

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

FIFTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

Wednesday, 23 May 2018

(Extract from book 7)

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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
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Minister for Training and Skills, and Minister for Corrections	The Hon. G. A. Tierney, MLC
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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 Elasmarr, 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 Elasmarr, 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 Elasmarr and Mr Melhem. (*Assembly*): Mr Crisp, Mrs Fyffe, Ms Garrett and Ms Ryall.

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

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

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

House Committee — (*Council*): The President (*ex officio*), Mr Eideh, Ms 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**

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Deputy President:

Mr K. EIDEH

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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	Southern Metropolitan	LP	Ondarchie, Mr Craig Philip	Northern Metropolitan	LP
Dalidakis, Mr Philip	Southern 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	Southern Metropolitan	LP	Pennicuik, Ms Susan Margaret	Southern Metropolitan	Greens
Drum, Mr Damian Kevin ⁴	Northern Victoria	Nats	Peulich, Mrs Inga	South Eastern Metropolitan	LP
Dunn, Ms Samantha	Eastern Metropolitan	Greens	Pulford, Ms Jaala Lee	Western Victoria	ALP
Eideh, Mr Khalil M.	Western Metropolitan	ALP	Purcell, Mr James	Western Victoria	VILJ
Elasmr, 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	Southern Metropolitan	LP	Rich-Phillips, Mr Gordon Kenneth	South Eastern Metropolitan	LP
Gepp, Mr Mark ⁵	Northern Victoria	ALP	Shing, Ms Harriet	Eastern Victoria	ALP
Hartland, Ms Colleen Mildred ⁷	Western Metropolitan	Greens	Somyurek, Mr Adem	South Eastern Metropolitan	ALP
Herbert, Mr Steven Ralph ⁶	Northern Victoria	ALP	Springle, Ms Nina	South Eastern Metropolitan	Greens
Jennings, Mr Gavin Wayne	South Eastern Metropolitan	ALP	Symes, Ms Jaclyn	Northern Victoria	ALP
Leane, Mr Shaun Leo	Eastern Metropolitan	ALP	Tierney, Ms Gayle Anne	Western Victoria	ALP
Lovell, Ms Wendy Ann	Northern Victoria	LP	Truong, 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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Wednesday, 23 May 2018

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

PETITIONS

Following petitions presented to house:

Safe Schools program

To the Legislative Council of Victoria:

How safe are your children?

The so-called ‘Safe Schools program’, compulsory curriculum in Victorian government schools, indoctrinates your children into sexual lifestyles and preferences which have shocked a growing number of Victorian parents.

We the undersigned call on the Victorian Legislative Council to strongly oppose the ‘Safe Schools program’ and draw to the attention of the house concerns over the ‘Safe Schools program’ in Victorian schools, its inappropriate content, the political agenda it promotes in schools, the lack of parental consent involved, and its failure to respect cultural and religious diversity.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Council of Victoria stop the implementation of the ‘Safe Schools program’ in Victorian schools and that any future anti-bullying programs be run by the education department, be inclusive of all forms of bullying and respectful of cultural and religious diversity.

By Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) (116 signatures).

Laid on table.

Ordered to be considered next day on motion of Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan).

Unlicensed drivers

Legislative Council electronic petition:

The petition of certain citizens of the state of Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Council that new legislation is required to create criminal offences for unlicensed driving causing death and unlicensed driving causing serious injury.

On 14 March 2017, Jalal Yassine-Naja lost his life at the age of 13, after being hit by an unlicensed driver.

Victorian law does not reflect the gravity of such an offence and there is currently no specific offence for causing death or serious injury when driving unlicensed. The driver was sentenced to 80 hours of community service.

An unlicensed driver who, with full knowledge of the fact that they are unlicensed, chooses to drive on the road and in doing so causes the death or serious injury of another person, should be subject to substantial criminal penalties. Jalal’s family wish for this reform to be known as Jalal’s Law, in his memory and honour.

Jalal’s Law would serve in the interest of public safety by acting as a deterrent against wilful unlicensed driving, as well as ensuring justice for the families and victims of unlicensed drivers causing death or serious injury.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Council support the implementation of Jalal’s Law by supporting the Crimes Amendment (Unlicensed Drivers) Bill 2018.

By Dr CARLING-JENKINS (Western Metropolitan) (915 signatures).

Laid on table.

PAPERS

Laid on table by Clerk:

Auditor-General’s Reports on —

Results of 2017 Audits: Technical and Further Education Institutes, May 2018 (*Ordered to be published*).

Results of 2017 Audits: Universities, May 2018 (*Ordered to be published*).

Planning and Environment Act 1987 — Notices of Approval of the following amendments to planning schemes —

Banyule Planning Scheme — Amendments C118 and C150.

Bayside Planning Scheme — Amendment C157.

Brimbank, Hobsons Bay, Maribymong, Melbourne, Port of Melbourne and Wyndham Planning Schemes — Amendment GC93.

Darebin Planning Scheme — Amendment C180.

Melbourne Planning Scheme — Amendment C306.

Moonee Valley Planning Scheme — Amendment C177.

Moreland Planning Scheme — Amendment C170.

Gambling Regulation Act 2003 —

Amendment to the Category 1 Public Lottery Licence, 19 April 2018.

Amendment to the Category 1 Public Lottery Licence, 3 May 2018.

Ombudsman — Good Practice Guide to Dealing with Challenging Behaviour — Report and Guide, May 2018 (*Ordered to be published*).

MINISTERS STATEMENTS

Premiers' Reading Challenge

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Early Childhood Education) (09:40) — I rise to inform the house on how the Andrews Labor government is encouraging all Victorian parents to take on the challenge of reading more books with their young children. I recently launched the Premiers' Reading Challenge for the early years to support the Andrews Labor government's Education State vision to improve the literacy and numeracy skills of young Victorians through a love of reading. Reading plays a vital role in a child's development, and we know the critical importance of the first five years in a child's life.

This week in Victoria is Education Week, so it is a timely reminder that regular reading with children from the day they are born is a simple way to boost their literacy and numeracy skills and ultimately improve their performance at school. Thousands of Victorian children and families are expected to participate this year, and I encourage them all to do so.

Honourable members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I cannot hear the minister, which might be my problem rather than anybody else's, but on the basis that I cannot hear — Minister, from the top, thank you.

Ms MIKAKOS — Thank you, President. I rise to inform the house on how the Andrews Labor government is encouraging all Victorian parents to take on the challenge of reading more books with their young children. I recently launched the Premiers' Reading Challenge for the early years, which supports the Andrews Labor government's Education State vision to improve the literacy and numeracy skills of young Victorians through a love of reading. Reading plays a vital role in a child's development, and we know the critical importance of the first five years in a child's life.

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The Premiers' Reading Challenge for the early years ends in September, so there is still plenty of time. The government is a proud supporter of this key Victorian initiative and will continue to support children and

young people's reading skills and highlight the importance of reading for literacy development. I take this opportunity to thank Melbourne Victory striker Besart Berisha, who is the Premiers' Reading Challenge ambassador for the early years. He has talked about how he loves to read to his children. There are over 2000 children's books on the early years list to choose from, and I want to emphasise this fact because it is indeed about providing more books for parents, educators and children to choose from, not less, and it is a great way to foster an interest in and love of reading in children.

Of course we know how much those opposite love fairy tales, so I am sure they will be pleased to hear that amongst the books available for reading in 2018 there is *Miffy the Fairy*, *Alice and the Airy Fairy*, *Fairy Bread*, *Fairy Dust*, *Dear Fairy Godmother* and *Lily and the Fairy House*. I know that those opposite would prefer to read 'Pinocchio', 'The Guy Who Cried Public Service Cuts', 'Little Red Lobster Hood' and 'Goldilocks and the Two Pairs'.

Honourable members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT — Two bears? Minister, why are there only two bears?

Ms Shing — Because the Little Red Lobster ate the third one.

Ms MIKAKOS — President, it was 'Goldilocks and the Two Pairs', as in P-A-I-R-S.

Vigliaturo Orchards

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Regional Development) (09:43) — I rise to update the house on how our government is supporting the creation of jobs in regional Victoria. At the heart of everything that our government does is a belief in fairness, getting things done and making things fair. It is important to us that kids growing up in country Victoria can receive the best possible education and health services and of course be confident about the kinds of jobs that they will have in the future. We know that it is important to their parents and their family members that the future of their communities is strong. Jobs are essential for people to be able to support a family, pay off a home and enjoy a great quality of life and full participation in our community. This is the case no matter where people live. Our \$500 million Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund supports exactly that: major projects and job creation, supporting the development of industries of the future and building stronger regional communities.

In that context I am very pleased to announce today in the house that Vigliaturo Orchards has received a grant from the government's Regional Jobs Fund to expand and upgrade the business. Vigliaturo Orchards is a family-owned business in Ardmona that grows, packs and markets apples, pears and stone fruits. With the government assistance and the initiative of the company, this Goulburn Valley business is thriving and creating new jobs for the community. It is a \$1.8 million expansion of its fruit packing and export facility, and it is creating 12 new full-time equivalent jobs. The project is doubling the size of the packing facility, developing additional cold storage and controlled atmosphere capacity and enabling the purchase, installation and commission of digital grading and packing technology. The expansion and new technology will increase the company's daily fruit handling and packing capability from 100 bins to 180 bins, so it is a very important project. These jobs mean more wages for locals and money spent in the local community, which has great flow-on effects for the region.

Victorian Young Achiever Awards

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Youth Affairs) (09:46) — I rise to update the house on the outstanding achievements of young Victorians across the state and how the Andrews Labor government is continuing to support our youth. Last Friday night I had the pleasure as patron to present certificates to all of the semifinalists and finalists for the Victorian Young Achiever Awards 2018. The awards acknowledge and recognise the enormous achievements of young Victorians in fields as diverse as community service, small businesses, rural and regional health, arts and fashion, and education.

I want to congratulate the winner of the government-sponsored group achievement in the community award, Happy Brain Education Rowville, for their work providing educational, social and mentoring support to disadvantaged young people. I would also like to congratulate Dan Poole of Melbourne-founded Crepes for Change, a not-for-profit, youth-led social enterprise aimed at eliminating youth homelessness. Crepes for Change provide underprivileged young people with tangible skills and professional development opportunities and recently commenced a paid employment program enabling five vulnerable young people to complete 150 hours of paid employment and training. These are two examples of the incredible calibre of young people recognised at these awards, and I wish to congratulate each and every finalist. They are truly inspirational young people.

We all have a role to play to ensure young people get every opportunity to thrive, and our government recognises that many young people face disadvantage and have a range of diverse needs. This is why I was also pleased on the night to announce the opening of a \$2 million Empower Youth grant round. This innovative program that we started two years ago has enabled a diverse range of community organisations to employ youth workers to support young people to support their goals. We know that some want to talk down our youth; however, it is important to remember that there are over a million young people in Victoria who are making positive contributions to our state every day. This is evident by the outstanding young people nominated and those who were finalists at the 2018 Victorian Young Achiever Awards. We do remain committed to continuing our support for our young people and our youth agencies across Victoria, recognising that young people are the future of our state.

The PRESIDENT — I am a little concerned about whether or not that was a new initiative in the sense that in that statement the minister indicated that it had been in place for two years. I do note the fresh funding, but I am a little bit concerned about simply a funding announcement.

Ms MIKAKOS — President, I can clarify that this is a program that we did initiate two years ago in the budget. There was \$4 million two years ago, and we have provided a further \$2 million in this year's budget. This new initiative is not one that I have spoken about in a ministers statement previously, and I am advising the house that this funding is now available to youth organisations and councils across Victoria through this funding round that I opened on Friday. Therefore it is a new initiative.

The PRESIDENT — Well, it is not a new initiative, because it started two years ago. It does have some fresh funding, which is really what you are hanging your hat on.

Wimmera weather radar

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Agriculture) (09:49) — I rise to update the house on the development of the Doppler weather radar for the Wimmera. This is an issue that has been of great significance to Wimmera communities for many, many years. Back in 2016, in a period when the community was experiencing significant challenges arising from drought, I joined the Premier and the Minister for Water in Wycheproof to announce that the government would provide through the Agriculture Infrastructure

and Jobs Fund \$5 million towards capital costs to deliver the first real-time Doppler weather radar in the region.

This region exists in something of a weather information black hole, with no information available between Mount Gambier and Mildura. The project was one of the first to be funded from the Agriculture Infrastructure and Jobs Fund. The construction of weather radar facilities is of course a responsibility of the federal government, but we committed to this project because of its clear economic benefits to the region. The need for improved weather services in the Wimmera has been identified by the community as a priority for many years.

We have \$5 million ready to go. Back in 2016 the federal government committed to covering annual operating and maintenance costs. Unfortunately progress has been slow, but I can update the house that the first meeting of the steering committee, which involves the federal government's Bureau of Meteorology and the Wimmera Development Association, is occurring this week. So there is progress, but I think it has been infuriating for the community. While we welcome that step, Victoria's farmers and communities do need this radar operating.

In providing this update to the house I take the opportunity to urge the federal government and the Bureau of Meteorology to move quickly to establish a location, order the radar and at the earliest opportunity get better information to our farmers, emergency service workers and others in the community who will benefit from it.

Neighbourhood houses

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) (09:51) — I rise to update the house on the Andrews Labor government's record of investment in expanding the neighbourhood house network across Victoria. The Andrews government are backing our neighbourhood houses as we want to ensure more Victorians have access to the vital employment, training and volunteering services that many neighbourhood houses provide in local communities across Victoria. That is why the 2018–19 Victorian budget invests a further \$21.8 million across the neighbourhood house network so that more people can enjoy the benefits of neighbourhood houses and the activities and services they provide.

This is the biggest funding boost to neighbourhood house coordination hours ever, with an extra 76 700 hours to be delivered each year to more houses

across the state. This funding will also provide mobile neighbourhood house networkers with an additional 4800 hours per year to spend more time with individual houses in their region to help them improve access to key services and activities. This builds on the more than \$30 million per annum that our government already provides to support 375 neighbourhood houses, 16 neighbourhood house networks and the peak body, Neighbourhood Houses Victoria.

I was privileged to officially open the 2018 Neighbourhood Houses Victoria conference last Thursday in Melbourne, where I also announced that our government has formally opened an expression of interest process for eligible neighbourhood houses to apply for an increase in their funding. I further announced that the Andrews government's budget investment will also help fund brand-new neighbourhood houses in areas of greatest need and allow some currently unfunded houses with a demonstrated need to receive neighbourhood house coordination program funding for the first time.

Neighbourhood houses create vibrant, inclusive and connected communities through effective community development. We want more people across Victoria to experience the benefits of the wonderful work that the sector does. This is an exciting time for neighbourhood houses in Victoria, and I am so pleased that we have been able to provide this significant funding for them. This record investment is almost eight times more than what was delivered under the previous Liberal government, and our record investment in neighbourhood houses stands in stark contrast to that of the Turnbull government, which is slashing the national occasional care program.

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

Gender neutrality

Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria) (09:53) — It would seem that Victoria's education agenda is all about gender — or more accurately, no gender. The agenda is no gender at all. This week we woke to news that the social police, the lamentable left-wing loonies, are scurrying through schools, kindergartens and public libraries to remove any books that refer to boys and girls — books like *Thomas the Tank Engine* and *Winnie the Pooh*. They will surely find other dangerous literary classics too.

This audit of dangerous material is apparently based upon research by the Australian National University that young children are influenced by gender stereotyping. How flawed our society must have grown

by reading books about boys and girls. Shakespeare must have mentioned them at some stage too. What a scoundrel! The problem is our world is made up of boys and girls and men and women. We could not have made it this far in the world if it were not for boys and girls becoming men and women. Evolution has brought us this far, thank goodness, on the basis that both sexes recognise the other as such. Girls will be girls and boys will be boys, and there is nothing wrong with that. What is wrong is that this inward-looking socialist Safe Schools agenda is dumbing down our education system.

Instead of learning the three Rs our modern students are learning that we are all the same and that we cannot be celebrated or respected for our differences. Difference and inclusiveness are what we should be celebrating. We celebrate the difference in cultures, in languages and in religions. We are not all the same, nor do we want to be. We also celebrate what unites us — our humanity, our time on this earth together and our efforts to make it a better place. Billions of dollars more are now being spent on our education system in Victoria, and we are no better for it.

Glen Eira food waste collection

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan) (09:55) — I would like to congratulate the City of Glen Eira which from the first of this month has introduced the putting of food waste and food scraps in its green waste collection, which has been running for years. It of course collected garden waste, but from now on in the City of Glen Eira we will be able to put fruit and vegetable scraps, used papers, paper towels, coffee grounds, dairy leftovers, eggshells, meat scraps and bones, bread, pasta and rice in the green waste collection. The mayor of the City of Glen Eira, Cr Tony Athanasopoulos, has said that the City of Glen Eira will be the first council in Victoria's south-east to introduce food waste recycling. We know that food waste makes up about 40 per cent of the waste that goes to landfill.

This is a welcome initiative, and I know other councils are lining up to follow, but it is pretty well overdue in Australia because it occurs already in the United States, Europe and places like South Korea, and has done for years. It will reduce waste to landfill. It will reduce greenhouse gas emissions. But I would like to say that what is needed to follow is organic waste collection on the streets. When I was in the United States a couple of years ago I noticed in the city of Seattle that they have solar composting bins for organic waste in the street. That is the next benchmark for Victoria.

Crossenvale Community House, Echuca

Mr GEPP (Northern Victoria) (09:57) — The budget delivered earlier this month made a significant investment of more than \$21 million into the neighbourhood house program. I visited Crossenvale Community House in Echuca last week to see what a difference this funding would make. Be it yoga, arts and craft, cooking, gardening or free seniors bingo, there is something for everyone at this neighbourhood house. I send a big congratulations to Sheridan and her volunteer team.

Save the Children Kindergarten, Mooroopna

Mr GEPP — I had the privilege of reopening the Mooroopna Save the Children Kindergarten. The committee turned out in force, and there was great joy and the laughter of children ringing out around the complex. The Mooroopna Save the Children Kindergarten is such an institution in town that one of the teachers had even attended there as a child. The community and local business pitched in with the government money, and it is now a state-of-the-art facility.

Shepparton Legacy

Mr GEPP — I had the honour of attending the 68th annual Shepparton Legacy luncheon recently. I presented a replica of the parchment that I had the honour of laying at Anzac Cove on behalf of Shepparton Legacy earlier this year. Good luck to the new president, legatee Denis Burr, and thanks to secretary Leonie Wilson and all her team for their great hospitality.

National Volunteer Week

Mr BOURMAN (Eastern Victoria) (09:58) — This week is National Volunteer Week, and today is particularly for State Emergency Service (SES) volunteers. It is about recognising volunteers from all around the country, and it is probably a good time for us all to reflect that we could all do a little bit more to help volunteers.

Honourable members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT — Mr Bourman, you may start from the top. Members from across the chamber, I cannot hear, and Mr Bourman understood that he was not being heard. Mr Bourman, from the top, thank you.

Mr BOURMAN — This week is National Volunteer Week. Today we are specifically mentioning the SES for all the work they do. I think we should also

recognise volunteers in general, and we could all probably spare a little bit more of our time to help people in need.

Melbourne Victory Football Club

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) (09:59) — President, I hope that you will join me in using this opportunity in the Victorian Parliament to congratulate the Melbourne Victory players and club on their fourth A-League championship. This one is all the more special after many had written off Victory, who went in as the underdogs but beat one of the most successful Sydney teams of all time to progress to the grand final and beat Newcastle 1-0.

It was a game filled with drama and red cards, but the boys in blue stayed strong and were victorious. Well done to all of the players and in particular the man of the match, goalkeeper Lawrence Thomas, who had a stellar season and an even better grand final. I would also like to congratulate Leroy George on winning the Victory medal and Besart Berisha on winning the golden boot yet again. Lastly, I think the people who deserve congratulations are the supporters and the chairman, Anthony Di Pietro, as well as his board on an absolutely magnificent result.

Electorate office budgets

Mrs PEULICH — I call upon Daniel Andrews and the Labor government to apologise and sack those who have defrauded electorate and departmental budgets, including the Attorney-General, for personal and political benefit of unprecedented proportions amounting to \$19 979 776, excluding the misuse by Labor's Assembly MPs which is yet to be exposed and held to account. This is absolutely a deplorable page in our history that the Premier has failed to address and respond to honestly and with the degree of accountability that we impose upon others.

Footscray Hospital

Ms TRUONG (Western Metropolitan) (10:01) — I rise to speak about the current state of the Footscray Hospital. It has some of the oldest inpatient accommodation in Victoria, and we have known for a long time that it has no longer been fit for purpose. My predecessor in this place, Ms Colleen Hartland, led the Fix Footscray Hospital campaign over a number of years, and we finally saw the government commit to \$17 million in May 2016 and then \$50 million in the budget before last for critical planning of this overdue rebuild. Colleen actually found herself in the emergency department of Footscray Hospital last

Friday, having slipped and broken her arm in two places. I went to visit her on Monday and saw for myself the decrepit state of the hospital.

In September 2016 the then CEO of Western Health told a parliamentary committee here that the detailed service planning over recent years had to be refreshed fairly rapidly because the community of the west had accelerated its growth in such a way that no-one had anticipated. She went on to state that its existing infrastructure was in such a state that wards had been closed and beds had been taken out. Resuscitations were happening in the corridor because this building, built over 60 years ago, was no longer fit for purpose for modern hospital equipment. The fabulous staff in the hospital and our communities deserve far better. This Labor government should commit today to building the Footscray Hospital in full. Give us the date for when we can expect our needs and growth to finally be served, and stop taking the west for granted.

Outlook

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) (10:02) — I was very pleased on Monday, along with managers of Outlook, which is a social enterprise, to visit the two level crossing removals at Carrum and Seaford and then end up at the Hampton Park recycling centre, which Outlook operates. Outlook is an organisation that employs people with a disability, refugees and sometimes long-term unemployed people who are recruited via the Brotherhood of St Laurence.

The fact that Outlook and other social enterprises have been able to pick up tenders from the level crossing removal program and other large infrastructure removal projects the state government is embarking on means a lot to these sorts of organisations. With this particular project alone it means that Outlook have put on eight extra employees to help facilitate the recycling of the waste. Of the building waste that is coming off these particular projects, 90 per cent is being recycled and reused — things like formwork timber. Concrete is being crushed and many types of metal are being recycled. I think that everyone should be proud of organisations like Outlook and proud that there is a government prepared to prioritise them and the good work they do.

Port Phillip Specialist School

Ms FITZHERBERT (Southern Metropolitan) (10:04) — This morning I was absolutely delighted to head along to Port Phillip Specialist School with Andrew Bond, who is the Liberal candidate for the Assembly electorate of Albert Park, and make an

announcement that, in my view, is long overdue. The school has for some time planned to build what it is calling a kitchen cafe. They have a commercial kitchen. It is only big enough for a few kids to use at the same time, and you cannot fit a wheelchair in there, which is a dreadful thing in a specialist school when so many kids need wheels to get around.

For a couple of years now they have been working on their plans to expand their commercial kitchen so that it can be a teaching space for more kids and to fit it out like a cafe that we might see nearby in Bay Street. Their dream is to actually open it up through the back entrance of the school so that the local community can use it. They have raised \$150 000 towards this great cause. They have twice put in applications to the Andrews Labor government for funding to support this, but they have been rejected.

We in the coalition are not going to reject this need. We have pledged \$250 000 towards this project, and I look forward to being able to deliver that next year. I look forward to being able to again visit the school, which I first visited some 20 years ago. It has always been a beacon in the local community and also more broadly. I know there are parents who move into the area so that their kids can attend this extremely good school. They have worked hard for this, it is a great vision and we are going to support it.

Benalla Auto Club

Ms SYMES (Northern Victoria) (10:06) — In my members statement today I would like to congratulate the Benalla Auto Club for another successful supercars event on the weekend. Labor has been a huge supporter of the auto club, which runs the Winton Motor Raceway.

Mr Gepp — Were you presenting the trophies?

Ms SYMES — I did present the trophies to the winners, Mr Gepp. For the fourth year in a row I have been there at the supercars. What was particularly great about this year's event was that thanks to Labor's funding they have secured the supercars for this year and next year, so they can plan for next year's big event as well.

What really stood out was that 3000 people camp at Winton over the three-day supercars competition, and obviously people are also staying in motels in Benalla, Wangaratta, small regional towns and Shepparton. About \$9 million is expected to be the economic boost to the region because of the supercars.

In addition to that, the supercar teams gave the tick of approval to the track for its high-grip surface, which means that they can push their cars to the limit, and that is a result of receiving \$1 million a couple of years ago from our government to ensure the continued success of the event.

Ms Pulford — Some very good lobbying from the local member there, Ms Symes.

Ms SYMES — They are going from strength to strength, and I am happy to be a big supporter of the club. They do a lot for the region. I would like to congratulate Chris, Wayne, Barry and the team for their hard work out there.

Flinders Street station photo booth

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) (10:07) — My 90-second statement today relates to the picture gallery black-and-white photo booth at Flinders Street. Public Transport Victoria and the faceless bureaucrats at Transport for Victoria, no doubt with the support of the Andrews government, sought to get rid of that booth, which has been there for many, many decades. Alan Adler, the owner, has stood up and said, 'No, this is nuts. People like that booth. It provides a different service'. But the faceless bureaucrats inside the transport bureaucracy do not see the value of it.

People have proposed there. People have their photos taken there regularly for fun and for historical record. They are black-and-white photos, but seriously this points to the out-of-touch nature of this government. Surely they could have accommodated an iconic photo booth at Flinders Street station, rather than ringing up the owner and saying, 'You've got just 10 days to go'.

Now the public reaction has been such that they have had to step back from that. I say they have to find a place to accommodate this photo booth. The community wants it. Honestly, Premier Daniel Andrews should tell his faceless bureaucrats to think more carefully in future.

CRIMES AMENDMENT (UNLICENSED DRIVERS) BILL 2018

Statement of compatibility

Dr CARLING-JENKINS (Western Metropolitan) **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 Crimes Amendment (Unlicensed Drivers) Bill 2018 (the bill).

In my opinion, the bill, 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 bill introduces new offences to specifically address incidents where an unlicensed driver causes serious injury or death.

The bill is a response to widespread community concern arising from an unlicensed driver who caused the death of 13 year old Jalal Yassine-Naja merely being sentenced to community service for driving unlicensed. The sentencing took no account of the fact that this unlicensed driver had caused the death of a person, thus revealing a significant gap in the criminal law which the bill seeks to remedy.

The bill will amend the Crimes Act 1958 to introduce the following new offences:

- a. driving a motor vehicle while knowingly unlicensed (or reckless as to whether unlicensed) and causing serious injury to another person by driving the motor vehicle (maximum 5 year term of imprisonment);
- b. driving a motor vehicle while knowingly unlicensed (or reckless as to whether unlicensed) and causing the death of another person by driving the motor vehicle (maximum 10 year term of imprisonment).

Human rights issues

Human rights protected by the charter that are relevant to the bill

Protection from cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment (section 10 of the charter)

Section 10 of the charter provides the right for a person to not be treated or punished in a cruel, inhuman or degrading way. In my opinion the bill does not limit this right.

Causing serious injury or death to another person while driving unlicensed will make an offender liable to a term of imprisonment.

This is an appropriate punishment where a person knows they are unlicensed or is reckless as to whether they are unlicensed and while driving unlicensed causes serious injury or death.

The amendment also provides that that a person is not guilty of an offence if the court is satisfied that the person has held an appropriate licence (whether issued in Victoria or in another State, Territory or country) at some time before the commission of the offence; and the licence was not cancelled for an offence relating to the driving of a motor vehicle committed by the person in Victoria or in another State or a Territory or country; and at the time the serious injury or death was caused, the person was observing the standard of care in relation to the driving of the motor vehicle which a reasonable person would have observed in all the circumstances of the case.

Right to liberty and security of person (section 21 of the charter)

Section 21 of the charter provides that every person has the right to liberty, and that a person must not be deprived of liberty, except on grounds, and in accordance with procedures, established by law. Section 21 also provides that every person has the right to security.

The right to liberty needs to be balanced with the right to security, specifically, the community's right to safety and security, which includes protection from being subject to serious injury or death caused by an unlicensed driver driving a vehicle. Although conviction for the new offences may result in the deprivation of liberty, it will only arise as a result of a sentence imposed after conviction for an offence by an independent court after a fair hearing.

These offences and corresponding penalties apply to a clearly defined set of circumstances. Knowledge or recklessness as to whether a person is unlicensed is an element of the offence and there is an exception for a person who has held a licence but who has not had it cancelled for any offence related to driving a vehicle and who is observing the standard of care in relation to the driving of the motor vehicle which a reasonable person would have observed in all the circumstances of the case.

In the circumstances defined for the offence the deprivation of an offender's liberty is necessary and appropriate to preserve the right to security of persons who may be caused serious injury or death by persons driving unlicensed.

Right to a fair hearing (section 24 of the charter)

Section 24(1) of the charter provides that a person charged with a criminal offence has the right to have the charge or proceeding decided by a competent, independent and impartial court or tribunal after a fair and public hearing. In my opinion this right is not limited by this bill.

These amendments do not impact on a person's ability to respond to the allegations made against them, to advocate for why they should be shown leniency by the court, to appeal the decision of a court or to have their matters determined consistently with the rules of procedural fairness, criminal procedure and sentencing laws.

Rights in criminal proceedings (section 25 of the charter)

Section 25(1) of the charter provides the right to be presumed innocent, and section 25(2) outlines minimum guarantees in criminal proceedings.

An accused's right under Section 25 (1) to be presumed innocent is not affected by the amendments as it will be necessary to prove each element of the offences.

An accused's rights under section 25(2) are not affected by these amendments, which maintain the accused's ability to be informed of the charges against them, communicate with legal representatives, obtain legal assistance and generally prepare their defence.

In my opinion this bill does not limit any charter rights.

Dr Rachel Carling-Jenkins, MLC
Member for Western Metropolitan

Second reading

Dr CARLING-JENKINS (Western Metropolitan) (10:09) — I move:

That the bill be now read a second time.

Since the beginning of my time in Parliament, I have always been motivated by the value of human life. This time I bring to the Parliament a bill motivated by the value of Jalal Yassine-Naja's life.

This bill amends the Crimes Act 1958 to create an offence of unlicensed driving causing serious injury or death.

It inserts an offence into current law, whereby if a person driving a motor vehicle, with the knowledge that they are unlicensed, or reckless as to whether they are unlicensed, causes serious injury to another person, they are liable to up to five years imprisonment. And if they cause the death of another person they are liable to up to 10 years imprisonment.

This is a bill about accountability.

This is a bill about taking personal responsibility.

And this is a bill about one boy — a boy whose life was taken too soon, by an unlicensed driver.

Jalal Yassine-Naja lost his life on 14 March 2017, at the age of 13, after being hit by an unlicensed driver while walking across the road.

His mother, Olivia Yassine, has been left with no justice, no sense of peace and no real answers after the driver was sentenced to community service after the incident which led to the death of her son was treated as an accident.

This driver should not have been on the road.

Ms Yassine does not want her son's death to go unnoticed — and has been working tirelessly to ensure this does not happen.

David Galbally, QC, told 3AW's Neil Mitchell on 15 March this year that the charge does not reflect the gravity of what happened. 'The offence for which the individual was charged was unlicensed driving', he said, 'It doesn't carry with it the fact that you killed someone'.

At the time, assistant commissioner for road policing Doug Fryer described the tragedy of Jalal's untimely death as highlighting a gap in the law: 'I get that the law was applied and ... community service was all that

was available. But it's highlighted there's a gap, we're progressing ... some legislative change around unlawful road user causing death and unlawful road user causing injury'.

This is that law. This is Jalal's Law.

Debate adjourned on motion of Ms SYMES (Northern Victoria).

Debate adjourned until Wednesday, 30 May.

PARLIAMENT HOUSE DEFIBRILLATORS

The PRESIDENT (10:12) — I am in the process of making sure that everybody in the building does know where defibrillators are, including in the new building obviously. We are now looking at a situation where in fact if members wish to purchase one for their electorate office out of their electorate office budget, we will be allowing that as an expenditure going forward. There will be advice sent through to members shortly about that. Obviously it is a reasonable expense — I think they are about \$3000 or something — but indeed I see it as a real service to the public in the instances where offices are located in areas where a defibrillator may well be called upon by someone.

The actual equipment, which was demonstrated here in Parliament by the National Heart Foundation a couple of weeks ago, is in fact almost foolproof. It takes you through what you need to do if you are using one, so it is now a situation with the modern equipment that it is really safe for everybody to use and hopefully to save some lives. So members will have that opportunity. Obviously they do not have to, but for those members who wish to do so that will be an opportunity going forward. As I said, there will be a greater appreciation of where the equipment is around the Parliament in the next week or so.

PRIVILEGES COMMITTEE

Membership

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS (South Eastern Metropolitan) (10:14) — I move:

That, until otherwise ordered by the Council, for the remainder of the 58th Parliament —

- (1) standing order 23.09(3) be suspended;
- (2) the Privileges Committee shall elect two of its members to be joint chairs and the election of joint chairs shall be considered as a single question;
- (3) the meetings of the committee shall be chaired by the joint chairs on an alternating basis;

- (4) the administrative role and functions of the chair shall be exercised by agreement of the joint chairs;
- (5) a joint chair shall take the chair whenever the other joint chair is not present; and
- (6) each of the joint chairs shall have a deliberative vote only, regardless of who is chairing the meeting.

The need for this motion arises from a resolution of the Council on 28 March this year to refer to the Privileges Committee the issues arising out of the Ombudsman's report into matters which were previously referred to her by the Legislative Council in 2015. These are the matters that have become known as the red shirts rorts in relation to the use of electorate entitlements by certain members of the previous Parliament.

At the time the house debated this matter the coalition members were of the view that the appropriate location for this matter to be investigated was in fact through a select committee. We believed the scope of what was contained in the Ombudsman's report, the public commentary or the other matters which had been discussed in the public context indicated that a select committee was the best structure by which these matters could be investigated. We were of the view at that time and remain of that view that the Privileges Committee and the framework that fits around the Privileges Committee was not the best fit for this subject matter, that the traditional scope of the Privileges Committee did not really lend itself to an investigation or an inquiry of this nature and that there were limitations in referring the matter to the committee in respect of the scope of what a Privileges Committee looks at versus the scope of what was contained in the Ombudsman's report — and we remain of that view. We do not think the Privileges Committee is the best place to investigate this matter. We think a select committee would have been a better structure for this matter to be investigated.

However, on 28 March the Council resolved to refer the matter to the Privileges Committee rather than to a select committee, so we now have before that committee a reference to look at certain aspects of the Ombudsman's report that was released in early March 2018. One of the challenges with the Privileges Committee is that it has never been constituted. Since it was first contemplated by this Parliament — I think the first time provision was made for a Privileges Committee was in the 1970s — the committee has never been constituted. As a consequence of that there is no precedent or practice around the operation of the Privileges Committee, and standing orders are also largely silent around the operation of the Privileges Committee. As members would appreciate, with

respect to joint committees, with respect to standing committees of the Legislative Council and with respect to select committees of the Legislative Council there is now quite detailed practice and precedent as well as standing orders as to how those committees should operate, how those committees should determine administrative matters and how those committees should proceed to dispatch of business.

There is none of that precedent, practice or standing order direction with respect to the Privileges Committee. Standing orders and sessional orders are essentially silent as to the operation of the Privileges Committee, which means that as a committee it is operating initially in something of a vacuum, and many of the precedents and practices which exist for other committees to determine outcomes are not applicable to the Privileges Committee. With the Privileges Committee receiving the referral from the Council on 28 March, the first thing it needed to do was proceed to the election of a chair.

The Privileges Committee, like all other committees of the Council in this Parliament, is constituted with eight members. It is now a matter of public record that when the committee first met, the committee was unable to resolve the election of a chair. Following a meeting, I think on 29 March, the secretary of the committee advised the President that the committee was unable to elect a chair, and the President advised the house accordingly. It does not take a genius to determine, with a committee of eight members, the reason that the committee was unable to elect a chair at its first meeting.

Of course following that first meeting members of the committee sought to reconsider that matter, without success. Since that time the coalition members of the committee have continued to seek an outcome, a resolution, to the question of how the Privileges Committee is chaired. This has included seeking alternative candidates. I am not going to get into who has been proposed and who has not been proposed as candidates for chair, but that has not produced a resolution.

We have looked at alternative mechanisms. We have previously sought for a version of the motion that I am bringing forth today to go forward by leave, which was not granted by the house. The motion that I am now seeking to bring forward is a motion which would allow the committee to proceed to the election of joint chairs. This is a practice which has been implemented successfully elsewhere.

Indeed the commonwealth Parliament currently has a joint select committee of the Senate and House of Representatives. It is the Joint Select Committee on Constitutional Recognition Relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People 2018, which has been constituted on the basis that it has joint chairs — a chair from the House of Representatives and a chair from the Senate, with one of the chairs to be government and one of them to be non-government. So there is a precedent for a joint chairing arrangement for a select committee, and the motion before the house today is drawn from the establishing resolution of that commonwealth select committee, which prescribed joint chairs and provided that the joint chairs would chair alternate meetings of the committee.

Following discussions with some members of the Privileges Committee the motion that I am moving today has been amended to recognise other aspects with respect to joint chairing. Not only would we seek to provide for the election of joint chairs in a single motion — both chairs would be proposed as a single act in the committee — but this motion also provides, as happens with the commonwealth select committee, for each meeting of the committee to be chaired on an alternate basis by the two joint chairs.

This motion goes further in providing for the functions and roles of the chair to be exercised by agreement of the joint chairs. To put that in context, as many members of the house who have chaired inquiries will appreciate, there are a number of administrative matters that a committee chair undertakes. Obviously chairing a meeting is one which is not something you can do on a joint basis; that needs to be done by one or other of the two joint chairs. However, all the administrative functions which take place in the background around setting agendas, convening meetings, organising witnesses et cetera are things which can be done jointly. The motion envisages that those administrative functions that the chair undertakes, working with the secretariat, would need to be done by agreement of the two joint chairs. Both chairs would effectively be required to sign off and agree on those administrative matters that a chair ordinarily undertakes.

We have put this motion forward as a way to advance the discharge of this inquiry. It is now coming up on two months since the Council resolved to refer the matter to the Privileges Committee. As I said at the outset, the coalition did not at the time agree that Privileges Committee was the best way to look at this matter. We still believe the Privileges Committee is not the best way to look at this matter as compared to a select committee. However, that is the mechanism that is available to us, and some two months on from that

referral being made to the Privileges Committee it is important that we advance the inquiry. With the committee having not been able to reach agreement on a single chair, it is the coalition's view that we need to show some leadership and we need to provide an alternative mechanism. This mechanism for joint chairs, which is currently working in the commonwealth Parliament, is a way to do that.

I note that the current deadlock suits the government. The government is happy for this inquiry not to proceed — happy for the deadlock to exist and therefore the inquiry not to proceed — so it is important that we reach an outcome on this matter. It is important that we resolve the chairing of the Privileges Committee and proceed to dispatch of that inquiry, notwithstanding limitations attached to the Privileges Committee structure.

I would urge members to support this motion. It does provide a way forward. It provides a way for there to be an agreement as to the candidates who have been proposed as chair. It will ensure that we get an outcome and that we can proceed to dispatch business. It is a model that has been used elsewhere. It is a model that is currently being used by the commonwealth Parliament jointly between the Senate and the House of Representatives. It is our view that this is a way to resolve this deadlock so that we can get on with the inquiry which was referred to the Privileges Committee some two months ago and was expected to report in about a month's time. This will resolve the deadlock which exists on the committee and allow it to dispatch its business, and I would urge the house to support this motion.

Ms SYMES (Northern Victoria) (10:26) — The government will not be supporting Mr Rich-Phillips's motion. Of course I can see that the perception that the deadlock suits the government is something that people are naturally drawn to, but that is not the reason we are opposing this motion.

It is interesting to note that Mr Rich-Phillips indicated that he has pursued alternative mechanisms to break the deadlock. I do not think there have been conversations recently between the government and Mr Rich-Phillips to resolve those issues. I can confirm that I too have had conversations with people, but not Mr Rich-Phillips, about breaking the deadlock. I am a member of this committee and am more than happy to have this committee start. Many, many conventions have been broken in this Parliament in the last three years, and —

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms SYMES — I am going to stick to —

Mr Finn interjected.

Ms SYMES — That is not true, by the way. We could spend hours talking about the merits of the conventions that have been broken, but I am just going to stick to Mr Rich-Phillips's motion.

On the face of it, I am not dead against the co-chair proposition, to be honest, but I do not think that this Privileges Committee is the opportunity to implement a new system for this Parliament. I also point to the flimsy precedent from the commonwealth jurisdiction. That is a joint select committee that is looking at an issue that is consciously bipartisan. On that inquiry you would expect the co-chairs to be working to achieve the same outcome. The Privileges Committee looks at matters such as misleading the house and breaches of conduct that we do not want MPs engaging in. It is not particularly going to be bipartisan. On the face of it, that is just not how it is going to be.

The government has said, taking into account the current membership of the Privileges Committee, that it is more than happy to have a Greens chair or a non-coalition chair, and I think that discussions within the Parliament — within the chamber or outside the chamber — can resolve the issue. We are committed to continuing those conversations.

I note that in this Parliament the government has shown great inclusiveness when it comes to chairs. I am on two committees that have coalition chairs — the Accountability and Oversight Committee and the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Committee, which both have Liberal chairs. All of the select upper house committees have coalition chairs. That is not something that we saw in the former Parliament when the coalition were in government and able to appoint chairs.

I also point to the Privileges Committee in the lower house when it conducted the Geoff Shaw inquiry. Given the inquiry that is going to the Privileges Committee now, Labor members have not put up their hand for chair of the committee because it is an inquiry into our colleagues, and we think is appropriate that it is not a government chair. We did not see the same kind of stand from the coalition when they were investigating one of their members in their term of government, so I think our bona fides on this are much better than those who are proposing a joint chair arrangement.

As I said, I think there is some merit in a co-chair going forward. We have a make-up of the house that is different to when the Privileges Committee was first created. We have got crossbenchers and we have got minor parties. We are going to have to look at different mechanisms for our committees in the future, but the proposal to trial it for a sensitive inquiry and an important committee such as the Privileges Committee just does not stand up.

I encourage the members of the Privileges Committee to continue to work to resolve the chair issue. There is certainly no deliberate attempt by the government to stymie that. That is not to mention the administrative impact on the staff working through the issues of how the secretariat will deal with two chairs and trying to even match up diaries, particularly if the chair is a country member. I think there are lots of issues that have not been thought through and, as I said, we can look at those issues, but in the context of this reference to the Privileges Committee it is not an appropriate time for co-chairs. For those reasons the government will not be supporting Mr Rich-Phillips's motion.

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan) (10:31) — The Greens have seriously considered the motion put forward by Mr Rich-Phillips, which provides that the Privileges Committee should elect two of its members to be joint chairs, the mechanisms for that and also a broad outline of how that would operate in terms of chairing alternate meetings and the administrative role of the chair to be exercised by the agreement of the joint chairs. In fact the Greens have a history of co-leaders and co-conveners of the party, both here in Australia and overseas. So it is a model that we do have a lot of affinity with, and we have worked in that way in many instances.

I do agree with the points made by Ms Symes in terms of this committee — Mr Rich-Phillips said himself that in fact the committee has never been constituted — that it is probably not the best time to try this arrangement, given that there has never been a co-chair arrangement in the Parliament of Victoria. I agree that the model put forward by Mr Rich-Phillips with regard to the commonwealth Parliament's joint select committee is a good model and it is working well on the particular issue it is considering. The co-chairs of that committee are from the Senate and the House of Representatives. That is something that we could look at with joint committees in the Parliament of Victoria.

I have been a strong advocate of reforming the committee system ever since I have been here, and I am pleased to see that it actually has been reformed somewhat from what it was in the past. When I arrived

in this Parliament there were no Legislative Council standing committees. I moved the motion to have those established, and they were established. Sadly in the last term of government, when the coalition had the numbers, no bills went to those committees except Greens private members bills referred by the government. None of their own bills went to those committees, even though some of the inquiries, including the Environment and Planning Committee's inquiry into planning and public health, resulted in good reports. The committees did not do the sort and amount of work they are doing now, including the seminal inquiry into dying with dignity that was done by the Legal and Social Issues Committee.

So there are models of how committees have worked in the Parliament of Victoria, and I would suggest that the best model for the Privileges Committee to follow is the model that the standing committees of the upper house work to. Notwithstanding that, I do think that at some stage we should be looking at co-chairing of committees, particularly joint committees.

The other issue that the Privileges Committee has had referred to it is an issue that is before this chamber also because of the Greens. It was the Greens who actually moved the motion to send to the Ombudsman the issue that was raised in the media with regard to the misuse of electorate office budgets. It was a very long time ago when that motion was passed. The government of course challenged that motion in the Supreme Court, in the Court of Appeal and even in the High Court. As I mentioned when moving that the issue be referred to the Privileges Committee, the High Court judgement was very short. Basically it was: no, do not bring this item here; you do not have any grounds for it.

That resulted, of course, in the Ombudsman's report which was released early this year. The Greens moved that it be referred to the Privileges Committee, which even though it has never been constituted, is really the only avenue open to us. Because we do not have in this Parliament an independent commissioner for standards that works across both chambers, that advises MPs on the use of their entitlements, allowances and budgets and that also polices and enforces that, we were in the position where we had to use the Privileges Committee, notwithstanding that it has never been constituted. There was no other avenue. The Greens were not going to support establishing a select committee which was going to repeat the work that the Ombudsman had already done.

Our motion is that there is the Ombudsman's report and the Privileges Committee should be looking into whether the MPs named in the report and shown to

have misused their electorate office budgets are in fact in contempt of the Parliament and should be sanctioned. That is what we are looking at. That is the avenue open to us. As I have said, we are not opposed to the idea of co-chairs, but we are in this particular instance.

We are looking at a very serious issue, and as of this week we have another issue that could be referred to the Privileges Committee, regarding coalition members and the breaking of the convention of pairing arrangements. Whether or not that goes to the Privileges Committee, the fact is that it is on the notice paper now. We know that the committee has met several times and tried to come to an agreement about who should chair the committee and has not been able to do that, which is why the matter is back here for the house to try to resolve.

It has been our view that the chairing of that committee should be by the Greens and the crossbench members so that it is completely separate from and independent of the government. The government itself acknowledges that it should not have a member as chair or deputy chair of that committee. We believe also that the opposition, who have not covered themselves in glory in their behaviour in terms of the contravention of the convention of pairing, should not chair the committee. That behaviour had its effect on that particular day, but as we know, it will have an ongoing effect not only in this Parliament but also in other parliaments in terms of the ability to continue with pairing arrangements and trust that they will be adhered to in the future, because that level of trust has been lost following the events of that day.

We have another notice of motion already on the notice paper, notice of motion 568, that would put forward, as we attempted to do earlier by leave, that Ms Springle be the chair of the committee and that a crossbench person be the deputy chair. That is our preferred position, and that is the motion that we would like to move. We feel that that would be the best way forward, not only for the functioning of the committee but for it to be seen as independent of the government and of the opposition, because we have a motion that could involve opposition members being subject to inquiry by the committee. For those reasons, we will not be able to support the motion put forward by Mr Rich-Phillips.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr MORRIS (Western Victoria).

Debate adjourned until later this day.

REGIONAL RAIL SERVICES

Mr O'SULLIVAN (Northern Victoria) (10:40) — I am very pleased to be able to rise this morning to speak to the motion standing in my name in relation to regional rail. It is something that is very important for regional people, and I certainly look forward to being able to go into a little bit of detail in terms of some of the problems that are being experienced in regional Victoria with our public transport system, particularly trains, and some of the causes of those problems. I will also work through some of the solutions that this side of the house has put forward to the people of Victoria for them to choose in November who they think will be the best government to deliver a significant regional rail package for country Victorians.

I move:

That this house —

- (1) notes that the Andrews Labor government are all excuses and no action when it comes to improving country rail services, including —
 - (a) hollow announcements of future works;
 - (b) blaming the federal government;
 - (c) continued failure to meet the government's own punctuality standards;
- (2) congratulates the Liberal-National coalition policies to invest —
 - (a) \$633 million replacing Victoria's ageing fleet of diesel V/Line trains;
 - (b) \$77 million to double the current number of train services to Shepparton;
 - (c) \$32 million and return passenger trains to Donald;
- (3) further congratulates the Liberal-National coalition for its commitment of \$80 million for the next stage of track upgrades on the Mildura line which will pave the way for a future passenger service to Mildura;

and further notes that the Liberal-National coalition's announcement has been welcomed by the communities along the Warrnambool, Swan Hill, Shepparton, Albury-Wodonga, Mildura and Bairnsdale lines, reaffirming that an elected Liberal-National government would ensure the interests of country rail users are looked after again following four years of Labor neglect.

That is a very important motion, and I think it is one that we will need to have a significant debate about because this is something that we need to make people very aware of: the fact that there are a lot of problems in regional Victoria with rail. The current government is just not doing anywhere near enough to actually fix

those problems or to advance the services that are available to country people.

This government certainly knows how to splash the cash around when it comes to investment in rail in the city, but as soon as it gets beyond the tram tracks the chequebook gets very firmly put in the back pocket and does not see the light of day. That is a pity because everyone in regional Victoria should have the right to have reasonable access to public transport. It would provide so many benefits to so many people if we could have an efficient public transport system. Right at the moment people who live outside of Melbourne just do not get a good enough service.

People rely on public transport for a whole range of things. They need to get to medical appointments, they might need to get to work, they might need to go and visit family. Whatever the reason might be, people may choose to use the train. Some people I know from regional areas, particularly further out regional areas, just do not like driving, particularly in Melbourne. They would like to be able to take the train if they could, if they had a reliable service, a service that does not break down and a service that will actually provide what is offered to them. Too often that is not the case. I will explore some of those matters further in my debate.

We continue to see that Melbourne is congested. It is very congested. We see that every day, and people tell me now that congestion on the roads is worse on a weekend than it is during the week. We all know about the peak hour in Melbourne — it used to be a peak hour but now I do not think it is a peak hour, it goes for many, many hours. In some cases it is 2 and 3 hours in the morning and 2 and 3 hours again at night-time; we are certainly well beyond the old adage of there being a peak hour for traffic.

What I find particularly interesting is that — and this is certainly not going to be a debate about immigration in any shape or form — we have a lot of people coming into Australia, and quite a lot of them come to Victoria. I think some reports are saying that now we are getting somewhere in the vicinity of 140 000 new people coming to Victoria each year and some say it is 120 000. It does not really make much difference whether it is 120 000 or 140 000, but over a period of 10 years that is a million plus — a million and a half — more people coming into our state.

Melbourne in particular is just not geared to cater for that rapid expansion. But also what we are finding is that of that significant number of people who have decided to make Victoria their new home — and I can understand why they would want to make Victoria their

new home: Victoria is a great place to live — a lot of those people come into Melbourne and stay in Melbourne. They decide that they want to live in a capital city. I do not always understand why people want to live in a congested city, but everyone gets to make that choice, and that is one of the great freedoms that we have. With those people coming into the state and deciding that they want to live in Melbourne, that creates a whole new challenge for governments of all persuasions — local, state and federal — and a whole range of other agencies, both public and private, in terms of how you cater for and deal with that expansion of population.

I can remember that when I was a kid I think we got to 15 or 16 million people in Australia. We thought that was absolutely amazing — that you could get to 15 or 16 million people. I think now we are above 24 million, heading towards 25 million people. That is increasing quite rapidly. We are very much still one of those countries in the world that probably has not reached its peak in terms of where it needs to settle with population, so in the meantime we are getting a whole range of people who want to come and live in this wonderful country and choose to come and live in this wonderful state. As we know, Melbourne has been declared the most livable city, I think for the seventh year in a row. The title Melbourne has as the most livable city is under serious challenge as the population increases as dramatically as it is.

As I said earlier, this is not a debate about population numbers or immigration or anything like that. That is not the debate today, but it is having an impact on so many other areas, whether that be education, health services, housing, recreation and sporting facilities or supermarkets to feed people. There are a whole range of those sorts of implications that come into the scenario when you have such an increase in population. Where that is relevant to the motion we have on the notice paper today is in relation to transport.

We have pretty much grown up in this country with everyone being used to just jumping in the car and driving to wherever you want to drive, which is terrific if that option is the best option for you, but that is not the best option for everyone. For instance, there are plenty of people who are under the age of 18 and not allowed to drive. They cannot just go and jump in the car; they need to look at alternative transport arrangements, whether that is their parents, friends, cousins or whatever, and obviously public transport is certainly one of the areas that they can look at to get themselves from point A to point B without having to rely on others to transport them around to wherever they want to go. Public transport plays a crucial role.

With the congestion that we are seeing in Melbourne, one of the significant ways that we can help to alleviate that problem is by having greater public transport. This motion, again, is not a motion on public transport options in Melbourne, although it is something I will certainly use as a comparison or as a yardstick in terms of what is available for people outside of Melbourne. We have seen a whole range of things that have been happening in the last couple of years in relation to new options for public transport in Melbourne, but unfortunately that has not been mirrored in what is available for people who live outside of Melbourne. It is all very well for people in Melbourne to have a great rail service and public transport services, but I think as the state that we are, we need to ensure that people who choose to live outside of Melbourne can also have great public transport options available to them.

I want to go into some of those particular lines so we can work through what is actually available for those particular lines. If you look at the state of Victoria, Melbourne is obviously the capital city, and it is sort of like a spoke-and-hub model in terms of the way the state works. Pretty much everything is based around Melbourne. All the main transport networks, whether they be rail or road, are based on Melbourne being the central hub, and then you have got the lines that run to the extremities of the state. You can go down to Bairnsdale in Gippsland to the east. If you want to go to the west, you go down to Warrnambool along the coast down into the Western District. You can go up into the north-east towards Albury-Wodonga. You can go straight up Shepparton-Echuca way or up to Mildura. It is like a spoke-and-hub model where everything is based out of Melbourne. There is not much lateral movement in terms of the networks, particularly key freight corridor networks that run east-west, if you like. There is a little bit, but most of it is in and out direct to Melbourne through that spoke-and-hub model. That is all very well and quite effective, but what would make it much more effective is if we could have the appropriate train services to reflect that model.

Some of the road networks that we have got in this state are comprehensive, but again we have seen a lot of investment from the government in a whole range of road networks in Melbourne, although I must say that the Labor government did spend \$1.3 billion not to build a road in Melbourne, which I find absolutely astounding. Particularly with the level of increase in population that we have in Melbourne, for Daniel Andrews to say that we do not need additional road networks in Melbourne in terms of the east-west link I think is absolutely crazy. That was a mistake that he certainly made. It is a mistake that everyone in the state is going to have to pay for, and \$1.3 billion is a very big

mistake. It was a mistake on two fronts: one, we need the road network; and two, it was a waste of \$1.3 billion.

I hope the government will reflect on that in the future and realise that that was a significant mistake, because when you look at what is going to be required for Melbourne's future, very clearly there is going to need to be that additional east-west crossing connection from the Eastern Freeway across to the Tullamarine Freeway and beyond there. There is no doubt that the east-west link is seriously going to be required in this state sooner rather than later. I think the government are not in a position now to admit that we need those roadworks because embarrassingly they spent \$1.3 billion not to build it. If they actually had have invested that \$1.3 billion in the east-west link, they probably would have built a fair chunk of it. I know building roads of that scale is expensive, but \$1.3 billion certainly would have been a pretty good start in getting that project well and truly down the path.

But I am not here to talk about road networks in Melbourne. Certainly the road networks in regional Victoria are well established, including the Hume Freeway up to the north-east. If you look at the road networks and the train networks, they pretty much run in parallel, which represents that spoke-and-hub model that I referred to earlier. Whether it be along the Hume Freeway up to the north-east or down to Gippsland, to the Western District or up to the north-west, there is usually a significant freeway or highway which is the arterial to those destinations. But as we have seen with the rail networks, there has been significant underfunding of investment in the road networks as well. I think that is something that can be sheeted back to successive federal and state governments which have not invested anywhere near enough in those road networks. That is something that I think will need to be rectified in the next decade to ensure that we have those networks which supply and support all those regional commuters, businesses and operations that require those networks for their daily business.

We have got the Minister for Agriculture in the chamber, and, as we know, in regional Victoria there is a significant amount of agricultural produce. Victoria is the leading state in the whole of Australia in terms of the agricultural produce that our farmers and growers are able to produce. A fair bit of it is used domestically to feed people who actually live in this state, but a lot of it is exported overseas as well, which is a good thing. But if you were just to focus on the domestic consumption of food in this state, most of it is actually sourced locally here in Victoria. For that food to get from where it is grown to where it is eaten, it has got to

be transported — and transported in significant quantities.

We have seen in the last decade particularly a significant increase in the number of trucks on the road. Part of the reason we have seen such a huge increase in the number of trucks on the road is that our rail facilities have not been up to standard in terms of what has been needed to be delivered. The big producers need those services to be able to get their produce to market. I am certainly aware of several big producers and logistics organisations that would prefer to use rail than road to transport their goods because they can get significant efficiencies in transportation costs by putting their products on rail rather than on a truck. In the end that means cheaper prices for the end user or the consumer when they go to the supermarket or the market. Wherever they source their food, they are able to get a cheaper product if cheaper freight can be gotten as part of shifting those goods.

When you look at freight around this state, it is very expensive to run trucks. Once upon a time there used to be single semitrailers, but now we are seeing that around 50 per cent of all trucks — I do not know whether it would be 50 per cent, but it would be quite close to it; it might even be above 50 per cent — on the road nowadays are B-doubles, where they are running two trailers just so they can transport more product with the same truck and driver. I think those numbers will even increase. Increasingly we are seeing B-triples, where we have a semitrailer with three trailers behind it. That creates its own logistical issues in terms of the road networks, but through a whole range of technical and engineering specifications the axle load — or the weight per axle — is actually the same as what it probably is on a smaller semitrailer. So while the truck might be a whole lot bigger — two or three trailers — the actual weight on an axle on the road is in some cases actually lower than what it is for just an ordinary single-trailer semitrailer. That is one of the efficiencies that has been brought into this state under certain permit arrangements which allows for people to transport their goods in a more efficient and economical way and will result in lower prices for the end consumer. Fuel is very expensive for trucking companies. If they can cart two or three trailers rather than one, instead of having three trucks and three drivers they will have one truck and one driver. So you get significant beneficial gains through that arrangement.

The reason those trucks have had an increasingly important role in this state through our freight networks is that the train system has not been adequate enough to run a significant or a substantial freight hub through those particular rail lines, which is a pity. But I think

that is probably changing. Over a period of probably 20 or 30 years there has been an underinvestment or an under-appreciation of the significance of a substantial rail system. I think we are getting to a point now where there is realisation that there needs to be a lot more work done to make sure we have better connection services through both road and rail to transport our goods and services — particularly our goods — around the state for domestic purposes, whether that be into Melbourne or whether that be to international destinations for foreign consumers, who obviously in a lot of cases are prepared to pay top prices for the good quality products that we produce here in Australia. The food that we produce here in Victoria in particular is of high quality, so we are supplying high-quality, high-value products to parts of the world that are able to pay for those products and pay a good price, which certainly helps the economy back here in Victoria where the production is undertaken.

I have been on several trade missions to Asia — South-East Asia and into China — and also to the Middle East, to see firsthand the benefits and the demand for a product overseas. There is a particular food festival in Dubai called Gulfood. I have been to that on two occasions in my former role working for Peter Walsh in the other place when he was the Minister for Agriculture and Food Security. To go over there and to go into the supermarkets, the stalls and so forth and to be able to see Australian product on the shelves is absolutely amazing.

One of the more significant things that we did at that time was to go to the Dubai International Airport and the Emirates Airlines kitchen where they prepare all the meals for their international flights. Dubai, as we all know, is a particular hub for the Airbus A380, a big aeroplane. Each one of those planes is carrying something like 450-odd passengers, and if they are travelling for a significant period of time they might need one or two meals along the way. It was interesting to go into the kitchen of Emirates Airlines in Dubai to see the food being prepared. I cannot remember the numbers in terms of the volume of meals they had to prepare each day, but it was certainly in the hundreds of thousands. As a part of that, we went through part of the production chain as that food was being prepared. I remember in particular they showed us that they had lamb that was sourced from Victoria, Australia, as part of the supply chain of food prepared in the kitchen that was destined to go onto those A380s out of Dubai to be then consumed by passengers as they went to their destinations right around the globe.

It was fascinating to have a look at that kitchen. The scale of it was just unbelievable. One thing really

surprised me more than anything. We hear on a number of occasions about people — and everyone has probably done it themselves — screwing up their nose at airline food. But I can very honestly say that the food they were preparing in the Emirates kitchen in Dubai looked like it was coming out of a 5-star restaurant. It was amazing. I was actually very surprised by the quality of food they were preparing. They wanted to have the best lamb they could get, so they were sourcing their lamb from Victoria, Australia, to serve to customers around the world as they travel on Emirates flights.

I digress a little from the motion at hand.

Ms Dunn — Just a little.

Mr O'SULLIVAN — I thought that was an interesting piece of information to put forward in terms of the produce we produce here in Victoria and how it is used around the world.

I come back to the motion, which might please Ms Dunn, particularly in relation to public transport. Ms Dunn knows better than anyone the importance of having good public transport networks. I think she would agree that we need to have better networks into the regional areas as well as the city areas. It is one of the age-old debates about public transport, and the Greens raise it quite a bit. They say that we should not be investing in roads, we should be investing in public transport. I have a slightly different view to that. I think we need to be investing in both. We need to invest in public transport and we need to invest in road networks. It does not have to be one or the other. We actually need to do both. I think pretty much everyone in this chamber would agree on that. When we invest in both, there is the other 'both' we need to invest in. It is not just Melbourne; we need to invest in regional Victoria as well. I would like therefore the government to have a greater role in terms of doing that — the current government.

Mr Gepp — Did you read the budget?

Mr O'SULLIVAN — Yes.

Mr Gepp — A big tick?

Mr O'SULLIVAN — Mr Gepp, I will come to the budget, because I did read it in relation to public transport. I am glad you have raised that, because I will certainly come to the budget in relation to investment in rail in regional Victoria.

Mr Gepp — There are no cuts in it.

Mr O'SULLIVAN — Well, there is not much investment, and that is one of the problems as well, Mr Gepp. If you look at the motion, one of the points of the motion talks about 'hollow announcements of future works'. There is plenty of that in the budget; I can tell you that. And blaming the federal government, there is plenty of that going around from this government as well.

What I want to do now is start to get into some of the individual lines and have a look at how they are going. I am going to start off with one of my favourite train lines, the Mildura train line. Being someone who was born in the Mallee, and having deep connections to that part of the world still, I was up there just last week. I got up to my home town of Patchewollock and then spent some time in Ouyen looking at some of the crops, as the grain farmers in the Mallee are well and truly into their cropping season; quite a few of them have finished. I went and had a look at one operation that still had all their wheat to put in. They would be well and truly into that now and would be starting to get to the end of their cropping program. One thing I think we would all agree on here is that we need rain out in the regions. We need it desperately. Because the crops have gone into the ground, we need some rain to get them germinated and keep them growing before the cold weather jumps in, which does slow down growth until spring comes. But that is not the reason I am here to talk today.

As a part of going up to Mildura I did stop and have a look at some of the tracks between Ouyen and Mildura — just to have a look at them. There have been some works done in relation to upgrading that train line, and the upgrade of that train line was desperately needed. There had been a significant underinvestment on that line for a fair while.

What is really good to see now is that there has been a significant investment in that Mildura train line through the Murray Basin rail project. That is one that is very dear to my heart because I was involved in the preparation of that arrangement back when the coalition was in government prior to 2014. Peter Crisp, the local Nationals member for Mildura in the Assembly, has certainly been very strongly pushing the need to have an upgrade of that train line. He was very successful in being able to lobby the federal government and at that time he was very strong in his lobbying of the state Liberal-Nationals government. As a result of that we were able to have a commitment of \$440 million to upgrade that line. That included a \$220 million commitment by Andrew Broad, the federal member for Mallee, and the federal government, which was absolutely terrific. I am very proud to say that that was

matched by the Liberal-Nationals when we were in government with another contribution of \$220 million to take it up to the \$440 million, which was terrific.

What I am very pleased to see is that the Labor government did not actually stop that project. They let that project continue on, and I think they have been very happy to go up there and have their photos taken and claim credit for it when it was not them. They love having their photos taken on projects that they did not fund, and the Murray Basin rail is certainly one where I know they have been up there and had their photos taken.

Mr Gepp interjected.

Mr O'SULLIVAN — Mr Gepp, I am sure you have been up there and had your photo taken. Having had a look at the Murray Basin rail project, you yourself would admit that it has been a very good project and it will deliver great benefits for the people of Mildura and along that line. The line needed some significant work in terms of replacing sleepers. A lot of the red gum sleepers had been there for quite a while and were certainly in need of an upgrade. We have seen concrete sleepers go in, and I think there are red gum sleepers in there as well. Many, many sleepers — thousands and thousands of them — have been replaced on the Mildura line, which has been a terrific thing.

I was up in Mildura last week. I always like going to Mildura to sit down and have a good chat with Peter Crisp, because he is a very knowledgeable member of Parliament; he knows a lot of detail on a lot of issues. Rail particularly is a passion of his. He is an engineer by trade so when you ask him technical questions he is one of those MPs who does not just fluff across the top in terms of the messages — he actually understands the detail of the whole project. He was telling me how one of the things that they have done as a result of the investment by the Liberal-Nationals into that project is take away all the gaps in the railway lines.

Once upon a time there were expansion gaps put into the lines. As most of us know, and I am from up that way so I know firsthand, in the summers up in the Mallee it gets very, very hot. As we know, steel expands in the heat and it contracts in the cold, so there were expansion joints put into the tracks so that the lengths of railway iron could expand in the high temperatures that we get up in the Mallee — quite often it is 40-plus degrees for successive days up there. When it gets to 40 degrees there are places that you do not want to be and out on a railway line is one place you do not want to be on a 40-degree day. I think we would all

prefer to be fishing on the Murray River when it comes to 40-degree days up in the Mallee. That is certainly what I like to do when it gets to 40 degrees: find a shady spot and go fishing. But I digress.

Peter Crisp was telling me that what they have done is replace those expansion joints and they have actually welded the track so there are none of those expansion joint gaps. In doing that they have stretched each length of railway iron to the length that it would be if it was around 40 degrees when it expanded. As a result of stretching all the railway iron and welding it together it has taken out all those expansion joints. Some would say it was a soothing experience and others would say it was very distracting, but you used to get the clickety-clack as the wheels rolled over those expansion joints; some people liked it and other people did not like it. As a result of those works to those lines those expansion joints have been taken out and welded up so there is a smooth journey whenever the train goes down that line because there is no clickety-clack going over those expansion joints. That was something that Peter Crisp was able to explain to me because he is very knowledgeable on the Murray Basin line.

Peter Crisp was also telling me that when it comes to the trains up in Mildura — and it is a fair way; it is close to 550 kilometres from Melbourne to Mildura — along that line between Melbourne and Mildura there are 130 or more level crossings. Under the current regulations a train going along that line must slow down to 40 kilometres an hour to go across those crossings. If you are a train driver, you can imagine what it would be like if you had to slow down 130 times between Mildura and Melbourne. With a big train carrying a lot of weight they do not just slow down like a car — it takes them kilometres to slow down, and conversely it takes them kilometres to speed up again — and they get to the point where as soon as they speed up they have got to slow down for the next one. In doing that they burn a lot of fuel, so the practice is actually to just stay at 40 kilometres an hour because they do not want to have to burn fuel accelerating. The train just tootles along at 40 kilometres an hour from Mildura to Melbourne, and if you are doing that for 450 or 500 kilometres, it is a very slow experience.

I was talking to a logistics operations guy up in Mildura only a couple of weeks ago, Ken Wakefield, and he was saying that his produce gets shifted by train. But at the moment with all the new tracks and the new sleepers and so forth, the line still has to be bedded in properly and have all the proper weight tests and so forth undertaken. The train started off at 15 kilometres an hour but I think it is now up to about 25 kilometres an hour for the whole journey, which means it is

something like a 30-hour turnaround to get a train from Mildura down to the port and back up to Mildura again. That is a long time for a train to be just tootling along at such a slow speed. Hopefully once they have done the pressure tests they will be able to get to a point where the trains will be able to get up to a higher speed.

Another thing that Peter Crisp was telling me up there in Mildura was that he was very pleased to have been able to commit an extra \$80 million to upgrade lines and remove a whole range of level crossings. That is an absolutely terrific outcome.

Peter Crisp is someone who has certainly been talking to me about his aspiration for a return of passenger train services to Mildura. He was saying that the first process in order to be able to do that was a significant upgrade of the tracks along the line itself, which was about removing those expansion joints and also upgrading the sleepers. That has by and large pretty much been completed now, and the next stage of it is to actually start to get rid of some of those crossings. A passenger train would not want to travel down to Melbourne at 40 kilometres an hour, because it would take some 12 hours or more to get down there. That would be just crazy. So Peter Crisp was telling me that the next stage is to get rid of some of those level crossings. We have an \$80 million commitment from this side of the chamber to do that. Once we have that underway it will pave the way for a passenger train to return to Mildura. Certainly that issue has been spoken about for quite some time, and I think it would be a great result for the people of Mildura and the people of the Mallee to have the option to take a train down to Melbourne.

It is also important to note that Mildura has a very good air service as well. I think there are some six or seven air services to and from Melbourne because Mildura is so far away. It is the only domestic service within Victoria where you can take flights from one destination to another on one of the major commercial providers.

It will be a great result for Mildura when that passenger rail service is provided to them in the future. But now it is a staged process. We needed to fix the line. We have done that through the investment of the coalition both federally and at a state level. It is interesting to note that Labor has put no money into that. They have just relied on the money that was put into the budget by the previous coalition government. They have been very happy to claim it as their own initiative, but the people up in that part of the world certainly know that it was the coalition who put that money in the budget and made that happen.

The second stage is to get rid of those level crossings in the country areas and upgrade the lines so that the trains do not have to slow down anywhere near as much. That certainly will pave the way for a return of passenger trains to Mildura, which would be very good. That is something that Peter Crisp has been talking to me about in the past. It looks like we are at a stage where that can happen, which will be a terrific outcome for Mildura.

Another rail line I want to talk about is the north-east line, which goes to the other end of the electorate that I represent. It is significant to note that this one is not quite as straightforward as the Mildura line, which is certainly well underway and on which we have made some great progress. Unfortunately I cannot say the same about the north-east line up to Albury-Wodonga. There is a service there now, but it is a poor service. I think sadly it is probably the worst service in regional Victoria. There are a whole range of reasons as to why that is the case, and they relate to the points highlighted in the motion. We have seen hollow announcements of future works from this government and also its blaming of the federal government. Those two aspects are very pertinent when it comes to the north-east line.

It is interesting to note that the Minister for Public Transport in the other place, Jacinta Allan, has certainly been very fond of going up there and making a whole range of statements about the line up in the north-east. What I find is that those statements have really been just holding positions on behalf of the government. Unfortunately the government have no real intention of doing too much in that space, but they want to create the perception up in the north-east that they are interested in delivering an outcome for those people.

I just want to spend a couple of minutes going through the facade that is put up by the minister in relation to the north-east line and how the people of north-eastern Victoria are not getting the service they should get. It is interesting that both the Premier and the minister have been up to that part of the world and made some statements that you would think would give the people of north-eastern Victoria some real hope that something will happen on that line.

When the Premier was up in Wangaratta in April 2016 he said that if the federal government invested in the tracks, then the state government would provide the rolling stock for the north-east line. That seemed like a fair enough prospect for the Premier to put out there. We know on some of these things the federal government has a contribution to make, as it did on the Murray Basin rail project. The Victorian state government said very clearly that if the federal government came to the party and invested in

upgrading the track, then the state Labor government would do its bit and provide new trains, new rolling stock, for that line. That is what the Victorian Premier said he would do. I know the public transport minister has certainly been up there as well and indicated the federal government needed to play a role in providing funding for the track.

I am very happy to say that I was actually present when an announcement was made by Darren Chester when he was federal Minister for Infrastructure and Transport. Darren is a good Nationals member for the federal electorate of Gippsland and a good minister. He came up to the north-east. I was standing on the line with him and actually rode the train with him and a number of other MPs, particularly Assembly members Steph Ryan and Tim McCurdy, who are great advocates for the north-east line and who continue to agitate for a better service. They certainly agitated with the federal government, and the federal government actually have come to the party. Darren Chester announced \$140 million for the upgrade of the north-east line. That is a significant amount of money. But since the federal government did its part in this process, we have seen no action at all from the state Labor government in relation to their end of the commitment.

The Premier made a commitment that if the federal government invested in the upgrade of the tracks then his government would provide the rolling stock. Well, the federal government have. They have provided \$140 million for the upgrade of that line, and this government still has not done anything in that space to fulfil that commitment that was made by the Premier to have more rolling stock.

I think Ms Symes has made comments in that space where she said, 'There's no point ordering new trains, because they'd just be sitting around idle until the track upgrade is complete'.

Ms Shing — Is that what she actually said? Why don't you do the direct quote? What is the actual quote, in context?

Mr O'SULLIVAN — I have got that somewhere here, Ms Shing. What we know is that the trains take a couple of years to build, so it is not as if you just order them today and they are ready next week. They are not ready next week. They actually take some three years to build. The current Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, Deputy Prime Minister Michael McCormack, made a statement in the *Border Mail* of 16 May 2018 saying that the track upgrade is scheduled to be completed by 2021.

We know that it takes several years, two or three years, to actually build trains, but at this stage the government has still not ordered the rolling stock for that line. So what we are going to have is a situation where the tracks will be completed but we will still be waiting for the government to actually order the trains, because they certainly have not done it to this point. I do not know if they are going to do anything very soon in this space, but it takes about three years to build a train and the tracks will be ready in about three years, so the government needs to be ordering those trains now. But they do not seem to be doing it.

Ms Shing — Thanks for that time line; that is fantastic.

Mr O'SULLIVAN — That is right. It is pretty simple Ms Shing. Why don't the government then do it? I do not understand why they have not done it. I will tell you why: because you are more interested in what happens in the city areas than what happens out in the regional areas.

So anyway, that was a great announcement that the federal government made. We know that the state government will not make that commitment, so this side of the house has decided that we certainly will make that commitment. We have made it very clear that we will commit to providing new rolling stock, new long-haul VLocity trains to run along those regional lines into the future. That is a commitment that we have not seen from the Labor Party. What we are going to do is provide more rolling stock. We have made a significant commitment in that space — hundreds of millions of dollars — for 16 new long-haul VLocity trains to run up and down the lines, which will be very beneficial. That is a terrific investment from the feds, but the state government is not meeting its part of the bargain.

I want to also move on to the Shepparton line, which is a line that I have got a particular interest in. We know that there have not been appropriate services for Shepparton over the last four years. What we have done on this side of the chamber is we have made a commitment — a significant commitment — to have eight daily services to and from Shepparton each day, which is a great result. With the new rolling stock that would be allowed on that line, we would take those trains up to about 130 kilometres an hour, certainly well above the speeds that you get on that line now. The people of Shepparton deserve to have a more significant train service, and under an elected Guy-Walsh government they will certainly get it.

Again, we have seen plenty of talk from the current Labor government in terms of the Shepparton line but we actually have not seen much action happen. In the budget last year they talked about all this big money and all that they were going to do and all the things that they wanted to do in the area, but it was really only for a stabling house for trains and one passing loop, which still has not even been delivered yet. The current government keeps the people of Shepparton, particularly the member for Shepparton, on a drip-feed. There are plenty of announcements of what they want to do in the future but there is very little actual action in terms of what is happening now. That is something that the people of Shepparton are well aware of, and they know that if they can get a member of Parliament who sits with the coalition and is not an Independent, they will get a much better outcome. We know that the Labor Party make all these promises but it is really on a drip-feed as they try and hoodwink the people of regional Victoria that they are actually doing something in this space. The coalition will certainly do plenty.

Also, in the time I have remaining, there is a whole range of other lines that we are going to be investing in. We are going to be upgrading the line to Donald through Dunolly and St Arnaud, which will be a great outcome for those people who live in those areas. There is \$30 million that will go to a commitment that we made that will return a passenger train all the way to Donald if we are elected in November. I am pretty sure that there has been absolutely no thought whatsoever from those on the other side of the chamber in terms of returning a train service to Dunolly. In fact I do not think many of them would even know where Dunolly is.

That is certainly another commitment that we will make for the people who live in that central western part of the state. They deserve to have a reasonable rail service as well, and that will be provided through a coalition government. For the people who live a bit further west again from Dunolly, we have made a commitment that we will look at doing some work in relation to a business case for the best way to deliver passenger services to Hamilton and Horsham. There has been a commitment from this side of the government that we will explore that, because they do not have any passenger service there at all at the moment.

Just before I finish up I want to touch on the Gippsland line, because that is one of the areas that I have not spoken about. Clearly Gippsland is not in my electorate, but I have spent a reasonable amount of time down in that part of the world. I certainly have been on the train down to Traralgon, and I had to jump on a bus down to Sale the time that I tried to get to Sale on the

train. You had to wait 45 minutes in Traralgon before the bus was available to go to Sale, so that was quite annoying at the time.

But in terms of the Gippsland line, there have been some commitments based on the initial commitment from Darren Chester of \$435 million for the Gippsland line. That is a terrific outcome because that line needs a bit of an upgrade to provide a better service to the people of Gippsland. But one thing that I find absolutely astounding, which shows how city-centric this current state government are, is that with the new sky rail that they put in through the east of Melbourne —

Ms Crozier — The east of Melbourne — that's my area, Mr O'Sullivan.

Mr O'SULLIVAN — Yes, it is. It is not an area I am overly familiar with, but with the new sky rail that they have just built and spent many billions of dollars on they did not put in a dedicated line for country trains. They did not put in a line that was dedicated to country trains.

Ms Shing interjected.

Mr O'SULLIVAN — Ms Shing should be listening to this, because I will tell her something that she should have been fighting for but obviously did not. What happened with the sky rail is that there was no dedicated line put in for regional services, so whenever a Gippsland train —

Ms Shing interjected.

Mr O'SULLIVAN — You just built a brand-new sky rail and did not put in a line —

Ms Shing interjected.

Mr O'SULLIVAN — So you are saying, Ms Shing, the Gippsland line should not have a dedicated line into the city. Is that what you are saying? Just to put that on the record, Ms Shing is saying that Gippsland should not have a dedicated line into the city. I find it absolutely astounding that she would say that. Ms Shing should have been shouting from the rooftops to get a dedicated line on sky rail so the Gippsland line could run straight into town, because at the moment as the line comes —

Ms Shing — On a point of order, Acting President, I am just wondering if Mr O'Sullivan has just announced that The Nationals will fund a dedicated line to Gippsland.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Ms Dunn) — No, there is no opportunity for clarification. Do you have a point of order?

Ms Shing — Yes, that was my point of order.

Ms Crozier — On the point of order, Acting President, as you well know, Ms Shing is verballing Mr O'Sullivan, and I ask you to ask her to reflect on what she has just asserted. She has verballing Mr O'Sullivan and she should —

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Ms Dunn) — Order! There is no point of order. I ask Mr O'Sullivan to continue his contribution.

Mr O'SULLIVAN — Thank you. I will continue because I find it absolutely astounding that they have built a brand-new sky rail and yet no consideration was given to putting in a separate dedicated line for the Gippsland trains to come straight into town on. One of the things that Gippslanders find most annoying is that they get a pretty good run into the edge of the city and then have to jump onto the metropolitan lines. They use the same train tracks that the metropolitan trains use, and they have to stop and wait behind those trains at every station as they come into Melbourne through the east. I just find that absolutely astounding.

However, on the other side of Melbourne, with Ballarat and Geelong, it has been very effective to have a dedicated line that comes straight into Melbourne. It makes for a much quicker service. One of the things that country people find very frustrating is that you come in on the train, you get to the outskirts of Melbourne and then you have to wait behind each of the metropolitan trains as they stop at every station. That can add 45 minutes to the trip, and country people find that most annoying.

One of the problems that we have now with regional train services is the trains are so old. This government will not invest in the trains, the rolling stock, that we need. The trains are old, and they are always breaking down. The train services are very unreliable under this government, and one of the things that people hate more than anything else is for their train to be cancelled and for them to have to jump on a bus. What we are seeing happen more and more is that instead of jumping on the train, and they are old trains at that because this government will not invest in new trains — I do not know why they will not do that, but the coalition will invest in new trains when it gets into government in six months time, and that will be of benefit to people who live outside of Melbourne — they have to jump on a bus. Having dedicated lines into the city is very, very

important, and that is something that needs to be explored a whole lot more.

Unfortunately the current government dropped the ball when it came to dedicated lines for regional train services, and those Labor members of Parliament who represent regional areas should hang their heads in shame that they did not fight tooth and nail for those lines to have a dedicated service. I say to Ms Shing that Gippsland probably needs it more than any of the other lines, although the other lines certainly need it too. Ms Shing has let down the people that she represents in her advocacy on their behalf, because she was quite happy for the city-centric elements of this government to ride roughshod over her, and it is a pity she did that. It is a missed opportunity that she cannot take back. I do not think the people of Gippsland will be thanking her for that.

In terms of investment, we have seen time and time again, as I think I have demonstrated, that really this current Labor government is full of hollow rhetoric when it comes to transport services in regional areas. When they do provide some money, it is on a drip-feed with promises of great things to come in the future. But what we have too often seen — the government have been in government now for nearly four years and they have been in government for 14 of the last 18 years, so they cannot say that they have not had the opportunity to do this properly, because they have — is that they have chosen not to do this properly. They have chosen not to invest in these rail lines. They have chosen not to invest in the road networks to the proper extent outside of Melbourne. Daniel Andrews is unfortunately the most city-centric Premier we have ever seen in this state, and that is a fairly significant statement when one thinks of Joan Kirner, John Brumby, Steve Bracks and a whole range of other ones. He is the most city-centric of them all.

Unfortunately, instead of members of Parliament on the other side of the chamber standing up to Daniel Andrews and saying, ‘Hang on, regional Victoria needs a fair go as well; regional Victoria needs a better deal’, they have sat on their hands and been silent and been happy for Melbourne to get just about everything in terms of the money that has been available for public transport in this state.

That will be rectified fairly soon. On 24 November everyone in this state will have a chance to decide who will be the next government, and I am sure the people who live in regional Victoria will look at the track record and the delivery of the current Labor government and then they will look at what the Liberals and Nationals are offering. They will have a very clear

choice and they will certainly vote with their feet. I think they will send a very loud message and will vote us into government.

Ms Shing — Do you want more time?

Mr O’SULLIVAN — Yes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Ms Dunn) — Thank you, Mr O’Sullivan. I call now on Mr Leane.

Ms Shing — On a point of order, Acting President, Mr O’Sullivan has just indicated that he would like more time. I would like to move for more time to be made available for him to continue making his contribution.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Ms Dunn) — There is no point of order.

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) (11:41) — These days I look in the mirror and I think, ‘Wow. I’m getting old. I used to be young and I’m getting old’. Every day I think to myself, ‘I have to live every minute to its fullest. I have to be in the moment and appreciate the moment’. But, Acting President, that was 60 minutes that none of us will ever get back. In the last 60 minutes the quality of all of our lives went downhill so fast I actually got vertigo during that contribution. That was excruciating and boring. If you are going to talk for an hour, do not be boring. You have got a responsibility to everyone in this chamber — to the clerks, to Hansard —

Ms Shing — The attendants.

Mr LEANE — to the attendants not to be that horribly boring. That was excruciating for everyone. I did manage to try and listen to some of the contribution. At the start of his contribution Mr O’Sullivan said, ‘This is a very important motion’. This motion is a take-note motion that congratulates the National and the Liberal parties. It is a motion where they get up and congratulate themselves. It is an important motion where they get up and say this house should all join with them as they congratulate themselves. I was thinking, ‘Well, that’s the way to win an election. Get up and congratulate yourself and then all the people in voter land will say, “Did you hear what happened today in the Legislative Council? Did you hear what happened? The Liberal and National parties congratulated themselves in a motion”. I tell you what: you would be a mug not to vote for them after that happened. Who can argue with that logic? You cannot argue with that logic. All of a sudden the pendulum has just swung a million miles an hour because everyone is

out there saying, “Oh, wow, today in the Legislative Council the coalition congratulated themselves”.

I tell you what: Mr Crisp in the Assembly must be so safe after Mr O’Sullivan got up and said, ‘Mr Crisp, he knows all these things. He’s really cool. He’s one of my heroes’. I was talking to Mr Mulino during that speech. Mr Mulino suggested to me that those four people that were watching the live stream, Mr Crisp has got them. The only problem with that is that we worked out that one of those four people is probably Mr Crisp himself. So I am not too sure; maybe he has picked up three voters out of this.

Congratulations to you for taking note that you congratulated yourselves. I think that is a great use of the Parliament’s time. Taking out that they have congratulated themselves, the whole premise that the National and Liberal parties do better for regional rail when they are in government than the Labor Party is a complete falsehood. The figures do not add up. Among the congratulations they are congratulating themselves for promising \$633 million for replacing an ageing fleet of diesel V/Line trains. That was actually a promise — they are congratulating themselves for a promise. Promises are great; promises are fantastic. But there are two parts, and the important part is delivering on that promise. Promises, good; delivery, better. Delivery is a lot better, and I think it is a very important part of the promise. There is no point just promising.

I remember before 2010 Ted Baillieu and Mary Wooldridge went out to Doncaster and they promised — and I clearly remember the promise — they would build a heavy rail to Doncaster. These are the words they used: ‘We’re going to do a feasibility study, we’re going to get the funding and we’re going to build it’. I do not think you can be any more clear than that: feasibility study, get the funding, build it. Well, what they did when they came to government was that they did part 1 of the feasibility study. They did not even do a full feasibility study — it was part 1. I do not even know if they planned to have a part 2, 3, 4 or 5, so I do not know if they did a fifth of a feasibility study or a half of a feasibility study.

After promising, ‘We’re going to do the feasibility study, we’re going to get the funding, we’re going to build it’, there was a section of a feasibility study delivered, and then when they were challenged over it, they said, ‘Oh, we never said that’. But they actually did. There were journalists and other people at the announcement where Mr Baillieu said, ‘We’re going to build a rail line to Doncaster’. As for congratulating themselves on these promises, time and time again they prove that they just do not deliver.

They probably do not understand the whole premise of the promise. Maybe that is it. They do not understand the whole premise of, ‘Yes, I promise this’, and then the next stage of actually delivering. Then you feel good about the promise. The promise has been delivered, and in the future someone might think, ‘Well, if that party’s going to promise something, and last time they promised something they actually delivered that something, then maybe we’ll feel comfortable about it in the future when they promise something again’. But they never do. They just promise and promise.

And then there is the calling — ‘Oh, we called for that’. When this government actually delivers something, the opposition say, ‘That wouldn’t have been done if we didn’t call for it’. But that is not true. That is not true at all. And so, getting to calling, I do not know if this is a call or a promise, but let us talk about the dedicated rail from Gippsland to the Melbourne CBD.

Ms Shing — They’ve promised to deliver that.

Mr LEANE — Well, I understand they are handing out leaflets saying that the National Party — I do not know if they are actually adding in their coalition partners — are committed to providing a dedicated V/Line track from Gippsland to the Melbourne city.

Ms Shing — They’ve said they’ll deliver it. A Nationals government will deliver it. That’s what Danny O’Brien says.

Mr LEANE — They will deliver it, and I think this feels a little bit Doncaster railish. At that time when everyone in Doncaster was going, ‘Gee, Mr Baillieu, that’d be fantastic. It’d be great. We’re looking forward to catching that train from Doncaster to the CBD’, Mr Baillieu said he was going to find the money but that he did not have the money. He did not actually say how it was going to be done. He did not actually say how many houses might be acquired or what route it would take. He did not say any of that. Here we have The Nationals saying that they are committed to providing a dedicated V/Line track on the Gippsland line to the city.

When Mr O’Sullivan sums up, in fairness to the people he is making this commitment to, he probably needs to answer some questions. So how many billions so far have been committed? Whether it be from the federal government or an incoming state coalition government, how much money are they committing to this project? As we know, it would need many, many billions. I know that the coalition has committed a lot of money for its road separation project, which is a project where

you will not ever have to stop at a set of lights. With their proposed road intersection you would be able to go over or under at that intersection point and be able to catch the next red set of lights quicker. As I said before, it could be the dumbest policy in the world. It is probably the world's dumbest policy. Maybe they were sitting around shooting the breeze, saying, 'You know what we should do? Let's put out the dumbest policy the world has ever seen, and it might be so dumb that people will think it's beautiful. There's beauty in being so dumb'.

There are billions of dollars committed to the road separation policy, so we need to know how many billions of dollars the coalition in their election commitments are committing to the dedicated rail line from Gippsland to Melbourne CBD. Where is this dedicated line going to go? It is a long way, and so is it going to go on the existing corridor or is it going to go on a different corridor? How many houses and businesses will have to be acquired and moved on? I would imagine there would be many. Does the commonwealth government support the project? The commonwealth government would have to come to the party.

The federal Minister for Infrastructure and Transport is Michael McCormack. He is the current leader of the federal National Party. He has done a Bradbury. There are people just falling over everywhere in front of him. For all sorts of bizarre reasons they are tripping over each other, and all of a sudden McCormack has skated through, punching the air, and become the Leader of the National Party. So, Mr McCormack, how much? Does he actually even support this project? I think Mr O'Sullivan will have the answers, because he has been out there in Gippsland committing to a dedicated V/Line track from Gippsland to Melbourne CBD.

Mr Gepp interjected.

Mr LEANE — Yes, the costings, the business case — all that sort of stuff. So how many trains will be on that dedicated line? When are they going to be built? How serious are they? When will the works start? When are they planning for the works to be started? What is the projected plan for when the dedicated line will be finished? This is getting back to the people of Gippsland. If they get a commitment that there will be a dedicated V/Line service from Gippsland to the Melbourne CBD, they will be pretty keen to sit on the train. That is the proof. That is when it becomes real.

It is a bit like the Doncaster rail service. It never became real. No-one actually went to a station that had a big sign with 'Doncaster' on it, jumped on a train and

travelled into the CBD. That did not happen, so it did not become real. As we would suspect — despite the poor form shown by The Nationals of going around saying that they will commit to this dedicated track between Gippsland and Melbourne — like the Doncaster rail, they are not going to do it.

As I said, it is easy to promise things and it is easy to call for things, unlike this government which has embarked on the biggest public transport heavy rail infrastructure program that any government has ever embarked on. This is a program that includes big projects in regional Victoria. The upgrade of the Ballarat line has 250 people working on 75 kilometres of track between Caroline Springs and Millbrook. The upgrade of the Rockbank station is now underway, as is a new bridge at Toolern Creek. The installation of 15 kilometres of safety rail fences is also complete so that trains can keep running on the duplicated track between Deer Park West and Melton. That is a line that the coalition never attempted to do any work on.

The \$530 million Gippsland line upgrade includes second platforms for Bunyip, Longwarry, Morwell and Traralgon stations; track duplication between Bunyip and Longwarry and sections near Moe, Morwell and Traralgon; level crossing upgrades along the line; signalling upgrades at Traralgon; relocation of the Traralgon stabling facilities; extending the crossing loop at Morwell; and replacing the bridge over the Avon River at Stratford. That is a very important project because that bridge desperately needs that particular work so that trains can travel over it at a decent speed. When people talk about the Gippsland line and certain promises, they should never forget that it was a coalition government that cut the train services to Bairnsdale — gone. It was a Labor government that reopened that line, which made a huge difference to the people who live in that town.

The \$110 million for the Geelong line upgrade includes building a second platform for better access at Waurin Ponds.

Mr Ramsay interjected.

Mr LEANE — All talk, no action — and coming from a coalition that promised the Doncaster rail. Now you are promising a dedicated line from Gippsland to the CBD.

Mr Ramsay interjected.

Mr LEANE — Promises. Well, we spoke about promises before, Mr Ramsay. The thing about the coalition promises is that they were never delivered.

Mr Ramsay interjected.

Mr LEANE — Mr Ramsay says we are not doing anything. Maybe you need to go for a drive; maybe you need to get out more. Mr Ramsay says, ‘Ya’ — which I assume is the government — ‘Ya’re not doin’ anything’. Maybe you want to drive along all the rail lines and see. Maybe drive to Dandenong or drive along the Ballarat line and you will see that there is actually work going on there. Maybe have a look at the Gippsland line, where there is work going on. I think ‘Ya’, as the government, have actually embarked on the biggest rail infrastructure program any government has ever embarked on.

Ms Pulford — Did you mention that they shut six lines?

Mr LEANE — I was going to get to that, too. Six lines were shut by the coalition. I know that I am about to finish because it is question time, but I look forward to two things from Mr O’Sullivan. One is explaining how they intend to fund and build the dedicated track from Gippsland to the CBD. The second thing I look forward to from him is if this time he could be not as boring and do us all a favour. We all have to work here and there are certain things we have to endure, but that is one thing I would like us not to have to endure again.

Business interrupted pursuant to sessional orders.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Easter Sunday public holiday

Dr CARLING-JENKINS (Western Metropolitan) (12:00) — My question is for the Minister for Trade and Investment, Minister for Innovation and the Digital Economy and Minister for Small Business. Minister, your government committed to establishing Easter Sunday as a public holiday, which you subsequently gazetted. There was a lot of support for this, particularly within the retail and hospitality sectors, where workers are now able to opt in or opt out of working on this day. However, as we know, polls are uncertain and there is no guarantee that you will hold government after the next election. Workers across Victoria are looking for leadership and certainty in this space, so will you move to enshrine your commitment in legislation before the next election to ensure long-term certainty to those who have been benefiting from this holiday?

Mr DALIDAKIS (Minister for Small Business) (12:01) — I thank the member for their question. I think it is a very good question. It goes to the heart of fairness within the community. At a time when people

in the workforce are questioning wage stagnation and the ability to afford a comfortable living for themselves and their family, it is important for us as leaders within the community, within the Parliament, to be able to provide a level of understanding about their work conditions and work practices and also of course their salary and remuneration. Let me be very clear about the gazettal. The gazettal is very clear. Unless a future government gazettes otherwise, that public holiday is there forevermore, just like Grand Final Friday is there under gazettal. In terms of legislation, it is certainly something that we will consider, given the concerns that you have raised and the concerns that of course most people in this place would have about the protection of rights of workers in our community. Given that we on this side have gazetted that, if there are additional protections that we can look at to provide confidence to people in the community then that is something that I am certainly happy to have a look at.

Logging coupe planned burns

Ms DUNN (Eastern Metropolitan) (12:02) — My question is for the Minister for Agriculture. In the week beginning Monday, 7 May, representatives from VicForests met with representatives from the Department of Health and Human Services and other government agencies. This was in response to the deleterious air quality caused by planned burns, including logging coupe burns. For the minister’s benefit, I recall that during that period of the burning season PM2.5 readings greatly exceeded the World Health Organization exposure limits, fell into the worst Environment Protection Authority Victoria category and were so bad in some places that they actually warranted emergency evacuation. Could the minister confirm that this inter-agency meeting, which included VicForests, approved the procurement of 100 air-quality monitoring systems to better monitor levels of PM2.5 and other pollutants caused by planned burns, including logging burns?

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Agriculture) (12:03) — I thank Ms Dunn for her question. I am reminded by this question that Ms Dunn was in the last sitting week asserting that there were emergency meetings, which there were not. Given Ms Dunn’s tendency to come in here and make assertions that are sometimes not entirely accurate, I will take the substantive part of this question on notice and provide Ms Dunn with some further information.

On the subject of smoke from burning off, I will just say this: this autumn, I think as all members would be aware, there have been occasions when smoke from planned burns on public land has reduced air quality in

both urban and rural areas. Forest Fire Management Victoria undertakes fuel reduction burns and ecological burns to reduce bushfire risk to communities and to improve the health of our forests. Of course this part of Australia is one of the most bushfire-prone parts of the world, and we have very highly evolved and sophisticated processes for managing fire risk to the Victorian community.

Forest Fire Management Victoria does also conduct regeneration burns, which are essential to regenerating forests after timber harvesting. VicForests staff work with Forest Fire Management Victoria to plan those regeneration burns. I think it is important to note though — and I encourage Ms Dunn to take heed of the fact — that a small proportion of planned burning on public land each year is regeneration burning. This year Forest Fire Management Victoria has undertaken around 1500 hectares of regeneration burning during autumn, and for context this is substantially less than the 34 000 hectares of fuel-reduction burning. These burns were conducted this year from March through to May and have now concluded the season.

Supplementary question

Ms DUNN (Eastern Metropolitan) (12:06) — Thank you, Minister, for your answer. My supplementary question is: will the minister in concert with the Minister for Health and the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change be instituting a system to stop logging burns if air quality deteriorates as a result of those burns, or at the very least start evacuating communities to protect them from harm once air quality plummets to levels that are harmful to human health?

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Agriculture) (12:06) — I would again refer Ms Dunn to my answer to her substantive question. I will seek some advice from the ministers who have responsibility for the matter that Ms Dunn is inquiring about and provide a response.

Rubicon Valley logging

Ms DUNN (Eastern Metropolitan) (12:06) — Thank you, Minister, for that last response also. My question is for the Minister for Agriculture again. Minister, there are two coupes in the Rubicon Valley that lie completely within a zone classified as ‘Historic reserves — limited timber harvesting’. The coupe names are Archibald and Little Jacqui. According to the definition set by the then Land Conservation Council, the predecessor to —

The PRESIDENT — Order! The minister is having difficulty actually hearing the question. A little bit of undercurrent noise in the chamber is not helping. Ms Dunn, can you start from the top on the question, please.

Ms DUNN — Thank you, President. There are two coupes in the Rubicon Valley that lie completely within the zone classified as ‘Historic reserves — limited timber harvesting’. Their names are Archibald and Little Jacqui. According to the definition, limited timber harvesting is meant to comprise selective logging. Could the minister advise why under the minister’s watch VicForests have failed to identify this zoning when seeking logging clearance from the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources to log these coupes and have then proceeded to clear-fell Archibald and Little Jacqui coupes, and also confirm that logging of the adjacent Rio, Bonds and Calvin coupes was postponed in December 2017 due to partial overlap with the historic reserves zoning?

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Agriculture) (12:08) — Thank you. As is my usual practice when Ms Dunn seeks coupe-by-coupe, tree-by-tree information about the activities of VicForests, I will take that on notice and seek some further detail from VicForests.

Supplementary question

Ms DUNN (Eastern Metropolitan) (12:08) — Thank you, Minister. I look forward to the response on that, because if you went on ground it would appear that parts of forests that should not have been clear-fell logged have been clear-fell logged. In fact the department is aware of that because they actually postponed logging in some of those areas. So considering these issues, Minister, and considering that native forest logging sits squarely in your remit, could you please advise this house why illegal logging has been committed by the state-owned entity in your ministerial portfolio and why, given that, you should retain your ministry in this area?

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Agriculture) (12:09) — VicForests operate within a very strict regulatory environment. Ms Dunn asserts that there is illegal activity. Ms Dunn often asserts there is illegal activity, and we know Ms Dunn does not like there to be any logging activity in Victoria.

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms PULFORD — Yes, yes, we know. I think that everybody knows that Ms Dunn does not like logging of any kind anywhere. But I certainly reject Ms Dunn’s

assertion that there is illegal logging being undertaken. I am quite confident Ms Dunn will continue on her campaign. I certainly would reassure the house, the Victorian community and the towns that have timber industry activity in businesses that have contracts with VicForests that we are absolutely conscious of our responsibility of fulfilling those contracts and we will do so within the confines of the very strict regulatory environment that operates to ensure the protection of our environmental assets and the responsibility that we have to those communities.

Taxidermy regulation

Mr BOURMAN (Eastern Victoria) (12:11) — My question today is for the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, represented by the Special Minister of State in this place. Taxidermy is a small but important part of hunting. Like most things in life today, it is regulated in this case by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning. The cost of a taxidermy licence is about \$580, but in most other states it is around \$50. Then we have a special category licence for specific species along with some administrative issues to muddy the water. My substantive question is: regarding specific species, why are deer the only non-native species to need a special licence to mount?

Mr JENNINGS (Special Minister of State) (12:12) — I am very disappointed that I actually have not got the necessary technical background to be able to provide the policy justification or what impact it might have on taxidermy in Victoria. However, I am happy to take the advice of my ministerial colleague the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change to share that with you, because I am sure on a daily basis in her questions that she prepares for in Parliament she has probably got that answer in her folder. But if she has not, I am sure she will take the appropriate advice.

I just want to take this opportunity to put one thing on the public record. Last week my interest in taxidermy was piqued when I actually saw a social media entry by the environment movement who were meeting in Morwell in a venue that had a stuffed reindeer in that venue. I thought at the time, ‘What a unity ticket’, in terms of reindeer eradication, taxidermy and the environment movement mobilising in the Latrobe Valley. I noticed that, I thought it was a laudable thing that they were meeting in such an environment and it has provided me with the opportunity to share that anecdote with you based upon my own social media experience in answering this question when I otherwise would not have been able to contribute any content whatsoever. I will take some advice from my colleague.

Supplementary question

Mr BOURMAN (Eastern Victoria) (12:13) — I thank the minister for his answer, and I will let him know that unless it is Christmas time there are no reindeer in Australia. Given the strange anomalies within the system, like the deer licence and that it is way cheaper in other states, along with a history of some administrative stuff-ups, which I do not have time to go into today, my supplementary question is: as a result of these many issues, will the government undertake to perform a review of the whole taxidermy licence system with the aim of making it effective, efficient and fair?

Mr JENNINGS (Special Minister of State) (12:14) — Mr Bourman and I are obviously going to have to have, once I am better informed by my ministerial colleague and I share that with him, a conversation about the impact of an introduced species in terms of the natural environment, the ways in which it should be dealt with and the ways in which the taxidermy industry could be supported appropriately for perhaps the preservation of species of various varieties for their contributions to the natural environment. For one reason or another it is a laudable and appropriate endeavour that should be supported. Even if you go no further than the natural history museums, that is a task worthy of our support.

Offender electronic monitoring

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) (12:15) — My question is to the Minister for Corrections. In answer to a question asked on 18 August 2016, almost two years ago, the former Minister for Corrections, Steve Herbert, told the house that:

Corrections Victoria is currently undertaking a procurement process for the next electronic monitoring contract.

Minister, to whom was this contract awarded and what contractual requirements were included to ensure the effective continuous electronic monitoring of offenders?

Ms TIERNEY (Minister for Corrections) (12:15) — I do thank the member for his question. We are reviewing the contracts, and the contracts will come with devices that will have redundancies in place that will ensure that monitoring can occur regardless of any service outages. Just recently Corrections Victoria reviewed the tender to ensure that these service issues, however infrequent, are addressed and remedied regardless of whether service outages impact on the electronic monitoring system. Our new contract will ensure that they will not affect our monitoring ability,

and that is something that was not addressed by the former government. In fact the new contracts will be in place this year.

Supplementary question

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) (12:16) — Minister, in April 2015 the then corrections minister, Mr Herbert, advised the house there were 75 offenders subject to electronic monitoring in the community, including at Corella Place. Minister, as of today's date, how many offenders are subject to electronic monitoring in Victoria?

Ms TIERNEY (Minister for Corrections) (12:17) — The majority of people who are on electronic monitoring and supervision conditions and indeed the most serious offenders are located at residential facilities — for example, Corella Place — and they are physically supervised 24 hours a day.

Offender electronic monitoring

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) (12:17) — My question is to the Minister for Corrections. Minister, former minister Steve Herbert also stated in regard to continuous monitoring of offenders that:

As a part of this process the most advanced technology available is being sought ...

That is in relation to the procurement of a new contract. Minister, since the expiration of the initial electronic monitoring contract on 9 May 2016 has a new contract been entered into by Corrections Victoria on behalf of the Victorian government?

Ms TIERNEY (Minister for Corrections) (12:18) — The fact of the matter is that the contract has been extended, and as I indicated in my response to Mr Finn, there is a tender process underway.

Supplementary question

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) (12:19) — Minister, does Corrections Victoria currently make use of satellite technology or does it contract with two telecommunications carriers to mitigate the risk when there is a network outage?

Ms TIERNEY (Minister for Corrections) (12:19) — These are highly technical questions that the member asks. If this information is available, I am happy to provide that.

Offender electronic monitoring

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) (12:19) — Minister, since the initial contract period expired in 2016 and prior to Monday has a network failure ever led to a loss of contact with high-risk offenders who are required to be monitored 24 hours a day, seven days a week?

Ms TIERNEY (Minister for Corrections) (12:20) — Not to my knowledge.

Supplementary question

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) (12:20) — Minister, have you or Corrections Victoria been previously alerted to the risk of losing tracking of dangerous sex offenders due to network outages, and if so, when?

Ms TIERNEY (Minister for Corrections) (12:20) — Again, not to my knowledge.

Solar energy

Mr O'SULLIVAN (Northern Victoria) (12:21) — My question is to the Minister for Agriculture. Minister, last week in your written response to my question regarding the Lemnos solar development you stated that Agriculture Victoria would support the development of guidelines for solar plant proposals on agricultural land. Minister, can you guarantee Agriculture Victoria will have a meaningful input into the development of these guidelines to protect high-value irrigated agricultural land?

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Agriculture) (12:21) — Agriculture Victoria has input into a lot of different things that are occurring in other portfolios, and it is always high value.

Supplementary question

Mr O'SULLIVAN (Northern Victoria) (12:21) — Minister, what involvement has Agriculture Victoria had in the development of these guidelines to date?

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Agriculture) (12:21) — The work is, as Mr O'Sullivan knows, being led by the Minister for Planning and his department. Agriculture Victoria are being consulted in the development of the guidelines and will continue to be involved in those.

Solar energy

Mr O’SULLIVAN (Northern Victoria) (12:22) — My question is to the Minister for Trade and Investment, representing the Minister for Planning. Sorry, I think this question is meant to be for the Minister for Agriculture. I will start again.

My question is for the Minister for Agriculture. Solar developments proposed on high-value agricultural land are causing angst among communities in the Goulburn Valley, Sunraysia and Central Victoria. What is the government’s policy in relation to the protection of high-value agricultural land from solar developments?

Mr DALIDAKIS (Minister for Trade and Investment) (12:23) — I thank the member for his question. I do not think it is very clear who he is asking a question of, whether it is me, representing a minister in the other place, or whether it is the Minister for Agriculture. I will let you try and work that one out, President. If you can work out where it goes, I will take it on notice accordingly.

The PRESIDENT — In respect of this question it poses an interesting situation where certainly convention in this place is that questions ought not to ask the government to make a statement on policy. One of the reasons for this was to prevent Dorothy Dixers in days gone past, but of course on this one we actually have the opposition asking for policy rather than a government Dorothy Dixers situation. There is no problem in terms of the question being directed to the Minister for Planning, and therefore it does require conveyance by Minister Dalidakis in this place. In terms of asking for a policy statement it is also true that the question does cause me to recall a similar question to Ms Pulford in the previous sitting week in regard to policy. Whilst historically we would not have allowed this sort of question, I think that given the way it has been structured today I will allow the question to proceed to the Minister for Planning by way of reference from Mr Dalidakis.

Supplementary question

Mr O’SULLIVAN (Northern Victoria) (12:25) — The farming communities of Tatura, Lemnos, Congupna and Tallygaroopna are concerned that they could lose more than 500 hectares of irrigated land because they are the test case and their matters are to be decided by the government prior to the development of the guidelines. What actions is the government taking to ensure the farming communities of Tatura, Lemnos, Congupna and Tallygaroopna are not being treated

unfairly simply because they are one of the first communities to deal with this issue?

Mr DALIDAKIS (Minister for Trade and Investment) (12:26) — President, I thank you for displaying the wisdom of Solomon earlier. I will take that on notice and pass it to the minister in the other place.

Written responses

The PRESIDENT (12:26) — I seek written responses to Ms Dunn’s first question to Ms Pulford, the substantive and supplementary questions, and as it involves reference to ministers in another place, it is within two days; Ms Dunn’s second question to Ms Pulford, the substantive question, is two days as well; Mr Bourman’s question to Mr Jennings, the substantive and supplementary questions, is two days; Mr Finn’s question to Ms Tierney, the substantive and supplementary questions, is one day; Mr O’Donohue’s first question to Ms Tierney, the supplementary question, is one day; Mr O’Donohue’s second question to Ms Tierney, both the substantive and supplementary questions, is one day; and Mr O’Sullivan’s second question to Minister Dalidakis, the substantive and supplementary questions, is two days.

CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS

Western Victoria Region

Mr PURCELL (Western Victoria) (12:28) — My constituency question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. The entrance to one of south-west Victoria’s best and most treasured national parks is a small gateway on a very busy stretch of the Princes Highway between Warrnambool and Port Fairy. Almost every day I see cars almost running up the back of others as they slow down to look for this entrance, which is very disguised, to try to make the turn into Tower Hill. Local residents have long campaigned to have improvements made to the entrance, with many suggestions over the years of how to manage access. The latest, quite sensible, suggestion is to move the entrance completely off the highway and relocate it to Lake View Road, either converting the existing entrance to an exit or making a new entrance that runs parallel to the current exit. I therefore ask the minister: are there any plans to make this improvement to safety for drivers entering Tower Hill?

Eastern Metropolitan Region

Ms WOOLDRIDGE (Eastern Metropolitan) (12:29) — My question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and it is regarding traffic volumes that the government projects will use the north-east link as they turn onto the Eastern Freeway towards the city. Last October the minister, in answer to a constituency question, told me that strategic transport modelling for option A, which has since been adopted as the preferred route for the north-east link, showed about 80 per cent of traffic travelling south will turn left towards Ringwood at the Bulleen Road interchange with the Eastern Freeway. In the North East Link Authority's corridor assessment last December this figure was reduced, with traffic modelling to 2036 showing 75 per cent of traffic would turn left, leaving a quarter of the vehicles using the north-east link heading towards the city. While the government is promoting the benefits of the link, it has been less keen to tell voters exactly how many more vehicles will be poured onto the Eastern Freeway. My question therefore is: what is the predicted traffic volume of vehicles that is expected to come off the north-east link and turn right onto the Eastern Freeway towards the city?

Eastern Metropolitan Region

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) (12:30) — My question today is directed to John Eren, the Minister for Sport. Recently there was a forum held at the East Ringwood Football Club where departmental people from Sport and Recreation Victoria informed in person 80-odd local sporting clubs about funding applications and grants that are available to sporting clubs. A number of funds were announced in the budget. I think it was really well appreciated that people from those sporting clubs could speak to the department directly to get advice about how to apply. The question I would ask John Eren, the Minister for Sport, is: are there plans for similar events to happen in the future?

South Eastern Metropolitan Region

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) (12:31) — My constituency question is for my local member of Parliament in the Assembly, the Attorney-General, Mr Martin Pakula. The Ombudsman's inquiry into the red shirt rorts reported that eight MPs signed time sheets authorising payment to eight field officers assigned to work in Legislative Assembly districts where the candidate for election in 2014 was not a sitting member of Parliament. These MPs of the 57th Parliament include Mr Pakula, my local member of Parliament and now the Victorian Attorney-General, who also authorised a further

\$1 million of public funds to be spent on the challenge to the Ombudsman's authority to undertake the inquiry referred by this chamber. Given the serious conflict of interest that exists between his elected position and his position in cabinet and the findings of the Ombudsman's report, the question that I have is: what processes does the member have in place as Attorney-General to deal with the clear conflicts of interest that exist?

The PRESIDENT — That is not a constituency question. I rule it out.

Mrs Peulich — He is my local member.

The PRESIDENT — Just the fact that he is your local member does not actually fit it in as a constituency question.

Mrs Peulich — Well, there are people who are asking me that question.

The PRESIDENT — They may well be, but it is not a constituency question.

Southern Metropolitan Region

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) (12:32) — My constituency question may fall foul of the same thing as Mrs Peulich's. I have had a constituent raise with me the issue of commercial passenger vehicle licences. In particular this is somebody who lives in my electorate and who is fearful of their name being mentioned, and they have explicitly said that to me. We had in this chamber a number of assurances provided, and now what is occurring is, instead of the hire car arrangements that were in place, this constituent is being disadvantaged by being not able to be issued the hire car arrangements with a specific numberplate. So I ask the minister: what is the situation for my constituent in Southern Metropolitan Region regarding the issuing of a hire car plate to that constituent?

The PRESIDENT — Mr Davis, you are right on the money: it is not a constituency question. You might like to try it as an adjournment matter.

Western Victoria Region

Mr MORRIS (Western Victoria) (12:33) — My constituency question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and it relates to Sturt Street in Ballarat. There has been much conjecture about the absurd plans that were released by the government to destroy Sturt Street by closing the crossroads and inserting a bike path down the centre of the median strip. However, there are significant safety concerns with Sturt Street. It

is unfortunate that the government initially released a ridiculous plan for Sturt Street because what we are seeing, particularly in the last few days, is a number of car accidents occurring in Sturt Street that represent the fact that it does need to have some remediation done to it. So the question I ask of the minister is: when will the government release its new plans for Sturt Street to address the very real safety concerns?

South Eastern Metropolitan Region

Ms SPRINGLE (South Eastern Metropolitan) (12:34) — My constituency question is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. Following the recent upgrading of the Mordialloc bypass to a freeway, the Friends of Braeside Park are concerned that the friends nursery and Parks Victoria’s rangers office and lunch room may be at risk. The Friends of Braeside Park group will turn 30 in 2019. This should be a celebration of the combined efforts of Parks Victoria and volunteers to transform a former sewerage plant, farming area and racecourse into an indigenous park visited by over half a million people annually. Friends of Braeside Park are understandably nervous that, depending on freeway plans they are not privy to, 2019 may become a wake and not the celebration it ought to be. Will the minister provide assurances that the nursery and rangers hub will not be adversely impacted by the freeway?

Western Victoria Region

Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria) (12:35) — My constituency question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and it concerns a very dangerous piece of road just east of the small township of Birregurra. Ms Elizabeth Ryan has asked me to raise this matter with the minister through the constituency question process because it is becoming critical now that the minister direct VicRoads to do some immediate upgrades to this piece of pavement. This pavement is on the Birregurra-Deans Marsh Road just out of the town of Birregurra on the east side and has significant holes on the left-hand side, particularly where rainfall over a period of years has compromised the foundations. It is very dangerous for trucks laden with hay or stock — they actually lurch to the left dangerously. The minister should be aware of this because I have raised it in different forums. It is now critical that he direct VicRoads to make immediate upgrades to this pavement.

Eastern Metropolitan Region

Ms DUNN (Eastern Metropolitan) (12:36) — My constituency question is for the Minister for Energy,

Environment and Climate Change. It is in relation to the Knox community nursery that is located on Crown land near Blind Creek in Wantirna. The nursery is favourably and practically located on flat land away from native vegetation and the local waterway. They have that site under a committee of management arrangement with the Knox City Council. The nursery are concerned about the security of tenure on that site. My question for the minister is: can she confirm that the nursery are able to continue their presence on the site in their current location?

The PRESIDENT — On the basis that I have ruled out two constituency questions today I will allow Ms Lovell and Mr Finn to ask constituency questions.

Northern Victoria Region

Ms LOVELL (Northern Victoria) (12:37) — My question is for the Minister for Mental Health. Recently I met with a constituent suffering from a mental health issue who accesses treatment options at Goulburn Valley Health. The constituent laments a lack of services at Goulburn Valley Health and has at times accessed services at Bendigo Health, where she advises the mental health services are much better resourced than at Goulburn Valley Health. My constituent’s experience has reinforced my concerns that only a token amount of the \$705 million funding for mental health included in last week’s state budget will be spent on services in regional Victoria. The imbalance of mental health funding between metropolitan and country Victoria is quite stark, with only 6.7 per cent of the state’s budget funding going to regional Victoria. It is clear that the minister is of the belief that these rural services do not deserve adequate state government support. Will the minister cease his city-centric mental health funding and help my constituent by committing much-needed additional funding to provide adequate mental health services at Goulburn Valley Health?

Western Metropolitan Region

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) (12:38) — My constituency question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. The imminent tsunami of heavy vehicles in Millers Road has thousands of locals worried about the impact the West Gate tunnel will have on their lives. The project has placed a giant question mark over the quality of life of residents of Millers Road and surrounds. Increased noise and air pollution threaten to make their lives a misery. Can the minister offer more comfort to these residents than Mr Melhem did in this house last sitting week when he dismissed their concerns with the comment, ‘The trucks have to go somewhere’?

REGIONAL RAIL SERVICES

Debate resumed.

Mr MORRIS (Western Victoria) (12:40) — I rise to speak to Mr O’Sullivan’s motion on the notice paper dealing with regional rail. I certainly commend Mr O’Sullivan for moving this incredibly important motion dealing with a significant piece of community infrastructure that we have in Victoria and one that unfortunately under Daniel Andrews and Labor has been sorely neglected.

There has been a significant amount of history in terms of what has happened in particular on the Ballarat train line under Daniel Andrews. I thought we might just go back to the initial issues that we saw on the Ballarat line, and indeed other regional lines, with wheel wear. Members of this house might remember the issues that occurred where the wheels were wearing out on the trains and the government seemed to have no idea about how this was occurring, why this was occurring or indeed what they were going to do to fix it. As a result of that there were no trains — they cancelled the trains from Ballarat — and they were entirely replaced with coaches, which of course caused mass inconvenience to members of the community.

It was a situation that would have been avoided had we had a responsible government doing the job that it should have been doing in ensuring that our regional public transport network, and in particular our train network, was supported appropriately. But this did not occur, and as a result we saw some shocking results. The government actually tried to tell us that their on-time performance improved when they cancelled all the trains. I think that was particularly galling for the community — that the government attempted to pat themselves on the back by cancelling all the trains, which they said improved their on-time performance. It was nothing short of disgraceful but indicative of the way this government treats our community.

In very recent times, just today, we have a continuing problem happening in Ballarat. Just today I have received 18 text messages from V/Line about delays, cancelled services and the inordinate amount of disruption that V/Line are causing the community in Ballarat and all the way up and down the Ballarat line. We expect from the government that they are going to be able to provide a service. We understand that on the odd occasion there might be a train here or there running late for a variety of reasons. However, in March this year Daniel Andrews broke a record on the Ballarat line in achieving the worst on-time performance on the Ballarat train line that has ever been

achieved — the worst in March this year — where we saw only 76.9 per cent of trains on time. Let us not forget that does not actually mean they were on time; it means that they were within the band of time that is considered to be on time.

I am very regularly in correspondence with train travellers who keep me informed of the actual on-time performance of trains. I do recall receiving an email some weeks ago from a very excited passenger because there was one train in a month that actually arrived at the station at the time it was supposed to. This is the state of the public train service under Labor at the moment.

What Labor will try and do is similar to what they have done with their crime statistics insofar as they allow the criminals to run rampant and allow crime to get absolutely out of control; and when they come off that very, very high base of crime and see a small reduction they say, ‘Look, what we’re doing is working’. No, it is not working. You have let the law and order system spiral out of control, and as a result of that when you do manage to just bring back the crime rate somewhat you should not be patting yourselves on the back; you should be working out what you can do to stop all of this from occurring.

Why do I mention crime when we are talking about rail? One of the reasons for the 18 text messages that I received from V/Line today is that there were people out stealing copper wire from the train lines, which is why the trains were late. We have a soft-on-crime government that sees crime running rampant. A clear example of that is people going out and pinching copper wire from train lines, and that directly impacts on people’s everyday lives.

There have also been an inordinate number of text messages from V/Line indicating the reasons for late trains. One of the major reasons that we are hearing for trains either being late or being cancelled is staff illness. We can all accept that people do get sick, but one would expect that rather than inconveniencing hundreds of hardworking commuters who are just trying to travel to their place of employment, do their job and hopefully get home to their families and maybe see their kids before they are tucked up in bed, and rather than continually having staff illness as the reason for having to cancel services, perhaps the government could work out a way in which there could be a bit of a backup system, whereby if someone is unwell —

Ms Symes — It takes 18 months to train a driver.

Mr MORRIS — If we have a driver who is unwell, maybe there could be two or three other drivers that you could give a bit of a call to and say, ‘Why don’t you come in?’.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr MORRIS — If Frank cannot come in, maybe you could call Mary. If Frank is crook with the flu — maybe he is just sick and tired of this socialist Labor government — then maybe we could get Mary in to drive the train. I do not think it is too much to ask.

Mr Finn interjected.

Mr MORRIS — You could indeed. If we have got these train services that are continually being cancelled, the system is not working. It is not working because trains are not running and people are not getting to work on time, so something needs to be done to very clearly address the issue that we have at the moment.

Mr O’Sullivan’s motion notes that the Andrews government is all excuses and no action when it comes to improving country rail services. This is absolutely true. It will stick with me that Daniel Andrews actually came to Ballarat in the middle of the V/Line wheel wear crisis and apologised. He apologised and said, ‘This is not good enough, and I’m going to get my best people on it’. The result of Daniel Andrews getting his best people on it was that punctuality got worse. That is what we have seen. We have seen a steady decline in the rail service under Daniel Andrews, and despite coming to Ballarat and apologising, he still has done nothing to improve the Ballarat rail service in any way, shape or form. That is just the train service itself.

I have spoken to many people, including the Save Our Station Ballarat group, who are doing a great job advocating for what is in the best interests of our community, which is what I certainly hoped the government would do but unfortunately it did not. I have heard from and spoken on many occasions with many disabled people themselves and advocates for people with disabilities who say the redevelopment that the government is undertaking of the Ballarat train station is actually going to make it worse for people with disabilities to try to get around.

Mr Finn interjected.

Mr MORRIS — It’s hard to believe, Mr Finn, but it’s true.

Mr Finn — Extraordinary.

Mr MORRIS — It’s absolutely true.

Mr Finn — Why would they do that?

Mr MORRIS — Well, the Andrews Labor government have just thumbed their nose at the community. Rather than doing what the community wants, which is upgrading the disability access to the station — which Ms Pulford well knows is a significant issue that the government is doing nothing about — it is prioritising the wants and the wills of a private developer from Queensland over the needs of disabled passengers in Ballarat. To be able to get from platform 1 to platform 2 at the Ballarat station you need to wander out and take a 100 to 150-odd-metre trip to the old magnificent heritage boom gates on Lydiard Street, you need to meander through the level crossing there and then back the 150 metres onto the station. It is not always that pleasant being out there in the open in Ballarat, particularly at this time of the year when we have rain coming down.

Mr Finn interjected.

Mr MORRIS — In the middle of summer it is magnificent, Mr Finn, but during winter it is not the nicest place to be. Indeed if there is a train coming through you cannot get through at all; it is a level crossing, so you cannot cross at all. These are the situations that, unfortunately, those with limited mobility issues are finding themselves in due to their being ignored entirely by the Andrews government.

Now to the flip side. There has been a bit of doom and gloom in my contribution thus far while I have been talking about the regional rail network under Daniel Andrews. However, there is a light at the end of the tunnel. That light is the very good prospect, as a result of the great announcements that have come from Matthew Guy, the Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly, and the coalition to say that significant investment in regional rail will occur under his government. I certainly know that he is exceptionally popular in Western Victoria Region. It is something that the community not only want but need, because if we are going to continue to grow our regional cities as we should then we need this investment in regional rail.

The allocation of \$633 million to replace the ageing fleet of diesel V/Line trains was a great announcement. I know Ms Lovell has been a long-time supporter of investment in the Shepparton train service, and the commitment of \$77 million is a huge investment in the Shepparton service. Ms Staley, the member for Ripon in the other place, is an excellent and hardworking local member.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr MORRIS — I tell you what, I feel tired sometimes just looking at Ms Staley's social media. She is here, there and everywhere speaking to people in her community.

Mr Finn — Never stops.

Mr MORRIS — She does not stop, Mr Finn. The \$32 million to return passenger train services to Donald is something that I well know the people of Donald and beyond are just absolutely ecstatic about. It is a great announcement; it is an amazing announcement. I know my fellow member for Western Victoria Region Mr Ramsay is as excited about it as I am. Mr Ramsay has long been an advocate for returning passenger rail services in our electorate. Rather than just talking about it or making excuses about it, as Labor does, we are actually getting on and doing it, which is what our community expects and indeed needs.

I certainly do commend Mr O'Sullivan for moving this motion, and I look forward to seeing it supported and being passed in this house.

Ms DUNN (Eastern Metropolitan) (12:54) — I rise to speak to Mr O'Sullivan's motion, which appears to be a motion about The Nationals and the Liberal Party patting themselves on the back for being so good at country rail. I mean, really? It is an interesting premise on which to base a motion. Here we go again: once in a blue moon The Nationals try something in this place to make it seem like they actually care about regular country people. They try but repeatedly fail to disprove that they are just lackeys for big coal, just apologists for fracking companies and simply lobbyists paid by the public purse to represent the interests of big corporate irrigators draining the Murray-Darling Basin.

We all know that Larry Anthony, the federal president of The Nationals, is busy in his day job lobbying for big corporations that rip up farmland and demolish country towns on behalf of fracking and strip mining companies. So to try and push back on this final trashing of their brand we have here a little homily of self-praise from The Nationals in an attempt to assert some connection to rural communities, but it will not work. Everyone that lives in country towns will still know they are just sellouts to big corporates.

I am going to go directly to part 2 of this motion, which I think is the real howler. Part 2 congratulates the Liberal-National coalition policies to invest and names a number of investments. This is a farcical case of backslapping for doing nothing if I have ever seen one. Mr O'Sullivan would like congratulations for their

policy to invest in Victoria's ageing fleet of diesel V/Line trains.

For the purposes of this debate it is worth recapping the track record of The Nationals on ageing diesel locomotives and passenger rolling stock. Under Jeff Kennett, from 1992 to 1999, the Liberal-National government's achievements in regional passenger rail were nought. Actually they were less than nought because they shut down lines, but more on that later. From 2010 to 2014, under Baillieu and Napthine, the Liberal-Nationals' investments in new rolling stock for long-distance passenger rail services summed up to nought. From entering opposition in 2014 right up to 3 March 2018 the Liberal-Nationals' policy position on Victoria's long-distance passenger rail fleet was unchanged. As in: do nothing, nought.

It took until 4 March this year for the Liberal-Nationals to try and catch up to everyone else and recognise that investment in long-distance rolling stock is required. And all they have to show for it is a half-page media release. That is it. There is not a single piece of evidence that they have done any more work or research or planning than that. Considering they have been negligent on this matter for at least 26 years, perhaps that is all we can expect from them for the moment. They need to down their pencils and pat themselves on the back.

I move on to the next claim in relation to the motion:

- (b) \$77 million to double the current number of train services to Shepparton . . .

With respect to this I refer Mr O'Sullivan to the *Hansard* of the Legislative Council, 6 February 2013, pages 105 to 107. Mr Barber, the then leader of the Victorian Greens, moved a production of documents motion in this place calling for the release of a rolling stock procurement plan and any subsequent updates. For Mr O'Sullivan's information, Mr Barber was successful in the documents motion, and it is worth reading from Mr Barber's media release from the time in full. I am sure Mr O'Sullivan and other members in this place will find it edifying, and I quote:

A 2-hour commuter train service to Shepparton would be possible, if the Baillieu government will commit funding to upgrade crossings and purchase new rolling stock, according to a V/Line strategy document obtained by the Greens.

'The report argues that a 2-hour commuter service would lead to increased patronage, because that's what happened when they upgraded the service to Bendigo and Traralgon', said Victorian Greens leader Greg Barber.

'V/Line predicts a 25 per cent population increase in Shepparton by 2026'.

'Meanwhile, something's got to give, because Shepparton and Warnambool are competing for the same ancient locomotive-hauled trains if they want to run any additional services at all'.

'We'll find out in the May budget if the Baillieu government has taken V/Line's advice', said Mr Barber.

So what did the Liberal-National budget in May 2014 have for V/Line? Nought. The technocrats in V/Line told them what was possible, but the Liberals and Nationals failed to prioritise it.

And now for the next self-congratulatory dot point:

- (c) \$32 million and return passenger trains to Donald.

The operative word in this dot point is 'return'. Note the word choice. It is not 'extend', it is not 'connect', it is 'return'. Why is it 'return'? Why is it necessary to return passenger trains to Donald? Because the Liberal-National government cut them in 1993. Towns all the way from Donald to Mildura are without passenger rail services because of the city-centric, Thatcher-esque, cost-cutting, privatising greed of the Liberal-Nationals in the 1990s. The community resents this. That is why the Victorian Greens campaign to return passenger rail to Mildura has had such great support up and down the north-west of this state.

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

Ms DUNN (Eastern Metropolitan) (14:02) — It is a great pleasure to rise to continue my contribution on Mr O'Sullivan's motion — or the gratuitous, self-congratulatory, patting yourselves on the back motion. In part one of my contribution I talked about the corporate interests that The Nationals are so clearly interested in and I talked about the demise of V/Line and the track record of the Liberal-National government in relation to regional rail, which is quite underwhelming, and that is most unfortunate for people in regional Victoria because of course they are the people who suffer when they do not have public transport options and good-quality regional passenger rail services.

Just to refresh members in terms of my contribution prior to the break, I certainly talked about the return of trains to Donald. Of course the trains to Donald were in fact dismantled because they were cut by the Liberal-National government in 1993, so as much as Mr O'Sullivan's motion contemplates them returning, the track record is pretty stark and it is a pretty grim read if you are a passenger in regional Victoria. You have to ask yourself why on earth The Nationals supported the massive cuts to regional train services in the 1990s. However, that is for the proponent of this

motion to explain. I certainly look forward to Mr O'Sullivan's detailed explanation in his summing up of this particular debate.

I want to move on to the next point in relation to this motion, which is point (3). It proposes something to the effect of further congratulations, pat our own backs, pop the champagne and let them eat cake. The Victorian Greens will not be congratulating the Liberal-Nationals for belatedly admitting what the Victorian Greens have been advocating in this place since we first entered it in 2006. Regional towns want, need and demand reliable and accessible country rail services because they are a vital lifeline to those communities. Instead, I note that in a leaked report from V/Line to the Napthine government in 2014 V/Line executives laid out the full implications of the compounding budget cuts on passenger rail services. These were unplanned service disruptions due to higher rates of system failures, a decrease in reliability, temporary speed restrictions or load restrictions due to the condition of track and structures, greater maintenance costs as the rate of degradation accelerates and deteriorating network performance that would not support long-term patronage growth.

That is the legacy the Liberal-Nationals left in 2014, when the proponent of this motion was a chief of staff to a minister in that very government. This motion is a waste of the Parliament's time. This state has real issues to deal with; we should not be wasting our time with this indulgent parliamentary onanism. The Greens will not be supporting this motion.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan).

Debate adjourned until later this day.

PRIVILEGES COMMITTEE

Membership

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan) (14:07) — I move:

That this house appoints Ms Springle to be the chair of the Privileges Committee and a member from a minority group or Independent member to be the deputy chair of the Privileges Committee.

You may recall that back in late March I attempted to move a motion by leave to appoint Ms Springle as the chair of the Privileges Committee, but leave was denied. We spoke about this issue earlier today in terms of the referral of matters arising from the report of the Ombudsman into the misuse of electorate office

budgets by certain members of the ALP who were named in the Ombudsman's report. The Greens moved a motion referring those MPs to the Privileges Committee for that committee to ascertain whether those members were in contempt of the Parliament and should be sanctioned and if so what that sanction should be, arising from the very comprehensive report that the Ombudsman produced as a result of the motion that was put to the Parliament by the Greens back in 2015.

As I said this morning, that motion, which was passed by Council, was challenged by the government in the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court said the Ombudsman did have jurisdiction over the matter, so the government then took it to the Court of Appeal. The Court of Appeal said the Supreme Court was right and the Ombudsman did have jurisdiction over the matter. The government then took it to the High Court. The High Court, as I said before, gave one of its shortest judgements, which was that there were no grounds for the matter to be before the High Court and that the Supreme Court and the Court of Appeal were correct in their deliberations on that matter.

For us it followed that what had happened had been fairly well established, although I will acknowledge not necessarily fully. There may have been some gaps in knowledge, but it was fairly well established as to what had happened. What the Parliament really needed to do then was to take the matter further as to what sanctions should apply to those members of Parliament. That is the matter that the Privileges Committee so far has not been able to deal with as a result of the committee not being able to operate because a chair has not been appointed.

From the outset we put forward Ms Springle, who is our existing member on the committee. She has been a member on the committee since the start of this parliamentary session. Given that we have driven these motions — and we put this motion forward — we feel that Ms Springle should be the chair. She is very well able to carry out those duties. She is an experienced parliamentarian; she is experienced on committees. She has been on some very gruelling committee inquiries and is already a deputy chair of a committee of the Parliament.

We also believe that the deputy chair should be from the crossbench, just to keep the committee very independent of both the government and the opposition in this particular inquiry. Obviously a government member cannot be a chair or deputy chair of an inquiry which is looking at their own members. As I mentioned, there is now on the notice paper — whether

it gets to the committee or not, but it is on the notice paper — a referral dealing with members of the opposition. Therefore it is appropriate that Ms Springle be the chair and that a crossbench member be the deputy chair.

I do not think there is an awful lot more to say about this except that there has been a very long delay in getting this important matter of public importance dealt with. It is now seven or eight weeks since the original motion was agreed to. The committee has not met. A lot of work could have been done in that time that has not been done. I think this is the way forward: to have the committee in good hands and proceed with the important matter that has been referred to it.

Ms SYMES (Northern Victoria) (14:12) — I will be very brief on this motion. It is basically a continuation of the contribution I gave on Mr Rich-Phillips's motion. I stand by the position that the government is supportive of a chair from the crossbench or the Greens. I pick up on what Ms Pennicuik was saying about the capabilities of the candidate that they are proposing. As someone who has been on committees with Ms Springle, I have no doubt about her capacity to perform the duties of the chair. On that note the government will not be opposing the Greens motion.

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS (South Eastern Metropolitan) (14:13) — I am pleased to make some remarks on Ms Pennicuik's motion this afternoon. This is a very unusual situation. We started a debate this morning on one motion related to this matter and we are now considering a different motion on the same matter with a different proposition. This morning when I went through the background of how we arrived at having a Privileges Committee I outlined that there had been a deadlock in the appointment or election of a chair from among the eight members of the Privileges Committee. Obviously when committees were convened for this particular Parliament they were done on the basis that all committees would have eight members, and what we have encountered, as the advice from the Clerk indicated, was in effect an equality of votes, which meant we did not elect a chairman.

As Ms Pennicuik indicated, Ms Springle is the Greens nominee for that position, and that was obviously one of the propositions that went to the committee. It is a matter of public record — published in the *Herald Sun* somehow — that I was the other candidate who was put forward for that position. To date the house has not resolved a way forward. This morning I put to the house an alternative proposition, which was that we consider a joint chairing arrangement. It was indicated from I think a majority of the house this morning that

that proposition for a joint chairing arrangement would not be supported, and therefore that was adjourned off to give consideration to this motion this afternoon.

It is the coalition's view that in seeking a way forward we do need to move beyond the deadlock, and in that regard we believe a different proposition should be put to the house. Ms Pennicuik has moved that Ms Springle be appointed. I would like to propose an amendment to Ms Pennicuik's motion, that we replace Ms Springle in the motion with Mr Purcell. The hard copy of the amendment is not quite ready, but it is a straightforward amendment to substitute Mr Purcell's name for Ms Springle's.

As I indicated, Ms Springle and I were the candidates who were previously deadlocked in the committee, and it has been a matter of public record that that was the case. We have sought to bring forward a way to break that deadlock. The proposition that I put this morning was that we would go down the path of a joint arrangement, which was not supported by the house. In moving this amendment this afternoon I am seeking an alternative way to break the deadlock, to step outside the contested position that we have had of the two candidates to look at an alternative candidate. Mr Purcell of course is well qualified for this role, having been a mayor in local government and having had extensive experience in local government. Picking up Ms Pennicuik's criteria of not being from the government and not being from the opposition, we believe it would be appropriate that Mr Purcell take on this role to discharge this inquiry.

I would indicate, Acting President, that I formally move:

Omit the words 'Ms Springle' and insert in their place 'Mr Purcell'.

This amendment provides that Mr Purcell's name be substituted in place of Ms Springle's name in the motion. If the amendment is supported, we will then support the amended motion.

Ms SYMES (Northern Victoria) (14:18) — In confining my comments to the amendment, the government will not be supporting Mr Rich-Phillips's amendment. I think we have been pretty open about the fact that we are open to a non-government, non-coalition chair, but we said that we would not be opposing the Greens' motion. If we supported Mr Rich-Phillips's amendment, we would be opposing the Greens' motion, and it stands that we would oppose his amendment in order to not oppose the Greens' motion. Just so we are clear: we are opposing

Mr Rich-Phillips's amendment and supporting the Greens' motion.

Ms DUNN (Eastern Metropolitan) (14:19) — I rise to speak on Mr Rich-Phillips's amendment to Ms Pennicuik's motion just to put on record that the Greens will not be supporting this amendment. It is fairly self-evident that the Greens support the motion moved by Ms Pennicuik and believe that Ms Springle is the appropriate nominee from our perspective in terms of who should chair the Privileges Committee.

One thing that is critical and incredibly important is that this inquiry gets underway. It is an important inquiry. It is about the integrity of the Victorian Parliament. This motion goes to seeking a way forward in relation to that inquiry. It is unfortunate that up to now there have not been any other mechanisms used that have been able to appoint a chair of this committee; hence Ms Pennicuik moved this motion to appoint Ms Springle. In terms of the amendment moved by Mr Rich-Phillips, it goes to the heart of what the Greens are trying to seek in relation to our original motion, so we will not be supporting Mr Rich-Phillips's amendment.

House divided on amendment:

Ayes, 20

Atkinson, Mr	Morris, Mr
Bath, Ms	O'Donohue, Mr
Bourman, Mr	Ondarchie, Mr
Carling-Jenkins, Dr	O'Sullivan, Mr
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 (<i>Teller</i>)

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	Symes, Ms (<i>Teller</i>)
Melhem, Mr	Tierney, Ms
Mikakos, Ms	Truong, Ms
Mulino, Mr	

Amendment agreed to.

Amended motion agreed to.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I just want to bring to the house's attention that, having passed that motion, there is a conundrum. Certainly it is quite clear that the appointment of Mr Purcell as chair is without any concern, because that is the intent of the motion, as was

the amendment proposed. However, the motion as now amended goes on to say that in fact the deputy chair ought to be an Independent crossbencher. It is my knowledge of the Privileges Committee that the only member who fits that qualification is in fact Mr Purcell. As capable as he is, I am not sure that he can be both the chair and the deputy chair or indeed might want to be.

It is clearly not within any of my powers to make any determination on this matter. I just bring it to the attention of the house, and the house may well consider what it intends in that regard. I guess it would perhaps be possible for the house to have regard to the Greens as members of a minor party within the house, but from my point of view I recognise them in this house as members of a party of standing and not actually fulfilling that qualification. In my position I see them as not being Independent crossbenchers. I think that they come into this house as members of a recognised party. With some trepidation, I just bring that matter to the attention of the house.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING

Reference

Dr RATNAM (Northern Metropolitan) (14:31) — I move, in an amended form:

That this house requires the Standing Committee on the Environment and Planning to inquire into, consider and report by 7 August 2018 on the proposed long-term lease of the land titles and registry functions of Land Use Victoria, with particular reference to:

- (1) the implications for the ongoing integrity of the land use system in Victoria;
- (2) the risks to privacy and security of sensitive data held by Land Use Victoria;
- (3) the likely consequences for the cost and service levels of the titles and registry functions being commercialised;
- (4) the implications for the people employed at the land titles office undertaking the work the government seeks to privatise;
- (5) the proposed financial arrangements of the sale and cost and benefit of those arrangements to Victoria in the long term; and
- (6) other Australian and international experiences of privatising similar services.

I have moved the motion in my name relating to the consequences of privatisation for Victoria and the referral of the lease of the titles and registry functions of Land Use Victoria to a committee inquiry. Before I get

into the substance of the amended motion — the referral to inquiry of the sale of Victoria's land titles functions — I want to provide some context. Here in Victoria we are the most privatised state in the nation. We are a place where the neoliberal dream of transferring the public good over to big business lives on. The myth that the private sector does it better is a mainstay of whichever party is in power, and the role of government in looking after people continues to diminish.

Under Jeff Kennett, Victoria passionately embraced privatisation. Our government sold off \$30 billion worth of assets in the 1990s, including our entire energy system, ports, the state bank, prisons and Tabcorp; 45 000 jobs were estimated to have been lost, 300 public schools closed and funding to hospitals decimated. And future governments did not stop there, with the privatisation of our road system through expensive toll roads; the disaster that is privatised vocational education and training (VET); trains, trams and buses being run for private profit; and community services and public housing all up for sale. The report from the People's Inquiry into Privatisation lists 118 privatisations in Victoria, and Victorians are the worse off for it.

Victoria's wholesale privatisation of the energy system is a case study on the harm of privatisation. We sold the lot: generation, distribution, transmission and retail. And what did we get? Prices going through the roof and a government that has to go and beg and plead with the corporations that control our energy when something goes wrong. People in the Latrobe Valley are still feeling the effects of the massive job losses and disruption that accompanied the sell-off of the State Electricity Commission of Victoria. Privatisation hurts people. The Premier has acknowledged that selling off the energy system was a mistake. Yet instead of looking to address the situation, what does the government do? It pays people to visit a website, entrenching the market ideology which created this mess in the first place.

The privatisation of the VET system in Victoria by a former Labor government is another textbook example of the harm caused by the myth of market efficiency. Labor opened up TAFE to private sector competition by funnelling public funds to private providers. It has been an unmitigated disaster for Victoria. Thousands of young people have been left high and dry by unscrupulous operators, public funds have been rorted and TAFE has been left to wither while a generation of young people struggle to access quality skills education. We welcome the government's budget announcement on selected free TAFE courses, but again the Labor

government is failing to address the systemic problem it created. TAFE needs to be restored as the well-resourced, high-standard public provider of vocational education and training.

Public transport is another example of privatisation failing the people of Victoria. Increased fares and overcrowded and unreliable trams, trains and buses are the results of this misguided approach to managing essential public services. There is not much of society that has not been touched by privatisation in Victoria. The law and order policies of the old parties funnel people into private prisons. Governments sell off our precious forests to turn them into pulp. Health care is increasingly privatised, with just this morning the news of private hospitals closing down, leaving hundreds of workers with an uncertain future.

Our civic institutions and public spaces are not safe either. Selling out Federation Square to Apple is the latest example of privileging big corporates over people. Instead of thinking about how our public square can be the most accessible and inclusive space for all Melburnians, the Victorian government has washed its hands of responsibility and says that the Federation Square management can run the space in the way it wants to. This means that private profits have once again been put before public interest.

Thousands of Victorians have been outraged by the Labor government's decision to allow Apple to take over Fed Square, and it is clear that this has been done to allow retailers to make more and more private profit. But who loses out? The rest of us do. With diminishing space for people to come together to enjoy the outdoors, organise and protest and to meet and build networks, we all suffer when our public place is taken away and when governments absolve themselves of the very responsibility they have been elected to take.

A consequence of privatisation becoming the norm is the increasing secrecy surrounding government dealings with private companies. Commercial in confidence has become the go-to excuse to hide from public scrutiny the transfer of public money and public functions to big corporations with a requirement to look after their profits over and above any social responsibility. In this place in the immediate recent past, we have seen so many examples of government evading its responsibility to be transparent and accountable. From ramming through the West Gate tunnel project to selling off our public housing, commercial-in-confidence excuses mean the government refuses to tell the public what they are doing with public funds and how much of that they are

transferring straight into the super profit lines of huge corporates.

I recommend members take time to read the report from the People's Inquiry into Privatisation, an excellent initiative from the Community and Public Sector Union. It outlines the failure of privatisation in a range of sectors, from energy to community services to prisons to VET, and does so by telling the stories of people's experiences of the privatisation of these essential services. The report clearly demonstrates that privatisations do not have the support of the people. It is the agreement between Labor and conservative parties that allows privatisations to continue in the face of opposition from the public. The report notes three justifications used for privatisation: fiscal motives, such as paying down debt; the notion that the private sector is more efficient; and the idea that people are just consumers best served by economic competition.

The politicians that bought these myths and continue to promote them have failed us, but it does not have to be this way. All around the world political parties of the centre left are starting to wake up to the failure of privatisation, of public-private partnerships and of outsourcing and contracting out public functions. It is not just those of us who can look around and see the failure in high costs for power and water, overcrowded and unreliable public transport, TAFE in crisis and less and less public space; even those bodies that supported and facilitated privatisation are now taking a second look. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank now acknowledge that the theory that the private sector will be more efficient is not necessarily correct.

After promoting privatisation for many years, Rod Sims, chairman of the Australian Competition Consumer Commission, is now on record saying that he is:

... now almost at the point of opposing privatisation because it's been done to boost proceeds, it's been done to boost asset sales and I think it's severely damaging our economy.

The role of government is now being re-evaluated after decades of market-driven policy that has so clearly failed our society. A whole generation of Victorians do not know that things can be better. But they can. Governments can and should do more to provide essential public services that serve the public interest, not corporate profit. Now is the time to draw a line in the sand and say, 'No more'. Stop selling monopoly services like the land titles registry functions to fund a surplus. Stop washing your hands of community services like disability group homes. Stop making dodgy secret deals for private roads with the likes of

Transurban. Stop transferring public housing to private developers. Stop selling our state.

Our motion also calls for an inquiry into the proposed long-term lease of the land titles and registry functions of Land Use Victoria, with particular reference to:

- (1) the implications for the ongoing integrity of the land use system in Victoria;
- (2) the risks to privacy and security of sensitive data held by Land Use Victoria;
- (3) the likely consequences for the cost and service levels of the titles and registry functions being commercialised;
- (4) the implications for the people employed at the land titles office undertaking the work the government seeks to privatise;
- (5) the proposed financial arrangements of the sale and cost and benefit of those arrangements to Victoria in the long term; and
- (6) other Australian and international experiences of privatising similar services.

This privatisation is such a bad idea. The government gets a one-off payment, and it is not even paying down debt. The amount they hope to get is around the same as their projected surplus, so the budget looks good but Victorians carry the cost, not to mention that currently the land titles office provides revenue of around \$300 million a year, a revenue that goes to fund other important public services. Every experience shows that prices will rise and service levels will decline. This is not just the experience of other jurisdictions that have sold off their land titles functions, like New South Wales and Ontario in Canada, but the experience of privatisations around the world. Why would this one be any different? It will not be, because otherwise privatisations do not work for the corporations that buy the assets or services.

But more than that, this sale is risking the integrity of our system of land tenure. Any liberal democracy has key functions that are fundamental to a functional society, and a secure system of land tenure is one of them. Now is not the time to go into the complications of land tenure in a colonised country, but Victorians need to have trust in a safe, secure and accurate system of land titles — all of those millions of Victorians that own a home or will look to buy a home in the future. Coupled with that is the security of sensitive data. Land titles contain important and sensitive data. The Law Institute of Victoria noted that:

Not only will our land registry details at the mercy of a private third party, but so too will the significant volume of sensitive data that sits behind each transaction: full name, date

of birth, addresses, consideration (i.e. monetary or otherwise), not to mention the metadata attached to search functions performed through the LTO.

The law institute opposes the sale, and it went on to argue that:

The privatisation of the system lends itself to exploitation and fraud, in addition to the inadvertent disclosure of private details.

With 855 000 transfers, mortgages and mortgage discharges registered in the 2015–16 financial year, that is a lot of data that could fall into someone else's hands, be held to ransom, or sold as an additional source of revenue.

This is an enormous concern and the public is right to be sceptical of any assurances the government seeks to give. Data breaches are becoming commonplace, but the consequences are far, far reaching. Accountability for land titles data rightfully belongs with the government and only with the government.

The other predictable consequence of privatisation is a loss of jobs and a loss of working conditions for those people that remain employed. Again, the government can make all the guarantees it wants, but experience shows us that workers are harmed by privatisation — in fact it is a key part of the logic of privatisation.

The Community and Public Sector Union and other unions, churches and the Law Institute of Victoria have all raised serious concerns about selling the land title functions, and for good reason. All these possible consequences of the sale require scrutiny. Is this latest sell-off in the public interest? The Greens share the views of many in our community that it is not. But let us take a good look at it through a committee inquiry.

In the context that it is the role of government to act for the public good and in the interests of Victorians to ensure that the people of Victoria have what they need to live good lives; recognising that, as the most privatised state in the nation, past Labor and Liberal governments have put the interests of corporations above those of the people; and acknowledging that Victorians have been poorly served by privatisation and are disappointed that the government is continuing with its privatisation agenda that has resulted in increased costs for power and water, overcrowded and unreliable public transport, declining public housing stock, a TAFE system in crisis, less public space, greater job insecurity, and the list goes on, I commend this motion to the house.

Mr MULINO (Eastern Victoria) (14:45) — I am going to oppose this motion today. I suspect that some on the opposite side are probably sympathetic to many of the arguments I am about to use but because of a

last-minute change to this motion they might find the current form of it more palatable. I am going to speak a little bit about the ideological elements of this broader issue and then I am going to talk a little bit about the transaction.

Firstly, I am going to talk about the fact that, with all respect, I believe that the arguments that have just been framed around privatisation always being bad are just not empirically correct and do not stand up to rigorous evaluation. I believe in fact it is ironic that the ideological position here is the position saying that privatisation is always wrong, and I am going to spell that out in a little bit of detail. Then I am going to talk about this transaction in particular and talk about why this motion may have made some sense four months ago — it may have made some sense when the policy parameters for this transaction were being framed — but it does not make any sense when we are in the middle of commercial transactions.

Again, I can understand those opposite — and when I say ‘opposite’, I mean the coalition — being sympathetic to an inquiry into some aspects of this transaction, but I am not sympathetic to a party which actually supports this policy of supporting an inquiry at a point in time when frankly it does not make any sense in terms of having an effect on the transaction and when in fact there is a risk that it might be deleterious to it. I will speak a little bit about that and explain why I think this motion has been brought forward at the wrong time.

Let me just set a little bit of context in relation to why it is that asset recycling and these kinds of transactions are being considered by this government and indeed have been considered in what I might describe as a bipartisan way over recent decades and why it is particularly relevant at the moment. Victoria, as we know, is experiencing incredible population growth, 2.4 per cent. This is something in the order of one and a half times any other jurisdiction in Australia and indeed one and a half times any other jurisdiction in a country that itself is growing faster than just about any other OECD country. We are facing an incredible demand on government investment — government investment in schools, in hospitals, in roads, in rail, right across the spectrum.

All of us in this place want more investment. We just had a motion calling for more investment in regional rail. We could have motions on every type of infrastructure in this place and all of us would speak at length about how we want to invest in everything because of population growth and because of sensible demands from the community for more infrastructure,

but what we have to have from a responsible government is a strategy for increasing investment to the levels required by the community in a responsible way. As I am going to explain in a moment, asset recycling has to be a part of that strategy, otherwise we are not going to get to anywhere near the levels of investment that our community wants and indeed needs.

Infrastructure expenditure in this year’s budget is \$13.7 billion, and as we have discussed on a number of occasions over the last few weeks in light of the fact that the budget has just been presented, we look back on a decade preceding this government in which infrastructure spend per annum was in the order of \$4 billion-plus — \$4.9 billion I think was the average in the decade preceding this government. Now we have a government spending \$13.7 billion in this budget and an average of \$10 billion over the forward estimates. Notwithstanding the fact that they were Rip Van Winkle in the previous term, I suspect even those opposite might feel compelled to increase their investment in infrastructure, given the population growth that we are experiencing.

Again I suspect that even those opposite — and by opposite I mean the coalition — would agree with the principle that we should increase infrastructure spending while maintaining a AAA rating. I would be interested in the Greens talking about that constraint on our expenditure at some point in this debate. I would be interested in the opposition’s view on that. I suspect they would agree with the broad proposition that it is important for Victoria to maintain a AAA rating. This government has committed to that.

I would just say — and this is nothing new — that a AAA rating is critical in terms of being a centrepiece of good fiscal management. Firstly, of course, it keeps the direct cost of government borrowing down. It is the lowest cost way of borrowing. Secondly, it imposes discipline on a government. It is very difficult to maintain discipline once you stray away from that top benchmark. We have observed many governments around the world, and once they stray away from AAA, it is very easy to then lose successive pegs. Thirdly, a AAA rating maintains a level of business confidence in the economy as a whole.

We would say that maintaining infrastructure investment at very high levels — we can expect it is going to be \$10 billion-plus for the foreseeable future if population growth continues at anywhere near these levels — is going to require a multipronged strategy. It is going to require a sensible use of debt, and I believe the Treasurer has laid out a very sensible and nuanced

approach to debt, which the business community, economists and stakeholders broadly have embraced. It is not an all-debt-is-bad strategy; it is saying that we need to use debt where it can be justified by productive investments. But debt is one component of it.

Investing from the budget is another component, and yes, that would include surpluses as part of the strategy for making sure that the balance sheet is being used to invest in infrastructure. It will require sensible and policy-justified asset recycling. If we look at this term of government, we have had a couple of significant transactions. The port of Melbourne was one, and that was a transaction which the coalition supported but the Greens did not support on principle — and I can understand where they are coming from, even though I disagree with it. We had the Snowy Hydro transaction with the federal government, which again the coalition supported. This house has supported asset recycling as a part of the government's sensible fiscal strategy for enabling significant investment in infrastructure while at the same time maintaining a AAA rating.

I do believe it is incumbent on the Greens to suggest the way in which they would try to balance all of those competing goals. If they do want to maintain investment at \$10 billion a year but rule out any asset recycling at all, I think it is incumbent on them to explain to us whether it is through higher taxes or more debt or whether they are willing to lose the AAA rating. You cannot achieve absolutely every goal simultaneously in this world. We all want more infrastructure spend. We all want more schools, hospitals and transport options, but in order to do this in a way that is sustainable and economically responsible we certainly argue here that where you can justify it on policy grounds, asset recycling is one of the tools in the toolkit. If the Greens are going to rule it out under any circumstances, I would ask them to explain how they square that circle.

When Mr Rich-Phillips rises to speak I would be keen to hear his thoughts on this and whether he remains committed to asset recycling where it is policy justified. I would be interested in whether he remains committed to this particular transaction. It seems from the nodding of his head that he will indeed reaffirm that. Of course it will be better when he is reported in *Hansard* as saying that rather than me reporting my observation of his nodding head.

That is an important piece of context. Asset recycling is a critical part, I would argue, of any government's strategy for balancing the books and for achieving high infrastructure spending in a way that is economically responsible. We would simply not have over

\$1.2 billion in school investment, we would not have level crossings being removed to benefit people in our outer suburbs and we would not have new hospitals if we had not, for example, managed to achieve the port of Melbourne transaction, among others.

I want to make some comments about Dr Ratnam's observations on privatisation. As I said, I believe that if anything, the ideological position is really now taken by those who are opposed to privatisation in all situations. I certainly agree with Dr Ratnam that it would be foolish to support privatisation in all circumstances. I certainly do not take that position, and this government does not take that position. Privatisation needs to be justified on a case-by-case basis.

One thing I would say is that we have to be very careful. The previous version of this motion, which was referenced a little in Dr Ratnam's speech but is not the actual motion we are discussing, and again I suspect the opposition would have found it less easy to vote for, makes the assertion that privatisation has led to increased costs of power and water, overcrowded public transport, and on the list goes. I believe that we have to be very careful here. A lot of the assertions made in the previous motion, and indeed a lot of the assertions that were made in Dr Ratnam's contribution, did conflate a number of issues. For example, with utilities there is no doubt that a number of impacts on prices had nothing to do with whether assets were in private or public hands.

I worked on a utilities regulator way back in a previous life in a jurisdiction where utilities were in public hands, and many of the same factors applied there. In New South Wales back in the 1990s utilities were faced with a lot of similar kinds of pressures when it came to capital requirements and when it came to regulators trying to wrestle and grapple with what was an appropriate rate of return on capital. Utilities in particular have had very complicated long-term trends in multifactor productivity due to long-term cycles in capital investment in those utilities and also due to the impact on productivity and outputs in utilities as a result of all sorts of things — for example, the impact of drought on water utilities. This has a huge impact on pricing. What we often find in these debates is that people conflate privatisation with everything that happens post-privatisation when in fact, looking at utilities in particular, they are being subjected simultaneously to so many regulatory changes and to so many other changes in their operating environments.

One can look at more considered views on the impacts of privatisation. During the course of this morning I had a look at some papers that were put out by the World

Bank on the impact of the privatisation of utilities in developing countries. Those papers do not come down 100 per cent either way. They certainly would not say that privatisation has always led to better outcomes or always led to worse outcomes. What they would generally say are things like, 'You need a set of criteria'. They would say you need to answer questions like, 'Are you regulating utilities appropriately post-privatisation?' and 'Is the post-privatisation environment one in which utilities are better able to attract capital than one in which perhaps the government owns the utility and might be capital constrained?'. There are all sorts of issues that need to be taken into account when deciding whether privatisation is suitable and indeed when trying to evaluate what the impact of privatisation is.

Indeed if one reads the literature on evaluating the impacts of privatisation, papers by most of what I would take as the more rigorous bodies trying to evaluate privatisation — bodies like the Productivity Commission, the Reserve Bank of Australia, the World Bank and even some private sector consultancies who have put out some interesting work, like McKinsey through their public policy institute, the Boston Consulting Group and many others — one will find they have a number of caveats because it is tricky to totally disentangle the effect of privatisation on an organisation.

If we go back to works that have tried to look at a number of transactions, we can say that there are a number of instances where privatisations have benefited the efficiency of the operation of organisations. There are any number of reasons we might think that that is the case — the shareholder motivation, the fact that some private sector operators are more expert at running the operational side of an organisation even if they are not necessarily so concerned with public good. That raises questions about the need to regulate that entity. I do not bring citations into this chamber during this contribution, but there is a huge literature out there looking at this and there are many, many instances of organisations which have looked at privatisations in both developed and emerging economies and which have basically found that there are a number of instances where organisational efficiency improves. If that is passed through to consumers — and that is, again, often reliant on effective regulatory mechanisms — then that can definitely benefit consumers.

What we need to ask is: are the kinds of operational functions that we are privatising or outsourcing or subjecting to some other mechanism subject to the potential for more efficient operation? We would argue

in this instance that they are and that there is evidence in a number of other instances where more operational kinds of activities can indeed be undertaken more effectively. Again, it is not directly or particularly relevant to this particular transaction, but if one looks at utilities in developing or emerging economies, there are many instances where privatisation or private operation has led to situations where there has been a greater attraction of capital and indeed greater access for a lot of people in poverty. That is not to say that all privatisations have been successful in those economies. There have been many that have not been, but there have been a number of privatisations that have worked well. Again, it has got to be on a case-by-case basis and it has got to be in a situation where there is the right regulatory set-up.

I do take on board Dr Ratnam's point about the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission's (ACCC) recent comments, and indeed the head of the ACCC made those very comments as part of the select committee inquiry into the lease of the port of Melbourne. He made the comment that one has to be very careful with privatising organisations, particularly natural monopolies, that they are not being privatised so as to generate large one-off payments. So what I would argue is that that just puts that much more onus on getting the regulatory mechanisms right. If you get pricing regulatory mechanisms designed well, then you can protect against those dangers.

I do think it is worth mentioning that the ACCC was very complimentary of the pricing mechanisms that were put in place post the lease of the port of Melbourne, particularly relative to other jurisdictions in Australia. The core point is that where pricing mechanisms are effective you can protect against that. As a parenthetical point, I would say that where you do not have the right pricing mechanisms, that is problematic whether it is in public or private hands. There are lots of instances where entities in public hands take advantage of or provide bad outcomes to consumers because pricing mechanisms are not undertaken in a rigorous or transparent way.

Dr Ratnam talked about workers. It is a critical concern for this government. Every transaction that we have considered has involved deep, serious consideration of the impact on workers. They are obviously a key stakeholder. There are a number of mechanisms that can be used. In this instance we believe that confining the scope of the transaction and providing post-transaction guarantees will provide good outcomes for workers.

Again, I do think we have to be careful about being too general in our conclusions. I would certainly not go so far as to say that all privatisations have been good for workers. No doubt some transactions could have been undertaken better for workers. We can all think of them. However, on the flip side there have been a number of transactions where appropriate protections were put in place and good, decent outcomes were achieved. Indeed I can think back to a transaction that occurred when I was working as a bureaucrat in the federal bureaucracy, which was the privatisation of the Commonwealth Serum Laboratories, which at the time was a government lab. They were not doing a bad job, but incredible productivity gains have been unleashed in that organisation having gone into a more independent and shareholder-focused mode. That has been an incredible opportunity for its workers.

I would simply say this: when it comes to broader observations about privatisation, this government certainly does not see privatisation as always good or necessarily mostly good. It is one option. It is on a case-by-case basis, it is horses for courses and there are some instances where it will make sense. I believe that that judgement is backed up by the empirical literature. We could go to any of what I would claim to be the larger internationally reputable organisations that have looked at this in both emerging and advanced economies.

Let me talk a little bit about Land Use Victoria (LUV). There are a number of protections that we have put in place, and hopefully this deals with some of the issues that Dr Ratnam has raised. There has been an extensive process, firstly. We announced a scoping study for the commercialisation of Land Use Victoria in the 2017–18 budget on 1 May 2017. After that we ran a competitive process to appoint specialist legal and financial advisers to assist the state in that process. We then engaged exhaustively with a number of stakeholders, including impacted employees, the Community and Public Sector Union and the Law Institute of Victoria. Not all of these stakeholders were in support of the transaction and indeed not all of them at this point are in support of the transaction, but their input has had an impact on the way in which the transaction is being undertaken. There are a number of instances where there were changes in the transaction in terms of scope and other dimensions of it which were a result of the consultation.

In terms of the particular protections, when it comes to data security the state will retain ownership over all registry data. Any information accessed by the private operator will be subject to all relevant privacy and data protection laws and regulations in addition to strict contractual obligations, including stringent data

integrity and security key performance indicators. The data must be stored in Australia, and the state will retain step-in rights to protect data and to enforce compliance with data privacy and protection laws. Land registry and valuation information now available to the public will continue to be available to the public, so there will be no change whatsoever in that aspect of its operations.

The private operator will be required to continue the delivery of all existing commercialised services. The private operator must provide data access to all potential customers on a non-discriminatory basis and give the government agencies access to data for public policy purposes. Any private operator retail operations will be ring-fenced to preserve the delivery of data via the competitive broker market.

In terms of customer service, existing consumer protections will be maintained to ensure there is no reduction in the rights of property owners or other consumers. The private operator will be subject to strict key performance indicators to ensure that quality of service is maintained or improved. The registrar will retain functions, powers and responsibilities, including existing statutory functions to oversight the operator and including approval processes and procedures.

As I mentioned earlier, staff entitlements will be protected. The transaction will be conducted in a manner consistent with the provisions of the government's *Public Sector Industrial Relations Policies 2015* regarding the transfer of functions to a private provider. Any employee whose functions are transferred to a private operator will be offered employment with the new provider on a voluntary basis. Offers made to LUV employees by the private operator will be on terms no less favourable than the employee's current terms and conditions, including accrued personal leave balances. Employees will have a guaranteed employment period with the private operator for a two-year period. The transaction and terms of employee transfer are subject to consultation with employees and their representatives, and current industrial protections will continue for all LUV employees that remain in the public sector, so there are very strong protections for employee entitlements.

In terms of service fees and charges, the state will retain full control over the setting of fees for existing and new statutory services. This includes all the key products necessary for the transfer of title and for both registrations and discharge of mortgage. The state will retain control over the pricing of fees for existing and new statutory service provisions provided by regulation, and the state will pay the private operator

ongoing service fees in relation to statutory products and services based upon an agreed mechanism. The state will guarantee title and ensure legal protections, and — this is a critical point — the state recognises the importance of the land title information provided by the LUV for land transactions and for our economy and the service it provides to the community. The state will ensure appropriate oversight and implementation of a robust regulatory regime to preserve the integrity and security of the key LUV registers. And, critically, given our regulatory system in Australia — and this is a difference to some international jurisdictions where this has been an issue — there will be continued state guarantee of title, which of course underpins the Torrens title system.

I think that answers all of the six points, (1) through to (6). In terms of point (6), the scoping report exclusively considered the experience in other jurisdictions and internationally. In terms of the substantive points in the motion — what had been points 4(a) through to (f) but are now just (1) through to (6) for the sole paragraph of the motion — all of those items have detailed protections provided for in the transaction. I think that the items that Dr Ratnam raised as policy concerns both in her contribution and in the motion have been raised throughout the course of the transaction by stakeholders, and they are serious matters and matters that the government has taken seriously and addressed.

That is where we come to the timing of this motion, and there are serious problems with this chamber considering this motion at this point in time. If we had considered this motion four months ago — if we had considered this motion at the point in time when the scoping work was being done, which was itself a process that took many months — this would have been a more sensible discussion to have, and maybe there could have been a short, sharp inquiry by this chamber in parallel to the scoping work the government was doing which could have fed into that. That would have been sensible. But we are now at the point where that work is finished, the transaction is well underway and indeed the transaction is at a very sensitive point — we are in the middle of commercially sensitive negotiations — so there is just nothing to be added by this inquiry at this point in time.

If this motion was to suggest that we undertake an inquiry in a year's time to evaluate the transaction, I would have more sympathy for it, but to undertake this inquiry right at this point, when the government is actually going to be constrained by the commercial sensitivities of the negotiations from saying anything in the public realm, makes this potential inquiry, frankly, a useless one and potentially worse than useless — it is

potentially actually damaging to the state's commercial interests. So the timing of this motion is particularly critical.

There is also of course the fact that we are lumping this inquiry onto a committee that is already very busy. This motion proposes a three-month time frame from conception through to finalisation. The Economy and Infrastructure Committee has just handed down a report into electric vehicles and is in the midst of an inquiry into infrastructure projects.

Mr Rich-Phillips interjected.

Mr MULINO — Well, I am sure that committee is very busy too, but leaving to one side whether the committee itself is busy, what I would say is that one has to call into question the seriousness of an inquiry that is so time constrained, firstly, as I mentioned earlier, given that it is right in the heart of commercial negotiations and, secondly, when it is going to be conducted in such a tiny time frame that is so much shorter than the scoping process.

What is it that we imagine this is going to add to an exhaustive process that involved extensive stakeholder consultation by the government? It really does, I think, warrant a bit more justification in terms of what an inquiry can possibly entail other than being a stunt at this stage of the proceedings — other than being a public spectacle — where the government is put in a position where it really is not going to be able to participate in any meaningful way because it will have to take that position so as to protect the commercial interests of Victoria's taxpayers and community.

I would say this motion fails the test on two levels. Firstly, as I said before, I believe that this motion is actually coming from an ideological position when ironically it is arguing that it is attacking an ideology. This government has taken a flexible approach to these kinds of transactions. They are not always suitable. I would stand up here and happily cite report after report from reputable organisations saying that you should not always privatise, that there are many things government should do and that you should look at it on a case-by-case basis. There are many serious papers which have looked at this and which have listed criteria one should look at on policy grounds to decide whether it makes sense on a case-by-case basis.

First and foremost I want to put on the record that this government does not take an ideological position when it comes to these kinds of transactions. Secondly, I do think the onus is on those who are willing to say they will never allow these kinds of transactions to explain

how it is they would maintain infrastructure spending. I believe that is a difficult balancing act to achieve in a sensible way. I do not think it is possible to achieve that in a way that is fiscally responsible given the kinds of demands our society is experiencing.

Thirdly, this transaction has been undertaken in a way that will produce benefits for the Victorian community. It is going to unlock capital that can be spent on much-needed infrastructure for health, for education and for transport, while at the same time protecting the public's interests in a transaction that has a number of protections for data security, data access, customer standards, pricing controls — and the list goes on.

Finally, this motion does not stack up because the inquiry that it is asking for is not timely. This inquiry might have made sense four months ago. It does not now. It would not unearth anything new. All it would do is cause noise at a time when the government is busy in the midst of commercial negotiations. For all those reasons, we will not be supporting this motion.

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS (South Eastern Metropolitan) (15:17) — I have to say I miss Mr Barber. When Mr Barber was in this place we could have debates on these issues where there was a degree of pragmatism and a degree of recognition of reality on issues of economic policy. It is interesting to reflect now on where the Greens party is on issues like this and the way in which the Greens party has shifted from the time when Mr Barber was a member of this place to the type of ideology we have seen from Dr Ratnam in the motion today.

As the house has heard, the motion that we are dealing with now is an amended version of the motion that was placed on today's notice paper, a motion which sought to trawl through a range of ideology in relation to the provision of public services and public assets that was well removed from reality. I listened with interest to the remarks of Mr Mulino, who made a number of very valid points around the provision of public services and public infrastructure and the realities of delivering those.

It is very easy for a minor party, a third party that is never going to form government, to take a view that is grounded in ideology that is far removed from reality. The notion that services should only be provided by the state and state-owned enterprises and that assets should only be owned by the state for the purpose of service provision ignores the realities about the decisions that governments need to make as to priorities. All governments need to make decisions as to priorities, and those options which are available to governments

always far exceed the budgetary capability, be it asset or output, that is available to a government. In order to maximise the service delivery to the community, from time to time governments need to use private sector delivery of public outcomes, public services and public infrastructure. If that is done in a framework which recognises the purpose for that service delivery and provides appropriate controls around that service delivery, there is nothing wrong with that.

It was interesting to hear Dr Ratnam talk about some of the infrastructure or assets that have been privatised in this state over a period of time. I was curious about Dr Ratnam's mention of Tabcorp as part of that list. Does Dr Ratnam really believe the Victorian government should continue to own Tabcorp and that it should have remained in the ownership and operations of the Victorian government? When you look at other assets and enterprises which have been in state ownership, not necessarily here in Victoria, entities such as Qantas, the Commonwealth Bank, the Commonwealth Serum Laboratories (CSL) and Telstra, which were previously commonwealth government entities — government business enterprises or commonwealth trading enterprises which were sold off by successive commonwealth governments, and when you look at that list they were largely Labor governments — they have gone on to flourish in private ownership.

CSL is one of those great examples. Commonwealth Serum Laboratories was a minor, obscure commonwealth government entity which had been attached to the CSIRO. It had a role to play in the provision of plasma and other blood products in Australia. After it was privatised it flourished. It is now a great Australian success story, which never would have happened under state ownership. It had not happened under decades of state ownership and would not have happened if it had not been privatised. That enterprise is now providing far more jobs and far greater income for Australians than it ever did in the hands of the commonwealth government. If we are to take Dr Ratnam's anti-privatisation rhetoric at its face value, that success of CSL never would have happened, nor would that of Qantas, Telstra or Tabcorp, as entities which have been transferred from public ownership to private ownership.

Dr Ratnam in her opening comments referred to the privatisation of vocational education and training (VET), and she did go on to talk about the reforms of 2010.

Mrs Peulich — 2009 actually.

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS — It was 2009. But to characterise that as the privatisation of vocational education and training is simply wrong. It was opening the VET market to competition. It was not transferring state assets or entities into the private sector; it was allowing the private sector to compete with those state enterprises and it led to a growth in the overall vocational education and training market. Yes, it created pressures for TAFEs, which were not ready to compete and were caught flat-footed and subsequently had to make changes and adjustments to compete in that market, but it vastly expanded the scope of courses that were available to students seeking education through the VET system.

Dr Ratnam also spoke about toll roads, obviously referring to CityLink. The reality is that if the then Victorian government, which was the Kennett government, that put together the CityLink Transurban package —

Mrs Peulich interjected.

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS — Mrs Peulich says, ‘Thank God for CityLink’. If it were not for that government in the mid-1990s putting together that transaction and creating what was I think the first toll road in Australia, Victoria would not have CityLink. The Victorian government of the day was broke. It did not have the capacity to build CityLink. It was heavily in debt. It had \$30 billion of accumulated debt. It was running massive recurrent deficits. There was no prospect of the state of Victoria building CityLink as a state-owned, state-delivered project. If it had not been a private project, it would not have happened, and the state of Victoria would not have had the capacity to do it for more than a decade.

Mrs Peulich — We would still be schlepping around.

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS — Without that project we would still be trying to negotiate, east to west, north to south, through the centre of Melbourne. It was only through the involvement of private sector capital that that project was able to be delivered.

Dr Ratnam also spoke about energy and utilities more generally, and she spoke about, to quote, ‘prices going through the roof’. She is right, but it has nothing to do with privatisation. It has everything to do with the lunatic policies that have been adopted by successive state governments in South Australia and here in Victoria over recent years, which have ignored the great competitive advantage we have had in energy through the Latrobe Valley through cheap, plentiful brown coal,

and which have seen a shift to more expensive, unreliable forms of energy. That is what has pushed up our energy prices. It has nothing to do with the reforms of the 1990s.

As Mr Mulino said, one of the issues with debates around privatisation is that people conflate the factors which have occurred before the privatisation with the factors that occurred after privatisation as an indicator of the outcome. If you look at the history of that energy privatisation, before we saw the adoption of the lunatic policies we have seen under this government over the last few years, privatisation delivered far lower prices than occurred in other jurisdictions where there was not at that time privatisation of energy. It has only been in more recent years with the move away from our cheap, reliable source of baseload power that we have seen energy prices increase in the way they have.

Mr Mulino also spoke, rightly, about the need for appropriate frameworks around privatisation. I recall that in 2016 or thereabouts Rod Sims, the chairman of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, delivered a speech that went to this point. He went to the point that there needs to be a very clear reason for privatisation of existing state assets and asset recycling which ensures that there are appropriate regulatory structures and market control structures around privatised assets. That is absolutely true. He is absolutely right. When the electricity market was privatised it was done with appropriate regulatory controls around pricing and availability. Those were subsequently unwound by the previous Labor governments, the Bracks-Brumby governments, but at the time the privatisation of energy was put in place there were structures around pricing controls through the Essential Services Commission at the time.

Dr Sims, in his 2016 paper, was very clear about the need for those market controls. But as Mr Mulino indicated, the need for those controls is the same whether it is an existing private sector monopoly, an existing public sector monopoly or an asset which has been transferred from public to private ownership. The ownership structure is irrelevant; if it is a large, powerful monopoly or oligopoly there need to be appropriate regulatory structures around it. That is not a function of who owns the capital; it is a function of what market power it exerts and how significant it is in the individual market.

So the coalition does not accept Dr Ratnam’s ideology and commentary around privatisation. The record has shown the value that appropriate privatisation or public-private partnerships can deliver for public sector service delivery in Victoria and Australia, and for

innovation in what were previously public sector enterprises which have been transferred to the private sector.

I note that the revised motion seeks to talk about the lease of the Land Use Victoria functions. This is something the coalition does support. We do support an appropriate transaction which realises the value of that asset, the value of that service, and does so in a way which has an appropriate regulatory framework around it. In that sense, putting aside Dr Ratnam's ideology and rhetoric, the substance of the motion — with respect to a referral to the Environment and Planning Committee rather than Economy and Infrastructure, as Mr Mulino indicated — the coalition is supportive of.

We think there is some scope for a short inquiry that looks at the elements which are set out in the motion. These are elements such as the ongoing integrity of the land use system, issues around privacy and security of the data that is held by Land Use Victoria, potential implications on cost and service levels, and issues around employment and the proposed transaction.

While I note the concerns raised by Mr Mulino, who spoke about the timing of this inquiry — and perhaps the timing is not ideal; perhaps it would have been desirable for this inquiry to have taken place four months ago — we do not see that as a reason not to have the inquiry now. Mr Mulino said it would be problematic. He said that nothing would be added by this inquiry. That is always the view of government; I accept that, and I have been there. Governments do not like parliamentary inquiries; they like to get on and deliver the policy decision that they have favoured. But that does not mean that there should not be inquiries. It does not mean that this house or this Parliament should not take the steps to satisfy itself as to a policy pathway that is being taken.

So while it is the government's view and Mr Mulino's view that the inquiry will add nothing, the coalition does not believe there is any detriment in allowing this inquiry to go forward and in allowing this inquiry to provide some assurance to members of this house as to those elements that are contained in the motion.

Mr Mulino also spoke about what he described as the commercial sensitivities of the transaction. Again, that is one thing that governments always refer to. Any contractual engagement between government and a third party is always cloaked in commercial sensitivities, and more often than not — this was the subject of a parliamentary inquiry almost 20 years ago — the need for or the desire for commercial sensitivity is actually from the government rather than

the private sector parties. I think it was the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee that looked at this in 1998 or 1999 and found that, where claims for commercial sensitivity and commercial in confidence were made, more often than not they were at the insistence of the government rather than at the insistence of the private sector parties.

Since then Parliament and the community have treated with a grain of salt claims of commercial sensitivity, but obviously there are times when it does apply. But it is used often by government as a blanket to not talk about things, and we think that that usage is often far too broad. While Mr Mulino has raised that as a concern, I have no doubt that in conducting this inquiry the capacity is there to provide satisfaction on the matters which are raised in the terms of reference without offending against the need for commercial sensitivity or commercial in confidence where that is genuinely held.

The coalition is not going to oppose this motion. We do not support the ideological position that Dr Ratnam spoke about at the outset. We believe there is a very legitimate role for private sector involvement in public service delivery. That has been proved over time to be successful where appropriately managed and appropriately structured. However, we do believe that there can be some value added for the Parliament's assurance around the Land Use Victoria privatisation. It is an unusual asset recycling exercise, given the nature of Land Use Victoria and the importance of the integrity of that data, and I think that the Parliament, and by extension the Victorian population, will benefit by having some assurance of the matters that are canvassed in the terms of reference. For that reason, the coalition will not oppose this referral.

House divided on motion:

Ayes, 22

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

Noes, 17

Bourman, Mr	Mulino, Mr (<i>Teller</i>)
Dalidakis, Mr	Pulford, Ms
Eideh, Mr	Purcell, Mr
Elasmar, Mr	Shing, Ms
Gepp, Mr (<i>Teller</i>)	Somyurek, Mr

Jennings, Mr
Leane, Mr
Melhem, Mr
Mikakos, Ms

Symes, Ms
Tierney, Ms
Young, Mr

Motion agreed to.

VICTIMS OF CRIME SUPPORT

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) (15:43) — I am pleased to move:

That this house notes that:

- (1) since the election of the Andrews Labor government there has been:
 - (a) a 303.47 per cent increase in calls and referrals to the victims of crime helpline for non-family-violence-related crime;
 - (b) a 99.5 per cent increase in victims assistance program cases related to non-family-violence-related crime;

and congratulates the Liberal-Nationals coalition on the suite of victims of crime policies announced that will put victims first in Victoria.

Behind these statistics of increased referrals and calls for assistance to the victims of crime helpline are individuals who have been traumatised or who have issues following a criminal incident. One of the great privileges for me of being a member of this place has been the engagement I have had with victims of crime throughout my time in this place, and particularly in the last five years or so when I have been a justice minister or a shadow justice minister.

Through that time I have met so many people who have experienced the most horrific, traumatic and difficult circumstances as a result of criminal incidents and yet have had the strength, courage, determination and resolve to advocate for change. Because what has been consistent with these people who I am so lucky to continue to know and to work with has been the way they say the justice system treats them. The crimes they have experienced are the full diversity of crimes that Victorians have experienced, whether it be assaults against the person, sexual offences, car or road trauma or other forms of crime. What they have all said to me consistently is that the justice system is cold, it is slow, it is impersonal and it fails to understand the challenges that a victim experiences.

My comments about that are in no way meant as a criticism of those who work for victims of crime through the Department of Justice and Regulation, through the courts, through the Director of Public Prosecutions, through Victoria Police — who do such a

great job — and through the other arms of government and the justice system that work with victims of crime. But there is no coordinated approach. No-one takes charge for a victim of crime who has never had any experience with the justice system previously and who has no understanding of legalese and the complicated processes that make up our court system. No-one explains that it could take two or three years for a matter to be resolved through the criminal courts. Many of the people that I speak of, that I have worked with and that I have come to know very well and respect very much, feel like the perpetrator has more rights than them.

Of course for legitimate reasons they are not able to speak openly about what has happened to them while their matter is on foot before the courts. They live through an extensive period of uncertainty. This is despite the best endeavours and the goodwill of so many in our justice system. But it is clear to us that significant, wholesale change is required if we are to put victims of crime at the centre of the justice system — to put their interests first and to help them navigate a system that we are lucky to have but that is so complex and difficult for those who are not familiar with it, particularly at a time of deep trauma and grief.

For us on this side of the chamber, the status quo simply will not suffice. I mentioned the fact that I have had the privilege of working with many victims of crime over many years now, but many of these issues have been brought into stark relief through the meetings that Matthew Guy, shadow Attorney-General John Pesutto, Georgie Crozier and I have had with the Victims of Crime Justice Reference Group. This is a group of victims of crime and their advocates who have been prepared to give their time to work with the opposition — the four of us — to give us their feedback and to talk openly, frankly and freely about what we need to do to change the system and put victims first.

The first policy I want to mention in my contribution is that which was borne by Reverend Jim Pilmer, a remarkable man, deeply respected by many, who was the senior police chaplain for many years and was attached to the homicide squad for a number of years. He has seen it all. He has endless compassion, and something he has advocated for now for many years, and something which we have adopted as policy, is the idea of a rapid response service. The Victorian Council of Churches and others do a great job in responding and helping victims of crime, but we want to implement Jim's vision of a rapid response service for victims of crime throughout Victoria, coordinated through the Department of Justice and Regulation and being helped by volunteers, so that in the immediate aftermath of a

traumatic event, when someone's world is thrown upside down, there will be someone there who can provide immediate support and assistance.

I am not a psychologist, but I understand from advice from psychologists and others on helping to deal with and manage trauma and grief that, if help and assistance is there in an immediate fashion, the ability of that person to manage that grief is increased. Having someone on scene quickly also helps our first responders, whether they be the police, the ambos, the fireys or others. Police, for example, may have a crime scene to establish and the ambos may have injured people to help, and if there is someone there to give advice and support to the victims of crime, that helps them start processing what has happened and understanding what to do.

We also understand that — inadvertently, no doubt — sometimes legislative change that comes before this house may have an impact on victims. Frankly at times I think due consideration to the interests of victims has not been given by that legislation. So rather than fixing things after legislative change, akin to the way a minister needs to table a statement of compatibility with each bill, for justice bills that enter this place or the other place we will make a requirement that there is a statement of compatibility or some such document with regard to the interests of victims of crime.

We also understand — and this was highlighted just this week by a caller to 3AW — that the traumatic effects of a criminal incident can last for years, particularly with the fact that serious criminal cases are now taking three years and longer, particularly with appeals. Currently the statute of limitations means that at the end of six years the assistance that can be provided ceases. We do not think that is long enough. We recognise that the effects of the trauma can be felt for much longer, and so, as of right, we will extend that period to 10 years and up to 15 years in certain circumstances. We want to support and help victims of crime to get back on their feet and to have the support they need.

We also understand that issues around parole and bail have been very important issues for the Victorian community now for a number of years, particularly for victims of crime, so we have announced that when the Adult Parole Board of Victoria (APB) meets to consider parole applications and make decisions around parole applications — and they are now applications pursuant to the implementation of the Callinan review — a victim of crime or a victims advocate will be represented and have a seat at the table. So rather than three board members constituting the APB there

will now be four — except for the second-tier process for serious violent sex offenders, which has a full-time member and a chair — because we want to see the voices of victims represented. Of course Carmel Arthur served the adult parole board with distinction for many years, and over time there have been other victims of crime as members of the parole board, but that really waxes and wanes on the decision of the minister of the day. We want to legislate so that a fourth parole board member constitutes part of the board, and that person will represent the interests of victims of crime.

In the immediate aftermath of a criminal incident, particularly a serious criminal incident, the job of government and the Department of Justice and Regulation is to provide the assistance necessary to that person, family or community that is needed to help them manage and deal with what they have just experienced. That assistance should be given in the immediate aftermath through the legal and court processes and it should not end at six years, because post-traumatic stress disorder and the effects of trauma do not end at six years. We will extend that to 10 years and in certain circumstances to 15 years.

These issues that the victims of crime advocates, the victims of crime representatives, the victims of crime and we on this side have worked with are not new issues, and I do not seek to blame the government. These are issues that I think have built up over years and years, and systemic challenges have been created. It is time now to take stock in a holistic and real sense, to look afresh and to provide solutions so that someone does not say, as I have heard far too many times, 'I was traumatised by the crime but I was re-traumatised by the justice system'. That is not what we should be hearing. It is not what should happen. Victims should be supported, helped and assisted through the process and after the process. I am very pleased that the Liberal-Nationals opposition has already articulated a number of policies that will help to achieve that outcome. I know that we have many more positive policies to come to fulfil this agenda and desire.

The measure of loss is often reduced to a monetary figure, but the changes in people's lives and the impacts of crime go way beyond any dollar figure, any monetary figure. It goes to people's sense of self, their sense of us as a community and a society, the ability to trust others, the ability to sleep at night, the ability to go out at night, the ability to be about in the community. We should be doing everything we can so that people who have been through traumatic experiences do feel they are heard, listened to and supported. That is what these policies I have mentioned today will achieve. I hope, if we on this side are given the opportunity to

form the next government, that as a Parliament we can work together to implement these policies and the others that we will enunciate before the election and other positive ideas that other parties may have. These issues are so important and so critical, and I do not think they have had the attention they need or deserve for a very, very long time. With those words, I commend my motion to the house.

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) (16:01) — This motion and Mr O’Donohue presenting this motion brings up a number of serious concerns. With respect to Mr O’Donohue, he has some suggestions that he sees may assist victims of crime. However, in the same motion Mr O’Donohue is congratulating the coalition on bringing forward a motion referring to victims of crime. In a lot of debates we have in here and when there are discussions around crime, you would think there was never a crime committed when the coalition was in government. You would think from the rhetoric that we hear that there was never a victim of crime and that under any future coalition government there will never be a victim of crime. The reality is we know that that is not the case. We know that since time began there have unfortunately been good people who have ended up victims of very bad crimes inflicted on them by very bad people. If any political party suggests that they will be the placebo, they will be the answer, they will be the be-all and end-all and that this will not be the case going forward, they just cannot be given any credibility.

When it comes to the prevention of crime, it has been Labor governments, and this Labor government in particular, that have vastly increased the number of police. There are thousands of new police —

An honourable member — 3135.

Mr LEANE — I have been rightly advised that it is 3135. The academy has been at full capacity and thousands of police have rolled out of it at capacity. Not one net extra police officer was funded or delivered by the coalition government only a few years ago. I think the coalition saying that when it comes to preventing crime and supporting victims of crime they are the experts, everything will be okay and there will never be a crime committed is just completely irrational. People just will not believe that some magical formula that the coalition will produce will mean that there will be no victims of ugly crime. I apologise to Mr O’Donohue for missing the start of his contribution.

Ms Shing — Acting President, I would draw the chamber’s attention to the state of the house.

Quorum formed.

Mr LEANE — Mr O’Donohue is not here. I do apologise if he did actually mention that a great percentage of victims of crime, particularly violent crime, have those crimes perpetrated on them in their own homes. They are perpetrated on them by people they know. If we are going to have a debate about victims of crime, maybe Mr O’Donohue in summing up or the next coalition member of Parliament who speaks will commit to all the provisions that this government has put in place for the prevention of family violence and also support for survivors of family violence, all those provisions and commitments that the government has proceeded with. I hope that, if there is unfortunately an incoming coalition government, they will commit to continuing all those programs, to funding all those programs.

I have had a lot of conversations with people who operate in domestic violence outreach services, and they are genuinely concerned because the coalition have not made that commitment. Today we have got a motion around victims of crime. It is a fact that there is a big percentage of individuals who are victims of crime by people they actually know and in their own home, and today is the perfect day for the coalition with this motion to alleviate that concern that is in domestic violence services, and it is a real concern.

I appreciate that Mr O’Donohue has brought this motion on. I will be very concerned if Mr O’Donohue or one of his colleagues does not get up after me — and I will not be long — and give that commitment to domestic violence services. They are good at calling on things. Maybe today we will call on them, because this is their topic. Maybe today we will call on them to make a clear commitment that all the recommendations of the royal commission into domestic violence will continue to be implemented by them if they come to government, because that commitment has not been made up till now, so we look forward to that.

As for the Andrews government’s work with victims of crime, in 2017 a \$28 million-plus boost for support services for victims and witnesses was announced. It included funding for their intermediaries, the victims of crime commissioner and the Office of Public Prosecutions. There was also in this budget \$7.2 million for the victims assistance program, \$2.9 million to extend the intermediary scheme, \$28.5 million to support services for victims, witnesses and vulnerable children, \$6 million over four years to boost resources and improve capacity for the victims of crime commissioner, \$2.6 million to introduce intermediaries, \$18.9 million for the Office of Public Prosecutions and

\$1 million for the Alannah and Madeline Foundation for its successful cubby house program to give children a safe place to play when attending court.

All these things the Andrews Labor government has taken on board and implemented via discussions with victims of crime. These are policies that have been enacted, not like the policies that the coalition come in here with and want us all to congratulate them on — policies that they have not actually enacted. They believe they know by what percentage their policies will reduce victims of crime and by what percentage they will assist victims of crime. They have come in here with policies, and no-one really knows what they are going to actually do when they are implemented. They are not costed, and I think that it is a bit rich for an opposition party to come in and talk about the issue of victims of crime and the challenges of victims of crime and in the same motion want the house to congratulate them. It really just turns them into the worst type of third-rate ambulance chasers, just the indulgence of it — ‘Please, congratulate us because we put some thought into this very serious issue that is ongoing’.

Unfortunately if anyone believes there will never be victims of crime, they are probably living in some sort of utopia that I hope we one day get to, but I cannot see that in the near future. To make out that because the coalition will be in government there will be less victims of crime is just a false hope to give people. Crime rates have actually gone down in recent years, despite the rhetoric, the fearmongering and the carry-on we have from the opposition — basically, downright lies. But I will sit down and welcome the next coalition speaker to confirm to me that all the royal commission recommendations will continue to be funded and will continue to be implemented if there is an incoming coalition government, because there are actual victims of crime and people who work with victims of crime in the domestic violence sector who are longing to hear if that is their commitment.

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) (16:14) — It gives me a great deal of pleasure to rise to my feet this afternoon to support the motion so ably moved by my colleague and friend Mr O’Donohue, and I for one would very like to congratulate the Liberal and National Party for the work that has been done and the suite of policies which will make Victoria safe again. I say that I can congratulate the opposition; I certainly cannot congratulate the government. Nobody can congratulate the government on what has happened to this state over the past three and a half years.

It is quite diabolical in fact what has occurred in this state over the past three and a half years. Victoria is

very much a state of fear. I have said it before in this house and I know it has been said by others, but when we have a situation where people are too afraid to live in their own homes or where they are too afraid to go to bed at night without a weapon to protect them, whether it be a baseball bat, a cricket bat or something a bit more powerful than that — when that sort of situation occurs, and it is occurring — we have got a real problem.

It does nobody any good to hear Mr Leane get up in this house and say that there is no problem. It does nobody any good to hear Mr Leane say that crime stats have gone down, because the fact of the matter is that the crimes that really matter, if I can put it that way — the crimes against the person, the aggravated burglaries and so forth, those sorts of crimes — in fact continue to rise, and that is something that I think is very, very sad for a state that I used to think was pretty much on the ball in terms of protecting the community.

Somebody had a go at me the other day on Facebook — you would not believe this, would you? — and they said, ‘You’re always pointing out Daniel Andrews’s shortfalls when it comes to crime and punishment. Why do you do that?’. I did respond to them. I said that ultimately crime and punishment, policing and the justice system must land at the feet of the Premier. They must land at the feet of the government of the day. The fact of the matter is that Daniel Andrews and his government have absolutely, totally failed the people of Victoria. They have totally failed the people of Victoria in terms of protecting them.

It is the government’s responsibility to protect the people. Indeed to quote Ronald Reagan from many, many years ago, the government’s first role is to protect the people without actually telling them how to run their lives. I think that is probably something that every government should take up. That is something every government should adopt almost as a principle, that indeed the first role of government is to protect the people, not to tell them how to run their lives. Unfortunately with this government it is the other way around — they regard themselves as being in a situation where they can tell us, the people of Victoria, how to run our lives. They will tell us how to raise our children, for example.

Mr Ondarchie — Kim Jong Andrews.

Mr FINN — Kim Jong Andrews somebody has mentioned to me. But this is what is going on all over Victoria. We have seen what the government has done

to the taxi industry. We are seeing what the government is doing to the bus industry at the moment.

Mr O'Donohue — School cleaners.

Mr FINN — School cleaners, you name it. This government will go around and around and around and tell everybody how to go about their lives, how to run their lives and what to do in their lives, but it will not protect them. This is only too obvious. Just yesterday down in Werribee in my electorate there was another attack on a jeweller. A bloke with two hammers, if you do not mind, walked into a shop, terrorised the staff —

Mr O'Donohue — During the day.

Mr FINN — Yes, as Mr O'Donohue points out, this was not a night-time burglary, this was not a break-in at night; this was in the middle of the day when people were around, when the staff were there and when potential customers were around as well. Indeed somebody, some very quick thinking person I would imagine, actually filmed it, and I understand they got that film to Channel 9 — they probably got a decent dollar for it as well, I would suggest. But to have a situation where somebody can walk into a jeweller's store and hold the place up in the middle of the day is just appalling. What is just as appalling or perhaps even more appalling is that this is not the first time that has happened and Werribee is not the only place it has happened. We have had the ones down in Malvern. There is one place — I am pretty sure it is down in Malvern — that has been attacked two or three times. Staff have actually had to leave because they are suffering post-traumatic stress as a result of what they have been through.

It is appalling that in Victoria we have a situation where a government will allow this to happen. They say, 'Oh, we're going to fix it. We're going to fix it'. They have been saying they are going to fix it for three and a half years. We have got an election in about 182 days and they still have not fixed it. But what do they say? 'Oh, we're going to fix it. We're going to fix it'. Well, we do not believe them anymore. We do not believe the Premier. We do not believe the government when they say they are going to fix things, because we know that if they were going to fix things, they would have fixed them by now. They have had ample opportunity, more opportunity than could possibly be imagined, to fix this dreadful situation that we have in Victoria, but they have not.

Again, going back to Wyndham and Werribee, as Mr O'Donohue knows and I am sure, Acting President Ramsay, you would be aware, the need for extra police

in Wyndham has been a long, drawn-out saga over many years. Both sides, governments of both persuasions, have been responsible for this so I will not point the finger on that, but do you know what this government did? It gave Werribee — was it three new police? What an insult it is when Werribee and Wyndham need somewhere in the vicinity of 150 new police and the Minister for Police and the government give Werribee three new officers, presumably to make up for those officers who are leaving because they are so stressed due to being overworked and the pressure of the job. Dear me, it is just appalling that we have this situation happening in Victoria.

I do not want to reminisce unduly, but when I was a lad growing up this sort of thing just did not happen. It did not happen. Not so long ago — four years ago — we did not hear about these aggravated burglaries. We did not hear about home invasions. We did not hear about carjackings. Why have they only happened in the last three and a half years? You have got to wonder about that.

Mr Ondarchie — Soft on crime.

Mr FINN — I hear from the distance words that I was about to utter myself in fact. The reason is that we have a government that is soft on crime. Labor is always soft on crime; that is the way it operates. You can go back to the Bracks and Brumby governments and the Attorney-General at that time, Rob Hulls. We should be almost running and hiding in the corner at the mere mention of his name. That man has caused more damage to law and order and to justice in Victoria than any other individual. He is the one who, for 11 years, appointed every single judicial officer to the bench. That is why we have the problem that we have today — because he appointed people like him. He appointed people who were soft on crime and indeed are still soft on crime. That is why we have people being let out who should not be let out. That is why we have victims of crime outraged that they are not receiving justice at the hands of our legal system.

I said this yesterday, I said it last month, I said it last year, and I said it 10 years ago: what this state needs is a justice system, not just a legal system. The legal system is not just there to employ lawyers and blokes in wigs. It is there to provide justice for Victorians, and it is not doing it. When Victorians lose faith in the judicial system, that is when the judicial system will fall apart. That is what has happened. It is exceedingly difficult to find anybody in the state with a good word for our legal system. It is nigh on impossible. There is no faith at all for the vast majority — the overwhelming majority — of Victorians that the legal system in this state has the

capacity to provide any justice, particularly for victims in this state. And on and on it goes.

There are certainly some good magistrates, and there are some good judges; there have to be somewhere. But what we see constantly on a day-to-day basis are good people being let down by the judiciary and being let down by the legal system. That is a direct result of the Labor Party. Nobody else can carry responsibility for that. This government and previous Labor governments must carry the responsibility.

When Mr Leane gets up here and says, 'There's nothing to see here', we do not believe him. Victorians do not believe him, and it does nothing to settle their nervousness about their ability to walk the streets safely and about the future of Victoria — in fact, quite the opposite. When they hear a member of the government say, 'We haven't got a problem; there's nothing to see here', that concerns them even more, because they know that that member of the government has no concept of reality and does not actually know what is going on in his own state and in his own city. It is going on all the time. It is going on every day. Whether people be police or security workers, or people working in jewellery shops or in milk bars, this sort of violence and thuggery and unmitigated lawlessness is occurring right across the state.

I am a great believer in Victoria Police. I suggest to you very strongly that we have some of the best police officers in Australia. But unfortunately many of them are leaving. They are getting out because they have had enough. They see a government that does not care about them. They see a government that does not care about law and order. They see a government that does not care about fighting crime. They see a government that does not care about victims, and they are getting out. I think that is a tragedy. We need a police force, not a police service. We need a police force that will actually enforce the law, not hold little meetings where they can sit around and all agree to be nice. We need a police force which actually does policing — real policing. That is what the rank and file of Victoria Police are calling out for. But that is not happening at the moment — not to any great extent, unfortunately, anyway. Hopefully we will see some major changes in that area in the not-too-distant future.

As Mr Leane said — and I agree with him — there is an election soon, and there will be a change of government. I know that Premier Guy and Minister O'Donohue will be a formidable team in returning teeth to Victoria Police and protecting the people of Victoria, because that is what our major job should be. The major job — the first job — of any

government is to protect the people, and I look forward to the new Premier, the new Minister for Police and the new Attorney-General, Mr Pesutto, in the Assembly, taking the lead in providing that protection for community members so people can feel safe living in Victoria and indeed so they can feel safe living in their own homes again.

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan) (16:29) — I am a bit perplexed by the motion put forward by Mr O'Donohue, motion 538, which asks the house to note that since the election of the Andrews government there has been an increase in calls and referrals to the victims of crime helpline and an increase in victims assistance program cases, both related to non-family-violence-related crime. I can sometimes be quite critical of the government not going as far as I would like to see it go in resourcing the justice system, in particular the area of crime prevention. Yesterday we spent quite a long time talking about the issue of access to justice and the funding of Victoria Legal Aid and the legal assistance program across the state. But this government has put some effort and resources towards prevention of family violence related crime and assistance to victims of family violence. I do not think anybody in here could stand up and say that is not the case.

With regard to victims of crime assistance in this budget — and I heard Mr Leane referring to it — you can see in the budget papers there is some \$6.2 million for assistance for victims of crime and nearly \$3 million for the intermediary scheme to support victims in court, which was part of legislation that passed just recently. That is a very good program. There are already programs existing to assist victims of crime in the courts, as there should be. I myself have been a victim of crime. I know many people who have been victims of crime, as everybody in this chamber does. I know how traumatic it can be, particularly if it is a serious incident and involves personal assault or injury. Of course it is traumatic. It is traumatic to that person, it is traumatic to their families and friends, and it has a long-lasting effect on their life.

But I have to agree with Mr Leane that it is not correct for the opposition to come in here and maintain that there has been a massive increase in crime since the election of this government and that it has something to do with the election of this government. There have always been crimes. There have always been people who commit crimes. It is the job of the government, as I have said, to put more resources into crime prevention. That is the best way to keep the community safe, and it will mean that less people will become victims of

crime. We need to focus a lot more than we do on crime prevention.

As I said yesterday, there are some tens of millions of dollars allocated to crime prevention programs, many of which are technological solutions such as CCTV, for example. I would not really class them as crime prevention programs. There are hundreds of millions of dollars put into the corrections system in terms of building prisons to keep people in prisons. Some people do need to be in prison, but an awful lot of people who are in prison would be better off if they were on community correction programs, as would the community, because it would assist in rehabilitating those people and reducing recidivism, which members of the opposition yesterday said was a problem. It is a problem. For the people who are actually incarcerated, particularly on remand — we have a growing number of people who are held on remand — it is not a good environment. We must always remember that a person held on remand is not a person convicted of any crime or sentenced to any sentence. They are just held until their particular matter arises in court.

Much of the discussion yesterday was about the pressure there has been on the court system — the Magistrates Court, the Supreme Court and the County Court — in trying to deal with the increasing burden caused by sentencing changes, changes to bail and changes to parole. It is all well and good for those changes to be passed through the Parliament, but if the courts are not resourced to deal with them we end up with problems in the courts and problems in the prison system.

There are also programs that are run by the parole board to make sure victims of crime are kept in the loop with regard to parole decisions. There is a register and there are processes to keep people informed as to what is happening. The Greens and I have always supported those programs to make sure that victims of crime are fairly treated in the court system and the justice system and that everything is done, as I said, to prevent crime in the first place as much as it can be.

Mr Finn said before that we had never heard of things called carjackings or home invasions before. Well, that is just not true. I can remember that happening when I was a young person in the 1970s. I can remember what are called home invasions now being what they have always been called, aggravated burglaries, under the Crimes Act 1958 prior to now. I can remember those happening when I was growing up. I can remember people's car doors being opened when they were stopped at lights and the person being either forced out of their car or forced to drive somewhere in their car. I

can remember those things happening when I was younger. It is not as if they were just invented three or four years ago and they had never occurred before then. Otherwise why would you have crimes listed in the Crimes Act called aggravated burglary and kidnapping? They were there because those crimes occurred. As horrific as they are and as traumatic as they will be to anybody who is a victim of them, it is not correct to somehow assert that they never existed before, as we just heard one member do. Of course they existed. I think I said once before that I remember when I first got my drivers licence my father saying to me, 'Make sure you always lock your doors'. Why was he saying that? Because those crimes did occur. That is why. They did not just start after the election of the Andrews government. It is a stupid notion that the opposition is bringing here.

We think, yes, there should always be more support for victims of crime to make sure their experience of court and the justice system is fair and with the least trauma that could add to the trauma they have already experienced. People could look back through my contributions in this place to see the many times I have spoken up in support of crime prevention and victims of crime. The opposition has its suite of victims of crime policies that it has announced, which it has not put in its motion. It is one thing for the opposition to stand by the policies they have announced and be proud of them even, but it is another thing to then come into the chamber and expect everybody else to congratulate them for them when they may or may not agree with those policies or parts of those policies. The Greens will not be able to support the motion put forward by Mr O'Donohue.

Mr ONDARCHIE (Northern Metropolitan) (16:38) — I rise today to support Mr O'Donohue's motion, whereby we note in this house that since the election of the Andrews Labor government there has been an increase of over 303 per cent in calls and referrals to the victims of crime helpline for non-family-violence-related crime, and an almost 100 per cent increase in victims assistance program cases related to non-family-violence-related crime.

The Liberal-Nationals coalition under the leadership of Matthew Guy and the stewardship of Edward O'Donohue will put victims first. I know it sounds unusual to the government and the Greens, but we are a party that will put victims before the perpetrators. For those that are in denial about crime in Victoria I contrast my comments with that of Ms Pennicuik, who says that some of these crimes were around when she was younger. That may be so, but they were not as prevalent.

I know that when I was a kid we did not talk about carjackings; we saw them in movies and in places like South Africa. We read about them in news clippings from Johannesburg, but they were not something that we ever experienced here in Victoria. People waking up in the middle of the night finding people at the end of their bed demanding the keys to their car or their money is not something that we were familiar with as children in this state. It has changed; it is different. The dialogue about crime in this state is different to what it was 50 years ago, 40 years ago or four years ago; it is different.

In saying that, I commend the work of Victoria Police, an organisation that is stressed with not enough resources. This government is making a late run to the post to try to suggest it is backfilling the shortages in Victoria Police, but the fact is the population is growing and this government has made significant non-investment in Victoria Police to keep up with population growth. Let us not forget it was the former Liberal-Nationals coalition government that put in protective services officers (PSOs) at railway stations. The then opposition and now government criticised us for this. In fact I think — and Mr O'Donohue will correct me if I am wrong — they called them plastic police at the time. I think they called them failed police applicants at the time — our PSOs who do a wonderful job at railway stations, at the shrine, at Government House and right here at Parliament House looking after us. To our PSOs: I salute you and say thank you for the great work that you do in keeping Victoria safe. A Matthew Guy Liberal-Nationals coalition will continue to do that work, given that the current government has dropped the ball.

I will talk about my own electorate, because I know that in Northern Metropolitan Region aggravated burglaries, theft from shops, people smashing into convenience stores with poles and needles and guns and knives have become a daily discussion point. I know that older people and women are nervous to go out at night in the suburbs I represent. That is not the Victoria we were living in four years ago. That is not the Victoria that went out on White Night, which was brought in by the Baillieu government, feeling very safe about things. Now people are nervous about going out at night. People are nervous about doing anything — going to the supermarket late at night or parking their car anywhere they are not familiar with late at night. Even Uber drivers note that there are certain places they will not go, because it is not as safe in Victoria as it was some four years ago.

We talk about victims of crime. One of the victims of crime in Victoria is the Victorian taxpayer. The

Victorian taxpayer is a victim of crime because this government ripped out nearly \$400 000 of their money to fund an election campaign. If we want to talk about victims, the taxpayer was victim to this government. And what has this government done? They have said, 'The Australian Labor Party has done nothing wrong; we acted in good faith and we paid the money back, so everything must be okay now'. If you acted in good faith and if you thought you did nothing wrong, why did you pay the money back? Something does not make sense. But we know that this robbing, cheating government do not care that it is other people's money — whether it is cost blowouts on projects or failing to deliver, they do not care.

But let us look at my own electorate. From 9 December 2014, when this government came to office, until the latest stats as at December 2017, the City of Banyule has seen an increase of over 8 per cent in crime. Darebin has seen an increase in crime since this government came to power. Hume has seen a nearly 14 per cent increase in crime since this government came to power.

Macedon Ranges is not in my electorate but I am very fond of Macedon Ranges, and I commend our candidate Amanda Miller and the great work she is doing up there. In fact she has had success today. The government has backed down on selling Kyneton Primary School because of the great work of Amanda Miller and the local residents. This is people power. This is people power doing the work. I commend Amanda Miller but more importantly the group that walked around the Kyneton Primary School and advocated to keep it in public hands. The member for Macedon in the other place, Mary-Anne Thomas, has reluctantly come kicking and screaming to the table, and now the government has backed down, so well done to that group. Macedon Ranges has had an increase of nearly 14 per cent in crime since this government came to power.

In the City of Melbourne, which I represent, there has been a 10 per cent increase in crime. Moonee Valley, which touches on part of my electorate, has had an increase in crime as well. Nillumbik, which I know Ms Lovell represents so well here from the upper house perspective, has had a nearly 14 per cent increase in crime. In Whittlesea where I live there has been nearly a 15 per cent increase in crime. There has been an increase in crime in Yarra as well. All the local government areas that I represent have seen an increase in crime since this government came to power. The government stands there today and says, 'It's not true. We have not had an increase in crime, you are making it all up'. The stats speak for themselves.

Look at car thefts, for example. Of the top five local government areas for vehicle thefts — I do not know why they are top, really — but of the five local government areas that have the most vehicle thefts, three of them are in Northern Metropolitan Region. Hume had 944 vehicle thefts in 2017, Darebin had 674 vehicle thefts in 2017 and Whittlesea had 659 vehicle thefts in 2017. They are three of the top five targets for vehicle thefts, and this government says nothing is going wrong.

In 2017 there were 15 332 vehicle thefts; 4752 of them were profit motivated and 29 per cent of all vehicle thefts in Australia occurred here in Victoria. Short-term thefts were 10 580; Australia-wide there were 56 927. In Victoria there were 3.03 thefts per 1000 registrations. I talked about elderly people being nervous to go out at night. If we look at the top times that cars are stolen in this state, we see it is between 4.00 p.m. and 8.00 p.m. on a Friday night, between 8.00 p.m. and midnight on a Sunday night, between 8.00 p.m. and midnight on a Saturday night, between 8.00 p.m. and midnight on a Friday night and again between 4.00 p.m. and 8.00 p.m. on a Saturday. It is no wonder Victorians are nervous to go out at night. This is when a lot of crime is happening.

Mr O'Donohue since day one has been working tirelessly and in fact announcing policy that will put victims first. I do have some experience in this area, and others have heard me talk about a tragedy that struck my family not too many years ago when my uncle was murdered. So I understand to some degree — I cannot claim I know it completely — what the concerns of victims of crimes are. We talk to them regularly. I know Mr O'Donohue meets with wider groups, including the victims of crime group themselves to understand what they are saying. The policy formation around that has been as a result of that feedback. But we cannot get away from the fact that since this government was elected there has been a 303.5 per cent increase in calls and referrals to the victims of crime helpline for non-family-violence-related crime. You cannot get away from those statistics. It is bad here. This is not the Victoria this government inherited; it has got worse.

There has been a nearly 100 per cent increase in victims assistance program cases related to non-family-violence-related crime. We know family violence is a problem in this state. We know a significant amount of work is being done, and I congratulate Ms Crozier on her advocacy and stewardship in supporting those who are victims and associated with family violence. But outside of that there is still a significant increase in crime. Let us look

at what we are talking about here: assault and related crimes against the person, robbery, stalking, harassment and other crimes against the person. There has also been arson, property damage, burglary, break-ins, theft, deception, bribery and drug dealing.

While I touch on drug dealing, let me touch on the injecting room that is going into Richmond right next door to a primary school. I tell you what, anybody who drives down Victoria Street in Richmond can see the hive of activity on that one particular corner. You can see it. You can see the interesting handshakes that take place on that very corner. You can see the people reaching into their coats to then spectacularly shake hands with somebody else. There is something going on on that corner. Yet the government does not want to deal with the causes; they want to deal with the effects. Putting a safe injecting room right next door to a primary school sounds ludicrous. And it is not just me standing in this place: the people in Richmond are at a loss to understand why you would put it right next door to a primary school.

Drug dealing and trafficking are on the rise. Cultivating and manufacturing are on the rise. Drug use and possession are on the rise. Interestingly, when you talk about public order and security offences we have seen some tragedies in this state such as Bourke Street. Possession of weapons and explosive devices is on the rise, as are disorderly and offensive conduct, public nuisance offences and public security offences. When it comes to justice procedures, there are increased breaches of justice procedures and breaches of orders.

I know Mr O'Donohue has talked about breaches of orders a number of times in this place and asked questions in question time about the justice system and also the process of incarceration here, and he is not getting any answers from the Minister for Corrections despite asking very straightforward, simple, narrow questions. If I can almost quote, um, what the minister, um, is saying, we do not get any direct responses. There have been other offences: transport regulation and regulatory driving offences and a range of miscellaneous offences.

If I look at one particular suburb in my electorate, Mill Park, crime is up. In saying that I want to make the point that I do not think this is the fault of Victoria Police. Firstly, there are not enough of them; and secondly, they work very, very hard. I know many of them outside of this work and I know them socially, and I have to say — and I know Mr O'Donohue agrees with me — they are good people. Victoria Police are hardworking people. With stretched resources and not enough equipment to deal with the rising population

and the rise in crime in this state, they are tireless workers, and I commend Victoria Police for the work that they do.

But I have to say the troops on the ground, those who are out in the van if they have enough people available, those who are out in the car at night, are stretched. They are stretched to the limit. I know my friends in Victoria Police and their colleagues are going as hard as they can, working really hard and long hours, but they are simply stretched. There is just not enough funding. I raised as an adjournment matter last sitting week the lack of money going to Mill Park police station, and the crime that I have been talking about specifically in one local postcode is in Mill Park.

I know Ms Lovell is a great advocate for the Whittlesea police station. She, with the local community, fought hard to secure Victoria Police numbers at the Whittlesea police station, which got no money — there was no money for that old building in Whittlesea.

Ms Lovell interjected.

Mr ONDARCHIE — I know Ms Lovell and our great candidate for the Assembly seat of Yan Yean, Meralyn Klein, will be pushing hard to get appropriate funding for the Whittlesea police station.

But the Mill Park police station, which was occasionally known as the Jenny Mikakos youth prison, is severely under-resourced. When there were problems in a youth justice centre Ms Mikakos put them all into a minibus and transferred them to the Mill Park police station.

Mr O'Donohue interjected.

Mr ONDARCHIE — And the pizza and soft drink did very well. I can tell you, Mr O'Donohue, that the police were required early in the morning to walk about 300 metres up the street to a particular restaurant with a big yellow M logo out the front and bring back egg and bacon muffins to feed the kids. I have to tell you, the rank-and-file Victoria Police members said, 'This is our job, is it — to serve kids who are locked up in our cells?', because Ms Mikakos had bungled the system.

Ms Lovell — What, she didn't even get it delivered?

Mr ONDARCHIE — Maybe she had considered Uber Eats, Ms Lovell, at the time to get it delivered to the Mill Park police station.

But the reality is this: Victoria Police are stretched. The population is growing, crime is on the rise significantly, and this government is in denial. There is a wake-up

call here. They can sit there and deny it all they like, but this is the wake-up call: you have to do something, government. It is not enough just to do the rhetoric and say 'We're trying to fight crime' and come late to the table with new policies at the last minute when we have been talking about this as a coalition since day one of having you in government. The call on behalf of Victorians is: 'Well done to the Liberal-Nationals coalition for their suite of policies that will support the victims of crime', but the reality is that Daniel Andrews, Lisa Neville and the cabinet in Victoria need to wake up and understand that this Victoria is not the Victoria they inherited in 2014. It is less safe, people are nervous and crime is on the rise. I support Mr O'Donohue's motion.

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) (16:53) — I will be very brief in my summation. I want to thank the members of the house who have contributed to this debate — Mr Leane, Ms Pennicuik, Mr Ondarchie and Mr Finn — and those who have been following this debate, because while the Greens and the government have said they will not support this motion, the fact that we are talking about victims of crime, their interests and the issues we need to address to make things better for them is important.

In my initial contribution to the debate I detailed some of the policy announcements that we have made in the interests of victims of crime. My colleagues Mr Finn and Mr Ondarchie spoke more about the macro situation — that is, preventing crime, dealing with perpetrators in a way that delivers some deterrence and delivering proper administration to the justice system. These are very important elements to this issue as well.

Ms Pennicuik talked about crime prevention, and I agree with her that crime prevention is important. What a disgrace it is that the government axed the crime prevention ministry and cut funding for crime prevention initiatives. An important organisation, Neighbourhood Watch, had its funding cut by Daniel Andrews, leaving it without the resources to fund a CEO to give the organisation the leadership, guidance and capacity that it needs. Crime prevention is a very important issue.

But at the end of the day, my motion is really about helping those who are victims of crime. We have a lot to do to address that. It is going to take cultural change and system change, and that is exactly what a Matthew Guy-led government will do if we are given the privilege of forming the next government in November this year. With those words, I again thank contributors to the debate on the motion, and I call on the house to support it.

House divided on motion:*Ayes, 19*

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

Noes, 20

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

Motion negatived.**Business interrupted pursuant to standing orders.****STATEMENTS ON REPORTS AND PAPERS****Ombudsman: investigation of matter referred from Legislative Council on 25 November 2015**

Mr MORRIS (Western Victoria) (17:03) — I rise to make my statement on a report this afternoon in relation to the Ombudsman's report into a matter referred to the Ombudsman by the Legislative Council on 25 November 2015, also known as Labor's red shirt rotting report.

Mr Finn interjected.

Mr MORRIS — It was a massive scandal, Mr Finn. I want to make some commentary centred around one particular participant in this rort, and that is Michaela Settle. Ms Settle is Labor's candidate for Buninyong in the Assembly. Now, Buninyong is a seat very close to my heart — a seat that I fear has not had quality representation for a number of years since Mr Traynor, the member from 1992 to 1999, and a great former member who represented his electorate with great distinction. For a number of years, close to two decades now, we have had Labor representation in what is now the seat of Buninyong. The candidate who wishes to take on this seat is none other than Michaela Settle.

Michaela Settle was a key player in Labor's red shirt rort, but as yet she has refused to answer any questions

about her involvement in this rort. The Ballarat media and members of the community have asked her questions about her involvement, and she has flat-out refused to explain or indeed apologise for her role in the theft, in her case, of tens of thousands of dollars. Of course Ms Settle was 'working' for Joe Helper, the former member for Ripon in the Assembly. I am very pleased that Ripon now has great representation, with Ms Staley as their local member. However, during this time Michaela Settle was paid somewhere in the order of \$21 148. That was illegitimate. The funds she received were not for the work that she did. They were well outside the role that she should have been performing. She should have been helping the good people of Ripon, but instead she was helping the Labor Party in Ballarat.

Mr Finn — She was on the taxpayers pocket.

Mr MORRIS — Indeed. The Labor Party have not found a bucket of money that they will not rort, and here is another clear example of that. Ms Settle must come clean; she must answer the questions that the community have about her role in this absolute rort of taxpayers money.

On many occasions I have said that Ms Settle was a key player in the red shirts rort, and that is because she was the lead red shirt who, at the launch of the Community Action Network, got up and spoke to the assembled comrades. She was the spokesperson for the red shirts and she had a lot to say then, but she has very little to say now. She has gone into hiding; she will not answer questions about her role in this absolute rort. She must answer questions; she must be open and frank about what her role was in this rort. If she refuses to answer these questions, she really must stand down. She must resign as the Labor Party candidate for Buninyong if she is not willing to answer questions from the community about her role in this rort. We should hold our elected representatives to a very high standard, and rightly so, and if a wannabe MP is trying to hide under the cover of darkness and not answer questions about the rotting of, in her case, tens of thousands of taxpayers dollars, then she really must consider her position and whether or not she is a worthy person to be the member for Buninyong.

Mr Finn — If she doesn't, the voters will.

Mr MORRIS — They will indeed. Exactly, Mr Finn. You knew where I was going. I am quite sure the good people of Buninyong, who are very well connected in a very well educated electorate, will understand and see through what Ms Settle has done

and ensure that she does not become the next member for Buninyong.

Victorian Electoral Commission: Northcote district by-election

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) (17:08) — I rise this evening to speak on the Victorian Electoral Commission's *Report on the Northcote District By-election held on 18 November 2017*. Being a former chairman of the Parliament's Electoral Matters Committee, this is a report that is of very great interest to me.

Mr Ondarchie interjected.

Mr FINN — We will get to that, Mr Ondarchie, I can assure you. Given the time and given a chance, we will change the name of this chamber to the State Senate and open it up to the understanding that so many people do not have at the moment as to what we do in here. It is long overdue, in my view, for people to understand that.

One of the issues that is raised in this report is one that is close to my heart, and that is the enforcement of compulsory voting. It says in this report that:

The first stage of compulsory voting follow-up for the Northcote district by-election commenced on 19 January 2018, with 7867 apparent failure to vote notices mailed —

7867!

On 7 March 2018, infringement notices were mailed to 5700 apparent non-voters who either did not respond to the apparent failure to vote notice (4711), or provided an invalid excuse (989) to the notice. The infringement notice included a penalty of \$79.

That is a good gig, that one.

At the close of the infringement notice stage a penalty reminder notice that includes costs as well as the original penalty will be sent to those non-voters with outstanding infringements.

I think this is an outrage. I think it is appalling that people who have quite possibly exercised their right not to vote — and we all have a right not to vote — should be fined by the state. I think it is just a blight on our state, a blight on our nation and certainly a blight on our democracy, because as long as people do not have a right not to vote we are not a true democracy. To be forcing people to show up at a polling booth — and let us face facts, it is not a matter of forcing people to vote, because nobody is being forced to vote; you are just being forced to have your name crossed off the list — under threat of a fine is an insult to so many. I am hoping that one day in the not-too-distant future, along

with a number of other reforms that I have expressed support for in years gone by, we will indeed do away with compulsory voting and with the fining and carry-on that occurs as a result of that compulsory voting system.

I turn now to the by-election itself. As we know, Northcote traditionally is a rock-solid red Labor seat. You would not have anticipated in a million years that the Labor Party could ever lose Northcote — but they did. Much to my absolute consternation, the Labor Party candidate, Clare Burns — I do not know Ms Burns, but she was the Labor Party candidate, and that does not say much for her — polled just slightly over 35 per cent of the vote in Northcote for the Labor Party. Arthur Calwell must be turning in his grave to see that situation. Of course we had Ms Thorpe from the Greens polling over 45 per cent on the primaries and ending up on the ninth exclusion with 50.9 per cent of the vote to the Labor Party's just a smidge under 40 per cent.

Even after preferences the Labor Party could not reach 40 per cent. I think this is a fair indication that the Labor Party in this state is in a real mess and is in a lot of trouble. It is an indication, perhaps like the Altona by-election a year prior to the 2010 election, that the Labor Party is heading for the rocks in November. When they cannot even poll 36 per cent of the vote in a place like Northcote, how are they going to go in the marginals? How are they going to go in those places where people are judging them on their performance on law and order and financial management? This is an interesting report. I wish I had more time. I might return to it sometime in the future.

Melbourne Water: report 2016–17

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) (17:13) — Today I would like to speak on Melbourne Water's annual report for 2016–17 and to use that as a platform to talk about an issue that is very important to my region, and that is the mismanagement of our inland waterways, which is a problem right across the South Eastern Metropolitan Region. The Minister for Water, Lisa Neville, is responsible for overseeing Melbourne Water and this particular agency reports to her, but there are a number of fragmented responsibilities that have contributed to the ongoing mismanagement of inland waterways, including by the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change; Parks Victoria, which administers the banks of inland waterways; water authorities, which are responsible for the actual water quality; and often local governments or perhaps various catchment authorities, which manage other responsibilities. But after reading this particular report

for 2016–17 there is no doubt that the minister has overlooked a number of pressing issues concerning the preservation of a very important resource. Some of the water infrastructure is man-made and has assumed the importance of natural assets and other infrastructure is of course the natural assets themselves.

Recently, on 20 May, residents along Dandenong Creek were surprised to find a creek filled with white foam, reportedly from a toxic dumping. It is obvious that the minister and state Labor government are failing to address the increasing number of pollutants being illegally dumped into waterways, especially Dandenong Creek, Kananook Creek and Mordialloc Creek in Melbourne's south-east. Friends of Dandenong Creek vice-president Anthony Bigelow said that it was the 10th time this year that the creek had been subject to such dumping. The principal scientist of Bio2Lab, Dr David Sharley, said this was the fourth incident of this nature. He believes it was a deliberate act that the government is failing to address.

It is indeed disappointing that nowhere in the annual report of Melbourne Water is there any mention of preventing events such as what occurred at Dandenong Creek last weekend. Charlie Miller from the First Friends of Dandenong Creek group reminds us that it comes down to political will, and clearly Ms Neville and the member for Dandenong in the Assembly, Gabrielle Williams, have shown none. On page 30 of the report there is an explanation that facilitating the inclusion of waterways and land team relationship managers in regional emergency management is under discussion, enabling earlier intervention. But unfortunately that appears not to have occurred.

Similarly in the Assembly electorate of Carrum, Quiet Lakes residents in Patterson Lakes have been abandoned by the minister and by the local member, Sonia Kilkenny, in their fight against toxic algal blooms. There has been complete disinterest in this. There is a requirement for a pump which costs \$40 000 a year to be installed to ensure that there is circulation of water to prevent algal blooms, yet nothing has happened. This is after these matters have been doggedly pursued by the former member, and current Liberal candidate, for Carrum, Donna Bauer. It appears that the local Labor member, Sonia Kilkenny, has turned a deaf ear to constituents' concerns in Patterson Lakes despite report after report noting increased health risks associated with deteriorating water quality, causing such things as skin infections, irritations and possibly even blood infections. This was reported in the *Herald Sun* in December 2017.

City of Kingston councillor and Liberal candidate for the Assembly seat of Mordialloc, Geoff Gledhill, condemned Labor's water mismanagement, arguing that it is not surprising that yet again the Andrews government is fumbling its way through another issue of water mismanagement. Their total neglect of the Mordialloc Creek in terms of dredging and water quality mismanagement is just one part of their poor track record. After this neglect the Andrews government has no right to do anything other than apologise.

The health of Kananook Creek, in the Assembly electorate of Frankston, is another example of this mismanagement. The *Herald Sun* of 31 October 2017 reported that Kananook Creek Association president Paul Davies had said about the increase in pollution in the creek that:

... the finger pointing between authorities and government over who is responsible for the creek ...

should end.

Similarly, flooding associated with the Hallam drain is a very serious matter that needs speedy and long overdue intervention. This matter has been brought to my attention by Susan Serey, the Liberal candidate for the Assembly seat of Narre Warren South.

The Labor government has made their ineptitude abundantly clear. They have shown no interest whatsoever in fixing up the inland waterway system. Local communities who value these inland waterways, many of which have assumed the value of natural assets, are at breaking point. They have endured three and a half years of uncertainty. They are sick and tired of the vast amount of pollutants and waste dumped into these waterways.

Labor MPs have been completely silent despite holding the future of Victorian waterways in their hands. Unfortunately the 2016–17 Melbourne Water annual report shows that the minister has no plan. The reason is simple: neither Ms Neville nor the Labor government care about these issues. I am sure that if Melbourne Water is —

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Purcell) —
Thank you, Mrs Peulich.

Mrs PEULICH — given the leadership and the tools necessary to protect our waterways, they will be able to act, but under Labor, under the supervision of Ms Neville and under the supervision of local Labor MPs, nothing is being done.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Purcell) — Thank you, Mrs Peulich.

Department of Treasury and Finance: budget papers 2018–19

Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria) (17:19) — The Victorian 2018–19 state budget is a big disappointment for my constituents in Western Victoria Region. It delivers no relief from the ongoing tax hikes this government has shovelled out, now 35 per cent more under the Daniel Andrews government. The budget opens the door for more taxes, and the increase in the fire services levy next year will increase it to approximately 40 per cent. The budget pushes us further down the road to more debt. While this government will herald the budget as a wonder child of Labor's making, regional Victorians will simply be wondering what is in it for them.

One hundred and fifty-three million dollars has been highlighted for the Geelong city deal. Just \$10.8 million of that will be forthcoming this financial year; the rest is in the never-never. But how much of that goes to the much-needed Geelong convention centre, how much goes to the Shipwreck Coast master plan and how much to other city improvement projects? The budget does not specify. Without the detail or desire, the convention centre may get none of that funding. It is a project on a promise, worthy of a photo shoot, a couple of headlines and a day trip out of Melbourne to Geelong, but not the funding. If that funding ever does come, and if the project follows the Labor way, it will cost a great deal more than the indicated budget. There will be blowouts. This Andrews government has managed to achieve an extraordinary \$25 billion in infrastructure blowouts — the level crossing removal project alone sitting at more than \$3 billion over budget, and it is a long way from finished. The north-east link has blown out by \$11.5 billion and that is without one dollar in this budget to actually build the road.

Closer to home, the cost of building the Drysdale bypass has swollen by \$15 million, apparently due to market conditions that others in the world have been able to foresee, just not this government. This massive \$25 billion blowout has real ramifications. It could have built 25 new royal children's hospitals or 1500 new police stations. For places like Drysdale, desperately in need of a swimming facility and water park, this wastage and mismanagement really means something.

For commuters from Geelong on the sardine service to Melbourne this wastage means no money for a station car park. It means no money to back the federal government's input to make the duplication of the

Waurm Ponds to South Geelong line happen — another project much talked about but still sitting on someone's desk somewhere. The federal government alone has committed \$150 million to the project, but there is not a cent from the state government.

It simply reminds us of the way the Andrews government has dealt with the moving of the stabling yards from North Geelong to Waurm Ponds. Again there was much fanfare and trumpet blowing, but this project is going nowhere, and the \$115 million resembles another blowout just waiting to happen. The \$50 million to investigate the electrification of the Geelong–Melbourne rail line is good money, but we do not need another study to tell us it is needed. We know it is needed; just make it happen.

Our roads continue to crumble. Described as some of the worst in the state, they will get a little attention but not enough, given the state of regional disrepair this government has allowed during its term. The \$100 million for regional councils for roads is a token gesture. The government slashed the very valuable and highly respected \$160 million country roads and bridges funding program. The Matthew Guy soon-to-be government has committed to \$1 million per year being provided to 40 regional councils every year.

If it were serious about safety, including safety on our waters, this government would also have funded the remaining part of what is needed to complete the Geelong waterfront safe harbour project. Just \$3.5 million would have secured the completion of the whole current stage. It is another example of what billions of wasted dollars could have otherwise achieved.

There are sporting grounds across Geelong, the Bellarine Peninsula and western Victoria that are crying out for better facilities, like change rooms for girls. These are basic facilities that enable a community to access the sporting, social and health benefits that come from involvement in local sporting clubs, but it is hard to pay for these things and pay for fat cat bureaucrats at the same time.

Daniel Andrews has overseen an escalation in bureaucracy, starting with burgeoning numbers in his own office. Having set such a top-heavy example, his effort has filtered down through all the departmental ranks. There are now 24 per cent more bureaucrats under this Premier, and public sector wages have amplified by 38 per cent in four years, costing Victorians more than \$7 billion since this government came to office. If Victorians could see the positive results of that, they might understand. Given those

results are not obvious, Victorians have a right and a duty to ask what is happening.

In schools, in the past year alone the number of public servants hired by the Department of Education and Training has increased by 18 per cent, adding 411 full-time staff at a cost of at least \$38 million. Just 370 extra principals and teachers were employed despite the booming population growth of nearly 150 000 a year.

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

Mr RAMSAY — There will be another chapter of this contribution, Acting President, when we get to the budget papers — hopefully tomorrow.

Department of Treasury and Finance: budget papers 2018–19

Ms BATH (Eastern Victoria) (17:24) — I would like to speak on budget paper 3 of the 2018–19 budget papers this afternoon, and my comments relate to the forestry industry and in particular the fact that VicForests must, as part of their statutory requirements, report and provide audits and a corporate plan et cetera. They will, by law, have to report the facts. Last week a member of this house — a member of the Greens — came out with the most outlandish and ridiculous comments on social media that I have ever seen. This member of the Greens published a Facebook post that stated that five Leadbeater's possums were killed for every ream of Reflex paper.

We all come into this place with a particular slant and a particular agenda. That is why we are here, whether we are part of a major party or a micro-party. To say the most ridiculous things on a social media page is classified as hyperbole, but I classify that statement as absolute garbage, so I am here to provide a bit of context around the truth. To put up rubbish like that is disrespectful to those thousands of people who work both in government departments and in the forestry industry — in the plantation industry and the native timber industry — those who gained a science degree because they had a passion about the forest and the environment and who are working in a whole range of departments and in industry and business.

The Australian Paper company are totally committed to being responsible managers of our resource. They have to comply with and are endorsed by the Programme for the Endorsement for Forest Certification and the Forest Stewardship Council, established back in 1993 to promote worldwide forest management. Let us look at

the facts. Australian Paper receives approximately two-thirds of its raw material from the timber plantation industry — a positive regrowth timber industry. Their resource also includes about 33 per cent or thereabouts from the native forest timber industry.

Of that native forest, let us note that 94 per cent of it is locked away and untouchable. It is retained in national parks and state parks for community use; it is not going to be harvested. Of the 6 per cent that is left, there is an 80-year rotation on that harvestable timber. That equates to roughly 450 000 hectares; that is 6 per cent. After conservation values have been taken into account and biodiversity values have been taken into account in a multilayered process, approximately 3000 hectares are harvested annually. That equates to 0.04 per cent of all of the trees across the state, and this is a resource that can be regrown. There is no old-growth forest taken into this harvesting.

If we also look at HVP Plantations and other plantations, we see that there is stringent and proper regulation around this, and this provides the resource for Australian Paper. Australian Paper is, in many ways, really at the forefront of renewable resources and resources for converting energy from waste materials. Across the rest of the world it is happening. However, in Australia we are lagging behind, and Australian Paper is looking to take our rubbish — Melbourne's rubbish and Gippsland's rubbish — and turn it into energy so that it is able to conduct its manufacturing process. This is at the forefront of adaptability and innovation. I think it is actually a slap in the face to all those people who are employed in our region and employed in Gippsland to have this sort of thing said to them. That person also got a whack back from a number of people in my electorate, and justifiably so.

In closing, jobs are important in our region. Australian Paper is important in our region, and it is being highly responsible. It produces a great deal of recycled paper. In fact I use only Reflex recycled paper in my office, supporting local jobs and supporting a responsible, sustainable timber industry.

Department of Treasury and Finance: budget papers 2018–19

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) (17:29) — Today in the reports section I wish to deal with the state budget 2018–19. I am particularly interested in a number of areas that the state government is very active in at the moment. We have a very, very left-wing state government. It is a nasty government, it is a harsh government and it is very much focused on attacking private businesses and those who have invested capital.

We have seen what Daniel Andrews and his government have done to the taxi industry, destroying the value of licences on one day in October last year. Those who had invested and perhaps purchased licences at government behest in a regulated industry actually had the value of those licences destroyed in a single day. Anyone can now buy a taxi licence for \$52.90.

The truth of course is that the government have continued this extraordinary attack on hardworking small business people and private families. They have now moved on to the bus industry. You can see that bus patronage can be improved, and we all are in favour of seeing value for taxpayers and in favour of seeing improved bus services both in the country and in the very big, growing city of Melbourne. What we are not interested in is seeing a nasty vendetta by Labor and the minister in particular as they attack private bus service operators across the state.

We have seen in metropolitan Melbourne the approach that is adopted. The minister gave assurances. She said that indeed there was no plan to nationalise bus operations, but of course now we know there is. We have seen the contracts. We have seen the arrangements that actually lay out in black and white what Daniel Andrews and his minister propose to do to the bus industry. Longstanding family bus businesses are being forced to confront a very difficult decision: either go out of business in the next few months or sign the contract. That means that your assets — the buses you own, the intellectual property, the depot that the bus line owns — are all to be transferred to the government or their nominee at a future point. Is it in five years time or six or seven? Whichever, you sign the contract and you are actually signing away the assets of private bus companies, some of which have been in family operation for 50, 60 or 70 years, with assets built up.

A lot of the private bus families just say, 'Actually, our business is not for sale. We have no desire to sell our business. We don't want to sell our business. We want to keep operating our bus services and doing so in a way that supports and adds value for our local community'. I have spoken to many of the bus operators, both in the country and in metropolitan Melbourne. They are very prepared to negotiate. They are very prepared to work with local communities. They are very prepared to work with the government of the day to deliver better bus services and good value bus services. What they are not prepared to do is have their assets nationalised.

This is like a blast from the past. Some remember the old Melbourne & Metropolitan Tramways Board. This

is like a blast back further; it is back into ancient history. It is the nationalisation agenda, taking private businesses and nationalising them for some ideological, extreme purpose. Goodness gracious, what is going on here? Daniel Andrews and his harsh left-wing government are actually seeking to nationalise the assets of private family bus companies.

The minister has said that this will not apply in this country. Well, nobody believes that for a moment. If they are successful in nationalising the private bus companies in metropolitan Melbourne this year and the Andrews government are re-elected, they will no doubt move on to the country bus contracts in the year following. Nobody should be under any illusions, and I do not think anyone is. Nobody believes that in delivering that service output for buses, which is funded by public money, the government ought to be doing anything other than negotiating a good-quality deal, a sensible deal, with private bus companies. They ought not to be seeking to nationalise a whole industry in this way. It is truly a bizarre step that they are taking.

Who believes for one moment that long term the community will get better value out of having a government-run, nationalised bus service, the Andrews Bus Line? I see that that is exactly where they are headed. The community are unhappy and the bus companies are saying no, and they are standing up and fighting. And they should be.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Agriculture) — I move:

That the house do now adjourn.

Palliative care

Ms WOOLDRIDGE (Eastern Metropolitan) (17:35) — My adjournment matter tonight is for the Minister for Health, and the action I seek is that she match the Liberal-Nationals commitment to increase funding for palliative care significantly, because this government's recent half-hearted investment in palliative care still fails to meet the needs of thousands of Victorians who want to genuinely have the choice to die at home with their friends, family and other loved ones. Still too many do not have that choice.

This week is National Palliative Care Week, a week which encourages people to plan ahead for end of life by thinking about what matters most to them and discussing this with their loved ones and health professionals. Death is obviously a normal but very challenging part of life, and palliative care aims to ease

this process. By treating people's symptoms and supporting their independence, palliative care can dramatically improve the quality of a person's final stages of life, and that is why thinking about what matters most, especially this week, National Palliative Care Week, is so important.

Many Victorians wish to spend the final part of their life surrounded by loved ones and family, and many wish to do so in the comfort of their own home. Yet under Daniel Andrews, thinking about what matters most will not make it a reality. A number of Victorians are still unable to access palliative care in their home even if that is for them what matters most.

On the other hand, a Liberal-Nationals government, if elected at the end of the year, would significantly expand the investment in palliative care services and provide that genuine opportunity for Victorians to have the choice about passing away at home with the support that matters to them. The package includes a significant expansion of specialist palliative care medical and nursing services for community palliative care clients, especially in rural and regional Victoria, and a significant investment in community palliative care provided in the home, including overnight care. Respite is often very much needed and very much welcomed. It does include in-home respite and carer support as well as enhanced linkages to after-hours support, such as GPs and pharmacists.

There is a significant education and workforce development program to recruit and train skilled palliative care workers and a community awareness and education campaign to assist Victorians to understand the availability and benefits of palliative care, including to under-represented groups such as rural and regional Victorians, for people with non-cancer-related illness, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and Indigenous Victorians. This will be overseen by an end-of-life ministerial council.

Daniel Andrews's half-hearted investment that was forced in order to get the voluntary assisted dying bill through means that thousands of Victorians still miss out on this vital care and vital support. I ask the minister to match the Liberal-Nationals funding commitment to boost palliative care in this state.

Yarra Valley Water waste-to-energy facility

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) (17:38) — My adjournment matter is directed to Lisa Neville in her role as Minister for Water. Last Friday I visited a Yarra Valley Water treatment plant, not particularly to see the treatment plant but to see the power plant that powers

that treatment plant. This is a power plant that runs on biogas. Waste food from supermarkets and other types of waste products, such as grease from grease traps at different restaurants, end up at the plant. They are fed into a hopper, mixed up into a certain sludge and put into a vat. That vat produces methane gas, which is captured and then sent on to power two large generators which have the capacity to power the plant. About 25 per cent of the power from the two methane generators is needed to power the treatment plant, and the other 75 per cent is sent into the grid. The resultant resolution from this chemical compound then ends up sold to a company that uses it and makes fertiliser out of it. This is an amazing treatment plant. Yarra Valley Water has aspirations to have a similar power plant at their treatment plant in Lilydale in the future. The action I would seek from the minister is the she support, in any way that she can, Yarra Valley Water to have a second power plant of this type at the Lilydale treatment plant.

Nixon Street–Goulburn Valley Highway, Shepparton

Ms LOVELL (Northern Victoria) (17:40) — My adjournment matter tonight is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and it is regarding the need to upgrade the traffic control system at the Nixon Street intersection with Wyndham Street in Shepparton, which is an intersection on the A39 Goulburn Valley Highway. The action I seek is that the minister ensures the immediate installation of a traffic signal pole with an outreach arm on Nixon Street at the intersection of the A39 Goulburn Valley Highway, which is Wyndham Street, specifically on the south-east corner of the intersection and applicable to the westbound traffic in Nixon Street.

Wyndham Street is part of the A39 Goulburn Valley Highway as it travels through the city of Shepparton. The intersection of Nixon and Wyndham streets is controlled with traffic signals facing in all four directions. Traffic signals facing north, south and east are attached to a pole with an outreach arm, placing the signal high in the air in clear view of motorists. Traffic travelling west in Nixon Street approaching Wyndham Street does not face a traffic signal attached to an outreach arm. These motorists are forced to rely on traffic signals at normal ground level on either side of the road. One of the traffic signals facing westbound traffic is obstructed from view because of a tree.

The intersection directly to the west of Wyndham Street and Nixon Street is Welsford and Nixon streets. Greater Shepparton City Council have recently installed traffic control signals at this intersection. The Welsford Street

installation includes a traffic signal with an outreach arm in the air facing westbound traffic in Nixon Street. This particular signal is causing confusion for westbound traffic as it is more visible to motorists approaching the Wyndham Street intersection than the actual lights controlling that intersection. Last week a motorist drove through a red light at Wyndham Street, possibly because the light was green on the Welsford Street intersection and was more visible to them than the red light at the Wyndham Street intersection. A truck collided with the motorist's vehicle, and she was hospitalised with three broken ribs.

To avert further confusion and potential serious injury collisions in the future, an upgrade to the traffic signals is required at the intersection of Nixon Street and Wyndham Street for westbound traffic in Nixon Street. The installation of a traffic signal with an outreach arm at the intersection facing westbound traffic will improve signal visibility and safety for all motorists. The action that I seek is for the minister to ensure the immediate installation of a traffic signal pole with an outreach arm on Nixon Street at the intersection of the Goulburn Valley Highway, specifically on the south-east corner of the intersection and applicable to westbound traffic in Nixon Street.

Sunbury after-hours emergency services

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) (17:43) — I raise this evening a matter for the attention of the Minister for Health. On 21 November last year I asked a constituency question of the minister, and it concerned providing a much-needed after-hours emergency clinic in Sunbury. I have received today six months later a response from the minister, and given that it is six months later I thought I might have actually got a better response than I have. It is obvious from the response from this minister that she probably does not have much idea where Sunbury is, because she talks about the Northern Hospital, which is at Epping, she talks about the Broadmeadows Hospital Surgery Centre, which is obviously at Broadmeadows, and she talks about the health service that covers Melton and also Bacchus March. Where that leaves Sunbury, I am not at all sure. She does in fact tell us in the last paragraph of her response that:

After-hours home doctor visits are provided by the National Home Doctor Service who bulk-bill to Sunbury.

That is not exactly what we were after, to understate things somewhat. The fact of the matter is that Sunbury is a rapidly growing community. There are many, many aged people in Sunbury, as well as many, many families. We have a situation where the population of

Sunbury will double in the next decade or so, and this service is absolutely needed. For the minister to dismiss the need that Sunbury has in this way is an insult to Sunbury and every resident of Sunbury and surrounds. I am talking about the people in Bulla, the people in Diggers Rest and even the people in the Macedon Ranges, who regard Sunbury as somewhat of a regional centre as well. I am really struggling to understand who was advising the minister. Whoever was advising the minister perhaps should move on, because this response that I received six months down the track is totally and absolutely insufficient and probably one of the worst responses I have had from any minister on any constituency question during the term of this Parliament.

I ask the minister to put together a review and give some serious consideration to providing this much-needed after-hours emergency centre for Sunbury. It is desperately needed by, as I say, a growing population, and I do not think the people of Sunbury will be impressed at all by this response from the minister on this occasion.

Hazelwood mine rehabilitation

Ms BATH (Eastern Victoria) (17:46) — My adjournment matter this evening is for the Minister for Water, the Honourable Lisa Neville in the other place. It relates to the water that will potentially go into the Hazelwood mine as part of the mine rehabilitation. Last week I attended a breakfast by Engie, the company that is responsible for the rehabilitation of the mine at present, and it provided a lovely, glowing picture there of the total Hazelwood mine filled with water and lovely landscape around the outside. One of the comments that morning was that the space would be filled and it would take approximately between 12 to 16 years. The figure, I believe, was around 15 gigitalitres of water that would end up filling that system.

Professor Rae Mackay is the rehabilitation commissioner, and he also has responsibility around this. After speaking with him I know the direction that he is taking is to fill that space in for safety reasons. I know there are a number of people in my community who are saying, 'What other options are available? How can this be used? How can the resource be used?', and I am not sure that the company or the government at present is seriously considering any other option.

But my issue relates to the huge volume of water that will be required to fill that void. It is said that at the present time it will be twice the quantity of water that is used in the Central Gippsland region in terms of town water supply, industry, agriculture and the like. So my

interest lies around how that water will be used. Will it be recycled, diverted or aquifer water? The action I seek from the minister is to provide any modelling that the government has already done about how this water will be transferred into that space and where it will come from. Will there be any effects on the town water supply and, as I said, on agricultural pursuits in that region or on industry? What mitigation measures are they going to use when moving large quantities of water into that space over a period of time for the aquifers below? We have had a lot of conversation in the past about preserving the quality of our water and our aquifers, so I ask the minister to provide all and any modelling that this Labor government has done in relation to that very important resource in the Latrobe Valley.

Building cladding replacement

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) (17:49) — My matter is for the attention of the Minister for Planning in the other place, and it concerns the issue of cladding. I note that there are some announcements in the budget and that there is a task force that is proceeding with respect to the cladding matter jointly chaired by former Premier Ted Baillieu and former Deputy Premier John Thwaites. I put on record that, following earlier questions of mine about Mr Thwaites's involvement on a national body that sets standards for products, he has subsequently stepped down from that body. I welcome that and the removal of the apparent conflict of interest, although I note that given he approved many of the products in that national role, he is still in fact compromised by the role reviewing the situation with cladding from a Victorian perspective at this point.

But the way going forward is the most important here, and I am in possession of a letter from Kevin and Jennifer Opie of Williams Road, South Yarra. They are a couple, and I am going to quote directly from this letter:

We are hoping that you might be able to provide us with some help to solve a serious problem which we have at the moment. Our apartment building has been identified as having illegal cladding which the VBA —

the Victorian Building Authority —

has ordered us to replace. We bought the property some six years ago with funds from the sale of our family home. We are both retired aged pensioners and do not have the necessary funds, perhaps \$50 000, to pay for the cladding replacement. We cannot sell the property with VBA building orders on it and at our age a normal loan is out of the question.

We understand that fire safety is of the utmost importance but when a plan of action was decided upon, surely a government

should have planned for and budgeted for some financial assistance for people like us.

This predicament is causing us huge stress and health problems. We are hoping that you might be able to suggest a solution.

Alas, I am not the minister. The minister is Minister Wynne, and that is why I am raising this letter for Minister Wynne's attention. But this is not on behalf of just the Opie family; it is a series of people — many, many thousands across our metropolitan areas — who are in buildings that have issues surrounding the cladding. Each is particular, each is different, and a solution will need to be provided that will require considerable expenditure of resources. In some cases they may have recourse to legal steps, which are necessarily complex and slow, with respect to builders. In other cases they may have recourse to other legal steps, and I cannot imagine it is long before the regulatory failure of the VBA and its predecessors comes to the fore. So what I ask of the minister is to take action to help people like the Opie family to make sure that there is a solution for people in financial distress through no fault of their own with respect to cladding.

Mordialloc police resources

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) (17:52) — I raise an adjournment matter this evening for the attention of the Minister for Police. Postcode 3195 for Mordialloc has seen an increase of 86.8 per cent in crime under the Andrews government, Aspendale Gardens has seen a 57.3 per cent increase in crime under Daniel Andrews and Parkdale has seen a 24.9 per cent increase in crime under Daniel Andrews.

I have received representation directly myself and also through Geoff Gledhill, a Kingston councillor but also the Liberal candidate for the Assembly electorate of Mordialloc, about the police presence in and around the Epsom estate but also more broadly through that part of Bayside from concerned residents who want to see a stronger police presence, a concern heightened as a result of some recent serious alleged crimes that have taken place. Of course this is a matter for which the Chief Commissioner of Police must deploy police resources, but it is important that the minister and the chief commissioner understand the level of community concern about crime, perceptions of safety and the strong desire for a visible police presence in this area.

In response to the representations I have received, and in response to the representations Mr Gledhill has received and his advocacy, the action I would seek is that the Minister for Police work with the chief

commissioner to provide as strong a visible police presence as possible in and around the Epsom estate and more broadly through Mordialloc and that part of Bayside.

Responses

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Agriculture)

(17:54) — I have adjournment matters this evening from seven members: Ms Wooldridge for the Minister for Health, Mr Leane for the Minister for Water, Mr Finn for the Minister for Health, Ms Bath for the Minister for Water, Mr Davis for the Minister for Planning, Mr O’Donohue for the Minister for Police and Ms Lovell for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety.

I might just add that Mr Leane was listening intently, as was I, to Ms Lovell’s contribution and providing all manner of expert commentary about the matter that Ms Lovell raised, because before being in the Parliament Mr Leane was a traffic light technician. Members who have been here for a while will know that, because they will have heard Mr Leane talk about that work in his inaugural speech, but members who have been here a little less time might not. If anybody needs to know anything about traffic lights and their maintenance and management, Mr Leane is your guy. In any event, we will send that question, as Ms Lovell requested, to the responsible minister, who perhaps might also benefit from a chat with Mr Leane about how such things are put together and how they work.

I have a written response to an adjournment debate matter raised by Mr Davis on 27 March 2018.

The PRESIDENT — On that basis the house stands adjourned until tomorrow.

House adjourned 5.56 p.m.

