for police members, but the front counter is closed and there is no public access. Wade Noonan, the first Minister for Police in this government, made a commitment that the 105 single-member stations would remain open, but the Whitfield police station up in the King Valley has effectively been closed for two years. I understand there was an announcement recently about its reopening, but it has been without a member and has been closed for two years. That is completely inconsistent with the clear statement made by Wade Noonan in a press release in early 2015 about keeping the 105 single-member stations open.

We all know that the single-member station is often the lifeblood of the local community. Often the bank has closed, the post office has closed and many of the other services have withdrawn, so the single member at the police station invariably is the secretary of the footy club, is the secretary of a range of community organisations, is involved in all the community organisations, is engaged with the community, understands the community and works with the community.

In a sense it is that traditional role of proactive policing: engaging with community, identifying risk and working with members of the community who may be at risk to keep them on the straight and narrow and keep them being productive members of the community. The fact that Whitfield has not had that dedicated resource for two years I know has been an enormous concern for Mr McCurdy, the member for Ovens Valley in the other place, and again is inconsistent with the

commitment of the first Minister for Police of this government.

Ms Lovell and I were recently in Tatura, and the members of the Tatura community voiced their significant concern about the regular and uncertain opening hours of their police station. The Tatura community has seen a number of burglaries and other criminal acts that have shocked the community. I will not go into details, but there have been a number of criminal acts that have shocked the community — acts that the Tatura community has seen rarely in the past.

The Somerville police station has never been opened. The former Chief Commissioner of Police, Ken Lay, wrote to the former Minister for Police, Kim Wells, in October 2014 saying that the Somerville police station would be open 16 hours a day, but when the work on that police station was completed in early 2015 — around April or May — it was closed. It is now a base for other police members, but the front counter is closed. It has never been opened. There was some suggestion in the local media that it was never designed to be a police station. It has got a front counter and it has all the infrastructure needed to operate as a police station; the unfortunate thing is that it has never been opened.

The list goes on. My colleague Mr Bull, the member for Gippsland East in the other place, has repeatedly raised the issue of policing at Lakes Entrance and the lack of dedicated extra resources when the population of Lakes Entrance increases by tens of thousands of people during the summer and other vacation periods.

I raised in the adjournment debate last night the fact that before Easter the Cowes police station was closed and police were transferred to the San Remo police station in anticipation of the imminent construction of a new station. Yet here we are a couple of months on and the contract for the new station has yet to be let, so mobilisation of the construction team is at least three, four, five weeks away, and the people of Phillip Island do not have a dedicated police station presence. The Minister for Police, Lisa Neville, made a very clear commitment, and I think Ms Shing did as well in the local paper, that the new police station would be open for the busy summer period.

We all know that Phillip Island and Cowes in particular is a very popular location for schoolies and for tens of thousands of people over the summer period to holiday, have fun and have a good time, but of course that brings with it some risk, which a dedicated police presence is central to managing. The question for the minister and the question for the government is: if the

new Cowes police station cannot be opened before Christmas, where are the extra police going to be located given the constraints on the San Remo police station and given the fact that the existing Phillip Island police are already located at San Remo? That is a serious issue.

My motion also mentions the vandalism at the Heidelberg West police station, and we know Mr Carbines in the Legislative Assembly used to have a very strong opinion about reopening the Heidelberg West police station. In fact Ms Mikakos and Ms Green in the Legislative Assembly and the now Premier were there with Mr Carbines in a protest saying, 'Reopen Heidelberg West police station'.

Now that they are in government there is silence, deafening silence. Indeed Mr Carbines has said, 'That has absolutely nothing to do with me. That is a matter for the police', despite having led protests, tabled petitions and rallied the community in relation to the 'outrageous' closure of the Heidelberg West police station, which by the way was signed off on under the term of the Brumby government. He is now silent — nothing to see here. A police station vandalised with graffiti — nothing to see here. It is amazing how those members, including the now Premier, have lost their voice over that issue.

At a broader level we have a serious law and order crisis in Victoria, with crime up just over 20 per cent in just two years while, as the police commissioner himself confirmed at the 2015–16 Public Accounts and Estimates Committee outcomes hearings, the number of police per capita in Victoria has been cut under the Andrews government. Again, as I mentioned in the house yesterday, the secretary of the Police Association Victoria, Mr Gatt, at a public hearing for the Legal and Social Issues Committee inquiry examining youth justice issues, highlighted the current resource challenges faced by Victoria Police and noted that the extra burden of managing incidents in the youth justice system just makes that resource scarcity even worse. So while the government has talked a great deal about what they are going to do about employing extra police and training extra police, the simple fact is that the academy has a certain capacity and it takes a certain period of time to do the recruitment, the training and the deployment of those police. We have had two lost years — two lost years.

The first budget of the Andrews government had barely an extra police officer over and above attrition being recruited. The second budget of the Andrews government had 406 police over two years, later with extra resources to make that delivery a little bit quicker

but not enough to keep up with population growth. While the Premier and the minister made the announcement about extra police last December, the simple fact is that the money for those extra police has not actually started flowing yet. Labor members particularly in marginal seats have been pumping out material about the thousands of extra police that the Labor government is training and the thousands of extra police it is deploying and how it is doing this and it is doing that.

The simple fact is they have spent the money on the brochures but they have not spent a cent yet on the actual training and deployment of those extra police that they are talking about that will start from 1 July. The opposition was calling for that money from the announcement in December to be fast-tracked into the current financial year so that we could expedite the training of as many police as possible. The government did not do that, because sitting behind this is the fact that we have seen terms such as home invasions and carjackings become part of the daily discussion in Victoria when in the past this simply was not the case.

Crime is up over 20 per cent. We have seen robberies up 24.4 per cent, thefts up by nearly 16 per cent and a range of other crimes up by significant percentages. More than 90 000 extra criminal offences have been committed in 2016 compared to 2014. To go back to police numbers, at the change of government in November 2014 there were 13 151.68 full-time equivalent (FTE) police. In March 2017 there were 13 525.60 FTE, a difference of 373.92. Let us call it 374. When you take into account population growth we are going backwards, because with population growth of around 2 per cent per annum we need around an extra 250 police each year just to stay level with population growth. You can see from those numbers that the number of police per capita in Victoria has gone backwards and the number of regional police or frontline police at stations has increased by just 8 between November 2014 and March 2017, so it is no wonder that when I talk to police on the ground, driving the divvy around, at the front counter, in the watch house or out in the community they say they are feeling the pressure — not just because of the violence we are seeing and the things like the rammings of police vehicles, which are just terrible.

Mr Morris interjected.

Mr O'DONOHUE — As Mr Morris notes, there was another incident such as that yesterday. There was another police ramming in Ballarat.

Mr Morris — Two in 13 days.

Mr O'DONOHUE — Two in 13 days, Mr Morris informs me, in Ballarat, which is just a terrible crime and a terrible thing to do. Our police are doing such a great job working on the front line under pressure when their resources are stretched and they are under attack, such as is reflected in the increase in police rammings that we have seen. These are not just my words. This is not just the opposition trying to make a political issue out of this. The Minister for Police herself admitted with the release of the recent crime stats that Victorians do not feel safe in their own homes. There can be no greater indictment of the Andrews government than the words of the police minister herself, who admitted that Victorians do not feel safe in their own homes.

Mr Ramsay interjected.

Mr O'DONOHUE — I will not take up Mr Ramsay's interjection about all the Labor members who do not live in their own electorates. I will not take up that issue today because that is a debate for another day, because how can you seek to represent a community when you are disassociated from it? But I will leave that aside.

There can be no greater indictment of the Andrews government's performance in community safety than the words of the police minister herself that Victorians do not feel safe in their own homes. There always has been crime and there always will be crime, but things have changed dramatically for the worse in recent times. The community is in fear. The crime statistics show that crime is up significantly and the worst types of crimes have gone up significantly. This is an enormous challenge for the community and for the government. Despite all the talk from the minister and the Premier in relation to the community safety statement, the simple fact is that we unfortunately continue to see heinous crimes and this trend continuing unabated.

I think it is time that the Andrews government had a good look at the way its cabinet is structured. At this time when community safety is at the fore like never before, how did the Premier come to have a Minister for Police who is also the Minister for Water? Why is the Attorney-General also the Minister for Racing? And why is the Minister for Corrections also the Minister for Training and Skills? There may be some argument about some connection between these portfolios, but fundamentally they are in different departments — although racing and the Attorney-General are in the Department of Justice and Regulation — they are different portfolios with different responsibilities, different stakeholders and different issues, which means that these ministers who need to focus full time on the

law and order crisis in Victoria have to manage a range of competing priorities. In these times when community safety is so much at the fore, that needs to be addressed by the Premier through a cabinet reshuffle.

The most recent Victoria Police figures revealed as well that the number of protective services officers (PSOs) was cut by 33. I would invite members of the government to address this motion to explain why the number of PSOs has been cut, particularly when demand for their services is increasing as a result of the extra work following the introduction of the Night Network. I would like government members to advise which stations do not currently have the coverage of PSOs from 6.00 p.m. till last train as has been the policy since the introduction of PSOs. With that number of PSOs cut, I find it hard to believe that the same coverage of the network can be provided. The PSOs — despite the commentary of some, despite the scepticism of the now Deputy Premier when he referred to them as ‘plastic police’ — do a fantastic job not just protecting us here in the Parliament, not just in all the work they do around Government House and the courts and other key institutions but in the work they do in making our railway stations safe and making our public transport travel, particularly at night time, something that commuters can use with comfort and safety.

I am pleased to move my motion. I am pleased to have a debate today about these important issues of community safety, because at this time nothing is more important for this house to consider than the safety of Victorians and the safety of our community. Despite a lot of talk from the government, we are still yet to see a clear and coherent policy framework to address the crime wave that is facing Victoria.

Mr SOMYUREK (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I rise to speak on this motion and, I say at the outset, to oppose this motion before the house. There are seven different paragraphs in this motion. I might address each one of those in turn. The first paragraph notes:

- (1) the failure of the Minister for Police, Lisa Neville, to commit to reopening the police stations that have either been closed or had their opening hours cut under Premier Daniel Andrews ...

In terms of police stations, let us be clear about this: no police station is closing and the safety of the Victorian community always comes first. Victoria Police are not closing police stations as such, but in some circumstances operational decisions have been made to reduce the hours of particular stations in a bid to get more police on the front line. My expectation, and I think the community’s expectation, and the explicit direction of police, is that the community will be

consulted through any such process. These decisions have been made to get more police out into the community. The Chief Commissioner of Police said:

... I give discretion to my officers, particularly our local area command, to have police on patrol. I want to give them ‘that flexibility’.

The chief commissioner has been very strong on this particular issue. I am paraphrasing him, but he would rather police be out on the streets fighting crime and not just occupying counters and filling out paperwork. So I guess what I am saying is that he would rather police were out on the beat rather than doing administrative work. These operational decisions are only made when there is a clear evidence base and the community has been consulted.

As Deputy Commissioner Andrew Crisp has previously said, and again I quote:

Decisions to change counter service hours are not made on a whim; they are approved only when backed up by evidence, and communities must be consulted.

In terms of the budget, the suggestion that no funding has been provided in the budget to tackle community safety is just not right. In December 2016 the government released the community safety statement, a comprehensive strategy to detect, disrupt and prevent crime. This government has backed it up with \$2 billion of investment in this budget to recruit 2729 new police based on a sophisticated new police staff allocation model (SAM). Victoria Police has developed that in consultation with the Police Association Victoria, and the government has endorsed it.

The new SAM moves us away from the boom-bust nature of police recruiting to an evidence-informed base that makes sure that Victoria always has the police force it requires. This staff allocation model takes account of population growth but does more than that: it takes account of crime, demand, major events, time, distance and other variables to get a much better picture of the sorts of demands being placed on police and where. It is a linchpin of our \$2 billion community safety statement. These numbers prove that only Labor funds police in Victoria.

But the community safety statement is more than just about police numbers. It is also about capability, with investment in a dedicated 24-hour police assistance line for non-emergency calls and a reporting website so that Victorians can contact police when and where they need to. We are rolling out automatic numberplate recognition technology to 220 highway patrol vehicles, up from six, to crack down on dangerous and unauthorised drivers; modernising and expanding the

Victoria Police air wing with three new helicopters and one fixed-wing aircraft; building a new training facility for Victoria's police special operations group (SOG), bomb squad and critical incident response team; providing \$10 million worth of youth crime prevention grants; and expanding the Victoria Police Kopkoda youth engagement program.

Police will also have new powers to fight crime, including giving police the power to take DNA samples without a court order from people suspected of committing an indictable offence; increasing the number of DNA samples analysed by police from 7000 to 70 000; introducing new laws to ban the payment of cash for scrap metal in an effort to target organised crime; and introducing new laws targeting drive-by shootings, including firing into a house, building or indeed a stationary vehicle. This investment comes on top of the \$1 billion investment in counterterrorism, the SOG and other specialist police, frontline police, and new technology and capability over this government's first two budgets.

Paragraph (2) of the motion is about closed police stations that have had graffiti attacks, including recently at Burwood and Heidelberg West. I think we all know that graffiti vandals are in fact attention seekers. Every time politicians or local councillors pose in front of these buildings covered with graffiti they are in fact promoting graffiti. This government is making sure that graffiti is quickly taken down so that attention seekers are not rewarded. The government also has a comprehensive graffiti prevention grants program.

Mr Finn — Most of you can't write.

Mr Rich-Phillips — Except tweets.

Mr SOMYUREK — Covfefe! Paragraph (3) of the motion states:

that the Minister for Police, Lisa Neville, has failed to honour her promise, made repeatedly both prior to and after the 2014 election, that the Portarlington, Drysdale and Queenscliff police stations would be open 16 hours a day, every day ...

Law and order was a major issue at the 2014 state election. Under the previous government's watch police stations across the Bellarine Peninsula were closed down and no new police officers for Geelong or indeed any part of Victoria were funded for four years.

Since the 2014 election the Andrews government has boosted police numbers across Victoria, including at Geelong and the Bellarine Peninsula, and stations on the Bellarine are now operational and accessible. Local police are in local stations, and there are more patrols now than ever before out in the community. In addition

police and community leaders are working closely with each other through the Bellarine Community Safety Group, providing information and resources for crime prevention initiatives, and at a state level in December 2016 the Labor government launched the community safety statement outlining the range of new investments, powers, tools and capabilities that Victoria Police would be equipped with to reduce the level of harm being caused to the community.

Paragraph (4) of the motion, which I will be speaking to in a second, states:

that under Premier Daniel Andrews, crime is up over 20 per cent in just two years while the number of police per capita has been cut ...

Mr Finn — That's right, exactly right. Well done. I knew that if you kept going you'd get something right eventually. I've got confidence in you.

Mr SOMYUREK — And I am quoting that clause verbatim. This government is up-front about the challenges of turning around the six-year crime trend. Every year of the Baillieu-Napthine governments witnessed a rise in crime. In contrast, this government has invested nearly \$3 billion to turn the crime rate around. The community safety statement provides a new and comprehensive strategy to detect, disrupt and in fact prevent crime. There will be 3135 new police over the next four years, with new powers to crack down on recidivism, new forensic capability and new laws to tackle seriously violent offenders. So rather than just talking about crime, we are actually getting on with the job of trying to prevent it.

We are seeing Victoria Police make real inroads into high-volume crime. Police are out in numbers in the community as never seen before. In terms of the vexed question of police numbers, the number of fully operational police in the regions is higher now than it was when the previous government was in power. Across the entire police force there are 374 more full-time equivalent sworn police now than there were in November 2014. There are also 309 police custody officers deployed across the state, freeing up police for frontline duties. Since January 2016 these police custody officers delivered 50 010 shifts across the state. That means more police out on the beat, engaging with the community and keeping Victorians safe.

The 2016 *Report on Government Services* data for 2014–15 shows the following: New South Wales had 232 operational police staff per 100 000 population, Victoria had 275 operational police staff per 100 000 population and the national average of police staff per 100 000 population was 267. In 2017 the

Report on Government Services for the 2015–16 data did not formally publish a per capita comparison, but using the same method we know the following: New South Wales dropped to 228 operational police staff per 100 000, and Victoria increased to 280 operational police staff per 100 000. We also know that we continued to be above the national average, which sits at 268 operational police staff per 100 000 population. So police numbers have risen every year since this government has come to office. I am informed that they will continue to rise month after month for the next five years — and that is a fact.

Paragraph (5) states:

the comments of the Minister for Police, Lisa Neville, who admitted in March 2017 that Victorians are living in fear in their own homes ...

This government is unashamedly on the side of victims. We know that victims of crime have been traumatised and the wider community shaken by some of the violent offending. We are up-front about that, and it is why we are instituting the biggest change in police resourcing and capability in the state's history. This has also been complemented by a major reform of the justice system that is leading to fundamental change in the way the justice system works.

This will mean cracking down on serious offenders, with tougher sentences for serious and violent crimes and increased consequences for young offenders. New youth control orders will be implemented. Sentencing standards will also be implemented, increasing sentences for the 12 most serious crimes. The bail system is also being strengthened, with a presumption against bail for many more offences, including rape, armed robbery and dangerous or negligent driving while pursued by police. In addition, people who commit serious indictable offences while on bail, summons, parole, serving a community correction order or otherwise under sentence will not be granted bail again unless they can prove there are exceptional circumstances.

As part of the Victorian budget for 2017–18, a further \$28.5 million to boost the number of frontline staff and support services for victims, witnesses and vulnerable children has been made available. I am informed that further reform is coming.

With that, I will conclude my contribution for today. In conclusion, I oppose the motion before the house.

Mr MORRIS (Western Victoria) — I rise to make my contribution on Mr O'Donohue's motion. I certainly do commend Mr O'Donohue for moving this

motion, for his strong advocacy in this area and for drawing the government's attention to and holding the government to account for the law and order crisis that the government is directly responsible for here in the great state of Victoria. I note that the motion reads:

That this house notes:

- (1) the failure of the Minister for Police, Lisa Neville, to commit to reopening the police stations that have either been closed or had their opening hours cut under Premier Daniel Andrews ...

I note that one of those police stations that has had its hours cut is the new Ballarat West police station in Ballarat, which was funded by the former government — because that was a government that recognised the need to build new police stations, particularly in areas where there is significant population growth, to keep our communities safe. On the day of the opening of that particular police station there was an announcement made that the police station was going to be open seven days a week, 12 hours a day, and that counter service was going to be available at the Ballarat West police station.

What happened very shortly after this announcement was that I was travelling in western Victoria and I happened to pass the Ballarat West police station. When I drove past I saw that somebody had dumped an old mattress out the front of the police station. I thought that was rather strange, considering that the police station should have been open given the opening hours that had just been recently announced, so I went to look inside the police station to inform the constabulary that there had been an old mattress dumped outside their brand-new police station, but of course the police station was closed. It should have been open under the hours that had been announced at the police station's opening; however, that police station was closed, and people in the community felt so emboldened that they could just dump a used mattress outside a brand-new police station that should have been open. I think this is indicative of the fact that what we have seen under this government is police resources being cut and, as a result of that, criminal activity going on unchecked. I do note that there has been some commentary around the fact that this is entirely unacceptable and is placing our community at risk.

The Ballarat police service area is well served by those members in the force who do the very difficult job of keeping our community safe, but the government is not supporting police in Ballarat to do the job the way that they should. In fact there has been a cut in the number of frontline police in Ballarat protecting our community since this government has come to power. There has

been a reduction of 7.79 full-time equivalent positions of frontline police to keep the community safe in Ballarat. This is despite the massive, skyrocketing crime rates that we are experiencing presently in Ballarat. There has been an over 100 per cent increase in aggravated burglaries in the suburbs of Ballarat North and Alfredton. Aggravated burglary was a crime that was almost unheard of until recently in the community, but certainly — —

Mr Finn — It is an Andrews-era phenomenon.

Mr MORRIS — It certainly is an Andrews-era crime, aggravated burglary, and it is something that has absolutely gone through the roof.

Carjackings and home invasions were crimes that we read about in countries other than our own, and now these are commonplace. Twice in 13 days in Ballarat we have had police cars being rammed by criminals — twice in 13 days! Indeed just last night there was a police search, a manhunt, for a criminal who had rammed a police car yesterday afternoon in Ballarat. Yesterday afternoon I was speaking to my wife, who informed me that there was a police helicopter over our home.

Mr Rich-Phillips interjected.

Mr MORRIS — It was the ramming of a police car, Mr Rich-Phillips. It was not a scenario that has occurred under previous governments; however, it is a regular occurrence presently. That offender unfortunately still remains at large. He escaped into what is now the Canadian Regional Park and has not been seen since, despite, I believe, the canine unit and the police helicopter attempting to find this offender.

This is something that is so pervasive in our community that I recently held a law and order forum in Ballarat. I was very fortunate to have been joined by Ed O'Donohue, our shadow police and corrections minister, and John Pesutto, the member for Hawthorn in the Legislative Assembly and our shadow Attorney-General. At this particular forum there were members of the community who had been affected by crimes, and these crimes had affected their general way of life. A constituent spoke of her car having recently been stolen. Another spoke of having their car broken into, having wallets and the like stolen and then those criminals going on to use their credit and debit cards and the like. There is a general sense of unease and violation attached to such crimes.

Another constituent from Miners Rest made the point that she is surprised there are still criminals in Miners Rest because it appears they have taken just about

everything. She feels the community of Miners Rest has experienced such a wave of crime that she is surprised that they bother coming back because there is not a lot left to take. It is a very sad indictment of this government that we have members of the community who feel this way.

At the law and order forum there were also members of the Handford family, whose father and grandfather, Ken Handford, was tragically and brutally murdered in his own home. In that case one of the offenders was recently given a sentence that from a community standards test was overwhelmingly inadequate.

Mr Finn — Outrageous. That's what I thought.

Mr MORRIS — It has been described as outrageous indeed, Mr Finn. One of the things that was raised at this law and order forum was that the community have certain expectations of the way criminals are going to be treated and the sentences they are going to receive, and this is not happening. This is not being reflected in the sentences that criminals are receiving. People in the community pick up their newspapers day after day and read about serial criminal violent offenders and the sentences they are given. They just shake their heads. There was a comment made at the forum that 'There is no reason for criminals to be scared about doing what they do, because there is no consequence for what they do'. If there is no consequence for this horrendous behaviour, they are not going to change what they are doing.

What needs to happen is this government needs to take very seriously the law and order crisis that we are experiencing at the moment. The government needs to respond to that; it needs to stop worrying about criminals and start worrying about victims. The victims of crime should be placed at the centre of our legal system rather than on the periphery, the way they are at the moment. Victim impact statements and the like should be indicative — —

Ms Pennicuik interjected.

Mr MORRIS — Ms Pennicuik, I think victims are a part of our legal system who are ignored presently. Rather than putting the victims at the centre of our legal system, we are seeing that we are having criminals who are being felt sorry for because of certain life circumstances. There are a lot of people who have grown up in really tough circumstances, and they have made good in their lives. Just because a person has had a difficult upbringing does not mean that they become a criminal. There are certain life choices people need to make, and let us get back to some personal

responsibility here. If you choose to break the law, if you choose to be a violent criminal, then you lose the right to your freedom and you lose the right to be able to be protected or indeed remain in a civilised society. It is the cost to the lives of victims that the legal system should be taking into account. Rather than victims being on the periphery, they should be at the centre of our legal system. The victims of crimes are the people we should be worried about. We should not be worried about criminals and feeling sorry for them as a result of the despicable behaviour that they are experiencing.

There is no doubt we are certainly seeing a rise in violent crime, and violent crime needs to be responded to quickly and very severely. We should not have bleeding hearts for those who choose to ram police cars or commit aggravated burglaries or murder people in their own homes. These are not the people that we should be feeling sorry for. We need to be protecting the rights of victims and not concerning ourselves with the criminals, who need to be dealt with very severely by our justice system.

To come back to Mr O'Donohue's particular motion today, I do not think there is any question that there is a law and order crisis in our state at the moment. This is something that we have seen not taken seriously by this government. Indeed Mr O'Donohue correctly makes the point that those ministers in this Labor government who are responsible for the likes of police and corrections and holding the position of Attorney-General also have other portfolio areas for which they are responsible. One would have thought that considering the crisis that we are in, considering the skyrocketing crime rates that we are experiencing at the moment, this government would see fit to ensure that those ministers with these responsibilities would have carriage of just these incredibly important portfolios.

The police minister at this time should not be concerning herself with the water portfolio. The law and order crisis that we are experiencing at the moment needs to be dealt with, and it needs to be dealt with by a minister who has the time and who has the capacity to focus upon that particular portfolio exclusively. Indeed the Attorney-General, who I regularly see at race meetings across my electorate of Western Victoria — —

Mr Finn — He loves a day at the races.

Mr MORRIS — I think everybody enjoys a day at the races, Mr Finn, but the Attorney-General, in his portfolio area at the moment, should not be concerning himself with attending the Warrnambool May Racing

Carnival, despite the fact that it is a wonderful racing carnival. He should be concerning himself with ensuring that we have the appropriate legal framework to keep our community safe. That is not what we are experiencing at the moment. Indeed basically what we are seeing from the Attorney-General is that Mr O'Donohue's work and Mr Pesutto's work is being copied by the Attorney-General, and that is where he is getting his policy development work from. It appears that he is at the races all day, every day, and Mr Pesutto and Mr O'Donohue are doing all his work for him.

Mr Finn — It's a good gig.

Mr MORRIS — Indeed Mr Finn, the racing portfolio is one that means you can go out and enjoy some of the finest racing in the world, but you should not be doing it at the same time as holding the Attorney-General's portfolio and indeed with the law and order crisis that we are experiencing at the moment.

In closing I certainly do commend Mr O'Donohue for bringing this motion to the house, and I look forward to the house supporting this very important motion.

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan) — I would like to start my contribution on the motion today by thanking the police and protective services officers for the work they do in the community on a daily basis. With regard to the actual motion that Mr O'Donohue has put forward today, I would have to make the comment that it is a little bit of a hotchpotch of points cobbled together. While I truly believe that the fundamental issues at stake here — whether there is a rising crime rate and the level of resourcing of the police service in Victoria — are important issues, I do not think this motion actually goes to those in any particularly serious way.

In fact if we were going to look at these issues in a serious way, we would be looking at them with a different motion and perhaps setting up some sort of inquiry. Because as often characterises these debates that have been put forward very often by Mr O'Donohue but other members of the opposition as well and the responses of the government to those motions that we have seen several times in the past couple of years, it often — and I think I have made this comment before — just amounts to claim and counterclaim as to whether police numbers are falling or police numbers are rising and whether crime is falling or crime is rising. We do not actually get very far in regard to having a serious discussion about what are very important issues to the community.

I thought I would just briefly respond to the points in the motion even though, as I say, I view it as a bit of a hotchpotch. It was presented to us as a motion about the rising crime rate, but in fact there is little reference to that in the motion. There was a lot of reference to it by Mr O'Donohue in his contribution and Mr Morris in his recent contribution, but in fact that is not actually what the motion and its points talk about at all — well, only one of the points does, which is the fourth point.

The first point is about whether there is any specific commitment to reopening certain police stations that have either been closed or had their opening hours cut under this government. I note that when Mr O'Donohue moved the motion he spoke about the comment by the police minister that it is up to the Chief Commissioner of Police to decide the opening hours of police stations and whether or not they are to close. Mr Adem Somyurek in his response for the government made the comment that no police stations have been closed. It seems some have, but I have to take what is put forward by the government, and they are saying that none have been closed. Perhaps none have been closed within the last certain time period, but that was not necessarily specified.

But I would agree with the police minister that it is in fact up to the Chief Commissioner of Police to decide on the deployment of police officers — sworn police officers or protective services officers. It is up to the police commissioner to decide. Commissioner Ashton made comments at the budget estimates hearings with regard to that — with regard to consulting with experts in the field, looking at the crime statistics data, looking at the demographic data and consulting with the police association as to how police stations are operated.

He also made the comment, and I think Mr Somyurek mentioned this as well, that within that parameter there is discretion for stations themselves to decide what their opening hours are and whether in fact it is better for them to have police on patrol rather than in the stations. I think it is correct and appropriate for operational decisions about particular police stations, patrols of police and whether police are working in particular task forces et cetera to be left to the police commissioner. It should not be up to politicians to make those decisions. When you get politicians making decisions about where police are deployed it is not a good road to go down.

The second point is that several closed police stations have been attacked with graffiti. The motion says 'several', but it only mentions two — Burwood and Heidelberg West. Of course the answer to that is to include them in a graffiti removal program, which there are in all local government areas, supported by some

funding from the state government. I am not quite sure why that point is in the motion when Mr O'Donohue says that we are talking about the important issue of the crime statistics in Victoria and the resourcing of the police force.

The third point goes to the police minister talking about the hours of operation of particular police stations in her area — Portarlington, Drysdale and Queenscliff — and saying that they will be open 16 hours a day. I would say that perhaps the police minister should not have said that, because again I would say that it is up to the police commissioner to decide the hours of opening of police stations and where police should be deployed, depending on where they are needed.

The same goes for the deployment of protective services officers, that Mr O'Donohue went to in his contribution and which I have raised in this place before, in that it was a policy of the previous government that there would be protective services officers on railway stations between 6.00 p.m. and the last train at every station across the Melbourne metropolitan area. But if you are actually going to use evidence as to where PSOs are best deployed, that may not be the best deployment of them. It may be better to deploy them at places where there are more reported incidents that require them to have a presence there. That is a point that the Greens have always made — that actually the deployment of police and protective services officers should be under the control of the police commissioner and not determined by any policy of any government.

The fourth point talks about the crime rate being up over 20 per cent in two years and the number of police per capita being cut. That is where we get to the claim and counterclaim that often characterise the debates we see in this place. I am not quite sure where that 20 per cent figure comes from. I have been studying the crime statistics since they were released; I look at them every year. I have just been looking at them again, and I do not see the figure of 20 per cent anywhere, so Mr O'Donohue may wish to come back in and clarify where he gets that figure from.

Certainly it is concerning if you look at the crime statistics released just in the last year that the number of offences has increased by 10 per cent. Also very significant is that family incidents have increased by almost 6 per cent. It may be that it is the reporting of those incidents that is increasing, and we have discussed that many times in here as well — that it is a good thing that they are being reported so that perpetrators can be brought to justice. It is not a good thing that it is occurring. I think following the family

violence royal commission and the recommendations that are being implemented by the government bit by bit the issue of family violence is being taken seriously across parties, by the Parliament, by the government and by the community to reduce the incidence of family violence and to change the culture that gives rise to it.

There are other offences that have increased, such as transport regulation offences, which are up by 43 per cent. That could be as simple as people riding on the public transport system without a valid ticket or without having touched on and touched off; I am not sure. You have to look a little more deeply into that. It is concerning to see robberies up around 24 per cent, theft up around 15 to 16 per cent and burglary and break-ins up 10 per cent. Breaches of orders are up 10 per cent as well, and of course that relates again to family violence.

Another thing to say about the crime statistics is, if you look at the detail and the explanatory notes of the crime statistics, you will see that a number of offences have moved around in categories over the last few years. So it is not necessarily entirely possible to compare one year to the other. Hopefully that might settle down a bit and make it more comparable.

On the issue about whether police numbers have been cut, of course one side says they have been cut and the other side says they have not been. I will turn to the presentation that was made by the Minister for Police at the recent budget estimates hearings. A graph has been presented to the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee, and I presume the information in that graph is correct. It refers to police graduations. What you do get from the graph is that from 2009–10 up until this year certainly the number of graduations has gone up and down on a yearly basis. The lowest number of graduations was in fact last year, and the second lowest was in 2012–13 under the previous government.

On the anticipated growth in graduations, the government has said its budget allocations over the forward estimates will see the number of graduates increase from what it is currently, at around 360 or so per year, to an anticipated increase to up around 620 next year and then an anticipated increase in 2017–18 to more than 1300. Well, we will see if that happens. That is certainly what the government says it is budgeting for, but we will have to see whether it actually occurs.

The other interesting issue that came to light under the budget estimates hearings, and Mr Somyurek referred briefly to it in his rather hasty defence of the government's position on this motion, is the SAM model — the staff allocation model — developed by

Victoria Police and experts in modelling and resource allocation in consultation with Police Association Victoria. Using this new model Victoria Police say they need 2729 new police to meet needs up until 2021 in the forward estimates. It is claimed that this will end the boom-and-bust cycle, and it will continue to be updated and refined using a range of data, including 25 different offence types, so it can forecast future needs and inform investment in police by government.

I thought that was very interesting, and as spokesperson for police, I am actually going to follow that up. There was not a lot of detail provided at the budget estimates hearings about that. I think it sounds in principle like a great model — looking at demographics, looking at population growth, looking at crime hotspots and then deploying police and police stations based on that sort of model rather than what we have had in the past.

We certainly have had, in terms of education and the allocation of schools, a lot of the pork-barrelling that goes on prior to and in the election campaign year when governments and oppositions run around promising resourcing, grants for this and that, new schools, grants for upgrades to schools, upgrades to police stations and new police stations in areas which are either marginal seats or areas where they wish to shore up their presence. That is not the way that we should be allocating resources for police or schools. I would like to see this particular staff allocation model be more public and transparent. I will certainly be pushing for that, because I think it would be a welcome development.

The fifth point is in regard to the comments by the Minister for Police about Victorians living in fear in their homes. Mr Somyurek said that was in the context of victims of crime being traumatised, and of course victims of crime are traumatised. We all understand that, particularly with aggravated burglary or other types of crimes that people have been subjected to. Of course it is frightening, it is terrifying and it is unacceptable, and the community, as the minister said, has been shaken. It is probably not helpful necessarily to say that Victorians are living in fear in their own homes. Of course anybody who has been subjected to one of those aggravated burglaries in their homes, and their friends and family, will be living in fear. I accept that, and I feel very much for those people, but I am not sure that it is helpful necessarily to say that every Victorian is living in fear in their own home.

The sixth point goes to whether the police minister is a part-time minister because she also has the water portfolio and that there is a part-time corrections minister with other non-related portfolio

responsibilities. In fact I think the portfolios of corrections and skills actually do have a relationship in that one of the ways to keep people out of the corrections system is to ensure they have the skills to enable them to make their way in the community and to find work. The statistics are very, very clear on the fact that the large majority of people in the corrections system either have not finished high school or do not have any tertiary or vocational education and training qualifications at all. In fact there is quite a relationship between those two portfolios.

But I just make the general comment that there are more portfolios than there are ministers, whatever government you are looking at and of whichever persuasion, so it is not uncommon for ministers to have more than one portfolio. Are they related? There may be lots of reasons why particular ministers are given particular portfolios and they may be to do with the background of that particular person in the particular area and their expertise et cetera, so I do not necessarily think that point is apposite to the wider debate about crime in the community and what we as a Parliament and a community need to be doing to address those issues.

Yesterday when I was speaking on the Corrections Legislation Miscellaneous Amendment Bill 2017 I made the point that as well as talking about resourcing of the police force we need to be talking about justice reinvestment. That has the strong evidence base of having results, and that is by identifying the areas where the offenders who are incarcerated or who are on community correction orders or whatever come from. It is very clear in the evidence that more than half of them come from around six postcodes, and so the way to prevent crime — and that is what we need to be doing: preventing crime so that people are not victims of crime; preventing crime so that people are not offenders and they are assisted and supported to put their lives back on track — is to put more money into justice reinvestment. That means applying additional resources in terms of drug and alcohol programs and education programs to those areas to assist those communities to lift themselves out of the disadvantage that they are in. That is how we will make the community safer, but we still need police, protective services officers et cetera.

I am a little bit perplexed by this motion put forward by Mr O'Donohue. It is a hotchpotch of six points which really do not go to the heart of this important issue. If he were really serious and if the opposition were really serious, they would put forward a serious motion about this issue, that I understand is of concern and interest to the community, as it should be.

Ms LOVELL (Northern Victoria) — I rise to speak on Mr O'Donohue's motion. I congratulate him for bringing this motion before the house, because this is a very important issue to our community at the moment. Communities are not feeling safe under this government. Crime rates are rising — in fact they are skyrocketing — under this government, and police stations are being closed under this government. In my local region I have had significant concern expressed by both the Tatura and the Mooroopna communities, whose police stations are closed most of the time — they are very rarely open — and they do not feel they have an adequate police presence in their communities.

Part of this has been brought about because of the government's two-up policy, which has halved the numbers of patrols available to our local command. Of course it is not the fault of our local command that there are fewer police on the beat and it is not the fault of our local command that the police stations in Tatura and Mooroopna are not open. They are doing the very best they can with the limited resources they have available to them. When governments make decisions to go from a one-officer patrol to a two-officer patrol and do not increase the police numbers to cover that additional workload, of course we are going to see fewer patrols on the street. This has led to great concern within our community about the rising levels of crime, and it is not only in country areas that we are seeing rising levels of crime but right across the state.

Over the past 12 months we have seen a 10.2 per cent increase in crime in Victoria, and over the first two years of the Andrews Labor government we saw a 20.2 per cent increase in crime. That is an enormous increase — over 20 per cent. People are telling us that they are not feeling safe, and we are seeing an increase in the levels of carjackings, home invasions and jewellery store robberies. The violent crime on our streets is very visible. Of course we had the shocking incident in Brighton two days ago where an innocent man going about his everyday life, working in a serviced apartment building, was shot dead in an act of terrorism. No wonder people in Victoria are not feeling safe. People are telling us that they are constantly living in fear of becoming victims of the next home invasion, carjacking or gang attack.

We have seen increasing levels of crime in Victoria, where justice procedures offences — and remember that the person responsible for the terrorism incident in Brighton was out on parole — have actually risen by 51.6 per cent over the last year; that is an enormous increase of over 50 per cent. Transport regulations offences in Victoria are up by 43.3 per cent; robberies, up by 24.4 per cent; dangerous and negligent acts

endangering people, up by 22.3 per cent; theft offences, up by 15.9 per cent; assault and related offences, up by 11.8 per cent; breaches of orders, up by 10.6 per cent; burglaries and break and entry, up by 10.1 per cent; and drug use and possession offences, up by 6.9 per cent. These are really large numbers for increases in crime, and no wonder people are not feeling safe in the community.

Greater Shepparton, which is where I live, has the unfortunate or dubious honour of being number six in the top per capita crime rate spots. In the 2015–16 year we have seen a 7 per cent increase in crime in that local government area and over the first two years of this Labor government a 12.1 per cent increase in crime in Greater Shepparton.

I spoke before about Mooroopna and Tatura as areas that have been really concerned about the level of crime in their communities. I have also had contact from other small towns like Rushworth and Tongala, where they are concerned about a lack of police presence. In Tatura we held a community safety forum at the beginning of May. It was 3 o'clock in the afternoon, and we had over 100 people turn up to that community safety forum.

They were telling us that they do not feel safe in their town. The police actually held a meeting in Tatura — I think it would have been in about October last year — that I attended, and again a similar number turned up to that meeting telling the police that even though at the time they had one sergeant and five officers, so six police stationed in Tatura, they did not feel safe. At that stage the Tatura police station was closed most of the time because, due to the two-up policy, the Tatura police were patrolling Mooroopna and quite a wide area around the place and often were not in Tatura.

People raised the issue of crimes that had happened in Tatura. There have been a number of home break-ins. There was an incident in the car park of the local supermarket where a lady had her bag snatched and it took half an hour for the police to come from Shepparton because they were not in Tatura. Tatura want their own police presence — they want them there and they want people at their police station so they can feel that they can access it. It is no wonder that people in Tatura feel unsafe — over the last year Tatura has had a 20.5 per cent increase in crime and over the past two years, the first two years of this government, a 49.8 per cent increase in crime.

When the police held that session in about October last year — as I said, six police were stationed at the Tatura station at that time but the station hardly ever opened — there had been a number of home robberies, but since that time we have seen a decline in police numbers in

Tatura. In fact at one point there was only one officer that was actually assigned to the police station in Tatura. Yes, they were backing that up with people coming out from Shepparton, but there is a half-hour delay in people getting there — and that is if the police can leave straightaway. It takes about 20 minutes to get to Tatura, and by the time the police get in their car it could be half an hour. That is if there is someone ready to go right at that moment, otherwise it is an even longer response time.

Since that point in time in October last year, when there were six police, we have seen a decline in police numbers and we have also seen an increase in crime in Tatura. There was an aggravated burglary at the Hill Top Golf and Country Club that really concerned a lot of the community, and certainly the staff that were there at the time suffered greatly from that aggravated burglary at the golf club. We have also seen an incident at the basketball stadium where the stadium had to be put into lockdown because of someone who was violent, and there were a number of children that were present. The police took over half an hour to get to that incident as well.

We have seen an increase in the level of break-ins at businesses and also in just general antisocial behaviour. People know there are no police around so they know they have time before the police are going to get to the area. Our local command have tried to respond to the concerns of Tatura residents, and they now have one sergeant and four police officers stationed at the station in Tatura — not that they are in the station very often; they are out on patrol, so the station is still not open — but that is one officer less than there was in October last year when the community raised their concerns. They were concerned about a six-officer presence. Now they have only five officers, and they remain concerned.

When we held our community safety forum I said to the community, 'Don't be surprised if the police minister suddenly visits in the next few weeks, because we have found that is one of the reactions of this government'. The Minister for Police is going to visit this Friday, but I do not believe she is holding a public forum for the community to tell her of their concerns directly. I think she is meeting with police and perhaps might meet with a couple of selected residents, but she really should have an open forum for the community to come along and tell her of their concerns. Mooroopna have had similar levels of concern. Their police station is largely closed, and most of the time they do not feel they have a level of policing that is protecting the community. There have been a number of incidents in that town of grave concern to the residents, and

Mooroopna residents certainly do not feel safe in their own community.

In the Greater Shepparton local government area crime statistics we see the percentage changes in crime from 2015 to 2016: homicide and related offences are up by 100 per cent; assault and related offences are up by 15.7 per cent; abduction and related offences are up by 28.6 per cent; robbery is up by 18.8 per cent; stalking and harassment and threatening behaviour are up by 27 per cent; dangerous and negligent acts endangering persons are up by 48.3 per cent; property damage is up by 16.2 per cent; burglary and break and enters are up by 12 per cent; deception is up by 46.6 per cent; and drug dealing and trafficking is up by 26.8 per cent. These are huge rises in crime in Greater Shepparton, and our community is particularly concerned about these levels of crime.

As I said, the local police command do the best they can with the resources that they have available to them, but what we have seen under this government is not only the two-up policy reducing the number of patrols that they can man but also a reduction of at least 10 police officers in the eastern region division 3, which they fall under.

We desperately need additional resources, additional police numbers, allocated to the Shepparton district so that the police command can then put them into places like Tatura and Mooroopna and use them to address some of the crime that is happening locally.

The front page of the *Shepparton News* today tells the story of police yesterday raiding a property where they found almost \$1 million worth of ice with a drug dealer. Ice is an enormous problem in our community. It is leading to increased levels of crime, and we need additional police resources to address the issues that are being presented to our local community. We have had carjackings, and we have had home invasions in recent months in our local area. People keep talking about Melbourne not being Johannesburg, but the crime rates and the types of crime being seen here are very similar to those seen in Johannesburg. It is a real shame that regional Victoria is also being subjected to these violent crimes in towns where you would think that these things would not happen. Tatura is a really terrific little community, a community that has a really strong sense of community values, and it is a very tight-knit community.

I was devastated when I first heard the people in Tatura talking about not being safe in Tatura. It is one of my favourite places in my electorate because of that sense of community and the great camaraderie that exists

there. It is a town where there is significant employment due to Goulburn-Murray Water being located there and a number of other employers like Tatura Milk and Unilever et cetera. So there is high employment in the town, and there are a number of higher wage earners in the town. It is not a town in which you would expect to be hearing of grave levels of concern about community safety and crime. This government needs to take their heads out of the sand and do something to really address crime in Victoria, because under them crime rates are soaring. People do not feel safe in their own communities. They do not feel safe in their own homes.

I attended a meeting in Shepparton of all the jewellery stores that are very concerned about the jewellery store robberies that have been happening here in Melbourne, and it was really eye-opening to see the levels that jewellery stores are now going to, almost barricading themselves to protect themselves from some of the violent crime that has been going on there. This government is responsible for keeping the community safe, and it is about time they took that responsibility seriously and actually put in place policies and funding that will address the level of crime in our community and make our community members feel safe again.

Mr MELHEM (Western Metropolitan) — I also rise to speak on this motion by Mr O'Donohue, and yet again the opposition is hell-bent on driving more fear into Victorians. It always wants to paint a picture about the state of play in Victoria, basically telling everyone that crimes in Victoria started in November 2014 and prior to that there was no crime at all in Victoria. Instead of working constructively with the government and supporting the police force and the judiciary, they are instead hell-bent on attacking the police force, attacking police command, attacking the judiciary and attacking the government without putting together any constructive propositions about how to address crime in Victoria.

They are trying to paint a picture of Victoria, or Melbourne, as places you cannot live in and from which you cannot get out. Yes, there is crime in Victoria. Yes, there is an increase in crime in Victoria, but Victoria is still a safe place. People are trying to use the media to paint a dark picture. I can use my home town of Caroline Springs as an example. I am very proud to live in Caroline Springs, and some people are trying to paint a picture of it as a place of horror. Let me tell you it is not. I am proud to be a resident of Caroline Springs. I believe it is a safe place. I often have walks at night. My daughter and my son walk from their schools, they walk to their friends' houses, sometimes

during the night as well, and I feel they are safe. I am proud to live there.

It is just that there is hysteria, basically saying that we have become like Afghanistan where no-one can feel safe, and that is what worries me. Yes, there is crime. Yes, we need to do more to make sure our citizens feel safe at home. I accept there is fear in the community at the moment. They are scared, and I get that. I sympathise with that, and I think we need to do more. We are doing more, but we can do even more to make sure we get that sense of security, that sense of feeling we can make our citizens in Victoria feel safe again. What does not help is when you have got an opposition that is so irresponsible it is basically hell-bent on continuing to undermine our security and police forces, and does not come with any ideas.

I will give a classic example. The Liberal Prime Minister, on Neil Mitchell's show this morning, criticised the state's parole system. Neil Mitchell asked him a question and said the Premier had just made an offer in relation to terrorism and people who had been accused of terrorist acts or suspected terrorist acts. It was: would the federal government be happy to take on that responsibility if the federal police and ASIO were to have a say on whether these people should be on parole? The Prime Minister said, 'Oh, no. It's a state issue'. So they are happy to throw rocks, but they are not prepared to be part of the solution. That is a typical Liberal Prime Minister — I should say Sydney Prime Minister — and the opposition are no different.

My understanding is that the number of people on parole at the moment is down from 1600 to 850 people over the last 12 months. So the numbers are going down, not going up, as a result of the reforms. Also the number of people who have been granted parole over the last 12 months, to my understanding, has gone from 60 down to five, so the numbers are down. The system we are putting in place is actually working.

Mr Morris talked about the first point of the motion, which says the Minister for Police, Lisa Neville, failed to commit to reopening police stations that have either been closed or have had their operating hours cut under Premier Daniel Andrews. Mr Morris talked about Ballarat West. My understanding is that Ballarat West has always been a 12-hour police station from Monday to Friday with a 16-hour van operating seven days a week. He would have us believe today that the Andrews Labor government has shortened the hours. So getting the facts right does not exist for this mob on the other side, which is driving fear and telling lies. They do not let the truth get in the way of a good story. That is their problem. Apparently the member talked

about a mattress, and that matter was done with 12 months ago when it was removed straightaway.

Let me talk a little bit about police stations, because we always have this argument about a 24-hour police station versus a 16-hour police station or a 12-hour police station. Again I go back to the debate we had in Caroline Springs, where I stood and talked to the community, along with the police, in relation to that issue. If I got a choice when I got extra police numbers, would I have them sitting behind a desk or have them in the van or in a car patrolling the streets? I know which one I would choose. I would rather see police patrolling our streets instead of sitting behind a desk. I would entrust decisions of police allocation to the Chief Commissioner of Police, not to politicians.

Not only do we have the other side criticising that decision, criticising the commissioner and criticising the minister, but I have got a quote here from Mr O'Donohue. It is in *Hansard* of 18 August 2016:

... under the Victoria Police Act 2013 the chief commissioner has absolute discretion about the allocation of police resources ...

At least we agree on that, but let us implement it. Allocating resources is in the hands of the police commissioner. In my view the police commissioner is doing a great job in allocating these resources. Victoria Police are doing a tremendous job. Police members are doing an absolutely first grade job. They need our support, not our criticism — not putting them down at every single opportunity. Members of the opposition keep doing that, unfortunately, instead of doing the right thing and actually supporting the people who are putting their lives at risk. We had three officers the day before yesterday who nearly lost their lives; they got injured. They went out there to do their job to keep us safe. What do we do? We attack them. We attack their leaders. We attack the police all the time. Because the opposition think there may be a vote or two in that, they say, 'If we play on the fear factor, then we might get a few votes. We can't talk about the economy. We can't talk about infrastructure investment. We can't talk about health. We can't talk about education. It's all tick, tick, tick. They're doing all these things. So what will we do? Let's go and drive the fear factor'. And that is basically what this motion is about.

There has been a record investment by this government in law and order. There is a \$3 billion additional investment, and over 3000 — that is net — additional police will be added to the system. That is excluding natural attrition or people leaving the system. We are talking about additional numbers. The lot on the other side when they were in government for four years did

not invest at all in additional police numbers. In fact the increase in numbers was zero. Yet they want to come in here and lecture us about investing in police numbers. There is to be an increase of 3135 in police numbers. Even Mr O'Donohue himself conceded that there are 374 new additional police already on the job and more to come. At least he acknowledged that.

Point 4 of the motion states:

that under Premier Daniel Andrews, crime is up over 20 per cent in just two years while the number of police per capita has been cut;

Premier Daniel Andrews has invested more than any other Premier in recent history in law and order and police numbers — in real numbers — including \$1.9 billion against family violence. The numbers speak for themselves. Quote the real numbers. Let us talk about the numbers per capita. When the *Report on Government Services 2016* data was released New South Wales had 232 operational police per 100 000 people while Victoria had 275 operational police per 100 000 population and the national average was 267. Now let us quote the 2017 numbers. New South Wales dropped to 228 operational police per 100 000, while Victoria increased to 280 operational police per 100 000. When people speak the truth the opposition do not like it, so what do they do? They just mouth off and make noise. Keep it up.

I go back to the Minister for Police. Minister Neville could have taken the view, like probably a lot of politicians and ministers, that she would dance around the issue and pretend there is no problem. Instead she was on the front foot and acknowledged there was a problem, because she is actually doing something about it. She is actually putting in a lot of work, putting a submission to cabinet for another 3135 police officers — —

Mr Ondarchie — When?

Mr MELHEM — When they are ready and through the system. We have grossed 374; we have already started. The police cannot keep up with the interviews and a lot of people coming through the system. That is already happening. It is not like we might want to do it in years to come. It is actually happening. More powers have been given to the police in relation to dealing with these issues. Last sitting week we passed new legislation set around how we deal with serious offenders, automatic parole and those sorts of things to strengthen and give more powers to the police to keep more people locked up if they are seen to be still too dangerous to be released back into the community. That was passed just last sitting week.

Unlike those opposite we are not just sitting on our backsides and doing nothing. We are actually doing things. My advice to you is this: get with the program, come up with something constructive and be part of the solution, not part of the problem. We see you do not want to be part of the solution because you do not want to take any responsibility for anything. Instead we had a lot of judges here yesterday paying a visit to this Parliament, and what did you do instead? You attacked them. You attacked the judiciary. You attacked judges — the very people who are trying to uphold laws passed by this Parliament. Some people will say that some judges get it wrong sometimes.

Mr Ondarchie — What do you say?

Mr MELHEM — That is what I say, Mr Ondarchie. Here is what I say: there is a choice for you. We are living in a democracy. We are living in a system with a separation of powers between Parliament and the justice system, between politicians and judges. We could actually adopt the North Korean style with basically no rights.

Mr Ondarchie — Is that what you are advocating?

Mr MELHEM — No, that is what you are advocating. I like the current system. The current system might not be perfect, but it is the best system in the world. You could have the North Korean system, where you are guilty until you are proven innocent and basically if a police officer says, 'I don't like you', then you disappear. Maybe we can go and adopt the Syrian system, where if the authorities do not like you, you disappear.

We have to make a decision. Do we want a democratic system based on the separation of powers or do we adopt this other system? I do not see you coming up with any alternatives. I do not see you coming up with any solutions. You basically are looking at how you can grab a few votes here and there. That is basically what you are interested in. I say: grow up and be part of the solution. If you want to ever dream of forming government, you need to show some responsibility instead of just keeping on driving fear into our community. Until such a time that you are actually responsible, which I do not see happening, you will always be on that side of the chamber. You are never going to make it back to this side.

Mr ONDARCHIE (Northern Metropolitan) — After listening to Mr Melhem, that is 15 minutes of our lives we are never going to get back. Having Mr Melhem stand in this chamber and quote numbers to this house is the most ironic thing I think I have seen

in this place. We all know about Mr Melhem's reputation when it comes to numbers. I am sure that workers at Clean Event are just delighted that he stands up and advocates for the good of the people. I am sure they remember. We will get to talk at another time about the royal commission that Mr Melhem is involved in.

I rise today to speak to Mr O'Donohue's very important motion, which talks about essentially the failure of this government to provide safety for Victorians. As I start, let me compliment and acknowledge the great work of the membership of our Victoria Police. I have many, many friends who are — to use their colloquial term — in the job, and every day many of them leave home not knowing if they are going to return home as they work hard to keep us nice and safe.

Victoria never used to be like this. Every Victorian has the right to feel safe at home, in the workplace and in the community. After two years of the Andrews Labor government Victoria has seen per capita cuts to police numbers right across the state and a weakening of bail and sentencing laws that has exposed communities to trauma every single day, to daily occurrences of carjackings, home invasions, armed robberies and gang violence the likes of which this state has never seen.

Brazen gangs are growing and are out of control. The many victims of their brutal crimes will never, ever be the same. I have close friends who have gone through such trauma. One particular couple woke up in the middle of the night to find an armed gang standing at the end of their bed demanding money, possessions and keys to the car. They lived their life safely in their home. They have been frightened. They will never get over this. In fact the wife concerned in this particular example will never drive that car again, so deep is the trauma.

Victorians are coming to find that this is happening every single day in our state. There is mob violence, with the marring of iconic festivals like Moomba as well as the youth justice centre riots and breakouts. This has terrorised Victorians, who just no longer feel safe or secure even in their own homes. While the other states of Australia are enjoying long-term declines in rates of violent crime, the Andrews Labor government has us heading in the wrong direction. Now Victoria, the place that I love, has the worst crime statistics the state has ever seen, with an increase in crime of over 20 per cent in two years of this Andrews Labor government.

Victorians have lost confidence in our justice system, which has been made weaker by Daniel Andrews's decision over the last two years to soften our justice

system. In a major admission of failure, even the Minister for Police has conceded that people do not feel safe in their own homes. Things have to change in this state. The Andrews Labor government's weakness in the face of the horrifying daily accounts of violent home invasions, armed robberies and carjackings has only emboldened those thugs, who think that violence and getting off lightly are just normal. Too many violent thugs in this state think nothing of reoffending. This has to change. Things are now so bad that a real difference is only possible with profound changes to the way our justice system responds to brutal and brazen violence on our streets and in our homes and local shopping centres. The only change possible can come in November 2018 when a Matthew Guy coalition is elected.

Crime is up 10.2 per cent overall. Assaults have spiked 11.8 per cent. Robberies have increased 24.4 per cent. Theft offences are up 15.8 per cent, break and enter offences are up 10.1 per cent and justice procedures are up 51.6 per cent. The specific crime increases over two years of the Daniel Andrews government are: common assault, up 31.2 per cent; aggravated robberies, up 30.8 per cent; non-aggravated robberies, up 41.5 per cent; dangerous and negligent acts endangering people, up 36.3 per cent; arson, up 15.3 per cent; aggravated burglaries, up 64.4 per cent; non-aggravated burglaries, up 17.5 per cent; motor vehicle thefts, up 43.6 per cent; drug possession, up 25.4 per cent; escaping from custody, up 25.6 per cent; and resisting or hindering a police officer, up 193.7 per cent.

As I indicated, car thefts are on the rise in Victoria. I refer to two particular local government areas in my electorate: in Hume there are over 30 car thefts a week, and in Whittlesea there are over 22 car thefts per week. I quote the words of the shadow Minister for Police, Edward O'Donohue — and I agree with him — that people should not have to live in fear of leaving their car on the street. Yet under the Andrews Labor government that is what is happening. In some suburbs a car is stolen every 5 hours on average. This is more and more proof that the job of fixing Victoria's crime rates and its crime crisis is beyond the capacity of Daniel Andrews and his police minister.

But then they take a different approach. The Minister for Corrections talked about her concern to see that we demonstrate great love and care for prisoners. This is the touchy-feely government that has not focused on the safety of ordinary Victorians.

Business interrupted pursuant to order of Council.

Mr O'Donohue — On a point of order, President, it is now midday and I am yet to receive answers to the questions that the minister was ordered to respond to in question time yesterday.

The PRESIDENT — Order! We will come to that at the end of question time.

ABSENCE OF MINISTER

Mr JENNINGS (Special Minister of State) — I indicate to the chamber that my ministerial colleague Ms Mikakos is at the state funeral for Anthony Foster at this moment, and during question time I am happy to take questions on her behalf.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Home education

Dr CARLING-JENKINS (Western Metropolitan) — My question today is to Ms Tierney, the minister representing the Minister for Education. As part of the education and training regulations review the Department of Education and Training has proposed significant changes to home education regulations. The review has received a large number of submissions, 564 of which were publicly available on the department's website. These submissions, to my understanding, were returned to the author if redactions were made with a request for approval for publication. However, it has been brought to my attention that at least one submission approved for publication was further redacted before it was published. In fact an entire paragraph was deleted without the approval of the author. The department has already been exposed for publishing names and addresses of parents without their permission as part of this review, and it now seems they are responsible for redacting paragraphs without approval.

My question is: what action will the government take to ensure that home educators are provided with a more transparent, more accountable and less biased service from the Department of Education and Training both now and in the future?

Ms TIERNEY (Minister for Training and Skills) — I thank Dr Carling-Jenkins for her question and recognise her ongoing commitment to the pursuit of matters that she has raised here this afternoon. Can I say that Minister Merlino is indeed leading this review. The matters the member raises here this afternoon are of a technical nature in terms of the mechanics of the way the review is being conducted, and I will ensure that

those concerns are relayed to the minister and that advice is provided to her.

Supplementary question

Dr CARLING-JENKINS (Western Metropolitan) — I thank you, Minister, for your answer and your willingness to get the information I seek. By way of supplementary, in light of the department of education's continued incompetence in relation to submissions, does the minister continue to have confidence in the panel reviewing the home education regulations?

Ms TIERNEY (Minister for Training and Skills) — Again, that is a direct question to the Minister for Education and is seeking an opinion in terms of his views of the panel. I will refer that matter to the Minister for Education.

Timber industry

Ms DUNN (Eastern Metropolitan) — My question is for the Minister for Agriculture. At the public hearing of the VicForests inquiry it was revealed that as part of the purchase of the Heyfield mill by the Hermal Group from Gunns a discount rate of between \$8 and \$10 per cubic metre was put in place as part of the contract arrangements. My question for the minister is: how many mills have current contracts in place that include a discounted rate for timber?

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Agriculture) — I thank Ms Dunn for her question and her ongoing interest in these matters. As is my normal practice, given that these questions — and in particular this question — go to contractual arrangements with VicForests and individual businesses, there is a sensitivity and a commercial-in-confidence nature to a lot of this. I will take Ms Dunn's question on notice, and if I am able to provide further information, I will, but I would indicate that it is quite possible that these matters do go into areas that are commercial in confidence.

Supplementary question

Ms DUNN (Eastern Metropolitan) — I thank the minister for her answer. My supplementary question is: what has been the accumulated cost to Victoria of providing this discount to Australian Sustainable Hardwoods?

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Agriculture) — I thank Ms Dunn for her further question. In the same vein, if I am able to provide further information to Ms Dunn, I will. But I know that Ms Dunn sees these

matters only as a negative and never as a positive. The community of Heyfield, of course, has derived great benefits from the ongoing employment that exists for so many people at the Heyfield mill. Of course the economic benefits of having a strong and sustainable timber industry are many. For the individuals who work in this business, for the contractors who supply product to this business and for the consumers who purchase finished product at the end of all the work and effort that occurs at the mill there is great value. So I might also provide Ms Dunn with some information about the benefits that have flowed to the Victorian economy and to the community, in particular the community of Heyfield, as a result of the ongoing operations of the mill — of course something that we hope will continue and are working very hard to that effect.

Timber industry

Ms DUNN (Eastern Metropolitan) — My question is again for the Minister for Agriculture. It is in relation to the budget announcement regarding the establishment of plantation timber. I am wondering, Minister, if you can provide the house with any information on where these plantations might be sited and what species they might contain?

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Agriculture) — I thank Ms Dunn for her question and her interest in our government's determination to increase the plantation timber sector in Victoria. There is, as Ms Dunn points out, \$110 million allocated in the budget to that end. What we have commenced now — and this will continue in earnest — are initial discussions with the local councils throughout Gippsland and initial discussions with industry about where they believe demand will exist, in preparation for the establishment of those plantations. So we will work closely with local communities and we will work closely with industry to determine where the demand is, of course in the first instance exploring opportunities on public land but also, if and as it is appropriate, on private land as well. So I cannot give you a spot on a map right now, Ms Dunn, but we will certainly be working very closely with industry and the community to increase the amount of plantation timber available to industry going forward. This is something that has not happened in Victoria since the 1980s, and we are very pleased to be getting on with it.

Supplementary question

Ms DUNN (Eastern Metropolitan) — I thank you, Minister, for your answer. Minister, I am wondering in relation to plantations: are you able to rule out in terms

of the siting of the plantations that we will not see a conversion of intact or already logged state forest?

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Agriculture) — As I think I indicated in my initial answer, we will work closely with all interested parties to determine the most appropriate location and also questions of species and develop this plantation sector further in close consultation and cooperation with existing players. So what I can indicate to Ms Dunn is that no decisions have been made around the specific location, other than of course that our statements to date have referred to the need to have this located proximate to the Latrobe Valley. The most significant player — not the only player in the industry but the most significant employer — in the timber products industry, of course being Australian Paper, is a business that I think has long made known its desire to have increasing supply from plantation timber, and we will continue to work closely to that end.

Winton Wetlands

Mr YOUNG (Northern Victoria) — My question today is for the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, represented in this house by the Leader of the Government. Minister, the Winton Wetlands near Benalla has been undergoing a restoration project that is supposed to have achieved the rehabilitation of the wetlands after the decommissioning of Lake Mokoan. As well as this, it is supposed to have driven tourism to the area in a number of ways, but as I have been informed the greenie-approved activities being promoted simply do not work. Minister, what are the criteria of assessment that the government uses to determine whether the committee of management are making the best use of the \$20 million-plus that has been provided to this project?

Mr JENNINGS (Special Minister of State) — I thank Mr Young for his question. I will top and tail my response to his question as to the way in which he structured it. He described the intent and the importance of the rehabilitation of the wetlands and its potential benefits, in terms of both environmental and recreational pursuits, very accurately at the beginning. That was clearly accurate. He was very accurate in relation to the significant resources that have been allocated to those outcomes. So I am very pleased to confirm that his description of both of those elements the government supports and the government will continue to support in terms of the intent, and the significant resource allocation that has been provided for it is a demonstration of how determined the government is to achieve those outcomes.

As to the bit in the middle, where he attributes certain outcomes and certain shortcomings in relation to the project, the project management and the input of others, I will actually then take advice from my ministerial colleague and her agency about the best way to account for those issues, without necessarily agreeing to the middle component of his question.

Supplementary question

Mr YOUNG (Northern Victoria) — I thank the minister for that answer. My supplementary question is: Minister, what assessment of this project has the government undertaken, if any at all, since the project started in 2011?

Mr JENNINGS (Special Minister of State) — I can actually confirm to Mr Young that between his asking his substantive question and the supplementary question I have not been privy to any additional assessment criteria. I will seek that out from my colleague.

Corrections system

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — My question is to the Minister for Corrections. Minister, at the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearings the Victorian police commissioner, Graham Ashton, stated that around 300 persons were currently on Victoria Police's persons of interest list relating to terrorism. Minister, how many of those 300 are currently in Victoria's correctional facilities?

Ms TIERNEY (Minister for Corrections) — I have made this part of a review that I have asked the Office of Correctional Services Review to conduct so that there is full and adequate information in terms of the profile of prisoners in our prison system. I have also asked the review to assess every interaction Corrections Victoria has had with Mr Khayre, both in prison and in the parole system. They will be reporting to me by 30 June this year. That is on top of a review that I referred to yesterday, an initial review that Corrections Victoria undertook and reported back to me on last night in respect of the incident on Monday afternoon. The initial review of the file has now been completed. While the incident, as we all know, is still subject to a police and a coronial investigation, and they will cover a range of matters, the review that I have ordered will deal with the direct role that Corrections Victoria has had in relation to the events leading up to Monday evening.

Can I say that the first report back from Corrections Victoria shows that Mr Khayre's management both in

prison and on parole has been appropriate. It shows that despite a history of violent and drug-related offending, he began to engage in programs, improved his prison behaviour and completed behaviour change programs, and then he applied for and was granted parole. Upon gaining parole last year he did comply with his parole conditions, which included curfew restrictions, GPS monitoring and drug and alcohol testing. He attended supervision with his parole officer and returned clean drug tests. He engaged in behavioural programs while on parole. Mr Khayre was presenting as an offender who was on the right path, Mr O'Donohue.

Then of course tragedy struck. Of course this raises a number of concerns, and that is why I have ordered a more comprehensive review of the management of this offender and all interactions Mr Khayre has had with staff in prison and on parole. That is why the Office of Correctional Services Review will actually lead that independent oversight and, as I said, contribute to the review of all interactions. This will check that the processes were followed and that no flags were overlooked to probe for any human error, and also check in terms of system failure or any other issue that could have meant a risk escalation was missed. I think that this is a comprehensive work that will be undertaken that has come to light as a result of information that was provided to me in the last 24 hours.

We are looking forward to taking the next step in having a comprehensive investigation. That report will be available to me at the end of the month, and I look forward to looking at those findings. If there are learnings from what has happened in recent times, then as the Premier has said, this government will take action.

Supplementary question

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — I thank the minister for her answer. Although it did not actually address the question that was posed to her, the information she has provided is useful, particularly in the context of her failure to answer questions yesterday. Noting the answer the minister has provided, that the review she requested from Corrections Victoria has now been completed, will she make that review public?

Ms TIERNEY (Minister for Corrections) — I thank the member for his question. As I indicated yesterday and I indicated again this morning, this was a preliminary review. It was to have Corrections Victoria study the files that were available. As a result of that there will be a second stage that will be a comprehensive review.

Brighton incident

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — I thank the minister for her answer that the Office of Correctional Services Review will be doing a full investigation into the Brighton incident. As the minister would know, the Office of Correctional Services Review reports directly to the secretary and not her as minister. The Office of Correctional Services Review never releases any of its reports to the community, so the question to the minister is: is she saying that a secret report has been commissioned that the public will never see?

Ms TIERNEY (Minister for Corrections) — I thank the member for his question. The reality is that this is a very, very serious matter, and allegations of cover-ups and secret reports take us nowhere. The fact of the matter is that I will receive findings. Of course there is the potential that security and operational matters that are very sensitive will be contained, I would imagine, in the report, and then I would need to make an assessment as to what becomes public and in what format.

Supplementary question

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — I ask by way of supplementary: Minister, again, given that the Office of Correctional Services Review never releases its reports to the public — and indeed does not even report to you — why did you not commission an independent person to conduct this important review?

Ms TIERNEY (Minister for Corrections) — I thank the member for his question. Can I say that I do receive reports and I have meetings and consultations with the review office. I believe that they do an excellent job in a whole range of areas and keep an oversight over the corrections system in this state. I actually applaud the work that they do. I believe that they are in the best place and in the best position to provide the information and the advice that I am seeking.

Parole programs

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — My question is to the Minister for Corrections. Minister, how many parolees have as a condition of their parole the requirement to participate in anti-radicalisation programs?

Ms TIERNEY (Minister for Corrections) — I would need to take that on notice, but I can say to you that, as I understand it, there is no-one who is on parole undertaking that course.

Supplementary question

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — Noting the minister's answer that she will take the substantive question on notice, I would ask by way of supplementary: if there are parolees who are undertaking anti-radicalisation programs, what is the successful completion rate of the parolees ordered to undertake such programs?

Ms TIERNEY (Minister for Corrections) — As I understand it, Mr O'Donohue, there is no-one who is on parole that is undertaking the course.

Prison programs

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — My question is to the Minister for Corrections. Minister, what is the management regime for radicalised prisoners?

Ms TIERNEY (Minister for Corrections) — I thank the member for his question. Obviously the anti-radicalism course is part of that. Of course, again, Corrections Victoria does not talk about individuals that are on that regime, but it is fair to say, as you would understand being a former minister, there are operational measures that are delivered that separate and shift people within that cohort so that there is proper management of that cohort on a daily basis.

Supplementary question

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — Minister Neville in the other place answered by a tweet the question I posed to you yesterday — that is, that there are 17 prisoners who are currently undertaking a program with the Islamic Council of Victoria. Are there other deradicalisation programs currently on foot within the prison system?

Ms TIERNEY (Minister for Corrections) — I stand by the answer that I gave yesterday, and that was that my advice is there are up to 22 people in prisons and in the community. My information is that there are 13 in the prison system who are undertaking that course.

Mr O'Donohue — On a point of order, President, I am concerned that the minister may not have understood my question. I said, 'in addition to the 22 she referred to, in addition to the Islamic Council of Victoria program she referred to', and she has referred to — —

Mr Dalidakis interjected.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I think I have had a bit of experience in judging what points of order are, and it might be best if it was left to me.

Mr O'Donohue, to this point it is not a point of order. You are really going to question the substance of the answer and, as I have indicated, the minister is able to answer as she sees fit. If the answer is unsatisfactory, then you obviously have further opportunities to follow up.

Parole conditions

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — My question is to the Minister for Corrections. Minister, how many criminals living in the community subject to a parole order have in the last 12 months tampered with or removed their electronic monitoring bracelets?

Ms TIERNEY (Minister for Corrections) — I thank the member for his question. I do not have that level of detail of information with me, but I am happy to take that matter on notice.

Supplementary question

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — Minister, one of those criminals that removed his electronic monitoring bracelet was the Brighton offender, Khayre. There are two conflicting reports in the public domain on the location of where the offender removed his bracelet. One indicates it was in Brighton; the other indicates prior to his travel to Brighton. Minister, in which suburb did Khayre remove his bracelet?

Ms TIERNEY (Minister for Corrections) — It was at 4.14 p.m. in Brighton.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Answers

Mr JENNINGS (Special Minister of State) — I have answers to the following questions on notice: 11 038–9, 11 057.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Written responses

The PRESIDENT — Order! In respect of today's questions, can I indicate that in relation to Dr Carling-Jenkins' questions to Ms Tierney, which were in regard to a minister in another place, the minister will provide a written response to both the substantive and supplementary question within two days.

In respect of Ms Dunn's first question to Ms Pulford, the minister will provide a written response to the substantive and supplementary question within one day.

In respect of Mr Young's question to Mr Jennings, which involved a minister in another place, the minister will provide a written response to the substantive and supplementary question within two days.

In respect of Mr O'Donohue's first question to Ms Tierney, the minister will provide a written response to the substantive question within one day. In respect of his third question to Ms Tierney, the minister will provide a written response to the substantive question within one day. In respect of his fourth question to Ms Tierney, the minister will provide written responses to the substantive and supplementary question within one day. On his fifth question to Ms Tierney, the minister will provide a written response to just the substantive question within one day.

Ms Wooldridge — I suppose my point of order, President, is a question in relation to the genuineness of the minister in responding to questions which you yesterday required her to provide a written response to, because we had a question which asked: exactly what time and date did the removal of the ankle bracelet occur? These answers were tabled at 11 59 a.m., and the answer refuses to answer that question. Subsequently, 29 minutes later, the minister provided the exact date and time, which was actually the answer to yesterday's question, so I think there are some serious concerns in relation to the minister's answering in a written form the questions that she was required to provide, given she clearly had that information to hand and has refused to provide it in her written responses.

Ms Shing — On the point of order, President, the claim about the genuineness or otherwise of a response to a question from the minister first of all is not a point of order, and in the second instance the minister, as she has indicated in answers to the house today, has confirmed that information has been coming to her ever since the incident, as it occurred, and that that is a continuous process.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I am not in a position to determine at what point the minister became aware of the fact that she did convey to the house during question time today. I just have no way of knowing at what point the minister became aware of that.

CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS

South Eastern Metropolitan Region

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) — My constituency question is for the attention of the Minister for Water, and it is in relation to longstanding problems involving the quality of the Patterson Lakes Quiet Lakes water. Some matters have been resolved as a result of the intervention of the former coalition government, but a serious problem remains in relation to the water quality in Lake Carramar.

Patterson Lakes Quiet Lakes serve a regional drainage function. Unfortunately this Labor government thinks that it is for private use only. The blue-green algae registered is astronomical; it is a health hazard. There is a requirement to take some action. Some options have been put forward. I call on the Minister for Water to outline what action she is going to take to address this public health issue of astronomical levels of blue-green algae in Lake Carramar.

Eastern Metropolitan Region

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) — My constituency question is directed to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, Luke Donnellan. I had a conversation with Eastern Ranges School. They are lobbying for a 40-kilometre variable speed zone in Dorset Road, in front of their school. They have many children with autism there, and they are lobbying and starting a petition around establishing a 40-kilometre zone. The question I ask the minister is: is there funding for special schools to be able to implement this type of technology to make access to their schools safer?

Southern Metropolitan Region

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) — My constituency question today is for the Minister for Planning, and it relates to the government's plans to redevelop and partially privatise the Prahran housing commission residences in my constituency. My question is a very simple one: will the minister guarantee that Stonnington council will remain the planning authority for this redevelopment?

Northern Metropolitan Region

Ms PATTEN (Northern Metropolitan) — My constituency question is for the Minister for Public Transport. A few of the businesses near my electorate office in Sydney Road have met with me and said that they are very concerned about proposals circulating in the media to permanently remove on-street car parking from Sydney Road and replace it with platform tram

stops, wider footpaths and separated bike lanes. Parking is very difficult. Customers are coming in and out of their stores as well as driving to their specific stores. I ask the minister: is she giving serious consideration to this proposal, and if so, has she instead considered increasing the width and capacity of the Upfield bike path or actually building a new bike path in Brunswick?

Western Victoria Region

Mr MORRIS (Western Victoria) — My constituency question is for the attention of the Minister for Police, and it relates to the number of police officers that are present in Ballarat at the moment. During the last 13 days we have seen two particular incidents of police cars being rammed by criminal offenders. Just this morning there has been another incident in Warrnambool of a police car being rammed by an offender. The question I ask of the Minister for Police is: will she ensure that the number of police protecting the community in Ballarat will be at least equivalent to the number of officers that were present in December 2014 when this current government came to office?

Northern Victoria Region

Mr YOUNG (Northern Victoria) — My question today is for the Minister for Agriculture. Recently I have had representation from an enthusiastic dog association who have been successful in having their favourite breed, the Murray River retriever, recognised as something unique and to be no longer confused with other curly haired retrievers. Unfortunately this accomplishment has resulted in an unintended consequence of no longer being a breed of dog that is allowed to be used for hunting. Minister, can you provide a guarantee that no owner of a Murray River retriever will face any penalties for using their dog while hunting until this oversight is sorted out?

Northern Victoria Region

Ms LOVELL (Northern Victoria) — My question is for the Minister for Public Transport, and it is in regard to the lack of access to myki tickets for residents of Doreen. I have been contacted by the owners of a newsagency in Doreen that wants to sell myki tickets. They applied to Public Transport Victoria, but the request was refused with the attitude that there are 800 retailers statewide and that is enough. The minister also gave the owners this same response. The owners challenge this logic, saying that the closest other outlet to them is 20 minutes away, a significant distance for customers reliant on public transport. Further, they say they have several people a day in their store enquiring about purchasing myki cards or top-ups, saying that some buses in the area do top-ups but they will not take

payment by card. A lot of children and elderly users might not have online access or capability so require a convenient way to purchase or top up cards in person. This newsagency is in an isolated area in an outer suburb and residents need access to a myki outlet. Will the minister please reconsider her previous position and take into account the specific circumstances of this community and allocate a myki ticketing outlet to the Doreen newsagency?

Western Metropolitan Region

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — My constituency question is to the Minister for Public Transport. In responses to my earlier questions on the looming debacle over the removal of the Buckley Street level crossing in Essendon the minister has shown zero understanding of the issues involved. In an attempt to score a cheap political point or two Minister Allan has totally dismissed the very real concerns of Essendon residents. Given the enormous importance of this matter and the need to ensure that the government's plan to destroy the heart of Essendon is avoided, if I convene a public meeting for locals to convey their anger over this directly, will the minister attend this meeting?

Western Victoria Region

Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria) — My constituency question is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. It is in relation to some farmers who have approached me about providing soil for the works on Princes Highway west between Winchelsea and Colac. I understand there has been —

Mr Jennings interjected.

Mr RAMSAY — Mr Jennings, do you want to help me with my contribution?

Mr Jennings — No, I was helping Mr Finn's afterglow.

Mr RAMSAY — Right. The concern raised by them is that there has been a challenge to them being able to provide soil in return for building water storages along the escarpment of Princes Highway west. I understand a neighbour has complained to the government in relation to that deal. That is very traditional and historic. It is very helpful for farmers to be able to exchange soil for water storage holdings, so I am seeking a clarification from the minister in relation to whether that project will be stalled on the basis that the managers cannot actually obtain the soil required for the continuing works for the Princes Highway west duplication.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Debate resumed.

Mr ONDARCHIE (Northern Metropolitan) — In relation to Mr O'Donohue's motion I refer to some of the interesting data that has come out in terms of the growing crime problem that this state is facing under this Andrews Labor government. I go specifically to my own electorate of Northern Metropolitan Region. In the local government area of Banyule crime has gone up by 14.26 per cent since the arrival of the Andrews Labor government.

In particular I draw attention to the Heidelberg West police station, which is in fact a feature of Mr O'Donohue's motion in part 2, where it says the Heidelberg West police station has been subject to graffiti and is closed. The member for Ivanhoe in the other place campaigned feverishly when he was in opposition for the reopening of the Heidelberg West police station. It services not only the immediate surrounds of Heidelberg West and Olympic Village but also over the creek into my own electorate of Northern Metropolitan region. Here we are almost three years into the Andrews Labor government, and nothing has happened at Heidelberg West apart from the fact that crime has gone up.

In Darebin crime is up by 16.51 per cent. In the Hume City Council area crime is up by 31.67 per cent. I note the City of Hume also takes in part of Mr Finn's electorate in the area of Sunbury, so across the area we share in the City of Hume crime is up by over 30 per cent. I know that the constituents in Northern Metropolitan Region, together with Mr Finn's constituents in Western Metropolitan Region are fed up — absolutely fed up. To quote Mr Finn in his eloquent way of putting it, 'They have had a gutful'.

In the Melbourne City Council area crime is up by 14.49 per cent. In Moonee Valley, which only just touches on part of the Northern Metropolitan Region, crime is up by over 14 per cent. In the City of Moreland crime is up by 18.19 per cent, and in Whittlesea crime is up by over 22 per cent. Speaking to the mayor, Cr Ricky Kirkham, in Whittlesea, he is absolutely frustrated. He is a fine man. He is absolutely frustrated at the lack of support from this government for the things needed in Whittlesea, particularly around law and order.

The government often talk about police numbers, and Mr Melhem, who we know is not always accurate when it comes to counting numbers, talked about police numbers in his contribution today. But these police

have not come online. They have just woken up. The government have just lifted their head out from under the doona and said, 'We've got a problem; we'd better do something', so they have announced they are going to add more police, but the reality is these police will not come online for some time to come. The facts are simple. During the term of the Baillieu-Napthine governments an extra 1894 sworn members were added to Victoria Police. After just two years of Labor, only 318 sworn police have been added. They can quote any numbers they like, but they are the facts.

But change is only possible in this state if Victoria elects a Guy coalition government in November 2018, because it is about leadership in this state, and quite frankly we do not have leadership from this government. Leadership means standing up to this violence and declaring, 'We will not tolerate it.' It means being prepared to take the strongest action to keep our community safe, and it means being prepared to take our state back from the emerging culture of lawlessness and disrespect.

A Matthew Guy coalition government will fix our justice system. In government the Matthew Guy coalition will crack down severely on violent reoffending by introducing statutory minimum jail terms for criminals who are found guilty of a second violent offence, having been found guilty of a prior serious violent offence. These minimum terms will be hefty, and they will be intended to send a very loud message that we will come down — a Matthew Guy coalition government will come down — heavily on those who think they can continue to defy the law and subject their fellow citizens to the indignity of violence, fear and intimidation. Not only are these changes directed at violent gangs but they also extend to all areas of our community where violence is all too prevalent.

Domestic violence is a key area where it is absolutely vital to come down heavily on reoffenders who think they can ignore the lessons of their earlier violent behaviour. These laws would see recidivist domestic violent perpetrators go away for a very long time. Reoffending is getting worse under Daniel Andrews. Even the latest Victorian budget shows the Labor government is failing when it comes to reoffending rates. Victoria has had a recidivism rate of over 41 per cent within two years. Despite Daniel Andrews claiming that crime is a priority, his government has failed to bring reoffending rates down. This is unacceptable.

A Matthew Guy government has a suite of policies already announced that it will bring to bear straight

away. It includes things like no body, no parole; introducing carjacking offences; making drive-by shootings an offence; abolishing cash payments for scrap metal; deporting violent criminals who are not citizens; keeping police killer Craig Minogue behind bars; and reinstating funding for Neighbourhood Watch.

In youth justice it includes naming and shaming repeat violent youth offenders, exposing the juvenile criminal history of violent adult offenders, making community safety the top priority when it comes to youth parole, moving youth justice from the Department of Health and Human Services to corrections and building a high-security youth detention facility for violent youth criminals. Ms Crozier suggested this, and it was absolutely attacked by the government as an idea. And lo and behold, what are they planning to do? They are planning to build one of their own. It is another example of this government being short on policy and short on ideas. It took Ms Crozier to suggest what needed to be fixed for the government to do something — albeit the government went about it badly. They announced this supermax youth prison to the people of Werribee without even consulting them. So the people of Werribee South, under Mr Finn's stewardship, came out into the street and said, 'We have had enough.' Mr Pallas, trying to save his own backside, quickly made a change and said, 'We'll put it somewhere else.' One of the sites that was selected was not even on the initial list. This is government policy on the run.

A Matthew Guy coalition government will put victims of crime first. We will put the rights of victims before those of criminals. We will give victims of crime access to criminals' superannuation as part of victims' compensation. The Liberals have had enough. We are not going to tolerate this behaviour any longer. The Liberal-Nationals coalition, under the leadership of Matthew Guy, is going to make Victoria safe again.

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I rise to support the motion moved so exceedingly well today by Mr O'Donohue and supported by a number of members on this side, probably none so well as Mr Ondarchie did before me. I seem to have spoken a lot this week, and indeed in previous weeks, about crime in this state. That is hardly surprising, because as I travel around my electorate and as I travel around the state, that is an issue that is raised with me time and time again. It is clearly the issue that is on people's minds more than any other. The government is trying to talk it down; the government is trying to perpetrate some sort of myth that this is all a Liberal plot. The crime epidemic in this state, I can assure members, is

not a Liberal plot, and if members opposite wish to go out and speak to their constituents, on the off-chance that some of them actually visit their electorates occasionally and can find their constituents —

Mr Ondarchie — Or can find their electorates.

Mr FINN — or can find their electorates, Mr Ondarchie, then they will find that the people in their electorates feel the same way.

This is no furphy. This is no fanciful exercise on behalf of the opposition. This is reality in Victoria in 2017. We have a crime tsunami. We have a situation where — as I have said before in this house but I will say it again, because clearly the government is not listening and does not want to know — many of the people of Victoria are living in fear. In the western suburbs it is probably worse than anywhere else in the state, although when I see things happening in Toorak and East Malvern, in Dandenong and in a whole range of other places on the other side of Melbourne — and it is a pity Mr Melhem is not here because I could take him up on a few things that he said, but I will get back to him a little bit later on — I know that it is not just the west; it is statewide. It is not just a Melbourne thing at all. This is a statewide phenomenon.

That is something that should concern us all and does concern those of us on this side of the house. It concerns us very, very much indeed, because there is no doubt in my mind and no doubt in anybody's mind on this side of the house that the number one responsibility of any government anywhere is to protect the people — always. Protection of the people is the number one responsibility of any government, and this government has thrown it away. This government has that responsibility and has just thrown it against the wall. It does not want to know.

We have heard members of the government today suggest that members on this side of the house have no respect for the police. We have heard members on the other side suggest that members of the opposition have tried to downgrade and hold the members of Victoria Police in contempt. Nothing could be further from the truth. There is nobody in this state that I hold in higher esteem than the men and women of Victoria Police, and I am talking about the men and women who are on the front line. I am talking about the men and women who go out there every day not knowing if they will return. They are literally putting themselves on the line.

Last Monday in Brighton we saw a situation where three members of Victoria Police were called to a job and two of them ended up in hospital and another one

was shot. They all had gunshot wounds. It could very easily have ended in tragedy. We had a situation outside this place — was it last year or the year before? — where one of our protective services officers (PSOs) was attacked by somebody with a hammer, as I recall. He was very, very badly injured. That shows that even here in this Parliament our PSOs, the people who are charged with the responsibility of protecting us as members of Parliament and those who work with us in this building, have the courage that all members of Victoria Police display on a daily basis.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the PSOs who protect this place, and remember that it was Deputy Premier of this state, James Merlino, who referred to the PSOs as 'plastic police'. He has never resiled from that. He has never apologised for that. He stands by that, clearly. He should be ashamed of himself; he stands condemned for that comment. But I am very, very thankful — very, very grateful indeed — to the PSOs, as indeed I am to every single member on the front line of Victoria Police, who do a brilliant job. They are under-resourced. They do not have the support that they should have — and I am talking about support from government, I am talking about support from much of their own command and I am talking about the authority that they need to do their job.

The problem we have with a lot of police is that they are thinking in their own minds, 'If I do my job, if I do now what I should do, I might end up in strife'. In years gone by police would have gone ahead and they would have done the job that they were charged with doing. But now they might find themselves in trouble with civil libertarians or some legal service somewhere reporting them for some breach of human rights, and that is something that must bear on the minds of every police officer in this state significantly.

I sincerely hope that when Matthew Guy becomes Premier in November next year the Guy government will give the police in this state not just the resources to do their job but the authority to do their job so that when police attend a job they know that they have the support of the government of Victoria. They have the authority of the government of Victoria to go ahead and do what they have to do to protect the people in this state. I say to the police of Victoria, the men and women in this state who are out on the front line every day and every night protecting us: thank you on behalf of not just the opposition but every Victorian. We are very, very proud of our police. They do a great job, quite often under extraordinary circumstances. Once again I thank them.

We heard from Mr Melhem earlier, who tried to downplay this whole thing. He said, 'Oh, there's no crime. It's all a beat-up. It's all part of the opposition trying to talk this up. It's all about fearmongering'. Let me assure Mr Melhem that if he goes out and speaks to people in his electorate, as I go out and speak to people in that same electorate, he will find out that it is not fearmongering. He could go and speak to the people in Caroline Springs, and he might remember that it was only last year that he and I stood on the same platform in Caroline Springs and spoke at a rally, with the then secretary of the Police Association Victoria, demanding more police because of the crime wave that was hitting Caroline Springs. Mr Melhem seems to have forgotten that. What a pity. There are so many bad memories in the Labor Party. Perhaps, President, you might consider some sort of remedial classes for them to enable their memories to improve. I remember very well indeed that day when well over 1000 people showed up in the middle of Caroline Springs on a very windy and chilly Saturday morning — there is so much happening on Saturday morning, yet still over 1000 people showed up — because people were worried then, and they are still worried now. They are living in fear.

People in Tarneit are living in fear. I mentioned yesterday the young bloke with autism who felt safe getting the bus but does not anymore because he was bashed and robbed, and that has had an impact on his family. The number of gang incidents that have occurred in Tarneit is terrifying; it is absolutely terrifying, and it is just not good enough. And that is to say nothing of a poor woman in Hillside. At 11 o'clock in the morning hooligans broke into her house and bashed her. She ended up in hospital. She was doing nothing but living the peaceful life that we all want, and she suffered the consequences.

I say to the government: enough of the PR, enough of the spin and enough of the bull. Let us get some action out here. Where are those police that you keep talking about? I cannot see them, and the people of Victoria cannot see them. We need those police. Today we have seen the Premier of this state abrogate his responsibilities as the leader of the state by offering to hand the parole powers to the federal government. Can you believe that? How weak is this Premier! How pathetic is this Premier that he would do that. He is not fit to hold the high office of Premier. Indeed he should resign. As for the Minister for Corrections, she has shown today that she has got no idea. I support this motion, and I trust that the house will very strongly support this motion as well.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan).

Debate adjourned until later this day.

Sitting suspended 1.00 p.m. until 2.03 p.m.

PROCEDURE COMMITTEE

Reference

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — I move:

That this house —

- (1) notes the Legislative Assembly Standing Orders Committee inquiry into the establishment of an independent parliamentary commissioner for standards in Victoria conducted in 2014, in consultation with the Procedure Committee, was unable to be completed before the expiration of the 57th Parliament; and
- (2) requires the Procedure Committee, in consultation with the Legislative Assembly Standing Orders Committee, to inquire into, consider and report on, by no later than 14 November 2017, the establishment of an independent parliamentary commissioner for standards in Victoria.

This motion calls for a reference to the Procedure Committee of this house working in consultation with the Legislative Assembly Standing Orders Committee to inquire into, consider and report on the establishment of an independent parliamentary commissioner for standards in Victoria. This notice has been on the notice paper for some time, so members would note that the reporting date has now been altered.

This in fact is the implementation of a recommendation that came from the lower house Privileges Committee inquiry into the unfortunate Mr Geoff Shaw, a member for Frankston in the previous Parliament. This was a recommendation that was supported by the Privileges Committee at that time, and their recommendation called upon us to jointly work with them to establish this commissioner, which by necessity would have to work across both houses. I will return to some of their arguments in a moment, but even if it had not been recommended by that committee in relation to that matter, visually impaired Frederick would understand that we need to clean up our act here in this Parliament.

These mechanisms, such as codes of conduct and parliamentary commissioners for standards have already been established in other Westminster parliaments, including Canada and notably the UK, where scandal after scandal after scandal, rort after rort after rort, have absolutely sickened their publics. Unfortunately we have got a bit of that trend going on here in Victoria, and it would be a good move to demonstrate to the public that we are capable of setting up an apparatus and a watchdog to govern ourselves. At the end of the day it will be politicians enforcing standards on politicians, but these sorts of mechanisms and these standing bodies are unfortunately necessary.

There are a lot of things I would rather be introducing into the Parliament today and talking about — global warming, transport problems, matters of agriculture and so on — but unfortunately without confidence by the public in the Parliament itself it is extraordinarily difficult to pursue any issue. Frankly, any time one of these rorting stories gets reported the feedback I get is that in fact we are all in on it. If there is one bad apple, the whole bunch is considered to be infected, so that is why it is important that we take some proactive steps here.

Members could, if they like, familiarise themselves with how this model works in the UK. There is certainly plenty of information there, and you will very quickly see by looking at the House of Commons website how it is that they have come to have the seatbelts and airbags — the integrity mechanisms — that they have. Just going back to the Geoff Shaw matter, the committee at the time under the subheading ‘Parliamentary commissioner for standards’ concluded as follows:

The committee upholds the need for high standards of integrity in public life and for any allegations of misuse of entitlements to be investigated thoroughly and quickly. The current investigation, which is the first of its kind for the committee, has been lengthy due to the inability of obtaining tapes of interviews, statutory declarations and written statements taken by the Ombudsman from the witnesses and whistleblowers.

The committee notes the process for investigating and reporting on complaints of misuse of entitlements in the House of Commons is that complaints are investigated by the independent parliamentary commissioner for standards, who then reports to the Standards Committee, House of Commons, detailing an account of the evidence, the finding of fact and a conclusion along with any relevant recommendations.

Then it says, mirroring my motion, which I have copied from this:

The committee recommends that the house provides a reference to the Standing Orders Committee to investigate the establishment of an independent parliamentary commissioner for standards in Victoria, in consultation with the Legislative Council Procedure Committee.

Also contained in that report is some detailed advice from Mr Purdey, the Clerk of the lower house — I should take this opportunity to congratulate him on his many years of service, now that he has announced his retirement — and that advice in fact goes into considerable detail about the issues that are at stake in terms of Parliament’s privileges, how entitlements are a part of the privileges and how breaches of those privileges can be dealt with and punished. That

provided some support to the committee when they made this particular recommendation.

Given how much the Labor Party in opposition made of the Geoff Shaw matter, you would have thought they would have come to government, as they have in this term, with their own policies in this area. The Greens have been advocating for measures such as these ever since we arrived here in Parliament. It was part of our platform in 2006 when we were first elected to this place, but in fact the government has not acted to set up this kind of watchdog body. Then, having received notice of my motion, they raced in here yesterday proposing a motion not for a parliamentary commissioner for standards but in fact for a kind of ethics adviser.

I do not know what former Speaker Languiller or former Deputy Speaker Nardella would have made of that if that body had been in place. One of the problems with a parliamentary standards adviser as opposed to a commissioner is that it is not really clear what the standards are around this place unfortunately. The main instrument that we turn to when an MP is accused of misdeeds is whatever specific instructions they have been given in relation to expenditure, but then in terms of proving the offence we go to a code of conduct contained in the Members of Parliament (Register of Interests) Act 1978. Note that date: 1978. That is the last time this Parliament considered making for itself a code of conduct, and the code of conduct is about seven dot points.

You could summarise the seven dot points basically just by saying, ‘Don’t be evil’. That is basically all it offers in terms of guidance. So I am not quite sure what a parliamentary standards adviser would offer to someone except to say, ‘Go read the code of conduct and make up your own mind about how you ought to behave’. Most of us in this place, I believe, are ethical and are not reaching out for whatever next little bit of money is going to go into our pocket, but unfortunately there are some who are, and too often we have spent time dealing with matters of allowances and entitlements and allegations of other types of breaches in the several terms that I have been here.

We would by necessity, if we were to have a standards enforcement body, need to have some standards. That is something that this committee would inevitably need to look at when they talk about creating this new architecture. It is interesting in relation to the finding that the committee made in relation to Mr Shaw that they said that it was necessary for such allegations to be investigated thoroughly and quickly and that they had

difficulty obtaining information that had been used in an Ombudsman's investigation.

There have been other allegations in the life of this Parliament that are not just about MPs and their beach houses but also in relation to the Labor Party and casual staff in the run-up to the last election. You would not say that that was investigated thoroughly and quickly. In fact it has been months and months as we have argued about it through this chamber and as we have seen it go through the courts and get challenged in the courts — the jurisdiction of the Ombudsman was challenged in court. Nothing about that was designed to restore quickly the public's confidence in this Parliament. That has been an extraordinary lengthy process, and unfortunately we still do not have a conclusion. Even though I was the instigator of setting up that inquiry, I think I have been reasonably even handed in not actually assuming that there will be any particular conclusion. We will get some sort of report from the Ombudsman at some point, but I think everybody in this place ought to agree that we should have been able to have an investigation like that initiated and resolved much more quickly than that particular one.

That is really the core of my case. I hope that we are able today to get some agreement that the recommendation made quite some time ago in relation to a particularly scandalous breach of privilege is still a good recommendation today, is still a good way to go and that this house could initiate such an investigation, which would be cross-party of course. It is not about the government of the day or the cabinet of the government of the day sitting around deciding what mechanisms they want and what standards they want to create; it is for all members, all 128 of us, to settle on these standards, and that is why this particular committee is the appropriate body to initiate it.

If we can get the lower house equivalent committee also working in parallel, that of course is going to make things a lot easier. It would be perhaps the first time that two separate committees have actually cooperated in order to achieve a result by working on effectively the same reference in parallel. That would be further demonstration that we are here to deal with this cooperatively, to raise our standards and set benchmarks for ourselves that we can live up to rather than, as it seems to be, certain people looking at them and trying to work out how to poke holes in them and extract money from within those holes. That has been very unedifying. I think all members would understand that it has led to a dramatic loss of confidence by the public in this place the longer it goes on. We need a body in place that is a standing body, that has the

necessary powers and that has standards it can refer to so it can take action and clear the air quite quickly.

Mr JENNINGS (Special Minister of State) — In representing the government's position on Mr Barber's motion I have to say that his argument was incomplete on a whole range of matters that have occurred or would need to occur and that his motion would rely upon to get a result, which I actually think he has not addressed. I would start off by drawing the chamber's attention to a motion that is on the books in my name that he dismissed out of hand, which is the government's current proposal to introduce a parliamentary integrity adviser to achieve many of the outcomes, not necessarily all of the outcomes, that Mr Barber has attributed to his rationale for moving his motion today. My motion deals with many of the ways in which parliamentary standards can be improved and actively monitored and how advice, appropriate guidance and structure can be given to members of Parliament in the future.

It is the government's intention, not today obviously but at a subsequent point in time, to move a motion that is on the notice paper. We would hope to work collaboratively across the Parliament to achieve that objective. The motion that I propose to move, despite Mr Barber's reference that notice of it was given to the Parliament this week, was foreshadowed a couple of months ago when the government responded to the parliamentary Audit Committee's consideration of entitlements and allowances and its recommendations about the way in which these matters should be addressed into the future. On the very day that the Audit Committee provided its report to the Presiding Officers the government made a commitment to do a number of things, including to introduce the parliamentary integrity adviser and to make immediate changes, through regulation, to the way in which some of those allowances should be administered.

We announced that in the course of the parliamentary sittings this year we would be introducing a mechanism to establish a remuneration tribunal to consider the salaries and conditions of members of Parliament and to provide for additional powers of the Parliament and indeed the clerks to administer the way in which entitlements would be understood to be work-related expenses into the future, and we announced that we would change the allowance structure to be a modern mechanism for dealing with appropriate work-related expenses rather than being seen as an entitlement of MPs.

We recognise that there has been a sorry history in terms of the way in which the remuneration has been

determined by MPs in this state for some time, and probably that stems from the decision that was made some time ago to sever the connection with the independent remuneration mechanism that had been established in the commonwealth. From that period of time perhaps unsatisfactory ways have developed in which those issues have been addressed in terms of establishing the salary, establishing the appropriate allowance structures and trying to make sure that this is an independently regulated workplace in terms of wages and conditions. I think the Parliament has suffered as a result of that nexus being severed. It is the government's intention to re-create an independent mechanism to determine those outcomes.

Mr Barber's arguments were also incomplete. Going back to the heart of his motion, he moved a motion in this chamber seeking a collaboration with the Legislative Assembly Standing Orders Committee to achieve an outcome that the 57th Parliament was unable to resolve, without necessarily any guarantee that his motion would be in effect supported by either the actions or the resolution of the Legislative Assembly.

Mr Barber and I have been on different sides of the debate. In fact Mr Barber can take some pleasure in the support that he has been given by the Supreme Court and by the High Court of the nation in relation to not recognising exclusive cognisance of the chambers in the Victorian Parliament. But I can fairly confidently say I believe that in practice exclusive cognisance will be something that will continue to be reflected by the chambers in this Parliament and indeed other parliaments around the country as a matter of principle: one chamber does not determine necessarily the fate of the other or the actions that may be taken within that chamber.

The motion of which I have given notice in this house in relation to establishing an integrity adviser was mirrored by my colleague the Leader of the Government in the Legislative Assembly, who gave notice of a motion which would give the same effect as the motion that I will move. So in terms of the degree of collaboration and the potential for this work of the adviser to be adopted by a bicameral approach in the Victorian Parliament, I actually say that despite the content that Mr Barber and I may argue about, it is more likely that we will be able to achieve a collaborative environment across the Parliament to deliver the motion listed in my name rather than the motion moved in his name.

It is interesting that Mr Barber does not choose to acknowledge potentially the role that the Privileges

Committee may play in this matter. He is blind to the potential interests of integrity bodies like the Accountability and Oversight Committee of this Parliament or indeed the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Committee, which also may have a view in relation to these matters. Mr Barber is actually recommending in the arguments that he has mounted today effectively the introduction of a new aspect of the integrity and accountability framework without necessarily being mindful of pre-existing bodies within the Parliament that have an obligation under statute to consider some of the interlocking matters in relation to how the integrity bodies work.

Mr Barber is also blind to and in fact chooses not to talk about the fact that during the course of this Parliament I have introduced and had passed pieces of legislation which have changed — in fact increased — the jurisdictional cover of IBAC to be able to look at and investigate misconduct in public office, which indeed would cover potential circumstances of MPs, public servants and other agencies. He also chooses to ignore the fact that a number of other forms have been introduced by this government to try to make sure there is appropriate cover of corruption across IBAC, the Ombudsman and the Auditor-General by giving additional powers to each of those bodies to enable them to look into, investigate and determine outcomes rather than allowing various concerns about the appropriate scrutiny of public sector and parliamentary behaviour to fall shy of full scrutiny.

Mr Barber also chose to not put on the public record that the matters he has referred to regarding the consideration of not only the matter of Mr Shaw in the 57th Parliament but also matters within the 58th Parliament have been considered by either the Presiding Officers, the Audit Committee or the police — who have examined both of those matters — and that in fact, even though the government had concerns about the motion moved in relation to the Ombudsman's reference, the government has at no stage denied the potential for scrutiny by the Ombudsman in relation to the matters within this Parliament that could be considered if in fact they followed a pathway of protected disclosures and could be instigated on the basis of a whistleblower-enacted consideration by the Ombudsman. If she was of a mind to pursue an inquiry in relation to the use of electorate resources, she would be quite able to. It would depend on the investigative pathway and the way in which the complaint came to her.

The issue that the government had with it was that it believed the nature of the reference from the Parliament itself fell afoul of the Ombudsman Act 1973. A range

of mechanisms have been available to those bodies up until now that could have been exercised. Indeed one of the matters that Mr Barber has referred to continues currently to be evaluated and investigated by Victoria Police. The police may at their own choosing determine a pathway for that investigation or decide on remedies that they may seek to recommend in relation to their inquiries. Indeed the government is open to those.

In terms of the limit of support that the government has about the intent of Mr Barber's motion, yes, we recognise that standards need to be improved, and yes, we actually recognise that there needs to be greater rigour in the way that members of Parliament are regulated. That is one of the reasons why we introduced new capacities for IBAC to have a look at misconduct in public office. We continue to be alive to the need for us to provide greater confidence to the Victorian community by placing restrictions on the way that entitlements and allowances could or should be used. We are very happy for greater consideration to be given to the way that electorate office budgets may be used. We have no doubt about that. The government is determined to achieve that outcome.

The government is very interested in working across the chamber and across the Parliament to achieve those outcomes and embed them either in law or in practice or in the procedures through which we address these matters.

Mr Barber — Really? You're interested in working across the Parliament?

Mr JENNINGS — Did you listen from the very beginning? My first criticism of an aspect of your motion was to choose to be blind to working across the Parliament by asserting something in this chamber and expecting the Assembly just to take at face value your motion without necessarily the rejoinder occurring in the other place.

Mr Barber interjected.

Mr JENNINGS — By the Assembly, and I addressed that about 10 minutes ago. If you have only woken up now, I have already indicated to you that it is the government's intention to find a way within the Parliament, working across party lines and working across the exclusive cognisance of both chambers but actually working in a harmonious fashion, to deliver on an outcome.

We have made a recommendation in our motion to achieve that outcome. I think at the moment Mr Barber's motion has not done that. It is not mindful of other obligations, whether it be through privileges,

the Accountability and Oversight Committee or the IBAC Committee. It is choosing to be blind to the way in which his recommendation may fit in with either pre-existing reforms to the integrity framework or what the appropriate structures may be in the future. The government is confident that its model actually fits and does not actually contaminate the other investigative bodies and those responsibilities, and it recommends this adviser position to the Parliament. We are very happy to work in pursuit of our motion and in pursuit of the reforms that I will be introducing on behalf of the government when we come back from August onwards, reforms that may regularise and collectively build confidence in the eyes of the community that we live up to the appropriate degree of standards and scrutiny.

The government is reluctant to vote for this motion today because in fact we have put our colours to the mast in relation to what we think the appropriate structure should be. We are happy to work through that to try to get that motion up in the chamber and to resolve these matters. We would think that the work that is recommended in Mr Barber's motion by its very nature does not necessarily dictate that this is the most constructive and productive way to work on these issues. The government would be reluctant to embark upon a process without some appreciation of the issues that I have put on the table, as distinct from appreciation of the issues that Mr Barber has put on the table. I think his arguments today were very narrowcast in relation to his interests, and the government's interests are broader and more complete in relation to being concerned about how this fits within the accountability framework.

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS (South Eastern Metropolitan) — It is interesting to watch Mr Barber and Mr Jennings each seek the moral high ground on this issue and work to outdo each other on the issue of an integrity framework for members of Parliament. In the last two years, in particular the last 18 months, we have seen a number of issues which have had widespread public disclosure, interest and commentary and which have called into question the integrity of members of Parliament and some of the activities of members of Parliament.

We saw in 2015 the issue of the staffing rosters, the allegations made against certain Labor MPs in relation to conduct in the previous Parliament and the misuse of electorate office staff and the use of those staff for party campaigning purposes. As all members of this house know, there was an extensive series of actions which followed the public disclosure of that matter, starting with the initiation of an Ombudsman's inquiry by

resolution of this Council, which was opposed by the government on a number of occasions — at every opportunity: through the Supreme Court, the Court of Appeal and subsequently the High Court. At each step the court found in favour of the Ombudsman undertaking that reference which had been given to her by the Legislative Council.

Then this year we saw the second residence allowance rorts, involving no less a person than the then Speaker and also the then Deputy Speaker in the other place. Of course it has been a longstanding principle of the Parliament that the Presiding Officers are those people in each chamber entrusted with the maintenance of standards expected of members of Parliament. The Presiding Officers are elected to their positions specifically to uphold the standards certainly within the chambers but also to oversee and uphold the standards of members of Parliament more broadly. The fact that we had such a significant issue which went to integrity and which involve the then Presiding Officer and his deputy in the other place did great damage to the reputation of all members of Parliament and called into question publicly the integrity framework around members of Parliament.

It was of great regret to this institution that that happened, that it was a drawn-out process and that the government was caught flat footed. That the then Deputy Speaker, Mr Nardella, continues to be in a situation where he has not, to the best of our knowledge, squared the ledger on that particular matter continues to be to the detriment of all members of Parliament.

After that issue broke of course we had the government needing to respond. That was the response that the Premier said would take days if not weeks, and of course we saw a response after a number of months, including the announcement in late April that the government would legislate with respect to a number of matters around allowances and integrity for members of Parliament. Indeed the Leader of the Government in that press release in April did foreshadow the establishment of a parliamentary integrity adviser, for which he did give notice yesterday. That is a matter that the Parliament will consider no doubt in due course.

The motion Mr Barber has put before the house today, which followed that disclosure around the former Speaker and former Deputy Speaker back in February, seeks to have the Procedure Committee undertake a consultation with its Assembly counterpart to inquire into, consider and report on the establishment of an independent parliamentary commissioner for standards. The coalition does not oppose this motion. Given the

framework, given the environment in which we are operating, given the disclosures we had this year and the disclosures in 2015 around the activity of certain members of the Labor Party, it is understandable and it is appropriate that we have an opportunity to consider parliamentary standards. The mechanism that Mr Barber is proposing in this motion is one way to do that.

I take up the points made by the Leader of the Government that ultimately any framework that results will need the cooperation and the agreement of both houses of Parliament. This is not something that will be successful if the Council's Procedure Committee seeks to do it unilaterally. It will need consistency across both houses of Parliament and it will ultimately require the lower house and, as Mr Barber pointed out correctly, the government majority in the lower house to agree to a framework.

Mr Jennings yesterday gave notice of a framework for what the government has described as a parliamentary integrity adviser, which sets out one potential framework for the type of accountability that Mr Barber is seeking to have an inquiry into. I imagine that if this motion is passed by the Council today, one of the starting points for the Procedure Committee in undertaking this reference would be to look at the notice of motion that was given by the Leader of the Government yesterday.

I would like to take up something the Leader of the Government said more broadly in terms of the government's intention around reform in this area over the next several months, which arose from the second residence allowance rorts of February of this year. The Leader of the Government spoke about the way in which salaries for members of Parliament are set and expressed regret that the nexus between the salaries of Victorian members of Parliament had been broken from those of commonwealth members of Parliament. I would remind the Leader of the Government that that nexus was severed on the recommendation of the commonwealth Remuneration Tribunal because, as members may recall, during the course of the previous Parliament the commonwealth Remuneration Tribunal undertook a work value review of commonwealth members of Parliament which resulted in a recommendation of a salary increase for commonwealth members of Parliament in the order of \$80 000 per annum.

Mr Barber — Some members are still a bit sore about that.

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS — Mr Barber interjects that some members are still sore about that, and I suspect he might be right. But as part of the commonwealth Remuneration Tribunal recommending that \$80 000 increase for commonwealth members of Parliament they also recommended that where state parliament salaries were tied to the commonwealth — some parliaments did have that nexus — as part of the increase being set at the commonwealth level the nexus with state parliaments should be broken.

Accordingly the previous government did break that nexus, and we put in place a new nexus. The current Parliamentary Salaries and Superannuation Act 1968 provides that increases in the salary of members of the Victorian Parliament are tied to average weekly earnings. As the earnings of the Victorian community increase, so will the salaries of Victorian members of Parliament. It was the view of the previous government, with me as the minister who brought the legislation forward, that it was a very good nexus to tie the salaries of Victorian members of Parliament to the earnings of the Victorian community.

It is interesting that the current government has foreshadowed it will go down the path of introducing a Victorian remuneration tribunal — Mr Jennings said to make the process independent. I would put to the government there is nothing more independent than having the salaries of members of Parliament tied to the earnings of the Victorian community. Any mechanism which inserts a remuneration tribunal — a decision-making body which gets away from the direct tie with the Victorian community — is going to introduce opportunities for interference, disagreement and indeed public disregard for the decisions that a remuneration tribunal makes, as we saw with the commonwealth with that \$80 000 increase for commonwealth MPs. So I will be interested to see the legislation the Leader of the Government brings forward in the next session and to understand why the government believes having its own remuneration tribunal, to which of course it will have to appoint members, is somehow a better mechanism than having salaries tied to average weekly earnings, as is currently the case. That will be no doubt a matter for the Parliament's consideration in August.

With respect to the motion moved by Mr Barber today, the coalition believes that this inquiry could be a useful mechanism for advancing a framework around parliamentary standards. It is an opportunity to give broader consideration to the notice given by Mr Jennings yesterday, and accordingly the coalition will not oppose Mr Barber's motion.

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — I thank Mr Rich-Phillips and Mr Jennings for their contributions to my motion. I think I heard Mr Rich-Phillips at the end say that he would be supporting my motion.

Mr Rich-Phillips — Not opposing it.

Mr BARBER — He is not opposing my motion. Apparently, according to Mr Jennings, the lead speaker for the government, my motion and my argument here today have two big flaws. The first flaw, he says, is that I have failed to take into account or failed to understand — actually I think the expression he used was 'chose to ignore' — all the many other things that have been going on, all the many other complicated issues and all the many other considerations that would go into the establishment of a parliamentary standards commissioner. Of course I did nothing of the sort. For the sake of brevity I simply assumed that members who had done their homework, who had perhaps read the initiating report from the last Parliament, would understand that a reference like this to the committee would have to bring up a range of issues.

The issues that he alluded to included exclusive cognisance, privilege and the role of the Accountability and Oversight Committee. That is interesting, because we had a report from the Accountability and Oversight Committee tabled just yesterday, I think it was. There was a minority report in there from my Greens colleague Mr Hibbins. In fact it dealt quite specifically with one of these questions — that is, how when protected disclosures are made by individuals against MPs they would be dealt with and whether in fact they would be brought into the orbit of an IBAC inquiry or not. So it seems there are still some gaping holes in our integrity net and there is still some agreement, I would say, to be achieved in relation to how we are going to sew up those holes, because the existence of the holes ought to be pretty obvious.

Mr Jennings, if he was allowed to bring a whiteboard into the chamber, would probably have very happily spoken for an even longer period and drawn us a little chart of what he described in words, which was all the amazing, wonderful, complex and in his mind elegant and different integrity bodies with different powers to do different things at different times that are flying around. But that is not actually a positive; that is actually an argument for my motion, which is that it is not at all clear as to how a specific allegation would be initiated and who would deal with it, how and when. I think at the moment your most likely chance is to drop a line to the *Age* newspaper, and then you would get some action. But we can do a lot better than that.

The previous committee that looked at this certainly hit on the idea of a parliamentary standards commissioner to deal quite tightly with questions of MPs and their conduct being dealt with through the Parliament under the overall umbrella of privilege — the protection of it or the breach of it. So it is not that I am unaware of those complexities at all. In fact that is one of the things that this committee will have to turn its mind to quite quickly. The question is really an argument of whether you believe there is a gap in our integrity system or you believe there is not.

The second big flaw he found in my argument was I would not be able to progress this because I could not get any support from the Legislative Assembly. In fact he almost made out that I was almost arrogantly assuming their compliance — well, nothing of the sort.

This notice of motion has been on the notice paper since 8 March. As we know, the very unfortunate allegations that were made against Assembly members Mr Languiller and Mr Nardella arose in mid-February, and the first thing that I did when those allegations arose was to call for the Premier to work with the various party leaders in this Parliament to come up with a system to restore public confidence. That was the first thing I did. I did not rush out there to say those individuals are bad men. I said, 'We, as the party leaders in this Parliament, ought to come together and come up with a method of restoring confidence'.

The first thing the Premier did was run into his bunker. He emerged quite some time later actually. So there were in mid to late February allegations in relation to the second residence entitlement, and on 8 March there was my intervention and motion on this notice paper. On 24 April the Premier came out blinking in the light and said, 'Don't worry. I've got it all sorted', and he announced, amongst a number of other things, that a new role of parliamentary integrity adviser will be established to advise and educate MPs on the use of parliamentary allowances and their obligations to disclose various matters in the register of interests — not that he will seek the support of the Parliament to establish a parliamentary integrity adviser.

So here we are today with a motion dropped on the notice paper that is now seeking our support as we get into June. Yes, it absolutely requires the cooperation of the members of this place, really, individually, the 128 members, certainly via the party leaders — and there are now eight parties in this Parliament, and also involving one Independent in the lower house — and of course across both chambers, to be willing to work together on this problem. But I do not particularly like being accused of arrogance, high-handedness or

perhaps just making assumptions when I have actually been reaching out to say this is a problem for all of us. It affects all of us. We are not all rorters in this place, but we are all being tarred with the effects of a number of MPs' actions, and we ought to be able to sit down together and come up with a system that raises the bar on itself.

As I say, we have supported in our entire time in this Parliament the UK House of Commons model with its parliamentary standards commissioner. It was backed by a Privileges Committee of the lower house in the last Parliament, but I am still here today struggling in trying to get cross-party support to actually move this thing forward. So I do not accept the government's argument that I have chosen to ignore a whole range of questions.

Clearly the committee itself will have to look at all those issues and come back with a recommendation. I certainly have not arrogantly assumed that I am going to get support from another house, the reality being that the numbers in that house are controlled by the government, so the government has to want to work together with us to achieve this. I did find that approach quite disappointing, but I will be gratified if all members in the house will accede to this motion, proposed to report back to us in November, so that we can demonstrate to the public that we are working together to make some progress on this issue.

Motion agreed to.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Debate resumed from earlier this day; motion of Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria):

That this house notes —

- (1) the failure of the Minister for Police, Lisa Neville, to commit to reopening the police stations that have either been closed or had their opening hours cut under Premier Daniel Andrews;
- (2) that several closed police stations have been attacked with graffiti, including recently at Burwood and Heidelberg West;
- (3) that the Minister for Police, Lisa Neville, has failed to honour her promise, made repeatedly both prior to and after the 2014 election, that the Portarlington, Drysdale and Queenscliff Police Stations would be open 16 hours a day, every day;
- (4) that under Premier Daniel Andrews, crime is up over 20 per cent in just two years while the number of police per capita has been cut;
- (5) the comments of the Minister for Police, Lisa Neville, who admitted in March 2017 that Victorians are living in fear in their own homes;

- (6) that Victoria currently has a part-time Minister for Police and a part-time Minister for Corrections with other unrelated portfolio responsibilities;
- (7) that according to the most recent Victoria Police figures, the number of protective services officers has been cut;

and calls on the Premier, Daniel Andrews, to make community safety the number one priority of the government.

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) — It is my pleasure to speak on a motion that is very, very important to all Victorians and becoming increasingly so, brought to the chamber by Mr O’Donohue. Safety is a very important human need. Apart from food and shelter, safety is absolutely critical, and it is the topic on everyone’s lips. Indeed people feel threatened in so many ways and in so many contexts, whether it is, for example, the topic that everyone is talking about at the moment, and that is terrorism, not only across the world — and we have seen it happen in Egypt, in Paris, in Manchester and London, in Afghanistan and so on — but we are actually now seeing it increasingly as a result of lone wolf incidents, we think, or perhaps there is a greater degree of coordination, occurring in our own community. We saw such a thing occur just a couple of nights ago in Brighton, very, very close to home.

In fact it occurred at the same time the Minister for Multicultural Affairs and I were actually co-hosting an iftar dinner to mark the holy month of Ramadan, an initiative of the AIS, the Australian Intercultural Society, which seeks to bring together people of different faiths and backgrounds to share food, dialogue, communication and, with that, build fellowship. I would like to thank all of those members of Parliament and community leaders for attending. So that was a contrast. In fact a couple of our guests that night, including Deputy Commissioner Andrew Crisp, were not able to attend the iftar dinner, which they traditionally do — I think Mr Crisp did — because they were diverted to the Brighton situation.

There is fear in the community. Once upon a time crime was committed against significant targets like banks, where there was a substantial amount of security. Of course that is more difficult, so now softer targets are becoming the targets of crime; home invasions and carjackings are most notable. I think the notion of someone crashing through your front door while you are either sleeping in your own bed or spending time with your family sends shivers down everyone’s backs.

I believe these young people have been commissioned to commit crimes, probably for some sort of an organised gang activity. These misguided young people

are prepared to take these risks for a quick cut. They are risking a lot and indeed creating an enormous amount of fear in the community. I certainly encourage community leaders from various multicultural backgrounds to do what they can to engage those young people, to dissuade young people and to engage their parents to become more vigilant and identify problem behaviours, because the consequences for their lives are phenomenal.

I serve on the youth justice inquiry currently being undertaken by the Standing Committee on Legal and Social Issues, and we have visited a number of youth justice facilities. As a member for South Eastern Metropolitan Region it did strike me that a lot of the crimes are either committed by people from the south-east or committed in the south-east. Certainly we do have a number of issues.

The police do a fine job. My niece is a policewoman. Her husband until recently was also in the police force, and a lot of my friends and acquaintances are police officers. I have the utmost regard for them. But I must say that some of the decisions that come out of police command do worry me. As the shadow Minister for Multicultural Affairs I was disappointed that it took the police so long, and certainly the minister so long — and I do not believe it has happened as yet — to meet with community leaders of African communities, where community leaders have a very privileged and significant position.

Ms Mikakos — That is nonsense. We have met with them multiple times.

Mrs PEULICH — No, you have not.

Ms Mikakos — What you are saying is nonsense.

Mrs PEULICH — No, that is not nonsense. You are selective — —

Ms Mikakos — It is just not true. I have met with Minister Scott and African leaders, so I know for a fact that what you are saying is not true.

Mrs PEULICH — You had a youth summit. I have fielded many telephone calls from community leaders, significant people in the African communities who did not know that it was going on.

Ms Mikakos — You are actually lying again.

Mrs PEULICH — I would ask that you withdraw that.

Ms Mikakos — It is not true.

Mrs PEULICH — It is absolutely true, and I have documentation from — —

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Finn) — Order! Mrs Peulich should address her remarks through the Chair. Minister, Mrs Peulich has asked for a withdrawal. I must say that I did not hear the remark.

Mrs PEULICH — Acting President, she said that I was lying. I have documentary evidence to — —

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Finn) — Order! Irrespective of what evidence you have, that is unparliamentary. I ask the minister to withdraw.

Ms Mikakos — No.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Finn) — That was unparliamentary language.

Ms Mikakos — Mrs Peulich changed the rules on this — —

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Finn) — Order! I will call the President.

The PRESIDENT — The Acting Chair has asked that I return to the chamber. It is my understanding that Mrs Peulich has sought a withdrawal of a phrase used by Ms Mikakos, and the Acting Chair has asked for a withdrawal. I would now seek that withdrawal also.

Ms Mikakos — On a point of order, President, the statement I made related to a statement of fact, because Mrs Peulich was claiming that Minister Scott has failed to meet with African leaders. In fact I attended a meeting with Minister Scott with African leaders, so my response to Mrs Peulich was that she was being untruthful in what she was saying. I am mindful, President, that in response to comments that Mrs Peulich herself made just recently you did not ask her to withdraw her statements to Ms Shing. Given that I believe I have objectively made a statement of fact in response to Mrs Peulich's claim, I will not withdraw that, because it is in fact a truthful statement that I have made to the house.

Mrs PEULICH — On the point of order, President, the minister did not provide a statement of fact; she actually said that I was lying, which is a very different version of what transpired. It is reflecting on my character. I can certainly attest to everything that I have said, and I do seek her withdrawal.

Mr Leane — On the point of order, President, I was actually sitting directly behind the minister and heard the exchange, and the exchange was that she said that

that was not true because she had met with different parts of the African community. I am very confused, President. As I said when this issue bubbled around Ms Shing and Mrs Peulich, I had understood the practice for 10 years and I had accepted the practice for 10 years. If someone calls for a withdrawal because they think there is an offensive interjection towards them, my understanding is that that person would be called to withdraw. But then since this recent incident I have been instructed that that practice, that I understood to be true, is incorrect. I think that if we are going to set a new practice, it should be consistent.

The PRESIDENT — Thank you for the explanations. I would seek a withdrawal.

Ms Mikakos — President, in light of the comment that I have already made in regard to this matter and the fact that like Mr Leane I had an understanding too, in all the years I have been here, about these matters, I will not be withdrawing my statement.

The PRESIDENT — Unfortunately then under the terms of the standing orders I will name the minister. I will be seeking to have the chamber confirm that the minister's services will no longer be required in the house this day.

Ms Pulford — On a point of order, President, I was not in the chamber for the first part of this exchange, so forgive me for coming to this late. In the last sitting week there was a lengthy discussion about the status of a request by someone to make a withdrawal of a comment that a member had found offensive, and we had, as Mr Leane has just described, what struck me as a new interpretation on that, having been here for more than 10 years. What we have today seems to be the opposite, and I seek your guidance for all of our benefit going forward. If somebody is requested to withdraw something, do we call it a request because that is just a polite way of describing an order to withdraw? This is for the benefit of members, because as I recall last week we interpreted it very differently to how we are interpreting it now.

Ms Mikakos — The rules seem to have changed. The rules have changed.

The PRESIDENT — No, they have not.

Mr Leane — On the point of order, President, now it seems like we have a situation where the Acting Chair can determine whether the person that has called for a withdrawal is offended or not, because the previous situation — —

The PRESIDENT — That is correct.

Mr Leane — That is correct. So the Acting Chair can determine whether the person who has called for a withdrawal should be offended or not?

The PRESIDENT — Correct, and totally consistent with what I described last week.

Ms Mikakos — When Ms Shing asked for a withdrawal, she did not get one.

The PRESIDENT — No, because objectively that was not offensive. You have contorted what you said, and so has Mr Leane. Indeed the clerks have advised me that the phrase that was used was that Mrs Peulich was lying. That was the phrase that was used, and you have sought to say that she was being untruthful. Be fair with the Chair, and tell it like it is.

Mr Leane — That is what I heard.

The PRESIDENT — Well, then go and get your hearing checked, because indeed other members of this Parliament actually heard it quite differently. The clerks advised me objectively about what was said.

When you go back to the powers of the Chair, yes, an Acting Chair has the responsibility and the right to actually seek a withdrawal of a comment if they believe objectively that that comment was offensive or reflected on the member. That is totally consistent with what I said last week. What I said last week was that when I perused the *Hansard* and watched the tape I believed that on that occasion the Acting Chair, who happened to be Mr Morris, had made the right call that the matter where it was sought to have a withdrawal was not objectively offensive.

On this occasion we have a very long established precedent that calling members liars or saying that a member is lying is in fact unparliamentary. The Acting Chair has acted consistently with our standing orders, with our conventions and indeed with the very remarks that I made last week which you seek to confuse. I have asked for the withdrawal. I ask for it one more time, and if that is not provided, then I must name the member.

Ms Mikakos — Mrs Peulich in raising this matter did not actually state what it was that she took offence to. Nevertheless, I will withdraw the statement. However, I do take exception to what she was saying, because it is incorrect. That was what I was interjecting. I did say that the statement she was making that Minister Scott had not met with African leaders was not correct, because I know for a fact, having attended some of those meetings, that he has had those meetings.

The PRESIDENT — I appreciate the withdrawal, and again the convention is that when asked to withdraw, a member withdraws without comment and without trying to contextualise that withdrawal. I have allowed it in terms of some of the remarks that members have made on this occasion because I was not in the chamber and because I think it was fair to those members, including Ms Mikakos. I take it, and Ms Mikakos has given me the courtesy of withdrawing the remarks on this matter.

I would put it to you, Ms Mikakos, and to members that if you were to have interjected in the course of the debate and if your remark had been along the lines of, ‘That is not correct; I have met with them’, then in fact there would have been no case for a withdrawal. But we have very long precedent in relation to using the word ‘lying’, and therein is the issue. Mr Leane, it is consistent. I thank the minister for the courtesy of the withdrawal.

Mrs PEULICH — The comment that I began to make was that the government was slow in meeting with significant people who could assist in perhaps discouraging youths with multicultural backgrounds from entering into a life of crime, a life which may be irreversible. I was talking about the manner in which fear is experienced throughout the community. I started off by talking about terrorism and fear in the community, especially as a result of carjackings and home invasions.

Domestic violence is a significant concern, and much of it is related to drug and alcohol abuse. A significant driver in particular is of course the problem of ice. We did have the Royal Commission into Family Violence. It did not look at the causes; it only looked at the responses. I think that was a shortcoming and an opportunity missed to indeed inform policy and programs with factual and insightful information often in very complex circumstances.

The one that is brought to my attention time and time again is the effect of ice in particular on family members, because an ice episode can last 6 to 8 hours. People become very agitated. Every dark thought becomes a reality. They become incredibly aggressive, often displaying the strength of 10 people. That does impact on the family, and indeed many tragedies have emanated as a result of the effects of ice.

We have increased concerns about bullying in the workplace and in schools. We have seen this government fail, sometimes in this chamber, to respond adequately to the problem of bullying in our schools. An obligation to protect all students from all forms of

harm is enshrined in the act. Every teacher has a duty of care under legislation, and therefore the department of education has a vicarious liability should harm befall a student. As I have mentioned before, that does not matter whether they are fat, whether they are skinny, whether they have freckles or glasses, whether they are LGBTI or not or whether they are from another country or of another religious background. But this government has focused on some of the more contentious issues rather than the issues that can really make difference.

The response of this government has been very, very hackneyed. It has been driven by ideology rather than practical outcomes. We see that manifested certainly in the crime increases in the City of Monash, where crime is up 19.8 per cent. That covers the electorate of Mulgrave, the Premier's own electorate.

In the City of Frankston, which is half in Mr Edbrooke's Assembly electorate of Frankston and half in Ms Kilkenny's Assembly electorate of Carrum, crime is up 14.3 per cent. Overall across the south-east, in my electorate, crime is up 12.6 per cent. Unfortunately under the Daniel Andrews government, our justice system is seen to be in crisis, with weak sentencing, watered-down bail laws, repeal of move-on laws, cuts to frontline police and closure of police stations. In particular, there is great angst about the future of the Clayton police station. We do not know when that is going to be closed. It should not be closed, because Clayton is an area that requires a visible police presence.

Endeavour Hills police hours have been reduced, with the station closing at 5.00 p.m. So basically if someone's car is being carjacked, do not bother driving to the nearest police station because you will not know whether that police station is open or not, and that is despite promises to make Endeavour Hills a 24-hour police station. Indeed there are concerns about the Carrum Downs police station and the Cranbourne police station in relation to reduced hours and a general police presence. There is also concern in the Kingston local government area at the Chelsea and Mordialloc police stations and a concern that this government is somehow spending a lot of resources on matters that are of a lower priority than the safety and wellbeing of our community.

I will not speak for much longer, except to say that every government's responsibility is to ensure that its population has food and shelter. The next layer of need is of course safety. If we do not have safety, all of those higher order needs as, for example, identified in Maslow's hierarchy of needs, become less relevant.

This government is more focused on those higher order needs than it is on the practical, everyday needs of Victorians, particularly people in the south-east, their families and their colleagues. That includes concerns in the workplace about the manner in which behaviour is managed — so bullying, domestic violence, crime in the community and the absence of any positive initiatives in the area of drugs. For example, Victoria has only 200 drug rehabilitation beds, whereas New South Wales has 800. That shows us what little importance this government places on the rehabilitation of addicts, of people who have a drug problem, but at the same time they are contemplating establishing drug injecting rooms, sort of putting up the white flag. This is the wrong way.

In the area of terrorism and counterterrorism the government has to get its narrative right. Some of the initiatives out of the department of political correctness — I beg your pardon, the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC) — talk about how they wish to pursue extremism on the right. I have called on them to focus on extremism wherever it falls, whether it is on the left or the right, and to make sure that we have programs and collaborate with agencies to address that.

I have not seen much return for the dollar in my own portfolio of multicultural affairs. The budget has almost doubled, but the outcomes have been substantially reduced. I do not know what the hell they are doing. But I do know that rather than applying the resources where they are most needed, they go into a PR spin, the greatest example of that being the launch of the government's value statement *Victorian. And Proud of It*, a statement that was devised or drafted in the dark, dim offices of DPC. No-one collaborated on it. The Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria does not know anything about it. The Victorian Multicultural Commission had virtually no involvement — no-one that I have spoken to. The faith communities were ignored. But they are happy to trot out a truck called Vicky at \$1 million a year in order to push these values and create an impression that somehow Victorians own this concept.

The government has failed in every respect when it comes to addressing safety. I call on them to review the various policies as they apply to the matters that I have raised today and to support Mr O'Donohue's motion.

Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria) — I am pleased to be able to make a contribution to the debate on Mr O'Donohue's motion, and in doing so I would like to congratulate him on the work he is doing. It is not an easy portfolio. As the shadow Minister for Police and shadow Minister for Corrections he has worked

diligently and very hard holding the respective ministers and their portfolios to account. In this motion he is certainly making us aware of some of the weaknesses in the portfolios of both Lisa Neville and Gayle Tierney in respect of policing and corrections.

I want to comment more on paragraph (3) of Mr O'Donohue's motion, which refers to the failure of the Minister for Police, Lisa Neville, to honour her promise, made repeatedly both prior to and after the 2014 election, that the Portarlington, Drysdale and Queenscliff police stations would be open 16 hours a day, every day. I remember distinctly through the election campaign in Bellarine that the member for Bellarine at the time was adamant that if she was elected in the seat of Bellarine and if her party was elected to government, they would commit to those three police stations being open 16 hours a day, every day. As we know now, that is not the case. That election commitment has not been fulfilled, and Lisa Neville has gone to great pains in providing a defence as to why that election commitment has not been honoured by her.

But on a broader theme I want to raise, as I have all week both in my members statements and adjournment matters, the concern that communities in the Bellarine and Greater Geelong region have in relation to the escalating crime rates. There is nothing really specific about any particular crime; it is actually a broad brush of crime resulting from drugs. We saw a 7.30 report in relation to the escalating use of methamphetamines in Geelong and particularly the impact that is having on the community and families that are involved with, connected to or have some association with the misuse of drugs. If anyone wants to venture into the emergency department at the Geelong hospital, they will see firsthand the impact that the abuse of drugs and alcohol is having on our city and its region, but we are seeing an escalation in home invasions.

The Bellarine Peninsula and the Surf Coast, traditionally seaside resorts that have had very low levels of crime and over many, many years, are seeing a significant increase in home invasions. A lot of these houses are inhabited by the more elderly, who are fearing for their lives now. Home invasions have escalated by over 352 per cent on the Bellarine Peninsula and Surf Coast over the last few years, and we know as well that the statewide increase in crime has hit the 20 per cent level over the last two years and is increasing. We know carjackings are up. In fact if anyone wants to come down from Melbourne and use Geelong Ring Road or venture onto Barwon Heads Road, they will see roadsides littered with abandoned cars that have either been stolen or stolen and burnt. I

know the City of Greater Geelong is spending a huge amount of resources with its related stakeholder groups to deal with the carnage of cars that are littering our freeways heading down towards the Bellarine that have obviously been stolen and just dumped.

I have made mention of a number of criminal activities over just the last five months. In a members statement and an adjournment matter I have talked about headlines both from the *Geelong Indy* and the *Geelong Advertiser* reporting a home invasion with machetes in Thompsons Road, a home invasion in Hamlyn Heights, an attempted stabbing during an attempted armed robbery in Torquay, Geelong teenagers charged with offences after a police pursuit in April, a sexual assault in a public toilet in Newtown and a taxi smashed into during an attempted armed robbery.

This is all going back to just the last couple of weeks. There was an alleged armed robbery at gunpoint on 24 May, and a 15-year-old had allegedly breached bail 13 times before assaulting an 18-year-old Whittington man. Even just today there have been reports in the *Geelong Advertiser* and the *Bellarine Times* of more criminal activity both on the Bellarine in the Minister for Police's own Legislative Assembly seat and also in the Greater Geelong region. So there is no doubt that we in the Geelong area have seen a significant increase in crime.

We know that the Waurn Ponds police station is not fulfilling the hours committed to by the Minister for Police, as is also the case, as I said, for the Portarlington, Drysdale and Queenscliff police stations. My own surveys that went out through my office to around about 16 000 residents with a return rate of over 22 per cent — which I think most members of this Parliament would consider a significant return for surveys — indicated the community are feeling unsafe. Respondents identified a number of concerns within their own communities about break-ins, home invasions, burglaries, domestic violence, cars being stolen and even numberplates being stolen. Even a friend of mine only last week outside a supermarket had her number plates stolen off her car in broad daylight. This is the sort of brazen activity we are now seeing through the Bellarine and Geelong areas.

I talk about Bellarine a lot because it seems that if the Minister for Police cannot respond to problems associated with crime in her own seat, how can we actually expect her to be responsible for her portfolio across the whole state? We are seeing very clearly now that she is not responsible — she is totally incapable of dealing with the significant increases in crime and the lack of police resources in her own portfolio, far less in

her own seat of Bellarine. In fact it is interesting: since she got wind that I was holding a law and order forum on the Bellarine next week — Thursday, 15 June, at 5.30 p.m. until 6.30 p.m. — with shadow Minister for Corrections Ed O'Donohue, shadow Attorney-General John Pesutto and shadow Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence Georgie Crozier, she has gone to great lengths to contact her stakeholder groups around the Bellarine and tell them not to attend. In fact as I understand it there has been a very clear indication that no police are allowed to attend this forum either.

Here we have a legitimate reason to bring the community together to talk about how we might best respond to the increasing crime rate on the Bellarine particularly but in more broader terms across the Geelong region. We will look at better use of CCTV, better use of police resources, better use of the police stations that are now not operating fully on the hours committed to by the Andrews government and better use of other tools that police can use to try and curb the increase in crime. We will also consider community groups, like Neighbourhood Watch, and how they can better utilise their resources to report crime quickly to allow for quick investigation.

It is disappointing that the minister would see fit not to embrace such forums to get together with the community and talk about the problems associated with the increase in crime, especially because this forum I am foreshadowing and hosting next week is in her own seat, where there has been a significant increase in crime and a significant increase in concerns about community safety. People feel unsafe in that electorate particularly but also more broadly. I know my colleague Andrew Katos from the Legislative Assembly held a similar law and order forum, and again the response from the community was anger and outrage about the fact the Andrews government is not committing to the operating hours of the Waurn Ponds police station and not committing to the three Bellarine police stations that Mr O'Donohue's motion has identified.

Paragraph (4) of Mr O'Donohue's motion talks about crime being up by 20 per cent — in fact in parts of Geelong it is up by 300 per cent. Police have told me about the resources needed to go to a domestic violence incident or to a burglary or a home invasion: it requires four to six police going into those areas like Norlane and Corio, where in fact police have to go in dual patrols — one to actually interview and investigate and the other one to provide protection for the police car of the initiating police. That is the sort of situation we now have — everyone is not only doubling up but quadrupling up in relation to providing safety for police

officers who are actually going into these areas where there is a significantly high crime rate and significant problems associated with aggressive behaviour. The resources taken up by the interviewing process, the documentation and then obviously, if it moves towards that, the bail and sentencing processes further on consume a huge amount of downtime for police officers, who should be on the front line patrolling. We have a significant problem associated with that.

Paragraph (5) of Mr O'Donohue's motion says that the Minister for Police herself, Lisa Neville, admitted in March 2017 that Victorians were living in fear in their own homes. Well — hello, hello — this is not new news. We know this, yet it is extraordinary how the minister said this in March and is now trying to deny it in June. It is a pattern of word speak very similar to the Premier's yesterday in relation to reform and parole. He said that, yes, the current parole system is working, despite the fact that we had a known terrorist being able to walk the streets unconstrained in relation to a parole sentence. At the same time as he is introducing legislation to beef up parole reforms he is saying that there is nothing wrong and that everything that happened in that very ugly incident actually complied with the parole laws. It just makes a mockery of what is happening out there in the real world.

In paragraph (6) Mr O'Donohue identifies:

that Victoria currently has a part-time Minister for Police and a part-time Minister for Corrections with other unrelated portfolio responsibilities ...

That is an important point. We in the coalition had a dedicated Minister for Police and a dedicated Minister for Crime Prevention. Here we have the Minister for Police trying to share her responsibility and time with the water portfolio. We know water is a really significant portfolio, and we know that in the previous government it was very much tied to the portfolio of agriculture, which is as it should be.

Obviously with the Murray-Darling Basin, our irrigation areas and even our groundwater areas there is a very strong connection between farmers and regional communities in relation to water, but — with no disrespect to the current minister — she has no real relationship with water apart from a desalination plant and a commitment to provide water that was not needed through the desalination plant to Melbourne Water to supposedly increase storage.

I think that without labouring the point we know what a total waste of money that whole debacle has been, right from the building of the desalination plant to its remaining idle over a period of time, to the problems

associated technically with even starting up that plant on an intermittent basis and to the cost of providing desalinated water through the environment and the actual transmission costs of getting that water from Wonthaggi up to the Upper Yarra dam and then spreading it out over Bendigo, Ballarat and Geelong. The point is that we really need in this state a dedicated police minister who will not be distracted by other issues and other responsibilities in her portfolio of water.

The same applies to the Minister for Corrections, who we have clearly seen over this week is totally underdone in relation to her corrections portfolio, also having the portfolio of higher skills and training. That alone almost demands a ministerial responsibility itself, given the problems associated with our TAFEs and our higher skill education and training system under the Andrews government. Our universities are all struggling to provide job-ready students, and there is a lack of funding now being provided to those TAFEs and universities under the state government's budgetary constraints. Again we really need a dedicated Minister for Corrections to deal with corrections and crime prevention, as against a part-time minister who is dealing with a portfolio totally unrelated and unassociated with the issues around crime and corrections that are facing Victoria at the moment.

I also note in paragraph (7) the important role that both our police — —

Mr Melhem interjected.

Mr RAMSAY — You are not the Acting President, Mr Melhem. I do want to take the opportunity to acknowledge the important role of our protective services officers (PSOs) and also our police, and I do thank them for the hard work frontline police are doing and the work that PSOs are doing to look after us.

House divided on motion:

Ayes, 20

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

Noes, 18

Barber, Mr	Mikakos, Ms
Dalidakis, Mr	Mulino, Mr
Dunn, Ms	Pennicuik, Ms

Eideh, Mr	Pulford, Ms
Elasmar, Mr	Shing, Ms
Hartland, Ms	Somyurek, Mr (<i>Teller</i>)
Jennings, Mr	Springle, Ms
Leane, Mr	Symes, Ms (<i>Teller</i>)
Melhem, Mr	Tierney, Ms

Pairs

Davis, Mr	ALP vacancy
-----------	-------------

Motion agreed to.

TAFE SYSTEM

Debate resumed from 24 May; motion of Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan):

That this house —

- (1) expresses its grave concern at the decline of Victoria's training system noting that under the Andrews Labor government, 123 000 students have disappeared from the training system in the past two years and students graduating with a vocational qualification are now less likely to get a job;
- (2) notes that Federation Training is in breach of the Financial Management Act 1994 by failing to provide to Parliament annual reports for 2015 or 2016;
- (3) calls on the Andrews Labor government to immediately provide data on the TAFE's student enrolments, contestable funding and staffing for the 2015 and 2016 years; and
- (4) notes that the Andrews Labor government has broken its promise to increase funding to TAFE, by spending hundreds of millions of dollars less on student training.

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern) — I would like to continue my contribution. Coincidentally I have covered quite a bit of the data, but today we also had the tabling of the Auditor-General's *Technical and Further Education Institutes: 2016 Audit Snapshot*, which adds a little bit more information to the debate. I had covered a fair bit of the material so I will not recap all of it except to say that the mythology that the Labor Party cultivates is that the coalition had destroyed the TAFE system when indeed it was the Labor Party under former Premier Brumby and former Minister for Education and Training Lynne Kosky — may she rest in peace; she was a very nice person and well intentioned — that deregulated the TAFE sector and opened up its funding in a contestable fashion, a sort of level playing field, to registered training organisations (RTOs) and private providers. Unfortunately it was done without necessarily having all the mechanisms in place to monitor the quality of training that was provided by the new players and new entrants, in particular the new RTOs — and the same applies to the

TAFEs — and also how to rein them in and get rid of the shonky ones.

When we inherited the system, former minister Peter Hall initiated some legislative change and put some mechanisms in place so we could in fact get rid of the shonky providers — could shut them down and could exclude them from contracts — and indeed put in a mechanism for managing students who found themselves without a provider if the provider went down or their funding was discontinued. So I must say I have great regard for the Auditor-General's office and I go to, I would say, more than 90 per cent of the briefings that they provide to Parliament on Wednesdays and Thursdays. I think it adds value to the debate of the important issues.

Today I went along to the presentation of the *Technical and Further Education Institutes: 2016 Audit Snapshot* and I must say I was disappointed. I was disappointed because, looking at page 16, it talks about how the contestable funding model was actually introduced in 2013, which is not correct. Yes, there were changes to the funding of courses in 2013 when we found that a lot of courses that did not lead to a job were receiving equivalent funding to courses for jobs that were perhaps on the national skills shortage list. It is a system that is unfortunately subject to change, so we reconfigured it and there were funding adjustments. That did impact on TAFEs and on RTOs, but that is the nature of the market. I believe the report has got it wrong and therefore the detail surrounding that, I think, also is not entirely accurate.

I was also interested to see whether the Auditor-General could undertake an audit which included an analysis of the TAFE sector, especially its financial sustainability, because, as we know, when this government was elected it promised to save TAFE from a coalition government — that was not actually responsible for opening the sector up to competition. The only way that Ms Tierney and her predecessor Mr Herbert could save TAFE was by giving it additional funding that it did not provide to the RTOs, so therefore the deregulated, contestable, level-playing-field environment is a myth; it is hypothetical. Labor is actually reregulating the sector by the back door or, as Mr O'Sullivan said just a few moments ago, by bailing it out. If the TAFE sector does not make adjustments and does not provide the quality courses that attract students and suffers a freefall in enrolment numbers, which is substantiated in the Auditor-General's report, how can they guarantee their revenue? You cannot just keep putting your cap out and expecting the government of the day to bail you out. You have to be a well-functioning, high-performing

institution that delivers a high quality of education that is sought after by student enrolments because it will lead to jobs. Clearly that is not the case.

The assessment by the Auditor-General about the sustainability of TAFE is in my view a very short term assessment. How can a TAFE be financially sustainable if it is wholly reliant on special grants from the government in order to make sure that it is operating in a liquid environment? On page 17 of the report the Auditor-General said:

The improvement in revenue in 2015 and 2016 has been driven by additional government grant funding, rather than growth in revenue. Student numbers continued to fall, and all other sources of revenue such as student fees and contestable funding declined in 2015 and 2016.

So the TAFEs have fewer students and less funding, but they are more sustainable because they are actually raking in the government dough. That is coming in through what we certainly called a restructure fund. We first of all provided a restructure fund, which allowed TAFEs to actually get additional funding to restructure and reform to adapt to the market and therefore become sustainable in the future. The Labor Party of course, in acquiescence to its union mates in the education system, converted that and called it the TAFE Rescue Fund. It dished out \$207 million in order to do that.

In addition to that there were other special grants. Skills First provided additional funds as well. But the TAFE Rescue Fund is due to expire in 2018, so what happens to these TAFEs that have been deemed by the Auditor-General to be sustainable? They are not going to be. If they are declining in terms of reduced student numbers and reliant on bailouts, then they cannot be sustainable. I must say I was disappointed with the quality of this report.

The underlying loss for the TAFE sector is \$164 million, and I think we cannot hide from that. We have had 123 000 students disappear from the system in the past two years. This amounts to a 30 per cent reduction since Labor came to government. In fact this is substantiated also by the Auditor-General's report. At page 3, figure 1B clearly shows that in 2015 the TAFE market share had declined to 31 per cent, from 38 per cent in 2012. Whatever the government is doing is not working, and indeed what it is doing is just masking the problems rather than addressing them.

I would also like to turn my attention to Federation Training, which is clearly in breach of the Financial Management Act 1994 by not tabling reports of 2015 and 2016. The Auditor-General does make some comments in relation to this. We did not have a lot of

time to peruse the detail, but initially the Auditor-General reported:

We have ... been able to complete the audit of the 2015 financial report of Federation Training. We issued a qualified audit opinion on 9 May 2017.

So initially the Auditor-General was not able to give a qualified audit, and it moved from the disclaimed financial report to a qualified financial report for 2015. I quote from page 6:

We were unable to issue a clear opinion because not all issues relating to recording and recognition of revenue balances had been resolved in time to ensure the completeness and accuracy of information derived from the student management system.

It goes on to say regarding the areas that could not be reconciled, which they could not verify:

Those transactions and balances include sale of goods and services revenue, accounts receivable, revenue received in advance and the provision for doubtful debtors.

So in many instances they could not establish which students had actually paid and which had not. How is that? How can you run an organisation if you do not know who your debtors are? Clearly there was an enormous problem there. The Auditor-General claims that the next report — that is, the 2016 financial report — will be tabled soon and that they will be able to finish that audit in 2017:

In future years, we expect that Federation Training will be able to report in line with the FMA time frames.

That does not, however, exonerate the Minister for Training and Skills for her lack of proactive management as minister to address these shortcomings, nor does it excuse her for not giving appropriate responses to the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee (PAEC) recently. In actual fact, according to the minister's own testimony to PAEC, she said the 2014 annual report was tabled in 2017, the 2015 annual report has not yet been finalised and the 2016 annual report has not yet been started — despite of course this being in breach of legislation. In addition, Wodonga Institute of TAFE had not met its 2 May deadline.

These are all breaches. It is disappointing that the minister is hiding basic information which needs to be available and which needs to be in the public domain because we are funding it. If we continue to conceal it, we cannot fix it. In the recent PAEC hearings the Minister for Training and Skills refused to or did not provide basic information, including workforce data and the amount of funding that Federation Training had received from the government in 2016, on the ground that it was commercially sensitive.

This is a party that criticised everything in relation to failures to release cabinet-in-confidence and commercially sensitive material. That was never good enough when they were in opposition, but of course now that the shoe is on the other foot they cannot even release information that the public expects to be released because of this lame reason. This is despite the standing directions from the Minister for Finance, Robin Scott, under the Financial Management Act 1994 requiring the publication of information in annual reports.

I know there are other people who would like to speak. I just wish to come back to paragraph (4) of the motion, noting that the Andrews Labor government has broken its promise to increase funding to TAFEs, by spending hundreds of millions of dollars less on student training. I did point out to the Auditor-General that it is not enough to just be looking at the TAFEs but that we also need to look at the registered training organisations if we are going to get a full picture of the state of vocational education and training in this state and how our dollars are spent. It seems to me that looking at one side of the equation or one side of the balance is not enough. I am indeed surprised that this is still happening.

When you actually have a look at the overall picture, less funding has been spent, notwithstanding the fact that the TAFE sector is being bailed out for the reasons given by Labor in the context of its election campaign and its close relationship with the education unions. Enrolments are down, funding is down and the Andrews Labor government's broken promise is perpetrated on young people, families and individuals seeking further education and training. This is serious business. In many cases these are not people who can afford to go on to university; these are people who need an education that is going to lead them to a job, so every misspent dollar and every lost opportunity is harming someone.

The symptom of this broken promise is highlighted in the Victorian Auditor-General's Office (VAGO) reports, which also show TAFEs selling off assets. The latest VAGO report indicates that the government has only masked the financial sustainability risks affecting the sector, stating that, and I quote:

This funding on a limited number of projects masks much lower expenditure on self-funded asset renewal and replacement in the 2016 year than our capital replacement ratio recommends.

The Labor government's propping up of the financial sustainability of TAFEs does hide the fact that Labor's own deregulation of the sector and contestable funding

model without the necessary preparation has led to a number of these TAFEs being financially unsustainable. They can now only stay afloat through significant and ongoing subsidies, which are not assured. Labor has not fixed the problem it has created. It has only served to hide it from public scrutiny. The failings of Minister Tierney, her department and the government itself cannot be concealed forever.

Labor has a woeful education track record, despite its claim that it is the party making this the education state. Labor's funding of vocational education and training was 50 per cent lower in 2010 than each year under the Victorian coalition government. Contrary to Labor's lies, TAFE funding increased under the previous coalition government from \$487 million to over \$600 million, a 23 per cent increase since Labor was in office under Premier Brumby.

In conclusion, I would just like to sum up by saying that Labor deregulated the TAFE sector and was responsible really for putting it on a trajectory of financial instability. Ms Tierney's performance at the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearings certainly left a lot to be desired. Her testimony was marked by obfuscation and concealment of facts that would otherwise help scrutinise the spending of public funds in the TAFE and training sector.

Our objective of course is to prevent rorting and to uphold the standard of financial accountability which does apply under the Financial Management Act but also to have a vibrant education sector that provides for the needs of Victorians. This government has failed to meet the first obligation, which is under the Financial Management Act, and it has failed to meet the second.

With 123 000 fewer enrolments, broken funding promises, fewer job-ready students and the government unduly propping up the TAFE sector, masking the problem which needs resolution and leadership and overseeing poor financial reporting, accountability, integrity and transparency, I think this is an appalling track record, and I call on the house to support the motion to ensure that we hold the government to account and really try to fix this TAFE mess.

Mr MULINO (Eastern Victoria) — I am going to start my contribution on this motion with some observations that I suspect everybody in this place will agree with. Then I will move to observations that I suspect those opposite would not agree with at all but that I think are well based in fact and in evidence, as opposed to what I might describe as some of the gratuitous editorialisation and skewed interpretations of the past that we heard in the most recent contribution.

I think everybody in this place would agree that training is extremely important in our economy, that the TAFE and vocational education and training (VET) sectors are extremely important. First and foremost, like all forms of education, training adds to our nation's and our state's productivity. The kinds of education that we see in the VET sector and TAFE sector add directly to people's vocational opportunities and to their workplace productivity, and that is extremely important.

I would also argue that the TAFE sector is critically important in terms of the kinds of economic adjustments and transformations that our society is undergoing. Again, all parts of our education system are relevant to resilience and flexibility, to providing people with the kinds of skills they need in a rapidly changing economy, but the TAFE sector I believe is particularly important. The TAFE sector can provide the kind of whole-of-life learning that people in our society are increasingly in need of, and the TAFE sector is particularly well suited to helping people transition from one career to another. We are seeing economic transformation, economic adjustment and economic disruption occurring so much in our society, and the TAFE sector is critical in assisting so many people in our society to move from one area of economic activity to another.

The third reason why I believe the TAFE sector is so important is the opportunity that it provides. Of all the sectors of post-school education, TAFE is critical in providing to those who are most vulnerable the kinds of opportunities that people need. In so many instances we see the TAFE sector providing that safety net, the TAFE sector providing opportunities to people who are extremely vulnerable to economic disruption. So there are all those benefits and more. They are just three of a number. It is the productivity improvements, it is helping people transition in an economy which is undergoing change and it is the opportunities that it provides that mean the TAFE sector is so critical. That is why it was front-loaded as one of the central election promises of this government when it was advocating for its election in late 2014. That is why, for example, reopening Lilydale TAFE was one of the key promises for the communities out east. That is why supporting TAFE institutions in other parts of the state — TAFEs throughout regional Victoria — and bolstering their teaching capacity was so central to our campaign in November 2014.

I am firmly of the belief that it was resuscitating the TAFE sector, giving it support, that was central to the Andrews government getting support at the last election. In my electorate the closure of the Lilydale

TAFE by the previous government shocked the community. They wanted that institution reopened, and they wanted that institution supported. I believe it takes some gall for those opposite to put this motion forward when they wrecked the TAFE system in their term of government.

I said that Mrs Peulich skewed history in presenting her interpretation. She claims that under the Brumby government the system was deregulated and that from that point forward it is all just continuity — not at all. It is true that some reforms were introduced in the Brumby government's time. For example, there was the uncapping of expenditure to reflect a more demand-driven system. One can see a lot of policy rationale for that — putting more control in the hands of students. There was a retention of caps on fees, and there was the continuation of differential subsidies and community service obligation payments to TAFEs.

What Mrs Peulich and others opposite often fail to mention is that a number of additional reforms were introduced in 2012 by the previous government — for example, uncapping fees that students could be charged, and introducing a fully contestable market in the VET sector that saw a significant increase in the delivery of training by private providers and greater variability in subsidy rates for courses in response to market conditions. So it is a complete misrepresentation to claim that there is a continuity from the reforms introduced by the Brumby government right through to 2014. Not at all.

There were a number of reforms introduced in 2008, which were grounded in solid policy. Those reforms were significantly changed in 2012, and those changes in 2012 led to a number of very negative effects for the TAFE sector. For example, government funding to the TAFE sector declined from \$733 million in 2011 to \$468 million in 2014, a \$265 million, or 36 per cent, decline; the teaching workforce at TAFE institutions declined by 1123 full-time equivalent positions, a 23 per cent reduction; and the TAFE sector's market share of government-funded enrolments across the VET system declined from 35 per cent in 2011 to 25 per cent in 2014 — 35 per cent to 25 per cent — a 10 percentage point reduction.

We in November 2014 came to power inheriting a system that was suffering in many of its many key performance indicators serious medium term decline as a direct result of policies implemented by the previous government. There was not policy continuity at all but significant negative impacts on the TAFE sector as a result of policies brought in by the previous government.

What did we do for this system that was on its knees? We brought into effect very, very early on — as one of the first acts of the incoming government — a \$320 million TAFE Rescue Fund. Again, Mrs Peulich made a number of references in her contribution to bailing out institutions, as if reinvesting in facilities is somehow a negative, somehow investing in something unsustainable. Not at all. We do not use the term 'bail out', because what we are doing is investing in institutions which have a very bright future because of this investment in facilities and in their staff. This investment will in turn lead to greater enrolments and greater financial sustainability.

Again, one example of this among many, but one I know all too well because it is in my electorate, is the Lilydale campus, a campus that was shut and had padlocks on its gates. It was very symbolic, but of course more than being symbolism it was actually a piece of land that was shut to the public and presumably was going to be sold off to developers for residential property — for units or who knows what, but for something that would have been a very, very short term outcome. It would have provided very, very short term benefits. Instead that campus has been reopened. There were nay-sayers, and not just during the election campaign. There were people who campaigned against its opening, and some of them I might say were all too happy to come to its opening. But there were also nay-sayers who did not want that campus opened, and when it was opened they were very sceptical as to whether it would succeed and were very sceptical as to what would happen to enrolments.

Well, I have got to say that since opening that campus has flourished, and flourished not just in terms of student numbers but in terms of the incredible range of institutions that are working together. It has flourished in terms of the range of different course offerings across different layers of higher education institutions, and it has flourished in terms of the interdependence and synergies between these institutions. We have the Box Hill Institute on campus now with a significant presence, we have William Angliss Institute, we have the Deakin Learning Centre and we have this state's first tech school fully operational — the first of 10 planned tech schools.

I have got to say that whenever I speak about science, technology, engineering and mathematics in schools, about the Yarra Ranges Tech School and about the fact that thousands and thousands of high school students will have access to virtual reality, to robotics and to 3D printing, it is something which inspires people. It inspires people in industry about what is possible in the education system. That is a \$10 million-plus investment

in something which was only possible because that TAFE had been reopened and that TAFE had been properly resourced. That is just one example, but there is so much on that campus that is already succeeding that is so critical to educational opportunity in the outer east.

We have already got on that campus more than 1000 enrolments and rising. As I said, that does not count the more than 10 000 secondary students that will get incredible opportunities and exposure to high-tech equipment at that TAFE that would not have otherwise been possible.

Our restoration of TAFEs is about hundreds of millions of dollars through the TAFE Rescue Fund and other funds going into TAFE institutions. It is about providing certainty to the sector so that it can boost enrolments, turn itself around and pick itself up off its knees. It is about providing more certainty to the overall VET sector by having stronger regulation of unsustainable non-TAFE providers. It is about providing a sector that students can be confident in and that puts into place and reflects recommendations from a number of independent and respected reviews.

It is about the Skills First initiative, which began in February 2015 and followed on from a review by Bruce Mackenzie, a former chief executive of Holmesglen TAFE, which undertook extensive consultation with stakeholders from across the VET sector. As part of its response to that review's final report the government has established a project management office to coordinate the reform directions for implementation of key recommendations arising from that review. Skills First will secure the future of TAFE and build on the important work of the TAFE Rescue Fund, which as I indicated was established as one of the first actions of this government way back in the post-November 2014 period.

Effective as of 1 January this year, as part of Skills First, there will be new accountable contracts for all government-funded training, there will be restored supplementary funding for TAFE and there will be an industry-focused new funded course list. That is so critical to some of those overarching objectives that I talked about earlier — the economic transition support that it provides to people, particularly the most vulnerable, and the productivity gains that can be achieved through TAFE. There will be new subsidy rates provided for quality training and greater transparency.

I will let others deal with additional elements of this very complicated sector and very complicated set of

policy initiatives, but can I just reiterate that this was an absolutely key issue in the election. We came to power prioritising education, and education has been one of our key policy areas and key funding commitments throughout the first two and half years-plus and three budgets of this government, and TAFE has been right at the heart of this government's education plan.

TAFE has been at the heart of what we prioritise in terms of education precisely for the reasons that I talked about: that it is so important for productivity, so important for economic adjustment and so important for opportunity, particularly opportunity for our most vulnerable people in terms of those who are socio-economically disadvantaged and our most disadvantaged people in terms of location — people who would not have access to services, for example, in regional areas were it not for a properly resourced and properly functioning TAFE system.

I return finally to that great example of our TAFE strategy in my own electorate, the Lilydale campus, because it brings together so many strands of education policy and because its turnaround has been so complete. It is a symbol of all that I believe is good about our education strategy.

We have TAFE, we have Deakin University, we have William Angliss Institute and we have a tech school. We have all these different strands, and they are supporting each other, they are providing opportunities and we are seeing student numbers at rates that are far higher than the nay-sayers would have predicted and student numbers that are rising. To me, as a biased local member, the Lilydale campus is a great reflection, a concrete reflection, of the success of the different strands of our TAFE policy.

Ms BATH (Eastern Victoria) — I rise this afternoon to speak on and support Mrs Peulich's motion in relation to the Victorian TAFE and training sector. I will start off with the first point in her motion:

That this house —

- (1) expresses its grave concern at the decline of Victoria's training system noting that under the Andrews Labor government 123 000 students have disappeared from the training system in the past two years and students graduating with a vocational qualification are now less likely to get a job ...

All this discussion about economic productivity and the TAFE sector sounds in many respects very far away. It is an outcome; it is sort of a report and a theoretical exercise for many people. But when you are an ex-teacher and when you have lived in the country all your life and have seen children being disadvantaged

just by their location and their proximity or lack of proximity to great TAFE sectors, then there is a large disappointment.

Children go through the secondary school system and they all have a variety of abilities, capabilities, backgrounds and potential, and we do not need to limit those in terms of where their life path may take them. Some will go — and we know that not as many go — from the country into a formal university education. Country students are less represented across the board in the tertiary education sector of university, and it is very important that they be able to train in, enjoy and find a career pathway in the TAFE education system. Sadly, currently under the Andrews Labor government the TAFE sector is not travelling well and students are not getting their needs met, particularly in the Gippsland region.

There are three factors that I want to talk about today in relation to this motion. One is the sustainability of TAFE, the second is the transparency and the third is the quality that is offered in regional Victoria, specifically in Eastern Victoria Region. Over the past year 123 000 students have disappeared from Victoria's training sector. There has been a 30 per cent reduction since Labor came to government, and last year 56 million fewer student contact hours were delivered in the training system. This decline is hitting both TAFE and training providers. Six out of 10 TAFEs that have tabled their annual reports have an underlying deficit. Two of the TAFEs, namely Federation Training and Wodonga Institute of TAFE, have not even tabled their reports in Parliament as of the end of May.

Sustainability is not just about receiving money from the government on a constant basis to prop up the system. If you are in business and you want to maintain sustainability, just putting in capital all the time creates a false bottom line, a false sense that you are actually making a profit. What we need are outcomes. What we are not seeing is student hours and student enrolments across the TAFE sector, and we know that they are falling in Gippsland.

If we look at the Victorian Auditor-General's report that has come out today, *Technical and Further Education Institutes: 2016 Audit Snapshot*, we see on page 17, in terms of financial sustainability, that:

The improvement in revenue in 2015 and 2016 has been driven by additional government grant funding, rather than growth in revenue. Student numbers continued to fall, and all other sources of revenue such as student fees and contestable funding declined in 2015 and 2016.

There it is in the Auditor-General's report.

It continues:

The decline in revenue from income rather than grants ultimately reduces TAFEs' financial flexibility, and thereby their fiscal autonomy. The sector received a total of \$278.6 million in state government grants in 2016 ...

If that is not a prop-up, I do not know what is. The other interesting fact from the Auditor-General's report concerns Federation Training. It talks about the lack of financial audits in 2014 and 2015 — the lack of transparency that has come from Federation Training. The government should be supporting Federation Training to provide a clear, transparent understanding of student numbers and accountability.

On page 6 of the audit report the Auditor-General, in relation to the lack of report from the 2014 audit process, reports:

We have therefore been able to complete the audit of the 2015 financial report of Federation Training. We issued a qualified audit opinion on 9 May 2017.

What they go on to say there is that through this qualified audit there are so many gaps, and the gaps include:

We were therefore unable to form an opinion on the transactions and balances drawn from this system for both 2014 and 2015. Those transactions and balances include sale of goods and services revenue, accounts receivable, revenue received in advance and the provision for doubtful debtors.

They actually do not know how many students have paid for their courses. There is just a massive lack of clarity which leads people to have reduced confidence in the system. Now in truth Mr Jonathan Davis, the CEO, has in many ways brought many skills to the table from overseas, and I realise that he is performing to the very best of his ability to coordinate the training and I guess redirect it. But he also needs redirection and vision from the Andrews Labor government and Minister Tierney.

In terms of transparency — I know Mrs Peulich brought this up before and I will again — the government is hiding information. In the most recent Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearing the Minister for Training and Skills refused to provide basic information, including workforce data and the amount of funding Federation Training received from government in 2016, on the grounds that it is commercially sensitive, despite the standing directions from the Minister for Finance, Mr Robin Scott, under the Financial Management Act 1994, requiring that the publication of this information occurs in annual reports. So on one hand we have the minister saying, 'It's commercial in confidence and we don't want it to come

out', and on the other hand it is actually mandated in the Financial Management Act. So there is a cover-up. The minister does not wish for this information to come out. What the minister should be doing is providing clear and fulsome direction and policy on how to solve Federation Training's problems.

The government has rightly said that a stable training system is not just defined by the number of students enrolled; it must also be judged on the quality of the training it delivers. I agree with that. However, the quality of the training has also declined. This year's budget, budget paper 3, page 190, shows that there has been no change in the proportion of vocational education and training (VET) completers with an improved employment status after their training. Just half of students who have completed a VET qualification are more likely to be employed as a result — only half of those students. This is a decline from 76 per cent of students who found jobs within six months after completing their qualifications under the coalition.

Let me also talk about a decrease in standard and a removal of services that was working well in the Morwell region. Under much fanfare a couple of years ago the government introduced the Bubble. The Bubble was a place where students could get personal counselling, career advice, literacy and numeracy support — they could get tutoring — and many students accessed this. In fact the government funded it to the tune of \$6 million. I know in the Morwell campus it is housed in Federation Training's Kernot Hall and there was no new building built. I am told that it operated under normal classroom conditions and there were not any special razzamatuzz buildings involved. It had staff trained to support students. So \$6 million does not seem to go very far, considering the amount that has evaporated.

Toward the end of last year a person who was going back to retrain and undertake a diploma in nursing was utilising the Bubble very successfully in supporting her change of career or return to career choice. She heard the rumour that it was going to be defunded and removed, and she was most concerned and came into my office. I raised it with the minister in an adjournment debate, outlining the importance of this particular education support system. What happened? The Bubble closed. There were supposed to be additional tutors within the TAFE sector, but sadly this did not eventuate and up until recently it still had not eventuated. There were students needing that extra support and tuition who were not receiving it.

Indeed Ms Shelley Pasquill came to me most distressed, and we went on her behalf to Federation Training to get the support she needed. There was no tutor and there were no specific maths classes, and this was for a training program to become a nurse. They did not have any specific training or education around medicines and how volumes are measured et cetera. I would have thought that that is a very important skill and one that should be embedded in the curriculum to support the students. To her credit she worked on her own with the support of a person at Federation Training that we linked her to, and I am thankful to the person who did it. This is an example of where people are being let down by this system.

I might add that Ms Pasquill also went to Ms Shing's office on 8 December to seek help. It was only last week when she went back into the office that they said, 'Yes, we must do something about that'. She had not been contacted between then and now.

In my last few minutes I will speak about Federation Training, the distressing state of the Wellington shire and the need to upgrade facilities in terms of the Fulham campus. I know that the Wellington Shire Council has been very supportive of a change. They have been advocating for improved services, and indeed a long time ago there were netball courts down near the port of Sale and there was a vision that in the future they would become the new training and TAFE hub. This has not happened. I know my colleague Danny O'Brien, the member for Gippsland South in the Assembly, has been advocating for some transformation. Unfortunately what has happened with the Fulham campus is that there has been a 68 per cent decline in enrolments over the last four years, whereas if we look at Bairnsdale, we can see that there has been a 40 per cent increase.

What we are looking at now more than ever in the Latrobe Valley and in Gippsland is the need for a strong TAFE and training sector. We know because of the loss of Hazelwood and the potential loss of people out of Heyfield through the lack of timber supply and Carter Holt Harvey unfortunately closing that there will be people needing to be retrained. We need a strong, vibrant TAFE sector. We need the government to direct good policy in relation to supporting Federation Training. We need a system that supports our students to make choices for positive careers. We need jobs and careers in Gippsland in general, and so I fully support Mrs Peulich's motion today.

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) — Far be it from me to give Ms Bath any advice, but Mrs Peulich is very sensitive about the way her name is pronounced. She has given me a dressing-down a number of times when I have endeavoured to do the right thing and pronounce her name correctly. It is just some friendly advice to Ms Bath: I do not think that ‘Pewlich’ will cut it with her.

Ms Bath — Do you want to talk about the importance of TAFE?

Mr LEANE — I absolutely want to talk about TAFE, Ms Bath. I think it is unfortunate for Mrs Peulich and the opposition today, on the day that the Victorian Auditor-General’s Office (VAGO) report has come out, that this motion has been moved. The VAGO report blows away every false accusation and every point of Mrs Peulich’s motion. Let us go through what is actually stated in the report. This report is part of the essential role of the Victorian Auditor-General to provide assurance to the Parliament on the accountability of the Victorian public sector and provides the results of audits of the TAFE sector. It comes on the back of the second consecutive year under the Andrews government that the TAFE sector has recorded a total operating surplus.

Ms Shing — Say that again.

Mr LEANE — It comes on the back of the second consecutive year under the Andrews government that the TAFE sector has recorded a total operating surplus. The report also finds that the financial health of the TAFE sector is improving. Net operating results over the past two financial years have improved, and there is more liquidity across the sector as a whole. Let us look at 2014 under the former government, when there was a \$52.5 million deficit in the TAFE sector. In comparison, in 2016 the sector recorded a surplus of \$44.7 million — a \$19.5 million improvement.

Ms Shing — That is not what the opposition is saying.

Mr LEANE — Yes, Ms Shing, that is not what the opposition and Mrs Peulich are saying. That is not what they are trying to state here, because they do not rely on facts. They do not even acknowledge the Auditor-General. This is part of a set-up so that if ever there is, unfortunately, a change of government and there is a coalition government, the coalition has done the groundwork so that they can once again attack TAFE — because the coalition has a hatred for TAFE. This hatred for TAFE — —

Ms Shing — Contempt for it.

Mr LEANE — It is not so much contempt. They seem to have this hatred for TAFE, which I believe goes back to elitism and to snobbery about people who attend TAFE and secure accreditation and employment through TAFE being lesser citizens than them because they have done university degrees and so forth or whatever education path they have taken. They look at TAFE graduates, people who attend TAFE and people who aspire to attend TAFE as lesser beings that should be treated that way and therefore the sector should be attacked, as it was in the last term of a coalition government when we saw campuses closed and funding outrageously stripped out of the TAFE system. We saw thousands of staff sacked from the TAFE system.

This government came in with a commitment to restore TAFE, to rescue TAFE, because we believe TAFE is important for a number of reasons. Today we have a motion where aspersions are being cast on the health of the TAFE sector as a whole. I say to the coalition that I am actually shocked that they want to discuss TAFE in this chamber. The health of the TAFE system is a hell of a lot better than it was a couple of years ago when this government inherited it.

The health around Lilydale TAFE has improved 100 per cent. During the previous term of government, the Lilydale TAFE campus was closed, leaving the outer east of Melbourne — an enormous area of Melbourne — with no access to TAFE. The answer from the government of the day was that young people, who might aspire to do TAFE courses to afford themselves the opportunity of employment in the future, could attend certain TAFE courses at Docklands. That was one of the suggestions for people living out at Yarra Glen who used to travel to Lilydale to do automotive training. It was suggested to them that they should see if they could continue their course at Docklands. They would travel from Yarra Glen to Docklands, and then I suppose once they get back and do their shift at Red Rooster, if they are back in time, they might get themselves 5 hours of sleep, wake up again and go back to Docklands. That was a suggestion that was made at the time. That was the attitude that the coalition had to TAFE.

I am not too sure if anything positive is being said about TAFE by those on the other side. I would be surprised if there has been. I would actually be surprised if Mrs Peulich has not accused TAFE of being a communist plot, because everything seems to be a communist plot to Mrs Peulich.

I can imagine the shadow cabinet meetings. I understand Mrs Peulich has the responsibility of

scrutiny of government. She would be telling her shadow colleagues that everything that is brought up is a communist plot. Sky rail, a communist plot — scrutinised and ticked. TAFE, a communist plot — scrutinised. Level crossing removals, a communist plot — yes, tick, that has been scrutinised. The Melbourne Metro Tunnel, a communist plot — yes, tick, that has been scrutinised. Of course there are all her favourites about encouraging safe environments and equality in the education system for everyone — ‘Yes, Mr Guy, I have scrutinised that, and it is a communist plot’. It would be given a tick as scrutinised.

We would encourage the opposition to bring motions about TAFE every Wednesday to Parliament. We would plead to them and we would thank them if they did that, because as much as they despise TAFE, those on this side of the chamber have a lot of admiration and understanding for TAFE, for what it brings and the opportunity it affords Victorians, young, old and in between. We are on a trajectory to improve TAFE. The numbers in the Auditor-General’s report have shown that today. I want to compliment Minister Tierney for the work that she has done there.

Mr Morris interjected.

Mr LEANE — I am not too sure if the laughter from the head boy of Slytherin was directed towards me or not, but we do not think it is a joke. We are very proud of resurrecting TAFE after what the previous government, which absolutely hated TAFE, did to it. We know what is going on. We know this is being set up for an attack on TAFE if there is ever a sad day when the coalition take over again. We know that is their position. Everyone knows it. But we are in a position to make it bulletproof. We will keep working, and we will keep improving it. We look forward to the improvement of more TAFE facilities and to more TAFE campuses being reopened, like Lilydale and Greensborough, to name just a couple. I reiterate and ask that they bring a motion about TAFE to this place every Wednesday. We very much look forward to it.

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan) — With regard to the motion brought by Mrs Peulich, who I note is not in the chamber and has not been since she gave her opening speech on the motion, I have to say that my overall comment on the motion is the absolute hypocrisy of Mrs Peulich bringing this motion to the chamber about the falling student enrolments in the training system, the effects on TAFE student enrolments, contestable funding, staffing et cetera. She is somehow implying by this motion that TAFE is faring worse under this current government than it did under the previous government. Having said that, it

really is astonishing to see a member of the former Liberal coalition government bring in a motion here trying to somehow defend TAFE when their performance over their four years was to basically not support TAFE. I have got in my hand here a ream of evidence to support that.

I glance over to Mr Leane, the previous speaker, and say in general that this government has — as I mentioned to the Minister for Training and Skills at the budget estimates hearings — belatedly stepped in to prevent the absolute annihilation of the TAFE system that was looming at the end of 2014. But of course everyone needs to remember that this government and the previous governments over the last nine years have been conducting an experiment on the vocational education and training (VET) system that has been an absolute disaster. It was the previous Brumby government in 2008 that brought full market contestability into the VET system that almost led to the demise of TAFE in this state. There is no government — not the Brumby government, not the Baillieu government and not the Napthine government — that can claim anything but being complicit in the demise of TAFE over those last nine years.

It just astonishes me when a member of the former coalition government — and Mrs Peulich and I have locked horns on this issue many times; I basically do not agree with anything she has to say about TAFE — —

Mr O’Donohue — I’m pretty sure the feeling is mutual.

Ms PENNICUIK — I am pretty sure you are right. Thanks, Mr O’Donohue.

Let us just go back over the whole nine years to 2008 when the legislation was brought into this Parliament. The Greens and, may I say, many people who worked in the TAFE sector warned the Brumby government, and particularly the minister at the time, that full market contestability and deregulation of the market would be a disaster and would lead to what it did lead to: massive rorting of the system, and overnight mushrooming growth of so-called registered training organisations (RTOs) run by fly-by-nighters who ran tick-and-flick training.

Back in September 2011 when I moved that the issue of the rorting of government-subsidised training by private registered training organisations should go to a parliamentary inquiry, the current government, which was not the government at the time, did support that.

But the government at the time, which had the numbers in this house, did not, and so it continued. At that time 7.30 had done an investigation into it and at that time too Michael Callahan of the then Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE said:

Millions, absolutely, millions and millions of dollars will have been wasted on no training effectively. A lot of people just fleecing the system.

...

The problem is that it's a free-for-all. Anybody can open up a private RTO. The government is not adjudicating appropriately over the system, and the auditing system is simply a paper trail, and it's really easy to fabricate a paper trail.

That was back in 2011. Of course since then we know of the number of dodgy private trainers that have had to be deregistered, the amount of dollars — it is not millions and millions, it is now billions of dollars — of public money that has gone through these private trainers and the ordinary Victorians who wanted to acquire a skill and a quality training certificate who have been let down by the system.

One of the previous trainers made the comment — I am reading the transcript of the investigation by 7.30 — said:

Depending on the module, I can only ... one particular one would be conventional roofing. Here at TAFE it's a five-day process. The private RTO I was at, that would be done in 4 hours. So the hours that are on the paperwork ...

are basically fraudulent. This was repeated thousands and thousands of times. I would say that it would take an army of investigators, be they journalists, be they academics or students or whatever, to actually go back over the last nine years and find out where those billions of dollars have gone, because they have not gone into training students with quality training. It has been an absolute scandal, and it has been presided over by both governments. And it is not even ending. I have stood up here just in this sitting year and questioned the Minister for Training and Skills about the collapse of the Sage Institute of Education, which has left thousands of students in the lurch — not having their work marked, not having their courses completed — having paid up-front fees or enrolled through the VET FEE-HELP scheme. I will just park that idea for the moment and may return to it later. Just recently another huge RTO has collapsed, leaving thousands and thousands of students in the lurch.

Since the time when this terrible system was introduced into Victoria thousands of students have lost money, thousands of students have been let down and billions

of dollars of public money have disappeared. That is what happened, but nobody ever wants to talk about that. The current government just goes along. I will get to what it has done which has prevented it from falling off the cliff, but only just.

The TAFE system used to run about 70 per cent of vocational education and training in this state, built up over decades using public money with a lot of expertise and a lot of experience. A lot of that was just thrown out the door in the first few years, and the Brumby government and the Baillieu-Napthine governments just watched that happen and did nothing. They found a few bandaids to try to look like they were doing something, but they were so committed to that model that they just would not do anything until in the last couple of years, when a few things have been done. But in that time thousands of TAFE teachers have lost their jobs — lots of really good, committed, experienced and dedicated teachers lost from the system. And they are disenchanted. I still get letters from them. They are completely disenchanted with what has happened. I can hear the Special Minister of State mumbling away in the background.

Let us go to 2013. I made a statement on the *Tertiary Education and Other Entities: Results of the 2012 Audits* in statements on reports. At that time, 12 June 2013, the Auditor-General found that TAFEs deteriorated again in 2012, so this is five years after the legislation but really four years after market contestability really kicked in in 2009, with the overall operating surplus falling to \$58 million, a decrease of 39.1 per cent. In 2011 it was \$100.5 million, down by 32.5 per cent, and in 2010 it was \$149 million. Based on that three-year trend TAFEs will be heading for an operational deficit, according to the Auditor-General in 2013.

The Auditor-General found that the underlying results for the TAFE sector had been declining over that last five years — that is, since 2008 — and one-third of TAFEs faced more serious medium term risk to their sustainability. The Auditor-General found that the capacity of TAFE institutes to self-finance had fallen from 15 per cent to 11 per cent over that five years. During that five years, nine of the 14 TAFEs recorded a deficit at least once. He also concluded that changes in the funding model have resulted in TAFEs cutting expenditure viewed as non-essential. A lot of what was cut was in fact staff and courses and included the construction of assets.

If we look at the following year, 2014, I made a statement on 28 August 2014 on the Auditor-General's *Technical and Further Education Institutes: Results of*

the 2013 Audits report, in which he reported a net deficit of \$16.2 million, which was a decrease of \$74.6 million from 2012. That was affected by a decrease of \$116.3 million, or 15 per cent, in government operating and capital grants.

We know that during the Baillieu and Napthine governments a stack of money was taken out of the TAFE system and the government contribution to TAFE fell exponentially. In 2014 the Auditor-General assessed the financial sustainability of five TAFEs as being at high risk and eight as being at medium risk. In 2009–10 all TAFEs were considered to be at low risk in terms of the underlying result risk assessment. That was before the disastrous full contestability model kicked in, which was introduced by the Brumby government and almost destroyed TAFE in Victoria. Prior to the introduction of market contestability by the Brumby government, which was basically unregulated, Victoria's TAFE system was a world leader and was very highly regarded around the world as a model to be aspired to. As I said, the Brumby government was repeatedly warned about the unregulated contestability model that it was introducing, but the minister ignored the warnings. What they were warned about all came to pass.

That 2014 Auditor-General's report found that 93 per cent of TAFEs were considered to be at low risk in terms of capital investment in 2008 and that by 2013 that had fallen to 21 per cent — from 93 per cent to 21 per cent. In 2014 some 21 per cent were also at medium risk, and a whopping 58 per cent were considered at high risk. That is the history going back to when what was happening to the TAFE system really became obvious, but nothing much was done.

Ms Shing — That was a dramatic pause.

Ms PENNICUIK — I still have plenty of time. If we look at the situation now, I asked the minister in budget estimates about the financial sustainability of the TAFE sector. This current government has put some hundreds of millions of dollars back into the TAFE system to prevent it from completely falling over, but it has not been without damage being done in terms of some TAFEs closing, the loss of hundreds and thousands of courses across the TAFE sector, the loss of thousands of TAFE teachers, as I mentioned before, and a whole lot of students being let down.

If you look at page 3 of the Auditor-General's report titled *Technical and Further Education Institutes: 2016 Audit Snapshot*, it does tell the story of the TAFE sector, which, as I said, in 2007 and before that was responsible for about 70 per cent of VET training in the

state of Victoria. In 2012 that had fallen to 38 per cent, in 2013 it was 37 per cent, in 2014 it was 32 per cent and in 2015 it was 31 per cent, so just over 30 per cent of VET training is now undertaken by the TAFE sector. I notice government members laughing et cetera. What has happened to TAFE is an absolute tragedy for students, for Victorian business and for the Victorian training sector. What you do need in any state or country in the world is a strong public provider of vocational education and training.

The other thing that has happened is that there is a very strong focus on it being about training — the minister has said 'training that leads to jobs'. That was always a part of the VET sector — training that leads to jobs. Of course the VET sector and particularly the TAFEs have trained a large number of occupations such as healthcare workers, childcare workers, paramedics et cetera. They all go through the TAFE sector, and the training that they received in the Victorian TAFE system was second to none. But now the TAFE system has been reduced to delivering around 30 per cent of VET training, and I think, as do many Victorians, that this is not a situation we should allow to continue. We should actually be building TAFE back up to being the primary provider of vocational education and training in Victoria.

The report, if you turn to page 17, which is in the chapter on financial sustainability — I noticed that Ms Bath referred to this page as well — says:

The improvement in revenue in 2015 and 2016 has been driven by additional government grant funding, rather than growth in revenue. Student numbers continued to fall, and all other sources of revenue such as student fees and contestable funding declined in 2015 and 2016.

This is true, but in the past — and this is what we should be aspiring to again — TAFEs did not rely just on student funding and revenue. They were in fact funded by the government for all of the community roles that they are meant to deliver and also because — —

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Finn) — Order! Ms Pennicuk, I must interrupt you at this point because it is time for statements on reports and papers.

Business interrupted pursuant to order of Council.

STATEMENTS ON REPORTS AND PAPERS

Standing Committee on the Economy and Infrastructure: Domestic Animals Amendment (Puppy Farms and Pet Shops) Bill 2016

Mr MORRIS (Western Victoria) — I rise to make my statement on the *Government Response to the Parliamentary Inquiry into the Domestic Animals Amendment (Puppy Farms and Pet Shops) Bill 2016*. I note that in the chamber there are a number of fellow members of the committee that inquired into the government's failed proposed bill with regard to trying to wipe out the opportunity for families across Victoria to be able to have a pet, whether it be a dog — such as Bobby Dog — or whether it be a bird that the government was attempting to wipe out the sale of in the state of Victoria.

I took particular exception to this response because I felt that the government in its response attempted to single out me, as chair of the committee at the time, and to question whether or not this inquiry and indeed the report that came out of it was a true reflection of what the committee heard and was unbiased, because I note there has been some very selective quoting in this response. I note that in part the response reads:

During hearings, the former chair of the committee made it known that he had visited the place of business of a witness the day prior to that witness giving evidence, and when hearing evidence from the relevant government department said —

and this is what I said —

... our family [pet came] from an establishment that was not on the same scale as Banksia Park but a similar type of facility where there are a large-scale number of dogs being bred. I just put it to you that my family chose to get Gus the groodle in the way we did. We wanted a groodle. That is what we got. We got it from the facility that we did ... [Your government is trying to] remove from people like me and my family the opportunity to make the decision that we wanted to when we were getting our dog.

I note that the government has chosen to quote that, but what the minister and the government have failed to quote is that the minister too made some reflections about her own personal experience with animals and the like. I note that prior to this particular quote that is in the response, I had said:

Thank you, Minister. I have one more question. You shared a personal story in terms of your animals, where they came from and how they came into your life. I just thought I might share mine with you. We have Gus the groodle, who is our family pet.

And so it goes on. I note that the minister in her testimony to the committee reflected upon her own experience in getting her own pets. The minister made some comments around her own experience:

... in terms of the government's understanding and recognition of the way in which people source their puppies and kittens, of course these are deeply personal matters because people have great affection for family members. My own experience again, with the committee's indulgence, for what it is worth is that I have an ageing dachshund that was sourced through a phone call to DOGS Victoria — I believe they had a different name that long ago — which then put me in touch with the breeder from where that dog was sourced. My other dog is a rescue dog from an organisation that has been referred to in evidence presented to the committee earlier today.

The minister has attempted to claim that I was biased in the evidence I gave because I referred to my own pet, when the minister herself referred to her experience in getting her dog. I also note that during your contribution to the committee, Acting President, you referred to Bobby Dog, a dog that you sourced from a particular rescue organisation whose name I cannot recall at this point in time.

I want to make one other note with regard to this, and that is in relation to the RSPCA contribution to this particular inquiry. The RSPCA in their evidence said that they are an evidence-based organisation. They also said there is no evidence to support the limit for 10 breeding dogs; however, the RSPCA supports the limit on 10 breeding dogs. They are an evidence-based organisation and support something for which there is no evidence. This is something that troubled me greatly, and I understand the current inquiry into the RSPCA is ongoing. I am looking forward very much to reading that report.

Auditor-General: Managing School Infrastructure

Mr ELASMAR (Northern Metropolitan) — I rise to speak to the Auditor-General's *Managing School Infrastructure* report, which was tabled in this house in May 2017. As a longstanding member and now chair of the current parliamentary Economic, Education, Jobs and Skills Committee, it is of great interest to me to read a report prepared by the Auditor-General's office on the subject of education in Victorian schools.

In particular, we know that all school environs are hugely important to student outcomes and that school infrastructure is a constantly evolving dynamic in maintaining the health and safety of students, staff and visitors. We are all aware of the critical importance of the role of the Department of Education and Training

and its responsibility for establishing, running and maintaining government schools which cater for about 63 per cent of school-age Victorians.

Infrastructure comprises assets such as classrooms and sports, arts and physical activity spaces. Over half of our currently operating schools were built post-1992. However, 40 per cent were built prior to that time. These buildings — and some of them are beautiful — take a lot of money for their upkeep and maintenance. Notwithstanding the age of the educational facility, they all have one thing in common: they provide relevant educational programs and a future for our children, and to do this in a proper learning climate they need to be well resourced, hence the Building the Education Revolution program instigated by the former Labor Prime Minister, Julia Gillard.

Since the 1990s each Victorian school has been in control of administering and managing its own assets. Victoria is considered to be one of the most devolved government school sectors in Australia. The responsibility is onerous; there is no doubt about that as each school sets its own priorities and determines where its budget is spent. The report found that there were some buildings below par, but the Department of Education and Training is in the process of developing a 10-year asset strategy and a package of asset management reforms.

The audit report is encouraging with respect to the department redesigning and planning a framework for the overall management of Victoria's government schools. Its intention is towards improving the transparency and accuracy of funding allocations for schools, working with schools to improve their individual asset management planning and improving the skills of school leaders in managing assets.

This framework outlines the steps schools must adopt to make sure their assets meet their service delivery objectives efficiently and effectively. The recommendations contained in the report are logical and achievable. I thank the Auditor-General's office for the report.

Department of Treasury and Finance: budget papers 2017–18

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) — Today I want to make some comment on the state budget 2017–18, and in particular on a couple of areas. The Minister for Planning has responsibility for the planning scheme and does so by administering his department but also by planning scheme amendments. We have seen in recent days an extraordinary backflip

by the Honourable Richard Wynne, the Minister for Planning, concerning Ryan's Reserve, an important small but well used piece of land on Swan Street in Richmond. It is an area that I am familiar with. I note the extraordinary decision by the government initially to remove the netball courts there — highly used netball courts — and to build an intense high-rise development on the site.

This would have been a travesty, given the increase in population in this area around Ryan's Reserve. In that area of Richmond the government's own plans and the City of Yarra's plans show increased density, and a short drive around that area up towards Bridge Road reveals many new buildings that house a very significant new population. The idea was that we would be removing significant open space and significant areas of recreation space, particularly netball courts that are used by local women and girls and those who come from afar to compete in netball.

I note the strong support from many local activists. I was proud to meet with many of them, and I know Mr Ondarchie was very active on this as well. We note that there was a motion on the notice paper that would have revoked the earlier planning scheme amendment put in place by Richard Wynne. But the minister himself took action last Thursday and revoked his own planning scheme amendment. He did a backflip — a huge backflip — admitting, I think, in effect that his earlier actions and the actions of the government had been quite wrong.

I for one am glad that the netball courts will survive. I think this is a victory for community pressure on the Labor Party and on Richard Wynne. The earlier arrogant and unthoughtful decision that had been made that would have seen the loss of those important netball courts has been reversed, and I think that is a very, very good outcome indeed.

I also want to say something about the situation with TAFE and the weak position that many TAFEs now find themselves in. The Labor Party before the election talked at length about TAFEs and their so-called rescue of TAFEs. However, I note that the Auditor-General's snapshot today makes it very clear that any improvement in the system is entirely due to more state government grants. I think the important quote is on page 17:

The improvement in revenue in 2015 and 2016 has been driven by additional government grant funding, rather than growth in revenue. Student numbers continued to fall, and all other sources of revenue such as student fees and contestable funding declined in 2015 and 2016.

The Auditor-General went on to say:

The decline in revenue from income rather than grants ultimately reduces TAFEs' financial flexibility, and thereby their fiscal autonomy. The sector received a total of \$278.6 million in state government grants in 2016 ...

The point that is made here is that the state government handed out \$490 million in grants to TAFEs in the last two years, but student numbers and training quality have worsened. The Auditor-General has clearly pinged the Andrews government for its failure to make the sector competitive and to be able to push forward in a constructive way, and I know that that is a long-term real risk for Victoria. The so-called rescue of TAFEs has been a complete and utter flop.

Department of Health and Human Services: drinking water quality report 2015–16

Mr EIDEH (Western Metropolitan) — I rise today to speak on the *Annual Report on Drinking Water Quality in Victoria 2015–16: Enhancing Risk Management*. I would like to begin by thanking Kym Peake, the secretary, and the Department of Health and Human Services for their contribution and preparation of the drinking water quality report.

The health and wellbeing of our communities is crucial, and all Victorians deserve to be provided with high-quality drinking water. The provision of safe drinking water underpins exactly this. The Safe Drinking Water Act 2003 provides the framework to ensure that the drinking water supplied is safe, that it is at the core of Victoria's safe drinking water regulatory framework and that it meets the needs of all communities and their expectations. The department, as the regulatory body for drinking water, is tasked with administering the Safe Drinking Water Act, and as is seen throughout the report, it provides a synopsis of drinking water quality in Victoria during 2015–16 along with the activities the department carried out under the act.

During the reporting period the Safe Drinking Water Regulations 2015 were introduced on 18 July 2015 after extensive consultation with water agencies, the public and government agencies. These regulations led the way in drinking water risk management, thus enhancing the risk-based nature of the safe drinking water regulatory framework. Drinking water compliance continues to excel, with 98 per cent of water sampling in localities achieving full compliance with scheduled drinking water quality standards all of the time. The number of notifications and reports of known or suspected contamination made to the department relating to water quality incidents, issues

and non-compliance also remained low in comparison with the previous year, with only 46 reports made to the department under section 22 of the act.

The report also outlined that during 2015–16 all water agencies were independently audited and found to be compliant with the legislated risk management plan requirements. This is the first time since the safe drinking water regulatory framework was developed in 2004 that all water agencies have been found to be compliant, indicating a mature understanding of their regulatory obligations. The department outlined that it cannot afford to become complacent as the potential public health consequences are far too serious, and it aims at continuing to work with agencies to achieve the shared goal of safe, good-quality drinking water for our communities. The subtitle of the report is 'Enhancing risk management', as it acknowledges the significant change introduced with the Safe Drinking Water Regulations 2015 and an increased emphasis on risk management.

The report outlines that many more achievements were made, such as Aireys Inlet being connected to the Geelong drinking water supply; construction of the Ararat fluoride plant, which was completed; and a human health risk in relation to a blue-green algal bloom in the Murray River that extended over 1300 kilometres being successfully managed.

The future supply and security of safe drinking water is of paramount importance, and with this in mind the department is committed to continuing to work with its partners regarding future challenges. This includes promoting and strengthening risk management processes, awareness of new and emerging risks to drinking water supplies and working with stakeholders to secure long-term water supplies.

Once again, I thank all those who contributed to this report and for the many stakeholders' commitment and hard work in ensuring our communities are supplied with quality and safe drinking water. I commend this report to the house.

VicForests: report 2015–16

Ms BATH (Eastern Victoria) — This afternoon I will make some comments on the VicForests annual report 2015–16 and note that the then CEO, Robert Green, on the opening page of the report comments on a number of positive things and one concern or challenging aspect of VicForests. One is that at that time they had a net profit after tax of \$3.4 million, no net debt and an increasing asset value, which is pleasing to note. The second point he raises is in regard to

personal safety and the safety of workers, contractors and staff. As he indicates, their Zero Harm target outcomes were progressing very well at that time. I note from speaking with VicForests staff and also harvesters in the Latrobe Valley the importance of being very careful and the need to utilise protocols around safety with respect to large equipment, large and heavy timber and also uneven terrain. It is also very important to make sure that we keep people safe, and it is pleasing to see that they were achieving those outcomes at that time.

One of the main challenges that they see is certainly the detection of Leadbeater's possum colonies and how they can balance maintaining this iconic species of possum with the activities of the timber industry. Mr Green said in his report:

VicForests remains optimistic that the possum and the timber industry can coexist, through careful and thoughtful management, collaboration between agencies and academia and goodwill ...

I concur with that. It is very important to be able to maintain the Leadbeater's possum species in good, positive numbers, but also the timber industry is vital to our economy. It is vital to small towns in my electorate, and in particular Heyfield, where the Australian Sustainable Hardwoods timber mill and the 260 jobs are certainly under threat due to reduced timber supply.

Some of the direction from VicForests comes from the Leadbeater's Possum Advisory Group, which was established under the Liberal-Nationals coalition government. It makes some specific recommendations. The recommendations that are important here relate to the colony numbers of Leadbeater's possums and what happens when there is a trigger of 200 colonies having been identified. We know now that the number of 200 colonies was actually triggered back in June 2016, so a whole year ago; the trigger for a review and scientific assessment of the numbers occurred 12 months ago. Currently we are at a colony status of 617, and when you look from week to week it seems to be growing by the day.

Mr Ramsay interjected.

Ms BATH — That is colony numbers; that is not actually numbers of possums.

We also know that the Arthur Rylah Institute for Environmental Research has completed its report and has sent it to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change. Minister D'Ambrosio has that report on her desk. What I want to know and what has been asked of me in great frustration by workers, timber

millers and other people in Heyfield is: why will the government not release this report as is, without adulteration, so people can get a clear assessment of possum numbers and the timber industry outcomes? Indeed on 2 May I asked the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change when she will release the report, and she came back with:

The review of the 200-metre timber harvesting exclusion zones has been completed and the report is being finalised by my department following feedback from two independent reviewers.

I think the Arthur Rylah institute report should be released as is and be tabled so that all Victorians across the board, including timber workers and VicForests, can see it.

The other issue that I thought was quite interesting was that the minister talked about the importance of plantation timber, whereas HVP — Hancock Victorian Plantations — is still awaiting lease negotiations. They still need to have their leases ratified, and the government is kicking and screaming about coming to the table to do what needs to be done.

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

Commission for Children and Young People: *The Same Four Walls*

Ms SPRINGLE (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I rise to speak to the report of the Commission for Children and Young People *The Same Four Walls*. On numerous occasions last year as young people were causing damage during incidents inside the Parkville and Malmsbury youth justice centres the Minister for Families and Children repeatedly said that she did not know and that her department did not know what was causing their behaviour. This was despite the fact that the minister, properly, ordered reviews into each of the incidents after they happened. The minister has kept those reports secret, although it seems the *Age* got hold of the report of the incident in March 2016.

We know what the minister and her department were being told at least as early as May last year: that young people were responding in entirely predictable ways to the fact that they were being locked down in their cells for more than 20 hours a day for extended periods. What did the minister do about it? From what we can tell, not much at all. When young people inflicted catastrophic damage to Parkville in November, all the minister did — let us not forget that she is the minister who is responsible for the care and protection of young

people in this state — was to call them the worst of the worst and throw them in Barwon Prison, illegally.

This sort of report by the Commission for Children and Young People shines a light on perhaps the most shameful period in the history of Victorian youth justice in living memory. Yes, the young people in Parkville and Malmsbury have exhibited violent behaviour. The minister is, or should be, well aware of the overwhelming evidence base which links these behaviours to the often extraordinary trauma and disadvantage these young people have already experienced. She is well aware that two-thirds of them have had formal involvement in Victoria's child protection system, which has too often been demonstrated to fail the most vulnerable young people in the state. The minister is, or should be, well aware of the overwhelming evidence which suggests that the confinement and isolation of young people with these backgrounds exacerbates harm and hinders rehabilitation. But to quote from the commission's report:

Young people were denied access to fresh air, exercise, meaningful activities, education, support programs and visits, sometimes for extended periods.

Often these lockdowns had absolutely nothing to do with the young people's behaviours in the centre; it was simply an issue of staffing numbers. Isolations increased to five times their ordinary level during December 2016. Separations increased to nine times their ordinary level. Some young people were isolated for weeks at a time. Some young people were forced to urinate and defecate in their cells during isolation periods. There was no cultural support or education offered to many of the young people in isolation. The department did not even record the isolations adequately.

Bearing in mind the view of the United Nations special rapporteur on torture in 2011 — that the solitary incarceration of children for more than 20 hours a day amounts to cruel and degrading treatment — the commission's investigation found that:

More than half of the separation plans reviewed during the initial 18-month review period required the child or young person to be locked in their room for 20 hours or more each day, often without access to personal items such as books, photos or music players.

The literature confirms again and again that this kind of treatment can actually induce psychosis. The minister says Victoria's detention system for youth justice bears no similarities to Don Dale, but under her watch we have had the lockdowns, the tear gas, the adult prison guards, the kids urinating and defecating in cells and the denying of education and cultural support.

The minister's latest response in this area has been to introduce a new bill which will at least require authorities to report episodes of isolation to the Secretary of the Department of Justice and Regulation but which otherwise ignores the children's commission's report and its recommendations in relation to the use of isolation and separation.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Finn) — Order! Mrs Peulich, for 2 minutes.

Department of Treasury and Finance: budget papers 2017–18

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I want to take the opportunity to make a few remarks on the 2017–18 state budget, specifically in relation to the Victorian Multicultural Commission (VMC). As part of the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee proceedings, questions were asked about what the staff allocation was for the Victorian Multicultural Commission. The minister was not able to answer the question. The question was asked how big the Victorian Multicultural Commission's budget was. The minister was not able to answer the question. This was the Minister for Finance, who ordinarily chews and spits out facts and figures readily and is known as a numbers man. The question was asked whether the VMC's strategic plan aligns with the strategic plan of the government in relation to multicultural affairs. He had not sighted the strategic plan.

Some time ago I put out a press release expressing concern that the VMC as an independent statutory entity had been gutted. Indeed this appears to be the case. But of greater concern is the fact that the reforms that were made at the time by the government were supposedly in response to the Victorian Auditor-General's Office's recommendations that the roles of the VMC and the Office of Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship were blurred and needed to be clarified. Never has that blur been greater, so clearly the reforms have failed to take into account the Victorian Auditor-General's recommendations. I would suggest that indeed this needs to be looked at very, very closely. The minister cannot continue to purport that the VMC is an independent body when clearly it has been assumed by the Department of Premier and Cabinet or, as I now call it, the department of political correctness.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Finn) — Order! The time for statements on reports has concluded.

Business interrupted pursuant to order of Council.

ADJOURNMENT

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

That the house do now adjourn.

Australian Hazara Women's Friendship Network

Ms SPRINGLE (South Eastern Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence and Minister for Women. The Australian Hazara Women's Friendship Network is a grassroots community-based organisation based in Dandenong. This is a well-established network driven by community demand and has been instrumental in connecting and supporting a growing community of Hazara women in Victoria.

As we know, the Hazara community has faced crushing oppression and persecution in Afghanistan, and many members of Victoria's Hazara communities face significant cultural challenges in resettling here. In particular, the challenges faced by Hazara women can be extreme. This is where the Hazara women's friendship network steps in, playing a vital role in empowering women to connect with each other and with their wider communities. The network provides English language classes, technology literacy and driving education. In recent years, as a trusted community organisation, it has been experiencing an increase in help-seeking from women who are experiencing family violence or family members coming for help on their behalf. Demand is outstripping the network's capacity. It has now been running since 2013 with extremely limited resources, staffed entirely by volunteers.

Volunteerism is a wonderful thing. It supports social cohesion, it is the bedrock of communities and it can massively increase an organisation's capacity to create positive change. But where organisations are providing vital services, they must be adequately resourced. The action I am seeking is for the minister to meet with the network's director to be briefed on the work of the organisation and to discuss funding opportunities across relevant departments aimed at scaling up the Hazara women's network's vital work in their communities.

Heatherdale railway station

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter is directed to the Minister for Public Transport, Jacinta Allan. It pertains to the successful level crossing removals at Blackburn Road and Heatherdale Road and in particular the new station

at Heatherdale as part of the removals. Members of the Heatherdale Community Action Group advocated for some DigiGlass, which is a see-through glass, with floral images from the area to be superimposed on the glass. They negotiated a spot at the station which they believe would be the most accessible spot for people to enjoy that particular imagery.

The final Blackburn/Heatherdale stakeholder liaison group meeting was held recently, and the action group wants to see the description of these particular flowers on both sides of the DigiGlass. It is to be on only one side of the DigiGlass, but it is approachable from two directions. Members of the group asked for action by the Level Crossing Removal Authority to explore whether that could be remedied.

The action I seek is that the minister ask the Level Crossing Removal Authority to act on this by any means possible. I think it makes a lot of sense. There was a lot of work done by members of this group towards advocating for this work, and I would like to see them completely satisfied with the outcome.

Bendigo Health

Ms WOOLDRIDGE (Eastern Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter this evening is for the Minister for Health in the other place, and the action I seek is for her to ask Safer Care Victoria to review the situation with respect to anaesthetic technicians, to assess the poor management of the transition from anaesthetic technicians to anaesthetic nurses and determine what impact that has had on the safety of surgical services at Bendigo Health and to make recommendations about how that transition can more effectively be undertaken.

I am very pleased that the minister heeded the concerns I raised in this place last sitting week regarding the loss of microbiology services and that she has sent Safer Care Victoria in to evaluate the impact on the health service and what needs to change. This has been well received by the staff team at Bendigo Health. It is fair to say that Safer Care Victoria has expressed concern about the changes and the impact on safety and quality in relation to care of the removal of those microbiology services to Melbourne. It also has expressed concern about the impact that the removal of those services has had on ensuring that Bendigo Health can genuinely offer world-class health services. The work is happening to identify what critical interventions must be provided on site and the clinical implications if those services are not provided. There is some optimism among the staff that this issue will be resolved in favour of maintenance of a significant range of microbiology services on site at Bendigo Health, as is needed.

There are still significant issues, though, at Bendigo Health. The waiting list is up significantly, with an additional 315 people on the waiting list in just the last quarter. This is a 22 per cent increase. The hospital is paying St John of God Bendigo Hospital and Bendigo Day Surgery to try to bring those waiting lists down by doing some elective surgeries at those locations. That is well and good, but the problem is that they need to fix what is happening in terms of elective surgery. There are still many shifts — I have been told over 100 a week — where the anaesthetic nursing staff roles have to be filled by agency staff, and this is leading to a very significant cost, in the order of \$100 000 per month, to pay for these additional agency staff.

There is still no resolution in relation to the CEO. It is four months since the CEO stepped down and this has still not been resolved. It is fair to say staff are very frustrated. They want to do their jobs properly, and they are being constrained from doing that. There is a very serious question as to whether the board is up to the job given their clear failure to manage these very critical issues.

In terms of the anaesthetic staff, the problem is there is still no paediatric surgery happening as a result of these services being withdrawn with this transition to the anaesthetic nursing staff. The lists are going very slowly, the waiting lists are growing and there is a significant cost with agency staff, as I have outlined, so I do seek a commitment from the minister for Safer Care Victoria to investigate these circumstances while they are there looking at the microbiology services.

Drug driving

Ms PATTEN (Northern Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter today is directed to the Minister for Police. The action I am seeking from the minister is to review the evidence base underpinning roadside testing and to look at the policy and practice that are used to develop that roadside testing. This is as a result of looking at the recent Transport Accident Commission advertising campaign that shows a young driver whose driving was clearly not impaired but who tested positive when stopped for a roadside drug test. The justification for this was that even though the person may not feel impaired they could unknowingly be impaired. This is about having trace amounts of certain substances.

This is where it all seems to unravel, because when you look at the information that is available around these trace amounts of illicit substances that can be detected by roadside testing, it is completely inconsistent. In New South Wales they say if you had some cannabis in

the last 12 hours you may still be affected, in the Northern Territory it is 5 hours, in Western Australia it is 4 hours and in Victoria it is 24 hours, so there is an incredible inconsistency. When I looked to see where this evidence for the Victoria Police and Victorian drug driving policy came from, I found a submission that related back to a 2004 study by Professor Olaf Drummer from the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine. Professor Drummer said that it did not matter how much trace element there was and that a person would be affected by tetrahydrocannabinol (THC). What he also went on to say, which I thought was quite extraordinary, was that there was no significant link between opiates and driving. So heroin and driving seemed fine, but trace elements of THC did not.

Anyway, the action I am seeking is that we currently review the Drummer study and that we look at all of the other information and research that has been done around drug driving and testing for drugs in drivers around the world.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Rather than all of us doing that, the minister will do that.

Ms PATTEN — Yes. Let us ask the minister. That was the royal we.

Gippsland offshore wind farm

Ms SHING (Eastern Victoria) — The matter which I wish to raise today is for the attention of Minister D'Ambrosio in the other place in relation to environment and climate change. It relates to an announcement last week from Offshore Energy, which confirmed its plans to proceed with an application for a feasibility study for the 'Star of the south energy project' ahead of the Victorian new energy technologies round table. This particular job involving offshore wind power generation from Gippsland using the transmission system which is already in place there would in fact create 2000 direct and 10 000 indirect construction jobs in the event that it proceeds. It is pleasing to see a level of cooperation between the state and commonwealth governments to facilitate this project going ahead to the feasibility study stage.

In this regard the action that I seek from the minister is confirmation of the steps being taken to secure as much opportunity as possible for local employment, skills and product to be used in the development of this feasibility study stage of the project and to ensure that as part of delivering on our commitment to improve opportunities for employment and economic growth throughout Gippsland this project falls within the scope of that broader commitment.

Kindergarten funding

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter this evening is for the Treasurer. It relates to getting some clarity around some budget initiatives that are in this year's Andrews government budget. Last week at the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee (PAEC) hearing Minister Mikakos was asked about \$98.4 million for kindergarten initiatives that will help improve educational outcomes for girls, which is detailed in the gender equality statement in the budget papers. Minister Mikakos at the time noted that the question being asked referred to the gender equality statement that was in fact released by Minister Richardson and that that therefore fell under Ms Richardson's portfolio. Minister Richardson was then asked by members of PAEC in the afternoon if she was in fact responsible for this \$98.4 million of kindergarten initiative funding that would help improve educational outcomes for girls, as had been indicated by Minister Mikakos earlier in the day, and Minister Richardson replied, 'No, I am not', and that in fact the Department of Treasury and Finance wrote the statement.

So, Treasurer, if it is not Minister Mikakos and it is not Minister Richardson, the action I seek, as I said earlier, is for you to provide clarity around including almost \$100 million of non-existent kindergarten programs for girls in the budget statements.

Tram priority signalling

Ms DUNN (Eastern Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. I have been advised that VicRoads charges Yarra Trams, the operators of Melbourne's tram network, \$15 000 to install priority signalling for trams at each and every intersection. This is gross overcharging and is clearly detrimental to ensuring a fair provision of road space and road priority for trams. This in turn contributes to the slow average speeds on our tram network and the degradation of our city's public transport system.

The action I seek is that the Minister for Roads and Road Safety reduce the charge set by VicRoads for installing priority signalling for trams to zero and do something for commuters on our tram network.

Victorian Institute of Sport

Mr EIDEH (Western Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter tonight is for the Minister for Sport, the Honourable John Eren. Recently the Andrews Labor government announced a \$300 000 funding

boost for the Victorian Institute of Sport (VIS) to strengthen the VIS and ensure that Victoria remains the leader in the nation for discovering and developing elite athletes. I note that this initiative will include funding for community outreach to help the VIS find new talent across the state and funding to improve data management systems so that the VIS can better track and monitor athletes and their performance. This is welcome funding, as we all know the importance of providing pathways for athletes in community clubs to take the next step in their sporting journey and removing barriers to participation in sport so that all Victorians, no matter where they live, have access to sporting facilities. So I ask the Minister for Sport to assist with promoting this initiative to clubs in my community so we can uncover the next generation of sporting talent in Western Metropolitan Region.

Domain railway station

Ms FITZHERBERT (Southern Metropolitan) — The Save St Kilda Road group has today tweeted pictures of the start of tree removal on St Kilda Road. They have also described the scene:

When crime in Vic is out of control @danielandrewsmp has deployed 8 police on St Kilda Rd in case 'silvertails' protest removal.

They are right about crime in Victoria. Every day we hear of yet more violent crime affecting people in places where they should feel safe — when they are driving their car or sleeping in their own home or visiting a local shop. This week's sitting is of course overshadowed by the horrifying attack in Brighton on Monday night.

In a second tweet Save St Kilda Road said:

... we can assure @danielandrewsmp that the residents of St Kilda Rd are no threat to public safety ...

I can certainly vouch for that.

When the next stage of works was recently announced, the references to tree removal in the public consultations were very minimal. The information on this emerged mainly from direct questions. The Melbourne Metro Rail Authority would not say when the trees would be removed, only that it would happen before 12 July. On one level I can understand their concern, given that literally thousands of people have indicated their opposition to removing the trees on St Kilda Road. Just under 10 000 signed a petition asking for Domain station to be deep cavern mined, and several thousand opposed the two permit applications made by Melbourne Metro Rail Authority to Heritage Victoria.

These tree removals are only able to happen because of permission given by Heritage Victoria, and this permission was sought very late because of confusion within the authority about whether it was actually needed. Two applications were made, one from memory on 30 November and the second a week or so later. Public input was sought, yes, during December and indeed over the New Year period, and despite this, thousands of people objected to the two applications. However, Heritage Victoria issued permits a few weeks ago, and that was the last impediment removed.

Without fail every action and protest that has been taken by local residents in relation to Domain station and the St Kilda Road trees has been peaceful and respectful. In fact the protesters have been far more respectful towards the government than the government has been towards them.

It is a remarkable coincidence that these trees have come down this week during a parliamentary sitting and in the aftermath of the Brighton attack, when attention is definitely elsewhere. But it is extraordinary that in the shadow of appalling violence, and in particular after an act of terror on Monday night, eight police officers have been deployed to St Kilda Road when these trees are being prepared for removal. We have spoken many times in this place about the need for more resources for our police force. Too many people have stories about calling the police and being told either that the police will not come or that they will not come urgently. Most people who speak to me understand that this is no reflection on the police, who they know are under-resourced.

The action I am seeking from the Minister for Police is an explanation why, when Victoria is facing increasing rates of serious crime, eight police officers were deployed to St Kilda Road for the removal of some of its iconic trees.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I might just make the observation that that was pretty close to a setpiece speech.

Latrobe Special Developmental School

Ms BATH (Eastern Victoria) — My adjournment matter this evening is for the Minister for Education, the Honourable James Merlino in the other place, and it relates to Latrobe Special Developmental School in Traralgon. The action I seek from the minister is for him to come to the school and speak with the principal, Barbara Walsh, and the school council to discuss initial funding to replace the ageing and not fit-for-purpose school.

Latrobe Special Developmental School caters for moderately to severely intellectually disabled children whose IQ is 55 or below. They range between the ages of five and 18 years old. There are a number of students there who are wheelchair bound. It is sad to say that the best way to describe this school is as a conglomerate of shoebox-style portable classrooms with cramped corridors and spaces and poky bathrooms which are certainly a challenge for staff who have to support students in their bathroom and toiletry activities.

Many of the school walls are lined with hazardous asbestos sheeting, and they are continually being patched and covered to make them relatively safe. One of the only permanent buildings on the site is a 1958 besser block building, and recently when the plumber was called to fix a toilet there he had to go looking for a 60-year-old model. You can see I am painting the picture that this is an old and antiquated school. Even this building does not meet the standards required to deliver quality education for the most vulnerable members of our community. When I went through the school, I saw that there are rooms that are divided and doors that are blocked up and not fit for purpose.

The most wonderful aspect of this school is the 40 teachers and teacher aides, and in fact one of the teacher aides happens to be an ex-student of mine. She is a delightful person and would be the most beautiful person to teach disabled students. The outdoor play equipment was actually donated by local businesses, so it did not cost the government anything. The motto of the school is 'Towards independence', but it is very difficult to thrive and move toward independence in buildings that are not fit for purpose.

I note that I said last year in my budget speech — and the Honourable Russell Northe, the member for Morwell in the Assembly, also made this comment — that it was on our wish list for improvements. It is very important for these 75 students and the families in and around the catchment area of Latrobe Valley that the initial stages to replace this old and antiquated school be supported. It is very important in the Latrobe Valley that funding is delivered for this important special school.

Hume drug rehabilitation centre

Ms LOVELL (Northern Victoria) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Mental Health, and it is regarding the location of the Hume drug rehabilitation centre that was announced as part of the 2017–18 budget. My request of the minister is that he advises me of the location of the Hume drug

rehabilitation centre and the time line for construction of this facility.

There is no disputing the fact that Victoria is in the grip of a substance abuse crisis. It is also widely understood that drug and alcohol use and abuse, especially addiction and recovery from addiction, is complicated and that rehabilitation is required in many instances. Unfortunately demand for this style of treatment far outstrips supply, and many people who desperately need rehabilitation are languishing on extensive waiting lists, including people in Shepparton and the Goulburn Valley area.

A recently released Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission report showed that rural Victorians are some of the worst users of ice in Australia and that Australia is the second-highest ranked country for ice users in the world. Indeed the front page of the *Shepparton News* this morning reports on an \$850 000 street value haul of ice recovered by the police at a home in Shepparton yesterday. Ambulance Victoria data released at the start of the year showed that Shepparton is among the three regions with the greatest number of ice-related ambulance call-outs in regional Victoria and that ice-related ambulance attendances in regional Victoria have skyrocketed in recent years.

According to the Australian Community Support Organisation (ACSO), in 2015 almost 1000 people living in the Goulburn Valley approached ACSO for help with their drug and alcohol use. Around one-third sought assistance for alcohol use and one-third for amphetamine use, including methamphetamines, the family of drugs that includes the notorious ice. However, less than 1 per cent — that is, less than 10 people — were able to access a residential treatment program despite this style of treatment being considered to be one of the best forms of intervention for helping people recover from addiction.

Drug and alcohol addiction ruins the lives of not just those experiencing the addiction but also their families and friends. The impacts flow on to the community, impacting workplaces, sporting organisations and the economy and productivity of entire communities, all the way up to state level and ultimately the country as a whole.

It is heartening that the Labor government has implemented the *Ice Action Plan*, and that initial funding was announced in this year's budget to start capital planning and the purchase of three new regional residential drug rehabilitation treatment facilities, including one for Hume. Now the ball must start rolling, and quickly, so that we can start to work

together to repair the lives of people being torn apart by alcohol and drugs.

My request of the minister is that he advises me of the location for the Hume drug rehabilitation centre and the time line for the construction of this facility.

Ararat Rural City Council

Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria) — The action I am seeking tonight is from the Minister for Local Government, and the action I seek is that she delegate the local government inspectorate to oversight the current deliberations of the Ararat Rural City Council in relation to the differentials that it is going to apply to its budget. The reason I ask for this intervention is that it is very clear at the moment that landholders and farmers in that district look like paying a very severe penalty for being farmers and landholders in providing — if the loss of the 55 per cent differential goes through, and it looks like it will — over 50 per cent of the total rate revenue of the council.

The council's demographic of ratepayers has about 24 per cent being local farmers, who are currently paying 34 per cent of the rates. That differential was applied some years ago to provide equity across the ratepayer base in relation to reducing some of the cost burden to the farming community, but we are seeing now with basically an urban council that they are looking to remove that 55 per cent differential and have all ratepayers paying the general rate, which means an increase to that farming community of anywhere between \$60 000 and now \$90 000 per annum.

I was at a meeting at Lake Bolac three weeks ago where 300 very angry farmers had banded together to put submissions to council to stop them removing the differential. There were 250 who attended a meeting last night, there were 600 submissions and eight speeches, all supporting the retention of the 55 per cent differential. My understanding is that the council is hell-bent on removing the differential so the rate burden costs will be spread right across the general community, but it will be at a significant cost to local farmers. On that basis I ask for the intervention of the local government inspectorate to oversight the process that currently the Ararat Rural City Council is going through in relation to setting its rate structure for the coming year.

VicRoads Sunshine office

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter this evening for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and it concerns the removal of the

licence-testing and roadworthy certificates department from VicRoads at Sunshine. As a local in Sunshine described it to me this week, 'This is another kick in the guts to the people of the west'. There is very real anger. It has to be said that Sunshine is very much now an area of renewal, courtesy of the Brimbank council. A lot of work has gone into making Sunshine a very, very nice place these days, and it is about time that the Andrews government gave Sunshine and the people of Sunshine the same degree of respect. There will be a rally at midday on Friday to protest this decision, and I will be addressing that rally. I am asking the minister to save us the trouble and in the meantime to cancel this ridiculous decision and to allow the licence-testing and roadworthy certificates department of VicRoads to remain at Sunshine.

Taxi and hire car industry

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) — My matter for the adjournment tonight is for the attention of the Minister for Public Transport in the other place. It is a request that she meet with a full range of representatives of the taxi industry, particularly owners and drivers, hire car operators and licence-holders. There is very serious concern in the industry. There has not been sufficient consultation — and not since the bill was introduced to Parliament.

Obviously the Commercial Passenger Vehicle Industry Bill 2017 is the subject of a report by the Standing Committee on the Economy and Infrastructure, which will be coming in future days. I understand that the chair of the committee and others will say whatever they have to say about the bill at that time. I welcome the opportunity for the community to have had their say through that process, but what is clear here is that neither the Premier nor the transport minister have deigned to meet with the representatives of the industry that they should have. They need to listen and hear directly the impact of this bill and the government's plans, the massive impact on people's livelihoods, on their super funds and on their property holdings and the massive impact on their lives in general.

I do not believe the government has treated this seriously enough and understood the greater significance to many people — many in the Greek community in particular but much more broadly than that. There are Indian people who have contacted me in my electorate of Southern Metropolitan Region, there are people of Chinese background and people from many different backgrounds who are impacted and who have put their life's work into the taxi industry and need to be respected in a suitable way. The failure of the Minister for Public Transport to meet with those

representatives in recent times is not sufficient, to be honest —

Mr Finn — She's a disgrace.

Mr DAVIS — Indeed, Mr Finn. But it is not sufficient for ministers to fob off these sorts of meetings to staff, even senior advisers, within their offices. What is required is for the Premier and particularly the transport minister to sit down with honest representatives of these sectors and understand the impact of the bill on those people very directly. It is a huge impact on their families, and it is a huge impact on their livelihoods. There are mental health issues, and indeed I have been told some very tragic stories in recent days.

What I seek is for that set of meetings to occur with a full range of representatives. This might take some time, and it might mean that the Premier and the transport minister have to deign to meet with ordinary Victorians, but the representatives of the taxi industry are very important ordinary Victorians that I have respect for, and I ask for respect for those people through that series of meetings.

Responses

Mr DALIDAKIS (Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade) — We had adjournment matters tonight from Ms Springle to Minister Richardson asking the minister to meet with the director of the Hazara women's network in relation to exploring future and further funding opportunities; from Mr Leane to the Minister for Public Transport asking the minister to instruct the Level Crossing Removal Authority to look at the use of DigiGlass at Heatherdale station; from Ms Wooldridge to the Minister for Health regarding a review of the transition of anaesthetic nurses in Bendigo Health; from Ms Patten to the Minister for Police regarding a review of the evidence used to underpin roadside drug testing; from Ms Shing to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change asking that local jobs in the feasibility study of the offshore wind project be included; from Ms Crozier to the Treasurer asking him to provide clarity around \$100 million of kindergarten funding for young girls; from Ms Dunn to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety regarding a reduction in changes to priority signalling for trams; from Mr Eideh to the Minister for Sport asking him to assist in promoting grants in his local community for kids in sport; from Ms Fitzherbert to the Minister for Police asking why it was necessary to have eight police deployed to tree removals; from Ms Bath to the Minister for Education asking the minister to come and speak to the principal about

funding of Latrobe Special Developmental School; from Ms Lovell to the Minister for Mental Health asking whether the minister can advise her of the location of the Hume drug rehabilitation centre; from Mr Ramsay to the Minister for Local Government requesting that the minister delegate the local government inspectorate to investigate Ararat Rural City Council's potential decision for the removal of the rate differential; from Mr Finn to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety asking that the minister instruct VicRoads to cancel their decision to cancel licence testing and roadworthies at that VicRoads site; and from Mr Davis to the Minister for Public Transport asking the minister to meet yet again with taxi and hire car owners.

I also have written responses to adjournment debate matters raised by Mr Barber, Ms Bath and Mr Finn on 9 May; Mr Elasmar on 10 May; Mr Davis on 11 May; and Mr Barber on 25 May.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Written responses

The PRESIDENT — Order! Just before I close can I bring to the notice of the house that I have received a letter from Minister Tierney, which I wish to convey to the house:

Regarding my written response to Mr O'Donohue's third question (substantive) without notice from 6 June 2017, my response included information that I understood to be correct at the time and which has since been updated.

The number of prisoners on terrorism-related offences is 17, with 11 of those unsentenced and six sentenced.

It was signed by the minister on 7 June.

With the completion of the adjournment debate, the house stands adjourned.

House adjourned 6.04 p.m.

Wednesday, 7 June 2017

JOINT SITTING OF PARLIAMENT

Legislative Council vacancy

**Honourable members of both houses met in
Assembly chamber at 6.17 p.m.**

The Clerk — Before proceeding with the business of this joint sitting it will be necessary to appoint a Chair. I call the Premier.

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — I move:

That the Honourable Colin Brooks, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, be appointed Chair of this joint sitting.

I can inform all honourable members that he is willing to accept the nomination.

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) — I second the motion.

The Clerk — Are there any further proposals? There being no further proposals, the Honourable Colin Brooks, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, will take the Chair.

Motion agreed to.

The CHAIR — I draw the attention of honourable members to the extracts from the Constitution Act 1975 which have been circulated. Please note that the various provisions require that the joint sitting be conducted in accordance with rules adopted for the purpose by members present at the sitting. The first procedure, therefore, will be the adoption of rules.

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — Chair, I desire to submit rules of procedure, which are in the hands of honourable members, and I accordingly move:

That these rules be the rules of procedure for this joint sitting.

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) — I second the motion.

Motion agreed to.

The CHAIR — The rules having been adopted, I now invite proposals from members for a person to occupy the vacant seat in the Legislative Council.

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — Chair, it gives me great pleasure to propose:

That Mr Mark Gepp be chosen to occupy the vacant seat in the Legislative Council.

He is willing to accept the appointment if chosen. In order to satisfy the joint sitting as to the requirements of section 27A(4) of the Constitution Act 1975, I also advise that Mr Gepp is the selection of the Victorian branch of the Australian Labor Party, the party previously represented in the Legislative Council by Mr Steven Herbert.

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) — I second the proposal.

The CHAIR — Are there any further proposals? As there are no further nominations, I declare that nominations are closed.

Motion agreed to.

The CHAIR — I declare that Mr Mark Gepp has been chosen to occupy the vacant seat in the Legislative Council. I will advise the Governor accordingly.

I now declare the joint sitting closed.

Proceedings terminated 6.21 p.m.