

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
FIFTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION**

Thursday, 10 May 2018

(Extract from book 6)

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By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

The Governor

The Honourable LINDA DESSAU, AC

The Lieutenant-Governor

The Honourable KEN LAY, AO, APM

The ministry

(from 16 October 2017)

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Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Minister for Emergency Services	The Hon. J. A. Merlino, MP
Treasurer and Minister for Resources.....	The Hon. T. H. Pallas, MP
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Minister for Families and Children, Minister for Early Childhood Education and Minister for Youth Affairs	The Hon. J. Mikakos, MLC
Minister for Police and Minister for Water	The Hon. L. M. Neville, MP
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Minister for Agriculture and Minister for Regional Development.....	The Hon. J. L. Pulford, MLC
Minister for Finance and Minister for Multicultural Affairs	The Hon. R. D. Scott, MP
Minister for Training and Skills, and Minister for Corrections.....	The Hon. G. A. Tierney, MLC
Minister for Planning	The Hon. R. W. Wynne, MP
Cabinet Secretary.....	Ms M. Thomas, MP

Legislative Council committees

Privileges Committee — Mr Dalidakis, Mr Mulino, Mr O’ Sullivan, Mr Purcell, Mr Rich-Phillips, Ms Springle, Ms Symes and Ms Wooldridge.

Procedure Committee — The President, Dr Carling-Jenkins, Mr Davis, Mr Jennings, Ms Pennicuik, Ms Pulford, Ms Tierney and Ms Wooldridge.

Legislative Council standing committees

Standing Committee on the Economy and Infrastructure — Mr Bourman, #Mr Davis, Ms Dunn, Mr Eideh, Mr Finn, Mr Gepp, Mr Leane, #Mr Melhem, Mr Ondarchie, Mr O’ Sullivan and #Mr Rich-Phillips.

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

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

participating members

Legislative Council select committees

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

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

Joint committees

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee — (*Council*): Ms Patten, Ms Pennicuik and Ms Shing. (*Assembly*): Mr Dimopoulos, Mr Morris, Mr D. O’ Brien, Mr Pearson, Mr T. Smith and Ms Ward.

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

Heads of parliamentary departments

Assembly — Acting Clerk of the Legislative Assembly: Ms Bridget Noonan

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

Parliamentary Services — Secretary: Mr P. Lochert

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

President:

The Hon. B. N. ATKINSON

Deputy President:

Mr K. EIDEH

Acting Presidents:

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The Hon. G. JENNINGS

Deputy Leader of the Government:

The Hon. J. L. PULFORD

Leader of the Opposition:

The Hon. M. WOOLDRIDGE

Deputy Leader of the Opposition:

The Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS

Leader of The Nationals:

Mr L. B. O'SULLIVAN

Leader of the Greens:

Dr S. RATNAM

Member	Region	Party	Member	Region	Party
Atkinson, Mr Bruce Norman	Eastern Metropolitan	LP	Mikakos, Ms Jenny	Northern Metropolitan	ALP
Barber, Mr Gregory John ¹	Northern Metropolitan	Greens	Morris, Mr Joshua	Western Victoria	LP
Bath, Ms Melina ²	Eastern Victoria	Nats	Mulino, Mr Daniel	Eastern Victoria	ALP
Bourman, Mr Jeffrey	Eastern Victoria	SFFP	O'Brien, Mr Daniel David ⁸	Eastern Victoria	Nats
Carling-Jenkins, Dr Rachel ³	Western Metropolitan	AC	O'Donohue, Mr Edward John	Eastern Victoria	LP
Crozier, Ms Georgina Mary	South Eastern Metropolitan	LP	Ondarchie, Mr Craig Philip	Northern Metropolitan	LP
Dalidakis, Mr Philip	South Eastern Metropolitan	ALP	O'Sullivan, Luke Bartholomew ⁹	Northern Victoria	Nats
Dalla-Riva, Mr Richard Alex Gordon	Eastern Metropolitan	LP	Patten, Ms Fiona ¹⁰	Northern Metropolitan	RV
Davis, Mr David McLean	South Eastern Metropolitan	LP	Pennicuik, Ms Susan Margaret	South Eastern Metropolitan	Greens
Drum, Mr Damian Kevin ⁴	Northern Victoria	Nats	Peulich, Mrs Inga	South Eastern Metropolitan	LP
Dunn, Ms Samantha	Eastern Metropolitan	Greens	Pulford, Ms Jaala Lee	Western Victoria	ALP
Eideh, Mr Khalil M.	Western Metropolitan	ALP	Purcell, Mr James	Western Victoria	VILJ
Elasmarr, Mr Nazih	Northern Metropolitan	ALP	Ramsay, Mr Simon	Western Victoria	LP
Finn, Mr Bernard Thomas C.	Western Metropolitan	LP	Ratnam, Dr Samantha Shantini ¹¹	Northern Metropolitan	Greens
Fitzherbert, Ms Margaret	South Eastern Metropolitan	LP	Rich-Phillips, Mr Gordon Kenneth	South Eastern Metropolitan	LP
Gepp, Mr Mark ⁵	Northern Victoria	ALP	Shing, Ms Harriet	Eastern Victoria	ALP
Hartland, Ms Colleen Mildred ⁶	Western Metropolitan	Greens	Somyurek, Mr Adem	South Eastern Metropolitan	ALP
Herbert, Mr Steven Ralph ⁷	Northern Victoria	ALP	Springle, Ms Nina	South Eastern Metropolitan	Greens
Jennings, Mr Gavin Wayne	South Eastern Metropolitan	ALP	Symes, Ms Jaclyn	Northern Victoria	ALP
Leane, Mr Shaun Leo	Eastern Metropolitan	ALP	Tierney, Ms Gayle Anne	Western Victoria	ALP
Lovell, Ms Wendy Ann	Northern Victoria	LP	Tuong, Ms Huong ¹²	Western Metropolitan	Greens
Melhem, Mr Cesar	Western Metropolitan	ALP	Wooldridge, Ms Mary Louise Newling	Eastern Metropolitan	LP
			Young, Mr Daniel	Northern Victoria	SFFP

¹ Resigned 28 September 2017

² Appointed 15 April 2015

³ DLP until 26 June 2017

⁴ Resigned 27 May 2016

⁵ Appointed 7 June 2017

⁶ Resigned 6 April 2017

⁷ Resigned 9 February 2018

⁸ Resigned 25 February 2015

⁹ Appointed 12 October 2016

¹⁰ ASP until 16 January 2018

¹¹ Appointed 18 October 2017

¹² Appointed 21 February 2018

PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

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

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Thursday, 10 May 2018

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

PAPERS

Laid on table by Clerk:

Auditor-General's Reports on —

Assessing Benefits from the Regional Rail Link Project, May 2018 (*Ordered to be published*).

Maintaining the Mental Health of Child Protection Practitioners, May 2018 (*Ordered to be published*).

Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor Act 2016 — Report of the Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor: As at 1 November 2017 (*Ordered to be published*).

Statutory Rules under the following Acts of Parliament —

Estate Agents Act 1980 — Nos. 48 and 49.

Wildlife Act 1975 — No. 50.

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 — Documents under section 15 in respect of Statutory Rule No. 50.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS

Mobile black spot program

Mr DALIDAKIS (Minister for Trade and Investment) (09:38) — I rise to announce to the chamber that the Victorian government will go it alone with round four of the mobile black spot program. The federal government has abandoned regional Victoria with round four but the Victorian government continues to ensure that round four does occur. What we have seen with the mobile black spot program — a program that we welcomed from the federal government in rounds one and two and a program that we co-funded with the federal government in rounds one and two — is that we had to go it alone in round three because there was a lack of transparency around the sites that the federal government proposed. As a result country Victorians actually benefited because they got money from the federal government's program and they also got \$11 million from our program in round three, so they got double for their money. For round four, in our budget last week we announced \$11 million for the program to continue.

We had hoped to co-fund that with the federal government, but in lieu of the fact that the federal government has decided not to fund a round four I want to reaffirm to all Victorians right across rural and regional Victoria that the Andrews Labor government

will not abandon them. We will not abandon communities that need mobile reception in areas of safety and concern and also areas of economic development. I can tell you, President, that we are very proud to continue with that funding.

Minister Pulford and I remain committed to ensuring that rural and regional Victorians have the reception they need for the safety that they want and for the businesses they want to undertake. We will continue to roll this program out to many communities, and of course this will be proudly done by Commissioner Lapsley to ensure that communities can have confidence that the sites that are selected are selected firstly for safety and safety of the community and secondly for economic need. The Andrews Labor government remains very proudly connected to this program and will continue to roll it out.

Kindergarten funding

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Early Childhood Education) (09:40) — I rise to inform the house on how the Andrews Labor government is giving Victorian children the best start in life and leading the nation with innovative programs. This year's budget delivers a \$135.9 million boost to early childhood education, including the single largest state investment ever in the kindergarten infrastructure Victoria needs, with a record \$42.9 million boost to build, upgrade and equip kindergartens right across the state. This brings our total investment in kindergarten infrastructure since coming to government to \$123.6 million — more than tripling what those opposite put in their budgets.

We are changing the way we fund kindergartens, with a \$58.1 million commitment that makes sure children who need more support get it. From next year 25 local government areas will start to roll out the school readiness funding, a new and permanent part of the Victorian kindergarten system that will represent a 10 per cent increase in total funding when fully rolled out. I am pleased to say that this year's budget has provided additional school readiness funding.

We have a plan to help children prepare for an increasingly connected world, with a \$17.9 million program to deliver language classes in up to 120 kinders across the state, with another 10 moving to a bilingual model, and we are continuing to build a highly skilled early childhood teaching workforce with \$8 million in scholarships to attract new teachers and support educators who wish to upskill to a teaching qualification. Free or low-cost three-year-old kindergarten will continue, with \$4 million for children who are known to child protection and Aboriginal and

Torres Strait Islander children. This will also see the expansion of the Lookout model to include kindergartens for the first time. Tailored Aboriginal maternal and child health services will also continue, with opportunities for Aboriginal maternal and child health nurses to undertake further studies in midwifery. We are also continuing to ensure that children with additional needs who are ineligible for the national disability insurance scheme do not miss out on early childhood intervention services.

I am proud of the investment that our government is making in supporting our littlest Victorians, but I was very disappointed to see this week that the Turnbull government's budget provides no funding for four-year-old kindergarten beyond 2019. They also have walked away entirely from the joint commitment to quality by ripping away funding to Victoria to regulate what is largely their federally funded child-care sector.

Youth program funding

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Youth Affairs) (09:43) — I rise to update the house on the continued investment that the Andrews Labor government is making to support and engage young people in Victoria. Our government believes that every young person should have the opportunities and support that they need to reach their full potential. We recognise that many young people face disadvantage and have a range of diverse needs.

This is why I am proud that the Andrews Labor government is providing a further \$2 million over four years to expand the Empower Youth program in this year's state budget. This will enable more young people to achieve their goals by providing them with pathways to employment, education, training and community engagement. This funding boost will allow more organisations to support disengaged young people, particularly in areas with high levels of socio-economic disadvantage and crime, through dedicated youth workers and connections with community mentors.

We have also allocated \$5.2 million as part of a whole-of-government initiative targeting youth offending to put in place a number of early intervention programs, including the establishment and operation of three community support groups which will use a community-led approach to engage young people and their families and respond to local issues associated with youth disengagement. There are over a million young people under the age of 24 in Victoria who are contributing positively to our state every day, and we are absolutely committed to continuing to support

young people and youth agencies across Victoria, recognising that young people are the future of our state.

I do express my great disappointment that there is no federal Minister for Youth Affairs. This is why we have seen in the federal Turnbull government budget only cuts to activities involving young people — cuts to TAFE that will impact on young people, the scrapping of National Youth Week, cuts to the Australian Youth Affairs Coalition and nothing to invest in the young people of our future.

Child protection

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) (09:45) — I rise to inform the house about what the Andrews Labor government is doing to keep vulnerable Victorian children safe. There is nothing more important than protecting our kids, and that is why we are making the biggest ever investment in our child and family services system to ensure that children are kept safe and vulnerable families receive the support that they need. The Andrews Labor government will invest an unprecedented \$858 million in the Victorian budget this year to continue the transformation of Victoria's children and family services system through the *Roadmap for Reform*, moving it from crisis response to prevention and early intervention.

The budget includes \$225.5 million to employ more than 450 child protection workers, the largest ever expansion of the workforce. As a result the workforce has already grown by 36.4 per cent since November 2014. There is a continued focus on placing children who need to go into out-of-home care with a loving family, with \$390.7 million for more home-based care placements and support for carers, including a new kinship-care model and Australian first reforms such as professionalised foster care. Additional targeted care packages to transition children out of residential care programs to keep siblings together and help young people leaving care are also funded.

Parents, especially those with young kids, will get the extra help they need much earlier with a \$101.7 million investment in family services and other early intervention programs, including Child First. A \$47.3 million investment will go towards supporting Aboriginal families and children, including cultural planning and the Australian-first Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care program, which enables Aboriginal community-controlled organisations to take on legal guardianship of Aboriginal children in care. A \$49.9 million boost will fund more therapeutic

counselling for victim survivors of family violence and provide women and children with more flexible support packages for relocation costs, furniture, clothing or security measures.

Victim survivors of sexual assault will also get more access to counselling support, and more adolescent family violence programs will also be established. The recently passed child information sharing legislation is supported by \$43.4 million across government to ensure staff can be trained in how best to share information to promote the wellbeing and safety of children.

The Andrews Labor government will not ignore the needs of vulnerable children and families in Victoria, and we will continue to innovate and invest to address the disadvantage that they suffer and most importantly to ensure that all Victorian children can be safe.

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

Australian Labor Party

Ms WOOLDRIDGE (Eastern Metropolitan) (09:47) — The roting of taxpayers funds by this Labor government to campaign for the now member for Eltham in the other place in the lead-up to the election was an absolute disgrace. The Ombudsman's report on the ALP's misuse of their staff budget entitlements found the Labor campaign to elect the member for Eltham rorted \$21 148 from taxpayers. Vicki Ward, now the member for Eltham, had the added ignominy of having her photo with seven red shirts featured in the Ombudsman's report. The defeated member for Eastern Metropolitan Region, Brian Tee, signed employment records for 70 days of casual electorate officer fieldwork for Ms Clare Keyes-Liley during 2014. Her assigned district was Eltham.

An article by Rick Wallace from the *Australian* on 1 December 2014 described how he was taken behind the scenes to visit campaign operations in Eltham shortly before the election. It describes Ms Keyes-Liley as an organiser who had put together a network and made 10 000 calls to voters in a successful defence of the marginal seat in Eltham. In fact even the meditation classes next door were disturbed by the volume. What is very clear is that the member for Eltham's campaign was completely tainted by the smear of Labor's roting of taxpayers dollars in order to get her elected to Parliament. This is an absolute disgrace and one that the Labor Party continues to deny responsibility for.

Anzac Day

Ms TIERNEY (Minister for Training and Skills) (09:49) — Anzac Day this year had a special focus on the centenary of the Battle of Villers-Bretonneux, which is of particular significance for Australians. In April 1918 in a battle to reclaim lost ground on the Western Front in France there were over 2400 casualties out of 3900 Australians who fought, 9500 British casualties and 10 000 German casualties in a defining Allied victory and a turning point. The Great War remains one of the world's worst. It retains all of the appalling records for casualties. Australia's memorial at Villers-Bretonneux is especially important. It records the names of nearly 10 000 Australians, mostly young, who died somewhere in France but who have no known grave — that is, they are missing, their bodies not recovered or unidentifiable. They were buried in a mass grave.

At the two services I attended — Geelong RSL's pre-dawn service in Geelong, and Portarlington/St Leonards RSL morning service at Portarlington — the involvement of ordinary citizens in major world events was very much the theme. Both were very quiet, sedate and respectful events. Some wore medals and hats of relatives long gone, and some were veterans themselves of much more recent conflicts. I would like to make particular mention of Lieutenant Colonel Neil Grimes at the Portarlington service and Captain Darren Stendt at the Geelong service for their moving contributions. Their speeches were informative, inspirational and a timely reminder of those that give a true meaning of service to country.

I take this opportunity to thank and congratulate all RSLs on organising all the many and varied services throughout Victoria on Anzac Day in 2018.

Koroit Irish Festival

Mr PURCELL (Westem Victoria) (09:51) — It gives me great pleasure to rise today to congratulate the organisers of the Koroit Irish Festival after another hugely successful weekend of fine music, spud-peeling races, Gaelic football and a great deal of old-fashioned Irish craic. For those who do not know what craic is, and I am sure most members do, it is actually gossip, fun, entertainment and enjoyable conversation.

For the past 11 years this festival has grown to be one of the major highlights of our local area. The organisers have adapted and changed this program to be now one of the smoothest and enjoyable in the local area, and it enjoys a number of international visitors and acts. It was my pleasure to be a part of the first-ever meeting of

the Irish festival committee. I would like to congratulate a number of those who were on the original committee, including Des Walsh, Maurice Molan and Des Noonan. I am currently looking forward to next year's festival and would suggest to any members who are in the area at the weekend prior to the May races that it is a great way to spend a weekend.

Western Port Highway

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS (South Eastern Metropolitan) (09:52) — The latest budget demonstrates that the Andrews government has no interest in fixing congestion on Western Port Highway. Residents of Carrum Downs, Skye and Cranbourne all deserve better than they are getting under Labor. Only a Liberal government is committed to addressing congestion and building new flyovers on Western Port Highway at the intersections of Thompsons Road and Hall Road. They will eliminate the bottlenecks and get traffic moving, something Labor has failed to do. Only a future Liberal government will get traffic moving on Western Port Highway for the residents of the south-east.

Frankston railway station car parking

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Public Transport and the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. It relates to the failure of the Andrews government to provide any funding or to have any plans to address the issue of car parking around Frankston railway station. We have seen over the last four budgets of the Andrews government a complete failure by this government to allocate any funds which would address the very desperate need for public car parking around the station. This is a very important issue for the residents of Frankston. It is one that the local Labor member has failed to address. It is one that the Labor government and Daniel Andrews have failed to address. I ask the Minister for Public Transport and the Minister for Roads and Road Safety when they will provide the much-needed funding for public car parking at Frankston.

National Vietnam Veterans Museum

Ms SHING (Eastern Victoria) (09:53) — I rise today to congratulate the National Vietnam Veterans Museum on the opening of a really wonderful exhibition, the Denis Gibbons gallery and exhibition, which commemorates the photography of this veteran of many conflicts of war with his photographs, a number of which are in the Phillip Island location as well as being in the Australian War Memorial. It was

really wonderful to open this exhibition and to be joined by Denis's family, Patricia and Shaun, and also to speak about the anniversary of the Battle of Coral-Balmoral. These were significant conflicts which saw numerous casualties and fatalities on the Australian and New Zealand front as well as upwards of 260 Vietnamese fatalities, but no doubt many, many more. Congratulations to everyone involved, specifically the volunteers who put so much time and effort into this particular facility.

TAFE funding

Ms SHING — It was really wonderful to be able to celebrate the work being offered for TAFE improvements and the provision of courses and facilities throughout Gippsland. Not only has this budget delivered 33 courses and 18 preapprenticeship traineeships which will be available free for school students to combine classroom learning and practical learning, but we have also got a total of \$10 million announced by Minister Tierney to be able to assist with practical in-industry training. This will lift the standard and make sure we have got jobs flowing from real, meaningful and quality accredited courses.

ABC Elsternwick site

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan) (09:55) — In November last year the famous ABC TV studios in Gordon Street, Elsternwick, officially closed. What is to become of the iconic studios where shows such as *Countdown*, *Adventure Island*, *Bellbird*, *Kath and Kim*, the *Late Show*, *SeaChange*, *Spicks and Specks*, *Shaun Micallef's Mad as Hell*, the *Big Gig* and *In Gordon Street Tonight* were filmed has been the subject of much debate for at least the past five years or since the ABC started to move TV production to Southbank. I have had discussions with the ABC, the National Trust of Australia and Glen Eira City Council about the preservation of the building and the surrounding land for community, arts and cultural purposes since that time.

On Tuesday, 24 April, the *Caulfield Glen Eira Leader* reported that the countdown is on to save the site. Daryl Braithwaite, Brian Nankervis, Joe Stanley, David Hobson and many others are behind the campaign to save the site for the community. Glen Eira city councillor Mary Delahunty has set up an online petition. In June 2003 Cr Delahunty and former Greens councillor and mayor of Glen Eira Neil Pilling moved a motion that a report be prepared on the future of the ABC site. In 1954, 8000 square metres of the Rippon Lea estate next door were sold to the ABC. The National Trust wants that part of the site returned.

The Elsternwick studios were opened 60 years ago, in May 1958. The studios and the iconic transmission tower are not only a local landmark and an integral part of the community but also a precious part of the cultural history of Australia and should be preserved for posterity and not sold off for profit. The ABC site should be returned to the community for community uses.

Youth violence prevention

Ms FITZHERBERT (Southern Metropolitan) (09:57) — Late last night the *Herald Sun* posted some enormously distressing footage of a young man named Quinn Lahiff-Jenkins, who was the victim of an assault that can only be described as brutal and vicious. I realise this matter is still under investigation and due process needs to be followed, but I want to place on record that what this footage shows is nothing short of disgraceful and enormously upsetting. The *Herald Sun* has this description:

The attacker lands multiple blows to Quinn's head while another youth whacks his legs with a metal spanner. Once he regains his footing, a boy grabs him to the head and knees him in the head before taking him to the ground again.

...

The footage shows how Quinn is then cornered between two boys armed with spanners, who attack him from front and behind before chasing him toward traffic where he is held down and kicked to the head by three boys.

As I said, it is distressing to watch and utterly abhorrent. What makes it even worse is that the young man who was on the receiving end of this brutal treatment experiences autism and is vulnerable, so to be set upon in this way is simply appalling. With the benefit of this horrible footage I hope that these thugs receive a fitting penalty, but it is also a reminder to all of us about the challenges and fears that families who have a loved one who is on the autism spectrum or has a related condition face every day. It is incumbent on all of us in this place to work together to ensure that these sorts of dreadful situations do not occur.

Frankston rail line extension

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) (09:58) — I want to congratulate the federal government this morning for allocating \$225 million to extend the metropolitan train line from Frankston to Baxter. This money will be a very important part of seeing this long-term aspiration achieved and an important part of revitalising the Frankston CBD. It also gives Monash University's Peninsula campus, Frankston Hospital and places such as Karingal and Langwarrin, which now

only have access to the diesel services on the Stony Point line, access to the electrified metropolitan network.

It will be a fantastic win not just for Frankston and those areas I have mentioned but also for the entire Mornington Peninsula. There are many residents of the Mornington Peninsula who commute to Frankston every day to then get on the train. Being able to get on the train at an earlier point rather than having to drive to Frankston will be a win for them. I congratulate particularly the federal member for Dunkley, Chris Crewther, and the federal Minister for Health, Greg Hunt, for their advocacy in seeing this achieved in the federal budget. I would also like to acknowledge Michael Lam's advocacy in that important issue as well.

Cardinia Road railway station safety

Mr O'DONOHUE — Victorians were shocked to see the footage in Pakenham of assaults that have taken place in recent days and weeks in and around the Cardinia Road railway station, and I call on the Minister for Police, Lisa Neville, to work with Victoria Police to address this lawlessness that has been seen.

North-east link

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) (10:00) — I was pleased to attend a couple of the information sessions in the east of Melbourne regarding the north-east link project. There was a lot of interest in the project. Something that I think people were pleased with that has not been highlighted enough is the creation of a dedicated bus lane that will be travelling down the Eastern Freeway from the Doncaster park-and-ride. This will greatly improve that particular bus service, which I think is quite a good service as it is now compared to using your own vehicle. I particularly enjoyed the session at the Veneto Club. It is a great venue. President, if you ever go there I would suggest you have the spaghetti in the bag with the seafood. It was fantastic. We look forward to more community information sessions about the north-east link project. It will provide the much-needed missing link for the ring-road around Melbourne. We look forward to continuing to work with the community to fulfil their aspirations.

Flemington & Kensington Community Legal Centre

Ms TRUONG (Western Metropolitan) (10:02) — I rise to speak about a powerful community event that was held on the lands of Wurundjeri of the Kulin nation

at Kensington town hall on 28 April 2018. The event sought to elevate unheard voices and create a new direction within communities impacted by racialised reporting and criminalisation of ethnic minorities in Victoria. If you ever wanted an example of how you empower, rather than consult, communities from diverse backgrounds, this was it. I felt very at home in the hall with First Nations people, people who had various experiences of arriving in Australia, Muslim and African-Australian women and folks from the union movement, legal advocacy and social work sectors.

As we listened to the harrowing, firsthand experiences of these young people, I watched my kids and the children of the other activist parents in the room flock to each other with no hesitation. I reflected on how necessary it is now to demand that our mainstream media hear and tell these stories and for our police to approach this with an open heart and the courage to commit to changing their practice. I want to congratulate the organisers from the Flemington & Kensington Community Legal Centre, especially Deng Maleek and their peer advocacy team, for an incredibly successful event. With their policeaccountability.org.au project, backed by a local and significant body of research and reflection on recent cases of racial profiling by Victoria Police, we are on our way to redressing systemic failings in police practice and building resilience and solidarity within and between our communities.

Warrnambool Racing Club

Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria) (10:03) — I would like to congratulate the Warrnambool Racing Club on yet another very successful racing carnival. In fact it is regarded as one of the best racing carnivals in Australia. Over 20 000 people attended the three-day event, and it culminated in about \$14 million going into the local economy, so it was very successful. I thank chairman Nick Rule for hosting me and the Assembly member for South-West Coast, Roma Britnell, when we attended both the steeplechase and the Warrnambool Cup. I might add I had wins in both.

Ms Pennicuik interjected.

Mr RAMSAY — So, Ms Pennicuik, it was a very successful day. Congratulations to the committee and everyone involved in a very successful racing carnival —

Ms Pennicuik interjected.

Mr RAMSAY — with no animals hurt, I might say, Ms Pennicuik. It was a very successful steeplechase of 5500 metres, with over 33 obstacles — the biggest and largest steeplechase in the world.

Mountain to Mouth

Mr RAMSAY — I would also like to acknowledge the fine work of artistic director Margie Mackay, who helped with the 80-kilometre creative art walk Mountain to Mouth, which was supported by the City of Greater Geelong. I was very pleased to be able to be at the You Yangs on Friday morning with Brian Powell, who did the welcoming ceremony, because it was a large part of the history of the Wathaurong community, to start the walk from the top of the You Yangs right down to Barwon Heads. A canoe was constructed and walked down through all the towns along the Bellarine, and it came to a resting place in Barwon Heads where the canoe was actually burnt at the mouth of the river. It was a very historic, ceremonious and significant creative art walk that I really enjoyed, and I congratulate Kaz Paton and others who helped put it together.

Anzac Day

Mr ELASMAR (Northern Metropolitan) (10:05) — On 22 April I attended a meeting of the Turkish sub-branch of the Victorian RSL, who held a commemorative ceremony to mark the 103rd anniversary of Anzac Day and the First World War, 1915. Many brave men died on both sides at Gallipoli. The evening recognised the ultimate sacrifice that was paid by Turkish and Australian soldiers. Lest we forget.

Electorate office relocation

Mr ELASMAR — Recently my staff and I were relocated to Bell Street, Preston. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the parliamentary security and electorate properties team for their expert and friendly approach to the task at hand. They say moving house is the second most stressful situation in a person's life. Well, let me tell you, my colleagues, moving your office after 11 years has to come a close third, but this electorate office move was achieved professionally and efficiently. I thank my own staff too and everybody who worked hard together to ensure a smooth transition to the new office.

Sir John Monash

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) (10:06) — I want to make some comments today about the centenary of Australia's involvement in the Great War in 1918. Victoria and Australia played a unique and very significant part in the last year of that war. It had been a long war and had had a huge impact on the men, the communities and indeed the countries that were involved.

Australians, particularly through the April to October period, played a very significant role. Sir John Monash, as our general, brought together the five parts of the Australian Imperial Force, and working with New Zealanders, British soldiers, others from the commonwealth and the French as well, and later the Americans, they played a very significant role in turning the tide of the war. They first played a significant role in rebutting the Michael offensive that was launched by the Germans and particularly the fighting in and around the village of Villers-Bretonneux. I recently had the opportunity to look at many of those battlefields and can say with great sorrow that the impact on so many Australian soldiers was extreme, but their bravery and heroism are things of which we can be very proud.

Sir John Monash later in that period led the Australians in a series of battles, in Le Hamel and beyond, to crush through the Hindenburg line. Perhaps this is the moment of greatest significance for Victoria and Australia in world history, as we led forward and worked with our allies. I pay tribute to Sir John Monash and recognise the knighting of him by King George on the battlefield as a recognition of all of our troops.

Shiny Dynamic Uniform Solutions

Mr ONDARCHIE (Northern Metropolitan) (10:08) — On Thursday, 3 May, I had the pleasure of visiting and touring a wonderful business in Northern Metropolitan Region, Shiny Dynamic Uniform Solutions. I congratulate Peter Wu and his team for his organisation. It is a family-owned business that has been successfully operating a high-volume garment, embroidery and decorating business around Australia for over 30 years. They began as a small embroidery decorator company in Abbotsford, with a second-hand computerised machine and three staff. With a passion for doing the very best, and with their motto of 'God is our guide', they grew and grew and eventually moved to a new premises in Collingwood. They outgrew their Collingwood site and ended up moving to their current home in Fairfield in 2003.

They have grown over the years, and today they have a facility which covers over 20 000 square metres and employs more than 100 staff in a wonderful multicultural community within that business. They have over 70 computerised machines, four printing machines and over 4500 distributors right across Australia. They are very much aware of their social responsibilities and are a long-term contributor to the Victoria Police Blue Ribbon Foundation.

With the closure of Ford they have employed 14 former Ford workers under Melbourne's North Innovation and Investment Fund, which was started by the Napthine government. Despite their growing energy costs, they are a very successful business, and I take this opportunity to congratulate Peter Wu and his team on their very successful business. May God bless them.

PRIMARY INDUSTRIES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2017

Second reading

Debate resumed from 14 December 2017; motion of Mr JENNINGS (Special Minister of State).

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) (10:11) — I am pleased to rise and make a contribution to the Primary Industries Legislation Amendment Bill 2017. This is an omnibus bill that makes amendments to a wide variety of current acts of Parliament that regulate agriculture, fisheries, meat processing, fresh food markets and hunting industries. The list of acts that are amended by this omnibus bill include the Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994, the Dairy Act 2000, the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981, the Fisheries Act 1995, the Game Management Authority Act 2014, in several respects the Livestock Disease Control Act 1994, the Melbourne Market Authority Act 1977, the Meat Industry Act 1993, the Plant Biosecurity Act 2010, the Veterinary Practice Act 1997 and the Wildlife Act 1975.

I should begin by paying tribute to my colleague in the other place Peter Walsh, who has done extensive consultation and of course comes to this bill as a former Minister for Agriculture and Food Security and with a deep understanding of that portfolio. There has been significant feedback provided to the coalition through those processes and I want to step through some of the various impacts. I make the point at the start that the coalition will not be opposing this bill. I make the point also that I am aware that the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party — and I hope I am not presaging anything but I think they have informed people relatively broadly — intend to bring forward a motion

to widen the bill's scope and enable consideration of amendments that relate to game management, and I will come to those amendments in due course in the committee stage. I indicate that the opposition will certainly support the attempt by the Shooters and Fishers to widen the scope of the bill to enable their various amendments to be tested in the committee stage.

Can I begin also by saying that these sorts of omnibus bills come to the Parliament from time to time, bringing together a grab bag of different amendments that apply in small measure to some acts and in larger measures to others but have a range of different impacts. The Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994 is a piece of legislation that this bill seeks to amend. The government is making changes to enable it to recover costs during the sentencing phase of criminal proceedings around offences for non-compliance. This is principally as it relates to pests, plants and animals, and that is an issue that the rural communities have been concerned about for a number of years. You can have a very active set of land management groups that are working collaboratively in the area and one or two landowners who are not doing the right collaborative thing in that area. There may well be prosecutions, but the impact of this non-compliance goes quite wide, and there is nothing wrong with recovering costs during the sentencing phase of criminal proceedings. To that extent the coalition is supportive of the steps that the government is taking.

The second piece of legislation that is amended is the Dairy Act. The bill brings into operation Dairy Food Safety Victoria as the regulator with respect to camel milk. People occasionally say that legislation is designed by committees and that a camel is an animal designed by a committee. This change actually has wide support. The camel milk industry is currently regulated through the Food Act 1984 and is largely the responsibility, in this instance, of local councils. The truth of the matter is that largely local councils are not expert or especially well-informed in the management and the guaranteeing of quality in camel milk production, so the logic here is reasonable. The government is saying that the dairy regulator, which obviously has expertise in this area, is able to regulate camel milk production as well as other milk production. Right across the world camel milk is a significant source of protein and nutrition, and there is no reason why it ought not play a greater role in our economy here and in our exports. Having a high quality of regulation makes entirely reasonable sense, so we certainly have no difficulty with that aspect of it.

I have read closely the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee (SARC) report, which looks closely at the limitation of rights, because the Dairy Act gives very significant powers of entry and search and necessarily tramples on individual rights as outlined by SARC in its report. But SARC, I think neatly, makes the point that the existing regulations under the Food Act have similar provisions, so in a sense it does not change the position with respect to individual rights. I take SARC's point closely on that matter. Not everyone reads the SARC reports, but I actually do.

Mr Dalidakis — I am not sure that is such a great thing.

Mr DAVIS — You are not sure?

Mr Dalidakis — It takes time away from your family.

Mr DAVIS — Well, I think it is part of our role, Mr Dalidakis. I do not diminish the role of SARC. I remember the setting up of SARC and the important role that that committee has played as a watchdog on individual rights and privileges. Recently in this chamber I have actually been critical of SARC. I do not think SARC has been vociferous enough in its watchdog role —

Mr Dalla-Riva interjected.

Mr DAVIS — Indeed. Let me loose and you will get some further contribution.

Mr Dalidakis — I think it is important that his family know why he prefers to spend time reading SARC reports than spending it with them.

Mr DAVIS — It is a cure for insomnia. Nonetheless it is a very important role. My criticism of SARC is that I do not think it sufficiently reads its role with respect to the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities. I think it has actually been tardy and weak in recent times in its focus on, for example, property rights. I think it has been too glib and weak in its skating over what has been significant trampling of property rights in a number of significant areas in recent times, most notably with respect to taxis. I make the point here with respect to SARC that it did not raise sufficient concern about the removal of long-established property rights and it did not grapple with the fact that the High Court has ruled that taxi licences are in fact a property right. I would have thought that was something of great concern to SARC, but it did not do that in a sufficient way.

I know that correspondence went to SARC but I saw no reflection of that correspondence to an adequate level in the SARC reports, either to agree, to rebut or to engage with the arguments that were presented to SARC. I think for SARC — the watchdog on human rights, the watchdog on individual rights and liberties, the watchdog on the property rights of the citizens of Victoria — to not engage heavily on a foundational bill that stripped rights from thousands of longstanding property owners and crushed their property rights without proper compensation, for it to be basically silent on the matter, is an absolute travesty. SARC can take that as a criticism because it is a very sharp criticism of their failure to actually engage in their long-term role of guaranteeing the rights and liberties of Victorians.

Mr Dalla-Riva — I'll pass it on to the chair.

Mr DAVIS — The deputy chair of the committee might take closer note. My point is that SARC actually does have a very significant role in respect of this —

Mr Dalidakis — I think he's doing a fine job.

Mr DAVIS — Pardon?

Mr Dalidakis — I think the deputy chair is doing a fine job with SARC.

Mr DAVIS — I am sure he is attempting to do that. I should say that in the case of SARC we were very lucky to have some extremely high quality staff for many decades who were able to lead members on the finest legal points and focus on protecting rights. I am not going to name people, but I do note that sometimes it is very hard to replace people —

Mr Dalla-Riva — Andrew.

Mr DAVIS — Andrew indeed. Sometimes it is very hard to replace people with others who have the same depth and knowledge. I am not seeking to diminish the work of others, but I do want to point out the fine contribution that was made by Andrew Homer and others for a very significant period.

The Game Management Authority Act 2014 is another act amended by this bill. It makes a couple of changes. The first one deals with the proposed new principles that the authority must have regard to when exercising its powers. There was an issue that was explored deeply, my colleague in the lower house said, when the previous Liberal-Nationals government was in power. There was an economic study done. Again, I pay tribute to the work of Peter Walsh in recognising the economic significance of the hunting industry. The report that he

did in 2013 looked closely at what the hunting industry meant for Victoria and found it had value of \$417 million for the Victorian economy. That is a very important contribution, with 40 per cent from metropolitan local government areas and 60 per cent from regional districts. There are thousands of full-time jobs directly related to the hunting industry and it has significance in a number of important rural shires like Mansfield, Murrindindi and so forth. I think it is important to put on the record the significance of the hunting industry to Victoria.

We should not think of hunters, as some do, as a group on the fringe but as a large group of people who contribute to the economy. They also do good pest management in many cases, but obviously they have to be appropriately regulated. They should not be thought of in a negative way. My colleague made the point at length about their education backgrounds being very different from what people might imagine. The breadth of community representation in this group of hunters is also significantly different from what people might think. It is a much broader perspective of the community.

Then there is the issue with the Game Management Authority. I know the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party have their recommendations. They sought to bring a bill forward at an earlier point. We certainly support the objectives of it. We see there should be similar regulation. I hope I am not presaging what will be said by the Shooters and Fishers too much, but there should be similar regulation of hunting and on-land game management as perhaps operates in the Fisheries Act 1995 now.

The Fisheries Act is another act that is amended by this bill. It allows the early surrender of the eight remaining netting entitlements that are held in Port Phillip Bay for commercial fishers and transfers the powers and functions of the fisheries Licensing Appeals Tribunal to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal. Again, the opposition has no particular negative view about those changes.

As I said, the bill also amends the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981 and makes amendments that relate to the definition of 'serious offence' in relation to people qualifying for the ability to work in the hemp industry. The opposition will not oppose any of those changes.

The Livestock Disease Control Act 1994 is another act that is amended by this bill. This change allows the spending of capital rather than only the interest earned on capital from the Cattle Compensation Fund and the

Sheep and Goat Compensation Fund on projects and programs benefiting these specific industries. I join Peter Walsh in putting on record a number of concerns. This has all the feel of Treasury wanting to scoop back some money and Treasury wanting to fund departmental activities. I know how it works; I have seen it in operation, and I am always cautious about it. To the extent that this change of itself is not objectionable — we are not seeking to oppose it — I think we will keep a close watching brief to make sure that the money is not misused, that the funds are not run down and that there is no diversion of those resources into departmental funding.

The bill also amends the Melbourne Market Authority Act 1977, and again, there are no particular objections to those points. The Plant Biosecurity Act 2010 is an important piece of legislation, and there are changes made around the control of grape phylloxera and potato cyst nematode, which are significant diseases that affect their relevant industries — the wine and grape industries and the potato industry in Victoria. Again, any sensible measures in this area are things that should be supported.

The Veterinary Practice Act 1997 changes are a series of penalty increases for serious professional misconduct, and the board's powers are strengthened in conducting wildlife hearings.

The Wildlife Act 1975 is also amended to include the offence of hunting, taking and destroying game during an open season. Previously it was an offence to take game in a closed season, and there is now an offence in the open season. The now defunct Broiler Chicken Industry Act 1978 is repealed, and that is a perfectly sensible process.

What I would say is that in terms of the coalition's position on this bill our agricultural industries are very significant for our state. Our fisheries are significant for our state, our food processing and fresh food market and hunting industries are also important, as is our meat processing industry. I should say about the changes with respect to butchering and changes that can occur with respect to the requirements for the nature of butchering that will occur with mobile arrangements that are brought in by this bill that we will seek some clarification from the minister in committee as to how the amendments to the Meat Industry Act 1993 will operate.

I understand the government has given commitments that the rules that apply for mobile butchering and processing will be the same as for fixed ones, and that is as it should be. I do not think there should be any

diminution of the protections, but I suspect the minister will be happy to give that particular assurance to the chamber. I think that is a fair request that the chamber makes of the minister. So yes, mobile abattoirs are supported in principle but they require high levels of regulation, certainty in terms of biosecurity, certainty in terms of local planning requirements and certainty in regard to traceability issues and the requirements for the traceability of particular pieces of meat. These are questions that we can pursue with the minister.

In the Game Management Authority Act 2014 there are changes that include principles that must be had regard to when exercising its powers, including triple bottom line analysis, equity amongst stakeholders and an evidence-based approach to decision-making. I do not want to be unkind here, but I can imagine who designed some of these principles —

Mr Dalidakis interjected.

Mr DAVIS — No, I support all of SARC and I support its strategic and important role. But anyway, whilst no-one would have any particular objection to any of the principles that are outlined, it does read as a political correctness checklist, don't you think? Am I being unkind, Mr O'Sullivan? If you were to say, 'I'm going to do a political correctness checklist', this would be a good start.

Mr Dalidakis interjected.

Mr DAVIS — It brings in what is effectively in the fishing arrangements, the guiding principles from division 2 of the Victorian Fisheries Authority Act 2016. Let me just read these. As I say, all of them are perfectly reasonable in and of themselves but it does read like a political correctness checklist. In relation to the principle of integrated decision-making the Victorian Fisheries Authority Act states:

The principle of integrated decision-making means seeking to achieve government policy objectives through coordination between all levels of government and government agencies.

It is very hard to speak from the opposite position, in favour of discoordination and ignoring other agencies et cetera.

In relation to the principle of the triple bottom line assessment the act says this:

means an assessment of all the economic, social and environmental costs and benefits, taking into account externalities.

They could be positive or negative externalities on this definition, but who will object to that in itself?

On the principle of equity, it says:

The principle of equity means:

- (a) equity between persons irrespective of their—
 - (i) personal attributes, including age, physical ability ...

et cetera, et cetera, and:

- (ii) location, including whether in a growth, urban, regional, rural or remote area.
- (b) equity between generations by not compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs ...

The principle of an evidence-based approach means considering the best available information when making decisions. It is very hard to mount the opposite argument that it should only take into account inferior evidence and secondary quality evidence when making a decision. Everyone agrees with the point, but really it does feel like a political correctness checklist.

The principle of stakeholder engagement and community participation means:

- (a) applying, to the extent that is practical, the consultation principles ...
- (b) taking into account the interests of stakeholders and members of the local community ...

These are all the things that of course community would expect, but goodness.

On the principle of transparency, the Victorian Fisheries Authority Act says:

The principle of transparency means members of the public should have access to reliable and relevant information in appropriate forms to facilitate a good understanding of fisheries issues and the process by which decisions in relation to fisheries management are made.

Well, there we are. We have had our little homily for today and we all feel good about that. I am sure the principles are important but it does have a feel about it, doesn't it?

Let me say a bit about the compensation fund issues around the Livestock Disease Control Act 1994. This bill will amend the Cattle Compensation Fund and the Sheep and Goat Compensation Fund to remove restrictions on the expenditure of interest. As I have said, we do not have an objection to this change but it needs to be watched very, very closely. The fund advisory committees and the Victorian Farmers Federation are supportive of the changes. The minister must have regard to the recommendations of the

respective advisory committee before making any decision to expend funds. We do have the opportunity to caution the government today against any politicising of those compensation funds and to seek an assurance from the government that they will behave in an appropriate manner.

I have already made comment about the Shooters and Fishers Party's private members bill, the Game Management Authority Amendment Bill 2017. They will seek to introduce many of the aspects of that into this bill by widening the scope of the bill and allowing a vote to be taken in the committee stage. We will certainly support them in widening the scope of the bill to enable their proposed changes to be tested in the chamber. We think that as a general principle that is the right thing to do, and we support the direction that they are heading in.

Mr Dalidakis interjected.

Mr ELASMAR (Northern Metropolitan) (10:36) — I rise to speak to the Primary Industries Legislation Amendment Bill 2017. While this bill contains primarily housekeeping matters, it also fixes up technicalities and repeals some sections of acts and it contains some very important new initiatives for the primary industries sector. There have been changes to the meat processing industry over the past decade. Large export-oriented abattoirs are now well-established, while some smaller operators have consolidated or closed. At the same time the number of small and specialist livestock farmers has increased. Industry has been looking at new ways of managing stock and mobile abattoirs have been proposed. They are used in the United States.

This bill amends the Meat Industry Act 1993 to allow the slaughter of animals and processing of meat to occur in vehicles — that is, mobile abattoirs. The change in the definitions of 'abattoir', 'general meat processing facility' and 'pet food processing facility' in the Meat Industry Act will permit mobile abattoirs, mobile butchers and mobile pet food facilities to be licensed and regulated by PrimeSafe. It is important to note that mobile facilities will be required to meet the same food safety, biosecurity and animal welfare standards that apply to fixed premises.

In 2014 a risk assessment was commissioned by PrimeSafe to provide options for compliance with Australian standards by new and emerging meat supply chains like mobile abattoirs. In Victoria state biosecurity, animal welfare and food safety standards apply to all abattoirs, and meat processors must meet the same high standards for food safety and animal

welfare. All licensed meat processors, including abattoirs, must demonstrate to PrimeSafe that they comply with relevant standards to be approved to operate. Mobile abattoirs would need to demonstrate to PrimeSafe that they comply with Australian standards for food safety and animal welfare. The models currently being considered by potential mobile operators have evolved significantly from those considered by the 2014 meat risk assessment.

The bill repeals the Broiler Chicken Industry Act 1978, which is now obsolete as the act was originally designed to counter the imbalance in market power between individual broiler farmers and large vertically integrated processing companies.

The industry has operated for many years under collective bargaining arrangements authorised by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission. Every other jurisdiction in Australia has removed state-based legislation, permitting collective contract arrangements between poultry growers and processors.

There has been widespread consultation in the development of this bill. The Victorian Farmers Federation, Seafood Industries Victoria and many other stakeholders have been consulted. It is a rational and sensible bill, and I commend it to the house.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ramsay)

(10:41) — Just before I call the next speaker, I would like to acknowledge a past member of this chamber, Ron Best. Welcome, Ron. Ron was a member for North Western Province from 1988 to 2002, so Google tells me, and also a goal-kicking machine. Welcome, Ron, to the Legislative Council again.

Mr MORRIS (Western Victoria) (10:41) — I rise to make my contribution to the Primary Industries Legislation Amendment Bill 2017 and note that this is an omnibus bill that makes a number of amendments to acts regulating the agricultural, fisheries, meat processing, fresh food market and hunting industries. The Primary Industries Legislation Amendment Bill 2017 proposes amendments to the following primary industries legislation: the Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994 to enable costs to be recovered during the sentencing phase of criminal proceedings for offences for non-compliance; and the Dairy Act 2000 to bring the regulation of camel milk production under Dairy Food Safety Victoria.

It also amends part IVA of the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981 that concerns participation in the industrial hemp industry for commercial or research purposes. I note that this is

something that a constituent in Western Victoria Region will be very pleased with. Mr Tony Clarke of Ballan has long advocated for industrial hemp and the capacity for it to be further utilised in a variety of forms. I have certainly had many conversations about the fact that Mr Clarke feels that hemp has been caught up with cannabis in some way and that as a result of that association it has not had the advancement or the opportunities that may have been available to it. I note that many of our joint constituents, Acting President Ramsay, have a strong interest in it. The amendments also further broaden the definition of ‘serious offence’ that precludes individuals from industry participation with regard to that industrial hemp.

The Fisheries Act 1995 also is amended, allowing early surrender of up to eight netting entitlements held by Port Phillip Bay commercial fishers and transferring the powers and functions of the fisheries licence appeals tribunal to VCAT.

A further provision of the bill amends the Game Management Authority Act 2014 to clarify the operation of the Game Management Authority (GMA) board, introduce changes requiring GMA to act consistently with any agreed governance framework and amend the definition of ‘authorised officer’ in the Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987, the Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978 and the Firearms Act 1996, as well as the definition of ‘litter enforcement officers’ in the Environment Protection Act 1970 to resolve legal uncertainty as to what enforcement agency officers authorised under the Game Management Authority Act 2014 can undertake.

Further provisions of the bill amend the Game Management Authority Act 2014 to allow new principles that the authority must have regard to when exercising its powers — that is, the principle of equity amongst stakeholders. Another provision goes on to amend the Livestock Disease Control Act 1994 to allow spending of the capital rather than only of the interest on the capital from the Cattle Compensation Fund and the Sheep and Goat Compensation Fund on projects and programs benefiting the respective industries.

I note that a little precipitation fell last night, and I think that is a welcome relief for many farmers who have not had the early rains that would have been hoped for. Let us hope that there is plenty more to come to ensure that our farmers can have a better year than would otherwise be the case if that rain did not fall.

This bill also, in amending the Livestock Disease Control Act 1994, extends the powers of inspectors to

issue infringement notices for the offence of failing to provide specified information when sending samples to laboratories for disease testing and offences relating to vendor declarations. It also gives inspectors increased discretion as to the measures imposed on the owners of diseased livestock.

Another amendment, which is made to the Melbourne Market Authority Act 1977, reflects the new Epping location of the market as well as raising the threshold for ministerial approval on expenditure from \$500 000 to \$750 000.

A further amendment, an amendment to the Meat Industry Act 1993, allows mobile butchers and processors to operate across Victoria and removes barriers to the processing of game for non-commercial purposes. This is probably the element of this bill that I, and I am assuming other members of this chamber, probably received the most correspondence on and had issues raised about. I think this is a growing area, with more and more mobile butchers looking to operate and ensure that more niche markets and paddock-to-plate type experiences can occur. That is certainly, as we well know, a growth industry across regional Victoria and something that should be well supported. I note I was recently at the Tuki Trout Farm in Smeaton, which is a wonderful operation and a great family business, where they certainly do deliver a lot of paddock-to-plate — or pond-to-plate I suppose it might be — with the trout farm there. They certainly do achieve an experience where a lot of the meat and a lot of the produce and the like is sourced from very close to the restaurant and provides a unique experience for those choosing to visit that lovely venue.

The bill further goes on to amend the Plant Biosecurity Act 2010 to control a number of —

Mr O'Sullivan interjected.

Mr MORRIS — Thanks, Mr O'Sullivan. You might have slightly caught me out with the pronunciation of some of these, but indeed it will control a number of insect pests. Mr O'Sullivan, I might leave it to you to go through the pronunciation of some of these. It goes on to amend the Veterinary Practice Act 1997 to increase penalties for professional misconduct and strengthen board powers in conducting hearings. Of course we always want the highest of standards amongst our vets and the work that they do.

A further amendment in this particular bill goes to amend the Wildlife Act 1975 to include the offence of hunting, taking or destroying game during an open

season and the further repeal of the Broiler Chicken Industry Act 1978.

I note that there has been wide consultation by the opposition on this particular bill, and some areas of concern have been raised with regard to some of the issues that are here. Victoria was the first state to legalise mobile abattoirs, and the changes to the Meat Industry Act 1993 did allow for mobile abattoirs to be licensed meat processing facilities. Indeed some stakeholders had concerns with regard to these mobile abattoirs being subject to a regulatory regime that is currently applied to abattoirs that are in a fixed location. I understand that the government has said that this regulatory framework that applies to fixed abattoirs would indeed apply to those that are mobile abattoirs. Let us certainly hope that that is indeed the case, and hopefully that will allay some of the concerns of those who have raised these issues.

More broadly with regard to regional Victoria and the importance of agriculture to regional Victoria we know that agriculture is certainly a growth industry and is something that needs to be invested in. We need to ensure that whether it be in western, northern or eastern Victoria the government is providing the appropriate support. We know that one of the most crucial pieces of infrastructure for the promotion of agriculture is the accessibility to markets and the like. Through this government not investing in regional roads, allowing regional roads to fall into disrepair, they have certainly negatively impacted the opportunities for the growth of agriculture and the opportunities to ensure that what can be a boom industry can really take off.

A further issue that is certainly raised on a regular basis is accessibility to affordable and reliable power. Particularly in the south-west of Victoria the lack of access to reliable and affordable power is a huge inhibitor to both investment and growth. Particularly in the dairy industry, amongst others, the lack of access to three-phase power is a huge issue for many dairy farmers and is actually holding back what could be a massive growth industry for western Victoria. The appropriate investments need to be made to facilitate access to three-phase power in western Victoria. I know that both Ms Britnell, the Assembly member for South-West Coast, and Mr Riordan, the Assembly member for Polwarth, have been very strong advocates — as have you, Acting President Ramsay — for investment into three-phase power to ensure that dairy farmers do have access to the power that they need.

This would address the access to power, but the affordability of power is a greater concern. We all know that by tripling the tax on coal the Andrews government forced the closure of the Hazelwood power station without an alternative source of energy into our market that would be both reliable and affordable. It was a shocking and terrible decision by this government when they broke their promise not to raise or introduce any new taxes. They tripled the tax on coal and forced the closure of Hazelwood, negatively impacting not just on every household trying to pay their bills but also on growth in areas such as agriculture through that move.

I certainly raise concerns about what the government has done to inhibit investment and growth in agriculture across the state. I note that there may be an amendment introduced to this bill during the committee of the whole. I look forward to perusing that amendment.

Mr Dalidakis interjected.

Mr MORRIS — Perusing — I used it just for you, Mr Dalidakis. I look forward to indeed perusing that amendment. I look forward to hearing the contribution of other members, maybe Mr Dalidakis.

Dr RATNAM (Northern Metropolitan) (10:55) — I rise to speak on the Primary Industries Legislation Amendment Bill 2017. It is a bill that makes numerous changes to a number of pieces of legislation. I want to focus on two areas of the bill — amendments relating to the Meat Industry Act 1993 and the Fisheries Act 1995.

In particular I want to indicate the Greens' support for the amendments providing for mobile abattoirs. While I and a number of my colleagues have chosen a meat-free diet for animal welfare and environmental reasons, we recognise that while meat consumption continues there are compelling arguments for shifting away from centralised, large-scale abattoirs to a more mobile system. The steady decline in the number of licensed abattoirs in Victoria has meant that farmers need to transport livestock longer distances for processing. In some areas animals may be spending up to 5 hours in transport to abattoirs in Melbourne or on the South Australian or New South Wales borders. This places animals under extreme stress due to stressful loading, transportation, mixing, crowding and handling by unfamiliar humans.

It is more humane to process livestock as close to the farm as possible. Providing for mobile abattoirs means that animals can be handled by familiar people in familiar environments without being separated from

their herd or flock. It will mean farmers no longer have to send their animals to all corners of the state for slaughter, paying for costly transport, when they could process livestock on the farm or in their local area.

At the 2014 state election the Greens candidate for Ripon, the late Rod May, who was himself an organic farmer and livestock producer, promised to review the regulations that relate to abattoir establishment and operation and see that provision for small, compliant facilities were put in place to permit the growth of the local meat market. The Greens are proud to continue Mr May's work in supporting these reforms. We are pleased that this legislation promotes a more humane meat industry in Victoria and supports rural and regional Victoria by servicing the specialty meat sector as well as the small producers who want to preserve the identity of their products in a more humane and ethical way. Reforms such as this one can reinvigorate rural communities, supply fresh and ethical food and satisfy the growing demand by those in the new and discerning food sector, who want to know about the origins, the identity and the welfare background of the food they eat.

Secondly, I wish to comment on the amendments to the Fisheries Act. After speaking to fisheries stakeholders, in particular Seafood Industry Victoria, we are concerned that inadequate consultation has been undertaken by the government in relation to proposed amendments to the Fisheries Act. The Port Phillip Bay fishing industry has been undergoing significant disruption due to the ban on net fishing previously legislated. The number of operators has been reduced from 43 to 10 and is soon to be eight. This bill makes another series of amendments affecting the Port Phillip Bay fishing industry with little or no consultation with affected parties.

The Labor government is continuing to prioritise recreational fishers over and above the local seafood industry. The available scientific evidence suggests the Port Phillip Bay fishery is a sustainable fishery. And in the current circumstances it is not commercial fishing that will place pressure on fish stocks but the recreational fishing policies of this government through its Target One Million.

Relevant stakeholders have raised a series of concerns with us that we believe the government should take seriously. The most significant is the ability for the operators continuing in the industry to receive compensation for giving up their nets early but not having the consequential revised quota being brought forward. The scheme previously legislated will see fishing operators giving up their nets by 2022, receiving

compensation accordingly and having a revised fishing quota of 11 tonnes of snapper put in place. The bill before us allows operators to give up their nets earlier and to also receive compensation for that, but it does not allow access to the revised quota until 2022. This is unfair. Ongoing businesses will not be viable without the revised quota. The ability to give up their nets earlier is not really an option for operators without the quotas also being brought forward. We urge the government to bring forward the quota to give operators genuine choice to give up their nets earlier.

These are local businesses who have undergone an industry restructure on a significant scale. When the restructure of this industry was being debated in this chamber my colleague Greg Barber noted, 'The impact will be quite dramatic', and it has been. These are local businesses that provide local seafood to local restaurants and shops. It has always baffled the Greens why Labor is so intent on disrupting these businesses.

The bill also abolishes the Licensing Appeals Tribunal, with all matters now being referred to VCAT. This is concerning to the fishing operators as they do not trust that VCAT will have the relevant experience to deal with their matters. The tribunal was established to ensure that someone with knowledge of the industry is included in making decisions regarding the issuance or cancellation of a licence. Referring a matter to VCAT will also result in costs now being associated with people seeking to retain fishing rights, which has previously not been required. We understand the industry does not support this change.

The industry is also concerned with the removal of first-offence provisions in relation to certain offences under the act. While judicial discretion remains to determine lower end penalties for first offences or minor infringements, the removal of first-offence provisions is concerning to many.

We encourage the government to talk to Seafood Industry Victoria and affected businesses about their concerns with this legislation and its impacts. Economic change is hard, and when industries are being restructured the people affected should be given the opportunity to be heard and their concerns considered. As Mr Barber said in an earlier debate on this issue:

We should all be willing to share and justly compensate those who are impacted by the changes that this Parliament makes, because not only is it in and of itself a moral value, but in fact it is important for cohesion of society in times of great change that we all look after each other and share both the benefits and the burdens together.

The changes in this bill that affect Port Phillip Bay fishing operators are unfair. I urge the government to talk to the people affected and to mitigate the impacts of these further changes.

Mr O'SULLIVAN (Northern Victoria) (11:02) — I am pleased to rise this morning to speak on the Primary Industries Legislation Amendment Bill 2017. This bill is pretty much centred around some broader aspects of agriculture. That is certainly an area that I have a lot of interest in. Having grown up on a farm myself, many of these amendments that are being made to a series of acts in the agricultural space relate to things that I have had some experience with in the past, and I might actually raise some of those as part of my contribution to this bill that we are talking about today.

My colleagues who have spoken on this matter in this chamber have covered off the detail of it fairly well, so I will not go into the same areas that they have covered, but what I might do for Mr Morris's sake is pronounce some of those diseases that he did not actually have a go at trying to put on the record. The issues that Mr Davis also put on the record in relation to these matters were covered off in a fair bit of detail. This is obviously off the back of the work that was done by my leader, Peter Walsh in the other place. He is someone who has extensive background in all of these areas through many years of experience, having been the Minister for Agriculture for a period of time as well. By and large this side of the house is fairly comfortable with the amendments. A lot of them are very straightforward, although there are some things I would have done slightly differently if I had been putting it together, but by and large they are all pretty reasonable.

Some of the changes to the Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994 make sense in relation to the recovery of costs by the department in relation to pests, weeds and animals. One of the very frustrating things for a landholder in trying to mitigate problems, whether it be with rabbits, foxes or weeds — weeds in particular are always a problem — is that if most of the landholders are doing the right thing in trying to eradicate or minimise the impacts of those and one or two farmers are not, then by those couple of farmers not acting on their pests, weeds, foxes, rabbits or whatever it may be, what will tend to happen is that, for example, the seeds from those weeds will blow with the wind and go back onto the other farmers' land who have been doing the right thing and trying to eradicate them.

Rabbits can also be very vexing within a community. If there is a significant effort to bring down the rabbit numbers and one or two farmers are not doing anything at all, those rabbits will breed up very quickly and then

go back onto the land of farmers who have actually been trying to minimise the damage from those infestations. Under the changes here the department would be able to recoup some of their costs if they were to take legal proceedings against a recalcitrant landowner who is not doing the right thing. Previously the department would often look at a situation and say it is not worth their time, money and effort in trying to get a prosecution, because the amount of money they would have to spend in trying to do that would outweigh the benefit that they would get from trying to achieve that prosecution in the first place. So that is certainly something we support.

If I remember, when I was a teenager quite often we would have to go out with a shovel or a pitchfork and cut Bathurst burrs, which were probably the most annoying ones to try and cut. Once they grow and spread they are very difficult to keep under control. Particularly if you have got a neighbour who is not doing the work in that space, that can become very frustrating. Having done that for many, many hours and days, I particularly support this amendment.

Changes to the Dairy Act 2000 in relation to camel milk make complete sense. Previously it was regulated by local councils. Local councils are not the group that should be undertaking the regulation of camel milk, so to put it under the Dairy Act makes sense. Camel milk is something that is an emerging industry, particularly within northern Victoria. There are a few places that are actually undertaking the milking of camels for commercial purposes. In some parts of the world camel milk is very much a preferred milk to cows milk. I was fortunate enough to have gone on a trade mission with Peter Walsh, the then Minister for Agriculture, where we got to see some of these firsthand. As part of those trade missions we went to Kuala Lumpur, but more importantly it was in the Middle East where we saw the camel milk farms, and they were pretty significant. I recall there was one farm that had 1000 camels that were being milked. Over in the Middle East camels are very precious.

In terms of the camels, I have got a bit of an appreciation for them myself. Up on the farm that I have with my brother, sister and cousins we have got a few camels there ourselves. While we have never milked them, they have certainly been ridden in the past. When I was about 17 I participated in the Bordertown camel cup, which was essentially the equivalent of the Melbourne Cup for camel racing at that time, and came fourth. My uncle loved his camels. He went and caught some up in the Simpson Desert back in the mid-1980s and broke them in, and then we

started to race them, so I have got a strong affiliation with camels up there at Patchewollock.

In terms of some of the other changes that I would like to talk about, the changes to the Fisheries Act 1995 are in relation to bringing forward the eight remaining netting entitlements in Port Phillip Bay. This is an approach that is supported by both sides of the chamber. It certainly does create a bit of an issue in terms of the capturing of bait because quite often nets are used to catch bait which are then used by other fishermen to go out and catch fish. With the complete banning of netting in Port Phillip Bay and also in Corio Bay there will not be as much bait available or it will have to be sourced from interstate or overseas so the fishermen can go ahead into the bays and so forth to catch those fish that they do want to catch.

As for the Target One Million program, which the government has been promoting very heavily, I do wonder about the aspiration of trying to get to 1 million fishermen in this state. I am not sure how the government would measure that. They keep promoting it as a goal. I am not sure when they will get to 1 million fishermen, but I certainly look forward to the day when the minister can show us how that number of fishermen, or fisherpersons, can be achieved in this state.

The Game Management Authority also has some changes to its legislation. I understand the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party will be bringing in some amendments during the committee stage. We look forward to having a look at those. I think we will be supporting those as well. There is no doubt that a good Game Management Authority is very important for this state. Hunting is a significant industry. There is some \$400 million generated every year from hunting in this state. I am certainly one of those people who contributes to that number. Even just in the last week I bought myself a new spotlight, which arrived in my electorate office this morning, so I am looking forward to picking that up on the weekend and trying it out on Saturday night up at the farm.

One of the things that the Game Management Authority will be covering is deer hunting. That is something that I have never done much of. Where I grew up in north-western Victoria there were not any deer. Obviously deer are found by and large in the High Country, although they are spreading quite quickly. I went deer hunting for the first time last year. We saw quite a few deer, but they would not stop long enough for us to be able to have a shot at them, so I still have not shot myself a deer. It is something that I might try and do this winter. It is also interesting in relation to

deer hunting that some people prefer to use dogs when they go after the deer. Some people use labradors, and some people use a whole range of different dogs. That is something that I will be interested to have a look at as well because I have never seen that happen.

One thing that I want to touch on before I finish my contribution is in relation to the changes to the Meat Industry Act 1993 which will allow for mobile butchers. This is a sensible outcome and one that has been pushed for a while, particularly in relation to game meat. We see quite regularly deer being shot. The hunters certainly like to harvest what they can, but I think if we have regulations in relation to the use of those game animals, that will be a way of being able to use more of that type of product in the market.

Having grown up on a farm, I am very used to that. We used to kill our own sheep. Lamb was probably a staple of our diet when I was growing up. My father would kill a merino wether once a week, and that is what we would eat for the whole week. Back in those days we would think, 'Oh, we're not having roast lamb again, are we?', but looking back now, we were very privileged at that time to have several lamb roasts each week and plenty of chops and so forth. That is something that I would love to do now. I was even able to butcher a sheep myself when I was younger. I have not done it for a fair while; I am not sure if I would be able to do it now. My father did a lot of that. Also we used to kill our own bullocks, and we would cut those up and we would have a lot of beef that we were able to eat, particularly during the winter months, with the Herefords that we had up on the farm.

That is something that I think is very important. A lot of people out in the country like to kill their own meat rather than buying it commercially, and if you have mobile abattoirs that can come in and do that work, I think that will be very beneficial. Quite often people who have a few acres might get a couple of sheep, some pigs or some goats or whatever it might be, and then they fatten them up and would like to be able to slaughter them, abattoir them and then obviously eat them. Sometimes it can be a bit of a logistical issue in terms of getting them to a proper abattoir, so if you can have an arrangement where someone can come to your place and cut up those one, two or three, or whatever the number is of livestock that you want to have processed at your place, and then put it straight into your fridge or deep freezer, I think that is a great outcome.

In terms of the planned biosecurity changes, there are some issues in relation to the control of some of those problems, particularly around grape phylloxera and

potato cyst nematode — for Mr Morris's benefit, in terms of the pronouncement of those particular diseases. There are a few things that will be done under the Plant Biosecurity Act 2010.

By and large this is a bill that covers off a whole range of minor amendments, and I think most of them are fairly reasonable. Members on this side of the house will certainly not be opposing this piece of proposed legislation.

Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria) (11:15) — I also would like to make a small contribution to the debate on the Primary Industries Legislation Amendment Bill 2017, and in doing so I do note that much of what my contribution was to be has been covered by other colleagues. But I do want to make a number of points about this omnibus bill, which makes a number of amendments to acts relating to agriculture, fisheries, meat processing, fresh fish markets and hunting industries.

I am glad to see Ms Pulford, the Minister for Agriculture, is actually in the chamber, because in the committee stage I wish to raise a couple of issues that have been a concern of mine for some time, and given that this bill has taken about five months to get to the Council from the Assembly there has been a little water under the bridge, if I can use that expression, in relation to some of the issues that are documented in the bill.

The changes to the Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994 will enable costs to be recovered during the sentencing phase. I certainly support that for criminal proceedings for offences of non-compliance. The Dairy Act 2000 is amended to bring the regulation of camel milk production under Dairy Food Safety Victoria. As Mr O'Sullivan said, we certainly support that. The United Dairyfarmers of Victoria and the Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) are very supportive. I note through consultation with stakeholders, including the Victorian Farmers Federation, the Australian Veterinary Association, the Australian Meat Industry Council, Wine Victoria, the Australian Deer Association, Seafood Industry Australia and Field & Game Australia, that they all are reasonably comfortable with the amendments in the bill.

The amendment to part IVA of the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981 concerns participation in the industrial hemp industry for commercial research purposes. The amendments broaden the definition of 'serious offence' and preclude individuals from industry participation.

I must congratulate Assembly member Peter Walsh, when he was the Minister for Agriculture, for introducing the trials for Indian hemp. That was a long and arduous journey. I also congratulate the current minister for her support in allowing production of Indian hemp, because it is an important opportunity for farmers to be able to broaden out their opportunities for production on primary land. Indian hemp does provide that opportunity, as do other pharmaceutical or potential pharmaceutical products, and Indian hemp is used for other purposes as well. But there are other opportunities we should continue to look at that are slowly being developed for both trial and commercial production that farmers could access to increase their armoury of seed production.

I do want to speak a little bit on the Fisheries Act 1995. People would be aware of my position on that. I was very reluctant to support the ban on commercial netting in Port Phillip Bay because I knew it would have significant consequences for many of our seafood retailers, particularly on the Bellarine Peninsula. I worked very closely with commercial fishermen to see if there could be a coexistence approach, which at the time Fisheries Victoria supported, with quotas put in place for commercial netting in Port Phillip Bay and Corio Bay — bays in which I engage a lot with constituents from the industry. Nevertheless a decision was made, and as has been noted, out of the 43 licences, many of them sleepers, there are currently only eight now that are licensed to net commercially, while others have a licence to longline. I assume that some of those eight will continue to fish by longline once they have reached the phase-out date and taken their package.

The point I am making is that a lot of the fish that is being sold on the Bellarine now is actually being bought at the Melbourne market or the Sydney market, and so they are not as fresh because of the loss of that opportunity of commercial fishing in Port Phillip Bay — which was a disappointment for those who invested heavily in the fishing industry, like commercial fishermen who invested in boats and staff and had taken out significant loans no doubt. It is not unlike the taxidrivers, I must say. They too have seen the value of their licences reduced financially, and many are now facing considerable hardship.

My hope is that this amendment bill will allow a swift pathway for compensation to be given to those that are seeking it. It has been brought forward, as I understand it, to be in this amendment bill to be able to provide access to that compensation, so at least that will reduce some of the hardship that they have been facing with the ban on commercial netting.

I note Dr Ratnam's remarks, which I agree with, in relation to the revision of quotas. It is something that I would like to bring up in the committee stage — I actually thought the Greens were going to put up an amendment to that effect, but I see they are not — to have an understanding from Ms Pulford about how it is going to be fair and equitable when compensation is going to be provided based on quotas that have not actually been revised, because the value of that quotas have changed over time. In terms of bringing forward the compensation payments based on quotas at a point in time, I need to have some confidence that it is fair and equitable to those fishermen, so we can tease that out in committee.

The bill amends the Game Management Authority Act 2014 to clarify the operation of the Game Management Authority (GMA). It is certainly with sympathy — after the inquiry that looked into the activities of the GMA — that, as Mr O'Sullivan said, we support these amendments on our side.

In relation to the Livestock Disease Control Act 1994 the bill allows the spending of capital rather than only the interest earned on capital from the Cattle Compensation Fund and the Sheep and Goat Compensation Fund on projects and programs benefiting the respective industries. Again, a note of caution, Ms Pulford — and I do appreciate that there are representatives of the Victorian Farmers Federation and others on those committees — that the money raised and the substantial amount money being held both in the Cattle Compensation Fund and in the Sheep and Goat Compensation Fund is to be used for a specific purpose. It is not to be used for government projects that have no relation to the aims of these funds, which is basically about disease control, disease control management and other matters, as distinct from the ovine Johne's disease stamp duty that we had many years ago.

I always worry when capital is suddenly freed from an industry fund that financially has operated successfully over many years that the government may try to get their sticky fingers on the capital and start moving it around into areas that are not fit for purpose. Again, I will ask questions in the committee stage about whether there will be some fiscal control and management of the way that capital is dispersed, given it is supposed to be for livestock biosecurity activity.

The bill amends the Melbourne Market Authority Act 1977 to reflect the new Epping location of the market, as well as raising the threshold for ministerial approval and expenditure by \$500 000 to \$750 000.

The bill amends the Meat Industry Act 1993 to allow mobile butchers and processors to operate across Victoria and removes barriers for the processing of game for non-commercial purposes. In fact this was a finding and recommendation from the committee that I am deputy chair of, the Environment, Natural Resources and Regional Development Committee, and it makes good sense. We know particularly in relation to deer that there is quite difficult terrain to pull deer out of for a controlled cull for processing, and also obviously there are opportunities for other game and meat animals where we can appropriately use mobile butchers to be able to access and process these animals on site.

Mr O'Sullivan gave us a little bit of his memories of the times and places when he used to self-butcher meat, and I used to do the same. I remember it was a job that I did not actually like, but unfortunately it was a job I had to do. I provided sheep for our farm and staff and also for the shearers and others during the shearing season. We would often have five or six sheep hung up under a tree — not meeting the regulations now, I suspect. Certainly I used to have the job of killing sheep maybe four or five times a week, and we would have anything up to a dozen strung up under a heap of pine trees at home. I am not sure if that is what Ms Pulford had in mind in terms of a mobile butchering arrangement. Ours was not terribly mobile as the sheep were stuck under a tree. Nevertheless, I think this is a good amendment to allow greater flexibility when butchering meat.

I will leave the Plant Biosecurity Act 2010, which was covered by Mr O'Sullivan. The amendments to the Veterinary Practice Act 1997 increase penalties for serious professional misconduct and strengthen the board's powers when conducting hearings. There are changes to the Wildlife Act 1975 to include the offence of hunting, taking or destroying game during an open season, which I am sure the Greens will be thrilled about. The bill will also repeal the now defunct Broiler Chicken Industry Act 1978. I do not know how many acts the broiler chicken industry has — I know it had thousands of codes of practice — but I am not familiar as to why we are repealing that act, which seemed to be defunct anyway. Perhaps Ms Pulford might like to expand on what may take its place.

At the end of the day these amendments to the primary industries acts seem to me to be quite simple and important. The bill is well supported, it would seem, by the VFF and others that I have identified. It will be interesting to see how these legal mobile abattoirs are policed — something we may well flesh out a bit more in the committee stage. Perhaps they will sit under the

Meat Industry Act 1993 and PrimeSafe will have some oversight — I am sure they will — but whether they will be subjected to the same sort of regulatory regime as other fixed abattoirs, again, Ms Pulford may wish to expand on that. Other than that, our position is not to oppose this bill. I understand there are no amendments to the bill being brought to the house. Can I get clarity on that?

Mr O'Donohue interjected.

Mr RAMSAY — There is one set, and that will be circulated shortly.

Mr YOUNG (Northern Victoria) (11:27) — I also rise to speak on the Primary Industries Legislation Amendment Bill 2017, a bill that is a collection of a number of small changes to a variety of acts, amending lots of different things for different reasons. Just to quickly touch on what Mr Ramsay raised with his question at the end of his contribution, there will be amendments put forward to this bill by the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party. They are in the way of an issue that we have raised quite extensively in the past.

The amendments that we will put up today reflect attempts that we have made in the past to have those same amendments made to the Game Management Authority Act 2014 via a private members bill. My apologies if anyone does not have those amendments or is not aware of them; they have been circulated informally. I can indicate that I am happy to have them circulated now in order to give everyone ample opportunity to refresh their memories on the changes that the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party tried to make to the Game Management Authority (GMA) in respect of the functions and objectives of the authority, an authority that has been a point of contention over the last little while, and expectedly so given that it is the regulatory body for hunting.

Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party amendments circulated by Mr YOUNG (Northern Victoria) pursuant to standing orders.

Mr YOUNG — The role of the authority is always a contentious issue amongst the community, with varying opinions and varying views on the topic, but ones that are able to be worked through for the most part when you have an authority that is a dedicated body responsible for administering lots of things around hunting, such as licensing. They have input into game management and practical applications of government initiatives to improve game management. Also with policing illegal activity in the hunting and poaching

scenes, the Game Management Authority as an independent statutory body has a vital role in that.

For the past little while what has probably been the main issue with the Game Management Authority has been their ability to perform those controls and whether they have not only the legislative capability to do that but also the resourcing and manpower to have an actual effect. I will talk a little bit more about that later on. I just want to flag it early so that anyone, like Mr Ramsay, who has not been made aware that those amendments are coming up to this bill can get their head around them and possibly even go and read my second-reading speech for my bill when I put it to the house last time.

I am not going to talk on every section of this primary industries piece of legislation. There are probably only three points that I am going to have a bit to say about. Other members have made their points on the other changes, which are relatively minor and not contentious and probably not in need of too much debate. I want to just briefly comment on the changes that are being made in this bill in relation to the Fisheries Act 1995. I make the point about the sheer numbers of changes to the Fisheries Act in this bill. With this opportunity to present and make all of those small changes that are required, it is obvious to see the importance the government gives to fisheries. They really get behind the fisheries sector, and over the last three years they have done incredible work in the sector — annoyingly so for the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party. I do not get to stand up and beat my chest and bang a drum about fisheries issues a lot, because the government actually does a good job of making sure the fisheries sector is strong, thriving and able to grow in order to get as many people as we can out enjoying the sport.

I make that point in the context of this bill. We have several amendments to the Fisheries Act that allow the fisheries authority to perform well and to the expected level that the government, as well as the public, expects them to. They allow them to be a serious player in compliance and to have an impact on illegal activity that may be affecting the fisheries industry — an illegal activity that in turn reflects poorly on people who partake recreationally in fishing.

The authority that oversees fishing will be able to do its job properly by way of many of the changes in the bill. The bill provides for appropriately tough penalties for non-compliance — penalties that are tough enough to really have an impact in terms of deterring people from doing the wrong thing. It is great to see those sorts of things in the bill, as well as changes that will allow the Victorian Fisheries Authority to be a lot better in their

management of fisheries as far as numbers, bag limits and catch sizes go and to have more of an influence on how our fisheries are managed to ensure that they are sustainable — that they are there for generations to come so that the 1 million people that the government is targeting to get into fishing have somewhere to fish and it is not something that is hard to do but something that anyone of any ability, any age and any gender can go out and partake in. When the fisheries authority — the knowledgeable body with the experts on the issue — have that real, direct contact with the way in which our fisheries are managed, it makes it easy to plan for the future and make sure that our fisheries thrive and are a great place.

Having said that, the contrast is enormous when we get to the next part of the bill, which deals with the Game Management Authority. This is one of the reasons why I am moving amendments to this bill — to change parts of the Game Management Authority Act 2014 to better reflect what is happening in fisheries. Obviously the government have identified a number of areas where they can improve fisheries. They can improve compliance in fisheries, the management of fisheries and another very important aspect of fisheries over the last few years, which was the buyout of the netting in the bay. They have improved that substantially in this bill by allowing the remaining netters to get out early if they so choose. They are all really big improvements that are going to have a direct impact on our fisheries.

The government have identified a whole range of issues to fix that they have managed to get into this bill. What they have not done is identify all of the issues that are in many ways very, very similar to those of fishing in on-land game hunting. That is very evident from the fact that this bill dances around the high-level management of the Game Management Authority, inserting some guiding principles which I note are a reflection of the guiding principles in the Victorian Fisheries Authority Act 2016. It dances around improvements to the Game Management Authority, but it does not actually do anything.

The government have not identified a number of issues in game management, such as the way the GMA has the ability to enforce compliance and the GMA's inability to be actively involved in game management and delivering initiatives of the government to improve game management, improve hunting opportunities and make sure of compliance and that people are doing the right thing for the safety of the public and also for the future of the sport. Those issues have most definitely been at the forefront of the government's attention for quite some time, but when we get to a bill like this, where the government has the opportunity to make

some changes to the Game Management Authority to bring it into line with the really, really good work that the fisheries authority is doing, they have not taken that opportunity.

That is why I am going to take that opportunity today, through the amendments I will be moving to the bill, to ensure that the Game Management Authority Act provides that the GMA has the same functions and objectives — as well as the same guiding principles, which the government have inserted in this bill — as the fisheries authority, because they are the same. They are both authorities that oversee, regulate and manage activities that are very, very similar in nature — the harvest of wild animals. It makes sense that we have a consistent approach with our authorities, a consistent approach in fishing and in game hunting, to ensure that everyone knows what is going on and that when issues arise the body is best placed to fix those issues and when improvements are needed that expert body is best placed to consult with government, consult with stakeholders and deliver the 20 or so changes that can be thrown into a bill like this to improve fisheries and in the same way improve game hunting.

I think the number of people who partake in game hunting is underestimated a lot of the time. People talk a lot about how many people fish, and I am not going to stand here and say that those numbers are comparable in any way. The number of people who fish is quite high. It is absolutely fantastic how many people get out and enjoy fishing. It is great to see. I do not do it a lot myself. I wish I had time to do more. For the most part, while you have really serious fishermen, fishing is a very easy activity for someone who is an amateur to get involved in, so there are a lot of people who fish very occasionally — maybe once every 10 years. Maybe they go out with a fisherman who does it a lot, just for a ride along. It is easy to get involved. I think the number of people who fish is in those terms somewhat inflated compared to the number of people who hunt.

I do not say that as a reflection on people who fish but to make the point that people who hunt are a lot more dedicated to it. In my experience people who hunt do so more often. They are not occasional hunters. They get out a lot more often and they really spend a lot of time doing it. Again I wish I could do more of it, but unfortunately with work and family commitments you only have so much spare time, and sometimes that impacts on what you can do recreationally. I know people who are out hunting every single weekend; I know lots of people who are like that. Hunters are very, very dedicated.

That group of hunters, which is smaller than that of fishers, have been really frustrated over the last few years about the way in which the government have managed hunting opportunities and the way in which the body that oversees licensing and performs compliance functions in conjunction with other authorities like police, which should be actively delivering on initiatives from the government, has not been performing to an optimal level. I mentioned before that these changes will allow the fisheries authority to perform to the government's expectations, to the public's expectations and to my expectations as a crossbencher.

These changes are fantastic for fisheries. They will ensure that the Victorian Fisheries Authority is the best organisation it can be. We are severely lacking that in the Game Management Authority. Hunters have been frustrated over a number of years by that, and enough is enough. The Game Management Authority needs to be brought into line with the Victorian Fisheries Authority by way of legislation and in the way in which it participates in the management of hunting areas, like the Victorian Fisheries Authority does in fisheries and the way in which it interacts with stakeholders. And I do not just mean hunters; I mean people who are living in regional towns where hunting takes place. They really need to be doing all the same things that the Victorian Fisheries Authority is doing, because the Victorian Fisheries Authority is a wonderful body. It really is. It is good for fisheries to have the Victorian Fisheries Authority the way it is, which is supported by government.

When you take the point that game hunting is really the same thing as fishing, then this government should be supporting those thousands and thousands of hunters out there in the same way that they support fishermen. They should be supporting the Game Management Authority in the way they support the Victorian Fisheries Authority. They should be accepting the amendments that I am proposing today that would do that. Perhaps if my bill had been passed the first time I presented it, the Game Management Authority would not have as many issues as are being talked about today.

I have to also say that I think there has been of late a bit of a witch-hunt against the organisation. I think the Game Management Authority issues have been severely overinflated, and that comes down to a lot of media attention on the issues. It is in the government's best interest to make sure that the authority has the ability to tackle those issues in the same way they do at the Victorian Fisheries Authority.

That is my last plea on the amendments that we are proposing. I hope there are not too many questions from other members that need to be answered given that my second-reading speech for my bill is widely available and these amendments have been flagged for quite some time. The Primary Industries Legislation Amendment Bill came to this place a few months ago and has been sitting here for a long time. I have been really keen to see it come up so that I can move my amendments and start making some headway on improving the Game Management Authority. I hope that everyone is well enough informed to support my amendments.

The last part of this bill that I want to speak about is in terms of the amendments to the Meat Industry Act 1993. The amendments are interesting. The debate around whether processing of meat is right at the moment is one that I have very closely observed lately. I have been quite involved in that debate, and the wider public has also been getting involved in that debate in many different ways. There are a number of different ways in which this issue is viewed. I say that in terms of people who are in the kangaroo meat industry. The other area of debate around this is people who hunt game and the way in which that interacts with the meat industry. There are also people who are running small operations and farms in a more boutique sense.

I recently read that Victoria is home to the biggest number of microbreweries in Australia, which is great — I love microbreweries — but I have noticed more and more that we are starting to go that way in a lot of other areas. We are not just relying on Carlton United Breweries to pump out our stock of beer in the same way as we are not relying on the same big meat processors to supply us with meat. We are becoming more boutique and smaller in nature, which is fantastic for local businesses in regional areas. Someone who wants to start on a small scale and supply a unique product should have all the support from government they need to do that. These changes are absolutely a very good start down the path of allowing that. Giving a farmer who wants to slaughter and sell produce the ability to do that on a small scale on site by way of a mobile abattoir is absolutely fantastic. It means it is a lot more streamlined on site for those people who want to operate those small businesses and maybe tap into a niche market.

The way in which this could be used in other areas — processing for knackereries and the use of kangaroos or, hopefully in the future, venison — is very interesting. I do not have all the answers on how it could work exactly, but we are looking forward to discussing those issues with the government and finding ways in which

it could happen. It would be really fantastic if those industries, which are at the moment starting to flourish with the trial of kangaroo harvesting in regional Victoria, which was recently extended by the government for one year — there are a lot of businesses that have started off the back of that — were able to expand. This could be a very important step in them doing so.

I did just mention venison in the context of knackereries. This is a very interesting debate for me as someone who has been involved in hunting and who really values deer in Victoria as quite an important resource. Using venison — which I consider one of the best meats to eat and one of the best game meats we have on offer — simply for dog food is somewhat annoying in many ways. We have a deer population in Victoria that is large enough to sustain a harvest so venison can be used for dog food. That is great, but I do not think there should be any barriers to that same harvest being used for human consumption. I know it is a very tricky topic and, like I said, it will spark a lot of debate around how it will apply to the way in which we manage meat processing for human consumption and the controls we have over it and having them apply to game that is wild harvested. It is a very touchy area, one that does range over many issues.

I am glad the government is taking steps like this in the right direction that may one day allow it. If we can get the rest of the regulation right, it would be fantastic for hunters who are out there hunting and harvesting large numbers of deer, possibly more than they can consume themselves by virtue of the fact that the deer population of Victoria is so high, if we could see some of that entering the commercial market and being more widely available for people who do not actually hunt themselves, in much the same way as commercial fishing takes place in our bay. Not everyone has the ability to go out into our bay in a boat to catch some locally harvested fish, so we rely on commercial fishers to do that. The methods obviously have been widely discussed and clamped down on in the last couple of years, but there are many people who still rely on that commercial harvest. They go to a fish market and buy fish that has been wild harvested from a good local source.

I see it as the same thing when we have got people harvesting deer, because we have an overabundance of them in certain areas, such as national parks. That harvest could go towards people who may want to start consuming the product but who do not have the means, experience or even the desire to go and harvest it themselves. Given the nature of how that would take place, the changes around mobile processing of meat

may not apply straightaway, but I think it is moving in the right direction to start those conversations and allow it to happen in the future.

In summary, those are the three areas of this bill that I found most interesting and most certainly worthy of discussion. The rest of the changes I think are pretty straightforward. Other members in this place have talked about them, and I believe they are straightforward. The Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party will not be opposing this bill for that reason — that the changes are straightforward. We do believe that the changes are for the most part very good changes, but we also believe that the amendments that I will be moving shortly do fit within this bill. They actually touch on the GMA's high-level governance, and we believe that my amendments should have been placed in the bill. If the government put as much emphasis on game hunting and the GMA as it does on fisheries, it would have identified that it needs the improvements that I present today, so I urge all members in the Parliament to support those amendments. I commend the bill to the house.

Ms PATTEN (Northern Metropolitan) (11:49) — I would just like to rise to speak for a few moments on this omnibus Primary Industries Legislation Amendment Bill 2017. I specifically want to speak about the amendments to the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981 in part 4 of the bill. This is in regard to the regulation of industrial hemp. I am pleased with the amendments because they make it a little bit easier for hemp farmers to operate in Victoria. The hemp industry is growing significantly in Victoria. There are around 30 licences now. We saw almost a doubling in licences after the announcement that Australia would finally allow the sale of hemp seed as food. I think we were the last country in the world to allow hemp seed as food. So we will see an expansion of this industry in a great way.

I want to use this moment to encourage the government to really assist this fast-growing industry. I think the regulations for this industry are still somewhat onerous. I understand that the regulations are being reviewed at the moment and that they will sunset in August this year, so I encourage the government when going through that review of the further regulations for industrial hemp to look at trying to streamline them and making it as easy as possible for this industry to flourish in Victoria. We have a great climate for it.

The technology that is emerging from this quite extraordinary plant is really exciting. I was fortunate to be at MardiGrass on the weekend, which looked at the low-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) products of hemp. I

saw some really interesting nanofibre technology up there — basically chopping up hemp, mixing it with water and making an extraordinarily strong and flexible product. It is a product that now Mercedes and BMW are using as a composite to start building their cars. It is something that can work in 3D printing. It can be an alternative to the very expensive graphene.

There has also been amazing work looking at using some of the hemp fibres and some of this technology in rechargeable batteries. So everything from a food to a medicine to a battery can be made from this extraordinary plant, and I think Victoria is very well placed to hopefully assist this industry to grow and also assist in the advanced manufacturing that could occur from this industry. I really encourage the government to work with that industry closely in expanding it.

Just on one final point, last year when we allowed hemp seed to be used in food that was one step, but we do not allow the stalks or the leaves to be used as food. This is a product that has no THC; it has high cannabidiol (CBD). So to make a CBD oil you need the leaves and the stalks. The CBD, the cannabidiol, that is such a great medicine is not found in the seed of the hemp plant; it is found in the stalks and the leaves. But we prohibit the stalks and the leaves of the hemp plant from being used even though it is not psychoactive at all. So I encourage the government in reviewing those regulations to reconsider the use of the whole of the plant as a food. As we have seen in many other countries, the whole of the plant is used as a food for animals and other livestock. Again, this is an opportunity for this crop, which is also a great rotational crop, but because of the licensing requirements it makes it a little bit more difficult for farmers to use that rotation method.

Just finally I encourage the government to consider this industry. I think it is a very exciting time, and I believe that we could use this industry to kickstart a lot of manufacturing industries in this country and particularly in Victoria. I commend this bill. I am sorry that I cannot talk about broiler chickens more, but maybe next time.

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Agriculture) (11:55) — I thank all members for their contributions to this debate. They have been as wide-ranging as the clauses in this bill.

When Ms Patten was talking I was reminded of meeting the people in our emerging hemp industry at their conference in Geelong not all that long ago and having walked away from that event with a little takeaway bowl of hemp-flavoured ice cream. I was

struck by the excitement there is in this industry — Mr Ramsay mentioned this as well — and the potential that exists there. So I can certainly assure Ms Patten and indeed Mr Ramsay that we are very attuned to the opportunities in the hemp industry. We have had some good and constructive discussions with interstate colleagues around getting the regulations in order so this industry can blossom, particularly with the former agriculture minister in Tasmania, Jeremy Rockliff, who is no longer in the role but who was certainly somebody with whom we worked on making sure that we can hasten the growth of this industry rather than hold it up with unnecessary red tape and regulation.

Mr Ramsay raised a couple of issues that I will just quickly take the opportunity to respond to before we get to question time. Mr Ramsay was asking about the part of the bill that relates to the broiler committee. I just indicate to Mr Ramsay, because he was interested to know what would replace it and what that gap might create, that that committee has not met since 2001 and the function of the Broiler Chicken Industry Act 1978 has for quite some time been replaced by collective bargaining arrangements that exist under the authorisation of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC). The current arrangements are in place and will continue to be in place for a number of years. The ACCC have authorised collective bargaining for chicken meat growers until June 2026. The act has not served any purpose for a long time. This is a pretty minor amendment in the scheme of things, but it will save some administrative work that currently administers an act that serves no purpose. I hope that answers that question.

Mr Ramsay was also seeking from us some assurance, or at least an expression of our view, about the role of compensation funds. The expenditure of the capital absolutely is for biosecurity emergencies. These are funds that exist to support our producers in difficult circumstances. They are funds for a rainy day, and they should be preserved for the industry's use. It is certainly my view that they are the industry's funds. The way that this works in a practical sense is that there is an industry committee that makes recommendations about the expenditure of the funds. My role is to administer that rather than to influence or shape what it is that industry wants to do. Certainly it is my view that that is very much a matter for industry.

Dr Ratnam raised some questions about commercial fishers in Port Phillip Bay, partly in relation to the reforms to remove netting from the bay and the amendment in the legislation before us today which will enable fishers who elected to stay in a longline

fishery to bring forward the transition in their own businesses earlier than they had previously elected. This is a request that has come to us through individual licence-holders and Seafood Industry Victoria (SIV). Again, I note Mr Ramsay has also undertaken some advocacy on this issue.

I think the Greens expressed some concern around the level of consultation underway. The industry has been consulted, and each licence-holder was consulted on the development of the bill. In relation to the issue that is currently a matter of discussion among these people around whether or not limits need to be set, I can certainly assure Dr Ratnam that we will continue to consult with SIV. I met with them two or three weeks ago and my office met with a couple of the affected licence-holders as recently as yesterday. Again, I would like to take the opportunity to provide some assurance that that consultation is ongoing and we will very, very carefully consider the impacts on affected licence-holders before making and finalising any decision on that question.

Mr Young spoke to his amendments, and I am conscious that the clock says it is pretty much question time so I will continue my summing up and respond to Mr Young's comments after question time.

Business interrupted pursuant to sessional orders.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Prison officer remuneration

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) (12:01) — My question is to the Minister for Corrections. Minister, is it correct that certain senior prison officers receive bonus payments to their salaries if particular service delivery outcomes are met?

Ms TIERNEY (Minister for Corrections) (12:01) — I will not go into the details of bonus payments. They are commercial-in-confidence matters —

The PRESIDENT — Order! Minister, I am not in a position to tell you how to answer a question, but the question did not talk about individuals. The question was about a system — whether or not a system was in place — and I would not have thought that you could rely on a confidentiality matter in respect of a system or a human resources policy. Minister, I would ask that you reconsider the direction of your answer at this time.

Ms TIERNEY — I am taken a bit aback, President, given that I had only just got to my feet. The reference that I was making — or was about to make — was in relation to the private prison part of the correctional

system. That comes within contracts that are between the Department of Justice and Regulation and indeed the private providers, and I am not in a position to make comment in respect to that. In terms of the enterprise bargaining agreement that is struck between the Community and Public Sector Union and the government in relation to prison officers, that is a matter between the parties that negotiate that contract at the time, and I do not have that detail before me.

Supplementary question

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) (12:03) — Minister, as you are in effect taking the question on notice, I ask by way of supplementary: how much in bonus payments for meeting the service delivery outcomes was paid to senior corrections officers at the Beechworth prison in the calendar years 2015, 2016 and 2017?

Ms TIERNEY (Minister for Corrections) (12:03) — I thank the member for his question. Obviously I do not have that level of detail in front of me, and I will see, under advisement, whether that can be provided.

Beechworth Correctional Centre

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) (12:03) — My question is again to the Minister for Corrections. Minister, has an investigation been undertaken and a report provided to the Secretary of the Department of Justice and Regulation into allegations of improper conduct at the Beechworth prison?

Ms TIERNEY (Minister for Corrections) (12:04) — This was a matter raised by the member yesterday, and yesterday I confirmed —

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms TIERNEY — Beechworth? I am not aware of the incident or the report that you are referring to.

Supplementary question

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) (12:04) — Minister, does the government have confidence in the way the Beechworth prison is currently managed and operated?

Ms TIERNEY (Minister for Corrections) (12:04) — There have not been matters raised with me in terms of any major difficulties at that facility, Mr O'Donohue.

Youth justice system

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (12:05) — My question is to the Minister for Families and Children. Minister, the Magistrates Court has detailed that young offenders should not be sent to Victoria's youth justice centres because, and I quote, it is 'just becoming a very, very scary place to be in. People have a right to feel safe in there'. Have you received advice that, like the Magistrates Court, the Youth Parole Board also considers youth justice to be a very scary place to be in and is taking into account the violent assaults, regular riots and serious incidents in our youth justice centres as a reason for releasing young offenders back into the community?

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) (12:05) — The tradition of basing questions entirely on *Herald Sun* reports just continues. What I can inform the member is that she is basing her question entirely on arguments made by defence counsel. Of course lawyers will try it on and try to argue that their client should get bail, but if you actually look at the facts, which the member seeks to blissfully ignore, then you will see that the facts are very different to what the member is asserting.

If you look at the most recent quarterly incident data that has been published only in recent weeks, the number of serious incidents has actually declined by 57 per cent on the previous quarter. I also would encourage the member to have a look at the budget papers, because she would see that there are in fact an increased number of young people in custody during the 2017–18 financial year compared to the year before, both remanded and sentenced, as a result of the changes that we are making. In fact the budget papers highlight that the target is being revised up, and the footnote to the budget papers clearly spells out that the Department of Justice and Regulation is projecting a further increase of young people in custody as a result of our government's bail and sentencing reforms.

So we as a government have put in place the toughest bail and sentencing reforms for young offenders — something that those opposite tried to scuttle. Let us not forget that Ms Crozier came in here and tried to kill off these tough reforms to bail and sentencing laws, so what I would say to the member is that she should not base her questions on *Herald Sun* reporting. She should have a look at the budget papers. She should have a look at the facts, and they show that our reforms are in fact resulting in more young people being put into custody.

So the member opposite needs to be clear here. Does she support those reforms or not? What we have actually seen from the member opposite is an attempt to scuttle those legislative changes. We as a government are making the reforms that those opposite failed to do in overhauling our youth justice system, with more than \$1 billion provided to the youth justice system, building a brand-new, state-of-the-art, high-security facility and going and fixing up Ms Wooldridge's gingerbread house at Malmsbury. We basically had to almost double the investment that she put into Malmsbury to fix it up. New double fencing has been funded in the budget this year at Malmsbury and new beds have been funded at Malmsbury and Parkville.

Ms Crozier — On a point of order, President, I would ask you to draw the minister back to the question. She has not answered this at all. She is just debating, and I would ask you to call her back to the question that I asked.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I hear the point of order, and I tend to agree that the minister is debating. My concern is to some extent that the question was one that sought an opinion by the minister rather than actually going to necessarily what was an administrative position. Essentially the question was in a context that was provided in the preamble: is the reason why more offenders are not being kept in secure circumstances and are being released into the community that there is a concern about whether or not the detention centre or youth justice centre is adequate in its facilities to provide not just the detention of those young offenders but a situation where they are also safe and their safety and security are also protected? That, as I understand, is the nub of the question.

Ms Crozier — Has she received advice?

The PRESIDENT — Can I have a copy of the question? The minister certainly was debating. I felt that there was a bit of leeway in it, but I do note that the question did indicate that it sought to understand whether or not the minister had received advice on the ramifications, if you like, of the circumstances in which young people were being detained and whether or not that was leading to other actions. So I do accept that the question is about whether or not the minister has had advice.

Ms MIKAKOS — The member needs to just have a look at the budget papers. The advice that I have had from my department is reflected in the budget papers. There are more young people in custody now than has been the case in the past. In fact since we have been in government there has been a 46 per cent increase in the

number of young offenders remanded in custody, so do not base your information on the *Herald Sun*; base it on the budget papers. The budget papers clearly show that more young people are being put into custody and more young people are being remanded, and in fact as a government we are making the investments in more staff, in improved intelligence functions in our youth justice system and in ensuring that we have got improved facilities and infrastructure in our youth justice system. We have put in place a complete overhaul of the youth justice system, and all Ms Wooldridge did was change the reporting system so that the numbers of incidents could be hidden.

The PRESIDENT — Minister, your time has expired and you are again debating.

Supplementary question

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (12:12) — I note the minister refused to answer that question, so my supplementary is and I ask the minister: further on the Youth Parole Board and considerations for release of young offenders, you instructed your department to review the Youth Parole Board following certain decisions to release young offenders back into the community. Is that review complete, and what recommendations have you implemented from the investigation?

Ms Mikakos — On a point of order, President, I do not think that that supplementary question is apposite to the substantive question, because the first question related to bail matters and remand, based on a media report, and now the member is asking a question about parole matters. I cannot see that they are related in any way.

The PRESIDENT — I think maybe I should have got the member to restate her question at the point where she raised a point of order, in so much as I do believe that the supplementary question is directly relevant to the original question that was proposed. It was the original question that was proposed and that I concur was not answered, perhaps because the minister had not heard the question. I was actually stumbling in my previous ruling from the same point of view, because I actually did not understand the nub of the question and I had missed some of the terminology. I think the minister might have been in the same boat as me. Certainly the first question did go to the parole board. That was in the first question, so from my point of view the supplementary question is in order.

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) (12:14) — I can advise the member, as I have previously advised the house, that I have asked my department to do a review of the youth parole system in Victoria, and I have specifically asked them to consider whether any elements identified through the Callinan review of the Adult Parole Board of Victoria are appropriate or worthy of consideration for the youth parole system. The department has considered a range of issues as part of that process. That work is still underway, and I will have more to say about that matter soon.

What I can say to the member is that our government has already put in place reforms to the parole system through the legislation that the member and those opposite tried to scuttle last year. That related to ensuring that the Youth Parole Board has an obligation to impose certain special conditions on youth offenders for more serious offences: those known as a category A offence, or a category B offence if there is a prior conviction for an A or B offence. Depending on the circumstances, those conditions can include that a person not visit a particular place or area and other such conditions.

Youth justice system

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (12:15) — My question is again to the Minister for Families and Children. Minister, on 30 September last year at 11.00 p.m. a Parkville young offender cut her own wrist, requiring six stitches. The following day a youth offender reopened a previous laceration on her wrist and she required stitches for that wound also. On 8 October last year at 8.30 p.m. a young offender in Parkville self-harmed to her left forearm. She required hospital treatment and also stitches. At 6.00 p.m. the next day the same young offender at Parkville self-harmed to her left forearm and seven stitches were required. Minister, why have you failed in your duty of care to protect offenders from multiple self-harm attempts, including ones occurring within hours of their return from hospital?

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) (12:16) — I have to say I am pretty astounded by that because finally the member opposite has acknowledged the complexity of the young people who are in our youth justice system — something I have been at pains to talk about for the entire time that I have been the relevant minister. That is, yes, we do have some very troubled young people in our youth justice system, whether they are on community-based orders or in custody, that also present with mental health issues. These matters, as I have highlighted on

many previous occasions, are all detailed in the Youth Parole Board annual report in terms of the preponderance of these young people being in the system.

What I can advise the member is that we have had to overhaul the incident reporting system. Your own parliamentary inquiry, that you had control of, highlighted how Mary Wooldridge changed it so that incidents were in fact hidden. We have overhauled it so that it now also includes self-harm incidents. So if you have seen numbers go up, that is because self-harm incidents are now reported to the independent Commission for Children and Young People. They are now disclosed, to improve transparency, through the incident reporting numbers. Most importantly, as a government we have funded improvements to mental health supports for young people in custody.

I talked about this about a year ago. We have brought in more psychologists and mental health clinicians to support young people in custody, and most importantly in this year's budget as part of a \$145 million investment in the youth justice system we are making a very significant improvement to the general health and mental health supports that young people receive in custody. That matter is currently undergoing a procurement process so I cannot go into more detail, but what I can say to the house is that there will be significant improvements to the health and mental health supports offered to young people in custody. What happened under those opposite is that a lot of specialist positions, those running day programs and other activities, were slashed. We had the member opposite slash 20 youth justice workers from the system as part of more than 600 staff that were slashed out of the then Department of Human Services. Now what we have heard from Mr Michael O'Brien in the Assembly, just on Friday, as part of his budget —

Honourable members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Minister, you would be well aware that you are debating, that you are commenting on the opposition and past governments and so forth. I have allowed you to make some of those statements, but I do regard it as debating, and as you know, that is not really what we expect in our responses to questions. The minister to continue, without debating.

Ms MIKAKOS — Thank you, President. The point I am making is that we are investing in the staff of the youth justice system. We have funded more staff, custodial staff, and have ensured there are more mental health clinicians. What we have seen from those

opposite and Mr O'Brien highlighting this is that the razor gang would be back if the Liberals were elected, because we know that slashing the public service and slashing services is just in the Liberal DNA. It is just cut, cut, cut.

Honourable members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Minister, I thought I said something.

Mr Gepp — She was being provoked.

The PRESIDENT — You are not being provoked but you are certainly provoking me, because I suggested that debating was not what I expected in your response to this question and you got up and said exactly the same thing again. Minister, please.

Ms MIKAKOS — Those opposite may not like the answers that I give in this house because they do not like facts. What I can inform those opposite is that we are making the investment that is necessary to overhaul our youth justice system and to make sure that vulnerable young people get the supports that they need. We have introduced a new classification and risk placement system, funded in response to recommendations from the Armytage-Ogloff report, the first independent review in 17 years of the youth justice system, and we have been getting on with the job of fixing those things that those opposite failed to do for four whole years.

Supplementary question

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (12:21) — Minister, youth justice workers claim a death in custody is at a higher possible risk point than ever before, and the examples I have given are from within just a 10-day period.

Ms Mikakos interjected.

Ms CROZIER — Do you want me to repeat the question?

An honourable member — Yes.

Ms CROZIER — Youth justice workers claim a death in custody is at a higher possible risk point than ever before, and the examples I have given are from within just a 10-day period. What urgent action has the Andrews government taken to ensure that these all-too-often-occurring life-and-death situations do not eventuate in a fatality?

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) (12:22) — I can advise the member that there has been no death in custody in the youth justice system. I think it is interesting that those opposite would make these kinds of assertions when in fact they did not even report on self-harm incidents in the critical incident response system. You had incidents hidden away because you just abolished a whole category of incidents. Ms Wooldridge, you just abolished a whole category of incidents. You had them put on case file notes. We are investing in the health and mental health supports necessary, including as part of a \$145 million investment in this year's budget to make sure that vulnerable young people in custody can get more support. When the procurement process is finished I will have more to say about this matter.

The PRESIDENT (12:23) — Members, it is with great pleasure that I welcome to the public gallery today the Honourable John Ajaka, who is the President of the Legislative Council of New South Wales; David Blunt, the Clerk in the New South Wales Parliament; and Ms Daniels. We certainly welcome you here on a visit to understand how we do things in the world's most livable city, which is indeed the holder of the National Soccer League trophy thanks to an event last weekend in your state. Welcome!

Small Business Ministerial Council

Mr ONDARCHIE (Northern Metropolitan) (12:24) — My question is to the Minister for Small Business. Minister, the Small Business Ministerial Council was appointed in February 2016 for two years with a specific remit to voice issues that concern small business to you as minister. Minister, what specific concerns has the board raised with you in the last two years?

Mr DALIDAKIS (Minister for Small Business) (12:24) — Well, it is nice to see the member in this chamber, because he scurried out of the other chamber, that is for sure. He did not seek a pair from this place to go and sit in the gallery in the Legislative Assembly, but he and Mr Finn sure did get a welcome that will probably not see them go back any time soon. President, let me tell you that the ministerial councils are very effective —

Honourable members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT — Ms Lovell, thank you. Mr Dalidakis, without assistance, but perhaps with greater relevance.

Mr DALIDAKIS — Thank you, President. The ministerial councils are of welcome use to us on this side of the chamber to hear what people think and what people need and what people want. We have representation from all areas right across Victoria — north, south, east and west. We have people represented from all different ethnicities on our councils. Again, this is something that is inconvenient for those opposite, but we are making sure that small business is covered in this state, and no more so I can tell you, President, than the work that the Treasurer did in the recent budget, where he provided payroll tax relief to those in rural and regional Victoria — something that has been brought up by the council before; payroll tax.

It is probably good, President, that you welcomed our parliamentary colleagues from New South Wales, because I can inform them that we have the lowest payroll tax in the country — 2.425 per cent. If you are a business in rural and regional Victoria and 85 per cent of your payroll goes to regional employees — it does not matter whether they work in the business where it is located or anywhere else across regional Victoria — you pay half the rate of payroll tax that is paid everywhere else.

But of course that was not the only thing that we have responded to from the council before. The Treasurer has previously pushed out the payroll tax threshold — the first time since 2002. So, there are a myriad of things that the council likes to obviously talk about, including programs that we offer, that include of course programs in terms of farm debt mediation programs. No doubt some people in rural and regional Victoria would like that, but mediation programs have been re-funded to support our farmers when they need our help the most.

Of course we also have other funding for programs, including our small business buses. We also have a new program in relation to digital economy literacy and how we can help our small businesses in rural and regional Victoria — something that the Minister for Regional Development has often spoken with me in private about as to what more we can do to help those businesses. So we have payroll tax cuts — the lowest payroll tax rate in the country — and we have thresholds being pushed out for the first time since 2002, which is something that those opposite did not do for four years when they were in government. They talk about small business and they try and pretend they support small business, but do you know what? At the end of the day they did nothing for small business. No business in Victoria, whether they are in metropolitan Melbourne, whether they are in outer suburban areas or whether they are in rural and regional Victoria, has had it better.

And there is one other thing that we have done for small businesses right across this state: unemployment is at 5.2 per cent. When we came into government it was 6.7 per cent. There is nothing we can do for small business more than ensure there are more people working that have more money in their pockets to spend in their local communities at small businesses.

Supplementary question

Mr ONDARCHIE (Northern Metropolitan) (12:28) — Minister, thank you for outlining what the Treasurer and the Minister for Rural and Regional Development have done for small business in Victoria, not you. Given as small business minister you have failed to take responsibility for the rise of energy costs for small business, small businesses closing down because of level crossing removal work, the mental health of small business owners due to the Frankston station redevelopment, bus operators having their assets seized, taxi operators being screwed over by Labor and small business school cleaners being pushed aside for union mates, I ask: when the Small Business Ministerial Council comes to you with similar concerns for small business, do you tell them to go away, because as small business minister you have taken no responsibility for any of these issues in the small business sector?

Mr DALIDAKIS (Minister for Small Business) (12:29) — Let me tell you, President, there is nothing hidden that will not be revealed and there is nothing secret that will not become known and come to light. That is Luke, chapter 8, verse 17, and that is completely apposite to your question.

Mr Ondarchie — On a point of order, President, the response to the supplementary question was not relevant to the question that was asked. Albeit as much as I appreciate the minister quoting the New Testament in this place, I ask you to consider getting him to respond to this in writing, because I am more than willing —

Honourable members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT — Thank you. Mr Ondarchie, I already have that in mind. I do not actually need a debating response back to the minister. I did regard that answer as unsatisfactory. I think for those people who do have faith — including the minister himself, as I know his genuine faith — to be quoting a book such as the Bible in that context and in the way it has been used actually diminishes the value of that faith. I have commented on that on a previous occasion, and I do ask that you consider that going forward. To use a phrase

from the Bible or a quote from the Bible in the context that you have used it I do not think is very good.

Public housing

Dr RATNAM (Northern Metropolitan) (12:31) — My question is to the minister representing the Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing. Budgets are a statement of priority. They tell us what a government thinks is important. From this year's budget it is clear that roads are important to Labor, prisons are important to Labor and housing, it seems, is not so much. The investment in public housing by this Labor government amounts to just 0.4 per cent of its spending on infrastructure over the next four years — only \$185 million on public housing — despite billions of dollars being found for toll roads. At the same time the government is using the urgent need for renewal and renovation of public housing to sell off our public housing estates. In the midst of a housing affordability crisis with a public housing waiting list of nearly 40 000 applications, why has the Labor government left an investment in public housing to languish in this budget? Or if I can put it another way, what is the justification for only \$185 million for public housing?

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) (12:32) — I find it interesting that the Greens party would ask questions about this matter given their track record in relation to these matters, and that is that when it came to the crunch the Greens party actually tried to scuttle public housing projects in our state. Our government has a proud record when it comes to social housing. We have committed over \$1 billion in this term of government in additional housing and homelessness support, building on \$2.1 billion in financial backing to deliver thousands of new social housing units; 86 672 social housing units are set to be built by June this year — a new record. I commend Minister Foley for that work. Plenty more is coming despite the attempts by those opposite, in cahoots with the Greens party, to prevent these projects from being built. Our \$1 billion Social Housing Growth Fund will add 2200 more homes in four years, and the \$1 billion loan guarantee, \$1 million loan facility and 4000 management transfers will help build even more homes.

Ms Crozier interjected.

Ms MIKAKOS — Ms Crozier, if I were you I would pipe down because all we see from the Liberal Party is nimby arguments. From those opposite all we see is nimby arguments, scaring community members about social housing projects across Victoria and keeping people on waiting lists. All you are interested

in is scaring people about social housing tenants and stigmatising vulnerable members of the community. As a government we have also invested \$152 million in our family violence housing blitz —

Mr Finn interjected.

The PRESIDENT — Mr Finn! That is far too much today.

Ms MIKAKOS — addressing the fastest growing category of homelessness, women escaping family violence. I am proud that in my own portfolio we have almost \$50 million of investment for family violence victims, both women and children, including continued flexible packages for women and children escaping family violence so they can either upgrade their home and the security measures in their home or have the supports that they need if they need to relocate.

So despite what we have seen from those opposite, as well as the Greens party, we are rebuilding rundown estates in communities like Ashburton, Preston, Flemington, Prahran, Ascot Vale, North Melbourne, Brunswick, Northcote, Clifton Hill, Heidelberg West, Hawthorn and Brighton. We are building 50 modular units on underutilised land, despite the Liberal candidate for Brighton's opposition to poor people living near the golden mile. We are transforming rooming houses as well, such as at Elenara and Layfield Street and in Ascot Vale, Flemington, Carlton and Ballarat.

What we have seen from Minister Foley is significant action in this space in responding to the needs of those who are on the housing waiting list as well as those who are experiencing homelessness. That is despite the fact that we are seeing cuts from the Turnbull government when it comes to national partnerships and when it comes to support for people experiencing homelessness. They have got absolutely no interest in supporting the vulnerable. So our housing strategy, *Homes for Victorians*, underlines the strength of our government's commitment, working across government to tackle the growing issue of housing affordability. It is in contrast to those opposite, who absolutely hate social housing, and those commentators who make a virtue of joining them in opposing homes for those in need.

Supplementary question

Dr RATNAM (Northern Metropolitan) (12:36) — Thank you, Minister. I think you failed to grasp the intent of my question, which was about the woeful, inadequate spend on public housing at a time of absolute crisis. In the midst of this crisis the

government is proud of its surpluses, which essentially is money that is not being spent for the benefit of the community. In light of these budget surpluses, can the minister confirm how many homes could be built for Victorians who need a roof over their head if the government spent only half of the projected surplus in the next four years building new public housing?

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) (12:36) — I refer the member to the answer I gave to her substantive question, where I referred to \$1 billion of investment in this term of government. We are getting on with addressing the housing waiting list. We are getting on with putting in more support for homelessness, building on \$2.1 billion in financial backing to deliver thousands of new social housing units. So we are making the investment that is necessary. What we have seen from the Greens party is just sheer hypocrisy when it comes to this issue, because they have voted, together with the Liberal Party, to in fact stop these important projects from actually taking place. On at least two occasions we have had the Greens party voting with the coalition to continue to stop these projects from being built in different communities across Victoria.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Minister, again, I think you are debating. It was a very specific question. I can accept that if I were in your place I would not be in a position to answer it at this time either, but that does not allow you to simply go on and debate other matters and particularly to reflect on the Greens, or the opposition for that matter, as you know.

Ms MIKAKOS — Thank you, President. It is just that if the member asked the question, given her party's track record, then she is leading with her chin. I am just pointing out the sheer hypocrisy of the Greens party.

Parental healthcare rights

Dr CARLING-JENKINS (Western Metropolitan) (12:38) — My question is for the minister representing the Minister for Health. In February 2018 the Alder Hey Children's Hospital in England took action in the High Court to procure an order against the expressed wishes of parents Tom and Kate James, requiring that ventilation be withdrawn from their son, Alfie. Victorian parents have expressed their outrage and are very concerned that the 'better off dead than disabled' mindset evident in this case could infiltrate our public hospitals, and they have flooded my office with these concerns. Can the Minister for Health assure these parents that neither the Royal Children's Hospital nor any other state-funded hospital would take such a course of action if faced with a similar case?

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) (12:39) — I am in a bit of a difficult position because there is a hypothetical being asked in the member's question referring to a tragic case that occurred in the United Kingdom. I have seen some media reports about that particular case. I must confess that I am not across all the details of exactly what happened there, but I am aware that there was a very tragic case of a young child being very seriously ill, and I acknowledge the anguish of the family involved in that particular matter. What I can advise the member is that, in relation to the legislation that the Special Minister of State had carriage of, those matters did not relate to children.

Mr Jennings interjected.

Ms MIKAKOS — Yes. The member would be aware that the voluntary assisted dying (VAD) scheme did not apply to children and also that disability alone would not form the basis for accessing the scheme for adults either. But in relation to the specific matter, given the complexity and the sensitivity of this particular issue, I will be very happy to seek some further advice from the Minister for Health in providing the member with a response in relation to this particular issue.

Supplementary question

Dr CARLING-JENKINS (Western Metropolitan) (12:41) — I thank the minister for her very compassionate response, and I do understand that VAD does not apply to children. That is not actually where I was trying to direct that question, to be quite honest, and I do look forward to a more full response from the Minister for Health. I am also happy to supply the Minister for Health's office with more information on this specific case to assist in that. As I said in my substantive question, parents are very concerned about what might happen here, so can the Minister for Health make a clear statement of support for the right of parents to make healthcare decisions for their child, including a clear statement of any exceptions to this right?

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) (12:41) — I will seek to provide a written response to the member's supplementary question in addition to her substantive question in relation to these particular issues, acknowledging that these are incredibly complex and sensitive matters. Of course our government is absolutely committed to ensuring that children, including children with disability, are always supported through our health system.

The PRESIDENT — I might say that I actually was a little bit concerned about the substantive question too because, as the minister picked up, there was a hypothetical aspect to that question, but it is a significant issue.

Can I also, with pleasure, welcome to the gallery today another former member of this house, Rosemary Varty. Welcome back.

Gambling regulation

Ms PATTEN (Northern Metropolitan) (12:42) — My question is for the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, who is represented by Mr Dalidakis. On 24 April the minister announced a major new study into gambling and health to help prevent and reduce gambling harm in the future. Specifically the minister announced that the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation will provide \$1 million to Central Queensland University to undertake research into emerging gambling products, consumer behaviours and gambling harm. We are advised that the university study of 11 000 Victorians will gather data on the prevalence of low, moderate and problem gambling in Victoria, which will be used to develop stronger, more targeted responses to gambling harm. Some of my constituents contacted me about this and they welcomed it, but the question they ask is: why was this study not commissioned before the government committed to new 20-year gaming machine licences, despite there being no rush to extend those licences, which are not due to expire until 2022?

Mr DALIDAKIS (Minister for Trade and Investment) (12:43) — I thank the member for the question. It is a serious question, and I will have it passed on to the minister in the other place.

Firearm permits

Mr BOURMAN (Eastern Victoria) (12:44) — I was going to launch into a set policy speech at the moment, but I will leave that to the Greens. I just want information today, so my question is just for the Minister for Police, represented by Minister Tierney in this place.

Honourable members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I have got no idea what Mr Bourman is saying.

Mr BOURMAN — Some people have no sense of humour. Anyway, my substantive question is —

The PRESIDENT — Can I understand, Mr Bourman, who it is directed to, because I did not hear it.

Mr BOURMAN — It is to the Minister for Police, represented by Minister Tierney in this place. Minister, just how many illegal suppressors, silencers or similar devices have been seized by Victoria Police over the last five years per year?

Ms TIERNEY (Minister for Training and Skills) (12:44) — I thank the member for his question, which is to the Minister for Police, in relation to firearms. I will refer that matter to that minister, and I am sure that she will respond within the guidelines.

Supplementary question

Mr BOURMAN (Eastern Victoria) (12:45) — I thank the minister. My supplementary question is: how many permits for legal suppressors or silencers have Victoria Police issued per year for the last five years?

Ms TIERNEY (Minister for Training and Skills) (12:45) — Again, I will refer the supplementary question to the minister concerned, the Minister for Police, and I am sure that she will respond within the time frames.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Answers

Mr JENNINGS (Special Minister of State) (12:45) — There are 10 written responses to questions on notice: 11 480, 11 502, 11 525, 11 547, 11 569, 12 549, 12 550–2, 12 555.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Written responses

The PRESIDENT (12:45) — In respect of today's questions I would seek to have written responses to Mr O'Donohue's first question to Ms Tierney, both the substantive and supplementary questions, and that is one day; Mr O'Donohue's second question to Ms Tierney, just the substantive question, and that is one day; Ms Crozier's question to Ms Mikakos, the substantive question, one day; Mr Ondarchie's question to Mr Dalidakis, the substantive and supplementary questions, one day; and Dr Ratnam's question to Ms Mikakos, the supplementary question, one day. Actually that might be two days because that might well involve the Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing in another place, so that is two days. Regarding Dr Carling-Jenkins's question to Ms Mikakos, the

substantive and supplementary questions, the minister has indicated that she is happy to refer that to her colleague in another place, so that is two days. Ms Patten's question to Mr Dalidakis, the substantive question, is two days. Regarding Mr Bourman's question to Ms Tierney, again Ms Tierney has indicated that she is happy to refer that matter for a written response to the minister in another place, her colleague — both the substantive and supplementary questions — so that is two days.

CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS

Eastern Metropolitan Region

Ms WOOLDRIDGE (Eastern Metropolitan) (12:47) — My constituency question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and I ask: how much of taxpayers money is being spent by VicRoads to pay for providing free coffee and cupcakes to Eltham residents on Saturday while at the same time this government refuses to compensate traders? VicRoads is advertising to 'Give Mum a treat on Bolton Street', saying the cakes and coffee are being paid for by VicRoads to celebrate Mother's Day. 'It's also a way of saying thanks for your patience while we upgraded Bolton Street', the advertisements say.

VicRoads has previously paid for hampers for traders to give away to customers, but this government has failed to compensate shopkeepers who suffered losses of up to 40 per cent for months while the upgrade of Bolton Street dragged on and on. Instead of actively helping compensate the traders, the minister directed them to the Law Institute of Victoria referral service website for legal advice. These are hardworking traders who deserve much better than that. This appears to be a matter, just as is attributed to Marie Antoinette, of saying 'Let them eat cake'.

Northern Metropolitan Region

Ms PATTEN (Northern Metropolitan) (12:48) — My constituency question is for the Minister for Emergency Services. I had a constituent come and see me the other week, and he has been diagnosed with Parkinson's disease. He is a professional firefighter of 32 years. In speaking to me he showed me some research studies that show the prevalence of Parkinson's disease amongst firefighters is 30 cases per 1000, whereas it is only three to four per 1000 in the general population. As a consequence of these findings the USA jurisdictions of Indiana and Massachusetts have introduced presumptive legislation for firefighters with Parkinson's disease. Sadly, due to what happened in this house on Good Friday, we do not currently have

a firefighters presumptive rights scheme in Victoria. However, my constituent asks whether the minister will consider including Parkinson's disease in any future iteration of Victorian presumptive rights legislation.

Eastern Victoria Region

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) (12:49) — My constituency question is for the Minister for Police. In recent times there have been a number of very disturbing attacks in and around the Lakeside shopping centre, the Cardinia Road railway station and the adjoining shopping precinct and residential precinct. Some of these attacks have taken place in broad daylight and have involved families and children. There is enormous concern in that part of Pakenham, and in Pakenham more generally, about some of the attacks that have taken place to steal handbags, mobile phones, wallets and other valuables — they have often involved unnecessary violence and aggression. The question I have is: will the Minister for Police work with the Chief Commissioner of Police to see a strong, visible police presence in this precinct in the coming weeks to provide a strong deterrent and community reassurance?

Northern Metropolitan Region

Dr RATNAM (Northern Metropolitan) (12:50) — My question is to the Minister for Tourism and Major Events. On 20 March I asked the minister representing the Minister for Tourism and Major Events about reviewing the operation, management and board of Federation Square given the serious concerns about its disregard of its civic and cultural charter and the proposed Apple megastore that will corporatise this public space. I received a very inadequate response from Minister Dalidakis to my last question on this matter, and in the meantime we have seen the visitor centre at Fed Square closed and reports that the new digital screen project has stalled because the builder has gone into liquidation.

Victorians are continuing to protest the Apple store at Fed Square with posters across the city and on social media — citizens to whom the minister has been sarcastic and dismissive, as has been demonstrated in recent social media comments. The contempt towards the community and the willingness to sell our public square to the highest bidder has been reported as a model of poor urban governance. What oversight is the state government providing Federation Square management to ensure that our public asset is being managed in the best interests of the public?

Eastern Victoria Region

Ms BATH (Eastern Victoria) (12:51) — My constituency question is directed to the Treasurer, the Honourable Tim Pallas. On 8 May the member for Melbourne in the Assembly, in a post-budget speech media release, stated:

As part of our budget negotiations, the Greens have been able to secure some great wins.

Targeted in the member for Melbourne's budget response was the complete shutting down of the coal industry; the scrapping of the recently announced hydrogen project, which will be located in the Latrobe Valley; and the creation of the great forest national park, which would effectively kill Gippsland's sustainable timber industry. My constituents are rightly scared and afraid of this coalition. These proposals could have diabolical consequences for the whole of the Gippsland region, and I ask: what deals have the Andrews Labor government struck as part of these secret Labor-Greens coalition negotiations?

Western Victoria Region

Mr PURCELL (Western Victoria) (12:53) — My constituency question is also to the Treasurer. An inspired project to be built in Warrnambool is an interactive war memorial, which was unveiled in August last year and was met with great enthusiasm. This is a unique memorial in regional Australia. It will list 12 000 local servicemen and servicewomen and can be updated to recognise current and future war heroes from our region. The expected cost is \$330 000 and it was initially backed by a combination of funding from the RSL, the federal government, the state government, the Moyne shire and the Warrnambool City Council. The organising committee has had a major setback, with Warrnambool City Council now withdrawing their contribution of \$25 000, citing rate capping as limiting the funds available for such one-off projects. My question is: will the Treasurer come to the rescue of this hardworking RSL branch to allow this project to be completed?

Northern Victoria Region

Mr GEPP (Northern Victoria) (12:54) — My constituency question is for the Treasurer, and it is in regard to the 2018–19 budget and the overall spending for Mildura in my electorate of Northern Victoria Region. The member for Mildura in the other place has been stirring up controversy in the local news about the Andrews government's record on spending in Mildura yet he continually talks down this thriving regional city. In fact he went so far as to say that the budget was

nothing but crumbs for Mildura. There were numerous statewide initiatives, including the delivery of free TAFE and support for regional jobs by slashing the payroll tax rate for regional businesses from 3.65 per cent to 2.425 per cent, making it the lowest in Australia. Both of these initiatives will help local businesses, students and families in Mildura every day. Can the Treasurer outline some of the investments that the Andrews Labor government has made in Mildura and regional Victoria over the course of this government and compare that with the record of the previous government?

South Eastern Metropolitan Region

Ms SPRINGLE (South Eastern Metropolitan) (12:55) — My constituency question is for the Minister for Families and Children. The Queen Elizabeth Centre (QEC) in Noble Park has been providing health and social support to parents and young children for over a century. QEC is funded by the Department of Health and Human Services. It comprises a registered public hospital with 42 inpatient beds at six community sites across Victoria. While demand for QEC services continues to grow, including an increase in the number of child protection notifications, funding limitations are resulting in waiting lists of up to three months for urgent care. An additional investment of \$750 000 would fund services to an additional 36 families per year, decreasing waiting lists and providing vital care to families in need. Will the minister make provisions to address this funding shortfall to ensure that families have access to the support and care they need from QEC?

Northern Metropolitan Region

Mr ONDARCHIE (Northern Metropolitan) (12:56) — My constituency question is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and it concerns the area of Greenvale in my electorate of Northern Metropolitan Region. I do acknowledge that after the great campaigning by local advocate and campaigner Jim Overend the government has come kicking and screaming to duplicate Craigieburn Road. I congratulate Jim on the work that he has done. Despite a northern roads package being promised over three years ago the government have just finally indicated to Mr Overend and others that they may duplicate Craigieburn Road —

An honourable member interjected.

Mr ONDARCHIE — And he was well acknowledged in the *Hume Leader* this week for the great work he has done in advocating for that area. My question to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety is

around Somerton Road and Mickleham Road in Greenvale. Can he advise me when they will be duplicated?

Southern Metropolitan Region

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) (12:56) — My constituency question today is for the Minister for Water in the other place. Riley Reserve in Murrumbena is a very important area of parkland, and it is another area of parkland and vegetation that is under threat from this government. Tree removal is being undertaken in that parkland this week as part of Melbourne Water's Murrumbena to Malvern flood mitigation project. I quote:

This tree is required to be removed because it is located within the work zone.

A whole strand of trees are in this work zone — there will be nothing left in Riley Reserve. There have already been hundreds and hundreds of trees cut out of that corridor — the Greens were no help there — as part of the sky rail process, including large established trees. The suburb is being outrageously denuded by this government. What I ask is: can the minister, in light of the sky rail activities, make sure that the flood mitigation process, which appears to be linked with the sky rail too, does not occur in such a way that every tree in Riley Reserve is cut down?

Sitting suspended 12.58 p.m. until 2.03 p.m.

PRIMARY INDUSTRIES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2017

Debate resumed.

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Agriculture) (14:03) — The final set of comments from the second-reading debate that I will take the opportunity to respond to at this juncture are the remarks made by Mr Young. Mr Young has flagged that he will move some amendments. There is a motion on the notice paper about expanding the scope of the bill that the government will not be opposing so that we can get into this in more detail in the committee stage. Mr Young's amendments, as indicated during this second-reading debate, seek to provide that the Game Management Authority (GMA) has similar functions and powers to the Victorian Fisheries Authority. This is something that Mr Young has sought to do in this place on a previous occasion. I would just like to provide some response to those comments.

The government did not support Mr Young's last attempt to do this, not because we have some major philosophical problem or point of difference with Mr Young on this question but because we just do not know the consequences of this for the regulator, and by consequences I mean the operational and budgetary consequences of what Mr Young is proposing. So that was the reason we did not support it at the time. Now a bit of water has flowed under the bridge since that period.

For context, the Game Management Authority was established in 2014. It was something the former government established. The authority had I think a reasonably quiet first couple of years, largely influenced by seasonal conditions, and a new organisation always needs a little settling in time. In 2017 the GMA had oversight of the opening weekend of duck season, which is one of their bigger events for the year in terms of managing crowds and managing hunting and where there is a high level of public scrutiny over the activity and indeed the efforts of the regulator. Now, I think that most people would agree that the GMA did not pass their first significant test well.

Following that and following some unacceptable conduct by what I believe was a small minority of hunters, I sought a full review and evaluation of the GMA so that we could properly explore why there had been such failures. That report has been provided to the GMA board. It was provided at some point earlier in the year to the 7.30 report, so everyone knows what is in it. The report now sits on the GMA website. It is an important context for Mr Young's amendments. If I could read just a few of the unpleasant findings from the Pegasus report:

The GMA has not been able to effectively deliver its compliance and enforcement responsibilities.

...

The GMA is regarded is perceived by its external stakeholders and its own staff as unable to positively influence hunter behaviour or effectively sanction illegal or irresponsible behaviours.

It goes on to say:

The GMA's inability to ensure compliance with the hunting laws has seriously undermined its credibility as an independent and effective regulator ...

...

The GMA's role as a regulator should be clarified and the independence of its licensing, compliance and enforcement functions protected.

The report says:

The separation of the GMA's regulatory functions from other advisory and promotional activities, and their location in a larger, related regulator, would protect the independence of the GMA's licensing, compliance and enforcement functions and provide access to additional regulatory capabilities and support.

The report goes on and on for many pages, and it is very unpleasant reading indeed. It states that if the current arrangement is not addressed it:

... will contribute to continued non-compliance with the game hunting laws and the erosion of the hunting community's social licence.

The report says that:

Reform will require concerted action by government and non-government stakeholders.

It talks about how the GMA needs to be a 'key player in these efforts', but that 'the scope of the changes required are beyond the direct authority and capability of the GMA to deliver without the assistance, cooperation and leadership of departments and agencies'.

It is a scathing report. So we put in place some arrangements to assist the GMA to get through the 2018 opening of the duck hunting season. The board, which is overwhelmingly a new board — the chair is reasonably new and indeed was the person who commissioned this report — has accepted all of the recommendations in that report, apart from one. That report really goes to the very essence of whether or not the GMA is actually a good vehicle through which to regulate hunting.

I believe that we have a responsibility to ensure that hunting is regulated. The government has been absolutely clear about supporting safe and sustainable hunting in Victoria. We have funded the *Sustainable Hunting Action Plan*, and work is underway on all of those actions — I think the signs should be going up in the state game reserves very soon, if they are not already — and many other actions. There are reforms that have been given effect through regulations and further reforms that will be given effect through this bill that we are debating today that I think demonstrate our commitment to ensuring that hunters in Victoria can undertake their activity of choice in a way that is safe and lawful. We respect that, and we want that to be regulated well. I know that the hunting groups want it to be regulated well, and I think Mr Young wants it to be regulated well.

My point is that right now it is not a good time to give the GMA a whole lot of extra things to do, because we have a report that states fairly clearly that they are not coping very well with the things that they are already required to do. I know that people will probably say, 'What about resources?'. The report makes it clear that there is much more to this problem than resources. There is the question of the culture that exists within the organisation. The reforms that are required are significant and they are underway, but these are very early days in that journey.

As I said, I think back in February when this report first became public, there is a very serious question for government to consider, and that we are considering, about whether the GMA will survive in its current form. I have not yet come to a conclusion on that question, but right now I think piling a whole lot of additional responsibility on the GMA is a really bad idea and can probably only serve to hasten the demise of the Game Management Authority. It is my preference to get it back on its feet and have it operating properly so that hunters and the people in the community who do not like hunting can all equally have confidence that this activity is being properly regulated. I think that is important.

I get the impression that Mr Young's amendments will probably be successful in the house today, but I implore members to think about the consequences of them. There are other amendments in this bill that are very good for our hunting community, particularly the ones that support the regulations around the harvesting of wild deer and their being able to be processed in a PrimeSafe licensed facility. The legislative changes that are in the bill will enable deer to be processed in a mobile facility and permit deer to be processed for personal consumption by a private service provider — that is, not a PrimeSafe licensed butcher. We can get into all of that in much more detail. I know that this is something very, very important to our hunting community, something that they have sought for a long time.

I note Mr Young's comments about the work that the government has done in terms of fisheries and the way that other parts of this legislation relate to that. I note also Mr Ramsay's advocacy and that of Seafood Industry Victoria for fishing licence holders in Port Phillip Bay who very much need this bill to pass. I would encourage all members who are concerned about these issues — any of them; it does not matter which one really; the whole suite of them — to think about the consequences of an amendment that is unworkable and that will delay the passage of all the other aspects of this bill.

Mr Davis — Is that a threat, is it?

Ms PULFORD — No, it is not; it is just a fact. If the bill is made unworkable after today, then I will need to consult with stakeholders and reflect on what we do next about that. But I can absolutely tell you that the Game Management Authority, as it stands today, is not equipped to take on a whole lot of new tasks. We are flat out supporting the Game Management Authority to undertake the tasks that it was given by the former government when they set up the Game Management Authority.

Mr Rich-Phillips — Are we going to talk about resourcing of it in committee?

Ms PULFORD — Yes, sure, we can talk about resourcing of it in committee. The resourcing is as we inherited, but the Pegasus report makes it absolutely clear that the problems at the GMA are far greater than questions simply of resourcing. I urge people, including Mr Young, to reflect on that. The government will be opposing those amendments today, but we do look forward to a discussion on all the other aspects of a bill that amends many acts of Parliament and makes many important changes on all manner of different parts of our primary industries.

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Instruction to committee

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Elasmr) — I have considered the amendments circulated by Mr Young, and in my view amendments 1, 4 and 5 are not within the scope of the bill. Therefore an instruction motion pursuant to standing order 15.07 is required. I remind the house that an instruction to committee is a procedural debate.

Mr YOUNG (Northern Victoria) (14:15) — I move:

That it be an instruction to the committee that they have the power to consider new clauses to amend the objectives and functions of the Game Management Authority under the Game Management Authority Act 2014.

In doing so, I would just like to clarify for members that this instruction motion is not on the amendments that we are seeking to move but simply a mechanism of the house to enable them to be moved at a later point, so a possible division on these would not be a reflection on the merit of those amendments. It is simply so we can move forward.

Motion agreed to.

Committed.

Committee

Clause 1

Mr DAVIS — It might be an opportunity to, just on this first clause, ask about some broader parameters. The minister gave a long homily or diatribe before. She laid out some concerns she has with Mr Young's proposed amendments, and the chamber has obviously voted to allow the amendments to be considered in committee. The minister made reference in her second-reading contribution to a number of reviews. She talked about the Pegasus review, which she says indicates that the Game Management Authority is not particularly functional. She also made reference to another review and this was about its regulatory duties. Is that a separate review? Is that the same review or was there another one? There is only one review, is that correct?

Ms PULFORD — Yes, that is correct. The review was undertaken by Pegasus Economics. The Game Management Authority engaged them in July 2017, not very long after the failures at the opening weekend of the 2017 duck season had occurred. That is the review.

Clause agreed to; clauses 2 to 40 agreed to.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Elasmr) — I invite Mr Young to move his amendment 1, which is a test for his amendments 4 and 5.

New clauses

Mr YOUNG — I move:

1. Insert the following new clauses to follow clause 40—

'A Objectives of the Authority

For section 5(b) of the **Game Management Act 2014** substitute—

- “(b) to optimise the social, cultural and economic benefits of game hunting; and
- (c) to support the development of recreational game hunting; and
- (d) to support the development of commercial game hunting; and
- (e) to work cooperatively with game hunting bodies in other States, in Territories and the Commonwealth; and
- (f) to perform its functions and exercise its powers in any manner it considers best achieves its objectives.

B Functions

In section 6 of the **Game Management Act 2014**—

- (a) for paragraph (a) **substitute**—
 - “(a) to inform and educate game hunters and the public about rights and obligations in relation to game hunting; and”;
- (b) for paragraph (c) **substitute**—
 - “(c) to monitor, investigate, enforce and promote compliance with this Act and other Acts and the regulations made under them in so far as they relate to game hunting; and”;
- (c) in paragraph (g), after “responsibility in” **insert** “relation to recreational and commercial”;
- (d) in paragraph (i)(iv), for “habitat.” **substitute** “habitat; and”;
- (e) after paragraph (i) **insert**—
 - “(j) to provide advice to the Minister or Secretary to assist in the development of strategic policy or legislation in relation to the development or management of game hunting and game management in Victoria; and
 - (k) to administer grants approved by the Minister in relation to game and game hunting.”.

These new clauses contain the bulk of the amendments that I am putting forward today, with the rest of them being mostly consequential. This amendment aims to amend the objectives and functions of the Game Management Authority. I just want to again make the point that the wording in these amendments and the way in which they have been structured is to specifically reflect the Victorian Fisheries Authority Act 2016. They are done in such a way as to standardise the two organisations, to bring them into sync with each other, and to enable both of the organisations to operate in the same way. It is recognised, I suppose, that the Victorian Fisheries Authority is actually working and working well, and they are provided with the funding to do so. I am proposing these amendments to amend the Game Management Authority Act 2015 in the hope that some of the issues that the minister has raised in the context of what has been reflected in the Pegasus report may in fact be addressed.

Mr DAVIS — The opposition will support Mr Young on his amendment. At the time that he proposed his bill we supported it. We see merit in a

number of the points that he is trying to achieve. The minister put a case in her second-reading contribution against some of the matters that Mr Young advances here. She pointed to the review. I am not sure that a review of this nature actually deals with many of the issues that Mr Young is trying to raise. I think that we can take an overly bureaucratic view and forget that there are other important objectives here. I think Mr Young’s approach certainly sharpens those functions and objectives of the Game Management Authority.

Dr RATNAM — The Greens will not be supporting Mr Young’s amendment. I think it is worth noting that my colleague Ms Pennicuik has raised several serious concerns over time about the functioning of the Game Management Authority (GMA). In fact we have called for the GMA to be abolished and for its functions to be returned to the departments. Now is not the time, given the serious concerns that have been raised about the Game Management Authority, for its powers and functions to be expanded, when so much scrutiny is being placed on its functions and operations.

The Pegasus report found several serious concerns over how the GMA was operating. It has failed to fulfil its compliance and enforcement responsibilities and the institutional framework is fragmented. It is not just a matter of resourcing and making its operations function better and then these expanded functions will somehow be realised — there is a fundamental problem with the framework that guides the GMA, which is why so many issues have arisen around its functions. There have been questions around its independence and its impartiality, with many suggestions that it is indeed not an independent body, and it poses many risks in terms of its current operations.

The report findings, as I said, were damning about the GMA’s operation, its effectiveness, its governance framework, its regulation and its operating model. So we reiterate that as there have been so many serious concerns raised about how the GMA works, now is not the time to be expanding its functions. For those reasons we will not be supporting the amendment.

Ms PULFORD — I do not have a great deal to add to what I said in the summing up of the second-reading debate, but the government will oppose this amendment because we believe that in the current context it is unworkable. I think Mr Davis has sought to make light of the findings in the Pegasus report. I also think Mr Davis is understating somewhat the consequences of Mr Young’s amendments.

I understand Mr Young's objectives here. We took a different approach to the previous government in establishing the Victorian Fisheries Authority. I think Mr Young prefers the approach that we took. What the amendment that Mr Davis is supporting seeks to do is shift the GMA's role to make it much more like the Victorian Fisheries Authority, but it is quite a fundamental shift in terms of what the organisation and staff would do every day when they get there and the structure of the organisation. The former government chose a model in establishing the Game Management Authority that is very much that of a pure regulator. In fact part of the GMA's challenge, I think, is that in the time since they were established they have not been a regulator that has sought to engage with the people they are regulating in a way that perhaps some of our other regulators do, and in my portfolio there are a number of others that I can think of that take a different approach. This is such a fundamental shift in the approach and the structure of the organisation.

As I have indicated previously, we do not really know — and I invite Mr Young to respond to this — what the financial consequences of this would be and what the organisational consequences of this would be. I do not know how much thought of the consequences Mr Young has given this, but I certainly cannot with any confidence say that the GMA has the resources to undertake these tasks.

But aside from the question of resources, even if we were all of a view that they ought to have a role in the development of hunting and the promotion of hunting, the GMA is just not in a position to do it at the moment. The board is working through this really very critical report, based on a deep analysis of the problems that are bedevilling the Game Management Authority, and I am just very concerned that if this becomes part of its legislative requirement, the whole thing will become impossibly difficult. It is already very, very difficult. We need a functioning hunting regulator in this state, and hunters need an effective regulator in the state.

So we will be opposing this, and if this amendment is successful and this bill goes amended to the lower house, then the government will take some time to reflect on what that will mean and whether or not we have the confidence to pass this bill with these amendments in the lower house. Right now I have a very, very low level of confidence that the GMA could manage this in the context of all of the things it is currently managing.

Mr YOUNG — It is somewhat difficult for me in many ways to respond to some of the questions, being an upper house member for a minor party. We do not

have the resourcing behind us that a government or a minister would have to look into the intricate details of the funding that would be required for the operation of the GMA. But I will be very frank that it is very obvious that it would need an increase in funding. It is very obvious that it would need an increase in staffing, and there are also other things that we have been advocating for a long time. Those are the things that we believe this amendment would provide a mechanism for to start fixing them. Then we would not be saying that the system is broken at the same time as saying that we do not want another system.

That is where I suppose I get a bit caught up with the reasons why the government is opposing my amendments, on the one hand saying that the system is broken and needs review and then on the other hand not going with a system that the government designed and has admitted is working very well in fisheries. It is the same system. We have actually used your approach, so it is a bit of a contradiction in those terms.

I will reiterate that extra funding and resourcing and a greater ability for the GMA to be able to perform those roles are needed. We wanted it under the current framework and we wanted it under this framework, and I absolutely recognise that more is needed. I am sorry, but I do not have a department that can work those things out. I would imagine that in the time that has elapsed from my bill on this issue until now, particularly given the primary industries bill has come up and we have had several months between the flagging of these amendments and when they have hit the table now, some work may have been able to be done on that issue of whether the government could provide me with some of those answers. But it is simply beyond me to be able to do that in any certain terms.

I have just one more point. The minister has used the Pegasus report quite a bit in her response to the second-reading debate and again at the start of the committee stage. The Pegasus report has some very damning things in it. I ask the minister if she could provide any clarity around the independence of that report, given the history of the organisation that was used in the commissioning of that Pegasus report and its previous work on other things such as for Animals Australia and the RSPCA — in the work that has been done on issues like the other live export industry. That report has some really serious questions hanging over it. The Greens most certainly are wrapped with that report; they have pretty much said so. I bet they would have been doing backflips of joy when it came out. They think it is an excuse, a reason — 'It is all we need now to shut down the GMA'. That is what they want,

and the government is starting to move down that path. I seriously have questions as to the independence of the body in commissioning that report.

Mr DAVIS — I want to make some further commentary on this. The truth of the matter, as the minister in a sense has let the cat out of the bag, is that the GMA was created by the former government. This government is not committed to it. It would prefer it went — was disbanded and dealt with differently —

Ms Pulford — We're trying to fix it.

Mr DAVIS — No, the truth of the matter is that the government would like to take a very different approach. I am not persuaded by the feeble points that have been made. The fact is that whatever deficiencies are there can be managed and dealt with and can be improved, and these changes that have been proposed by Mr Young are a step in that direction. Let us be quite clear —

Ms Pulford — You're embarrassing yourself.

Mr DAVIS — No, I am calling you out for the fact that you actually want to pull the GMA down. That is the truth of the matter. This is a very clear example —

Ms Pennicuik — I do.

Mr DAVIS — I know you do, but this is the Greens and Labor working in unison to attack the GMA, a body neither of them ever liked. That is actually truly what is going on here. Let us be very clear about what is occurring.

Ms PULFORD — If I could just quickly respond, it is clear that Mr Davis is unfamiliar with the matter he is talking about. The GMA was established by the former government. It seemed to all appearances to be undertaking its task adequately until it had its first difficult test —

Ms Pennicuik interjected.

Ms PULFORD — Ms Pennicuik would disagree with that. The government has no agenda about the GMA. The government's view is that hunting ought to be properly regulated, and the government now has a report before it that says that we have got real problems with the regulator. The regulator that we set up, as Mr Young indicated, is the one that is travelling pretty well, I think, although we had the benefit of learning from the former government's mistakes. These are issues that have only really come to light in relatively recent times, certainly the extent of them —

Ms Pennicuik interjected.

Ms PULFORD — I can hear Ms Pennicuik over my shoulder, who probably has a different view to the government on this.

Ms Pennicuik interjected.

Ms PULFORD — Thank you, Ms Pennicuik. Our priority and our focus is on ensuring that hunting is properly regulated. It is absolutely imperative that it is properly regulated, and at the moment there are some real deficiencies. So we have this review. I heard the aspersions that Mr Young was casting about Pegasus Economics. It is a consultancy that was commissioned by the Game Management Authority. It was not commissioned by the government, it was commissioned by the Game Management Authority and, as I understand, it has considerable expertise in the review of regulators. So if Mr Young has a problem with Pegasus, a company with whom I have had no dealings ever, I would encourage him perhaps to take it up with the company however he may choose. But the report does present us with a serious problem, which we are taking seriously. The findings in that report do certainly ring true, and I think they need to be taken seriously and not dismissed, so that is what we are doing.

Mr YOUNG — At the risk of causing confusion, I would like to respond to two points made by the minister just now. The first is in relation to the assertion by the minister that they have created a body with a framework that is working well.

Ms Pulford — It is.

Mr YOUNG — Again she is standing by that. You have created a body with a framework that is working well. At the same time you are saying that the previous government created a body with a framework that did not work, as well as indicating that you are going to oppose an amendment that would change the body that you just said did not work into the same framework as the body you are claiming does.

That is the point that I have been making the entire time. You are recognising that it works and opposing the changes at the same time, and it does not make sense.

On the second point, in relation to the GMA commissioning Pegasus Economics, I just want to ask a question of the minister as to where the recommendation for that group came from — whether that recommendation came from the department or from somewhere in the government.

Ms PULFORD — If I can just respond to the first part and then I will take some advice on the second, Mr Young is suggesting that changing the functions of the authority would fix all of the problems. It is analogous to putting a second storey on a house that has weak foundations.

Mr Young interjected.

Ms PULFORD — My point — and we probably should wrap this up because it is all getting very repetitious for us all — is that the GMA is not in a fit state to be taking on a whole new task at the moment. If we were setting the GMA up from scratch, maybe we would set it up the way we set up the Victorian Fisheries Authority, but you missed the point that at the moment the GMA is not able to adequately perform the tasks it already has, let alone a whole lot of new tasks. So on this I think we just have to agree to disagree. On the question of the consultant's appointment, I will be back in a second.

I am advised that the GMA, when embarking on the review that they undertook, sought a list of organisations that would be skilled in this kind of review and that was provided.

Committee divided on new clauses:

Ayes, 21

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

Noes, 19

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

New clauses agreed to.

Clause 41

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Elasmar) — I invite Mr Young to move his amendments 2 and 3.

Mr YOUNG — I move:

2. Clause 41, after line 10 insert —

‘(1) For section 8(2) of the **Game Management Act 2014** substitute—

“(2) If the Authority is given a written direction under subsection (1), the Authority must publish the direction—

- (a) in the Government Gazette within 14 days of receiving the direction; and
- (b) in its annual report; and
- (c) on its Internet site.”.

3. Clause 41, line 11, before “After” insert “(2)”.

Mr DAVIS — We will support these amendments.

Committee divided on amendments:

Ayes, 21

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

Noes, 19

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

Amendments agreed to.

Amended clause agreed to; clauses 42 to 73 agreed to.

Clause 74**Mr YOUNG** — I move:

4. Clause 74, line 11, omit “77” and insert “79”.
5. Clause 74, line 19, omit “77” and insert “79”.

Committee divided on amendments:*Ayes, 21*

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

Noes, 19

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

Amendments agreed to.**Amended clause agreed to; clauses 75 to 104 agreed to.****Reported to house with amendments.****Report adopted.***Third reading***Motion agreed to.****Read third time.**

**OFFSHORE PETROLEUM AND
GREENHOUSE GAS STORAGE
AMENDMENT BILL 2017**

*Second reading***Debate resumed from 14 December 2017; motion of Mr JENNINGS (Special Minister of State).**

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) (15:03) — I have pleasure in making a few remarks on the Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage

Amendment Bill 2017 on behalf of the Liberal and National parties and indicate at the outset that we will not be opposing the bill. The purpose of the bill is to amend the Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Act 2010 to provide protections for the holders of petroleum titles affected by changes to the boundary between the offshore area and the commonwealth-defined offshore area.

The amendments in this bill are to ensure that the titleholders who are affected by such a boundary change receive equivalent entitlements to those that they would have otherwise had were it not for the boundary change. This will maintain the integrity of the title area as a whole so that any existing offshore activities in the area and related investment by a titleholder are not undermined by a shift in the boundary. The amendments, I understand, broadly mirror the boundary change provisions in the commonwealth Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Act 2006.

The bill amends existing provisions in the Victorian act to ensure that the effect of the boundary change is delayed with respect to a commonwealth petroleum or greenhouse gas title whilst that title remains in force — that is, until it falls due for renewal or it expires. It also automatically grants or extends the coverage of commonwealth petroleum titles where part of a title moves from the commonwealth to Victorian coastal waters as a result of a boundary change. It also provides arrangements for the valid granting of renewals of Victorian petroleum and greenhouse gas titles where part of that title has moved into commonwealth waters as a result of a boundary change.

Under the 1979 offshore constitutional settlement the commonwealth, the states and the Northern Territory maintain common rules for the regulation of offshore activities. Consistent with that agreement, the bill provides mirror arrangements for the protection of commonwealth title rights in the event of a boundary change, and the commonwealth act already provides this protection to state and Northern Territory titles.

The extent and timing of any future boundary shift is not yet confirmed, so it is not possible to state with certainty to how many or to which particular titles the amendments may apply. Nevertheless, the substantial movement in the boundary could affect up to 17 current commonwealth petroleum titles located along or near the coastal waters boundary, 10 pipeline licences, three exploration permits and one production licence and three retention leases. The pipeline licences in particular are, I understand, vulnerable because a licence may extend from commonwealth waters across

the coastal water boundary to carry raw products from Bass Strait petroleum fields to onshore Victoria for processing. Any titleholders affected by a maritime boundary change would benefit from the amendments, and the bill is unlikely to have wider impact on the community.

I understand that the commonwealth Department of Industry, Innovation and Science was consulted during the drafting and raised no concerns with the bill. Similarly the shadow minister for the Liberal and National parties, David Southwick, consulted with a number of the energy bodies and, in addition to that, with the Minerals Council of Australia, the St Vincent de Paul Society of Victoria, Jemena, the Clean Energy Council, the Australian Energy Council, AGL and a number of others. There were certainly no issues that were unearthed. I also understand that departmental consultations with stakeholders also resulted in no opposition or concerns being raised by any affected stakeholders.

The opposition have some questions that we would like to explore in committee. It is a very important area of policy, not so much the contents of the bill but the entire area of gas exploration, in particular onshore gas, especially in the context of a changing environment, less energy security, astronomically rising energy prices and the fact that indeed Victorian households are paying something like \$500 more for gas under Labor than previously. There has been this sort of ideological ban on onshore gas. With winter upon us, Victorians are finding it increasingly more expensive to heat their homes, to run their businesses and to put food on the table. Also recently the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission chairman, Rod Sims, blasted Labor's ban on conventional onshore gas in Victoria, saying that the ban has led Victorian households and businesses to be exposed to higher and more volatile domestic prices. This is indeed the case.

In addition to that, the consequences for business are astronomical. I know that one of my businesses in the Dandenong area was looking at a \$1.5 million increase in energy prices in one financial year. That is \$1.5 million off the bottom line. Obviously that would mean reducing operations and reducing jobs. This is just a cascading effect right throughout the economy. With Victorian households paying \$500 more for gas since 2016, I think Labor's very stubborn refusal to overturn its onshore gas ban means there is no end to the price pain in sight.

There were also some interesting shifts in the Northern Territory that change the debate following a very extensive independent report. I think there is a real need

for Labor to start listening to industry, regulators and consumers and to really work through its ideological onshore gas ban to reduce cost-of-living pressures and avoid gas shortages, especially during winter.

As I said, the amendments are aimed at bringing state legislation closer to the relevant commonwealth legislation. This will protect current and future offshore petroleum and greenhouse gas titleholders. Offshore petroleum is much harder to both process and harness — to mine — rather than onshore gas. Western Australia has enacted similar legislation as only Western Australia and Victoria have viable offshore petroleum reserves. The need for this legislation is only relevant to those two states. The coalition does not oppose the original legislation introduced in early 2010, but we do consider that the government's policy on onshore exploration should be revisited promptly, especially in the changing energy environment.

There are some questions that we would like to explore in the committee stage, in particular to explore some of the government's own inconsistencies in this area of policy. I look forward to having the opportunity of doing so during the committee stage.

Mr MELHEM (Western Metropolitan) (15:11) — I also rise to speak on the Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Amendment Bill 2017. This bill is technical in nature. It just deals with some technical issues. There is nothing earth shattering about this bill. Our waters are governed by state and federal governments. From time to time the boundaries need to be looked at and regulated. This bill gives effect to some of these changes or the potential changes that might occur. The state has jurisdiction over Victorian coastal waters which apply from the territorial sea baseline to 3 nautical miles seaward, and the commonwealth has jurisdiction about 3 nautical miles to the continental shelf. Under the Offshore Constitutional Settlement Agreement 1979 the commonwealth and the state agreed to maintain common rules and principles to deal with that. It is my understanding that the commonwealth has passed legislation to deal with some of the issues that are now going to be dealt with by this bill.

Geoscience Australia, an organisation which has the ongoing responsibility of defining the limits of Australia's maritime jurisdiction, is currently undertaking a review of the offshore coastal boundary in Victoria. The boundary between Victorian coastal waters and commonwealth waters could shift as a result of Geoscience Australia's remapping of the territorial sea baseline. It is my understanding that an announcement about this and any relevant changes may

be made sometime next year. If the boundary were to shift, part of whatever title was granted under the commonwealth act adjacent to the coastal waters boundary may cease to be within commonwealth waters and become located in Victorian coastal waters, so the commonwealth may no longer have jurisdiction to deal with the title which has moved. So it is very important to actually close some loopholes in the current legislation so that in the event that some of these boundaries change there is preservation for people currently holding titles in these waters.

Offshore gas exploration in Victoria is quite significant. It is a large part of the Victorian economy. This legislation makes sure that any boundary changes will not lead to disputes. The bill is meant to grant existing titleholders rights and ensure that they do not end up losing out, because we know there are a lot of investments where there are pipelines and platforms. Therefore the bill sort of addresses problems which could result from the mapping currently taking place.

We appreciate that members will support this legislation. I do acknowledge some of the points made by Mrs Peulich in relation to some questions that might be asked when this bill goes to the committee stage. I was curious to hear that they might not be related to the bill; they might be related to just the policies. We know that the issue of gas supply in the state of Victoria, and in fact on the entire east coast of Australia, has been a hot issue in the last few years. The pressure on power costs and gas prices has been going up in recent times. Unfortunately instead of people sticking to the facts it has become a political issue. That is unfortunate. We know there are significant changes happening in the gas market on the east coast following the rise in gas exports.

However, let us be clear about this: this is not supply issue, it is a demand issue. For example, Victoria produces enough gas for 7.2 million households but only uses 3.6 million households' worth. That is about 206 petajoules that we use a year. The Australian Energy Regulator has confirmed that we are producing approximately 400 petajoules of gas each year in waters off Victoria's coast. Clearly too much of our gas has been exported either interstate or overseas, so this is not about supply or whether or not enough gas is being produced in Victoria. We clearly do have more than enough to meet our domestic and industry needs, but unfortunately the question is how much of it is actually exported interstate or overseas.

That debate is ongoing, and I understand the current federal government and various states are in discussions about it. Some measures are being put in place to try to

address that problem, and I think it is an issue that needs a bipartisan approach between various levels of government in Australia to basically come up with the right solution. But I just want to point out that this bill does not deal with the issue of where gas is explored, how much there is of it and where it should be distributed; it is simply clarifying that if as a result of the new mapping which is taking place as we speak any potential issues arise or boundaries change, existing titleholders will not be disadvantaged by the changes. With these few comments, I endorse the bill and hope the house will support the bill.

Mr MORRIS (Western Victoria) (15:17) — I rise to make my contribution to the Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Amendment Bill 2017. I note that this bill amends the Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Act 2010 to provide protections to the holders of the petroleum titles affected by changes to the boundary between the offshore area and the commonwealth-defined offshore area.

Mr Finn interjected.

Mr MORRIS — Indeed it does, Mr Finn.

Mr MORRIS — The amendments in this bill seek to ensure that a titleholder who is affected by a boundary change receives equivalent entitlements to those they would have had were it not for the relevant boundary change. The bill goes on to provide reciprocal arrangements for the protection of commonwealth petroleum title rights in the event of a boundary change, a feature already provided for in the state petroleum titles under relevant commonwealth legislation, whilst also going on to amend delaying provisions to ensure that the effect of a boundary change is delayed with respect to a commonwealth title while that title remains in force.

Mr Finn interjected.

Mr MORRIS — Indeed, Mr Finn, such as has happened federally — the redistribution of some federal seats across Victoria, with some very interestingly named electorates being proposed by the Australian Electoral Commission. Let us see whether or not that does get anywhere.

The bill further goes on to establish a framework to automatically grant or extend the coverage of commonwealth petroleum titles where part of the title moves from commonwealth to Victorian coastal waters as a result of a boundary change. It also provides arrangements for the valid granting of renewals of Victorian petroleum and greenhouse gas titles where

part of that title has moved into commonwealth waters as a result of a boundary change. There is also within the bill the overarching impact to align state and commonwealth legislation and increased protections for relevant titleholders.

However, I do think that one of the important points, and a point that is often made in this house, is that we are unfortunately in somewhat of an energy crisis at this point in time in our state. The reason for this energy crisis is sitting opposite the members on this side of the house. Unfortunately there are multiple reasons for this energy crisis, but they can all be traced back to this Labor government and their very actions.

One of those actions of course has been the tripling of the tax on coal, which forced the closure of the Hazelwood power station, sending energy prices, electricity prices, skyrocketing. What we have also seen is that through this skyrocketing of our energy prices through the closure of Hazelwood there has been a lack of certainty of supply of energy across Victoria as well.

I note that it was not last summer but the summer before that there was almost a scheduled or forced blackout of Ballarat due to the energy crisis that we had been facing. There was a period of peak demand over the summer and decisions looked like they would have to be made about where the energy supply was going to be shut down, and Ballarat was at the top of the list.

I have spoken to many Ballarat businesses, which are exceptionally concerned about the impact that such a shutdown would have on their businesses. I have spoken to residents who are very concerned about the impact that a forced shutdown of the electricity supply to a regional city such as Ballarat would have on the more vulnerable in our community, either those who are slightly more advanced in years or vulnerable people at the other end of the age spectrum as well — that is, those much younger in years — particularly during a very warm period, and in particular an elongated period of warm weather, which as Mr Finn well knows we see in Ballarat on a regular basis.

Mr Finn interjected.

Mr MORRIS — There is a bit of snow around Ballarat today, Mr Finn.

Mr Finn interjected.

Mr MORRIS — In Gordon, yes. There are not only concerns about electricity cost and supply but also very real concerns about gas supply. I am in regular contact with businesses, as I know many on this side of the house are. It is something that I would encourage those

opposite, and maybe the Minister for Small Business, to do — on the odd occasion, just in passing, maybe have a conversation with a businessperson.

Mr Finn — Especially Mr Dalidakis.

Mr MORRIS — Indeed, Mr Dalidakis could well do that. The impact that the rising cost of gas is having on businesses is significant. I have spoken to businesses that are talking about the doubling, tripling and even quadrupling of their gas costs. This is not something that in many of these industries and businesses can be passed on or built into the price of the end product, so the decision being made by some of these businesses is to cut jobs. It is very unfortunate to see businesses being placed in this position, particularly when there is a supply of gas within Victoria which the government refuses to explore. That is something that has been widely condemned by industry groups and business more broadly. But not only that, it should be condemned by —

Mr Leane — Are you going to lift the ban on fracking?

Mr MORRIS — We are not talking about fracking, Mr Leane, and you well know that. It is conventional gas.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr MORRIS — This is not what we are talking about. One of the issues is that you do not know, Mr Leane, how much gas there is available because you have banned exploration. This is one of the things. An outright ban was placed on it. Why? Because the Labor Party have been forced into this position because they were part of a scare campaign that they themselves got caught up in. The Labor Party thought, 'We'll jump on board with this', and since they jumped on board we have seen the skyrocketing cost of gas.

The many, many people that I have had the good fortune to chat to, both in my office and at their front doors when I have been out and about talking to people, cite two things — being scared about being attacked in their own homes and the cost of their gas and electricity bills — as the two biggest issues that they are facing. They are two of the biggest issues they are facing that are directly in the purview of this state government, which is refusing to do anything about them, and they are constant causes of concern for these people. It is the pensioners who do not turn on the heaters because they cannot afford their bills.

Mr Finn interjected.

Mr MORRIS — That is right; rather than turning on their heater they are in bed all day or they are wandering around inside with jackets on because they cannot afford to put their heating on, or indeed they are heading to the shopping centres and hanging about there because of the cost of heating, and in the summer months cooling, their homes.

It is an indictment of Labor that they have failed to deal with the energy crisis that grips our state at this time. They have washed their hands of it. They have pointed to wind turbines, saying, 'This is going to be the saviour of the world'. There is no doubt that there needs to be a mix of renewables and the more baseline power in our energy system. However, unfortunately Labor have placed all their eggs in one basket, and when the wind stops blowing then our state will turn into a basket case. Once the wind stops blowing and those wind turbines stop turning —

Mr Ramsay — Mr Gepp could actually blow a wind farm all by himself.

Mr MORRIS — I think you're right, Mr Ramsay. There could be quite a few opposite who could keep wind turbines going, but once they stopped to take a breath the lights would go out. We saw what happened in South Australia to the Labor government, which could not keep the lights on. We saw skyrocketing energy prices in South Australia, and the good people of South Australia voted with their feet. They cast their vote to send an incompetent Labor government out of office and to elect a Liberal government. I do not underestimate the task they have.

Mr Finn — Steven Marshall will do a good job.

Mr MORRIS — Yes, Steven Marshall will do a wonderful job as Premier of South Australia.

Mr Finn — He's a good Marshall.

Mr MORRIS — He is a good Marshall; he is a very good Marshall.

Mr Finn — As distinct from the other Marshall.

Mr MORRIS — He has a big job on his hands though, because what he has been left by Labor in South Australia is going to have to be turned around. It is a bit like turning the *Titanic* — it's a big job, but you have to start turning it around.

Mr Finn — Especially after it's sunk!

Mr MORRIS — The promise of a big battery in South Australia was what Labor pinned their hopes

upon there. I note that Labor in Victoria have also promised a big battery for Ballarat, just in Warrenheip. Do you know when they promised it would come online? This summer — this past summer. Guess what? They still have not started. This is how far off they are.

Ms Shing — I think you need to go to emergency at the base hospital.

Mr MORRIS — In Ballarat?

Ms Shing — Yes.

Mr MORRIS — The one that you're not going to build until 2022? Is that the one you're talking about?

Ms Shing — No, no. The one that lots of people need for the smallest of household accidents.

Mr MORRIS — I'm not sure that's quite right. It is a grave concern what is happening with the energy market here in Victoria. What we do need to do is ensure that there is a reliable energy market and system in the state of Victoria. That is something that I am quite sure will be achieved post November this year, once the Guy government is elected. At this point I will cease my contribution, and I look forward to hearing other contributions.

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) (15:30) — It is only a little over four years ago that Victoria had the cheapest and most reliable energy supply in Australia. Today Victoria faces a huge energy crisis, and Victorians are entitled to ask what happened. Four years ago we had all the cheap energy that we could possibly want, so what happened between then and now? The answer is very simple: Daniel Andrews happened between then and now. It is the Andrews government that is solely responsible for the destruction of the energy reliability and energy competitiveness that Victoria had enjoyed for many a long year. Never has any government in the history of probably Australia, with perhaps the exception of the former South Australian government, gone in so hard to destroy the basis of its own state. It is quite extraordinary.

We are seeing some of the highest electricity and gas prices in Australia as a result of the Andrews Socialist Left government. That got Mr Jennings's attention. The eyebrow shot up then. Mention the Socialist Left, and that will get anybody's attention over there. They are very keen on that.

Mr Jennings interjected.

Mr FINN — Mr Jennings, let me assure you, I am about to take you on the trip of a lifetime. The prices that Victorians are now forced to pay for electricity and gas are outrageous. They are criminal, particularly when you consider the supply that we could use but that the Andrews government will not let us use. Those prices and the unreliability of supply hurt Victorian families. Remember when the Labor Party used to talk about working families? They do not care about families anymore, whether they are working or not. As long as they can push ahead with their green left agenda of climate change — their kneeling at the altar of climate change — they do not care about Victorian families.

They do not care about the elderly people in this state who stay in bed all day on a day like today, which is pretty chilly outside. I do not know if anybody has been outside in the last couple of hours, but it is very chilly outside. There are huge numbers of elderly Victorians who stay in bed all day just to keep warm because they cannot afford to heat their own homes. They cannot afford that and that is just appalling, but that is what Labor has done to the elderly people of Victoria. Let me tell you, those people who have contributed or have paid their taxes deserve better than what this government is dishing out to them now in their twilight years.

Those prices that we speak of and the lack of reliability also hurt workers. I remember when the Labor Party used to talk about the workers non-stop. They said, 'We are the party of the workers'. No longer can the Labor Party claim to be the party of the workers, because they have done the workers in the eye, because the workers are the ones that have to pay the bills. They have to pay the electricity bills, they have to pay the gas bills and, most importantly perhaps, they are the ones who lose their jobs when their employer puts them off to pay the electricity and gas bills that we now have to cope with in Victoria.

So many small businesses in particular are struggling under the huge burden of energy costs that is unprecedented in the history of this state, and we know that small business is the backbone of our state and indeed our nation. You would not think so when you listen to Mr Dalidakis, allegedly the small business minister. He does not seem to know much about it, but let me assure the house and Mr Dalidakis, if he happens to be listening to this debate, that small business is indeed the backbone of this nation and certainly the engine room of our economy. For small business people to be slugged in the way that they are by exorbitant energy prices is a form of poisoning the economy. Unfortunately it is not just small business

people that suffer; it is the workers, their employees, who are put off work because the employers cannot afford to keep them on. That is not good for small business and it is not good for workers. But as I said, the Labor Party no longer cares about workers. It is far more interested in green left ideology, and that is the bottom line.

We have seen over the last decade I suppose, federally and at the state level, the Labor Party sell out workers and sell out families in pursuit of these ratbag green left policies in support of trying to stop something that does not actually exist — that is, global warming. Julia Gillard used to tell us that the earth is warming. Well the fact of the matter is the earth has not warmed for over 20 years. This is what is known by climate scientists as a pause — it is a fair pause, don't you think? — and we have to pay the bill. If we have got this pause, this two-decade-long pause, why are we still paying these exorbitant prices? To stop something that is not happening. It is insane.

Is it any wonder that people are sick to death of hearing about this nonsensical man-made climate change, this nonsensical global warming? Is it any wonder that people are sick of hearing the predictions of gloom and doom from the likes of Sandbags Flannery, the likes of Al Gore and whoever wants a handout? They pop up and they say, 'The end is nigh. Global warming is going to kill us all. Now give me some money and I'll fix it'. It is one of the greatest rorts — speaking of rorts, there they are over the other side — in the history of the world. There are so many people going hell for leather and collecting huge sums of money as a result of this scam, this climate change, global warming scam that we have seen the world over.

The people of Victoria are seeing through what is going on in this state. They are seeing their government making the people of this state suffer to satisfy a green left agenda that is pure nonsense. I am very hopeful that we will see an end to that green left agenda and those stark acts of ratbaggery that we have seen from this government. I am very hopeful that we will see an end to all of that in November of this year. I know that only a Liberal-Nationals government will restore the reliability and the affordability of our energy resources to the people of Victoria, because the people of Victoria know that we have as a potential Premier, a man who indeed will be Premier post November, somebody who does actually care about the workers, who does actually care about families, who does actually care about the elderly. He will not put some ratbag left-wing ideology ahead of the welfare of the people of Victoria, and that man is Matthew Guy. I for one cannot wait for him to take the Premier's office, because the present

incumbent leaves a fair bit to be desired, to say the very least.

Mr Morris interjected.

Mr FINN — Peter Marshall is a good mate of his, I understand. We were talking before about the new Premier of South Australia, who rode to victory on the fact that —

Mr Jennings — Name him.

Mr FINN — Steve Marshall, a good man. He is the good Marshall.

Mr Jennings interjected.

Mr FINN — No, Mr Jennings, he is the good Marshall, as distinct from Peter Marshall, who is the bad Marshall. Steve Marshall came to power earlier this year in South Australia on the back of a Labor government that had put all its chips on a battery, and it lost big time. That is what is going to happen with this crowd come November because people are not stupid. Victorians are not stupid, and they will not be treated as being stupid by this crowd over here. They will not be treated as idiots by this government. They are sick to death of this crowd over here slugging them time and time and time again to try and stop something that does not actually exist.

Mr Morris — And they're sick of being lied to.

Mr FINN — They are sick to death of being lied to by this government, because this is an intrinsically dishonest government. There may be some who genuinely believe their rhetoric about global warming and climate change and all that sort of nonsense; they might actually believe that. But I know that the overwhelming majority of members opposite know that they are taking us for a ride. They know that it is a con, they know that it is scam. They see people the world over ripping off taxpayers left, right and centre.

This climate change industry is one of the great frauds in the history of the world. There is a growing acceptance among the populace that man-made climate change — global warming — is a nonsense. We should be under water according to so many of these so-called climate change experts that happened to collect the money and run. As I said, they tell us that the end is nigh and then they say, 'Give us the money and we'll fix it'. Well, they got the money and then they tell us it has got worse. What is going on there? It is just outrageous. It is time for common sense and it is time for decency to be returned to this whole energy debate.

The people of Victoria are running a distant last. They are not on the radar as far as this government is concerned; they are not on this government's agenda at all. The welfare of the people is something that the government care for not one little bit. They look after their mates; there are plenty of people who are making lots of money out of this scam. They scare the naive and they scare those who are easily sucked in, particularly in the inner city, it has to be said. I have always said that I wish I could afford to vote Green. I would not, but I wish I could afford to. The coalition partners of this Labor Party, as has been formalised it seems, in this house anyway over recent months, are the Greens. That is what is driving this whole thing. I am very hopeful and very confident, I have to say, that all of this is about to come to a screeching halt on 24 November this year. All I can say to the house is, 'Bring it on'.

Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria) (15:45) — I must say I do admire my colleague Mr Finn. Even I could not rise to the occasion of speaking for 15 minutes and not even get close to the bill. I would probably find some tenuous link somewhere in my 15 minutes on the bill, but Mr Finn has totally outdone himself. It is ironic to be here on a Thursday afternoon speaking on a bill that has got very small amendments aimed at trying to protect the titles of titleholders, and Mr Finn gives a 15-minute presentation on climate change. The poor advisers in the box must be thinking, 'What am I doing here?'. Anyway, I am going to do my best to actually bring us back to what we are doing here.

Mr Jennings interjected.

Mr RAMSAY — Yes, there is all sorts of gas in this chamber, Mr Jennings. The bill amends the Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Act 2010 to provide protections for the holders of petroleum titles affected by changes to the boundary between the Victorian offshore area and the commonwealth-defined offshore area. As our lead speaker said, we are not opposing this amendment bill; in fact we supported the original legislation in 2010.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr RAMSAY — This is an amendment, Mr Finn, to a piece of legislation we actually supported back in 2010, and there are some protective elements in it for titleholders.

The bill brings the state legislation closer to relevant commonwealth legislation and will protect current and future offshore petroleum and greenhouse gas titleholders. In fact Western Australia has very similar

legislation. Given that Western Australia and Victoria are the only two states that have viable offshore petroleum, the need for this legislation is only relevant to those two states. Assuming this passes, both states will have similar amendments.

Mr Jennings invited me to talk about storage. There is an issue around petroleum storage. What should be a worry to this state and the country more generally is that we have very limited reserves of fuel. In fact I think there is a requirement under law to have — and I cannot remember the exact —

Mr Morris interjected.

Mr RAMSAY — Yes, 60 to 90 days, and we are well below that figure. Perhaps if the minders are sitting there and thinking, ‘What on earth am I doing here?’, they may well put their minds around how we can best build up our reserves of fuel so we do not find ourselves in a national crisis and a security crisis if we run out of petroleum. I think that is perhaps much more important than some of the discussion that we have had this afternoon.

While I am on my feet I flag that the minister responsible is Ms Pulford, and I hope she is listening, because the bill we previously debated, the Primary Industries Legislation Amendment Bill 2017, will be going back to the Assembly with amendments, and a delay in the Assembly either approving that bill or not will have a significant impact on those commercial fishermen on the Bellarine Peninsula who are awaiting the passage of that bill so they can access compensation for their licences. While we are talking about protection of petroleum titles here, I encourage Ms Pulford to do whatever she can to push forward with the amendments to the Primary Industries Legislation Amendment Bill so that it passes in the Assembly and compensation can be accessed by those commercial fishermen who wish to fast-track their exit and are seeking the compensation they deserve.

In respect of this bill I also want to flag, as Mr Finn and Mr Morris ably did, the importance of the Labor Party supporting a position of allowing onshore conventional gas exploration. We know that apart from our petroleum and our rich reserves of coal, the gas reserves we have, particularly those near where I live in the Otway Basin and the South-West Coast, are ripe for plucking through commercial conventional gas exploration. It is the Labor Party that is actually stopping that opportunity, so I do implore the government to reconsider their position in relation to being able to extract gas onshore.

I also wish to flag with the government the importance of providing three-phase power to the south-west. My colleagues have mentioned this. It is important for industry and for primary producers, particularly dairy farmers, that they have a secure and reliable supply of three-phase power in south-west Victoria, and I did not see anything in the budget that would indicate to me that the government is willing to invest in that grid in the south-west to enable factories in particular, processors and farmers to access three-phase power. I do encourage the government to look at that.

Other issues that have been raised in other contributions deal with the matter of alternate energy in relation to wind and solar. Again I ask the government to reconsider — and the advisers may well want to have some discussion about this — how we appropriately plan our wind farms, particularly across western Victoria, which is soon to be host to most of the wind farms in this state. There seems to be a lack of willingness by the operators, the generators, to share infrastructure. We have got poles and wires running all over the place in regional Victoria, connecting these turbines to the grid, but there does not seem to be any sharing or any willingness by the generators to share some of that infrastructure. They just duplicate it, so now as well as having a mass of turbines we also have a mass of posts and wires all over the place. They really are changing the landscape, to the detriment of the environment and those who choose to live in regional Victoria for its livability and beautiful landscapes, which are being totally compromised by this investment in infrastructure to host the plethora of wind farms that are being heavily subsidised by the taxpayer and also encouraged by the state RET — renewable energy target.

Can anyone explain to me why states would have their own renewable energy targets? It just does not make sense. You do not have air shutting off at the border; air moves around. We produce less than 1.5 per cent of the greenhouse gas emissions of the whole world, so we are a very small player in greenhouse emissions, yet states all have different renewable energy targets, which obviously stimulate artificially many of our renewable energy projects. We should get rid of the RET and start using some of our natural resources — our gas resources and our coal resources — and yes, use some wind and solar and create some decent planning rules around the use of solar farms.

As we have heard, a number of solar farms are now actually having an impact on the areas in which they are located, so we need to think carefully about how we put appropriate planning rules around the establishment of solar farms, just as we need to have a rethink of the

current planning rules and permits around wind farm establishment, because I believe we are overdoing it. We are overcooking that market in western Victoria.

Ms Shing — ‘Overcooking’ — I see what you did there. Very droll, Mr Ramsay.

Mr RAMSAY — It is having a significant impact on those who live and work in western Victoria, Ms Shing.

It is good to see that the government has actually consulted stakeholders in respect to this bill — quite a number of them — and they all seem to not have an issue with this bill. In fact some are even supportive of it: AGL, the Australian Energy Council, the Clean Energy Council and EnergyAustralia; St Vincent de Paul in Victoria even gets a mention. The Minerals Council of Australia seems to be reasonably non-committal with no strong view either way, which is a bit strange for that organisation. Normally the minerals council has quite a strong view about everything, but apparently in the case of this amendment bill that is not so.

I see I have enthralled those on the benches opposite with my contribution this afternoon. I know you want me to finish now because you want to get home. In closing, I would like to say that we are not opposing this bill. It is not a large or complex bill, and we look forward to its speedy passage.

Ms BATH (Eastern Victoria) (15:55) — I am pleased to rise today to speak on the Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Amendment Bill 2017. It is very important that we properly manage our offshore resources in terms of petroleum and gas. It is important to facilitate the mechanisms that allow those companies, those permit-holders, to seek to explore natural gas offshore under proper jurisdiction and proper regulation and without impediment. It is for those reasons that The Nationals will not be opposing this bill this afternoon.

The bill amends the Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Act 2010 to provide protections for the holders of petroleum titles affected by changes to the boundary between the offshore area and the commonwealth-defined offshore area. The amendments in this bill will ensure that a permit-holder that is affected by a boundary change receives equivalent entitlements to those that they would have otherwise had were it not for the relevant boundary changing in the first place. In effect this bill is designed to protect those entities that have existing permits to ensure that they are not disadvantaged by the new

mapping that is being carried out. It allows for the realignment of titles and boundaries where remapping has occurred in tidal waters.

The bill also provides reciprocal arrangements for the protection of commonwealth petroleum title rights in the event of a boundary change, a feature that is already provided for state petroleum titles under commonwealth legislation. This will flip it so that commonwealth title rights are protected under the state system. It amends the delaying provisions to ensure that the effect of a boundary change is delayed with respect to a commonwealth title while that title remains in force. The overarching impact of this bill is to better align the state and commonwealth legislation and increase protection for those relevant permit-holders and titleholders.

The coastal water boundary is designated as a belt of water or a zone of water that is 3 nautical miles seaward from the designated point at which the shore finishes. From doing some research I understand that there are 17 commonwealth petroleum titles that are next to or align with these coastal waters boundaries. There are three exploration permits, one production licence, three retention licences and 10 pipeline licences, noting that there is a Tasmanian pipeline that extends from Victoria to Tasmania and there is transfer of gas through that pipeline. It is very important to protect that pipeline and its various owners to enable those vital energy systems to continue to flow between states.

What is our current status in terms of gas in this state? We have heard some commentary on that this afternoon. All of those people on this side of the house have acknowledged that we are in a state of crisis in terms of our businesses coping with those increasing gas prices. Eighty-three per cent of Victorian households, or 1.83 million customers, have main gas connections. My former leader Peter Ryan was very much a force behind getting main gas connections into many regional towns. In my area, way out in a lovely corner of South Gippsland, we are still on bottled gas, as are many rural and regional people. We also know that the cost of our bottled gas has gone up astronomically in the last few years. People are making decisions as to whether to turn on their heating at night, rug up or, as we have heard today, hop into bed and shiver.

Certainly many businesses and households use gas in terms of the domestic market. We are the largest domestic user in the whole country, yet there is a shortage. The Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) in its March 2017 *Gas Statement of Opportunities* warned that there would be a decline in

gas production right across the southern states — South Australia, New South Wales and Victoria — going into 2018 and 2019, and, I quote:

Continued upward pressure on gas and electricity prices may threaten the financial viability of some commercial and industrial customers.

We have already seen many of our regional agricultural processors really hitting the wall. Many of them, while still in business, are having to lay off people, and I will highlight some of them in a moment.

Six months after releasing that statement AEMO identified that the gas shortfall would actually be much worse due to — what a shock! — a greater demand on gas-fired electricity due to the closure of the Hazelwood power station. We know that that sudden, non-phased, government-pushed closure has had wideranging and painful ramifications for people in my electorate of Eastern Victoria Region and right across the state.

AEMO also said that wholesale electricity prices have trebled since 2015. This is not a shock because it is transferring across into people's homes and businesses. I have raised this issue before, but it goes to the heart of many small businesses in our electorates. Their energy prices, whether it be gas or electricity, have skyrocketed. My local baker, who makes a fantastic quiche lorraine, has had a 58 per cent increase in his energy costs. He is in a real dilemma as to how to continue on.

Again, those high-end users of electricity and gas, such as agricultural processes and refrigerators in abattoirs and dairy companies, are really suffering. For example, there is a fantastic tomato processor in northern Victoria which has had their gas bill increase by \$1.4 million. It has gone up from \$2 million to \$3.4 million in a season. They have signed up, thankfully, for a two-year deal to try to slow that impact of the huge cost burden on that company. This is a smart company. It has been going for decades and decades. They are not a fly-by-nighter. They have encouraged and supported their community for many, many decades and created jobs, so this is a stress on them.

Alba Cheese, a dairy processing plant here in Melbourne, has seen an increase of 150 per cent and pressure on their bottom line. Indeed Burra Foods in Korumburra have in recent years had an 80 per cent increase in their gas prices. This was noted in the Committee for Gippsland's annual report. In relation to that a very good document called *Our Region Our Future* investigated small to medium-size businesses right across Gippsland and the impact that various

issues, including increasing energy prices, would have. One of the recommendations that came out of that report is:

That further consideration is given to the blanket moratorium on all onshore gas exploration in Victoria, and the adverse impact experienced by energy intensive manufacturing businesses like Australian Paper's Maryvale mill, which is now having difficulty sourcing a secure and affordable long-term gas contract.

Interestingly the recommendation before also talks about Australian Paper and the need for state and federal governments to procure locally made paper from the Latrobe Valley's Maryvale plant, and I agree and concur with that sentiment as well.

This is an issue that is not going to go away under the current government, but the Liberals and The Nationals have certainly come out on the front foot in identifying that, if we are elected on 24 November, we will open up opportunities for exploration into onshore conventional gas. We will continue to keep the ban on the fracking industry. It is not required, not needed and not wanted in this state. However, opening up the opportunity for conventional gas on a case-by-case basis will provide increased gas into the domestic market. What will happen is that on a case-by-case basis a farmer or landholder will be able to share the royalties from that opportunity with the company, so landholders will have rights and benefits. They will also have the right to say no and they will have the right to veto and not have it on their land, or they can take up that opportunity. There will also be a domestic gas requirement — that it will not go anywhere else, but be retained for homes and businesses in our local areas of the state.

We need a broad range of coal, gas and renewables and to increase opportunities where we can to incorporate solar power — solar plants — in our state and on our houses and businesses. That is very important. We also need other renewables in the market.

In conclusion, the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) report made some comments around the cost of gas in Victoria. It says in relation to gas in New South Wales and Victoria that customers are paying \$2 a gigajoule more for gas than customers in Queensland due to the requirements of transportation from the north down into the southern states and that this southern demand is running at 464 petajoules a year at an extra cost of \$929 million. Rod Sims, who is head of the ACCC, told the *Australian* that customers in New South Wales and Victoria are paying way too much for their gas because they do not have their own supply. This initiative by the Liberals and The Nationals will certainly create

opportunities for businesses to explore and, where viable, produce our own domestic gas.

As a final comment, again and again the Andrews Labor government has said that we are not experiencing a shortage in gas, that we have enough and that it is all somebody else's fault. The Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, Minister D'Ambrosio, issued a press release on 7 June last year saying:

The Labor government is also exploring the development of a LNG —

that is, liquefied natural gas —

import terminal in Victoria.

Why is the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change looking to explore a terminal to import gas into this state if we are not experiencing a shortage of gas? With those remarks The Nationals will not be opposing this bill. We are very much interested to see a kickstart to the domestic market. We need this omnibus bill to tidy up and protect those titleholders and permit-holders so they can maintain their assets and continue at this point to maximise gas production in this state. With those few words I shall conclude.

Ms DUNN (Eastern Metropolitan) (16:10) — I rise today to speak on the Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Amendment Bill 2017. While this may be dismissed as one of those machinery-of-government bills — it is mundane in its content — the most concerning part of this bill is what it signals, which is business as usual for the hydrocarbon industry with no plan for a transition to renewables. It is a bill to ease some of the regulatory confusion for oil and gas companies without a hint of concern for the ensuing release of millions of tonnes of carbon dioxide and escaped methane that comes from pumping hydrocarbons, accelerating climate change when the science tell us that that will be far more costly than a rapid transition to renewables.

My colleague the member for Melbourne in the other place has spoken at length about the lack of action by this government on climate change and the easy relationship that both the government and the opposition have with major hydrocarbon companies. I note that this Parliament is passing this bill to give regulatory security and security of tenure to these massive oil companies, and yet at the same time these very companies are shafting their workers and avoiding paying tax.

Australian Taxation Office data released in December 2017 revealed that ExxonMobil for the third year in a row paid zero corporate income tax in Australia on a total income of \$24.8 billion. It was revealed during Senate estimates in mid-March that ExxonMobil will not be paying any tax until after 2021 — not a cent, despite the fact that it expects to continue earning billions of dollars in revenue. ExxonMobil is trying to cut the wages of workers at the Longford gas plant in Gippsland and is trying to force them from full-time contracts to casual work. It is also attempting to slash pay by 30 per cent and reduce annual leave and other conditions. It is forcing workers to be contracted through a labour hire company, allowing the middleman to cream off money, much like the Carlton United Brewery's dispute in 2016.

Make no mistake about it, working in the oil and gas industry is hard work. Workers spend weeks away from their families. They are subject to increased risk of exposure to dangerous chemicals, destructive equipment failures and the risk of wells or tanks exploding. These workers deserve their pay and they deserve their leave and conditions. While a picket line continues at Longford, with workers fighting ExxonMobil's greed, we see the Andrews Labor government bringing this bill to the house at the behest of ExxonMobil. Not a word has been spoken in this place in support of the workers at Longford. The Labor, Liberal and National parties have supported this bill, yet they know workers in East Gippsland are being undermined and they know that ExxonMobil is paying no tax. This Parliament is doing the bidding of big business while failing to stand up for workers and failing to protect the environment and the climate. The Greens will always oppose measures that make it easier to burn fossil fuels while we see the climate emergency unfold before our very eyes. The Greens will be opposing this bill.

House divided on motion:

Ayes, 35

Atkinson, Mr	Morris, Mr
Bath, Ms	Mulino, Mr
Bourman, Mr	O'Donohue, Mr
Carling-Jenkins, Dr	Ondarchie, Mr
Crozier, Ms (<i>Teller</i>)	O'Sullivan, Mr
Dalidakis, Mr	Patten, Ms
Dalla-Riva, Mr	Peulich, Mrs
Davis, Mr	Pulford, Ms
Eideh, Mr	Purcell, Mr
Elasmar, Mr	Ramsay, Mr
Finn, Mr	Rich-Phillips, Mr
Fitzherbert, Ms	Shing, Ms
Gepp, Mr	Somyurek, Mr
Jennings, Mr	Symes, Ms
Leane, Mr	Tierney, Ms

Lovell, Ms
Melhem, Mr (*Teller*)
Mikakos, Ms

Wooldridge, Ms
Young, Mr

Noes, 5

Dunn, Ms (*Teller*)
Pennicuik, Ms (*Teller*)
Ratnam, Dr

Springle, Ms
Truong, Ms

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Committed.

Committee

Clause 1

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Melhem) —
Order! I will start by asking the minister to circulate her amendments.

Ms PULFORD — These two amendments are just to the commencement date, and we will come back to them in clause 2, but I will provide a summary assurance on what they are about. These were circulated quite some time ago when this bill was previously listed for debate. They simply change in two clauses the word ‘January’ to ‘May’ to allow for a commencement date that reflects the delay in passage of the bill. It is a four-month postponement.

Mrs Peulich interjected.

Ms PULFORD — Clause 2 of the bill has a commencement date of 1 January 2018, and this proposes to change it to May.

Mrs PEULICH — I will allude to the amendments that have just been brought in to the commencement date to say what an oversight, and I think it reflects the poor management of the government’s own business program and the fact that they have had to bring in a house amendment to delay the commencement date, which has already passed, from 1 January 2018 to 1 May 2018. Obviously we will support that, but again it does not reflect well on the government to have had such a long delay — that this bill has been sitting on the notice paper for so long that its own commencement date had to be amended.

In relation to clause 1 I will explore some of the inconsistencies of this government’s policy in relation to this bill, and I have passed these questions on to Ms Pulford to expedite any answers, although I do have two or three additional ones at the end. One of the gas sites that would be impacted by any boundary changes under this legislation is the Halladale gas field in the

Otway Basin. Why does this government permit the extraction of gas from an onshore location, given it stubbornly maintains an onshore gas moratorium?

Ms PULFORD — I thank Mrs Peulich for her question and for the courtesy of indicating to me an hour ago or so the nature of some of her questions so that I could seek some advice. I am advised that the Halladale gas field is different from onshore conventional gas. While the drilling rig and apparatus is based onshore, it is accessing an offshore gas reserve. This means that there are clear differences with regard to groundwater and contamination risks, so it is distinctly different from activity that might have a consequence for our agricultural sector. We have specifically welcomed development where offshore reserves are accessed using reach drilling from onshore, and the minister has made remarks to that effect at the Australian Domestic Gas Outlook conference.

Mrs PEULICH — So it is onshore drilling infrastructure that is tapping into an offshore reserve. Is that the explanation you are giving me?

Ms PULFORD — Yes.

Mrs PEULICH — So again it is very much a blur at this pointy end. I do not accept the technical difference being grounds for banning conventional onshore gas extraction, which the government has banned notwithstanding the energy crisis, which I think is self-inflicted in many ways. If there is little technical difference between the two, especially in this example, why is the government maintaining its ban on onshore conventional gas extraction, especially given that the Geological Society of Australia Victoria Division supports the view that there are abundant resources of gas onshore in Victoria?

Ms PULFORD — We certainly recognise a distinction between onshore rigs that are accessing offshore reserves, as Halladale is. The government’s policy is to permanently ban unconventional extraction.

Mrs Peulich — Fracking? Sure, and we agree with you there.

Ms PULFORD — Yes, that is right, and we probably do not need to get into all of that, and the government does not have in place a ban on conventional extraction. We have in place a further moratorium, and during the period of that moratorium there are extensive studies being undertaken to further demonstrate the size of reserves. I think the advice that members of the opposition have referred to in the second-reading debate and Mrs Peulich has just referred to differs from the advice that the government has about

whether there is a resource of significance for the state for gas users to access. That is why it is important that that work is undertaken over the next few years to help us all to better understand that.

Mrs PEULICH — I am glad to hear that some of the work is happening. In view of your remarks, if you ban exploration, you do not know what reserves you have. You may acknowledge the fact that there are resources, but you will not be able to define the reserves. In view of that has the department or has your government received advice about the capital cost of development of onshore conventional gas? My information is that it is about one-tenth of the cost of offshore production due to very high costs of offshore and subsea infrastructure and the costs of gas processing. Are you able to confirm the information that I have received — that is, that the cost of developing onshore conventional gas is one-tenth of the cost of offshore production?

Ms PULFORD — Thank you, Mrs Peulich, for your further question. It is not possible to draw that comparison around the cost of offshore versus onshore because it is highly variable depending on which particular oilfield you are in. I am not able to confirm for you what it is that you are specifically asking. The answer is that there is no comparator that is 10 times more or two times more or some other number times the cost because of the unique nature of each particular type of extraction activity.

The other point that I would make in relation to the cost of onshore versus offshore is that at the moment the advice to government is that there are only around 100 petajoules of onshore conventional gas in Victoria, so that is less than six months supply for the state. That is why the Victorian gas program — the piece of work that is currently underway — is further evaluating that and helping us to understand that to a greater degree. Just for context, that is around one-hundredth of the amount that is available in offshore reserves. The lack of availability of onshore, based on what we know now, and the comparative availability of offshore also makes it nigh on impossible to compare the cost of one versus the other, because what we know about the resource onshore, and we are exploring it further, is that there is not a great resource there.

Mrs PEULICH — So we disagree. I am disappointed to hear that the work has not been done which establishes quite clearly, not on a case-by-case basis but overwhelmingly, that the cost of production and processing of offshore gas is much higher than onshore gas. We also disagree about the reserves or the resources. The government's Minister for Resources

stated that Victorian onshore gas is not commercially viable, yet Geoscience Australia has estimated that Victoria's total onshore gas potential is 29 500 petajoules, enough to supply the state for decades to come. We disagree on the cost, or you have not established that as yet. We disagree on the size of the reserves.

The Premier, Daniel Andrews, has told Victorians there is a sufficient supply of gas; however, in September 2017 an Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) report predicted gas shortages in Victoria as soon as this coming winter. There is a whole series of stages where the government has been obstinate — head in the sand — on this conventional gas exploration despite all of the evidence being to the contrary. Why does the government continue to hide behind this onshore gas moratorium while the industry and everyone else is telling us that there is gas there that can be brought to market? Indeed it can take the pressure off the escalating cost of energy, especially with Victorians now paying \$500 more for gas due to the government's reckless, ideological and ill-informed onshore gas ban.

Ms PULFORD — I think members would be well aware of the federal government decision to open our gas markets to exports and that that is the most significant contributing factor to rising gas prices. This is something that has been known for many years. The impacts of it have been much more acutely felt in the last year or two, but the decision to open the gas market to the international market is the thing that has created this pressure. That is certainly something that we are urging the federal government to take some action on.

On the question of reserves, we are undertaking the Victorian gas program to assess the risks and opportunities of onshore conventional gas. The former government had a moratorium on conventional gas exploration in place and was not to the best of my knowledge undertaking that detailed technical and scientific work that is required to properly understand the available resource. The government is not hiding behind anything. We are continuing the moratorium for onshore conventional gas. The best information we have is that there is less than six months supply available and therefore that is not commercially viable, but we continue to undertake the work that is required. There are three parts to that Victorian gas program: the scientific and technical assessment of the resource, the promotion of offshore gas exploration and a third part of the project which includes underground gas storage. At the time that the government announced our permanent ban on unconventional exploration and the continuation of the moratorium on conventional

exploration, we indicated that these studies were required to enable us to move forward.

Mrs PEULICH — In view of the work that the minister has said the government is undertaking, does the government accept that gas is an ideal fuel for dispatchable, flexible generation of electricity to back up unreliable supplies of electricity from solar and wind sources?

Ms PULFORD — Well, gas has been powering Victorian industries and homes for a long time. We absolutely accept that gas has a very important role to play as part of our energy mix. I guess the inference in Mrs Peulich's question is that the government would prefer a more unreliable form of energy to a reliable form of energy. Let me say that the government very much likes reliable energy — wants all the lights to be on when people want them to be on everywhere in the state — and is very committed to ensuring that households and industry have their energy demands able to be met. This is not an ideological exercise for us. I know some people might assert that it is. We want to increase the generation of energy from renewable sources, but we absolutely recognise the need for other types of energy generation to complement and to be operational in parallel.

Mrs PEULICH — In view of the work that you said was being undertaken, does the government accept or concede that conventional gas does not interfere with groundwater resources?

Ms PULFORD — That is not known.

Mrs Peulich — The work has not been done.

Ms PULFORD — It is not definitively determined one way or the other. It is not as though there is a completely clear line between the types of extraction and extraction methods and the impact that they will have on the environment. That is why with fracking clearly there is a strong view in the community about that, and the Parliament has made a decision to permanently ban fracking in Victoria, because I think certainly in the Victorian community there is a pretty widespread acceptance that that poses risks that we do not want to bear. In relation to conventional gas, it is unclear. It is not possible to say that conventional gas extraction is without its risks to, say, agricultural production.

Mrs PEULICH — Minister, could I say that I think farming activities and gas exploration and production activities have coexisted without incident in many other countries in the world, New Zealand being one which has some very, very high regulatory rules around

pristine environments and environmental assets, so I beg to differ. I think the science is there in relation to conventional gas not interfering with groundwater resources, but the government clearly wants to keep its head in the sand. On the notion of fracking coal seam gas, it is highly unlikely that it can be produced from our brown coal reserves, so that is completely academic. But in view of the work that you mention as being done, does the state government have any information about the forecasts of income that the Victorian government could earn from royalties payable for production of gas from conventional onshore resources? I am just trying to establish exactly what work has been done and then understand why you still retain the moratorium if this work has not been done.

Ms PULFORD — The work is being done.

Mrs PEULICH — So the question is: is there an estimate, is there some modelling and are there some forecasts about the sort of income that the Victorian government could earn from royalties payable for production of gas from conventional onshore resources?

Ms PULFORD — The Victorian gas program work does not include assessment of royalties to government. It is about identifying whether there are proven and probable resources and resources available at a scale that might be commercially viable. I am also advised that that larger —

Mrs Peulich interjected.

Ms PULFORD — Yes, the larger that you are referring to, the 29 500 petajoules that Geoscience Australia has estimated, does include tight and shale gas, which is the same as fracking, which we have banned. So that bigger number that you have does not include something that has been determined by this Parliament to be ruled out in Victoria.

Mrs PEULICH — As I mentioned before, it is highly unlikely that gas could be produced commercially from low-rank brown coal, which is really what Victoria has at the moment, so I reject that.

Ms PULFORD — I am sorry, I did not understand what you said. Could you say it again?

Mrs PEULICH — Victorian coal today is brown coal, and it is highly unlikely that we could actually produce gas commercially from low-rank brown coal. That is my advice.

Ms PULFORD — Sorry, you might have misunderstood or I may not have expressed myself very well. The 29 000 petajoules that Geoscience Australia are claiming to be Victoria's total onshore gas potential includes extraction by fracking.

Mrs PEULICH — It is not the advice that I have just received, but I will certainly check that. Minister, harnessing Victoria's considerable onshore gas resource, I think most people understand, would deliver significant economic benefit for the state which the state has not fully investigated — industry and people — yet the process or the progress on dealing with some of these key issues that supposedly underpin your rationale for maintaining the moratorium remains without the government having made any substantial progress on those issues. Given that you are actually not addressing some really important issues and denying Victorian business, Victorian households and the Victorian government enormous economic opportunity, is the government then going to have to rely on yet another \$50 bribe as a way of trying to offset skyrocketing gas prices, as you have with electricity prices? Is that what we are looking at?

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Melhem) — Before I go to the minister, can I give Mrs Peulich a bit of advice. The line of questioning is not related to the bill. I urge you for the next line of questioning to go back to the bill, please.

Ms PULFORD — Thank you, Acting President. That is not an irrelevant point that you just made. Mrs Peulich in her question asserts that there is a significant resource, and on that I think during this committee stage we have already agreed to disagree. The best advice available to the government is that there is no proven or probable resource of any significance and that 100 petajoules would last for about six months.

In terms of the pressures that households and industry are experiencing as a result of gas exports impacting gas prices, there are a number of things that the government is doing. We are certainly very keen for the federal government to act and to create a reserve to provide a measure of protection for Victorian consumers and businesses from that export demand, which is the thing that is above all other things placing the greatest pressure on gas prices. But Mrs Peulich refers to an initiative that the government recently announced which is about prompting consumers to avail themselves of cheaper deals from energy retailers. The average saving for households who avail themselves of this deal-switching information on the website is in the order, if my memory serves me

correctly, of about \$350 a year. So the government has decided to encourage people to go and access those deals if they can.

Mrs PEULICH — Whilst I take heed of your advice, indeed in the first example I used in relation to the Halladale gas field, where the boundary was a little blurred, I just wanted to understand the underpinnings of the government's rationale for maintaining the ban on conventional gas exploration and gas production. I note the minister is attempting to pass the ball to the federal government, but Blind Freddie would know that if you actually increase the quantum of gas supply available to Victorians the prices will come down. The government has got to accept that part of the energy crisis here also emanates from their ban on conventional gas production, so it is self-made, threatening the economics of Victorian industry and having adverse impacts on Victorian households and Victorians.

I will leave my questioning there, but hopefully some of those key questions will prompt the government into action. They have now had almost four years to undertake the work to decide whether indeed the moratorium should go. We have taken the position that it should. I am certainly not convinced that the government has done any of that important work. Many of their opinions are contradicted by the science, by the experts, by the industry and certainly by the experience of business and the community. With those few words, whilst the opposition is not opposing the bill, it obviously has a very different view in relation to conventional gas production.

Ms PULFORD — Again, heeding your advice about sticking to the contents of the bill, Acting President, I will make my remarks short, but some of the things that Mrs Peulich has asserted are just simply not true. The moratorium is a moratorium that was in place. It is not something that the government has put in place. It is something that the former government put in place. On the enormous resource that Mrs Peulich speaks of, there is no evidence available to the government that suggests it exists in any way that Mrs Peulich is describing. The work is very much underway. This is the work that the former government did not do. And just on the question of the impact of rising gas prices due to exports — and Mrs Peulich might not like this answer — I think it is an objective fact that the government is using that \$50 bonus to drive people to the Victorian Energy Compare website.

Mrs Peulich — To collect their names and addresses.

Ms PULFORD — Well, that is a little paranoid.

Mrs Peulich — Can you rule that out, Minister? And can you give a commitment to this chamber that anyone who is caught —

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Elasmr) — Order! Mrs Peulich, the minister is on her feet.

Ms PULFORD — That will save a typical household \$330 on their energy bills in the first year alone. That is the experience of people who do use the Energy Compare website. Nobody is compelled or required to do this, but in my experience there are some people in the community who are very, very good at driving a great bargain with the energy retailers and who put a lot of time and effort into the detail.

Mrs Peulich interjected.

Ms PULFORD — It was Mrs Peulich's friends who deregulated and privatised much of the energy market historically. Previous governments have made the decision that the private market has a role to play in energy sales. There are people in the community who drive a very hard bargain with the energy retailers, and there are other people in the community who for a whole lot of reasons pay the bill when it comes and take the price that is offered to them, and some people for any number of reasons —

Mrs Peulich — If you don't, you're copping it on the chin.

Ms PULFORD — I think Mrs Peulich is being ridiculous, so maybe it is time to go back to the bill. But before we do I was just going to say —

Mr Ramsay — On a point of order, Acting President, what part of clause 1 is Ms Pulford referring to?

Ms PULFORD — We have not been on the bill the whole time.

Mr Ramsay — Well, why don't you get onto the bill and then we can go home?

Ms PULFORD — I would very much like to get onto the bill if that is the opposition's wish.

Clause agreed to.

Clause 2

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Elasmr) — My understanding is that Ms Pulford will move an amendment to clause 2, but I ask her to circulate her amended amendments first. Correct?

Ms PULFORD — Yes, I have amendments as amended, and I now ask for them to be circulated. I move:

1. Clause 2, line 8, omit "January" and insert "October".

The amendment to clause 2 seeks to omit the word 'January' and insert the word 'October', giving the bill an operative date of 1 October.

Mrs Peulich — October? Hang on, we've got May.

Ms PULFORD — Yes, and I apologise. I am advised there was some error in transmission from the Office of the Chief Parliamentary Counsel to the Parliament, and I apologise for that. Members, particularly those who have wholeheartedly participated in filibustering, would be well aware of the frustrations that the government has experienced in the passage of its legislation. That is why the date was proposed to be moved from January to May, and that is the exact same reason that it is moving from May to October. We would very much like to be finalising the consideration in the chamber of half a dozen bills in each sitting week, as we declare to all members in the week preceding each sitting week, and this week we have made quite some progress, but that has been unusual in recent weeks. So that is our explanation for why this amendment is as it is.

Mrs PEULICH — Whilst obviously we will not be opposing the amendment, I think it is extraordinary that we have had one set of amendments circulated and — obviously I am handling this here in the upper house, and I have not had the opportunity of consulting with the shadow minister in the lower house — before they have even come off the printer there are other amendments. What this shows is really policy on the run. This bill is dated 2017, so the government, and especially Minister D' Ambrosio, have had plenty of time to work out the details and get them to this chamber. This clearly shows that they are not on the ball. If they cannot get a commencement date right, then how can we get the answers to many of those questions which I asked in the discussion on clause 1? Unfortunately it quite clearly shows that the minister is just not focused on the issues of her portfolio.

Ms PULFORD — The minister is a he, not a she, if we are going to fuss over detail, and detail is important in this place. I would correct you that the minister is a male. The minister is Mr Pallas. All members in this house are aware of the outrageous filibustering that has been going on. That is why the bill is being considered today rather than on an earlier occasion.

Amendment agreed to; amended clause agreed to; clauses 3 to 32 agreed to.

Clause 33

Ms PULFORD — I move:

- Clause 33, line 23, omit “January” and insert “October”.

This amendment is exactly the same as the other one.

Amendment agreed to; amended clause agreed to.

Reported to house with amendments.

Report adopted.

Third reading

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ramsay) — The question is:

That the bill be now read a third time and do pass.

House divided on question:

Ayes, 35

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

Noes, 5

Dunn, Ms	Springle, Ms
Pennicuik, Ms	Truong, Ms (<i>Teller</i>)
Ratnam, Dr (<i>Teller</i>)	

Question agreed to.

Read third time.

BUDGET PAPERS 2018–19

Mr MULINO (Eastern Victoria) (17:09) — I move:

That the Council take note of the budget papers 2018–19.

It is a great pleasure and it is a great honour to speak to the Appropriation (2018–2019) Bill 2018. This is a transformational budget at a point in time when Victoria is at a crossroads. There are a great many opportunities for Victoria and a great many challenges for Victoria, and this budget delivers. It is the fourth budget of this term, building upon three very strong budgets already delivered by this government and by this Treasurer.

Just to set a very brief contextual picture of where Victoria is at, everybody in this place knows we are experiencing rapid population growth — the highest population growth by some measure of any state in this country, and might I say Australia is growing at a faster rate than just about any other OECD country. We are growing far faster than all of the other major states. This is a reflection of how good things are in Victoria. People are choosing to come here, international migrants are choosing to come here and people are choosing to come here from other states. What this creates is a challenge to keep up with the infrastructure demand and the service demands.

We are also in an environment where there are social policy needs. There are policies which have been highlighted by important policy developments that this government has championed, such as the family violence royal commission and the national disability insurance scheme, which we worked very hard on. We have to keep up with the investments in those areas of social policy.

Finally, we live in a society and an economy which is undergoing a dramatic transformation. We are seeing sectoral change and we are seeing technological change. It is change which is very exciting and it is change which creates many opportunities, but it is change which is very challenging for many people, with many jobs under threat and many jobs disappearing. We live within an economy and in a society where we need to be providing people with educational opportunities and training opportunities. So before talking about some of the broader fiscal parameters I want to start with one of the signature achievements of this budget, which is our TAFE and training package.

That package is going to provide the training opportunities for our young people and for people who are facing insecurity in work so that they can retool for

the future. This training package, this TAFE package, is the biggest single investment in this sector for decades. That is in stark contrast to what the previous government — achieved is not the right word — did to this sector, which was to gut this sector. We have faced TAFE precincts with padlocks on them. In my own electorate the Lilydale TAFE had padlocks on it and was going to be turned into apartments. It was going to be redeveloped in the most inappropriate and unimaginative way. Now, in sharp contrast to that, the Lilydale TAFE is thriving. It is offering courses to a community that needs them. The Lilydale TAFE now has a tech school that is already open and offering courses to prepare high school students in the entire eastern area for the challenges of the future.

This budget builds upon all of that. It provides \$524 million in ongoing funding to continue this government's commitment to TAFE and the training system. It provides \$172 million to make TAFE free for selected priority courses and preapprenticeships, so we are removing barriers to those in most need, to those that come from low socio-economic backgrounds and to those for whom fees would be a barrier. Those courses are going to be so critical for those in our society that most need to achieve the training that can provide them with opportunities in the future.

We are also providing \$304 million to meet demand in training subsidies, including for priority areas such as family violence services, disability services and infrastructure projects. We are providing people with the training that they need to slot into the jobs that our huge infrastructure program is creating. This is the holistic approach we need for our economy and society. This signature policy is one of the truly groundbreaking policies in this budget, and it is such an honour to talk about that policy with the minister responsible for it here in the chamber. That policy stands out, but it is just one of many strong policies in this budget.

Can I just say before I get onto specific investments and specific policy areas that we are standing at a point where our economy is the standout economy of this nation. When we came to power that was not the case. We were weak relative to other jurisdictions in so many respects — in relation to jobs growth and in relation to per capita gross state product (GSP) growth. Let us look at where we stand now. Our real gross state product growth was 3.3 per cent in 2016–17 — the strongest of all the states, well above the national average of 2 per cent. That is what is underpinning the jobs growth and underpinning our fiscal strength. That is a number which is a complete turnaround from where we were at.

There were 117 000 jobs added in 2016–17. This side of the house understands the importance of work. We understand the importance of opportunities in employment for people and the dignity and economic security that work provides for both those in employment and their families. Those 117 000 new jobs mean that 117 000 families in just 2016–17 are that much better off. Of course if you look at what we have done since we came to power, there are over 330 000 new jobs. These are huge numbers relative to what the previous government achieved, and they are significantly higher than we see in any other jurisdiction.

Victoria's economy has expanded by more than 13 per cent in real terms, or \$48 billion, since we came to power. Importantly, even at a time when our population growth is so high, we are achieving high growth in GSP per capita, so we are not just achieving high absolute growth rates and large numbers of absolute jobs growth. Our GSP per capita grew by 0.9 per cent in 2016–17; the rest of Australia grew at 0.2 per cent. So it is a very significant achievement — a very significant, positive gap — that we have achieved in Victoria relative to the rest of the country, and that is in the face of such rapid and unprecedented population growth.

What about the regions? Victoria's regional economy is also experiencing rapid growth. Employment in regional Victoria grew by 3.1 per cent in 2017, while the regional unemployment rate declined by 0.03 per cent. When we came to power we inherited 6.6 per cent regional unemployment. It is far lower than that now. If we just look at regional full-time jobs growth, regional full-time jobs growth was negative 8200 jobs when members on the other side were in power. We have seen growth of 31 500 jobs. So when members opposite say they are the party of regional Victoria, let us look at the facts. Let us not look at the rhetoric.

Let us look at fiscal health. Let us look at how we are achieving all of these outcomes — the TAFE outcomes, the infrastructure outcomes, the outcomes in service delivery — in a responsible manner, keeping our government's balance sheet in good health. In 2018–19 we have an operating surplus for the general government sector of \$1.4 billion, with operating surpluses averaging \$2.5 billion over the forward estimates. We are also seeing expenses and revenue growth in balance over the forward estimates. This is responsible budgeting. As I said, we are experiencing rapid population growth. We are experiencing challenges. We are not shying away from the expenditure — we need to keep up with that — but we are doing it in a way that is balanced.

Expenses are expected to grow by 3.9 per cent a year on average, compared with revenue growth of 4 per cent a year, and this is something that we have stuck to throughout the four years. People in the community will now have seen this budget after budget from this government, and they will know when they go to the ballot box in November 2018 what they can expect from an Andrews government in the following term should they give us the privilege of a second term. They know what they can rely upon — that we will achieve great things through our budgets, but in a responsible way.

Government infrastructure investment is at an all-time high, and that is what is needed with population growth where it is at. Those opposite might say, ‘Wasting money’. That is what their mantra is now. Is that their way of justifying sitting on their hands for four years? Is that their mantra now — ‘Do nothing. We sat on our hands for four years, and that’s how we’re going to justify doing it again’? We have over \$10 billion a year in infrastructure spending over the forward estimates. That compares with an average of \$4.9 billion a year in the decade from 2005–06 to 2014. People around this state are seeing level crossings removed. They are seeing schools opened. In my electorate John Henry Primary School was opened 18 months ago. That school is now bustling; that school is a hive of activity. That is the kind of investment our community wants. They are seeing it delivered, and this budget delivers more. It delivers more schools, more roads, more hospitals and more public transport. That is what the community demands. That is what it is getting.

What are the broader objectives of this government? What are the objectives that we have set out for each of our budgets? And this fourth one continues on in this vein in achieving all of them. The four long-term financial management objectives and fiscal measures and targets are sound financial management, improving services, building our infrastructure and using public resources efficiently. What we see in this budget are surpluses projected in every year, as I just outlined; average expenditure growth of 3.9 per cent being lower over the forward estimates than revenue growth; and projected net debt to GSP of 4.6 per cent at June 2018, which is lower than the level that we inherited. This is exactly what the community needs in this time of high population growth.

Let me just talk briefly about infrastructure. Infrastructure is needed right across the gamut. We have people moving into the outer suburbs at unprecedented rates. So many of our outer suburbs rank in the top local government areas for growth in our country, including Cardinia, Casey in my electorate,

Melton, areas in the north-west and the outer suburbs of Geelong. These suburbs need schools, they need health services and they need roads. We have \$10.1 billion of government infrastructure investment per year across the forward estimates. This is an unprecedented investment. I recommend to anyone reading *Hansard* that they go to the budget papers to look at the graph in budget paper 2 which compares the previous 10 years to what this government has achieved over four years and the forward estimates. It is a stark contrast. We are seeing these projects delivered on time. We are seeing these projects already producing benefits for our community.

In this budget we are seeing more new schools. In our second year how many new schools did we open? None. That is the pipeline we inherited. I would love to hear those opposite get up and defend the pipeline of schools that they gave us. We are funding and delivering new schools every year. I recommend that people go to chart 4.1 on page 56 of budget paper 2. There they will see not a one-year wonder; they will see what this government has done over the full term and what will continue to be invested over the following four years. As I said, this is absolutely necessary investment for our community, given the needs in regional Victoria, given the needs in our rapidly growing suburbs and given the needs in established suburbs.

What are some of the key projects? There are many, but I will just point to \$940 million for regional roads, which is so needed. I know that there are many in this place who have talked to this issue. Mr Purcell is in the chamber; he has talked to these issues often. This is a huge investment in regional Victoria and will produce significant benefits in terms of travel times and in terms of safety. There is \$2.2 billion to upgrade the arterial road network in the north and south-east of Melbourne’s outer suburbs. Again what we see is communities in my electorate which need this investment. Consider Koo Wee Rup Road, which needs a huge amount of investment. That road has 20 000 cars —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr MULINO — Those opposite make noise. I cannot wait to hear them explain their pitiful performance over four years in government on any objective measure. The amount they invested in roads was pitiful compared to this government. They are all rhetoric and no delivery, and I think the Victorian people will understand hot air versus actual achievement when it comes to them passing judgement later this year. So there is \$2.2 billion for outer urban

areas which are growing at unprecedented rates. Koo Wee Rup Road has 20 000 cars and 5000 trucks a day. This investment has been welcomed by people right across that area. I have received so many positive messages in relation to that particular investment. There are so many investments of course right across the north and right across the south-east.

We are seeing huge investments in public transport. The level crossing removal program continues — 19 level crossings have been removed and 11 train stations have been upgraded to date. This project is ahead of schedule. This program is something that the community time and time again says they support. They want to see this program completed over the eight years that we promised to complete it within. If anything, I fully expect that those in the community, if they were asked about this program, would like to see it expanded. As with many of our infrastructure projects, it is being completed ahead of schedule. As with so much of our infrastructure program, so many of these projects have already been completed and are producing massive benefits for our transport system.

Mr Ondarchie interjected.

Mr MULINO — Again I would love those opposite to get up and run through the numbers of how many level crossings were removed under their four years versus how many have been removed during our four years. I would love to see —

Mr Ondarchie interjected.

Mr MULINO — Mr Ondarchie is yelling. He will not stand up and talk about how much he delivered in his four years; he will not say a word about that. He will promise everything. He has got zero credibility. When I say he has got zero credibility, you do not need me to expand on that. I will not expand on that beyond the budget. I will simply say he has got zero credibility when it comes to level crossings, and other matters too.

I will not go on much longer. We also see significant investment in schools, over \$1.2 billion. As I said earlier —

Ms Bath — What about Koo Wee Rup?

Mr MULINO — I love the audacity of those opposite — they are throwing education projects out there. We built no new schools in our second year? The audacity is unbelievable. That \$1.2 billion is the biggest education investment in this state's history, and those opposite do not like it at all. Again, we are seeing new schools. I have had the privilege of opening a new primary school near my electorate in Pakenham every

single year of this government. They did not have any opportunities like that under the previous government.

Let us look at service delivery across health and education, and let us not forget that we are still seeing the rollout of this state's largest expenditure ever on family violence services that are so needed. When you look back at the four years of this government, the Royal Commission into Family Violence was undertaken and completed. It produced very solid policy which is now being funded. Last year's budget was the first budget in which we saw major expenditure on it and this year's budget continues on with that. When we talk about that 4 per cent growth in revenue and 3.9 per cent growth in services those opposite may get up and say they would love to slash those numbers, and I believe them — they would love to slash spending on services — but then we would come back and ask where that expenditure would be slashed, and it would be slashed in areas like family violence expenditure and the national disability insurance scheme.

I want to finish off by saying that this budget is the fourth budget in a term where we have seen so much achieved. We have crafted this budget in an environment where there are many challenges for this state but also many opportunities. I am somebody who looks at population growth through a glass-half-full prism, and I believe we are in a very exciting phase for Victoria. However, we do have to invest in this state in this environment of high population growth if we are going to keep up with the service requirements and the infrastructure requirements of the people who live here and who are moving here.

This budget delivers on the massive infrastructure requirements of our state. It also delivers on signature policy reform. TAFE stands out. In an economy where transition is occurring for so many we need to provide affordable and accessible opportunities for people to retrain for the jobs that are emerging — the jobs of the future — and this budget delivers on that. This budget also delivers on the investment that we need in education services, in health services and in family violence, disability and other core services.

This budget is a very strong budget. I recommend it to the house. I feel very privileged to have been part of a government that has delivered four strong budgets, and I feel that this one is the cherry on the top after a very strong term of delivery. This one is the best yet.

Dr RATNAM (Northern Metropolitan) (17:29) — I rise to speak on the 2018–19 budget papers. I, like so many Victorians, awaited the release of the state budget

for 2018–19. We wanted to see what the priorities of this government are. In an election year we keenly awaited some indication of what this government's vision for Victoria is. The role of a government is to put in place the conditions that enable the people it governs to live good lives now and into the future. It must tackle the big issues on the horizon and look to the future as well as manage the present. It should put the public interest above that of its corporate mates. It should care for all its people, from the elderly to the young and all those experiencing hard times. Budgets are a key means by which governments demonstrate where their priorities lie and what their vision for Victorians is. This is where the Labor government has fallen down. This election-year budget from Labor is sorely lacking in vision. It is a budget built around roads and privatisation while ignoring growing inequality, our housing affordability crisis and climate change.

Victoria is a great place to live, but our communities are under increasing pressure. Poor planning is putting the things we love about our communities under strain, with an undue influence from vested interests. We want our government to invest in things that make our communities livable — trains, trams and buses that get us where we need to go when we need to get there, good public healthcare and education, having a roof over our heads and a clean and healthy environment. But instead of moving us towards 100 per cent renewable energy and fixing our public transport system, this Labor government is giving billions to big corporations which want to build toll roads and propping up the coal industry while selling off important assets for the short-term gain. In contrast, the Greens plan will make our communities more livable, connected by world-class public transport and powered by clean, renewable energy.

The biggest disappointment in this year's budget is the focus on roads to the detriment of properly planned public transport. Going into this year's election we see Labor and the Liberal opposition engaging in a battle of the toll roads. Will it be the east–west link, already defeated by the community, or the north-east link that will prevail in this battle for the least useful way to spend billions in public funds? The Greens will do all we can to ensure that it will be neither. Both of these road projects, along with the West Gate tunnel, are unnecessary. They will increase congestion and lock in car dependence for decades to come. Roads like these make a city unlivable.

No other major city in the world is building new toll roads like these. The forward-looking cities around the globe are reducing car usage and pollution and investing in public transport. The Greens have a plan

for public transport to provide people with the means to get where they need to go when they need to get there. We have released the first part of our plan to extend Melbourne Metro. The government's failure to fund metro beyond the current project is short-sighted. We will increase services, cut overcrowding and deliver a reliable, high-capacity metro system for commuters from the outer suburbs to the inner city.

We need our cities to be planned properly to create neighbourhoods where people have opportunities to connect with each other and travel within them safely and sustainably. This means letting communities, not property developers, design our neighbourhoods. This means standing up to those big property developers, not taking donations from them one day and making a decision that makes them super profits the next day. This means investing in safer cycling paths and footpaths, not just building highways that literally divide our communities. This means supporting and funding the work our local councils do. They do such important work in caring for and bringing communities together every single day. By making toll roads its priority this government has put corporations before communities and is consigning Victorians to a future of congestion.

Another key issue faced by Victorians that the government has neglected is energy. Our energy market contains structural problems that are causing energy prices to rise and place pressure on Victorian families. Labor's response is to pay people \$50 to visit a website. This policy seems to have been stolen from the Compare the Meerkat campaign. Remember them? Premier Andrews's response to our energy costs seems to borrow more from a clever ad company's attempt to sell its product rather than fixing the very system that is inflating energy prices.

Labor has capitulated on energy. The budget does nothing to address the underlying problem created by privatising the energy system and having insufficient regulation. Instead of promoting the failure that is our privatised energy system Labor should be joining with the Greens in thinking through how to reform the energy system to put people and the environment front and centre. We need a plan to bring key parts of the energy system back into public hands and ensure that people, not profit, come first.

One of the biggest failures in this budget was the absence of positive policies to address global warming and protect our environment. Labor and the opposition still do not get it. The world is in a climate crisis. We must act now to transition away from fossil fuels to a 100 per cent renewable energy future. Coal and gas

must be kept in the ground if future generations are to inhabit a livable planet. Instead of using their previous policies as a foundation for more action, Labor thinks they have done enough. They think they have ticked the climate box — no more to be done — but nothing could be further from the truth. A government committed to climate action would not waste \$53 million on a dodgy brown coal project, giving false hope to the community in the Latrobe Valley. Now is the time to ramp up the transition to renewable energy, away from brown coal and gas. We can get to 100 per cent renewable energy, create thousands of jobs and lower energy prices.

The government also failed once again to secure the great forest national park. This is such a lost opportunity for job creation, securing Victoria's water supply, protecting endangered species and biodiversity and ensuring carbon storage. Instead Labor is going to spend over \$30 million to find more ways to log our beautiful forests. Our oceans, parks and waterways are choked with plastic. While the rest of the world takes action, the Victorian government is focusing investment on burning plastic. Victorians know we can do so much better than this. There is huge support for Greens policies focused on reducing waste, building our local plastic recycling industry and holding corporations to account for the waste they produce.

Victoria is in the midst of a housing crisis. There are close to 40 000 applications for the public housing waiting list. Rents are out of control and young people have given up hope of being able to own their own homes. Housing is fundamental to ensuring livable communities. Everyone has a right to have a roof over their head. It is the responsibility of government to ensure that right is fulfilled. There is no new money in this year's budget to relieve housing pressure. Despite surpluses in the billions the government has only committed \$185 million over four years to fix public housing. It is almost unbelievable that a Labor government would give up on public housing the way this government has — except that it fits with their privatisation agenda. It is now the Labor way to sell public housing to private developers. What the government cannot answer is: once the land is given up, where does the government build housing again? Or is it the answer that Labor no longer sees a role for government in the provision of public housing?

While housing has been ignored, prisons are getting a windfall. Spending over \$700 million on a new prison and prison upgrades is an admission of failure. Prison populations grow when government policies to provide adequate housing, access to education, jobs and strong communities fail. Building more prisons does nothing

to reduce crime and in fact may reduce prospects for rehabilitation. We can improve community safety and reduce crime by investing more in crime prevention, rehabilitation and prisoner post-release services, but the Victorian government has clearly decided it knows better than the experts. It does not, and vulnerable kids and families will suffer as a result.

The government is very proud of its surpluses — \$9 billion over the next four years that is not going to be spent on the community. These are surpluses that are propped up by one-off privatisations. It is disappointing to see a Labor government continue with Jeff Kennett's plan to sell off our state to the highest bidder. Thinking long term always seems difficult for governments, but given the experience of Victoria as the most privatised state in the nation and the problems we face with privatised transport, privatised energy, privatised education and privatised prisons, you would think they would heed the lessons of the past. Public assets should stay in public hands.

The Greens will continue to oppose the sale of land titles operations, disability support homes and public housing. These privatisations are a disaster waiting to happen. The government is giving up sensitive and significant data to private companies in the privatisation of functions of the land titles office. Why will this privatisation be any different to any other where costs have gone up and service levels have declined? The selling off of disability support homes is particularly troubling. There can be no guarantee that people will be properly cared for, and the government is washing its hands of responsibility. The Greens will always stand up for public services and keeping public assets in public hands for the ongoing benefit of all Victorians.

The Labor government is also proud it is not raising taxes or introducing new ones. We do not think that this is something to be proud of when there remain clear areas in need of funding. Taxation is what enables a society to strive for fairness and equality. It was disappointing that, for example, the budget did not include a point of consumption tax for online gambling, a way to make revenue from companies peddling harm to our community — revenue that could be redirected into positive programs for the community.

There were some good things in the budget too. Long overdue funding to schools and free TAFE courses are welcome but are only making up for a decade of neglect and poor past policy. The Greens also secured over \$100 million from the government for some of our priorities, including 130 park rangers to better look after our precious environment; \$22 million for safe recycling and better active transport infrastructure;

\$5 million for upgrades to Casey Fields, including facilities for women's sport; \$12 million to upgrade the South Yarra train station, which is something my colleague the member for Prahran in the other place, Sam Hibbins, and the local council have campaigned long and hard for; \$37 million for legal assistance to people facing barriers to justice; and funding to build Docklands Primary School.

The Greens believe Victoria can do better. We can have public transport that works. We can transition to 100 per cent renewable energy, address climate change and have reliable, affordable energy. We can ensure everyone has a home. We can protect our precious forests, waterways, clean air and landscapes. We can have clan-based treaties processed with funding that ensures equal footing for Aboriginal communities in the treaty process. We can stop diverting billions of dollars to toll road companies and keep public assets in public hands for the benefit of all Victorians.

The Greens are looking forward to the next few months as we lay out our plans for Victoria and a cleaner, fairer society in harmony with the natural world powered by renewable energy. If you want a Victoria that invests in the future and looks after people and the environment, the choice is now clear.

Mr MELHEM (Western Metropolitan) (17:42) — I also rise to speak on the Victorian budget, which is yet another budget delivered by the Andrews Labor government since coming to office. I am proud to be a member of this government that has delivered some excellent budgets since November 2014. With the previous budgets we have built on making sure that Victoria is back on the map; Victoria is investing in its people; Victoria is investing in growth; Victoria is investing in health, education, public transport and roads infrastructure; and Victoria is investing in the most important resource in our state — people. I am proud that in the current budget we are investing in further education, and one of the highlights for me is the further investment in TAFE, which was subject to some major cuts by the previous government over the four years that they were in office.

We are now injecting another \$172 million into the TAFE system, and we are offering some 30 priority courses and 18 preapprenticeship courses free of charge so that our kids who do not want to go to university are kids who want to go to TAFE. Particularly in areas like my electorate, Western Metropolitan Region, a lot of our students and our kids want to do TAFE courses, and now they will be able to do so. They will be able to get into TAFE without worrying about where they are going to find the money to pay for these courses, which

is a problem in a lot of low socio-economic areas. They do not have to worry about that now, because these courses will be free of charge.

These courses are tailored for the things we will need to make sure that Victoria's wealth and progress continue, a journey we started back in November 2014. The courses are based on the needs of the state to continue the investment and growth in infrastructure projects like the Melbourne Metro project, projects that will transform public transport in this state. It will make the fast rail project to Geelong, which is part of this budget, a reality. It will make a reality the recent announcement finally by the federal government to chip in \$5 billion towards the Melbourne airport link. The preferred model, which was proposed in this budget by the Andrews Labor government, is to go through Sunshine in my electorate to then connect to various regional rails. In order to get all these rail projects you need metro rail built. It has been talked about for decades and decades, but finally now it is a reality, and again it is thanks to the Andrews Labor government investing in Victoria.

There are projects like the West Gate tunnel project, which is another vital project that the state needs. In my electorate that project will transform the way people travel to Melbourne from Western Metropolitan Region and also from Geelong, Ballarat and the whole Western District. Even people who come from the south-eastern suburbs and travel west will find life easier as a result of the continuous investment by this government in the Monash Freeway upgrades over the years and further investment as part of this budget. It is about connecting Victoria and about making travel times easier for Victorians to take their kids to school and go to work and for businesses to work in the most efficient manner.

This budget is about delivering the things we said we were going to deliver when we came to office in November 2014. With level crossings we said we were committing to remove 50 level crossings, of which 20 would be done in this term. Guess what? We have delivered more than 20 already. We have delivered the biggest infrastructure project in railway crossings, eliminating all these deadly crossings in the state, and we have got more to do. We will do the 50. Should we be given the honour and privilege to return in November this year and form government we will continue our program to make sure we deliver the other 30 level crossings.

Some of these crossings are deadly, and one or two of them are in my electorate. The St Albans Main Road railway crossing is now a thing of the past; it is no longer there. Between the terrible railway crossings at

Main Road and Furlong Road in St Albans 17 people have been killed over the years. But guess what? Now they are gone; they are not there anymore.

The many railway crossings between Flinders Street and Dandenong are gone. People on the other side have been complaining in the last two years about sky rail and how terrible it is, but guess what? No-one is listening to them, because the people in these regions are now realising what this government is about. This government is delivering a better transport system and a better railway system. They are seeing the results already, and come November 2018, later this year, they will realise the difference between a coalition government that does nothing for four years and a government which said, 'We're going to do all these projects', and delivered them, and going forward we will be putting our plans forward to the electorate about what we are going to deliver in the next four years. That is basically what we have delivered.

Now I want to go to some of the announcements in this budget for my electorate. Sunshine Hospital is a fine hospital, and I want to pay tribute to the men and women — the doctors, staff, nurses and management — of the hospital, who are doing a terrific job servicing the west of Melbourne. On top of the \$200 million investment in building the children's hospital in Sunshine there was an announcement prior to this budget to expand the emergency department and invest \$29.3 million to deliver that. That is on top of the investment in the Mercy hospital in the last budget and the commitment to redevelop Footscray Hospital. There will be some upgrades at Williamstown. Most importantly in relation to Footscray Hospital, where the \$50 million was committed in the last budget to actually rebuild that hospital, I am looking forward to stage 2 to be able to start being built to put into action a brand-new hospital in Footscray to service the inner west and the people of the west. That is happening in relation to health.

In relation to education there is a further investment by the Andrews Labor government of \$29 million for stage 2 of the secondary campus in Footscray. That is part of \$353.2 million in school investment listed in the budget. That is a very important investment in that precinct, which is going to deliver first-class education to our kids in the west.

Also there will be a further investment in the west: an additional \$55.7 million for new and upgraded bus services in Melbourne, which will include bus services in Wyndham, one of the fastest growing suburbs in Melbourne. The improvement is expected to be introduced from 2019. That is not all. There will be

further improvement and further bus services in these growth areas in my electorate. I will continue campaigning to make sure we get improved bus services and rail services in these growth suburbs. There is \$22.7 million to upgrade and maintain active transport infrastructure, including for Raleigh Road in Maribyrnong.

The plan goes on and on. Going back to education, there is \$353 million for 12 new schools, including Davis Creek Primary School; for early works for three schools; and for additional stages for seven schools, including Burnside Primary School, Truganina East P-9 and Sanctuary Lakes P-9 school. They are brand-new schools that are going to be built in my electorate.

The Andrews Labor government is the only government in recent history basically putting the west back on the map. I am proud to stand here representing the people of the western suburbs of Melbourne. This government has delivered again and again for the west. The western suburbs of Melbourne are no longer the poor cousins in Melbourne. I am proud of living in the west. I am proud of the living standard. We have now got better infrastructure and employment in the western suburbs.

I will stand up for my constituents about delivering the West Gate tunnel project and about making sure the M80 ring-road project is finally completed. The EJ Whitten Bridge will be opening hopefully in the next few months. That project was supposed to be done seven years ago. When the previous government came to office, the first thing they did was take that money away and transfer it to the ill-fated east-west link. That is why this project is four years behind schedule. But guess what? That project is near completion and will be open in the next few months thanks to the Andrews Labor government actually making sure that is now a reality.

The list goes on and on in relation to what we are doing in the west thanks to the current budget. Another area about rail projects and improving the public transport system is car parks. That is one of our biggest issues at the moment. There will be further investment in making sure that we increase the number of spaces and car parks around train stations. There is no point having train stations and new rail networks if you do not have enough parking spots. As a result of this budget two train stations in my electorate, in Essendon and in Watergardens, will have funding to increase the number of car spaces so more constituents will be able to drive to the station and use the public transport system, which

is something that was somewhat ignored by the other side.

The western region of Melbourne will continue to improve under this government, with increased resources for early childhood across the state. I had the pleasure of opening early childhood centres in Wyndham with Minister Mikakos a couple of weeks ago, and there are more in the planning stages. When we have growing suburbs and new people moving into new suburbs, especially people with young families, it is important to make sure we have got early learning places available for them so they are able to take their kids to these places and make sure they receive the attention and the education they need.

Also there has been a \$50 million increase in funding to the interface councils to further assist growth suburbs. This is funding which the government introduced two years ago, so the extra \$50 million will be in addition to the current funding of \$50 million. Some of my councils, like Wyndham council and Melton council, are actually some of the beneficiaries. Hume council is as well, so three of the councils in my electorate actually are beneficiaries of that scheme. Having the additional \$50 million is going to go a long way to assist them in meeting the requirements of our citizens.

One of the other announcements in the budget — which is probably a small item, but you need to watch this space — is in waste-to-energy. The issue we are facing in relation to waste — and I think Dr Ratnam talked about this — is a very important issue. I agree that we need to address the waste problem we have in Victoria. I have the full confidence that the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, Ms D’Ambrosio, will be making an announcement shortly in relation to how we are going to deal with the chronic issue of waste in Victoria. One of the areas I have been advocating for, and I produced a report for the minister in relation to it some few months ago, is in relation to dealing with making sure that we do not have waste being sent to landfill any more. I think that is a thing of the past. We need to move away from sending our waste to landfill.

We should be seriously thinking about implementing and building waste-to-energy plants so we can get rid of our waste in the most efficient and most environmentally friendly manner and so we can also generate environmentally friendly electricity. I am looking forward to Minister D’Ambrosio announcing the government’s policy in relation to that in the next few months. Hopefully the western suburbs of Melbourne will be the beneficiaries of that policy and we will no longer rely on landfill.

With these words, I commend the budget to the house. I want to congratulate Premier Daniel Andrews, Treasurer Tim Pallas and Daniel Mulino, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer, on the great work they have done in putting this budget together and making sure Victoria remains strong. We are getting things done.

Mr GEPP (Northern Victoria) (17:57) — It is with great pleasure that I rise to speak on the budget for the first time in this place. What an opportunity it is when you get to speak about a budget that delivers jobs, health care, education, skills and roads and has a healthy surplus this year and across the forward estimates. This is a great budget. It is getting things done for all of Victoria and it is one that everybody on this side of the house is particularly proud of.

I want to focus my contribution on regional Victoria and in particular on my electorate of Northern Victoria Region. I want to talk a little bit about some of the negativity that is being spruiked in my area by the member for Mildura in the other place and the member for Murray Plains in the other place. They have been going right across the electorate talking this budget down and talking doom and gloom for these great areas of this fantastic state. It is clear to me that they actually have not gone into any of the detail that is in this budget, because if they had they would actually know that there were enormous benefits within this budget for people in regional Victoria and in particular my electorate of Northern Victoria Region.

Since the Andrews Labor government has come into office it has invested more than \$8.5 billion in regional Victoria. In this budget alone we have continued that momentum by investing over \$4.3 billion, including in world-class health care, as I said. The Victorian budget of 2018–19 includes upgrades to schools for our kids. For example, it builds on our past work of investing \$775 million to improve Victoria’s regional schools by investing a further \$180.8 million to build and upgrade some 60 regional schools across Victoria.

We have of course made a big investment, as has been stated again and again, to improve our roads. We have allocated \$941 million for this important work. We know that the problem in regional Victoria is not that we do not have enough roads; it is that the roads that we do have are not in good enough condition. Decades of underinvestment and inattention mean that our country roads need an overhaul, and we are investing in that. That is very important to country Victorians. It is very important that the road system is up to scratch and able to perform for them as they go about their very important lives on a day-to-day basis.

There are many other budget highlights for regional Victoria that I will just touch on. For example, there is \$26.8 million to better connect businesses, farmers and families. What we have heard from all nine of our regional partnerships over the past couple of years is that connectivity is a real issue. This investment will enable us to better provide connectivity for businesses, farmers and families.

In his excellent contribution on the budget Mr Mulino earlier talked about payroll tax cuts for regional Victoria — down from 3.65 per cent to 2.425 per cent. This is leading the nation and is genuine reform putting genuine money back into the pockets of businesses in regional Victoria. We have gone further. I talked a little bit about the \$941 million to improve our roads. We have got \$433 million for road restoration, including \$100 million for the Fixing Country Roads Fund.

We have also heard a lot about TAFE. What a great budget this is for TAFE. It seemed a bit ironic as we sat there and listened to the federal Treasurer delivering the federal budget and, like his state counterparts did four years ago, taking the axe to TAFE. I do not know why they want to continually beat up on young people who see pathways to learning, jobs and skills other than university. Those opposite see it as a cash cow. They do not care about those young people. If you are not going to university, you are of no consequence to those opposite. You can contrast that with the investment that this government is making in TAFE through this budget. It will have a real impact in my electorate of Northern Victoria Region.

When I go to SuniTAFE, GOTAFE or the Bendigo Kangan Institute, they cannot stop talking about the investment that we have made in the TAFE system over the past four years. We are seeing vibrancy in places that were vast, deserted wastelands after those opposite were finished with them. They are delighted, unlike Mr Crisp and Mr Walsh in the Assembly, who want to talk it down. People in my electorate associated with TAFE are delighted. Indeed Mr Crisp went as far as saying that our investment in TAFE through this budget was a complete and utter waste of money. He said, 'You're wasting your money, and you're wasting your time. It could be better spent elsewhere'. This government believes that there is nothing more virtuous than investing in our future, investing in our young people, investing in our skills and working with industry to close the skills gap and the jobs gap that is out there today. That is a path we will continue on, and we will not be persuaded by the negativity of Mr Walsh and Mr Crisp.

A couple of other highlights include that we have funded the cross-border commissioner. What we have heard again and again from our regional partnerships, particularly those in the Mallee —

Mr Ondarchie interjected.

Mr GEPP — Mr Ondarchie is over there —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr GEPP — Yes, from opposition. They did not do it when they were in office. Guess what they did? They announced their policy after a regional partnership assembly that we had instituted, where we had committed to the community that we would develop a proposal — and that is what we have done. Of course what they do not like to hear is that the 2018–19 budget delivers almost \$760 million on key regional partnership priorities, but they do not want to hear any of that.

I want to talk a little bit about some specific initiatives in a couple of electorates. I will not steal all of Ms Symes's thunder, because she will have an opportunity herself to contribute to the debate on the budget, so I will just concentrate on three lower house districts. In Shepparton — and we have heard the photobomber talk down this budget again and again and again — you can rest assured that when I am up there or Ms Sheed is out there announcing something from the budget —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr GEPP — She has been a wonderful advocate for Shepparton. She has actually got things done. Unlike the photobomber, she has actually got things done. She has got real reform through the Shepparton line upgrade, \$313 million; the Munarra Regional Centre of Excellence, \$23 million; the Barmah National Park master plan, \$400 000; the Hume renewable energy strategy, \$300 000; and the Industry Capability Network, \$5 million, which we will share in. Then of course in Shepparton we have got projects that were announced prior to the budget, including the Shepparton Education Plan, \$20.5 million; the \$20 million for the heavy vehicle alternative freight route upgrades; the Nathalia District Community Association; Numurkah Community Learning Centre; and additional funding for Tatura Community House's neighbourhood house coordination programs.

The one that I am particularly proud of is Ardmona Primary School. It is a \$500 000 contribution from the budget to this school. It is a school that I have worked very closely with. There are about 30 kids.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr GEPP — You can talk down a small school in country Victoria all you like, but I will stand there proudly with those people. I will stand proudly with a small school in country Victoria, and do you know what? This school has been grossly underfunded every year that Ms Lovell has been in this place. And what has she done in terms of her great advocacy for the school? There are 30-odd kids, mostly Indigenous kids from socially and economically challenged backgrounds, and not once in the 12 months that I have been in this place have I heard the photobomber do anything positive for this school. Over the last 12 months we have invested three-quarters of a million dollars to improve the amenity there.

Ms Bath — On a point of order, Acting President, it is unparliamentary to call another member of Parliament a photobomber, and I ask the member to withdraw it.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Elasmarr) — I ask the member to withdraw.

Mr GEPP — I withdraw calling Ms Lovell a photobomber.

In Murray Plains there are further announcements: the Echuca court upgrade, \$5.1 million; the Murray River Adventure Trail, \$500 000. This is in the electorate where Mr Walsh from the other place said, ‘There’s nothing in the budget’. This is on top of all the other statewide initiatives — \$500 000 for that, and also money in the budget for the Cobram State Emergency Service unit’s land acquisition project. We had already announced \$400 000 for Kerang Primary School in Murray Plains. There is Swan Hill bridge maintenance of \$5 million; the Calder Highway upgrade, \$19 million between Bendigo and Mildura, picking up Swan Hill.

Mr Mulino — That’s huge.

Mr GEPP — It is, it is enormous. Then we move to Mildura, with \$600 000 for the centre Food Next Door program; \$1.7 million for the Mallee Regional Innovation Centre; \$800 000 for Cardross Primary School; \$1.8 million for Mildura West Primary School; money for the Birchip Telecentre, East End Community House and the Murrayville Neighbourhood House under the Neighbourhood House Coordination Program. There is also the Calder Highway upgrade program that they will participate in, so by any measure this budget is a terrific budget for —

Mr Ondarchie — Have you ever been to Mildura West Primary School? Have you been to Cobram?

Mr GEPP — Listen to the cackling! Yes, I have. As a matter of fact, I have.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr GEPP — I know who goes in for photo ops, and she will be with me every step of the way. Every time there is an announcement, do not worry, the photo opportunist will be there. She does not miss — she gets a crook neck every time we get up there because she cannot wait to get her head into the photo. But I tell you what, Mr Ondarchie: we are at the front and centre of every one of those photographs, and do you know why? Because we are the government and we are getting things done. I thoroughly commend this budget to the house.

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) (18:10) — It is with great pleasure that I rise to speak on the Andrews Labor government’s fourth budget, appropriately titled ‘Getting Things Done’, and that is exactly what this budget is all about. I want to borrow a quote from a very famous former Labor Prime Minister, and that is Paul Keating, who referred to a previous budget as ‘a beautiful set of numbers’. That is in fact what this budget is; it is a beautiful set of numbers.

The Andrews Labor government is building a state where every Victorian can get a great education and secure a good job, and that begins with a strong economy. A strong economy means more jobs for more Victorians, and that is exactly what we are doing. We have seen Victoria’s economy grow by 3.3 per cent in 2016–17, well above the national economic growth of 2 per cent. We have seen more than 117 000 new jobs created in 2016–17, the highest of any state. This was more than 70 per cent of all new jobs created across Australia.

Since day one the Andrews government has invested in the things that matter to Victorians: new schools for our kids, hospitals for our loved ones, better roads and rail services to get people home faster and historic action to curb family violence. This budget continues that momentum and provides a strong foundation to help us get on with the job. That is what Labor governments do. Reforming Labor governments go on and get things done, and I am proud to be a member of a reforming Andrews Labor government that gets things done.

There is nothing more important than giving our children and young people hope for the future and giving them the best start to their lives. I am very proud that we as a government have in fact provided historic

and unprecedented levels of funding for our schools, for our TAFEs and for early childhood education.

I want to focus in my remarks on the investment that we have made in early childhood education. I am proud that we are making Victoria the Education State, and that starts of course with the early years. We released our groundbreaking *Early Childhood Reform Plan* with the budget last year and had a record budget in early childhood last year. That is supported again this year with a \$135.9 million to boost early childhood education. We are delivering the kindergarten infrastructure that Victoria needs with a \$42.9 million boost to upgrade and equip kindergartens, build new kindergartens and build new integrated children's centres. This is the single largest state investment ever.

We have seen those opposite claim previous federal Labor national partnership money as if it was theirs. If you actually look at what was appropriated over their four budgets, if you actually look at what they put in their four budgets, it was \$37 million over four years. Compare that to \$123.6 million, which is more than triple what those opposite managed to appropriate in their entire term: \$123.6 million by Labor.

We are also co-locating additional kindergartens at primary school sites: at Botanic Ridge Primary School in Casey, at Riverwalk Primary School in Wyndham South and at Davis Creek Primary School. We are changing the way we fund our kindergartens. We know, because research tells us, that one in five kids starts school developmentally behind, and this is why we are the first state in the country to introduce school readiness funding. We had funding in the budget last year and we have provided further funding in the budget this year for school readiness funding, a total of \$58.1 million now to make sure that children who need more support get it. This new initiative will roll out from next year, and the first 25 local government areas to get it have been announced recently. This will enable our kindergartens to bring in speech therapists, allied health professionals and literacy and numeracy experts to support kids to get the additional support that they need. This reform will be a permanent part of the Victorian kindergarten system and represents a 10 per cent increase in total funding when fully rolled out, because we want to give the kids the best start to their education.

We also have a plan to help children prepare for an increasingly connected world, and we have provided \$17.9 million in the budget to deliver language classes to up to 120 kinders across the state, with another 10 moving to a bilingual model. We are providing support for our workforce with an \$8 million

investment in scholarships and other workforce supports to enable new teachers and support educators to upskill to a teaching qualification. We are also making sure the most disadvantaged kids in our community are supported to access two years of free or low-cost kindergarten with the Early Start Kindergarten program receiving \$4 million, as well as funding the expansion of the Lookout model to include preschools for the first time.

We started last year to fund tailored Aboriginal maternal and child health services to give more Aboriginal families access to this vital universal service. We have got the best maternal and child health service in this country, but it is a world-class system here in Victoria. I have had overseas officials and ministers come and talk to me, and they are envious of our system. They are envious because we have highly qualified staff supporting families, and our budget this year provides more support for these tailored Aboriginal maternal and child health services. We will be getting on with expanding and enhancing maternal and child health services later this year from investments that we made in the budget last year. We have rolled out additional family violence visits through our maternal and child health services as well.

There are so many reforms that we are making in the early years space. We are making sure that kids with additional needs who are ineligible for the national disability insurance scheme do not miss out, and we have provided funding for those children in the budget as well, building on previous investments we have made in previous budgets, because we know the National Disability Insurance Agency has been too slow to get the support and the plans in place for children. We are making sure that children do not miss out on getting this vital support because the commonwealth cannot get its act together.

We are making the investments that we need to make sure that kids are ready for kinder, ready for school and ready for life. What we are seeing from the federal Turnbull government is, disappointingly, that they are yet again providing only one year of funding for their contribution to four-year-old kinder. We had a groundbreaking report handed down earlier this year, the *Lifting Our Game* report, which found that short-term, one-off, one-year funding agreements are holding the sector back. They are not enabling our kindergarten committees and parents to plan for the future. They need to know if they have the money in the following year to do major repairs to their centres or expand their centres or whether their staff will have a job the next year. Staff deserve that certainty as well, and parents deserve that certainty. That groundbreaking

report points out that Australia to its great shame ranks 24 out of 26 OECD nations — we are down the bottom of the OECD in terms of preschool investment — and the day after that embarrassing report that shames Simon Birmingham and Malcolm Turnbull came out, they offered one year of funding yet again.

Unbelievably in the federal budget this week what is hidden away is that they have completely ripped up the national partnership on the quality agenda. The contribution that the commonwealth has made since Kevin Rudd signed up to this national partnership and this national quality framework more than a decade ago — the contribution the commonwealth has made to the quality of our early years services, which goes to pay for inspections and compliance checks of our early year services — has been torn up and they are walking away. So they are not even prepared to make a contribution to the quality of our early years services.

Mr Ondarchie — On a point of order, Acting President, I take it the minister is badly mistaken here, because the response today is about the Victorian state budget and she has spent the last 4 minutes talking about the federal budget. Admittedly she has not talked about the state debt and she has not talked about the great Ponzi scheme that this budget really is. You should bring her back to talking about the Victorian state budget. Maybe she could talk about the debt level as well.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Melhem) — Thank you, Mr Ondarchie. There is no point of order.

Ms MIKAKOS — I know those opposite are very sensitive about what their federal colleagues do, because we know it is in the Liberal DNA to cut things, but what the member needs to understand is that this does have consequences for Victoria. Every time the federal Turnbull Liberal government makes cuts and walks away from national partnerships it does have implications for our state and our services. It has implications for workers in our departments, who go about doing regulatory checks and doing this important work every day. I think it should alarm those opposite that their federal colleagues do not care about the quality of the early year services in our state.

There is nothing more important than protecting our kids, and that is why we have made the biggest ever investment in our child and family services system in this budget. We have got an unprecedented \$858 million in the budget to continue the transformation of Victoria's child and family services system through the *Roadmap for Reform*. We are moving from crisis response to prevention and early

intervention. We have provided the biggest ever investment in our workforce — \$225 million to support the continued growth of our child protection workforce. I make the point that those opposite over their four years were only able to fund 192 staff. In comparison over our four budgets we have funded 610 new child protection workers.

So when Ms Crozier wants to cry crocodile tears she needs to be reminded that only last week Mr O'Brien in his budget reply flagged that they are going to wheel out the razor gang again. We know that public service jobs are on the line. We know what happened the last time they were in office — more than 600 public servants got the axe from the then Department of Human Services. What that meant was that child protection workers were answering phones and staffing reception desks and were not able to undertake their work. And what happened in response? We had an Ombudsman's report in 2011 entitled *Investigation regarding the Department of Human Services Child Protection Program (Loddon Mallee Region)*. And what that report found was, and I quote:

Data for cases closed during 2010–11 demonstrated that there were a number of days where an unusually high number of cases were closed. The largest number of cases closed on any one day was 90 on 28 June 2011. This is in contrast to an average of 22.7 cases closed per day throughout the year.

It goes on to say:

An increase in closure activity is apparent particularly during the lead-up to the end of the 2010–11 financial year when data for the department's annual report was required.

So what happened was Ms Wooldridge's chief of staff got on the phone and directed the department to close files two days before the cut-off for figures to be published in that year's annual report so they could fudge child protection cases. This is what they got up to: they cooked the books. When it came to the allocation over child protection we had Ms Wooldridge changing the incident reporting system so she could hide child protection incidents and hide youth justice incidents.

Mr Ondarchie interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Melhem) — Mr Ondarchie! I am going deaf from your shouting.

Ms Bath — On a point of order, President, on relevance, the minister is not on task. She is supposed to be talking about the budget, and she is just way all over the place. Bring her back to have some relevance about the budget.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Melhem) — Thank you, Ms Bath. There is no point of order.

Ms MIKAKOS — We have got a lot of hypersensitivity from those opposite. I am very proud to talk about our investment as a government. We are putting the supports in place to ensure that we can support vulnerable families so that fewer children need to come into the child protection system in the first place. We are doing groundbreaking reforms in Victoria. We are leading the nation with things like professionalised foster care and the Aboriginal children in care initiative. We are providing targeted care packages that will see more than 500 children transition out of residential care into home-based care environments. We are putting in place groundbreaking reforms and investment in ending family violence in our state. We have got crocodile tears from Ms Crozier about this matter. The Liberal Party is yet to commit to the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Family Violence. They are yet to even commit to it. We have seen nothing from them.

We are making record investments in your youth justice system. We are tackling issues that those opposite failed to commit to. There is \$145 million in this year's budget to strengthen our youth justice system — more staff, better infrastructure. We have had to fix up all the deficiencies in Malmsbury that Ms Wooldridge failed to address when she commissioned that project. We are investing in our young people. We are funding the Empower Youth program so that more youth workers can be employed. We are giving young people opportunities through free TAFE, with investments in our TAFE system as well. We are putting in transformational reforms in Victoria because we are a government that delivers. We are getting things done. What we know will happen from those opposite is they will just cut, cut, cut.

Mr Ondarchie interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Melhem) — Mr Ondarchie, if you want to put your name on the speakers list, I am more than happy to add it.

Mr Gepp interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Melhem) — Mr Gepp, I am actually speaking. I ask members to show courtesy to other members who are making their contribution in relation to this important issue without a constant barrage from the other side. I think members are entitled to be heard in silence on this issue.

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Agriculture) (18:26) — I am so pleased to speak about this budget. I love this budget. We are proud of this budget, and I am exceptionally excited about what this budget means for our communities in regional Victoria in particular. Over previous budgets the government has invested \$8.5 billion into regional Victoria. It has been action stations from day one. There is a lot going on. There is a lot of confidence in our regional Victorian communities, and it is really heartening to see. This budget makes those other budgets that were by historical measures excellent look not quite so wonderful, because this budget sets an entirely new benchmark and invests \$4.3 billion into regional Victoria.

Part of the reason that we have been able to do this is that we are investing half of the proceeds of the Snowy Hydro sale into regional Victoria. Members will have seen the significant announcements around country roads, the upgrade to the Shepparton line and many, many other projects. We thought it was really important to invest half of the proceeds of Snowy Hydro into regional Victoria, given the significance and history of that project and particularly its importance for regional communities. I was a little amazed to read that the coalition were going to use the proceeds of Snowy Hydro for their Melbourne intersections policy. I guess that is their choice, but that is not the choice that we have chosen to make.

I spoke a minute ago about the confidence that exists in regional Victoria at the moment. I think one of the things that absolutely contributes to this is the strength of the economy. Having a strong economy is important for lots of different reasons, but to me it is really about making sure that we have got the economic settings that are within our control geared towards supporting strong employment growth, and not any kind of employment growth — the kinds of jobs that are really important in delivering services, the kinds of jobs that are secure and permanent, quality jobs, highly skilled jobs. They are the kinds of jobs people can have that they can then use to support their families, the kinds of jobs you can take a story about into the bank and get a mortgage and have that housing security and personal financial security, and the kinds of jobs that enable a family, or perhaps a couple, to say, 'Hey, maybe let's have some kids and settle in here for a while or forever'.

What we want in regional Victoria is for the mums and dads right across our regional communities to be absolutely confident about their own financial security, to be very hopeful and optimistic about that of their children, to know that those kids can grow up in a community like the one that they have grown up in and

have the same opportunities and experiences that they have enjoyed. We also want those mums and dads, when they are thinking about perhaps their ageing parents or other members in the community they care for and support, to be confident that those people are going to be able to access the services that they need.

Of course ‘the services that people need’ is a very, very broad catch-all way to describe so many different things. I know Ms Mikakos was on her feet in this debate a few minutes ago talking about the work that she is doing in early years development and in child protection and the very important work that she does supporting some of the most vulnerable people in our society. For other people when we talk about the services people need it is around support for living with a disability. For the agricultural communities that I work with each and every day as agriculture minister, the services that we need are our animal health officers, our frontline biosecurity response staff and the people who are still working every day with farmers in south-west Victoria following the St Patrick’s Day fires to help them make the best decisions about how to get their businesses back on their feet and how to make decisions about animal management. Service delivery means so many things.

We have heard members of the coalition in their budget replies in the other place during the week say, ‘Oh, no, there are too many people in the public service now; there’s too much public sector employment’. What I would say to our communities in response to that is: that is because we are restoring service delivery and we are restoring the kinds of services that people desperately need in our community, whether they are in housing, whether they are in other social services or whether they are in our emergency services. The list is long and the work that they do is unique and provides different support and assistance to different members of our community at different times in their lives.

It is wonderful that the Victorian economy is so strong that the budget enables the government to make very significant investments in lots of different things that we know matter to people in the Victorian community. There are schools — 55 schools being upgraded in regional Victoria — and there are 30 TAFE courses that will very soon no longer attract fees, which is just the most wonderful thing. I congratulate my dear friend and my electorate buddy of almost 12 years, Ms Tierney, on a wonderful, wonderful package for TAFE.

I do not know about everybody else, but it warms my heart every time I hear someone talk about it and every time I think about it. It is just beautiful, because it is not

only about ensuring a great future for thousands and thousands of young people in the Victorian community but it is also about bridging that gap. It always drives me mad that it seems so hard to bridge the gap between the skills that industry needs and the jobs that people want.

I think that Ms Tierney, the Premier and the Treasurer in putting together this package have really done something quite extraordinary. I heard James Merlino talk about the reforms and the way that apprenticeships and traineeships will coexist in people’s lives within the secondary school system, describing it as the most significant education reform in the state since the 1970s. Mr Merlino is about my age and we were very, very young in the 1970s, so that makes that a long time ago. I hope Mr Merlino would not horribly mind me saying that.

Members might also be interested in the very significant investments in our agriculture sector. There is \$16 million in the budget for a number of initiatives in agriculture, and we have a whole lot of programs underway — still very much active programs funded by the \$200 million Agriculture Infrastructure and Jobs Fund. I would not want you to think this is all we are doing, because there is a hell of a lot more. In this budget in terms of new initiatives there are programs to expand phyloxera monitoring — that is an important issue for anyone who drinks wine — and to support the development of an artisanal food sector. This is a sector that I think has been left to its own devices for a little too long. Mary-Anne Thomas, the member for Macedon in the Assembly, and I were eating cheese to die for at Cloud 9 Farm last Friday, just 10 minutes or so out of Kyneton, with a group of artisanal food producers with whom we are very interested in having a dialogue over the next couple of months around the design of a grants program and an industry development plan, a little akin to what we have done with the wine industry over the last few years.

Of course agriculture and our agricultural communities depend on water. It is absolutely their lifeline. A couple of very significant projects have been funded in the budget. Again, congratulations to my colleague Lisa Neville for \$32 million in this budget for water security for the East Grampians and \$10.2 million to secure water at Mitiamo. These are both very important projects. These projects will provide water security to the communities that are most dramatically impacted by drought. It is always Labor governments that build the water pipelines and the water infrastructure that our rural communities need. It is always Labor governments that do it and it is only Labor governments that do it. That is very exciting. It was sad

to see that the federal government did not provide funding this week in their budget for those projects in a share arrangement, which is the usual arrangement for things like this. But we will press on, and we certainly still want the federal government to be responsive to those projects.

There is \$433 million for regional road restoration, including \$100 million for fixing country roads. We understand that local councils have an issue with their budgets, some more than others. I have had more conversations with rural councils about this issue than I have had hot dinners. I am confident of that. So we have responded to that both with the roads funding but also with a package that the Minister for Local Government, Marlene Kairouz, successfully achieved through the budget process, which continues our work to support the sustainability of small rural councils. Of course there is the famous Shepparton line, and Shepparton has probably been the community in Victoria that has had the most airtime in the chamber this week, so congratulations to Shepparton for that dubious honour. Again, it is an important agricultural and rural community that will benefit from a long-overdue investment into its rail service.

In terms of further support for farmers there are a couple of things that I must mention. The young farmer stamp duty exemption, which is a great initiative, is to assist people who have not thought before that farming could be a potential vocation for them to get a foot in the door and make a start. That is incredibly important. Of course Minister Dalidakis and I will continue to rub out every black spot we can find in regional Victoria. It is not an easy job, and we are not letting the federal government off the hook. Telecommunications is their responsibility, but there are good economic development arguments and good community safety arguments to continue the work on black spots.

Members here would know that one of things that I have been very focused on and very determined to do as Minister for Regional Development is to give regional communities a much stronger voice within government. Our regional communities absolutely know what is best for them. We do not roll into regional Victorian communities and tell them what we think they want to hear. We turn up, we say very little, we open our ears and we listen very closely and very carefully. Our regional partnerships model is the framework that gives life to that belief — that very, very strong sentiment that is held very deeply and shared by all members of our government. Regional partnership priorities that have been identified over the last couple of years — and this is a young reform — have resulted in \$760 million in funding for a range of

initiatives across regional Victoria. I mentioned the rail service to Shepparton.

There is \$153 million for the Geelong city deal. Mr Mulino has done a wonderful job on the Geelong city deal, and he and I have worked closely and will continue to work closely on this initiative. Again, it is disappointing to see the federal government not come to the party on this in their budget, but we remain optimistic and hopeful that they will get there — and, we hope, sooner rather than later. I would certainly like to see that before the end of the year. But this will be a dramatic investment of 1000 jobs and more than \$1 billion of economic activity stimulated.

There is also the Geelong convention centre and the *Shipwreck Coast Master Plan*. I reckon people have been talking about the Geelong city deal since the 1980s. People have certainly been talking about a Shipwreck Coast master plan and this investment at Glenample for at least all the time I have been a member for Western Victoria Region, and I reckon probably quite some time before that.

There are also upgrades to TAFE, work on the Princes Highway west from Colac and the water projects that I spoke about. There are so many things. The list is really long, and if people want to gain a great sense of what regional Victoria communities are talking about, have a look at this list because that is where it came from.

I congratulate the Loddon Campaspe region for their success in the Healthy Heart program. This is a very exciting preventative health program that has absolutely got its origins locally, but again other regions will benefit from the establishment of a cross-border commissioner. I welcome the coalition's interest in this. I know Mr Gepp is a keen supporter of this project, but this is something that absolutely came to us from a regional assembly. It bubbled up through that as a high priority. We have been undertaking a study into this project, and it is a great example of going to a community, listening to a community, working out what they need through that listening, going through a budget process, getting it funded and getting it done. That is what the budget is all about.

As I said at the outset, I love this budget. I love it very, very much, and I wish it a happy passage through the Parliament.

Debate adjourned on motion of Ms SYMES (Northern Victoria).

Debate adjourned until next day.

LIQUOR AND GAMBLING LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2018

Introduction and first reading

Received from Assembly.

Read first time on motion of Mr DALIDAKIS (Minister for Trade and Investment); by leave, ordered to be read second time forthwith.

Statement of compatibility

Mr DALIDAKIS (Minister for Trade and Investment) tabled following statement in accordance with Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006:

In accordance with section 28 of the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* (the 'Charter'), I make this Statement of Compatibility with respect to the Liquor and Gambling Legislation Amendment Bill 2018.

In my opinion, the Liquor and Gambling Legislation Amendment Bill 2018, as introduced to the Legislative Council, is compatible with human rights as set out in the Charter. I base my opinion on the reasons outlined in this statement.

Overview

The *Liquor and Gambling Legislation Amendment Bill* makes amendments to the *Liquor Control Reform Act 1998* and to the *Gambling Regulation Act 2003*. The Bill makes amendments to the *Liquor Control Reform Act* to:

- reduce red tape for licensees, including reforms to processes for licence applications and transfers, removing unnecessary record-keeping requirements and allowing spirit producers to obtain a producer's licence

- improve harm minimisation measures, including introducing new offences related to displaying alcohol advertising near schools and delivering alcohol to minors, prohibiting the supply of liquor to minors on licensed premises, requiring the supply of liquor to minors in private premises be made in a responsible manner, and allowing restaurant and café patrons to take away limited amounts of unfinished liquor after a meal.

Human Rights Issues

Human rights protected by the Charter that are relevant to the Bill

Section 13 — Privacy

Section 13 of the Charter provides that every person has the right not to have his or her privacy, family, home or correspondence unlawfully or arbitrarily interfered with.

The reform in clause 26 of the Bill provides that the supply of liquor to minors in a private residence must occur in a responsible manner. This requirement is drafted as an exemption to the existing offence of supplying liquor to a minor, meaning that if liquor is supplied in a private residence

to a minor in a manner that is not responsible, the person supplying the liquor will commit an offence. In order to enforce the provision, Victoria Police officers may need to attend private premises, such as homes. Therefore, the reform may interfere with the right to privacy.

However, attendance by police at private premises as a result of this reform is unlikely to be arbitrary or widespread. Police will only attend private premises in accordance with the law and in pursuance of a clearly defined objective. The impacts of this reform on the right to privacy are also outweighed by the reform supporting the protection of children under section 17 of the Charter, which provides that every child has the right, without discrimination, to such protection as is in his or her best interests and is needed by him or her by reason of being a child. The harms associated with children consuming alcohol are well known, and it is clearly in their best interests for the circumstances in which the law permits them to consume liquor to be very limited. The reform will further restrict the circumstances in which it is legal to supply liquor to a minor in Victoria.

Therefore, the reform requiring the supply of liquor to minors in a private residence to occur in a responsible manner does not limit the right to privacy, as the interference is lawful and non-arbitrary and supports the protection of children.

Clause 24 of the Bill will require a licensee to provide their employment details and those of staff, as well as copies of certificates evidencing their completion of an approved Responsible Service of Alcohol course upon request by a police officer or a gambling and liquor inspector. This is not a new requirement — licensees are already required to produce these documents on request under section 108AE of the Liquor Control Reform Act.

The purpose of this provision is to enable police officers and gambling and liquor inspectors to ensure that staff in licensed venues are appropriately trained in the responsible service of alcohol. Their requesting of evidence is therefore not arbitrary, and is lawful as it is required to ensure licensee's compliance with an important harm minimisation measure.

In summary, the Bill's limited impact on the right to privacy is reasonably necessary for the protections that the Bill offers, particularly those aimed at protecting children.

Section 15 — Freedom of expression

Section 15 of the Charter provides that every person has the right to hold an opinion without interference.

The amendments include a prohibition on the display of alcohol advertising within 150 metres of the perimeter of a school in clause 20 of the Bill. The purpose of the amendment is to reduce the exposure and impact of alcohol advertising on minors. For this reason, the amendments enhance the protection of children, without discrimination, as it is in their best interests and needed by reason of them being children under section 17(2) of the Charter.

The prohibition on alcohol advertising does not limit the right to freedom of expression of natural persons. The right is subject to section 15(3)(b) of the Charter, which provides that the right to freedom of expression may be subject to lawful restrictions that are reasonably necessary for the protection of public health and public order.

The prohibition is not a general restriction on advertising and is restricted to alcohol advertising that is displayed for any direct or indirect pecuniary benefit within 150 metres of a school. As such, any restriction on the right is limited to the extent necessary to achieve the objectives of the Bill.

For these reasons, the restriction on expression is reasonably necessary for the protection of public health and order.

Section 17 — Protection of families and children

Section 17(2) of the Charter provides that every child has the right, without discrimination, to such protection as is in his or her best interests and is needed by him or her by reason of being a child. Several sections of the Bill promote this right by seeking to minimise the harm to minors from liquor.

Clause 27 of the Bill creates the offence of knowingly delivering liquor to a minor. This offence is intended to minimise the risk of minors accessing liquor by way of alcohol deliveries (as opposed to liquor being supplied on licensed premises).

Clause 26 of the Bill removes an existing exemption from the prohibition on supplying liquor to minors on licensed premises. This will mean that minors are no longer able to be supplied liquor in a licensed premises if it is served with a meal and they are accompanied by a parent, guardian or spouse.

Clause 26 of the Bill also introduces a requirement that where minors are supplied liquor in a private residence (a practice which is not prohibited by the Liquor Control Reform Act) it must occur in a responsible manner.

Collectively, these clauses will significantly reduce the circumstances under which it is permissible to supply liquor to a minor under the Liquor Control Reform Act. Consistent with the protection of children in section 17(2) of the Charter, this will protect children.

Section 20 — Property rights

Section 20 of the Charter provides that a person must not be deprived of his or her property other than in accordance with law.

As noted above, clause 20 of the Bill will prohibit alcohol advertising within 150 metres of a school. In the event that an individual holds a property right, for example, the owner of an advertising space covered by the alcohol advertising prohibition, there is potential for the prohibition to interfere with that person's right to property.

However, the advertising restriction is unlikely to limit the right to property as it is in accordance with the law, for a clearly stated purpose (the protection of children), and narrow in nature. The prohibition is restricted to alcohol advertising, and space holders would be free to display other forms of advertising. In any case, any limitation on the right to property would also be justified in light of the public interest purpose of the Bill to reduce the impact of alcohol related harm, and can be balanced against the protection of children under section 17(2) of the Charter.

Section 24 — Right to a fair hearing

Section 24 of the Charter provides that a person charged with a criminal offence has the right to the presumption of

innocence and the right to have the charge or proceeding decided by a competent, independent and impartial court or tribunal after a fair and public hearing. Clauses 13 and 14 of the Bill supports this right by ensuring that liquor licence transferees are not unduly penalised for offences committed by the previous licensee.

Certain serious offences in the Liquor Control Reform Act incur demerit points and compliance history risk fees on a licence. Currently, these transfer with the licence, even if the transferee has no connection with the transferor. This means that the transferee may have to pay higher fees and be at higher risk of disciplinary action if further points are incurred than if they had obtained a liquor licence for new premises. The amendment in clauses 13 and 14 will mean that demerit points and compliance history risk fees are not transferred with a liquor licence unless the transferee has a relevant relationship (which includes a range of business and family connections) with the transferor. The provision regarding relevant relationships is designed to ensure that a licensee does not gain the benefit of the new provisions removing demerit points by simply transferring their licence to a family member or business associate.

In the circumstance where a transferee does have a business or family association with the transferor, they will have the right to apply to the Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation to have the demerit points removed. The Commission will only be able to remove demerit points if it is satisfied the transferee has taken sufficient measures to improve compliance with the Liquor Control Reform Act.

Additionally, clause 27 of the Bill inserts a new offence for a person to knowingly deliver liquor to a minor without reasonable excuse. The new section provides that it is a reasonable excuse if the person making the delivery has seen an evidence of age document indicating the person receiving the delivery is of or over the age of 18 years.

Clause 27 may be considered to engage the right to be presumed innocent by creating evidential burdens on the accused. However, this offence does not transfer the legal burden of proof. Once the accused has pointed to evidence of those matters, which will ordinarily be peculiarly within their knowledge, the burden shifts back to the prosecution who must prove the essential elements of the offence. As discussed above, I do not consider that an evidential onus such as the one contained in the Bill limits the right to be presumed innocent, and to the extent that a different view may be taken as to this, any such limitation is justified.

Section 27 — Retrospectivity

Section 27(1) of the Charter provides that a person must not be found guilty of a criminal offence because of conduct that was not a criminal offence when it was engaged in. The prohibition on advertising within 150 metres of a school in the Bill may capture advertising contracts that were already entered into before the Bill commences or is made public. However, the transitional provisions in the Bill relating to the prohibition provide that the restriction will not apply for a period of two years to advertising contracts that were entered into prior to the date the Bill is second read.

The retrospectivity of the transitional provision is intended to ensure that parties that may be affected by the restriction do not enter into contracts (to gain the benefit of the two-year

transition period) immediately on the Bill being announced in Parliament.

This is a very limited retrospective provision that is not expected to affect a significant number of people. The majority of people affected by the provision are likely to be companies. The retrospective provision is considered demonstrably justified in light of the public interest purpose of the Bill to reduce the impact of alcohol related harm, and can be balanced against the protection of children under section 17(2) of the Charter.

Hon. Philip Dalidakis, MP
Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade

Second reading

Ordered that second-reading speech be incorporated into *Hansard* on motion of Mr DALIDAKIS (Minister for Small Business).

Mr DALIDAKIS (Minister for Small Business)
(18:43) — I move:

That the bill be now read a second time.

Incorporated speech as follows:

The Bill amends the *Liquor Control Reform Act 1998* and the *Gambling Regulation Act 2003*.

The Bill will amend the *Liquor Control Reform Act 1998* to:

reduce red tape for licensees, including by reforming the processes for licence applications and transfers, removing unnecessary record-keeping requirements and allowing spirit producers to obtain a producer's licence, and

strengthen harm minimisation measures, including by introducing new offences related to the display of alcohol advertising near schools and the delivery and supply of alcohol to minors.

The Bill will amend the *Gambling Regulation Act 2003* to provide the Minister with a power to direct wagering service providers to comply with harm minimisation and consumer protection requirements and will enable the Government to implement the National Consumer Protection Framework for online wagering that is being developed with other state and territory governments.

The Bill also makes changes to the *Gambling Regulation Act 2003* to:

increase the efficiency and flexibility of the keno licensing process, and

clarify certain legislative provisions and reduce regulatory burden for industry.

I now turn to the provisions of the Bill before the House.

The *Liquor Control Reform Act 1998* regulates the supply of liquor in Victoria.

There have been many changes to the liquor industry and to consumer preferences since the introduction of the *Liquor Control Reform Act 1998* nearly 20 years ago.

To ensure that the regulatory framework for the supply of liquor keeps pace with the evolution of the industry while continuing to support the minimisation of harm, the government commenced a phased review of the *Liquor Control Reform Act 1998* in November 2016.

The Bill will implement some reforms that were identified during the first phase of the review, which included the release of a public consultation paper.

More complex aspects of the *Liquor Control Reform Act 1998* will continue to be considered. This will allow time for further consultation with both industry and community stakeholders on any proposals for reform that may be identified. The government will ensure that the outcomes of the review support the continued development of a strong, diverse and responsible liquor industry while minimising harm arising from the misuse and abuse of alcohol.

From an industry development perspective, the Bill includes a number of amendments that will support Victoria's diverse liquor industry.

The Bill supports local producers by amending provisions of the *Liquor Control Reform Act 1998* relating to the wine and beer producer's licence. This licence is currently only available to producers of brandy, but not other spirits producers. For the first time, all spirit producers will be able to sell their product from a cellar door or supply their product at promotional events under the one licence type. Removing the existing anomaly will be welcomed by the industry.

The Bill will assist in reducing red tape and administrative delays associated with the transfer of a liquor licence by specifying that a licence transfer takes effect on the date a transfer is granted or when the transferee gains the legal right to occupy the licensed premises, whichever occurs later. These amendments mean that a transferee will be able to start trading without delay and will no longer lose trading days due to administrative processes associated with the transfer.

The Bill further reduces business costs associated with licence transfers by amending the provisions that require the transfer of demerit points and risk fees with a licence. The Bill will amend the *Liquor Control Reform Act 1998* so that demerit points and associated compliance history risk fee (which is provided for in the regulations) are removed from a licence when it is transferred, provided that the transferee does not have a business or family association with the transferor. If there is no business or familial relationship between the transferor and transferee it is unfair to burden a new licensee with the consequences of the poor business practices of the transferor.

The Bill will also amend the *Liquor Control Reform Act 1998* to change the licence application process to reduce delays by enabling the Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation to grant an application for a liquor licence or BYO permit before a planning permit is issued. While the licence will not become operational until a planning permit is granted, this amendment ensures that where an applicant chooses to apply for both a liquor licence and a planning permit at the same time, the time taken to obtain both will be reduced. This is because the Commission will be able to complete its process without having to wait for the planning process to be completed.

In determining a liquor licence application, the Commission must consider the impact of the granting of the licence on the amenity of the area in which the premises to which the application relates are situated. The Bill will reduce unnecessary duplication between the liquor licence and planning permit processes by removing the requirement for the Commission to consider parking facilities, traffic movement and noise levels as these are better determined as part of the council's planning permit process. Local councils have the expertise to consider the impact of these factors on the amenity of the area in which a licensed premises will be located.

Most liquor licensees and their staff are required to complete Responsible Service of Alcohol training. The *Liquor Control Reform Act 1998* currently requires these licensees to maintain a register to demonstrate compliance with this requirement.

This imposes an unnecessary administrative burden on licensees. The Bill will remove this requirement and instead require licensees to retain a copy of the most recent certificates of completion for each person who is required to complete this training. This will enable inspectors to determine whether training obligations are being met without imposing an unnecessary regulatory burden on licensees.

The Bill also makes amendments to the Act to ensure the regulatory framework supports a responsible industry.

The Bill will amend the *Liquor Control Reform Act 1998* to allow patrons to take away up to one bottle per person of unfinished liquor where it was ordered as part of a meal and it can be resealed. This will apply to premises that have a Restaurant and Café licence. Instead of consuming liquor irresponsibly towards the end of a meal, patrons will be able to take the unconsumed portion home.

Most importantly, the Bill will make several amendments to the *Liquor Control Reform Act 1998* to enhance the protection of minors from alcohol-related harm.

The Bill responds to significant community concern about the exposure of children to alcohol advertising by prohibiting the display of alcohol advertising within 150 metres of a school. Some common-sense exemptions will apply, such as advertising within or on the exterior of licensed premises, on clothing, or on mobile billboards that are passing by a school.

The Bill will introduce a new offence related to the delivery of alcohol to further protect minors. In recent years we have seen the growth of businesses that specialise in the delivery of alcohol, typically where it has been ordered online. The Bill will make it an offence for any person to knowingly deliver alcohol to a minor.

The Bill will prohibit minors from consuming alcohol on licensed premises under any circumstances by removing the current exceptions that permit consumption by minors as part of a meal if they are accompanied by their spouse, parent or guardian. Industry feedback suggests that this will be a welcome amendment that will provide consistency in relation to the legal drinking age.

The Bill will also amend the *Liquor Control Reform Act 1998* to address ongoing community concern about minors consuming alcohol on private premises without adequate supervision, typically at parties. The Bill will amend the *Liquor Control Reform Act 1998* to require the supply of alcohol to a minor on private premises to be undertaken in a

responsible manner. Authorisation by a parent or guardian will still be required but will no longer be enough.

The Bill also makes amendments to the *Gambling Regulation Act 2003* to improve the regulatory framework for gambling in Victoria.

The Bill amends the *Gambling Regulation Act 2003* to make important reforms in relation to the licensing process for keno. Keno is a rapid draw game which is offered by the keno licensee in Victorian clubs, hotels and wagering outlets. The keno licence is awarded as a single 10 year licence and the current keno licence is due to expire in 2022.

The amendments remove the requirement to conduct a registration of interest process. The new process will grant the Minister with a power to invite a person to apply for a keno licence. The amendments also provide that the Minister may take into account any matter in deciding whether to invite a person to apply for a keno licence, including a report by the Secretary on suitability of persons Minister is considering inviting to apply for the keno licence, if requested.

The amendments also remove the requirement for an applicant to have a physical place of business in Victoria in order to participate in the keno licensing process and provide the Minister with the power to extend the existing keno licence for up to two years.

These amendments are intended to increase the efficiency and flexibility of the process.

This government is committed to ensuring that the highest probity standards apply to gambling licensing processes. Under these amendments, the keno licensing process will continue to be framed by principles of integrity, transparency, fairness and encouraging open and effective competition.

The keno licensing process will continue to be overseen by the Independent Review Panel. The Independent Review Panel is established under the *Gambling Regulation Act 2003* and is responsible for considering and reporting to the Minister on the conduct of review and licensing processes, including for the keno licence.

The Victorian Government recognises the importance of regulating online wagering and putting measures in place to reduce gambling-related harm.

The Bill will amend the *Gambling Regulation Act 2003* to provide the Minister with a power to direct wagering service providers to comply with harm minimisation and consumer protection requirements.

It is important that strong and consistent consumer and harm minimisation protections apply to online wagering. The Victorian Government has welcomed the opportunity to work with the Australian and state and territory governments to develop a National Consumer Protection Framework for online wagering. The purpose of this framework is to ensure greater national consistency and stronger consumer protection for people using legal online wagering services in Australia.

The Victorian Government has agreed, in principle, to the key measures to be included in the National Framework, including the introduction of a national self-exclusion register, a voluntary opt out pre-commitment scheme and new limits on inducements. However, work is still required on the detailed design and implementation of the National

Framework. The power will provide the Minister with the means to implement the measures included in the National Framework in a timely and efficient manner once the details of the National Framework have been settled.

This power will apply to all wagering service providers providing wagering services to Victorian residents, no matter where they are licensed or registered in Australia.

A breach of a direction made under this power will carry a maximum penalty of 60 penalty units.

The Bill also makes amendments to clarify the operation of legislative provisions in the *Gambling Regulation Act 2003*.

Under the *Gambling Regulation Act 2003*, the keno licensee is required to pay 75 per cent of all amounts played on keno games into a prize fund. Where the prize fund is insufficient to pay out all winnings, the licensee must deposit additional funds into the prize fund to cover the prizes. In other jurisdictions, there is a clear power for the keno licensee to recover these top up payments, provided that the minimum return to player requirement has been met. The Bill makes amendments to enable the Victorian keno licensee can also recover top up payments in these circumstances.

The Bill provides that the requirement for a loyalty scheme provider to provide an annual player activity statement in relation to gaming machine play does not apply where a player has not played a gaming machine during the relevant period. Given the purpose of the player activity statement is to track play, it is unnecessary to provide a player activity statement in these circumstances. This amendment will reduce regulatory burden for venue operators and the casino operator.

Finally, the Bill makes minor and technical amendments relating to the commencement of the *Gambling Regulation Amendment (Gaming Machine Arrangements) Act 2017*, which received Royal Assent on 12 December 2017.

I commend the Bill to the house.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr ONDARCHIE (Northern Metropolitan).

Debate adjourned until Thursday, 17 May.

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT 2018–2019) BILL 2018

Introduction and first reading

Received from Assembly.

Read first time on motion of Mr DALIDAKIS (Minister for Trade and Investment); by leave, ordered to be read second time forthwith.

Statement of compatibility

Mr DALIDAKIS (Minister for Trade and Investment) tabled following statement in accordance with Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006:

In accordance with section 28 of the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* (Vic) (**Charter Act**), I make this statement of compatibility with respect to the Appropriation (Parliament 2018–2019) Bill 2018.

In my opinion, the Appropriation (Parliament 2018–2019) Bill 2018, as introduced to the Legislative Council, is compatible with the human rights protected by the Charter Act. I base my opinion on the reasons outlined in this statement.

Overview of Bill

The purpose of the Appropriation (Parliament 2018–2019) Bill 2018 is to provide appropriation authority for payments from the Consolidated Fund to the Parliament in respect of the 2018/2019 financial year.

Human Rights Issues

1. Human rights protected by the Charter Act that are relevant to the Bill

The Appropriation (Parliament 2018–2019) Bill 2018 does not raise any human rights issues.

2. Consideration of reasonable limitations — section 7(2)

As the Appropriation (Parliament 2018–2019) Bill 2018 does not raise any human rights issues, it does not limit any human rights, and therefore it is not necessary to consider section 7(2) of the Charter Act.

Conclusion

I consider that the Appropriation (Parliament 2018–2019) Bill 2018 is compatible with the Charter Act because it does not raise any human rights issues.

Gavin Jennings, MLC
Special Minister of State

Second reading

Ordered that second-reading speech be incorporated into *Hansard* on motion of Mr DALIDAKIS (Minister for Trade and Investment).

Mr DALIDAKIS (Minister for Trade and Investment) (18:45) — I move:

That the bill be now read a second time.

Incorporated speech as follows:

The Appropriation (Parliament 2018–2019) Bill 2018 provides appropriation authority for payments from the Consolidated Fund to the Parliament in respect of the 2018/2019 financial year, including ongoing liabilities incurred by the Parliament such as employee entitlements that may be realised in the future.

Honourable Members will be aware that other funds are appropriated for parliamentary purposes by way of special appropriations contained in other legislation. In addition,

unapplied appropriations under the *Appropriation (Parliament 2017–2018) Act 2017* have been estimated and included in the Budget Papers. Before 30 June 2018, the actual unapplied appropriation will be finalised and the 2018/2019 appropriations will be adjusted by the approved carry over amounts under section 32 of the *Financial Management Act 1994* (Vic).

In line with the wishes of the Presiding Officers, appropriations in the Appropriation (Parliament 2018–2019) Bill 2018 are made to the departments of the Parliament.

The total appropriation authority sought in this Appropriation (Parliament 2018–2019) Bill 2018 is \$154 293 000 (clause 3) for Parliament in respect of the 2018/2019 financial year.

I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned for Mr RICH-PHILLIPS (South Eastern Metropolitan) on motion of Mr Ondarchie.

Debate adjourned until Thursday, 17 May.

APPROPRIATION (2018–2019) BILL 2018

Introduction and first reading

Received from Assembly.

Read first time on motion of Mr DALIDAKIS (Minister for Trade and Investment); by leave, ordered to be read second time forthwith.

Statement of compatibility

Mr DALIDAKIS (Minister for Trade and Investment) tabled following statement in accordance with Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006:

In accordance with section 28 of the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* (Vic) (**Charter Act**), I make this statement of compatibility with respect to the Appropriation (2018–2019) Bill 2018.

In my opinion, the Appropriation (2018–2019) Bill 2018, as introduced to the Legislative Council, is compatible with the human rights protected by the Charter Act. I base my opinion on the reasons outlined in this statement.

Overview of Bill

The Appropriation (2018–2019) Bill 2018 will provide appropriation authority for payments from the Consolidated Fund for the ordinary annual services of Government for the 2018/2019 financial year.

The amounts contained in Schedule 1 to the Appropriation (2018–2019) Bill 2018 provide for the ongoing operations of departments, including new output and asset investment funded through annual appropriation.

Schedules 2 and 3 of the Appropriation (2018–2019) Bill 2018 contain details concerning payments from advances under section 35 of the *Financial Management Act 1994*

(Vic) and payments from the Advance to Treasurer in the 2016/2017 financial year respectively.

Human Rights Issues

1. Human rights protected by the Charter Act that are relevant to the Bill

The Appropriation (2018–2019) Bill 2018 does not raise any human rights issues.

2. Consideration of reasonable limitations—section 7(2)

As the Appropriation (2018–2019) Bill 2018 does not raise any human rights issues, it does not limit any human rights and therefore it is not necessary to consider section 7(2) of the Charter Act.

Conclusion

I consider that the Appropriation (2018–2019) Bill 2018 is compatible with the Charter Act because it does not raise any human rights issues.

Gavin Jennings, MLC
Special Minister of State

Second reading

Ordered that second-reading speech be incorporated into *Hansard* on motion of Mr DALIDAKIS (Minister for Trade and Investment).

Mr DALIDAKIS (Minister for Trade and Investment) (18:47) — I move:

That the bill be now read a second time.

Incorporated speech as follows:

President, from the moment we took office, we haven't wasted a day.

We think big. We act quickly. We get things done.

This budget holds true to our values and to our promises.

We said we would deliver a strong economy, and we have.

Victoria is the fastest growing economy in the nation.

We have delivered the highest average surplus of any Victorian government in history, we've kept debt levels below what we inherited, and we've maintained our prized AAA rating.

Crucially, they're the means by which we can build the state and deliver for all Victorians.

President, this budget encapsulates everything the Andrews Labor government stands for.

It captures the essence of good government.

Good governments have a vision. They think decades ahead.

They manage the present, but act as custodians of the future.

They make tough decisions.

They build something bigger than themselves, something that endures for generations, something that leaves an indelible legacy.

President, since 2014 this Government has invested more than \$48 billion to build the schools, the hospitals, the roads and the public transport system our state needs.

During this time, hundreds of thousands of jobs have been created.

Indeed, one in every 10 jobs in our economy today was created over the past three and a half years.

While the previous government was artfully idle, we haven't wasted a moment in getting things done.

In the coming year, \$78.9 billion of state capital projects will commence, or are underway.

But when all the numbers are crunched, this budget is about the fundamental building blocks of any fair and prosperous society — more skills, more jobs, more schools, better hospitals and a better transport network.

It's about making people's lives easier.

President, our economy will have grown by \$48 billion, in real terms, over the four years since 2014.

This growth has been driven by strong economic management, record investment, and increased productivity and participation in the labour market.

Indeed, nearly \$1 in every \$7 of economic value in Victoria today was created under this Government.

This strong growth comes with inherent challenges.

Each year, we welcome more than 100 000 new Victorians, many coming here for a better way of life and to make the most of our booming economy.

We don't control migration targets, but we do control how we tackle both the challenges and opportunities of population growth.

We can invest in all Victorians, from our newest residents to the Kulin nation people on whose traditional lands we stand today.

We can invest in the roads Victorians will drive on, the schools they'll send their kids to, and the healthcare professionals who'll look after them when they're unwell.

We can invest in the industries that will employ them in the future, ensuring they have the right skills for the right job.

It's what good governments do. And it's at the core of this budget, one that builds on our strengths, addresses pressing concerns and positions us well for the future.

President, at the heart of the *2018–19 Budget* is a landmark \$644 million investment to ensure Victorians can get the skills they need for the job they want.

This is part of our unprecedented \$8.8 billion investment in the Education State, with a further \$1.3 billion to build and upgrade more schools and facilities.

The budget also includes a record \$4.2 billion to ensure quality health care for all, including historic action on mental health.

It provides more than \$4.3 billion for some of the biggest road projects in the history of our state, projects that will significantly reduce congestion and get Victorians home safer and faster.

It provides an additional \$1.9 billion to improve the efficiency and amenity of our public transport system, building on the more than \$25 billion we've already invested.

The budget maintains our commitment to every corner of the State, with more than \$4.3 billion for regional Victoria.

And it includes measures designed to ease cost of living pressures, particularly for our most vulnerable Victorians.

President, this budget produces an operating surplus of \$1.4 billion in the budget year, with surpluses averaging \$2.5 billion over the following three years.

Net debt as a proportion of the economy is projected to be lower than the previous government's final year in office.

Real GSP is forecast to grow by 2.75 per cent in 2018–19 and continue at that growth rate over the next three years.

Indeed, Victoria's GSP saw the highest growth of all the states in 2016–17 — one of the many economic indicators where we lead the nation.

This year, we're also leading on population growth, full-time employment growth, wages growth and retail trade growth.

And we enjoy the strongest consumer sentiment and business conditions of all the mainland states.

These numbers only tell a fraction of the story of course.

But suffice to say, they underpin everything we do.

Without them, we wouldn't be funding new schools, laying new roads and building new hospitals.

They've also helped create hundreds of thousands of new jobs.

Nearly 334 000 have been created since we were elected, more than any where else in the nation during this time.

That's thousands more engineers, construction workers, apprentices, teachers and nurses.

These aren't just numbers on a spreadsheet.

Each is a story of hope, of opportunity, of progress.

Each job engenders a sense of purpose and belonging.

Every time we build a school, excavate a tunnel, open a hospital, it means more jobs for Victorians.

Since 2014, Victoria has contributed more than a third of the nation's total employment growth.

It's been a broad-based growth across gender, skill levels and regions.

Labour force participation, particularly for women, has increased to record levels.

And crucially, 41 000 of these jobs have been created in regional Victoria — more than double what the Coalition managed in their four years.

We also recognise the role the private sector has played in this economic resurgence.

This includes our small business sector, which accounts for nearly half of the state's private jobs, and which has experienced a fourth year of uninterrupted growth.

This budget contains a raft of measures, totalling almost \$500 million, which provide a boost to Victorian businesses — allowing them to access new markets, pay less tax, grow their operations and reduce red tape.

President, we're particularly determined to make it easier for our regional businesses to operate, to grow and to take on more employees.

That's why, having already reduced the payroll tax rate in our regions last year, we're cutting it again to half that of metropolitan Melbourne — giving Victorian regional businesses the lowest rate in Australia.

This is expected to slash costs for around 4000 businesses, create jobs, encourage people to move to regional Victoria, and ensure every region shares in the benefits of our economic growth.

It's the third year in a row this government has eased the payroll tax burden.

And on 1 July this year, the payroll tax-free threshold rises again to \$650 000 — providing tax relief for about 38 000 businesses right across the state.

It also brings the total value of business tax cuts announced under this government to more than \$742 million — more than three times what our predecessors delivered.

President, to continue this success, we not only need to invest in the projects our state needs, we need to invest in the people to deliver them.

From level crossing removals to classroom upgrades, from refurbished hospitals to resurfaced roads, it's TAFE-qualified workers who are building our state and caring for our families.

But the demand for these workers is outstripping supply.

President, when we were elected, we promised to save our TAFE system. And we have.

Now we'll make it stronger than ever before — to meet our skills shortages and give every Victorian the opportunity for a good job.

To get that done, we need to invest in their skills, in their talent and in their ambition.

And we need to better align our workforce with the skills and experience employers are demanding.

That's why this budget invests in the biggest shake-up of vocational education and training in Victoria's history.

It includes \$644 million for training initiatives and \$184 million for skills programs in schools.

It's the single biggest investment in Victoria's TAFE system since its inception in the 1970s.

President, too often cost has been an impediment to young people getting the skills for a good job.

This budget breaks down that barrier, by making priority TAFE courses free.

From 1 January 2019, 30 priority TAFE courses and 18 preapprenticeship courses across the state will be free.

These courses will focus on the skills our state needs.

To make sure every Victorian who wants a job can get a spot at TAFE, we'll open new classes and create 30 000 new TAFE and training places across Victoria.

And to make sure every corner of our state has access, we'll upgrade and redevelop three TAFEs in regional Victoria.

President, we can't afford to slow down.

A stronger TAFE system means we can continue our momentum.

It means we can build on our Skills First program, an essential step towards fixing the broken system we inherited and restoring the confidence of students, employers and industry.

This will transform our apprenticeship programs.

The new Head Start apprenticeships and traineeships program will give secondary school students the opportunity to learn their trade at school and get a job sooner.

We're also investing \$109 million to boost careers education.

Ultimately it means all young Victorians will have the best advice to make the best decisions about their future.

This is all in stark contrast to the TAFE cuts of the previous government, which saw thousands of young people starved of opportunity and left gaping holes in our talent pool.

We, on the other hand, are ensuring Victorians are armed with the right skills for the right job.

President, since 2014 we've invested \$8.8 billion building the Education State — more than double what the previous government managed.

Across Victoria that means more than 4000 new teachers, 70 new schools and upgrades to more than 1200 others.

We make these investments because we believe a strong education system is the best way to tackle entrenched inequality.

Indeed, we regard a modern and inclusive education system as the cornerstone of both a strong economy and our society as a whole.

Over the next five years Victoria's school-aged population will increase by about 90 000.

It's why we've spent the past three and a half years modernising our current buildings and investing in our state-of-the-art facilities.

We recognise that our education system must keep pace with rapid economic and technological change.

That's why the *2018–19 budget* commits \$272 million to buy land for 19 new school sites in Melbourne, with a further \$483 million towards upgraded schools across Victoria.

From vertical schools in the inner suburbs to expansive new sites in the outer suburbs, this ongoing investment will enrich young lives and help educate the workforce of the future.

And from Mortlake College to Moolap Primary School, from the Surf Coast to the alpine region, we're investing more than \$180 million to build, upgrade and plan for 60 regional schools.

But, President, there's more to the Education State than simply building new schools.

We're focused on improving science, technology, engineering and mathematics outcomes, with funding for 200 new maths and science specialists in our primary schools.

And we're ensuring Victorian students living with disability get the opportunities they deserve, with more than \$167 million to enable all students to participate in all aspects of school life.

President, the importance of a good education starts early.

Every February thousands of pint-sized Victorians walk hand in hand with their parents on their first day of kinder.

From the very first day they deserve the best education possible.

They deserve an environment that fosters a lifelong love of learning.

They deserve an opportunity to create, to connect, to simply be kids.

That's what this budget delivers.

It builds on our previous investment in early childhood education and delivers a significant boost to kinder infrastructure.

Our \$122 million commitment will help kinders meet the growing demand for enrolments, provide access to the latest equipment and ensure that they are accessible and inclusive for kids of all abilities.

Kids like five-year-old Henry, from Gowrie kindergarten, whose blindness presents significant obstacles to learning.

This funding means he has access to a braille typewriter.

It means that he's ready for school. It affords him the same opportunities to grow, to learn and to contribute as every other Victorian kid.

President, a healthy state is every bit as important as an educated one.

Access to universal health care goes beyond the concept of good government.

As the party of Medicare, it's one of Labor's greatest legacies.

It's about fundamental decency.

We've already invested \$1.8 billion building and expanding acute and residential health facilities across Victoria so our loved ones can get the care that they need.

And we've now got almost 500 more doctors and 2600 more nurses than we did three years ago.

This budget provides a massive \$4.2 billion to ensure Victorians continue to receive world-class health care.

It's funding that will make it easier and more convenient for Victorians to get the care they need, when they need it.

And it's funding that invests in the capacity and accessibility of our healthcare system, particularly in growth areas.

We don't shut hospitals. We build them.

This budget includes \$495 million for major metropolitan hospitals, including the Alfred and Sunshine hospitals, as well as the new Victorian Heart Hospital.

That's in addition to a \$2.1 billion boost to meet demand for health services and improve access to elective surgery, including emergency departments, intensive care units and palliative care services.

There's also \$124 million for the Peter Mac, Melbourne Health and the Royal Women's Hospital to design and develop a state-of-the-art electronic medical record system.

This will improve the safety and quality of care for patients, boost capacity for groundbreaking medical research and cement Parkville's reputation as one of the top biomedical research precincts in the world.

Having already achieved the fastest ambulance response times in a decade, we're funding a further 90 paramedics to support their life-saving work.

Contrast that with the previous government, who went to war with our paramedics and gutted our ambulance service.

In regional Victoria there's \$462 million for the redevelopment of the Ballarat Base Hospital, which will include a new emergency department and intensive care unit.

And there's \$115 million to upgrade the Wonthaggi Hospital's facilities, including a new emergency department and new and upgraded operating theatres.

President, it's essential that we not only increase public awareness and reduce the stigma around mental health, but back this up with meaningful and decisive policy.

That's why we're providing a record \$705 million for mental health and alcohol and drug services.

This funding will directly assist more than 12 800 people and provide an additional 89 acute inpatient beds.

For too long these Victorians have been marginalised and misunderstood.

But good governments fund a healthcare system that recognises each patient is a parent, a child, an employee, a loved one.

We're also taking decisive action on ice, an insidious drug that ruins lives, tears families apart and puts an enormous strain on our health system.

That's why we're investing \$40.6 million towards three rural facilities to continue our support for regional communities dealing with the impact of ice.

Building on our Ice Action Plan, six emergency department crisis hubs will also be established across Victoria to help those in urgent need.

Just like our unprecedented initiatives to address family violence, this will save lives.

It's what we were elected to do. Whether it's essential health services or key infrastructure, we keep our promises and we get things done.

President, since we were elected we've invested more than \$35 billion on transformative road and rail projects.

They create tens of thousands of jobs, ease congestion in the suburbs, better connect our regions and make it easier to move freight.

It's critical we balance the immediate needs of passengers and commuters with the long-term realities and priorities of a growing state.

From Mordialloc to Mernda, we're widening roads, making them safer, reducing congestion and getting people home quicker.

It includes \$2.2 billion for the suburban roads upgrade, a targeted package of upgrades to some of the most congested arterial roads in the south-eastern and northern suburbs.

There's also a further \$712 million for the Monash Freeway upgrade, together with \$110 million for the planning stages of the north-east link, the biggest transport infrastructure project in Victoria's history.

Likewise, the West Gate tunnel will create thousands of jobs, take trucks off residential streets and provide a vital alternative to the West Gate Bridge.

This budget also allocates \$50 million for detailed technical investigations into an airport rail link and a fast rail service to Geelong.

President, roads are the lifeblood of our regions and are particularly crucial to our tourism and agricultural industries.

Before the last election the message from regional Victorians was loud and clear. The roads weren't up to scratch.

We listened and we have acted. We committed to spend a minimum of \$1 billion over eight years to repair and upgrade roads in regional communities.

President, we've not only met that commitment; we've more than doubled it.

We've drawn heavily on local knowledge and have already rebuilt nearly 1000 kilometres of deteriorating roads in regional Victoria.

The 2018–19 budget commits \$941 million for our regional and rural roads.

A new authority for regional roads — based in Ballarat — will oversee a \$333 million boost to road maintenance and rebuilding across the state.

We're also investing \$98 million towards the Beaufort and Ararat bypasses along the Western Highway — a primary freight route between Victoria and South Australia and one of the busiest highways in the country.

For our Western District farmers, grain producers, tourism operators and manufacturers, this will be a game changer.

There is also \$100 million to assist rural and regional councils with the maintenance and restoration of roads in their communities.

But it's not just about roads. This government's commitment to public transport in this state is without peer.

We've already invested upwards of \$25 billion to ensure Victorians have more frequent and reliable services.

It's essential we invest in a system that is focused on the network in its entirety — a modern, safe and reliable system that puts passengers first.

At the heart of this is the Metro Tunnel, the most important public transport project in Victoria since the construction of the city loop.

And of course work continues on the removal of 50 of our most dangerous level crossings, with 38 expected to be completed or underway in 2018–19.

Meanwhile the new Sunbury and Cranbourne-Pakenham lines will be transformed as part of a major rail corridor upgrade.

The next stage of this investment will see \$572 million for a range of signalling, power and infrastructure upgrades along the corridor as well as planning works on the Sunbury line.

These upgrades will increase capacity and accommodate a fleet of new high-capacity Metro trains.

\$89 million will go towards extending services from South Morang to new train stations on the Mernda rail extension project and additional services on the Hurstbridge and Dandenong lines.

President, public transport in regional Victoria was neglected by the previous government.

The problem was then exacerbated by the federal government's intransigence over infrastructure funding.

The 2018–19 budget builds on the work of the Andrews Labor government to rectify this, providing upgrades to every regional passenger line and creating jobs across regional Victoria.

There's \$313 million to upgrade infrastructure and enable VLocity trains to operate on the Shepparton line.

This will deliver faster journey times, a business case for nine return services a day, as well as improvements to signalling, tracks and platforms.

These and other critical works will ensure more comfortable, frequent and reliable train journeys, and make it easier for regional Victorians to access jobs, education and other essential services.

President, every Victorian has the right to feel safe in their communities and in their homes.

In the past 19 years, 7000 additional police officers have been funded — all of them under Labor governments.

Having already committed to the biggest recruitment drive in the history of Victoria Police, this budget invests a further \$1.4 billion towards community safety measures.

Despite the rhetoric and scaremongering on this issue, Victoria is the safest it's been for a decade, with ABS figures confirming the fourth successive annual fall in crime.

This budget includes a raft of measures to further reduce crime and support those who protect us.

It includes a \$689 million expansion of the Lara prison precinct, and a new bail and remand court.

But it isn't just about putting more police on the beat and throwing more crooks in jail.

It's also about establishing new courts, upgrading facilities and boosting resources to ensure a more responsive justice system.

And it's about acknowledging the role of disadvantage as an underlying cause of crime and better integrating our mental health, education and justice sectors.

President, this government recognises Victorians are increasingly burdened by cost-of-living pressures.

It's why we're investing \$48 million in the power saving bonus to encourage and assist Victorian households to get a better deal from electricity providers.

Not only will they receive a \$50 bonus for using our Energy Compare website, they could save hundreds of dollars a year off their electricity bills.

We'll also provide \$22 million to boost the utility relief grant cap from \$500 to \$650 — helping those suffering unexpected hardship to pay their water, gas or electricity bills.

For our outer suburban areas, this budget also invests in the Growing Suburbs Fund, building on the \$150 million already provided, with an extra \$50 million to fund vital local community infrastructure.

That's in addition to the \$30 million for the Pick My Project grants program, which allows locals to decide on their own funding priorities.

Importantly, we're also committing \$20 million to improve the financial efficiency of rural local governments.

This budget addresses our susceptibility to drought and the challenges presented by population growth and climate change.

It's critical we properly manage our water resources, which is why we've allocated \$42 million to ensure greater water security for households, agriculture, industry and the environment.

From Mildura to Mallacoota, from our inner-city parks to Port Phillip Bay, we're also investing \$141 million to protect our marine and coastal treasures, and maintain our parks and forests.

For Aboriginal Victorians, we're providing a further \$116 million to progress cultural, economic and social self-determination, and work towards closing the gap in health and socio-economic outcomes.

This will continue the delivery of Victoria's Aboriginal justice agreement, strengthen employment and business opportunities and provide ongoing support for Aboriginal families and young people.

The budget also invests \$29 million to ensure Victoria remains Australia's digital technology leader, with funding to boost cybersecurity and remove mobile blackspots.

It provides a \$246 million boost to our visitor economy, which attracts millions of domestic and international visitors each year, and injects billions of dollars into the economy annually.

And to further enhance our status as the nation's cultural capital, it includes \$37 million to redevelop the Australian Centre for the Moving Image.

President, as the sporting capital of the world, our major sporting events showcase everything that makes Victoria great, attracting millions of visitors each year and boosting our local economy.

The 2018–19 budget invests more than \$231 million in our major sporting venues, including redevelopments to Etihad Stadium and Moorabbin Oval, and planning for further upgrades to Ballarat's Eureka Stadium.

But it's essential that we also invest in grassroots sport, so often the focal point of local communities and the foundation of a healthy, active lifestyle.

That's why we're investing more than \$242 million in community sport and participation.

This includes an unprecedented \$82 million to upgrade women's sporting facilities and venues across the state to make it easier for women and girls to participate in all forms of sport.

There's also \$64.6 million to redevelop the State Netball and Hockey Centre, including six new indoor netball courts.

President, we're a government grounded on fundamental, unstinting values — a government that celebrates our diversity, that delivers for all Victorians.

We're a government that's ensuring our economic prosperity doesn't just benefit a privileged few.

And we're certainly not an idle government.

As the great Welshman Lloyd George said nearly 100 years ago, 'The finest eloquence is that which gets things done; the worst is that which delays them'.

Our government believes in decisive action, in generational, transformative projects that benefit all Victorians.

In public office — just as in life — you are what you do, not what you say you'll do.

We promised Victorians we'd get on and deliver, and we're doing that at pace, with a focus like no other government before us.

This budget is the culmination of four years of growth, of prudent economic management and of good government.

It's our blueprint for Victoria's future, a Victoria that leads the nation, a Victoria that aims high while reaching out a helping hand to its most disadvantaged.

It's about getting things done.

I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned for Mr RICH-PHILLIPS (South Eastern Metropolitan) on motion of Mr Ondarchie.

Debate adjourned until Thursday, 17 May.

**APPROPRIATION (2018–2019) BILL 2018
and BUDGET PAPERS 2018–19**

Concurrent debate

Mr DALIDAKIS (Minister for Trade and Investment) (18:47) — By leave, I move:

That this house authorises the President to permit the second-reading debate on the Appropriation (2018–2019) Bill 2018 to be taken concurrently with further debate on the motion to take note of the budget papers 2018–19.

Motion agreed to.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Adjournment

Mr DALIDAKIS (Minister for Trade and Investment) — I move:

That the Council, at its rising, adjourn until 12.00 p.m. on Tuesday, 22 May 2018.

Motion agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr DALIDAKIS (Minister for Trade and Investment) — I move:

That the house do now adjourn.

Shepparton bypass

Ms LOVELL (Northern Victoria) (18:48) — The matter I wish to raise on the adjournment tonight is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. It is regarding the state government funding for the construction of stage 1 of the Shepparton bypass. The action I seek is that the minister give a commitment to provide funding of \$50 million, being the state government's share for stage 1 of the Shepparton bypass project, and in his written answer provide the date the Andrews Labor government's submission was forwarded to Infrastructure Australia seeking federal government priority funding for the project.

The Goulburn Valley Highway is an integral transport route in the national highway system between Melbourne and Brisbane. The Goulburn Valley Highway in and around Shepparton can no longer cater for rising traffic volumes, particularly through the Shepparton CBD. The Shepparton bypass project will facilitate traffic movement around Shepparton so that we do not have trucks coming through the centre of our city. Greater Shepparton City Council has spoken to the state government and is seeking \$50 million from the state government as its share of the total cost of the \$260 million for stage 1 of the Shepparton bypass.

In last year's budget, not this year's that we just had presented last week, \$10.2 million was allocated for preconstruction work and a business case. The majority of the funding for the bypass will of course need to come from the federal government, but in order for that to be done the project has to be prioritised by the state to Infrastructure Australia.

There were hopes that in last Tuesday night's federal budget there would be funding included for the project. Unfortunately there was no mention of the Shepparton bypass project in that budget. There is also no mention of the Shepparton bypass project on Infrastructure Australia's infrastructure priority list, which includes all projects forwarded to them by the states as state priorities whether they are funded or not. This begs the question as to whether the state has even actually put this project forward to Infrastructure Australia as a priority project.

The Andrews government is responsible for submitting that application for the Shepparton bypass project to Infrastructure Australia for its consideration, and it should do so immediately if it has not already. The entire Shepparton community wants to see a firm commitment from the Andrews Labor government to the Shepparton bypass project in the form of the required \$50 million in state government funding and

also the application to Infrastructure Australia as a priority project.

The action I seek is that the minister give a commitment to provide funding of \$50 million, being the state government's share of stage 1 of the Shepparton bypass project, and in his written answer to me also provide the date the Andrews Labor government's submission was forwarded to Infrastructure Australia seeking federal government priority funding for the project.

Workplace deaths

Mr GEPP (Northern Victoria) (18:51) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Finance in the other place, and the action I seek is that he come to my electorate and attend one of the forums that I will be convening to talk about and find solutions to workplace deaths in regional Victoria. I have raised in this place on a number of occasions the number of Victorians, particularly regional Victorians, who do not go home from work at the end of their workday. In particular, farmers and construction workers are over-represented in these awful statistics. I understand that we are now into double-digit figures this year, after 27 deaths last year and 26 the year before.

I do commend the minister for the work he has done in this space. I realise that there are no obvious quick fixes and that he is unwavering in his commitment to ensure that every worker returns home at the end of their working day. The minister has delivered on Labor's election promise to conduct an independent review of OH&S compliance and enforcement in Victoria, and the government has in principle accepted all 22 recommendations from the review. He has also overseen an increase of more than 10 per cent in inspectors on the beat, he has overseen an increase in penalties for breaches and improved compensation arrangements for injured workers and he has overseen the farm quad bike safety rebate. In short, he has been doing an excellent job.

Notwithstanding that, we still see in this state far too many deaths from workplace accidents. That is why in the last sitting week I said that I would be convening forums in my electorate to sit down with unions, peak bodies, workers, farmers and statutory authorities — anybody who is interested — and have open and honest conversations about how we can keep regional Victorians and all Victorians safer at work. It matters not where the ideas come from. Clearly, despite all of the efforts of everybody, either legislatively we are falling short or from an education, compliance and enforcement perspective we are falling short. We have

got to do something about it. From my perspective, all solutions will be on the table. That is why I would like the minister to attend at least one of these forums with me and hear the views of people in my electorate on this most important matter.

Mill Park police station

Mr ONDARCHIE (Northern Metropolitan) (18:54) — My adjournment matter tonight is for the Minister for Police, and it concerns the Mill Park police station in the City of Whittlesea. In the City of Whittlesea local government area the total offences up to December 2014 were 13 594. In December 2017 there were 15 572 offences, which is nearly a 15 per cent increase in crime in the City of Whittlesea. Quite frankly the staff at Mill Park police station, many of whom I know, are struggling with the workload. Whilst there has been the opening of the Memda police station that covers the north part of Whittlesea, Whittlesea itself attracts 173 new residents every single week.

Postcode 3752, being South Morang, is the fastest growing postcode in the country. Mill Park police station is supposed to cover that area, but I can tell you the growth in crime such as family violence, car thefts, aggravated burglaries, crimes against the person, theft and other serious crimes are putting Victoria Police and the great people at Mill Park police station under enormous stress. I see them outside of work hours and they are really stressed and under the pump because of their workload. There has been no money to support the Mill Park police station.

Interestingly enough it also covers Westfield Plenty Valley Shopping Centre, which has just seen significant growth with the opening of new cinemas and restaurants, and the car park is full every day. We know that shopping centres are an ideal location for crooks to find things to steal from cars and to steal the cars themselves, and for all the other sorts of irresponsible activities that happen around shopping centres.

Mill Park police station is supposed to cover that area, yet they are short on staff and short on resources. Quite frankly they are running a very old police station, which for some period of the life of this government was Ms Mikakos's youth prison — that was when she shifted young people into the Mill Park cells and the officers there were required to look after the young ones and turn it into a youth prison for a period of time. That did not work for anybody, particularly the kids that were locked up there.

The action that I seek from the Minister for Police is to immediately bring forward funding to modernise and

upgrade Mill Park police station, and to provide more police to cover that very important area, because the community are crying out for these services.

Boronia Heights secondary college site

Ms DUNN (Eastern Metropolitan) (18:56) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Planning, and it is in relation to a site at 40 Mount View Road, Boronia. The Minister for Planning has referred this site to the Government Land Standing Advisory Committee for advice on the future planning provisions that apply to it. It is currently owned by the Department of Treasury and Finance on behalf of the Department of Education and Training.

The site is a significant one locally because it contains two areas of biological importance, including 0.75 hectares of lowland forest listed as vulnerable and 2 hectares of valley heathy forest listed as regionally endangered. It is home to 72 plant species, four of which are critically endangered and 11 of which are endangered. The site is a haven for wildlife. It boasts numerous hollow-bearing mature trees and good dense undergrowth providing refuge for small birds. The site also includes an important green open space area, an oval currently used by locals as a dog off-lead area, a place for children to play and a green space to exercise.

The action that I seek is that the minister protect these important community assets on the site by zoning the two parcels of land containing native vegetation as public conservation and resource zones and the open oval area as a public parks and recreation zone.

Live sheep export

Mr O'SULLIVAN (Northern Victoria) (18:58) — My adjournment matter tonight is for the Minister for Agriculture, and the action that I am seeking from the minister is for her to make her position clear in relation to the future of the live export industry here in Victoria. Victoria currently exports some 200 000 sheep. These are mainly wethers out of Portland, which accounts for about 10 per cent of Australia's total sheep exports. Most of the sheep we export go to Kuwait and Qatar in the Middle East. There are about 13 000 jobs and about \$1.8 billion added to the economy as a result of the live export trade around this country, so it plays a pretty significant role for us here in Australia, particularly for those out in the regional areas and farmers.

What industry has been able to do is put in place considerable animal welfare practices over a period of time. What we see from time to time is an individual or a bad operator that creates a bad influence right across

the sector. What we want to see is those bad operators prosecuted and driven out of the industry, because there is no room for those sorts of people in the industry.

Ninety-nine per cent of all Australian animals arrive at their final destination in a fit and healthy state. The Australian industry is working with destination countries to educate them about better animal welfare practices in their countries. Certainly we have seen some very big improvements in those countries in terms of the way that those animals are treated once they do get there, and that is a good thing.

Mark McGowan, the Labor Premier of Western Australia, has recently come out and said that he does not agree with the position taken by Bill Shorten in Canberra in terms of wanting to phase out the industry in the future. The action I am seeking from the Minister for Agriculture tonight is to give reassurance to the live sheep export trade in Victoria that the Andrews government supports the continuation of the industry into the future.

Queen Elizabeth Centre

Ms SPRINGLE (South Eastern Metropolitan) (19:00) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Health. The Queen Elizabeth Centre (QEC) was established in 1917 and has been delivering health and social support services to families and young children for more than 100 years. The centre comprises a 42-bed public hospital, as well as six support sites across the state. QEC supports thousands of Victorian families every year, and there is good evidence demonstrating the positive health and social outcomes of QEC's work. While the Department of Health and Human Services funds QEC's core costs, demands for their services are increasing, and without additional funding families are waiting for up to three months to receive urgent care. QEC urgently needs an additional \$2.5 million to support increased capacity in both health and social services.

With a funding boost of \$2.5 million over three years, \$1.75 million would be invested in digital health and facilities and would significantly increase QEC's capacity to meet demand. These upgrades are critical to QEC's ability to support and treat families. Built 25 years ago, QEC's facility in Noble Park does not currently meet best practice standards for health care, staff safety or family support. This funding would enable upgrades to accommodation, patient bathrooms, heating, cooling and replacement patient beds. The urgent investment in digital health would fund a new client health record system, internet and operating

system upgrades and improvements to the staff security system.

These upgrades would account for \$1.75 million of the total requested \$2.5 million. The remaining \$750 000 would provide increased capacity to support families, particularly in child protection matters. I have raised this request separately with the Minister for Families and Children. The action I seek is that the Minister for Health review this funding request and provide a formal response to QEC.

VicRoads Sunshine office

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) (19:02) — I wish to raise an adjournment matter this evening for the attention of the Premier. Peter Thomson is a well-known resident of Sunshine. He is known very much through that part of the western suburbs, and he has been running a determined and dogged campaign to keep the VicRoads office in Sunshine. His particular concern is that the licence-testing component of that office will be gone, and this will disadvantage locals, many of whom are already significantly disadvantaged. He has been running this campaign now for the best part of 18 months, and it does not look like he will in any way, shape or form back away from his aim. Sadly he has not had any joy from the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and he has expressed to me his frustration with the minister and the minister's lack of action on this particular matter.

He recently wrote to the Premier asking for a meeting to discuss this matter. He also said he would bring along two Brimbank councillors to inform the Premier of what locals regard as a very important issue. I should add that Mr Thomson is yet to receive a reply from the Premier. Tonight I am asking the Premier to respond to Mr Thomson's invitation for a meeting and to respond in the affirmative — agree to a meeting with Mr Thomson and the Brimbank councillors. Indeed, if the Premier is so inclined, I am happy to go along as well.

I am hopeful that the Premier will respond to Mr Thomson. Mr Thomson is a very strongly community-minded individual. He does a lot of great work in the Sunshine community. He is deserving of respect for that, and I am very hopeful that the Premier will give him that respect and will not just respond to the invitation but, as I said, respond in the positive and meet with Mr Thomson and the two Brimbank councillors that Mr Thomson has spoken of. Hopefully the Premier will be able to do that in the not-too-distant future.

Tallarook Mechanics Institute

Ms SYMES (Northern Victoria) (19:05) — My adjournment matter this evening is for the Treasurer. The Tallarook Mechanics Institute has stood in the town of Tallarook for 127 years. It is also known as the community hub or the community hall and is the place where the locals come together. Devastatingly, this important community hub burnt down on Saturday night. It happened at about 11.00 p.m., and my phone was beeping with messages from lots of distressed people in the area. It was quite sad to see the footage of the flames. Obviously the Country Fire Authority turned out — we had the Tallarook, Clonbinane, Hildene, Avenel, Kilmore, Broadford and Seymour brigades — but unfortunately the institute could not be saved.

The mechanics institute is such an important asset and has a rich history as a gathering place. Senior strength classes are run out of there and the Tallarook Arts Society has put on performances there. Weddings, wakes, birthday parties, you name it, it is the place to be in Tallarook. It is also the home of the Tallarook Farmers Market, which amazingly went ahead on Sunday morning just down the road. The organisers rallied together and spoke to the market stall organisers and the community was really keen to come together and support the community as a whole. I attended the market on Sunday, as I do most months, and it was fantastic to see such a strong, resilient community focused on the rebuild.

The council has been amazing in supporting this community. They had a community meeting on Tuesday night to get everyone together to talk about the next steps. It is very clear that everyone is focused on rebuilding and all of the community will be a part of it. The facility is owned by the Mitchell shire and run by a volunteer management group. The building is insured, and obviously that will be assessed in due course. However, this is such an important asset that I think a state government contribution to the rebuild would really ensure that the community is able to get a new facility, a new building in Tallarook, where they can celebrate their past and their history and create their new future. My request of the Treasurer is for him to advise me of any avenues for state government funding to help the Tallarook community rebuild their mechanics institute.

Yarra Boulevard, Kew

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan) (19:08) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. Residents living on and

near Yarra Boulevard in Kew continue to raise concerns about the use and safety of this road, which is under the care, management and responsibility of VicRoads, with council responsible for the footpaths and Parks Victoria for the adjacent parkland. The concerns of the residents relate to safety, speed and honking traffic late at night. A petition on this issue from residents was presented to the council in August 2016 and to VicRoads in May 2016. Community forums were held in December 2016 and December 2017, organised by Victoria Police and attended by VicRoads, the City of Boroondara and Parks Victoria, where the community's concerns about the safety of Yarra Boulevard were raised.

Yarra Boulevard saw 34 crashes in the five years ending 30 June 2017, including one fatal accident near Yarra Street and 14 serious injury crashes. While the road is under the care and management of VicRoads, council officers have examined the crash history and undertaken speed and volume surveys to guide their advocacy with VicRoads. The council officers are working with VicRoads, Victoria Police and Parks Victoria to develop a solution to the issues. Potential treatments have been developed, and the community has been provided with comments through an information session held just in March 2018.

The action that I am seeking of the minister is: will he advise the City of Boroondara when it will be possible for their officers and the officers from the four agencies led by VicRoads to complete the design and consultation related to developing solutions to the issues on Yarra Boulevard? They need to be able to do that before they can then go on to consider the reconstruction of the road or any other solutions. They are held up by not being able to go forward with developing these solutions by the four agencies led by VicRoads. My request is that the minister advise the council when VicRoads will actually lead this process.

Menzies Creek Primary School

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) (19:10) — I am pleased to rise in relation to a matter for the attention of Mr Merlino, the Minister for Education, and it relates to the Menzies Creek Primary School. I had the good fortune to be in Menzies Creek recently and to meet with the school principal and parent representatives. The school is growing, which is a great reflection on its leadership, the community it has fostered and the outcomes it has achieved in one of the most beautiful parts of Victoria. But this growing student enrolment, this growing number of families at the school, is creating some challenges, particularly parking and safety challenges. Currently there is

insufficient parking for the drop-off and pick-up of students.

Most of the students come by car given it is a predominantly rural district. There are barely enough car spaces at the moment around the school perimeter for staff and teachers, let alone for parents. This is forcing parents and others dropping off children or picking up children to park in precarious locations along School Road, and this is creating a danger and hazard. This is made worse because the school is near the Puffing Billy Menzies Creek railway station, so scores of tourists use School Road, the road in front of the school, to access Menzies Creek Puffing Billy railway station, including large tourist buses and tourists driving vehicles in an area they are not familiar with. To add even more risk, in wintertime in particular heavy fog can often make it very difficult to see in the area.

The school community has done a lot of work on solutions to this issue. They have proposals, from extra car parking on nearby council land potentially, subject to council wishes, to engaging with nearby private landowners and making safety improvements to the current parking arrangements and current road arrangements. In addition they are seeking flashing 40-kilometre speed signs so that in fog in particular or for tourists the flashing lights will draw drivers' attention to the fact that they are entering a school zone. The action I would seek from the minister is that he identify the solutions to deliver extra car parking, road safety improvements around the school and flashing 40-kilometre-per-hour speed signs so that there is sufficient parking and that the school environs are safe.

Sturt Street, Ballarat

Mr MORRIS (Western Victoria) (19:14) — My adjournment matter this evening is for the attention of the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and it relates to Sturt Street in Ballarat. No doubt members will be aware of the many concerns that I have had about Sturt Street in Ballarat; however, the budget papers detail a further concern once or twice. The budget papers do raise a further concern about some changes to Sturt Street between Pleasant Street and Dyson Drive in Ballarat. The options that I see are options that would see a variety of trees removed from heritage Sturt Street in Ballarat. The action I seek from the minister is that he detail to the community how many trees would be lost to Sturt Street if the proposals that the government is considering proceed as per the budget.

Responses

Mr DALIDAKIS (Minister for Trade and Investment) (19:15) — I have had adjournment matters this evening from Ms Lovell to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety regarding the Shepparton bypass; from Mr Gepp to the Minister for Finance inviting him out to visit the electorate and meet with community members about workplace deaths; from Mr Ondarchie to the Minister for Police in relation to the Mill Park police station; from Ms Dunn to the Minister for Planning regarding 40 Mount View Road, Boronia; from Mr O'Sullivan to the Minister for Agriculture regarding the future of live sheep exports; from Ms Springle to the Minister for Health regarding the Queen Elizabeth Centre; from Mr Finn to the Premier regarding a meeting request for one of his constituents; from Ms Symes to the Treasurer regarding funding towards rebuilding the Tallarook community hub; from Ms Pennicuik to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety regarding Yarra Boulevard and VicRoads' communication with Boroondara City Council; from Mr O'Donohue to the Minister for Education regarding Menzies Creek Primary School; and from Mr Morris to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety asking how many trees may be removed for the Sturt Street upgrade.

Beyond that, I have a written response to an adjournment matter raised by Mr Ramsay on 20 February 2018.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Melhem) — The house stands adjourned.

House adjourned 7.15 p.m. until Tuesday, 22 May.