

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

FIFTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

WEDNESDAY, 5 JUNE 2019

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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

Premier.	The Hon. DM Andrews, MP
Deputy Premier and Minister for Education.	The Hon. JA Merlino, MP
Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Industrial Relations.	The Hon. TH Pallas, MP
Minister for Transport Infrastructure.	The Hon. JM Allan, MP
Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Youth Justice and Minister for Victim Support	The Hon. BA Carroll, MP
Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, and Minister for Solar Homes	The Hon. L D’Ambrosio, MP
Minister for Child Protection and Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers	The Hon. LA Donnellan, MP
Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Equality and Minister for Creative Industries	The Hon. MP Foley, MP
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Special Minister of State, Minister for Priority Precincts and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs.	The Hon. GW Jennings, MLC
Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, and Minister for Suburban Development	The Hon. M Kairouz, MP
Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services.	The Hon. J Mikakos, MLC
Minister for Water and Minister for Police and Emergency Services. ...	The Hon. LM Neville, MP
Minister for Jobs, Innovation and Trade, Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, and Minister for Racing	The Hon. MP Pakula, MP
Minister for Roads, Minister for Road Safety and the TAC, and Minister for Fishing and Boating	The Hon. JL Pulford, MLC
Assistant Treasurer and Minister for Veterans.	The Hon. RD Scott, MP
Minister for Local Government and Minister for Small Business	The Hon. A Somyurek, MLC
Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Agriculture and Minister for Resources	The Hon. J Symes, MLC
Minister for Training and Skills, and Minister for Higher Education . . .	The Hon. GA Tierney, MLC
Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, Minister for Women and Minister for Youth	The Hon. G Williams, MP
Minister for Planning, Minister for Housing and Minister for Multicultural Affairs.	The Hon. RW Wynne, MP
Cabinet Secretary	Ms M Thomas, MP

Legislative Council committees

Economy and Infrastructure Standing Committee

Mr Barton, Mr Elasmarr, Mr Finn, Mr Gepp, Mrs McArthur, Mr Quilty and Ms Terpstra.

Participating members: Ms Bath, Dr Cumming, Mr Davis, Mr Limbrick, Mr Meddick, Mr Ondarchie, Mr Rich-Phillips and Ms Wooldridge.

Environment and Planning Standing Committee

Mr Atkinson, Ms Bath, Mr Bourman, Mr Hayes, Mr Limbrick, Mr Meddick, Mr Melhem, Dr Ratnam, Ms Taylor and Ms Terpstra.

Participating members: Ms Crozier, Dr Cumming, Mr Davis, Mrs McArthur and Mr Quilty.

Legal and Social Issues Standing Committee

Ms Garrett, Dr Kieu, Ms Lovell, Ms Maxwell, Mr Ondarchie, Ms Patten, Dr Ratnam and Ms Vaghela.

Participating members: Mr Barton, Ms Bath, Ms Crozier, Dr Cumming, Mr Erdogan, Mr Grimley, Mr Limbrick, Mr O'Donohue and Mr Quilty.

Privileges Committee

Mr Atkinson, Mr Bourman, Ms Crozier, Mr Elasmarr, Mr Grimley, Mr Jennings, Mr Rich-Phillips, Ms Shing and Ms Tierney.

Procedure Committee

The President, the Deputy President, Ms Crozier, Mr Davis, Mr Grimley, Dr Kieu, Ms Patten, Ms Pulford and Ms Symes.

Joint committees

Dispute Resolution Committee

Council: Mr Bourman, Mr Davis, Mr Jennings, Ms Symes and Ms Wooldridge.

Assembly: Ms Allan, Ms Hennessy, Mr Merlino, Mr Pakula, Mr R Smith, Mr Walsh and Mr Wells.

Electoral Matters Committee

Council: Mr Atkinson, Mrs McArthur, Mr Meddick, Mr Melhem, Ms Lovell and Mr Quilty.

Assembly: Ms Blandthorn, Ms Hall, Dr Read and Ms Spence.

House Committee

Council: The President (*ex officio*), Mr Bourman, Mr Davis, Ms Lovell, Ms Pulford and Ms Stitt.

Assembly: The Speaker (*ex officio*), Mr T Bull, Ms Crugnale, Ms Edwards, Mr Fregon, Ms Sandell and Ms Staley.

Integrity and Oversight Committee

Council: Mr Grimley and Ms Shing.

Assembly: Mr Halse, Mr McGhie, Mr Rowswell, Mr Taylor and Mr Wells.

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee

Council: Ms Stitt.

Assembly: Ms Blandthorn, Mr Hibbins, Mr Maas, Mr D O'Brien, Ms Richards, Mr Richardson, Mr Riordan and Ms Vallenge.

Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee

Council: Mr Gepp, Mrs McArthur, Ms Patten and Ms Taylor.

Assembly: Mr Burgess, Ms Connolly and Ms Kilkenny.

Heads of parliamentary departments

Assembly: Clerk of the Legislative Assembly: Ms B Noonan

Council: 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-NINTH PARLIAMENT—FIRST SESSION

President

The Hon. SL LEANE

Deputy President

The Hon. WA LOVELL

Acting Presidents

Mr Bourman, Mr Elasmarr, Mr Gepp, Mr Melhem, Ms Patten

Leader of the Government

The Hon. GW JENNINGS

Deputy Leader of the Government

The Hon. J SYMES

Leader of the Opposition

The Hon. DM DAVIS

Deputy Leader of the Opposition

Ms G CROZIER

Member	Region	Party	Member	Region	Party
Atkinson, Mr Bruce Norman	Eastern Metropolitan	LP	Maxwell, Ms Tania Maree	Northern Victoria	DHJP
Barton, Mr Rodney Brian	Eastern Metropolitan	TMP	Meddick, Mr Andy	Western Victoria	AJP
Bath, Ms Melina Gaye	Eastern Victoria	Nats	Melhem, Mr Cesar	Western Metropolitan	ALP
Bourman, Mr Jeffrey	Eastern Victoria	SFFP	Mikakos, Ms Jenny	Northern Metropolitan	ALP
Crozier, Ms Georgina Mary	Southern Metropolitan	LP	O'Donohue, Mr Edward John	Eastern Victoria	LP
Cumming, Dr Catherine Rebecca	Western Metropolitan	Ind	Ondarchie, Mr Craig Philip	Northern Metropolitan	LP
Dalidakis, Mr Philip ¹	Southern Metropolitan	ALP	Patten, Ms Fiona Heather	Northern Metropolitan	FPRP
Davis, Mr David McLean	Southern Metropolitan	LP	Pulford, Ms Jaala Lee	Western Victoria	ALP
Elasmarr, Mr Nazih	Northern Metropolitan	ALP	Quilty, Mr Timothy	Northern Victoria	LDP
Erdogan, Mr Enver ²	Southern Metropolitan	ALP	Ratnam, Dr Samantha Shantini	Northern Metropolitan	Greens
Finn, Mr Bernard Thomas C	Western Metropolitan	LP	Rich-Phillips, Mr Gordon Kenneth	South Eastern Metropolitan	LP
Garrett, Ms Jane Furneaux	Eastern Victoria	ALP	Shing, Ms Harriet	Eastern Victoria	ALP
Gepp, Mr Mark	Northern Victoria	ALP	Somyurek, Mr Adem	South Eastern Metropolitan	ALP
Grimley, Mr Stuart James	Western Victoria	DHJP	Stitt, Ms Ingrid	Western Metropolitan	ALP
Hayes, Mr Clifford	Southern Metropolitan	SA	Symes, Ms Jaclyn	Northern Victoria	ALP
Jennings, Mr Gavin Wayne	South Eastern Metropolitan	ALP	Taylor, Ms Nina	Southern Metropolitan	ALP
Kieu, Dr Tien Dung	South Eastern Metropolitan	ALP	Terpstra, Ms Sonja	Eastern Metropolitan	ALP
Leane, Mr Shaun Leo	Eastern Metropolitan	ALP	Tierney, Ms Gayle Anne	Western Victoria	ALP
Limbrick, Mr David	South Eastern Metropolitan	LDP	Vaghela, Ms Kaushaliya Virjibhai	Western Metropolitan	ALP
Lovell, Ms Wendy Ann	Northern Victoria	LP	Wooldridge, Ms Mary Louise Newling	Eastern Metropolitan	LP
McArthur, Mrs Beverley	Western Victoria	LP			

¹ Resigned 17 June 2019

² Appointed 15 August 2019

Party abbreviations

AJP—Animal Justice Party; ALP—Labor Party; DHJP—Derryn Hinch's Justice Party;

FPRP—Fiona Patten's Reason Party; Greens—Australian Greens; Ind—Independent;

LDP—Liberal Democratic Party; LP—Liberal Party; Nats—The Nationals; SA—Sustainable Australia;

SFFP—Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party; TMP—Transport Matters Party

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Wednesday, 5 June 2019

The PRESIDENT (Hon. SL Leane) took the chair at 9.35 a.m. and read the prayer.

Announcements

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The PRESIDENT (09:36): On behalf of the Victorian state Parliament I acknowledge the Aboriginal peoples, the traditional custodians of this land which has served as a significant meeting place of the First People of Victoria. I acknowledge and pay respect to the elders of the Aboriginal nations of Victoria past and present and welcome any elders and members of the Aboriginal community who may visit or participate in the events or proceedings of the Parliament this week.

Papers

PAPERS

Tabled by Clerk:

Auditor-General's Report on Child and Youth Mental Health, June 2019 (*Ordered to be published*).

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

Banyule Planning Scheme—Amendment C154.

Banyule, Kingston, Manningham, Moreland, Stonnington, Whittlesea and Wyndham Planning Schemes—Amendment GC131.

Cardinia, Casey, Greater Geelong, Hobsons Bay, Melton, Moonee Valley, Nillumbik, Port of Melbourne, Port Phillip and Yarra Planning Schemes—Amendment GC128.

Hume Planning Scheme—Amendment C238.

Manningham Planning Scheme—Amendment C126.

Maribyrnong Planning Scheme—Amendment C160.

Mitchell Planning Scheme—Amendment C141.

Mornington Peninsula Planning Scheme—Amendment C260.

Surf Coast Planning Scheme—Amendment C131.

Whittlesea Planning Scheme—Amendment C239.

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994—Legislative instrument and related documents under section 16B in respect of an Order in Council of 28 May 2019 amending the transitional pricing rule under the Electricity Act 2000.

Business of the house

NOTICES OF MOTION

Notices given.

Members statements

LORNE P-12 COLLEGE

Ms TIERNEY (Western Victoria—Minister for Training and Skills, Minister for Higher Education) (09:43): Today I congratulate Lorne P-12 College for its outstanding achievement in engaging students in the Victorian certificate of applied learning (VCAL). Principal Shane Elevato and his staff deliver a program that is an exemplar to educators and schools in western Victoria. Their latest award, now among many, is the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority chair's award recognising high-quality VCAL teaching and leadership. Lorne P-12 is a regional and statewide leader in offering a hands-on alternative to the more academic VCE, succeeding in keeping more students at school through to year 12. Good VCAL teaching involves not just developing a connection with students but also engaging with the local community. In Lorne the business community has provided great support for the school through vocational opportunities for students.

STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH

Ms TIERNEY: That same emphasis on supporting students is reflected in a really significant initiative that will see schools having dedicated mental health practitioners on site. The Andrews Labor government understands the challenges faced by regional communities, especially young people living in farming areas. All schools aim to support students' health and wellbeing, but welfare staff are sometimes frustrated in securing an ongoing response for students experiencing mental health issues, especially those who might slip under the radar while grappling with family issues, pressures of study or social media bullying. Colac Secondary College, Apollo Bay P-12 College and Lavers Hill K-12 College are among the more than 20 schools to benefit from these practitioners, complementing the schools' existing support services. Lorne P-12's achievements and the clear benefits of a great new program in other schools show this government is committed to providing the best educational opportunities.

WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

Mr HAYES (Southern Metropolitan) (09:45): My members statement is on World Environment Day. Today, as we celebrate World Environment Day, I draw to the house's attention the latest United Nations report on biodiversity. It has found that up to 1 million of the earth's estimated 8 million plant, animal and insect species are at imminent risk of extinction due to our relentless pursuit of economic growth. The report found that in the past 50 years human population has doubled and global trade grown tenfold, driving up the demands for energy and materials. Urban areas and roads have more than doubled since 1992, which has put our worldwide habitat under severe threat. There has been a 300 per cent increase in food crop production since 1970, with millions of acres of forests being destroyed worldwide—80 per cent of intact forests are being destroyed for palm oil.

The report suggests that we need to move away from growth economics to avert these risks posed by the interaction of habitat destruction, pollution and climate change. An obvious breakthrough would be an agreement to stabilise population, with each country, including Australia, agreeing to move to stabilise their own population. We must reduce our environmental footprint and ensure that we set population targets that are sustainable for our environment and our future.

LEONGATHA RAILWAY STATION

Ms GARRETT (Eastern Victoria) (09:47): Leongatha passengers have celebrated a win with the reopening of the public bathroom facilities at the Leongatha railway station. Bus patrons had been left to hold on whilst the public toilets at the V/Line bus stop were out of action. This was due to vandalism and issues with electrical work and no permanent power supply to the loo. Now, some of you may ask, 'Why is she talking about a toilet?'. But it is not just about a toilet; it is about much more than that. Having clean and working bathroom facilities at bus stops and train stations allows people to get from point A to point B comfortably. Without public bathroom facilities, passengers may be forced to find alternative bathrooms or face missing a service altogether. Many of us in this room know the importance of providing amenities for those who cannot wait, particularly small children, and of course we also need to consider the need of the elderly and those with a disability to access clean and working facilities.

Local transport advocates Fred Grace, Max Semken and Jeff Osborn all brought this pressing issue to our attention. Max worked closely with me and my office, and together we got onto the issue and got a good result. The toilets are now working again, and we can all breathe a sigh of relief. This is the type of community spirit that I love about my constituents in Eastern Victoria Region. They are passionate about local issues and about delivering for their local community. This is just one example, but an important one.

BUDGET 2019–20

Ms TAYLOR (Southern Metropolitan) (09:48): As it is World Environment Day, I thought I would zone in on the elements of the budget closer to home that support the environment because that makes sense, doesn't it? The \$154 million in the suburban parks program will create 6500 hectares of new parkland—that has got to be good. There is \$35 million to establish pocket parks in suburban Melbourne, and if I focus on Southern Metropolitan Region, they will be in Prahran, Albert Park, Bentleigh, Oakleigh and Caulfield. There is \$5 million for off-leash enclosed dog parks in Stonnington, Port Phillip, Boroondara, Glen Eira, Kingston and more—also very good and also good for the dogs.

Ms Shing: Yes.

Ms TAYLOR: Yes. Also, for protecting our pristine natural environment there is \$3 million to tackle the impacts of climate change along coastlines, supporting Coastcare Victoria volunteers and providing grants to local communities. The budget delivers \$35 million to strengthen and diversify Victoria's waste and recycling industry, establishing contract models, promoting and developing new markets and ensuring strong regulatory oversight. Now, on solar homes, we have a positive plan for solar, investing \$1.3 billion to make sure Victorians can take control and cut their power bills. This will enable 770 000 homes over the next decade to seek rebates, which kick off from 1 July, for solar panels, hot-water systems or battery storage, and there will be zero-interest loans so Victorian households can install half-price solar with no up-front costs. The other thing that I really love—the \$27.3 million bike infrastructure for St Kilda Road—will encourage more people to take their bike.

CATE MCQUILLEN AND HEWEY EUSTACE

Dr CUMMING (Western Metropolitan) (09:50): It seems fitting that I rise today on World Environment Day to speak on the work of multi-award-winning Cate McQuillen and her partner, Hewey, from Mememe productions. These change makers have produced the visually distinctive animation series *Dirtgirlworld* and the nature-driven live-action series *Get Grubby TV* for the ABC. Their life's work is to broaden and deepen awareness of sustainability and environmental issues. They know how to tell a story about caring for the environment—a story worth hearing and a story for all. Cate and Hewey believe that a joyful narrative helps young people understand the world around them and the impact that they are having. They utilise children's natural curiosity to move beyond viewing to doing. Together they have created a vast body of environmental educational projects for the Get Grubby program, an online early childhood sustainability curriculum project. They have created a recycling initiative, Rubbish ... Handle with Care, which was implemented in schools across New South Wales. For the benefit of our younger generations, I hope that this government will bring the same program that is used in New South Wales here as a resource for all schools in Victoria.

RAMADAN

Ms VAGHELA (Western Metropolitan) (09:52): I had the privilege of attending many iftar dinners during the holy month of Ramadan, including the one that was hosted by our Premier, the Honourable Daniel Andrews. I was joined by several parliamentarians, councillors, interfaith leaders and community leaders at each of the iftars. I had the honour of being a part of the iftar dinner organised by the Amafhh Federation and the iftar dinners organised by La Trobe University and the Islamic Council of Victoria. I represented the Minister for Multicultural Affairs, the Honourable Richard Wynne, at the iftar dinner organised by the East African Women's Foundation and the iftar dinner organised by the Dawoodi Bohra community.

Along with my parliamentary colleagues the Honourable Adem Somyurek and Katie Hall, I also attended the iftar dinner organised by the Australia Light Foundation in Tottenham. I was amazed to see the volunteers at this iftar work tirelessly to accommodate over 450 people from various ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

Each iftar was unique in its own way but also had the common theme of selflessness and unity. They promoted the real spirit of Ramadan—of social belonging, unity, brotherhood and equality before God. Gatherings like these truly uphold the commitment of the Andrews Labor government to nurture Victoria's vibrant multicultural and multifaith society. I look forward to supporting and attending such gatherings in the future.

HOMELESSNESS

Ms PATTEN (Northern Metropolitan) (09:53): Courtney Herron's tragic death still resonates with me now. It led me to deeply reflect: had she not been struggling with serious mental distress, had she not been suffering in isolation, had she not been homeless, would she still be with us today?

Housing and early intervention are vital. I was talking to my intern, and she revealed that in high school she knew of many students who suffered and are still suffering from intense mental distress and have displayed tendencies of homelessness, often leaving home without notice and not returning until one or two weeks later. She revealed that the students seeking assistance from the school's health office were told that, 'You know, everyone has these issues—you'll be fine'. But 27 680 young people aged just 12 to 24, according to the Salvation Army, are couch surfing or on the streets on any night. That is 23 per cent of our homeless.

Students suffering in silence are another reminder that we are just not doing enough. It is time we focused on early interventions to identify and support those at risk of mental health issues and homelessness in our youth. As I keep saying, a fence at the top of the cliff is far more effective than an ambulance at the bottom, and I would very much like to thank our intern, Freda Meng, who is a first-year politics student at Monash University and a very clever woman.

YOUTH SPACE LATROBE

Ms SHING (Eastern Victoria) (09:55): I rise today to congratulate every single volunteer member of the youth governance committee and committed person behind the scenes as part of Youth Space Latrobe on its success in recent years. We have seen through profound engagement, direct consultation and taking our instructions from people within the youth governance council that extraordinary change can happen, and this is now manifesting in all sorts of positive ways. It was wonderful to join the youth team for dinner during National Volunteer Week, and I congratulate them all on their efforts.

BLUE BALL GAME

Ms SHING: On another matter, it was an absolute privilege to attend the inaugural Blue Ball Game—indeed that is intentionally named to draw attention to prostate cancer research and development—at the Churchill Football Netball Club ground a couple of weeks ago to see Cowwarr go up against Churchill and to share with a room full of blokes my experiences in caring for and losing my brother to prostate cancer at the age of 42 around three years ago. This is a really important thing to focus on, and it is really a profound signal of greater engagement that we are now prepared to look our blokes in the eye and say that they need to take their health into their own hands, seek advice, information and treatment as often as they need and get informed about their health.

SMOKEFREE GIPPSLAND

Ms SHING: It was wonderful to head along to Traralgon's Gippsland Primary Health Network on World No Tobacco Day to launch the Smokefree Gippsland initiative to equip primary health carers and doctors with the information they need to have conversations about how best to assist those 29 000 people across Gippsland who continue to smoke and to give them the tools they need to achieve a smoke-free life.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Mr MEDDICK (Western Victoria) (09:56): Last week marked another woman's death at the hands of a violent man. Many spoke in this chamber of the need for change in how we raise and teach our young men to respect women and how a cultural paradigm shift is needed. At the same time a list began circulating on the internet of the best places to identify, stalk and pick up women at locations around Melbourne. The online 'hotspot' list, made by a so-called pick-up artist, teaches men where to go to practise their 'day game', including where to find a good 'turnover rate' for open targets such as foreign students and women likely to be walking the streets alone. The list also ranks young women in attractiveness out of 10, and even more disturbingly it refers to women as 'targets' and suggests foreigners are more likely to be receptive to a 'cold approach style' due to their inherent vulnerability in a new place.

It is just another example of the enormous way we have to go to change the culture of the way men treat women in everyday situations, and it begins with the little things we do and say and re-evaluating the comments we make that might seem harmless but do devalue and disrespect women. It means teaching boys and men that no does not mean 'convince me' and that rape culture begins with so-called locker room banter, unwanted advances and catcalling, and it means calling out our mates, no matter how uncomfortable it makes us feel. It is not the responsibility of women to fix the scourge of violence against them. It is up to us as men. I have made a commitment to do all I can to end this culture, and I call on every man in this chamber to do the same.

ALEX FRASER GROUP

Mr MELHEM (Western Metropolitan) (09:58): Last Friday, along with Minister D'Ambrosio, Ms Taylor and Ms Connolly in the other place, I had the pleasure of attending the opening of two groundbreaking recycling plants at the Alex Fraser Group facility in Laverton. These two plants play a major role in the growth of Victoria's circular economy, and it is a new era in the use of recycled material for the state. There are two plants: one is a new glass recycling plant, and the other is an asphalt recycling plant. The glass recycling plant will produce around 150 000 tonnes a year. Somewhere equivalent to 1 billion bottles of glass can be recycled and put to good use.

For a number of years I saw mountains of recycled glass in the Laverton area, particularly at the Visy plants and the Alex Fraser plants, but now we finally have a solution to actually use that material to build roads. I am pleased to say that some of that product is currently being used on Victoria's new roads—for example, in Metro Trains Melbourne projects and the Kororoit Creek Road level crossing removal project, which has used more than 900 tonnes of recycled glass. Some of the material has also been used in asphalt making. It is groundbreaking, and I want to congratulate the Alex Fraser Group on their efforts and congratulate the whole team, particularly their managing director, Peter Murphy. We are finally getting there in relation to the recycling issue and putting these recycled materials to good use.

ROAD SAFETY

Dr KIEU (South Eastern Metropolitan) (10:00): Last Friday I attended the road safety summit hosted by the Transport Accident Commission on behalf of the Victorian road safety partnership to discuss initiatives that will further reduce serious road trauma and address the current high rate of road trauma as well as focus on post-2020 initiatives. Participants included the Honourable Jaala Pulford, the Honourable Lisa Neville and some other members of this chamber. The major factors causing death and serious injury on our roads have been identified as speed, drugs and alcohol, fatigue and distractions, including those involved in mobile phone usage and texting. More often than not it is a combination of those factors.

Towards Zero represents a long-term achievable goal, with record low fatalities recorded in 2018. But to get there we will need the full arsenal of technology, safer vehicles, better roads, more suitable speed management, licensing and of course law enforcement. Foremost, we also require the appropriate shift

in the mindset of drivers, riders and road users. In times of war all sides of Parliament unite together. The fight against death and serious injury on our roads is no less than a war, a war that requires the cross-party, united support of every single member of this chamber and the other house. We need bold initiatives and courageous policies to win this war.

DOG PARKS

Ms STITT (Western Metropolitan) (10:01): Ms Taylor and I must be channelling one another this morning, because I too would like to note what a wonderful state budget this is for our four-legged friends. More than one in three Victorians own dogs, and more people are choosing to live in apartments or units without backyards. In our growing metropolitan regions it is so important that our pets have access to secure and safe parks to get the exercise they need and, importantly, the opportunity to socialise with other dogs so they can be good four-legged Victorian citizens. This budget delivers enclosed dog parks across 16 local government areas, including Boroondara, Casey, Darebin, Glen Eira, Hume, Kingston, Knox, Maroondah, Nillumbik, Port Phillip, Stonnington, Whitehorse and Wyndham. This is part of an overall \$5 million budget commitment. In my own region of Western Metropolitan Region off-leash enclosed dog parks will be delivered in the cities of Maribyrnong, Moonee Valley and Brimbank, and I look forward to Wilbur and Charlie having some new places to play thanks to this budget commitment.

Committees

ECONOMY AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

Reference

Mr BARTON (Eastern Metropolitan) (10:04): I move:

That this house requires the Economy and Infrastructure Committee to inquire into, consider and report, within 12 months, on Melbourne's public transport, in particular:

- (1) the expansion of the free tram system to include:
 - (a) Wellington Parade to Powlett Street, East Melbourne;
 - (b) Swanston Street to Elgin Street, Carlton;
 - (c) Royal Parade to College Crescent, Carlton;
 - (d) Flemington Road to Abbotsford Street, North Melbourne;
 - (e) St Kilda Road to Commercial Road, Prahran;
- (2) providing free fares for all full-time students;
- (3) removing fares for all Seniors Card holders;
- (4) new technologies that enable intelligent transport systems that improve the performance of the networks; and
- (5) the effects and benefits of dynamic public transport pricing.

I present this motion today because I have a sincere interest in improving public transport services across Victoria, particularly in Melbourne. As you know, my background is in the taxi and hire car industry, and I see this industry as an integral part of our public transport system. Our trams, trains and buses deliver services across the city and out into our regional areas, but as part of that system our commercial passenger vehicles deliver on the first and last mile and in particular for the most vulnerable—those who are sick, those who are frail, those who are young and at risk, the elderly and those travelling late at night.

I ask for this investigation to extend our free tram zone and offer free public transport to our students and our senior citizens because I believe it is a step toward changing the way people choose to get around this great city of ours. It is time we break the culture of using cars to get everywhere in Melbourne, especially when accessing services and events in the centre of the city. Making transport

to our universities, hospitals, major attractions and sporting precincts free at all times would make this network the obvious and best option for all who move around Melbourne.

The debate is not whether we should have more roads or public transport. We clearly need both, but much of our current planning focuses heavily on cars and we need to make a cultural shift. We need to help Melbourne people embrace public transport. We need to find ways to make sure public transport is the best option, the first option, when we travel to the city. Bringing your car into the CBD will not be the best option if our tram network is free.

The Australian Automobile Association 2018 *Road Congestion in Australia* report found that Melbourne had the sharpest decline of all Australian cities in average free-flow speeds from congestion over the period between 2014 and 2018, at 8 per cent. Depending on the metric used—either the percentage of free-flowing traffic or the percentage of speed limit met—the AAA found Melbourne is either the most congested or the second most congested city in Australia. Congestion in our city is a growing problem, and as the population of Melbourne increases over the next 30 years and as we strive to drive tourism, so will the demand for our public transport network grow. The congestion problem will grow with it.

Melbourne city is no longer just the grid and merely a place for 9 to 5. The city is a tourist destination, a thriving shopping precinct and a vibrant social hub of activity and events. It includes major health, education and sporting precincts, and it is also the home of a growing number of residents—people who choose to live right in its heart. Last year, 2018, total tourist spending in Melbourne was over \$18 billion, up almost 11 per cent from the previous year. There were over 31 million total visitors, almost 19 million domestic daytrippers, 10 million domestic visitors staying overnight and some 3 million international visitors staying overnight. This was an increase of 7 per cent on the previous year. The fastest growing category of visitor was the domestic overnight category, which saw an increase of nearly 8 per cent from the previous year. People from our regions and interstate are coming to Melbourne. Let us make it easy for them to leave their cars behind.

Extending the free tram zone encourages participation and access for tourists and locals alike and removes the need for them to consider bringing vehicles into the city. It also takes much of the confusion out of the process of getting around the city. While Myki is a staple for Melbourne residents, it is a challenge for visitors to the city, especially foreign visitors, and the cost of the card is an extra cost to a day's fare. Many of our key destinations for visitors to the city lie just outside the current free tram zone. Visitors have to get off the tram a stop early and walk or buy a Myki card to travel a single stop.

The Committee for Melbourne proposal to extend the free tram zone says that including key visitor experiences in the free tram zone would do a great deal to increase visitor spending to meet the city's vision for tourist spending to reach \$37 billion by 2025. Their proposal cites the National Gallery of Victoria, which estimates that the inclusion of the zone would lead to a 3 per cent increase in visitor numbers, amounting to an additional 75 000 visitors a year.

The proposed extension of the free tram zone extension will include our inner-city hospitals. This will support our needy, vulnerable, sick and infirm, their families and those who support them in medical treatments and hospital stays. It will provide better access for the thousands of staff, volunteers, students and visitors to the hospitals and the education precincts. Overcrowding and inflated parking costs at our city hospitals are a burden for visitors and staff. Giving free transport access to the hospitals in the inner city will take away some of this pressure.

The expansion of the free tram zone to the areas outlined in this motion will take in seven major hospitals otherwise currently excluded. By my count the hospital staff total approaches 30 000, plus another several thousand volunteers. The number of patients and visitors would be enormous. The hospitals include the Royal Children's Hospital, which has some 4000 staff and 600 volunteers; the Royal Women's Hospital, which employs 1500 staff and has 100 volunteers; the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre, with 2500 staff and 200 volunteers; and the Royal Melbourne Hospital, with 9000 staff

and 480 volunteers. And the free tram zone extension will include the Alfred, with over 9000 staff and 500 volunteers, the dental hospital with its 400 staff and the Melbourne Private Hospital. This motion would offer staff and volunteers an incentive to use public transport—a free alternative to driving to work.

The free tram zone will include Australia's premium higher education institution, the University of Melbourne, an institution employing 9000 staff and serving over 52 000 students or full-time equivalents. It will provide better access to RMIT University on the fringe of the current free tram zone. It will include some of the fantastic research institutes highly regarded at an international scale such as the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute, the Bio21 Molecular Science & Biotechnology Institute, the Murdoch Children's Research Centre, the Florey Institute of Neuroscience and Mental Health and the Alfred precinct. There will also be free trams to the city campuses of Monash University, the Baker Heart and Diabetes Institute and the Burnet Institute. Many of these health and academic organisations work together. An extended free tram zone will encourage and strengthen these programs and allow for better engagement among our leading health and academic professionals. These organisations are the centres of major partnerships between industry and academia. These important connections should be recognised and fostered by linking the central business and academic districts with free travel.

In recent years we have seen the free tram zone extended to include sporting venues during major events, such as the AFL Grand Final at the MCG, with additional trams and trains put on to service the extra travellers in this area. This has been a great success; it is also a necessary measure. The logistics of trying to police fare evasion on these services at these times would be impossible. The free tram extension proposed would include sporting grounds such as the MCG—home of the Collingwood Football Club—Olympic Park to the east and Princes Park and Royal Park to the north and west of the city. Landmarks such as the Melbourne Zoo, the Shrine of Remembrance, the Sidney Myer Music Bowl, Government House, the Royal Botanic Gardens, Alexandra Gardens and Fitzroy Gardens will be better accessed, along with the Victorian Arts Centre precinct and the National Gallery of Victoria. We want to encourage visitors to these areas; we want to encourage locals into these areas. It makes sense to encourage tram travel to these many major destinations and encourage everyone to enjoy what Melbourne has to offer.

Will there be a cost? Yes, but this is something Melbourne can afford. I have received some preliminary figures from the Parliamentary Budget Office to estimate the costs of extending the free tram network to cover the additional 6.1 kilometres. This free tram zone extension would affect 13 tram routes and could cost somewhere between \$4 million and \$5 million extra per year. However, keep in mind that while this figure accounts for free tram trips, it does not account for the free tram users who have already paid to travel into the city. If \$4 million to \$5 million is the cost of battling congestion in the city, it is not a lot to ask.

I spoke earlier about the investment we have in society in driving our cars. We love them, but we need to change that car culture and think longer term about the effects of driving our cars everywhere we go. Training our students to look at public transport as the first and best option to move about the city is a great way to effect change in our culture. By offering free public transport to all full-time students studying at our schools, universities and TAFEs we can build a new mindset about public transport use from a young age and set good habits in place. Likewise, our seniors, who face increasingly high costs of living, should be rewarded for a lifetime of contribution to our communities. Free transport for them would encourage their ongoing and active participation in their communities and in the wider Melbourne community that may otherwise not happen due to financial constraints and distance. Anything that supports full-time students, their parents and our seniors is a good thing. Anything that reduces the reliance on cars through incentives to use free travel options is a no-brainer.

Of course we will not compensate for poor services, but a state-of-the-art tram network should not be beyond our reach just because we make it cheaper for some groups. We want public transport to be the best option, and so it must be the most efficient, the most reliable and the safest system possible. I

want this inquiry to investigate new technologies to enable intelligent transport systems that can improve the performance of our network. This might include high-capacity signalling systems, such as those being trialled as part of the Metro Tunnel project; these allow trains to safely run closer together, meaning we can offer more frequent services. Or it might include active public transport prioritisation to give priority to trams and buses to make trips faster. Yarra Trams right now are testing a new signalling system in 25 trams on route 75, which runs along Toorak Road and Burwood Highway. This system uses GPS technology to track the position of the trams and takes into account live road conditions to determine traffic light sequences. If the trams get through congestion, problems are improved. Any technology options that make trains, trams and buses the best option need to be considered.

Finally, my motion asks the committee to investigate dynamic pricing and options that would encourage more efficient use of the public transport networks. We have some of this already in place. How many of you are aware that your metropolitan train journey is free if you touch on and off before 7.15 a.m. on a weekday, as long as your Myki has some money on it? Other than this earlybird special, prices do not reflect demand for services. Travelling in crowded trains at peak hour costs the same as waiting until the crush ends and travelling later in the morning.

I want to end today by speaking briefly on some of the international experiences of free public transport. In Estonia public transport is almost free. This small country in northern Europe is one of the world's most digitally advanced societies; they hold their elections online. In 2013 Estonia's capital city, Tallinn, made the public transport system free for locals. The sky did not fall in. Public transport in the city has improved, and the city's population has grown. New revenues have come from the increased population and additional revenues come from tourists and non-residents, who still buy tickets. But most importantly Estonia's free public transport network is changing habits. Use of the public transport system has increased by 10 per cent. Better still, the number of cars in the city has gone down by 10 per cent. Luxembourg is set to introduce free public transport in 2020, and many other places have already introduced free public transport for certain groups or at certain times. One-third of all bus trips in London are free with concession travel passes, especially for senior citizens. Wales offers free travel over the weekend to boost tourism.

My motion asks the Economy and Infrastructure Committee to take a bold step towards a cultural shift in the way we use public transport by looking at extending the free tram zone, opening up the entire network for free travel for students and senior citizens, and exploring new technologies and pricing systems that would continue to grow Melbourne's reputation as one of the best cities in the world. I commend this motion to the house.

Ms TAYLOR (Southern Metropolitan) (10:16): I am very happy to speak on this motion. As someone who has over many years used a lot of public transport, I certainly do not disagree with the premise of using it as much as possible because it is better for the environment generally speaking and it is also convenient because you can read your mobile phone and you can do lots of things when you are on public transport. When I was a councillor I used to read the paper on the way. I cannot do that now because, with my metropolitan area being so large, it is not quite as convenient. That is why I bought a hybrid, so I can at least lower the amount of emissions that are being emitted. Hopefully in time we will get more electric cars and we will be on a different page there; that would be even better. That is not what Mr Barton wants to talk about today, but I just thought I would add that little component so he understands that I do bring this down to a very personal, grounded level in the way it impacts all of us here.

I think the premise of having an inquiry is a good idea because then it forces—if it is a good inquiry and it is done properly, with the appropriate parameters—all facets of an issue to be brought out, because obviously when you are in government you have to own all facets of an issue. That means you own the really, really nice components of an issue, which is saying, 'Hey, we're going to give you free public transport. Off you go. That's it. Done. Happy'. I am not saying that that is not a good idea

either, but we do have to be accountable and responsible in the way that we examine that issue: with what we give to people, do we also create other problems? I am not saying no or yes, I am just saying it is really, really important, as you can understand, from the position of the government to factor in all facets of an issue and to make sure that we actually create something that is for the greater good and does not in the process create further problems or exacerbate an issue along the way. That is just to expand on that issue so that we are being fully accountable in this discussion. That is why I am explaining that aspect. I know there are pragmatic realities with this, but let us explore that. We can have a bit of a discussion about that today, and then if the inquiry goes ahead, it too can explore the issues on many, many levels.

I have lived in inner-city areas and used trams and so forth. I have actually used the trams in the city area quite a lot since the free tram zone was introduced on 1 January 2015. I know a lot more people have been taking that up and those trams are very cosy as a result. There are a lot more trips having to be squeezed in there. The benefit of having that free tram zone—Mr Barton has already spoken to this—is it has increased accessibility to retail, to entertainment and to businesses, and that certainly is a positive.

It has meant that less people are using the bikes around the area to get up and down. Some of the tourists in particular used to rent the bikes. They are not using them as much, and less people are walking around the city. I am just pointing out all facets of the issue. Again I am not criticising the point or the motion that has been put forward; I am just saying that we have to balance out the choices that people make when you make something free. Certainly it is appealing, and I understand the merits of the argument, but it does mean people may then elect not to use their feet or a bike. They may choose an option which is not quite as good for their health and which may actually increase congestion on the tram routes and not necessarily increase activities in other ways. These are just things to be factored in, again not in any way wanting to take away from the motion that has been put forward.

If we look specifically at the extent of the free tram zone, there is a stop at Federation Square. These are real tourist hotspots, and I am not telling members anything they do not know. Any Melburnian knows very well, as do people visiting from regional Victoria, that for obvious reasons these areas are hotspots for visitors. The free tram zones help people to be in walking distance of Jeff's Shed, Crown Casino, the Victorian Arts Centre and the National Gallery of Victoria. So yes, for tourists that is a good thing, and I do not want to criticise that. Also, as the member has quite rightly pointed out, the free tram zone has been extended for special events such as the AFL Grand Final. There is certainly merit in undertaking that in order to help with some of the major transport disruptions that can occur at peak times and during peak use of our transport networks, such as the AFL Grand Final and other major events in the city.

We do just have to factor in—and I am just following this discussion through—that if we were to extend the free tram zone on a permanent basis, as has been requested or suggested, we would need to consider the impact on revenue and network performance. Effectively, having travelled in the city zone myself, when we extended that free tram zone it meant that people were even diverted from train travel to tram travel, which meant the trams got very, very snug and cosy indeed. I know that on Friday nights it can be hard to get onto trams because they are so popular. Sometimes you think, 'Oh, look, I won't walk down', although I do have a yearly Myki pass—just to be clear about that—so it would not make a difference anyway. But I would think, 'I won't walk down, I'll take the tram'. These are things that need to be factored in as well. I am not putting down the motion; I am just saying we have to factor in all elements.

If you did expand the zone out to residential areas, you would probably expect to see a similar impact in terms of—as I describe it—cosiness. It is not that I do not want to be near my fellow Victorians; it is just that it can get a little snug at times. One thing leads to another leads to another, and these things can influence the choices people make in transport between one mode and another. I think part of the member's intention is to say, 'I do want to influence those choices', but we would have to also factor

in the time element and so forth when we introduce these kinds of changes. If you just say, 'Right, we're going to do this', what is that going to create? What are the ramifications? All those things have to be very, very carefully thought through so that there is not a ricochet or domino effect that creates another negative impact, which would get a backlash from the community. That is just something to be factored in.

If I go back to the motion, it is looking to provide free fares to full-time students, so essentially looking at concessions, and to remove fares for Seniors Card holders. We know that eligible full-time students can apply for concession travel and can have access to student passes, which further reduce the cost of travel. So it is not a fact that we do not have concessions in place to assist people in mitigating the costs of getting around the city. Those are in place. Seniors also have access to concession fares and in addition get free weekend travel in two consecutive zones, and every year they receive a number of free travel vouchers. There are already some significant concessions in place to help mitigate the cost of transport. I just put that out there to make sure that it is factored in and not dismissed as insignificant or irrelevant in this discussion.

I know that when we look at what the cost overall would be if we were to, for instance, provide free travel to students under 16, it could—and this is a Department of Transport estimate—cost around \$50 million to \$60 million per annum in lost revenue. Additional costs would be incurred if this were extended to all students over 16 years of age, including VET and tertiary students and all seniors. You can see why the government has to factor that in, and \$50 million to \$60 million is certainly a significant sum and something that has to be taken into account. If you say, 'Okay, we'll give free travel there', where does that \$50 million to \$60 million come from and what other aspect do you take away from the community? I am not saying yes or no, I am just saying that you give and then you take. We do have to balance that out. We cannot just say, 'Bang, you don't have to pay anymore. We don't know how we're going to fix it, but it sounds really good and it's landing really well with the community'. Do you know what I mean? I am not trying to be sarcastic, I am just trying to say that we do have to be accountable and say, 'Okay, right, let's look at our ledgers and let's see where that money could come from over the longer term'.

The Andrews Labor government did introduce important changes to the fare structure, which has cut the cost of public transport for many concession card holders across Victoria, and this is in order to make fares fairer and easier to understand. For instance, from 20 January 2017, the age at which a child must start carrying a Myki increased from four to five. This saves carers and parents the expense and hassle of getting a Myki for their child before the child has started school. We have also lifted the eligibility age for a child Myki from 16 to 18. So you can see the significant effort that the government has undertaken to help buffer the cost of transport.

The other thing that has to be factored in is that under the agreements the government has with its operators, Public Transport Victoria is required to increase fares by CPI to contribute to the rising cost of running public transport. We cannot just say, 'Oh well, it cost this much this year and that's the end of it'. Unfortunately there are inherent costs in running a public transport system—and it is just something to be factored in. The former government's four-year commitment to increase public transport fares by 2.5 per cent plus CPI ended in 2018. So in 2019 fares rose only by CPI—something that was factored in—which was 2.2 per cent.

Now I know there was a comparison with some parts of Europe, and a particular country in Europe, and I cannot say yes or no with regard to Estonia specifically, not having visited there or personally examined the way their transport system works. I am sure that if we looked at all European countries we would find a whole array of different mechanisms of assisting people in using public transport. I know that when I have travelled in Europe I have seen people having to use their particular transport mechanisms to get on and off transport, so I think we have to be careful about comparing apples and oranges when we are looking at different population sizes. We have to look at all aspects of their

budgets. If you look at all aspects of a budget of an individual country, then you get a holistic approach to an issue.

I think it is a really good idea to examine—as you, Mr Barton have done—other countries overseas and say, ‘Okay, how are they doing this? Can we learn something from this? Is there something that we can take on board?’. But I know that I would want to be looking at the whole transport system, the whole way that that country manages its budgets et cetera before I would do a direct comparison, because I think there is a danger that we might be avoiding some inconvenient truths that may be relevant within that particular country’s transport or overall movement infrastructure. I could be right, I could be wrong, but I just think that we do have to be very careful when we are comparing different countries. I do not say, ‘Don’t’. I think it is a good idea to look at different countries and how they run their transport systems, factoring in the size of the population, factoring in how they get their revenue and so forth. But you do need to look at the whole transport system and the whole budget, and then I think you can get a well-rounded comparison.

I take on board your point about looking at other countries and how they run their transport systems, how they balance the various costs and how they incentivise people to take public transport. I factor that in, and I think there certainly is merit in looking across the board, but we do have to be careful. Are we comparing apples and apples? Are we comparing apples and oranges? Is it a fair comparison? When you balance the whole budget, are they comparable or are they not?

I am sorry to be a little bit of a pollyanna on these issues, but it is just that in terms of accountability and responsibility we do not always get to deliver what might seem magical and brilliant and perfect when we have to look at the holistic perspective of an issue. Mr Barton, you understand where I am coming from with that argument. It is just that we need to be accountable and we need to be able to own the various costs and elements of a particular decision. But it is not only the costs, as I was saying before. It is also the comfort level of commuters and the choices that they make, even choosing between different elements of public transport or whether they—even better still—might, where it is possible, go to the bike or go to walking instead.

I have no disagreement with the absolute fundamental premise of getting more people out of cars. That is a good idea, because we know that there are only so many roads and there is only so much room for the many cars on the road. Certainly we are in furious agreement about encouraging people to use alternative modes of transport, and that underpins our government’s decision-making in helping people not only from a financial perspective but also by encouraging them to use public transport and other modes of getting around our wonderful state.

Now I will move on to some other parts of Mr Barton’s motion which have been raised and which are certainly interesting and very important when we are looking at the issue of how we move people around our wonderful state. The motion says:

... new technologies that enable intelligent transport systems that improve the performance of the networks ...

Certainly there is significant merit in exploring those elements. I know that there has been a significant investment in the managed motorways program. The government has already invested in intelligent transport systems to improve the operation of a freeway network through measures such as variable speed signs and coordinated ramp signals—you know, where they go green and red and help to just steady the flow. Mr Barton, you probably know a lot better than I do because you would be an expert in those things. As a driver I have seen those signals and I understand it is to help just get a better pace and to balance out the traffic flow. Other measures are traffic time signals, vehicle sensors and CCTV cameras in order to make sure people do not lead-foot it around the city, which is obviously very dangerous. It is not something that I do myself; I will say that quite proudly. These are all part of a dynamic traffic system that helps to respond to whatever is happening on the roads at any given time.

But it does not end there, and it is good that you have actually raised that point as well, because obviously the whole concept is dynamic in and of itself in that this technology is improving all the

time. Now, you might be pleased to know, or you might already know, that there is a trial underway to test new technology designed to better balance the needs of trams and other road users—pedestrians, cyclists and motorists. The Cooperative Intelligent Transport Systems technology was fitted to 25 trams on route 75, which run along Toorak Road and the Burwood Highway, which you are obviously already aware of. The system uses real-time GPS technology to track the position of a tram on the route and in turn determine traffic light activity based on live road conditions, which is pretty amazing. It blows my mind away to think that this is happening. But that is great; this is good.

Trams which are delayed or running behind schedule will be given priority for passage, resulting in more efficient journeys for tram passengers. When trams are running on time or ahead of schedule, traffic lights may favour other road users, resulting in a faster and more efficient journey for cyclists, pedestrians and motorists—so in a sense trying again to balance out the flow of traffic generally. This system will integrate with VicRoads's existing road management system while also providing a link in to Yarra Trams operations centre. The Australian Road Research Board will provide detailed findings of the trial to VicRoads so it can be determined if it is an effective solution to be rolled out more broadly across the tram network. So I guess what I would be saying is we have got to watch this space and see where that trial ends up, but it is certainly very promising. Further to your particular point, it is looking at how we can basically better manage the transport infrastructure that we have in place right now and make sure it is used in the most efficient way possible. I hope that that goes some way to your point, but obviously it is a dynamic space itself, and the technology is advancing all the time. There may be lessons that we can learn from overseas as well, but we need to factor in that our local transport authorities are looking into these issues and recognising the importance of having a more efficient transport network.

I am going to proceed to the other point in the motion: 'the effects and benefits of dynamic public transport pricing'. This certainly does have the potential to really be able to manage those peak congestion periods when everyone is deciding, 'Right; we're all going to go to work now', and we all go at the same time. Then you have this awful congestion, and it is really unpleasant for everyone. I know the Victorian government already provides peak and off-peak fares for regional public transport. This encourages customers who have a choice of travel times to travel off peak and allows additional space on peak services for those who must travel in the peak times. That is good, and it is certainly a thoughtful initiative, one that allows people to make choices which ultimately benefit everybody on public transport—actually everyone on their way to and from work or significant areas that they have to go to.

There is a similar incentive called the early bird. This is applied to metro services. The early bird offers free travel to those who can travel and arrive in Melbourne before 7.15 a.m. When I used to work for the Community and Public Sector Union we had members travelling to and from their workplace right in the city, and some of them would elect to take that early shift. It was beneficial to them because they saved money, but it was beneficial to all of us because it was actually taking the burden off the overall transport system. This certainly has a lot of merit and is something that I think could be used even more into the future.

Speaking of interstate, as I did live in Sydney for a couple of years I know that because the transport there was so congested—it was a shocker—people would actually stagger their start times and their finish times at work in order to be able to mitigate the peak congestion that we all hate. Nobody likes peak periods, nobody likes sitting in traffic and nobody likes being overly squashed. Sometimes just some pragmatic decision-making can actually de-burden the overall transport experience for all of us. It also allows people to make those choices and be empowered in that. They can say, 'Well, actually I wouldn't mind starting earlier in the day. I'll get home a little bit earlier. Boy, it's a bit cheaper for me, and at the end of the day I'm not sitting in traffic, tearing my hair out and dying when I could be doing other wonderful things'—planting trees or spending time with their kids or whatever else.

I know we all feel passionately—let us not say everyone, but many of us feel very passionately about—

Ms Shing interjected.

Ms TAYLOR: That's right. I was going too far, wasn't I.

Ms Shing: We live in hope.

Ms TAYLOR: I live in hope. I would like to think that everyone is very passionate about looking at multimodal transport and getting people moved from the obsession with the car, particularly cars which take petrol as opposed to the more modern versions of hybrids and electrics—people who are not necessarily as enthused about public transport options or walking or riding. But we live in hope. Perhaps even having these discussions and an inquiry et cetera inspires people and hopefully gets that information out there for people to think about all these various aspects of making a more efficient and, if you like, carbon friendly transport system as well, whether it be looking at what the parameters of the free tram zone are, factoring in the negatives as well that we have to take into account.

Obviously we cannot just sledgehammer and say, 'Hey, free tram zone. Everyone, all students, off you go, free, fine, great', without factoring in what that means in terms of even the comfort levels of people travelling on the transport system and also the fairness across the board when you are balancing a budget generally and looking at the ramifications of the choices you make. On the one hand we give you something for free here, but we might have to take from a hospital there. You know what I am saying? You have to own that whole piece and what it means and what it might mean for somebody else who is quite vulnerable in your community when you give or take various transport concessions or measures. It may on the face of it look like a real win but may in fact create other problems that are not as beneficial for the whole community.

As I said, I am not actually criticising the intent or the fundamental tenets of this motion. I think there is a lot of merit in it, and I really enjoyed reading the motion itself and understanding where Mr Barton is coming from. I am really glad that we have other members in Parliament who are thinking about and conscious of our impact as MPs on the public transport system. This is actually a really positive thing. I think the community would be glad that we are debating these issues, which impact every one of their lives on a daily basis no matter who they are—no matter whether they are retired, no matter whether they are a student or otherwise. I think it is a really good sign that we are happy to have this open and democratic discussion and constantly review and revise where we are headed. What is working? What are the benefits? What could we do differently? If we make certain choices, what will the ramifications of them be? The real shame is when you get the 30-second grabs on the news and they will point out one little flashpoint, and the community thinks, 'Oh, that's the whole issue'—no disrespect to the community; it is just that people are busy. They do not have time necessarily to read the paper from front to back. They do not necessarily come and read our *Hansard*—I am not sure how many members of the community actually go back and read *Hansard*.

Ms Terpstra interjected.

Ms TAYLOR: They are watching it all the time. I am not sure what the ratings on our parliamentary presentations would be.

Dr Kieu: Is there a rating?

Ms TAYLOR: Is there a rating? Probably not even a rating. However, one way or another what we do and the decisions we make obviously can have a very significant impact on the quality of their lives. I can speak from this side of the fence—I will not speak for everybody as I think people should be able to speak for themselves—but we certainly are very concerned about making sure that the decisions we make are actually for the greater good in the long run. That is the fundamental premise of the values which speak to what we are about and why we are here. Just to understand, we are coming from a good place and we want the best for the community.

Certainly if I speak for myself, I want the best possible outcome in terms of transport measures. That is why I was so excited about that bike infrastructure, the segregation. That is the kind of thing that gets me up in the morning. That is like, 'Wow!'. That is why I love being a member of Parliament. I just had to say that; I just had to add that in there because it is not irrelevant. When we are looking at all the trams that flow along there, if we get that bike infrastructure, automatically we know that is going to make a significant difference and make people feel safer, and they may then choose that, perhaps even over the tram. It is something to factor in.

I hope that I have in some way explored some of the facets of the very comprehensive motion that is here and the elements of this motion. But just to understand, we take it seriously and we are looking at all angles of this issue.

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan—Leader of the Opposition) (10:45): I am wanting to make a short contribution, and I make the point it will be a short contribution. I do not intend to abuse the time of the house, as the last speaker did, with a long, long rant.

Let me be quite clear here. This is a motion to send this reference to the Economy and Infrastructure Committee. It is a proposal that the public transport system in Melbourne be looked at with respect to the expansion of the free tram service. It particularly points to a number of geographic locations. It talks about free fares for full-time students, it talks about removing fares for all Seniors Card holders, it talks about technologies and it talks about the effects of dynamic public transport pricing. There is some significant merit in having this inquiry, and the opposition will not oppose this inquiry. We actually do see some significant points.

I want to just take a very quick trip through the background of free public transport in the city. It was an initiative of the then Napthine government in the 2014–15 budget. It was a very innovative policy. It has been well-received and it has now become a matter of bipartisan policy. I remember a transport forum I spoke at prior to the election, and there were questions about whether the free public transport would be maintained. Some do not like it. I made the point that it would be and the then public transport minister also made the same points. The base that is there now is an important one.

It is important for those who come into the city to shop or to transact business and who wish to leave their car at home and have the ability to move around the city. It is also an important aspect for students and for office workers and for tourists. International tourists note our free City Circle tram, and I think the government has not put enough into protecting the City Circle tram. I indicate that one thing I think the inquiry ought to examine is the government's disparagement and winding back of the City Circle tram, which I think is a major tourist emblem for Melbourne and actually widely respected internationally as an important service.

The opposition, in government, also provided access to reduced fee public transport concession fares for those who were over 60 but still working, with the deliberate intention that this was a practical step that we could take to ensure that people continued to work and had the option of working with sensible support for the public transport that they would need around that. I was, as the then Minister for Ageing, active in ensuring that that happened.

I think this reference does provide an opportunity to look closely at the data and the material about collections and the costings of all of these proposals. None of these proposals, let me tell you, are cost-free. They do have significant costs. Forgone revenue means less options in public transport elsewhere, and we have got to actually balance those points quite closely.

As shadow minister for the arts I am quite focused on the fact that we actually need to think about access to the National Gallery of Victoria, which is outside the free tram zone but is important for many, both tourists and local people, who want to get to the gallery. For those who want to move around the city and get to the gallery there is a legitimate argument for that being in the free tram zone. It is true that the free tram zone applying to Docklands has been an important underpinning for the

commercial development and the residential development of Docklands, and I think that has been used in this instance as an instrument to attract businesses and others into the Docklands precinct to help build that. I do not think we should count out the use of public transport as an instrument to develop precincts in that way.

I do think it is important, though, to again squarely point to the issue of cost in Victoria. We collect just a little over 20 per cent of the cost of public transport in fares. It is a relatively low amount compared to other jurisdictions. We actually have a line to walk on these sorts of approaches—on one hand holding fares low so that usage is high and choices with cars and other modes are reduced, but at the same time collecting enough fares to enable us to run the quality of service that we want. Free public transport in the city has actually been a wild success. People love it. There is also, I might add, a data issue that applies when we make something free in this way, so people with their Mykis—

Ms Shing: Like TAFE?

Mr DAVIS: No, no, it is a serious point. When people in the free tram zone do not swipe their Myki card on, you do not have the data of who is moving at what time and indeed the background information for service planning that is actually an important part of what this sort of inquiry should be looking at. So my point is that government then needs to actually go out and undertake surveys to understand who is using the free tram zone. I understand a number of those surveys have been undertaken and this inquiry can get access to those. I see this as an important inquiry to the extent that it would enable a large amount of information to come into the public domain to inform and strengthen our position with respect to our decision-making on a number of these key areas.

I think that for full-time students there are legitimate arguments for free access, and there are different cohorts within the full-time student population. There are postgraduate students who have made significant cases and there are overseas students who also have made cases for access. This inquiry can certainly look at those. I accept that there are opportunities for and effects of dynamic public transport pricing, and we have a number of aspects of that in place already in terms of access costs being reduced if you come into the city before an early point on a workday. Those reductions in the fare have actually had some success in moving some of the load in a highly congested system.

We have a very highly congested system, and that is a significant challenge. We saw yesterday in the *Age* an article about people from Cranbourne and Pakenham facing challenges in that corridor where reliability is a problem and crowding is a problem. V/Line is facing huge crowding problems. Looking at tweets yesterday, people were complaining legitimately about their inability to get a seat on a train after the first one or two stations past Geelong. The same applies to people coming from Ballarat. They are on those V/Line trains. They are packed in like sardines. The trains have become unpleasant and difficult to travel on in a regular way, and the reliability of our trains has also fallen.

There has to be a balance here between what needs to be done to add capacity and what needs to be done to ensure reliability and punctuality. The government's performance on punctuality and reliability has been terrible. It has been shocking. We have seen trams and trains and buses face challenges with reliability, and our country V/Line service has been a shambles. Most of these services have not been meeting their targets. The government needs to run a reliable and basic service so that people can be sure they can get to work on time. That is not the case currently.

So the opposition will not oppose this motion. We see some merit in this inquiry. We see some opportunities to better examine and better cost a number of the proposals. We need to understand what the dynamics of that are. The bits that are laid out here in the motion—the new technologies for intelligent transport systems, and Mr Barton mentioned the last mile challenges—I accept those. We have got to have better connections to our public transport for pedestrians and bikes and also commercial passenger vehicles of various types. There are options that are available but the government has not taken up those options.

The final thing that I think the inquiry perhaps misses out on is ensuring not just the reliability and punctuality that I pointed to but also the safety. The coalition was very active in government in putting 940 PSOs in place—the first really significant attempt to tackle safety on our public transport system—but we know from comparative national data that Victorians do not feel safe on our public transport. We know that Victoria performs the worst of any of the states on safety on our public transport and on perceptions of safety on our public transport. That is a significant challenge. I think that these pricing decisions cannot be looked at in isolation; they have to be looked at in a holistic way across the system.

Ms PATTEN (Northern Metropolitan) (10:57): I too would like to speak briefly on Mr Barton's motion, which I think is a very sensible one and one which I am very pleased incorporates much of my region of Northern Metropolitan with the extension of the free tram zone around the universities. It is effectively 6 kilometres of track that would be added to the zone and affect 13 different tram routes. The overarching goal, which I think is a very good one, is to improve access to universities, hospitals, sporting precincts and of course the city. I would probably like to add that during the inquiry the committee should look at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre as well, because as we see—and as Mr Davis pointed out—by putting free transport into places like Docklands you really can invigorate an area. I think this is one of the very effective ways of using our public transport to offset some of the costs that Ms Taylor pointed out, because it brings more commerciality to those areas. It means people are spending more in the areas and small businesses are benefiting from that.

The student union at Melbourne University has been campaigning for some time to extend the free tram zone up to Melbourne University. As someone who catches the tram down Swanston Street most weeks, I can see this makes an awful lot of sense. And we are not the only city to do this. As Mr Barton mentioned, Tallinn in Estonia has done this. I just note that Luxembourg—I think Ms Taylor mentioned Luxembourg—is also going down this path of making public transport completely free. Where there may be a cost—and if we use the example of the preliminary costings that Mr Barton has had of \$4 million to \$5 million in lost revenue—that would be offset by things like the cost of managing the fares. I do not know how much Myki costs, but I am pretty sure that the fares we collect barely cover the cost of collecting them. This is something I would be very interested to hear from the committee. How much does it cost to collect the fares that we are collecting? Could we use that money better? And does extending free tram zones not just in these areas but maybe even more broadly really actually invigorate the local economy and therefore actually improve things?

Very quickly, I certainly commend the Committee of Melbourne for the work that they have done in this area and some of the costings that they have done. They have really considered this. Certainly the National Gallery of Victoria says that this would bring probably close to 75 000 new visitors to the gallery, which is significant. We know our tourists love our trams; they love the free trams, but they do get confused when they are catching the tram and all of a sudden they get to the Yarra and they realise that now they have to pay to get to the Arts Centre Melbourne or the national gallery. The same goes for going down to the MCG, going to the university or even going to St Vincent's Hospital. So we are not talking about a large area, but we are talking about an area that would have a significant effect.

In France, for example, they found that passenger aggression was greatly reduced. They found there was an incredible decrease in antisocial behaviour because 90 per cent of aggression on trams was due to fares. Operators were able to achieve faster boarding times. I take Mr Davis's point that Myki touch-on/touch-off does enable us to collect a lot of data about the usage of our tram system, so looking at alternatives on how we might collect that data if people are not using their Mykis is something I would be interested in the committee considering. As I have said before, when customers can get around with greater ease, this makes it a lot better for our small businesses around our city, but it also makes the city more accessible and fairer for our low-income earners, especially students. For people who are suffering social isolation—this is something that is very close to my heart—this does enable people to get out and about more easily. Anything that we can do to do that is an improvement. Certainly for

people with disabilities enabling a much simpler way of using our public transport is very sensible, so I commend it.

I suppose because I have an inner-city electorate—I know Acting President Elasmar would agree—quite often we talk about wonderful transport and free transport in our inner city. Then I talk to my constituents in Epping or my constituents out in Meadow Park or Broadmeadows and they say, ‘We would just like a bus that goes somewhere near our houses a couple times a day’. So while I think this is a very important and very good motion, and I am very pleased to support it, I am constantly conscious that while we talk up the inner city, we have to be very conscious of the disadvantage that our sprawling outer suburbs are experiencing, and obviously our regional and rural areas also have these issues. I would like to commend the motion.

Ms MAXWELL (Northern Victoria) (11:03): On behalf of Derryn Hinch’s Justice Party, I indicate that we will be supporting Mr Barton’s motion. There is considerable merit, as far as we are concerned, in the prospect of referring this motion and each of the issues he has listed to the Economy and Infrastructure Committee. What we like most of all is the possibility of examining the spectre of expanding the free tram zone to the Royal Children’s Hospital. It has been a serious problem for some time in Melbourne for parents and/or guardians having to bring their children to the hospital, often for treatment of very serious conditions, including intensive cancer treatment. They typically face substantial repetitive public transport costs and the costs of parking, which can make life far more traumatic than it needs to be when they have children placed in hospital. It would also be wonderful, if possible, for them to have access to better and less expensive transport options, and this might well represent a very positive step in that direction. We also like some of the other similar changes to which the motion gives expression, and some of those have been previously expressed here in this chamber.

The idea of fare relief being provided to full-time students travelling to university and the scrapping of tram charges for all Seniors Card holders would be seen to be extremely beneficial for reasons previously detailed in Ms Taylor’s narrative. Naturally we also think it is also very appropriate that in such contexts the committee should consider, as is specified in the motion, issues such as improved technologies and dynamic pricing, not to mention that the general principle of reducing road congestion in Melbourne would be likely to be assisted significantly by some, if not all, of the measures in the motion.

However, I will put a small apology to Mr Barton at this moment and say that we also have a few concerns that temper our enthusiasm for the motion just to a small degree. The major one is a likely very significant financial cost that would arise from the kinds of changes being described in the motion. Ms Patten certainly alluded to how they can be addressed, especially in the large reduction in revenue that would presumably occur if this motion were to be passed. It is also true that substantial new investments in the infrastructure of Melbourne’s public transport network would likely be required, including, probably, the provision of a higher number and greater frequency of trams. Our party would like to think and would certainly hope there would be a number of other associated challenges that would also form a major focus of the committee’s scrutiny and debate on these issues.

One of those would be the already near-constant problem of overcrowding on trams, especially at times anywhere close to peak hours at either end of the working day—a problem that already only seems to be getting worse insofar as that is even possible as Melbourne’s population continues to swell. Without some very detailed thinking about contingencies to deal with these challenges it is an unfortunate reality that the prospect of an extended free tram network may only accentuate these issues rather than doing anything to alleviate them.

Another subject to which I also feel I need to turn is one which Mr Grimley and I have often discussed, and that is the differential treatment between metropolitan and rural areas, which Ms Patten also acknowledged. While the motion is quite deliberately Melbourne-centric in its focus, and we have no problem with that in itself, it does lead us to suggest that we would also like to see the Economy and Infrastructure Committee perhaps consider a concurrent examination of the costs and inadequacies of

transport options that are frequently being borne by people living in rural and regional areas. That would certainly assist with increased tourist numbers coming in and students coming in and spending money in the metropolitan area.

Just as one passing and small example of that, if full-time students in Melbourne are going to be offered fare relief, then we do not think it would be out of place for the same committee during this term to consider the even bigger range of problems and often exorbitant prices that rural children and their parents typically face in organising and paying for travel to the places at which they study. This has been an inhibiting factor for many people that I know in rural Wangaratta, who say that often they cannot travel down to see their families, (a) because of time, but often their children do not travel back to them because if they are university students it becomes too expensive.

With all of that said, we do agree with Mr Barton that this motion, and the issues contained within it, is something that is entirely appropriate to place before the Legislative Council committee for further and very detailed scrutiny. I am also very conscious of impinging any further on the time of other people in this debate, so I will leave it there for now, and I sincerely commend Mr Barton for moving this motion.

Dr RATNAM (Northern Metropolitan) (11:09): The Greens will be supporting this referral to a committee for an inquiry into Melbourne's public transport system and hope that it will highlight some key areas for improvement. We do not necessarily support all the measures outlined in the motion but are open to them being subject to an inquiry and considered, taking into account equity and access considerations as well.

Public transport should be a priority for the government so we can create a world-class public transport system for all Victorians. The government's investment in big public transport projects, such as Melbourne Metro, are very welcome, but there is still much more left to do to turn our ageing, unreliable system into one that is fast, reliable and efficient.

Many train and tram services across Melbourne are infrequent and unreliable, meaning that commuters cannot rely on a service arriving soon or even at all. The Upfield line, which runs through my electorate, currently operates every 20 minutes, just three services per hour during peak times. In other parts of the city trains and trams are overcrowded and commuters can watch multiple services go past before they are able to board.

Internationally, best practice is to provide at least one service every 10 minutes so that people can simply turn up and go, rather than stressing about timetables. The Greens turn-up-and-go policy demonstrates how Melbourne commuters could enjoy 10-minute services from 6.00 a.m. to 9.00 p.m. seven days a week on 10 out of our 16 train lines and on 12 tram routes during weekdays and 17 on weekends. The Parliamentary Budget Office costed this at around \$200 million per annum, just \$40 million a year for trams and \$160 million for trains.

Given that the government is comfortable spending \$6.7 billion on the West Gate Tunnel and almost \$16 billion on the North East Link, we hoped that they might find \$200 million in this year's budget for frequent and reliable transport for Melburnians. So we were disappointed to see no funding for a turn-up-and-go program for Melbourne and will keep pushing for the government to properly invest in our trains and our trams.

There is of course much more to do than increase the frequency of services. We need to invest in buses across Melbourne's east so that people in Mr Barton's electorate have more options to get them across the eastern suburbs. We need level access stops across all tram routes, high-capacity signalling across the metropolitan train network and, importantly, planning to begin for Melbourne Metro 2, a new underground line from Clifton Hill to Newport that would enable more and faster services for thousands of commuters.

Above all, we need an integrated transport plan. Now that the government has adopted our policy of bringing the transport agencies back together, we hope that means a proper, integrated transport plan can now be achieved. These are all areas that we hope the government will work with us on to improve public transport across Melbourne.

Mr QUILTY (Northern Victoria) (11:12): I will be brief. There is no such thing as a free government service, so the trams will not be free; the taxpayers will pay for them. The role of price in a market economy is to ensure efficient allocation of resources. Without a price signal, trams will be overused, as you can see by their crowding in the city at the moment. Having to pay even a small amount to use transport will ensure more efficient usage. Dynamic pricing offers a way to adjust price signals to more closely reflect demand. This could improve service efficiency, but an Uber-style surge cost at peak times may not prove popular with travellers, who have become used to their government-subsidised tickets. I doubt this is what you have in mind. Tram systems are expensive to build and to run. You would have to be an idiot to be pushing to build a new tram system on the roads now. If this inquiry were directed at improving the efficiency or reducing the cost of public transport, we would be on board. As it is likely to do the opposite of that, we cannot support the motion.

Dr CUMMING (Western Metropolitan) (11:14): As the Independent in the upper house, transport does matter. Transport matters, and I commend Rod Barton's motion today as someone who ran for the lower house seat of Footscray many, many years ago on this very principle: wouldn't it be great if, in Victoria, students and the elderly had free transport? Where does the burden shift when we make our students pay? It means that their parents somehow have to find the money to pay for those students to get on public transport.

Mr Dalidakis: Hear, hear!

Dr CUMMING: I am a bit upset by the government. You obviously feel that everybody is wealthy. Not everybody is wealthy, and as a member who looks after the western suburbs—and there are many people who struggle in the western suburbs—

Mr Dalidakis: And in southern metro.

Dr CUMMING: Therefore you should be supporting this motion. The government absolutely should be supporting this motion.

A member: We are.

Dr CUMMING: That is excellent to hear.

A member interjected.

Dr CUMMING: It could be. But as I said earlier, I look after the Western Metropolitan Region, the place that I love. We need to look after the disadvantaged in our community, being families and the elderly. We in Victoria should be looking at best practice, and best practice, if you look at Europe or even Japan, means that there are frequent, reliable trains.

The counterargument which I have heard around why we cannot afford free transport is that somehow, if we allow this, our trains will be choked with all these people accessing free transport. Well, there you go. That shows me that there is something wrong with a system where our community cannot access the train service, where there is not the frequency and the reliability so that people can actually go to a train station and board a train.

As someone who looks after the western suburbs, I know that poor rail stock is used in the west. The brand-new trains seem to go to the east, but the older trains—the trains that really should be scrapped—somehow end up on the Werribee line. Looking after the western suburbs, I am not happy—

Mr Dalidakis: Jan.

Dr CUMMING: I am absolutely not happy, Jan or Phil.

Mr Dalidakis: I prefer Philip.

Dr CUMMING: Okay. I am not happy, Philip. Philip, I am fairly sure that over the next four years you are going to have a complete love of the western suburbs, and you might even start barracking for the Bulldogs. As someone who looks after the western suburbs and knows her community inside and out, I will happily get up every single time in this chamber and argue for the western suburbs.

As I have said to Mr Barton, I do not believe that his motion goes far enough. Where is my free tram service in Footscray? This Parliament seems to forget all of the time that Footscray is in the inner city. Footscray is in the inner city, people. It is in the inner city. So wouldn't it be great if trams were free from Footscray to the new hospital that is going to be built across the road from Victoria University? Wait a minute, people, have we all forgotten that there are hospitals and universities in the west? When people wish to write motions, please remember the western suburbs. For a very long time my community has wanted a tram service from Footscray to the city. Guess what? Melbourne City Council actually has it in their transport strategy. But no; the western suburbs has a tram that starts in Footscray, goes to Moonee Ponds, goes on a very big gauntlet, and then it somehow gets to the city 40 minutes later.

Mr Dalidakis: Weren't you on council? How much money did you put into it?

Dr CUMMING: Every advocacy strategy my council has ever put forward has actually requested an extension of the tram service from Footscray into the city, and Melbourne City Council agrees.

Mr Dalidakis: Show me the money.

Dr CUMMING: 'Show me the money'. Are you saying that councils actually are now building trams and trains and that councils should be putting in money for buses?

Mr Dalidakis interjected.

Dr CUMMING: That is okay. I could argue all day, Phil. Keep it up! I get half an hour. You will not get your 3 minutes, because I will spend the next 13 minutes talking about how this government should find money in their pocket for a tram service from Footscray to the docks. If I want to catch a tram to watch the Bulldogs, I have to go all the way on a circuit to get to the city. It is pretty ridiculous, isn't it? Why isn't there a tram from Footscray to Docklands? Why hasn't the government actually put their hand in their pocket and built the extension of the tram service from Footscray to Docklands or to the city? I have got a bit of quiet now, haven't I? Because it is obviously something that should have occurred a long, long time ago, but for many, many years this Parliament somehow has treated the western suburbs as second-rate to the whole of Victoria.

I am looking forward to the Transport Matters-led inquiry. I do hope somehow within this conversation we actually do have the tram service from Footscray on this government's agenda and that somehow someone will actually do the work to make sure that that might be a reality one day. I do hope that the elderly and the students of Victoria, rather than feeling isolated and poor, can actually get on a wonderful public transport service just like in Europe and just like in Japan. I thank the Council for listening to me today. Philip, the western suburbs matter. Philip, one day you are going to be happy.

The PRESIDENT: Can I just remind the chamber that it is best to direct your contributions through the Chair. If you are going to mention another MLC's name, can you call them by their second name.

Mr DALIDAKIS (Southern Metropolitan) (11:22): I will be brief, to use a phrase much used by my colleague from Northern Victoria Region. I believe I only have about 3 minutes, so let me state for the record that the government will support Mr Barton's referral to the committee. I am wanting to make a number of points, however. Firstly, things cost money. Money does not grow on trees, especially now that we have plastic notes. Whatever we do and wherever we do it, we need to find

funding sources, so I do hope that with this referral the committee will investigate the potential for funding sources for the works that they are trying to have a look at.

I do note that this is Mr Barton's first motion in the house, and it is a worthy motion as his first motion. I am not sure how his stakeholders will feel, given he has sold them out. The taxi and hire car industries have been sold out by Mr Barton as he attempts to get public transport up on the agenda, but that will be a matter for Mr Barton to reconcile with his stakeholders. Nevertheless, I do admire the work that Mr Barton has done in this place in the short term and the short time that he has been a member of Parliament. He has contributed more in six months than Mr Davis has in 23 years. Some people would say that that is not a bar that is very high to jump, but let me say that Mr Barton has well and truly jumped that bar, irrespective of time.

Can I also say, because my 3 minutes is almost up, that no-one opposes public transport, at least on this side of the chamber. We have invested in public transport through the work that we are doing with Melbourne Metro. Our infrastructure program has ensured that what we are doing is intergenerational, with benefits for decades to come, in terms of its positive impact on the people of Melbourne. Whilst some people would like to focus on one inner-city suburban clique, elite or geographic region, I prefer in this place to, yes, represent Southern Metropolitan Region but also represent myself as a true Victorian. As a true Victorian no-one can oppose public transport, but we do need to find funding sources for it.

Ms TERPSTRA (Eastern Metropolitan) (11:24): I rise to make a contribution in regard to this motion proposed by Mr Barton today. As has been noted, the government does support this motion in terms of the referral to the Economy and Infrastructure Committee. I have just been sitting here listening to previous contributions that have been made in the house today. Might I say—wow—there have been very interesting and broad-ranging contributions today. While the motion that is being proposed is in fact just looking at a free tram system in particular suburbs, we have had a conversation around PSOs, we have had a conversation around trains—we have had a very broad-ranging discussion. Maybe I am living in a parallel universe, but it is quite clear that what the motion is in fact proposing is that there be an inquiry into the expansion or the potential expansion of a free tram system which would include Wellington Parade to Powlett Street, East Melbourne; Swanston Street to Elgin Street, Carlton; Royal Parade to College Crescent, Carlton; Flemington Road to Abbotsford Street, North Melbourne; and St Kilda Road to Commercial Road, Prahran. So it is quite a succinct area that Mr Barton proposes that the Economy and Infrastructure Committee be required to look into.

Can I also just comment, perhaps with a note of caution, that it is a good thing that it is proposed that the committee has 12 months to complete a report into this matter. I do have some concern about the workload that perhaps may be imposed upon the committee to undertake these sorts of inquiries. So it is a good thing that there is a reasonable amount of time to allow the committee to conduct its work.

It is a good thing that we have the free tram network, in particular in the city. It aids and assists tourism as well. For example, we have lots of visitors to inner-city Melbourne. With people being able to get around—students, seniors, tourists—it is a good thing to have those people travel around the city, as I said, particularly for tourists. Sometimes for me when I have gone to visit another country and I have to come to grips with a particular public transport system, whether it is a card or something you swipe and all the rest of it, it can be quite confronting and overwhelming. You do not want to end up with a fine or perhaps fall foul of whatever country you are in and their particular requirements. So it is a good thing, and it does in fact encourage the use of public transport.

I must say I am impressed by Mr Barton's motion because, as he does come from the taxi industry, I was a bit surprised that he would want to promote the increased use of a free tram network, perhaps at the expense of taxidriviers. So it is a good thing that Mr Barton is thinking in a more expansive way. I note also that this proposal will not apply in his electorate, but nevertheless it is a welcome inquiry, and we hope the committee can find some decent information out there when looking into those aspects of the inquiry.

Might I just add that we have heard earlier contributions that have touched on things like free travel for students and seniors, and a previous commentator—I think it might have been Mr Quilty—commented that nothing is for free when something is provided free. I think I might just distinguish that comment by saying that it would be provided free to commuters, so in continuing to say that nothing is for free, you have to look at the fact that of course the government is going to subsidise that. It would be free to commuters. There is a distinction in that point that needs to be made. As I commented earlier, it is a good thing to provide a free service to commuters, who fall into two particular categories, as I touched on before, including tourists to our city. And that is a good thing. It allows us to promote more easily the good things that are on offer in Melbourne as part of that free tram network, and it allows tourists to more readily and easily see the best things that our city has on offer to access. That is a good thing.

Also we had a bit of a comment earlier by Mr Davis in regard to concern around commuter safety on our public transport network. I might just add, for example, that in February 2016 the Victorian Auditor-General did in fact conduct a report into public safety on the Victorian train system. I know I am talking about trains for a minute, but it is quite a bit of a stretch to say that public safety is a huge concern, because, particularly in regard to that report, the Victorian Auditor-General did in fact find that as the Andrews Labor government had committed to and increased the number of PSOs—and I might just comment and take a bit of a quote from the Victorian Auditor-General's report—the introduction of protective services officers at Melbourne and metropolitan train stations was intended to improve perceptions of safety and reduce crime and antisocial behaviour on the train network at night. In fact their findings were that perceptions of safety on the train system at night have improved. Incredible! It found recorded crime at train stations had increased, due in part to the detection and reporting of those crimes, again due largely to the introduction of PSOs and the increased numbers of those PSOs. That is a good thing. So, again, in response to overplaying the situation and to saying perhaps there are perceptions of community safety that are still of huge concern, I say the government is in fact doing things to minimise the impacts or perceptions around community safety, and we are making good progress on those perceptions. So again it is a good thing.

Might I just add, as has been commented on before, obviously as part of the inquiry, that if we are going to be providing free public transport to commuters, that is something the inquiry will need to look at. Again, it is trams; it is not talking about trains. This is quite a specific motion. It is about the free tram network. We do need to look at what the cost to government might be to provide those subsidised services. For seniors, we already have seniors who are subsidised to travel free on the tram network. Also there was a carers initiative announced in the 2019–20 budget, and that will mean that from 1 July 2019 all carers with a Victorian carers card are eligible for concessions on Myki, which will include a 50 per cent reduction of the full fare. They get free weekend travel in two consecutive zones on regional town buses, free statewide travel during Carers Week and it also removes the need to carry additional concession entitlement. There is more; I could go on. There are improvements of veterans' concessions as well. And of course there is the concessions for seniors, and many contributors have already discussed and talked about the concessions for students.

But also it would be interesting to look at other aspects and other elements of our community that will benefit from the free tram network. It will obviously make free tram travel a lot more accessible and easier to access, which is a good thing, and I particularly like, as in my own electorate of Eastern Metropolitan Region, for example, the introduction of the new technology, the intelligent transport system, that has allowed the 75 tram, which runs along Burwood Road and in fact ends at Vermont, right out the front of my office, to in fact utilise the cooperative intelligent transport system to be given priority of access on the roads. When it is caught up at traffic lights, for example, the tram is given priority. I look forward to seeing more information about that. This is—

The PRESIDENT: Order! The time for the debate has expired.

Motion agreed to.

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE

Establishment

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS (South Eastern Metropolitan) (11:33): I move:

That:

- (1) a joint select committee of seven members be established to inquire into, consider and report to both houses, no later than 1 December 2019, on the increase in the Victorian road toll in 2019, including but not limited to an examination of the:
 - (a) current Victorian *Towards Zero* road safety strategy 2016–2020 and progress towards its aim of a 20 per cent reduction in fatalities with 200 or less lives lost annually by 2020;
 - (b) adequacy and scope of the current driver drug and alcohol testing regime;
 - (c) adequacy of current speed enforcement measures;
 - (d) adequacy of current response to smartphone use, including the use of technology to reduce the impact of smartphone use on driver distraction;
 - (e) measures to improve the affordability of newer vehicles incorporating driver-assist technologies;
 - (f) adequacy of current road standards and the road asset maintenance regime;
 - (g) adequacy of driver training programs and related funding structures such as the L2P program; and
 - (h) adequacy and accuracy of road collision data collection;
- (2) the committee shall consist of:
 - (a) four Assembly members, comprising three members from the government nominated by the Premier and one member from the opposition nominated by the Leader of the Opposition;
 - (b) three Council members, comprising one member from the government nominated by the Leader of the Government in the Council, one member from the opposition nominated by the Leader of the Opposition in the Council and one member from among the remaining members in the Council nominated jointly by minority groups and Independent members;
- (3) a majority of the members appointed pursuant to paragraph (2) will constitute a quorum of the committee;
- (4) in addition to exercising a deliberative vote, when votes on a question are equally divided, the chair, or the deputy chair when acting as chair, shall have a casting vote;
- (5) the committee may proceed to the despatch of business notwithstanding that all members have not been appointed and notwithstanding any vacancy;
- (6) the committee shall operate under the provisions laid out under joint standing order 15; and
- (7) the foregoing provisions of this resolution, so far as they are inconsistent with the standing and sessional orders or practices of both houses will have effect notwithstanding anything contained in the standing and sessional orders or practices of both houses.

This is a motion to establish a joint select committee of seven members drawn from across the Assembly and the Council to consider and report on the increase in the Victorian road toll in 2019 and in particular to look at a number of individual elements which are listed in the motion. The first is the current Victorian road safety strategy 2016–2020 and progress towards the targets which are set down in that road safety strategy, which are a 20 per cent reduction in fatalities with less than 200 fatalities annually by 2020; the adequacy and scope of the current driver drug and alcohol testing regime; the adequacy of current speed enforcement measures; the adequacy of the current response to smartphone use, including the use of technology to reduce the impact of smartphone use on driver distraction; measures to improve the affordability of newer vehicles incorporating driver-assist technologies; the adequacy of current road standards and the road asset maintenance regime; the adequacy of driver training programs and relating funding structures, including the L2P program; and the adequacy and accuracy of road collision data collection.

We have seen over the course of 2019 an increase in Victoria's road toll. As of 3 June the road toll stood at 141, which has been recognised as a substantial increase on the same time last year. That

understandably has given rise to concerns in the Victorian community as to the causes of that increase in the road toll compared to the same period last year. Of course in 2018 Victoria recorded its lowest road toll, with 213 fatalities. It is worth putting that figure in context because the road toll is something which has been a focus in Victoria for over 50 years.

It was back in 1970 that Victoria recorded its highest road toll, which was 1061 fatalities. Prior to 1970 there had been an increase in the number of fatalities on Victorian roads. As the adoption of ownership of private motor vehicles increased in the postwar period we saw the number of fatalities on Victorian roads increase; indeed the Australian peak also occurred in 1970. But from a Victorian peak of 1061 in 1970 we have seen a downward trend. It is fair to say in the 49-year period since 1970 there have been years when the road toll has gone up and there have been years when the road toll has gone down—almost an equal number. Half the years it has increased and half the years it has fallen, but the trend has been down—down from 1061 to 213 last year. The trend has certainly been in the right direction, and obviously that has occurred at a time when vehicle use in Victoria has increased dramatically as the population has increased and ownership of private motor vehicles has increased.

It is fair to say that in the international context Victoria's road toll, and Australia's road toll, is low. On an international comparison basis road toll is typically measured in three ways, but the most common way in which it is measured is fatalities as a ratio to 100 000 head of population. On that measure in 2018 Victoria recorded about 3.3 fatalities per 100 000 head of population, which puts Victoria well at the top of global rankings—in the top 10—surrounded largely by countries in the Scandinavian region and more generally in Europe. Victoria's performance on the per 100 000 head of population basis is better than the Australian performance, which is also at the top of the table.

Other rankings which are used are fatalities per number of vehicles—million vehicles or thousand vehicles—and fatalities per vehicle kilometres. That of course takes into account those jurisdictions which have either a very low number of vehicles or a very low number of vehicle kilometres—that is, distance travelled by vehicles. But in all those three measures Australia and Victoria are at the top of international rankings, and it is in that context, with that long-term decline in the road toll and Victoria's and Australia's standing internationally in road safety, that this debate should be considered.

Last Friday I attended the road safety forum convened by the government in response to the spike which has occurred this year in road fatalities. Mr Barton was there and Dr Kieu was there. The Minister for Road Safety and the TAC was unable to attend for family reasons, and I make no criticism of her for that. The member for South-West Coast in the other place, Ms Britnell, was there and the Minister for Police and Emergency Services was also at the forum. Not surprisingly, the issues which were raised in the course of that forum and the levers for road safety which were raised in that forum were not new. They were issues of improved vehicles, issues of improved drivers and issues of improved roads. Those are the three pillars which underpin the approach to road safety. They were the three pillars which underpinned the approach when I was the minister responsible for the TAC in the previous government. They continue to be the pillars which underpin a strategy for road safety today because obviously those are the levers which will make a difference—improving our drivers, improving our vehicles and improving our roads are the ways to improve road safety outcomes.

The motion before the house today seeks to establish a joint select committee, and this is with the background of the current government's decision to abolish the longstanding Road Safety Committee in the Victorian Parliament, a committee which had made a tangible contribution to road safety in this state. The initiatives of that committee, for example, led to the introduction of the compulsory wearing of seatbelts in Victoria, which in fact was probably the single-largest factor leading to a reduction in the road toll from 1061 back in 1970. That committee had runs on the board. As has been canvassed extensively in here previously, the coalition did not support the abolition of the Road Safety Committee, so today via this mechanism—this proposal for a joint select committee—we are seeking to re-establish a committee focused on road safety which spans both the Council and the Assembly.

Notably, in the concluding remarks of the road safety forum last Friday, the assistant commissioner for road policing, Stephen Leane, in fact remarked that there is a responsibility for the Parliament as a whole, not just the government, to have a role in road safety. That was a very strong message in the concluding remarks from the assistant commissioner. It very much supports the coalition's contention that this should be a joint select committee which spans both houses of this Parliament. However, the government has flagged its intention to seek to amend this motion and, rather than establish a select committee, to refer the subject matter of this motion to the Economy and Infrastructure Committee (EIC). That is not something that the coalition will support, because firstly, as I said, we believe that this is a matter that should be dealt with across both houses by drawing on the resources in terms of the members across both houses. Equally, we believe it should have a singular focus as a committee on road safety.

What is proposed by the government in seeking to refer this matter to the Economy and Infrastructure Committee is to limit this inquiry to participation by members of the Council and, equally, to add this as simply one more inquiry to the agenda of the Economy and Infrastructure Committee, which is already heavy. The house voted earlier this morning to refer Mr Barton's matter in relation to public transport access to the Economy and Infrastructure Committee. That committee is already undertaking an investigation into animal activism and it is undertaking an investigation into the commercial passenger vehicle hire sector. It now has a new referral in relation to public transport access in and around central Melbourne, and with the government's proposal today the road safety inquiry that I am proposing would be dropped down to the fourth inquiry on that list of things for the EIC to do, most of which it is required to report on by the end of the year. It is our view that tacking this inquiry onto the bottom of that EIC list as just another inquiry does not reflect the importance of the road safety issue and does not reflect the importance of having involvement across both houses in looking at some of the issues which underpin the changes in road safety in Victoria. It is our intention to oppose the government's amendment to make this an EIC inquiry, very much in the belief that it should be a standalone committee which spans both houses of Parliament.

I would like to turn now, in the time remaining, to some of the individual elements that we are seeking to look at through this inquiry. The overarching issue to look at is the increase in fatalities this year, and I have already put that in the context of the long-term trends and the context of the international environment. The elements that we are specifically seeking to look at through this inquiry are, firstly, the road safety strategy 2016–20 and the targets that are contained within that. At the forum last Friday one of the presenters—I think it was Joe Calafiore, the chief executive of the Transport Accident Commission—used the analogy of family violence to talk about road safety. He made the point that in the family violence sphere we would not accept 200 fatalities a year or 200 injuries a year and that we are seeking to eliminate family violence or domestic violence altogether. I am not sure that analogy is entirely appropriate for the road toll situation, because in addressing domestic violence, in addressing family violence, we are recognising that it is not appropriate for any victim of family violence—the men and women who are subject to family violence, who are subject to attacks, who are subject to attempts at control—to be in that environment. It is an environment which is recognised as being wrong—criminally, morally and ethically wrong.

In relation to the road toll we are not looking at an activity which has at its heart criminality or ethical or moral corruption. We are looking at an environment where people are undertaking a lawful activity—a lawful activity that involves risk—and we have seen fatalities and casualty collisions as a consequence of that risk. So I am not sure that a comparison of how we treat family violence and how we treat the road toll is necessarily an appropriate analogy. I think we need to look at the reality that with road safety and the road toll there are competing interests. Through the road system, through the transport system, we are seeking to move people and goods efficiently and quickly around the state, and we recognise that in doing that compromises are made. It may not be popular to say that, but it is a reflection of the reality.

If we were accepting that there are no compromises, then every road in Victoria would be a class A road, which is clearly not the case, and it clearly cannot be. Likewise, if your view was to get an absolute outcome on safety, the easiest way you could achieve that tomorrow would be to drop the speed limit. You could drop the speed limit to 40 kilometres per hour on every road across the state and the effect of that would almost certainly be zero fatalities, but it is also completely impractical to do it. So inevitably, whether we like it or not, we make decisions between priorities, balancing the need for people to be able to move around the state on our road network with our priorities around road safety. It is a balancing act, and it is a proposition that requires decisions to be made, priorities to be assigned and relative weights to be assigned to those different factors. We can get an absolute outcome, but it would come at a significant absolute cost. As policymakers, as a community, we recognise that there has to be a balance between those considerations and those factors.

In putting this motion together we sought to highlight some of the key issues which are of relevance today in the road safety debate and in considering that balance between our competing objectives. The second element that I have included is the issue of the adequacy and scope of driver drug and alcohol testing. Obviously the use of drugs and alcohol in driving is illegal for a good reason. The use of drugs full stop is illegal. Interestingly, data that came out of the forum last week highlighted that drug driving has become a significant issue in the Victorian community, perhaps even a greater issue than the use of alcohol on the roads. Of course the practicalities of the testing regime make its widespread detection more difficult than it is for alcohol. We seek to examine that element through this motion.

The next element I am seeking to examine is the adequacy of current speed enforcement measures. This again goes to the point that I raised before, that we can have an absolute outcome if we decide to drop speed limits dramatically across the state, but that is not a practical outcome. While it was raised in the course of the forum last week that we could drop the speed limits, it is also a pretty lazy policy response. Going around the state in the last couple of years, we have seen some key regional roads. One that comes to mind is the road from Kilmore to Lancefield, which has been long term a 100-kilometre-an-hour road. It is a road which has had a deteriorating pavement for a period of time, and rather than repair that pavement the response has been to drop the speed limit from 100 to 80. Likewise on the road from Kyneton to Bendigo, again a traditional country road, a 100-kilometre-an-hour zone; because of the deteriorating pavement, again, rather than fixing it, the lazy option has been to drop the speed limit. That is a lazy policy response.

I note that as part of the government's proposed amendments to this motion the minister is seeking to add to that reference around the current enforcement regime a reference to speed management policies. It is not my intention to oppose the inclusion of those words in the motion, but I say at the outset we do not see simply dropping speed limits as a solution to the issue, because we need a road network which is quick and efficient for users. There are parts of the world which have lower road tolls than Victoria's and better performance in road safety than Victoria, which also have speed limits which are far higher than in Victoria. Some of them have unlimited-speed roads. A response of 'Let's just drop all the default speed limits' is not the solution to addressing the road safety challenge that we have in Victoria.

The next element the motion picks up is the issue of smartphone use and driver distraction, which has become a factor, and technology means to mitigate that. I just want to go back briefly to the issue of speed. In this year's budget the government has allocated funding for a further 96 speed cameras. It is budgeting over the next four years to collect around \$2 billion in speed camera revenue. One of the challenges with that as a road safety measure is the risk of cynicism developing and expanding in the community. If the community perceive that those speed cameras are not being used in locations where casualty collisions occur, if they see them being used on straight, good class A roads, stretches of freeway and the like, or if they see them being used at intersections where there is no data record of collisions or injuries, the community become cynical. When they see a budget that is under pressure suddenly relying on \$2 billion of speed camera revenue, they become cynical, which undermines the road safety message and undermines attempts to improve road safety. So we need to be very careful

where those sorts of measures are introduced that they are seen by the community as being appropriate, that they are seen as responding to actual issues on the road and are not seen as simply short-term, convenient revenue-raising measures. If they are seen that way, it will completely undermine the road safety strategy.

The next item I would like to touch on is the affordability of newer vehicles with driver-assist technologies. Interestingly, we have seen over the period that we have focused on the road toll, for 50 years, and particularly the last decade or 15 or 20 years, that the introduction of technology in vehicles has had a dramatic impact on road safety. It has had a dramatic impact on the survivability of casualty collisions, and it has had a dramatic impact on allowing drivers to avoid those collisions in the first instance. This element is particularly around the affordability of those vehicles. It was one of the issues which was raised last week at the forum, and again it was Assistant Commissioner Leane who made the comment. He spoke about the decision by Victoria Police to replace its Holden pursuit vehicles with BMW M5 vehicles. He indicated that the key driver of VicPol's decision to buy BMW M5s to replace the Holden pursuit vehicles was safety considerations, that those vehicles have a high level of safety and a number of safety features. That was the driver of VicPol's decision.

The irony of that is that the government, through its most recent budget increasing stamp duty on what it regards as luxury vehicles, has in fact made those very same vehicles less affordable for Victorian citizens. So the vehicles that Victoria Police has bought specifically because they have been identified as vehicles with a high safety capability have been made more unaffordable to the general Victorian community by way of this tax increase. That is why we have included this element around the affordability of vehicles with driver-assist technologies.

The next element I will touch on is the issue of our road standards and the maintenance of roads. As I said at the outset, it is recognised that the keys to road safety are not new, they have not changed and they are as they have been for a long time: better drivers, better roads and better vehicles. On the issue of better roads this inquiry seeks to look at what we have as road standards in Victoria, the different classes of roads and whether our roads are in fact maintained to the standard they are designated and whether we have the ongoing maintenance regime to support that. That, as one of the three pillars of road safety, is one of the key aspects that this inquiry is seeking to examine.

The other element I will touch on is the issue of the adequacy and accuracy of road collision data collection. This is an issue which has been raised over a number of years by a number of community organisations and interest groups that are associated with road safety. Their concerns are as to the accuracy of the data we have in relation to road collisions and as to whether they accurately reflect causal factors in road safety. Obviously we talk of causal factors in a relatively narrow band of things related to drug and alcohol, speeding et cetera and vehicle factors, which are obviously relatively small in relation to the road toll. Concerns have been raised as to the accuracy of the data we have, whether it is collected in an independent manner and whether we can rely on it in generally showing causal factors underlying accidents. So that has also been included as a reference in this inquiry reference.

We believe this is an important inquiry. It covers a set of factors which are deserving of the Parliament's attention at a time when we are looking at an increase in the road toll this year. The coalition believes it should be done by a joint committee which is dedicated to this task; it should not simply be added on as a fourth inquiry for the Economy and Infrastructure Committee, confined to this chamber. It should be done across both houses, and it should be a dedicated task for a committee looking at road safety. On that basis I would urge members of this house to support this motion. It does go to an issue of concern to the Victorian community. We have seen in the past the great value that was created in this area by a joint Road Safety Committee that spanned the membership of both houses and that brought forward ideas which subsequently became policy and had a dramatic impact on road safety in this state. A new joint committee specifically looking at the events of this year is an important opportunity to continue that legacy. I would urge the house to support this motion today.

Business interrupted pursuant to sessional orders.

Questions without notice and ministers statements

FLU VACCINATIONS

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (12:00): My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, 13 214 Victorians have been diagnosed with flu so far this year, and alarmingly this includes 55 babies. Sadly 26 people have died, including three children, aged three, six and 11. Last year your government reluctantly funded free flu shots for children under five but did so only until 30 June this year. Why will you not provide ongoing funding for this program to ensure children can be protected from severe flu, such as we have experienced this year?

Ms MIKAKOS (Northern Metropolitan—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services) (12:00): I thank the member for her question. In fact we have addressed this issue in a previous adjournment matter. When the member says that we funded this reluctantly, we stepped in because the commonwealth government refused to fund children aged between six months and five years of age as part of the national immunisation program.

It is very concerning that we have had so many children who have been affected by the flu this season. We know that we had a very early start to the flu season this year. We have had many Victorians affected by the flu. In fact the latest numbers of confirmed flu notifications has now reached 14 880 people so far, so we are well up on the numbers compared to last year. This is why we stepped in and we started the campaign for the flu season earlier this year than has been the case in past years—to get the message out to all Victorians to get vaccinated against the flu, because we do know that it is effective, that it is evidence based and that it is the best way to protect Victorians from the flu.

Last year we announced \$3.5 million to provide a free flu vaccine to ensure that all Victorian families with children aged six months and under five years can have their children protected, and we expect that that will cover around 385 000 Victorian children this year. Parents are able to access this free vaccine through current immunisation providers, such as local government immunisation services, GPs, community health services and Aboriginal health services.

Of course it is important that we continue to get the message out to parents about the risks of not immunising their child against the flu. Sadly we have had three Victorian children who have been lost to the flu this year. We know that vaccinations save lives. It is disappointing that the commonwealth refuses to step up. I hope that the very severe flu season that we have had this year and the number of children affected might see a change of heart by Greg Hunt. I will be raising this issue with him when I meet with him personally. But it is important that we get the message out to the community about the importance of getting their free flu vaccine, and it is disappointing that the member wants to play politics with this issue.

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (12:04): It is clear that there has been a cut to this program. Minister, your government wasted nearly \$2 million of Victorian taxpayers money on a federal political campaign. That money should have been used in this year's budget to fund additional flu shots for kids and vulnerable Victorians. How do you justify your position of playing politics above protecting Victorians that would save lives?

Ms MIKAKOS (Northern Metropolitan—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services) (12:04): That is absolute nonsense from the member. We have stepped in and provided a free flu vaccine for Victorian children because the commonwealth refuses to do so, and it was appropriate for us to be advocating for an end to the federal government cuts—\$305 million in retrospective cuts from the commonwealth—and to be advocating for more federal funding under the national health reform agreement. Clearly you have no interest in getting more federal funding for Victorian hospitals and Victorian patients. We will continue to advocate for a better deal for Victoria, and that also includes getting a better deal for Victorian children, who should be able to get this free flu vaccine under the national immunisation program.

WESTERN METROPOLITAN REGION SCHOOLS

Dr CUMMING (Western Metropolitan) (12:05): My question is to the Minister for Education. When will the primary and secondary schools of Point Cook, Williams Landing, Tarneit and Werribee receive overdue funding to support the learning and play needs of their students? Funding to support the growth of these established schools is overdue, but again in this budget they seem to have missed out. Their classrooms and playgrounds are overcrowded. Parents tell me that the children do not get the academic help that they need due to these concerns. They are concerned about the burden on the teaching staff, who are stretched but are also trying to do their best. Schools often stagger their whole school assemblies unless the weather allows them to sit outside. Play is of high importance to these primary schools. However, it would seem that they have to stagger their breaks because their playgrounds are overcrowded. When will the minister commit to supporting these schools to meet the academic and social needs of these students?

Ms TIERNEY (Western Victoria—Minister for Training and Skills, Minister for Higher Education) (12:06): What I can say to Dr Cumming is that this state is very proud to be known as the Education State, and there has been a record investment in education across the sectors in this state. I am sure that there has been a lot of discussion with the school communities that the member has raised with the department and indeed with Minister Merlino's office. I will refer this matter for further comment to the minister.

Dr CUMMING (Western Metropolitan) (12:07): I thank the minister for her response. I commend these school communities for doing their best to support their students. Funding for new schools in nearby suburbs is welcome. However, the funding for the established schools must not be missed. As a parent of five children in the western suburbs and using the public school system, I see the extra efforts that these teachers make. I see parents also shopping around for a school, and rather than feeling confident that their closest school will meet their children's needs, they are often looking at different schools, meaning private and Catholic. These parents are obviously driving great distances, adding to congestion on our roads, and this also decreases family time. Some parents have actually opted out of their public school system because of this overcrowding issue.

The PRESIDENT: I think the supplementary question will be just further information that the minister will pass on to the Minister for Education.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: DAIRY INDUSTRY

Ms SYMES (Northern Victoria—Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Resources) (12:08): This is a great opportunity to update the house on how the Andrews Labor government is supporting dairy farmers in northern Victoria. We know dairy farmers in northern Victoria are doing it particularly tough right now, with dry conditions and high water and fodder prices. Some are battling through; some are reducing stock, changing their farm practices, choosing to transition to other types of farming or relocating to other regions.

The Goulburn-Murray irrigation district roughly goes from Cobram to Cohuna. It is a proud and important dairy region, with over 1100 dairy farms directly employing about 3000 people and thousands more along the supply chain. That is why the government has been working really closely with the dairy industry over the past few months to gain a shared understanding of the pressures and how to best support a positive, sustainable future for dairy in the north.

As part of this ongoing engagement, the Minister for Water, the member of Shepparton and I attended a round table in Tatura last Friday with leaders in northern Victoria's dairy and water industries to discuss the impact of seasonal conditions and water prices and how to ensure there is confidence in the future of dairy in the region. I then had the privilege of meeting Paul and Robyn Lindsay at their dairy farm in Picola. The Lindsays milk 1000 cows at two dairies and run a cropping and machinery business with their three sons. While they have felt the impact of high input costs and dry conditions, they are confident in the future of the sector.

As part of this visit I announced an additional \$2.7 million in support for northern dairy farmers to help manage current and future challenges. The support will see additional financial and business counsellors on the ground to support farmers and businesses in their decision-making. They will re-establish the successful Rural Skills Connect program in partnership with Murray Dairy to support dairy farm workers seeking off-farm income to develop new skills and use their existing expertise to gain new employment. It will also make more funding available for the highly popular on-farm drought infrastructure support grants and provide tools to councils and farmers to more easily navigate planning and permit requirements. Of course we will continue to work closely with the dairy industry and northern Victorian farmers and communities to ensure they have a wonderful, bright, sustainable future.

BALLARAT BASE HOSPITAL

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (12:10): My question is to the Minister for Health.

Ms Mikakos: I hope it is better than the last one.

Ms CROZIER: Minister, this is an important issue, as was the last issue. You failed to answer the last one, but let us try this. Minister, in April the Ballarat Health Services executive director of acute operations, Ben Kelly, announced ward 3 south would open for patient admissions. Two months later the doors are not yet open. Minister, with emergency department (ED) presentations at Ballarat during May up almost 7 per cent compared to the same time last year, why is ward 3 south not open as promised and when exactly will it be accepting patients?

Ms MIKAKOS (Northern Metropolitan—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services) (12:11): I thank the member for her question. At a time when we have put in the biggest ever health budget in Victoria's history and at a time when we are getting on with the biggest ever pipeline of health infrastructure in Victoria's history, it is interesting that the member would even want to talk about hospital infrastructure projects in our state, but I certainly welcome her question.

We are getting on with meeting local demand in Ballarat. We of course funded \$461 million for the redevelopment of the Ballarat Base Hospital in the 2018–19 budget. This investment will completely revamp the Ballarat Base Hospital site, creating a new emergency department, a modernised acute mental health facility, an intensive care unit, a women and children's hub, an expanded critical care hot floor and at least an extra 100 inpatient beds. The master plan for the site has been completed, and work is now progressing to finalise the staging and sequencing of the project to minimise disruption to the health service when the project proceeds to construction.

Whilst this planning work is progressing on that redevelopment, Ballarat Health Services are currently fitting equipment and undertaking staff recruitment to expand ward-based services for patient care on ward 3 south. This will deliver extra bed capacity, significantly improving their capability to meet demand pressures from our emergency department and enhance the placement of medical and surgical patients to our wards. Previously this ward was an adolescent and children's ward, and the benefits for staff, patients, families and carers from the successful implementation of the ward 3 south model of care will include improved flow from the emergency department to wards and more services to help meet the additional anticipated winter demand. The development is progressing as planned, and an opening prior to the peak winter period is what I have been advised in order to meet expected increase in demand over the winter season.

Ms Crozier: It is winter.

Ms MIKAKOS: The member does not understand how the timing works with these issues, but we are getting on with the task of delivering a fantastic hospital for the Ballarat community, something that those opposite never did when they slashed and burned and cut funding to hospitals. Apart from the infrastructure, we have also given our hospitals this year record funding to run our hospitals, and of course that is going to benefit the Ballarat community as well.

I would be interested to see the member advocate to Mr Hunt, the federal minister, regarding some of these issues. If you look at the *Bendigo Advertiser* today, what the federal government is doing is actually taking away GP incentives from regional areas, and that is going to put more pressure on our public hospitals. If you actually did care about regional patients, you would get on the phone to Mr Hunt.

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (12:14): I notice that the minister completely failed to answer the question.

Ms Mikakos: I gave you a detailed answer.

Ms CROZIER: No, you did not. You did not answer the question that I asked. Minister, of the 15 465 patients admitted to Ballarat Base Hospital from the emergency department during 2017–18, only a third were found a bed on a ward within 4 hours, compared to a 40 per cent average for hospitals of a similar size across Victoria. Given that when ward 3 south does open, ward 3 north will be reduced from 28 to 24 beds and ward 2GP will have fewer beds available on weekends, will you guarantee that an open ward 3 south will provide sufficient beds to cater properly for the current average of 176 people a day seeking treatment in the ED, with some days peaking at more than 200 patients with health complaints?

Ms MIKAKOS (Northern Metropolitan—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services) (12:15): What I can guarantee the member is that the people of Ballarat will always be better off under a Labor government in terms of health funding than they would ever be under the coalition. In fact Ballarat Base Hospital has had an increase in its funding this year by 32 per cent compared to the last Liberal budget, so already Ballarat patients are doing better under this government with a 32 per cent funding increase. We are getting on with the task of giving the Ballarat community a significant win in terms of the redevelopment of this hospital. We put \$461 million for the redevelopment of the hospital in last year's budget, and we are getting on with delivering that. That is something that the people of Ballarat can never expect from a coalition government. I would encourage the member, if she actually cared one iota about people in regional communities, to talk to Mr Hunt about the fact that he is taking away GP payments. We will continue to see an exodus of GPs from regional Victoria because of the changes the federal coalition are making.

COMMERCIAL PASSENGER VEHICLE LICENCES

Mr BARTON (Eastern Metropolitan) (12:16): My question today is for Minister Pulford, representing the Minister for Public Transport in her capacity of providing oversight for commercial passenger vehicles in Victoria. Currently there are two quite different vehicle safety standards which are accepted for commercial passenger vehicles. A roadworthy certificate issued by a licensed vehicle tester is a thorough examination of a vehicle and costs somewhere between \$160 and \$200. However, Commercial Passenger Vehicles Victoria will accept a RedBook inspection, and I am told RedBook is not a licensed vehicle tester here in Victoria. RedBook offers prepurchase vehicle inspection services that are traditionally used by the second-hand car buyer to determine whether or not they are buying a lemon. RedBook offers an inspection to rideshare operators for \$52.80. I ask the minister: what is the reasoning behind having two differing standards?

Ms PULFORD (Western Victoria—Minister for Roads, Minister for Road Safety and the TAC, Minister for Fishing and Boating) (12:17): I thank Mr Barton for his question and his interest in safety and standards for commercial passenger vehicle travellers. I will seek a written response from Minister Horne, but what I can indicate is that there are not two different safety standards. Victoria's commercial passenger vehicle inspection approval policy is designed to ensure—and we believe it does—that consistent safety standards are adhered to by all of the approved vehicle inspectors so that there are consistent standards and a consistent experience for the travelling public. All commercial passenger vehicles are required to undergo an annual inspection to ensure they are roadworthy and provide a safe and comfortable experience for passengers as well. But I will forward your question to Minister Horne, and she will provide you with a more detailed response.

Mr BARTON (Eastern Metropolitan) (12:18): Thank you, Minister. Commercial passenger vehicles in Victoria can travel up to 100 000 kilometres a year on our roads. These are commercial vehicles providing services in our public transport network. They must be safe. The lemon test is not sufficient. I ask the minister: will she set a safety standard for all proper roadworthy certificates issued by licensed vehicle testers for commercial passenger vehicles operating in Victoria?

Ms PULFORD (Western Victoria—Minister for Roads, Minister for Road Safety and the TAC, Minister for Fishing and Boating) (12:18): I will seek a written response from Minister Horne.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: BETTER APPROVALS PROJECT

Mr SOMYUREK (South Eastern Metropolitan—Minister for Local Government, Minister for Small Business) (12:19): One of the biggest issues that small businesses have with government is dealing with government regulation and red tape. As a result, I spend a lot of my time talking to small businesses about the program to reduce red tape and how government can assist them to grow their business and employment—in other words, how government can create an environment to grow small business. One example of this is the work the government is doing through the Better Approvals Project. The Better Approvals Project is an initiative of Small Business Victoria, which sees the government work with councils to improve their small business approvals process. In practical terms, the project implements reforms identified in the small business regulation review of the retail sector.

The house will be interested to learn of one of the recent case studies which demonstrates the success of this program. By looking at each of the stages involved in the regulation of cafes, Glen Eira council has reduced the approval time for a cafe seeking to erect sidewalk tables and chairs. It has slashed that from 90 days down to 11. Glen Eira is a local government area with around 130 cafes and 220 restaurants, and as a consequence this reform has had a significant impact for local business owners and prospective local business owners. I recently had the opportunity to meet with the owners of the Fifth Chapter cafe and the member for Bentleigh, Mr Nick Staikos, to discuss the importance of these reforms delivered through the Better Approvals Project and Glen Eira council. This program is doing important work across Victoria, and I look forward to working with small business owners in continuing to reduce the regulatory burden on small business.

PUBLIC INTEREST MONITOR

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) (12:21): My question is for the Special Minister of State. I refer the minister to the appointment of Mr Michael Strong as the Victorian Public Interest Monitor. Minister, can you advise whether any agencies that are subject to oversight by the PIM were consulted during the selection process prior to Mr Strong's appointment, and if so, by whom?

Mr JENNINGS (South Eastern Metropolitan—Leader of the Government, Special Minister of State, Minister for Priority Precincts, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs) (12:21): I thank Mr O'Donohue for his somewhat belated question. It is in fact responding to a story that probably took the journalist who wrote it quite some time to compile. About six months after the event, an article has appeared to bring into question this appointment for a role that is well established and recognised within the court system and indeed within the relevant agencies, which includes Victoria Police, in terms of the scrutiny role that the Public Interest Monitor plays, in terms of the validity of applications before the court and in terms of guaranteeing that due process has been complied with in relation to warrants and other forms of investigative methods where evidence is compiled. The Public Interest Monitor provides scrutiny within the court system about how those statutory requirements and procedures have been complied with.

That would have been very evident—extremely evident—to all of those who have participated in court process over the past six months, notwithstanding the report, which would indicate it was a complete surprise to many people who are relevant to this. The practice would indicate that every week in the courts the presence of the Public Interest Monitor would have drawn attention to the role that Mr Strong plays and his deputies play in providing that important service on behalf of the Victorian

community. The construction that Mr O'Donohue participated in in relation to his complete surprise, which was reported within the process too, would indicate to me that he perhaps is not aware of the role that the Public Interest Monitor plays within the court system. Certainly his sources of information in relation to the procedures that are followed each and every day in our court system may leave him a bit short in relation to his informants—unlike Mr Davis, who has remarkable informants, as he told me yesterday in the committee stage of the budget. In fact he relies on informants in the system to provide him with all of the material he shares in the public domain. Mr O'Donohue is clearly lacking.

In relation to the appointment process, I took advice from the public service and the head of the public service in relation to the appropriateness and the evaluation of the interview panel that was established for this purpose, the relevant referee checks and other aspects of the recruitment process. I received advice that clearly satisfied me in relation to the validity of the appropriateness of the experience and the referees that actually came to support this appointment, and I took it to cabinet a very long time ago, given this question has arrived this week, about six months after the appointment was made.

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) (12:24): The opposition agrees with the minister about the important role of the PIM, and we are pleased that the government has maintained the framework that the coalition government established with the PIM. Minister, I note that the government issued a media release when Mr Murphy was reappointed as the PIM in 2015 and when Ms Elliott was appointed as the deputy PIM in 2016. Minister, why was there no public announcement and accompanying media release regarding the appointment of Mr Strong?

Mr JENNINGS (South Eastern Metropolitan—Leader of the Government, Special Minister of State, Minister for Priority Precincts, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs) (12:25): Mr O'Donohue may like to see a conspiracy or some matter. There are a lot of administrative decisions that I make and that the government makes that are not necessarily associated with press releases. In fact, if my involvement in the activities of government was measured by press releases, I would be a very, very invisible part of the government because there are very, very few press releases issued in my name. I suggest you do a crosscheck over the last five years. Do you think I play a prominent role in the government? Do you see a high incidence of press releases? No. You can reconcile that in your own mind. There is no conspiracy; there is no problem to be identified here. I do many, many things and make many, many decisions that are not annexed by press releases.

VICTORIAN COMPREHENSIVE CANCER CENTRE TELETRIALS

Ms MAXWELL (Northern Victoria) (12:26): My question is for the Minister for Health, Minister Mikakos. I refer the minister to her 19 February 2019 media release with the Premier about the launch of the Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre's (VCCC) teletrials program. In that media release it was stated that the teletrials would begin in Bendigo and Wodonga but would extend to other parts of regional Victoria. To which other parts of regional Victoria, and when, have these teletrials subsequently been extended?

Ms MIKAKOS (Northern Metropolitan—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services) (12:26): I thank the member for her question. She touches upon a really important area because our government is absolutely committed to making sure that all parts of the state get access to good-quality and safe health care regardless of their postcode. We will be looking at what further improvements can be made in terms of this really important area of providing additional services to regional Victorians. In terms of any proposed rollout, I would be very happy to have a look at the potential for additions in terms of locations and have a discussion with the member about this.

Ms MAXWELL (Northern Victoria) (12:28): Thank you, Minister Mikakos, for that answer. It sounds like the Mildura region is still yet to be included in the teletrials. I therefore ask my supplementary question: why is a city and surrounding region whose residents are around nine times more likely to die of cancer than the national average, who are geographically isolated and further away from Melbourne than the people of any other major population centre in Victoria and who

therefore spend well over \$1 million annually travelling for cancer treatment not a quintessential example of an area that should be included in these teletrials?

Ms MIKAKOS (Northern Metropolitan—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services) (12:28): I certainly agree that there are particular parts of our state, including in regional Victoria, that experience particular disadvantage. This is why we have funded in the budget this year something that we made an election commitment about. It is \$136 million over four years to provide an extra 500 000 specialist appointments to patients living in regional Victoria, including for people experiencing cancer treatment. So we are certainly making every effort to provide for greater access in terms of regional Victoria getting access to these types of clinical trials. One thing that we did do also in the budget is provide funding for the Alfred hospital to do more clinical trials specifically with a focus on regional Victorians. So I am very happy to have a look at the program that the member has specifically mentioned in relation to the VCCC teletrials program, which has started in particular locations that the member mentioned, and have a discussion with her about this.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: RURAL AND REGIONAL HEALTH

Ms MIKAKOS (Northern Metropolitan—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services) (12:30): I rise to update the house on what was an excellent health budget for rural and regional Victorians. It is almost like we are in sync here. To ensure regional communities get the emergency care when they need it most, the Andrews Labor government has invested nearly \$300 million in our ambulance service to meet rising demand and support improved response times. This includes upgrading stations in Ocean Grove and Gisborne and recruiting more than 90 paramedics to support the upgrade of 15 dual-crew stations and the deployment of additional paramedics across regional and rural Victoria.

The Andrews Labor government has also committed \$136 million over four years to provide an extra 500 000 specialist appointments for patients living in regional and rural communities. This means an extra 75 000 appointments for patients with heart conditions, 30 000 appointments for those struggling with arthritis, 50 000 appointments for Victorians with chronic pain and 40 000 appointments for patients with cancer. This year's budget also invests \$214 million to deliver Victoria's largest ever parenting support package, establishing early parenting centres in the regional cities of Ballarat, Bendigo and Geelong for the very first time. We are also expanding maternal and child health services accessible to rural and regional families, and it is only fitting that our dedicated and hardworking health staff have world-class facilities in which to do their life-saving work.

The Andrews Labor government is investing \$60 million for a new day rehab centre at Bendigo Hospital. The project will bring together a range of rehabilitation services into a cutting-edge new facility. Regional health services will also benefit from \$100 million boost to the Regional Health Infrastructure Fund, helping build the world-class facilities that rural and regional communities can count on. We are also starting important planning work for stage 3 of the Latrobe Regional Hospital and have funds at the ready for the Maryborough hospital redevelopment and the Geelong women's and children's hospital once they are shovel-ready.

The previous coalition government closed hospital beds and left thousands stuck on waiting lists. We are delivering first-class health care for all Victorians close to home, regardless of where they live.

WEST GIPPSLAND HOSPITAL

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) (12:32): My question is to the Minister for Health. I note, Minister, that in your statement just now you failed to mention the West Gippsland Hospital. I refer you to the 2019–20 budget and your government's failure to provide funding to build a new West Gippsland Hospital. Given the enormous population growth, Minister, in the Baw Baw Shire Council area and the clear need for a new hospital, will you now detail your future plans for the West Gippsland Hospital?

Ms MIKAKOS (Northern Metropolitan—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services) (12:32): I thank the member for his question, and if he was listening earlier, I mentioned to his colleague about how our government has in fact been putting in place the biggest ever infrastructure pipeline in Victoria's history for our health services in Victoria, and we are very proud of that because it is in fact our government that is delivering to regional and rural Victorians.

Firstly, can I acknowledge the community campaign in the Warragul community, and no doubt the local community are very passionate about these issues. I want to assure them that our government absolutely is committed to looking at their healthcare needs. Our government has invested \$10.3 million through the Regional Health and Infrastructure Fund for West Gippsland Healthcare Group to build an eight-bed short-stay unit and a third operating theatre at Warragul hospital. These works are on track to be completed by the middle of this year. The funding also includes \$1 million funded in 2016–17 to complete capital planning for the redevelopment of the existing Warragul hospital, informing orderly future investment at Warragul hospital that will meet the long-term needs of the local community. In 2018–19 we provided the West Gippsland Healthcare Group with operating funding of \$78.9 million, and that is 37.9 per cent more than they got from the last coalition budget when they were in government.

Ms Crozier interjected.

Ms MIKAKOS: I note Ms Wooldridge's interjection.

Mr Finn: No, that is Ms Crozier, as a matter of fact.

Ms MIKAKOS: The point that I would make is that more patients in that community are getting access to the health care that they need as a result of the health service getting more funding.

On the Liberals and Nationals, we know what their record is. They cut funding to the West Gippsland community. They work hand in glove with their federal coalition colleagues about these matters as well. If they actually cared about getting a fair deal for Victorian patients, they would get on the phone to Mr Hunt and have a discussion with him about these issues, because the retrospective cuts that they have made have meant an estimated \$14.2 million less for the West Gippsland Healthcare Group, equivalent to 2294 elective surgeries, so these cuts do have an impact on our regional health services. But we are getting on and making sure that our regional communities get the benefit of this significant pipeline that we are putting into infrastructure, record funding to run our hospitals and also, for the first time, dedicated funding for more specialist appointments for regional and rural Victorians.

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) (12:35): Minister, you referred to the capital plan funded in 2016–17, now several years ago. That plan has now been completed. Will you now release that completed capital plan or business case and feasibility study and assure the West Gippsland community that its recommendations will be actioned and implemented despite the lack of funding in this year's state budget?

Ms MIKAKOS (Northern Metropolitan—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services) (12:36): I thank the member for his further question. As I have already explained to the member, we are already putting in place construction works at this hospital. There are works underway that will be completed by the middle of this year, and there is work underway in terms of looking at the future needs of this community as well. Of course we are doing this in an orderly way, making sure that we can assess the needs of communities right across the state. We will continue to have dialogue with that healthcare group and the local community around those issues, and I am looking forward to paying them a visit very, very soon to have a discussion about these issues.

POULTRY INDUSTRY

Mr MEDDICK (Western Victoria) (12:37): My question is for the Minister for Agriculture. There are millions of chickens in Victoria currently suffering in tiny wire cages, used to produce cheap eggs for human use. These animals are unable to exercise their most basic natural behaviours—stretching out their bodies to full height, flapping their wings, scratching the ground, perching, bathing and foraging. They stand on sloping wire floors, leading to chronic pain and foot injury. Cannibalism is common. They cannot escape aggression from other hens, many driven mad by the unnatural conditions they are imprisoned in for the entirety of their tragically short lives. When they cannot lay eggs reliably enough, the cages are ‘depopulated’. This means the hens are brutally removed and killed. That battery cages are cruel is indisputable. Numerous scientific reports, including one specifically commissioned for the Victorian government in 2017 and involving experts from Bristol University, have concluded the same: good animal welfare policy means ending battery cages. And the public are onside. Battery cages have been completely eliminated in the European Union and many states in the US. Will the minister listen to the science and the public and commit to a phase-out of battery cages in Victoria?

Ms SYMES (Northern Victoria—Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Resources) (12:38): I do thank Mr Meddick for his question and his ongoing interest in animal welfare matters. Of course the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Domestic Fowl) Regulations 2016 set out the mandatory standards under which layer hens can be housed, including minimum cage floor space requirements and cage design. There is currently a national review of the Australian animal welfare standards and guidelines for poultry, and it will inform any future changes to Victoria’s regulations. In conducting that review, Animal Health Australia accepted over 167 000 submissions during the public consultation period between November 2017 and February last year.

To support this process here in Victoria, Agriculture Victoria published the independent *Farmed Bird Welfare Science Review* in 2017, an analysis of the peer-reviewed scientific literature regarding this issue. The welfare of layer hens is really complex. Current science suggests that there are advantages and disadvantages to all poultry husbandry systems and no individual system is definitively superior in its indicators of animal welfare. Given the impacts of animal welfare standards on animals, farmers, businesses and the wider community, food supply, biosecurity and land use, it is important to consider all of the evidence carefully.

A meeting of the commonwealth stakeholder advisory group is scheduled for this month, and they will provide advice on a revised set of draft standards and guidelines. This group represents industry, veterinarians, researchers and animal welfare NGOs. The animal welfare task group has also got departmental representatives from each state and territory. When they finalise the draft standards and guidelines, this will be considered by the ministerial council for agriculture ministers. I think it is really important to wait for a national approach. Any movements that we make in a particular state could lead to people crossing borders and the like, so a national approach is something I am much more interested in in relation to this matter.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: THE CAPITOL

Ms TIERNEY (Western Victoria—Minister for Training and Skills, Minister for Higher Education) (12:40): On Monday I joined the vice-chancellor of RMIT, Martin Bean, at the reopening of the iconic Capitol theatre on Swanston Street in the city. By investing \$2.5 million in the Capitol’s refurbishment, the Andrews Labor government has helped to make this world-class cultural and educational facility available to the people of Melbourne and Victoria once again, and the results are simply stunning. Designed by Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahony Griffin, the Capitol is one of Australia’s most architecturally acclaimed cinemas. Marion was one of the first licensed female architects in the world, and the Capitol’s glamorous interior bears her unique stamp. The ceiling is indirectly lit with thousands of cleverly concealed coloured lamps, which were used in conjunction

with orchestral scores to dramatic effect when silent films were played. The refurbishment efforts included upgrades to this lighting and sound system, as well as the restoration of the foyer, cinema projection and seating.

The refurbishment also gave several RMIT TAFE and university students great learning opportunities. Students completing a certificate III in building and construction followed the project closely as a live case study. Photography, media and communications, and interior design students have documented the project and recorded oral histories. More than 1000 students will now use the theatre each week to access cutting-edge learning facilities and the latest research and innovation. The theatre will provide learning experiences for students across digital media, virtual reality, augmented reality, film and animation. Students will benefit from new industry partnerships, enabling them to learn while working with key cultural organisations on hundreds of cultural events, festivals and live performances each year. In short, the refurbishment of the Capitol is an important development in the cultural and educational life of Victoria and Australia, and I congratulate all those involved in working on it.

WRITTEN RESPONSES

The PRESIDENT (12:42): As far as today's questions go, can I thank Minister Pulford for getting written responses in line with the standing orders for Mr Barton from the Minister for Public Transport. I thank Minister Tierney for getting a written response for Dr Cumming to her question to the Minister for Education. Can I ask Minister Mikakos to supply a written response to Ms Crozier's second substantive question, around ward 3 south at Ballarat hospital.

Mr O'Donohue: On a point of order, President, I submit to you that Minister Mikakos did not answer my supplementary question about releasing the business case. I ask that she provide a response to that point.

The PRESIDENT: Can I take that on notice. I will get back to you this afternoon.

Constituency questions

NORTHERN VICTORIA REGION

Ms LOVELL (Northern Victoria) (12:44): My constituency question is for the Minister for Health, and it relates to the need for a sexual and reproductive health centre to be established in Mildura. Eight sexual and reproductive health centres are situated around Victoria, including two new centres recently opened in Ringwood and Gippsland to join existing centres in Bendigo, Wangaratta, Frankston, Ballarat, Dandenong and Laverton. The Mildura area has the highest rate of teenage pregnancy in Victoria, with a rate of 21.1 per 1000 women, significantly higher than Ballarat, Bendigo, Wangaratta and Gippsland. Mildura is also an area with a significantly high level of disadvantaged families. The government need to ensure that sexual and reproductive health services are available to all Victorian women, especially in regional areas like Mildura, where there is a clear need for these services. Considering Mildura has the highest rate of teenage pregnancy in Victoria and a significant number of disadvantaged families, will the minister provide funding to establish a sexual and reproductive health centre in Mildura to improve access to important health services for women in the Sunraysia area?

WESTERN METROPOLITAN REGION

Ms VAGHELA (Western Metropolitan) (12:45): My constituency question is directed to the Honourable James Merlino, Deputy Premier and Minister for Education. The Andrews Labor government has delivered a budget that keeps the promises we made to the Victorian people. The government is funding \$671.1 million to deliver 100 new schools across the state over the next eight years. This includes the construction funding for the new Truganina South East Primary School in my electorate of Western Metropolitan Region. This school will be an excellent addition to the rapidly growing population of Truganina. My question to the minister is: can the minister provide me with an update on the time line of the construction for the new Truganina South East Primary School?

WESTERN VICTORIA REGION

Mr GRIMLEY (Western Victoria) (12:46): My constituency question is to the Minister for Health, representing the Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers. Recently I met with Mike McKinstry, the CEO of GenU. GenU are a profit-for-purpose organisation which is run out of Geelong in my electorate of Western Victoria Region. GenU reinvest the small profits they make back into the community in order to ensure that there are affordable and independent housing options available for disabled Victorians. Understandably, organisations such as GenU need the backing of both the community and all levels of government in order to ensure these projects become a reality. My question is: to ensure that disabled Victorians are not housed long term in aged-care homes, can the minister highlight the steps the Andrews government is taking in order to address the long waiting times for affordable and independent housing for disabled people in my electorate of Western Victoria Region?

WESTERN VICTORIA REGION

Mrs McARTHUR (Western Victoria) (12:47): My constituency question is for the Minister for Planning and concerns the planning amendment made last October which provided community care accommodation exemptions from the requirement of planning permits. Benefitting from these changes is the Haven Foundation, who intend to construct a mental health complex in Highton, Geelong. Like all members in this place, I believe that providing adequate support and treatment for people with mental illness is of utmost importance. The Haven Foundation is one of many commendable organisations in our state that provide accommodation. Preserving the character and security of local communities is also important. The exemptions produced last year disadvantage local communities by denying them the consultation they deserve with regard to the construction of community care accommodation, such as the facility in Highton. So I ask the minister why he believes that local communities should be denied consultation prior to the construction of facilities that may have the potential to alter the character and nature of their neighbourhoods.

NORTHERN VICTORIA REGION

Mr QUILTY (Northern Victoria) (12:48): My constituency question is for the Minister for Roads. The Yarrawonga–Mulwala bridge is falling apart. It needs to be replaced. In 2015 the roads minister issued a media release confirming the demolition of the current bridge and construction of a replacement. Plans were drawn up and a series of routes were proposed. Locals overwhelmingly supported the so-called green route. The government ignored that and locked in the grey route. It is now 2019 and construction is yet to commence. Large transport vehicles are already a concern for the bridge, and munitions transport is already diverted to nearby Weir Road. Weir Road is the only other crossing for hours in either direction, and it will be closed next year by the Murray-Darling Basin Authority. Without a bridge Yarrawonga-Mulwala would suffer severe hardships. When will Yarrawongans be provided with their new bridge, and why not use the more logical and locally supported green route?

WESTERN METROPOLITAN REGION

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) (12:49): My constituency question is to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. I refer the minister to the case of a family in Point Cook, as highlighted on Neil Mitchell's 3AW program this week. The family woke in the early hours of Sunday morning to the sound of someone trying to break into their home through the front door. They rang 000 and were told to barricade themselves inside their house, which I presume they had done already. It was fortunate that the offender turned his attention to cars outside, because the police failed to show up at all, and despite another phone call from the residents there has been no contact from Victoria Police to this point. It is bad enough that residents of Point Cook cannot feel safe in their own homes, but it is deplorable that they cannot receive police protection when they need it. Minister, what are you doing to ensure this sort of appalling situation never happens again?

NORTHERN METROPOLITAN REGION

Dr RATNAM (Northern Metropolitan) (12:50): My constituency question is for the Minister for Public Transport in the other place. Last year the government committed to building new car parking at Merlynston station in Coburg North, and funding for this car park was set out in last week's budget. Building more car parks in our suburbs means laying more slabs of concrete in already built-up areas, further contributing to the urban heat island effect and increasing the temperature of our suburbs. To combat this effect we need to increase sustainability measures in urban design such as increasing open and green space and planting more trees for shade. My question is: is the government incorporating measures to combat the urban heat island effect such as, amongst others, water capture and treatment as well as shading and trees in the construction of this new car park?

EASTERN VICTORIA REGION

Ms BATH (Eastern Victoria) (12:51): My question is to the Minister for Roads. I have a constituent who is a 19-year-old student balancing part-time work and full-time university. She recently received her car registration. Shockingly, it had increased by nearly \$200 in comparison to that which another vehicle at the same address received five months earlier. Both vehicles are the same classification and build and are due in the same financial and calendar year. The only difference is a 25 per cent increase in the TAC charges. My young constituent relies on her car. Public transport is not an option. The Gippsland rail service is grossly inadequate, charging at a premium but delivering substandard service. She is at a loss as to how regional people can financially survive and afford an education when unwelcome charges such as car registration are imposed. How will the minister justify and explain to my constituent a sudden 25 per cent increase in car registration TAC charges?

EASTERN METROPOLITAN REGION

Ms WOOLDRIDGE (Eastern Metropolitan) (12:52): My question is for the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change and relates to the current plague of wild animals in Eltham. Over the last five years there has been a marked increase in populations of kangaroos, wallabies and deer in the Eltham area. The animals are trampling and destroying fences, destroying local fauna and endangering not only the lives of animals but also the safety of residents. Countless reports in local papers confirm what constituents have told me regarding their concern for their safety while driving on local roads. Nillumbik is the only council in Victoria which has a strategy to manage injured native wildlife. The plague proportions of these animals means injured animals are having to be euthanised at an alarming and growing rate. I understand the government is undertaking a trial to control deer in the vicinity, but what about kangaroos and wallabies? My question to the minister is: what more will the government do to manage the rapid spread of native wildlife in peri-urban areas, particularly Nillumbik, to ensure that both animals and the human population are protected from injury?

Committees**JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE***Establishment***Debate resumed.**

Ms PULFORD (Western Victoria—Minister for Roads, Minister for Road Safety and the TAC, Minister for Fishing and Boating) (12:53): I welcome the opportunity to join this discussion in the house today on a motion that I hope will lead to the seventh inquiry in as many years by a parliamentary committee on the very important subject of how we keep the Victorian community safe on our roads.

Mr Rich-Phillips's motion canvasses the main causes of road trauma—drugs and alcohol, speed and distraction, which increasingly is a euphemism for people being on their phones; how to make sure that our roads are as safe as possible; and how to make sure our vehicles are as safe as possible. Many

of these are the central tenets of the *Towards Zero* strategy that provides the framework for the reference that we look forward to a parliamentary committee considering.

Mr Rich-Phillips also added to his motion a question around data accuracy and properly understanding the causes of road trauma. I really welcome the addition of that point. I was reminded, as Mr Rich-Phillips was talking about this part of his motion just before we broke for question time, of some comments made by Joe Calafiore, the chief executive officer of Victoria's Transport Accident Commission (TAC), last Friday when he, assistant commissioner of police Stephen Leane, who has responsibility for road safety, and I addressed the media ahead of Victoria's road safety summit.

Mr Calafiore reflected on a discussion that he had had with one of the senior trauma specialists at the Alfred hospital. The context in which this was occurring was where the Transport Accident Commission, with the government and Victoria Police, were launching our latest road safety campaign. These campaigns are about changing behaviour, and this particular campaign is around helping people in the community to better understand the risks associated with a short, quick glance at their phone, which is an incredibly hazardous thing to do. But while we were addressing the media Mr Calafiore reflected on a conversation that he had had with a trauma surgeon at the Alfred hospital who had reported to him that in seven out of eight wards there were people who had said that the reason that they were there was that they had been on their phones.

We know that there is quite substantial under-reporting of circumstances where people are on their phones and in the car—and this is I think the drink-driving road safety challenge of our generation. So this campaign will be an important start or an important next step. There are actually already very hefty penalties in place—\$484 and four demerit points—for people who are found to be on their phones. That is one form of deterrent; this campaign explaining the risks is another. But it is entirely possible that we need to look at harsher penalties for this, because this is a really significant hazard.

The single greatest hazard on our roads, though, is speed. We do have a really significant challenge with drug and alcohol consumption when combined with being on the roads. A lot of the time when we are talking about who is on the roads and road safety, we do talk about and think about people who are the drivers of cars, but there are of course also their passengers, people who are on foot, people who are on bicycles, people who are on motorbikes and people for whom the roads are their workplaces. In the six months now that I have had responsibility for road safety as part of my ministerial responsibilities, what has become very, very clear to me is that this is an issue that touches each and every member of the Victorian community. There are 141 people who have lost their lives on Victoria's roads already this year, which is a very significant increase on last year's record low experience. We do have a great deal that has been achieved in Victoria over the last 50 years, but we have got an almighty long way to go.

We have through our collective efforts, including some very significant moments spurred on by the work of parliamentary committees here in this place, reduced the loss of lives on Victoria's roads by 80 per cent, which is a really good achievement and one that all our road safety partners and all members of the community should be rightly proud of. This has occurred at a time when the population has doubled and the number of cars on the roads has increased by a factor of four. So the challenge is difficult, and the *Towards Zero* road safety strategy seeks to address this challenge in a number of different ways. The central tenet of that is recognising that zero is a goal that we should all aspire to, and it is a statement that at its heart is about the idea that the price of people getting around on the roads ought not be the loss of life, and of course for every lost life there are around four people who have a life-changing serious injury as well.

Sitting suspended 1.00 p.m. until 2.04 p.m.

Ms PULFORD: Before the lunchbreak I was talking about the central tenets of the *Towards Zero* strategy, which are in addition to that aspiration of a time when we have no lives lost on Victoria's roads. The four pillars of the *Towards Zero* strategy are safer people, safer roads, safer vehicles and

safer speeds. In many respects the elements of the inquiry that are captured by Mr Rich-Phillips's motion go to each and every one of those. They also were the subject of much discussion at the road safety summit last Friday, where we brought together experts and representatives from our road safety partners and representatives of different community groups from across the state. Indeed some of the world's leading experts in road safety research were gathered at the state library on Friday.

We were certainly not prepared as a government—specifically Minister Neville, the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, and I—in calling this summit to stand by and let this horrific number of lives being lost on Victoria's roads go without any response. The context is important. The current *Towards Zero* strategy does involve \$1.4 billion of investment. There are literally hundreds of projects underway at the moment: intersection upgrades, the installation of flexible safety barriers along some of our high-speed roads, campaigns, community engagement and so much more. But being able to bring our experts and community representatives together, I think, was an important opportunity for us all to test again the current strategy and to begin work on Victoria's next road safety strategy, to better understand the issues we face and to determine what more can be done. Many of these key factors contributing to trauma on our roads are well known and well understood. There is nothing much new about them at all, but there are other new and emerging issues that need proper attention and urgent response. All options are, from my perspective, on the table and we should leave no stone unturned in stopping people from being killed or seriously injured in our communities.

For decades Victoria has been a global leader in road safety because there has been a willingness to be bold, to try new things and indeed to go further than others. Obviously it was quite a bit before my time, but something as dramatic as making the wearing of seatbelts compulsory must have been an extraordinary proposition in its day, and now the thought of doing otherwise is quite hard to conceive of. Road deaths have decreased significantly in recent decades, and Victoria saw a record low number of lives lost on our roads last year, which marked the midway point of the four-year *Towards Zero* strategy. But this year has demonstrated, I think, just in stark contrast that what got us close to 200 lives will not necessarily get us to zero.

I think this parliamentary committee inquiry will be a really important input into the next road safety strategy, and I look forward to seeing the committee's deliberations. There is no one single answer to why we are seeing the increase in lives lost. Of course, as you well know, Deputy President, and all members in this place know, our regional communities bear a disproportionate share of the impact of road trauma. The evidence tells us that these are 'country people dying on country roads', to quote a TAC campaign that was running at about the time I was learning to drive. We also recognise that everybody is human and that people do make simple mistakes. That is why making the road system safer is an important pillar.

I have had lots of people contact me in recent months, but perhaps more so in recent weeks, to share their thoughts and ideas about what we as a community can do to make our roads safer. There have been some generous insights and people sharing some very, very difficult personal stories. There have also been quite a lot of people who describe themselves in their emails or their Facebook posts as 'professional drivers' who are on the road for their 40 or 50 or 60 hours or more a week and who are professional observers of everyone else's behaviour. I have had more than a few people say to me, 'We also just need to get back to basics'. That notion of driving to conditions and of being courteous and mindful of all other road users and respectful of everybody else's right to be there is something that I know a lot of people in the community feel is an area where there is considerable room for improvement.

This year, amid the horrific experience that Victorian road users have had to date, we have seen a really shocking trend of drivers and passengers dying in circumstances where they were not wearing their seatbelts. Around March, when we were seeking to understand why there had been such a considerable shift and asking our road safety experts and advisers more and more questions about the circumstances of accidents and the people involved in them—what are the keys to this puzzle, what

more can looking at the circumstances of each of these things tell us about patterns that might give us some direction about what we could do differently—I was personally shocked to see that for around half of the fatalities we had data on whether people were wearing seatbelts or not, though it was not available in all cases, and of that half, around half were not wearing their seatbelts. If you are not wearing a seatbelt and you hit something in your car at lots of speeds but particularly at high speed, your chances of survival are negligible. That was what we were seeing. Drink-driving and drug driving remain among the leading causes, and enforcement, we believe, is still our best weapon there.

I receive—I think I might have mentioned this to the house before—an email every morning with the latest accident information and the latest accounting of how many people have lost their lives on Victoria's roads. Three-quarters of the people who have lost their lives on Victoria's roads this year are men. This is quite different to the proportion of men in the general population, which also perhaps gives us something to pursue in terms of that small percentage of people in the community who are living risky lives and whose risky driving is a symptom of a whole lot of other things going on in their lives.

Young drivers and old drivers of course are also groups in the community for whom different strategies can perhaps assist. The graduated licensing scheme, which we have had in Victoria for 12 years now, at its 10-year evaluation in 2017 was shown to have had quite a dramatic impact on the numbers of young people being killed or seriously injured on the roads—that is the 120 hours and support for young people to be quite experienced drivers by the time they are licensed. But we have also seen this year a group of people that are best described as older people in older cars. I know Mr Rich-Phillips reflected on the fleet that is on the roads in Victoria and what we can do to have more people accessing better and newer technology in their vehicles. The average age of a vehicle on the roads in Victoria is nine years; the average age of a vehicle in which someone is killed is 12 years.

Again, things like GPS were new not all that long ago and now they are everywhere. Curtain airbags are not in all cars, and again the experts tell us that that is one of the most important things. Lane-keeping technology, which you see in new cars, is something that I think in the not-too-distant future we will have in more and more vehicles on the roads. That part of the committee's work I think will be very, very interesting, because we certainly do not want certain groups of the community excluded from being in safer vehicles if we can possibly avoid that.

That gives rise to another interesting element of this. I have had a brief discussion with the Deputy Prime Minister about this and look forward to further conversations with him about the role of the federal government. Most of the things that governments can do in road safety are the responsibility of state jurisdictions, but I do know that the commonwealth government have expressed an interest and a desire to be involved in road safety. There is one area in particular that I am keen to first be discussing with them, and that is around import standards.

Australia was a car manufacturing country and many, many cars on the roads were Australian made. The federal government's role historically in that context was around manufacturing standards—making sure that cars manufactured here met certain safety standards before they went on the road. Now circumstances have changed and Australia is now an importer of cars. What we have got at the moment are a lot of cars coming into the market that are 1 and 2-star Australasian new car assessment program (ANCAP) rated. When people get into strife in those cars and they run into things or other vehicles, the consequences are catastrophic. I would really like to see the federal government playing a more active role around import standards because there are some types of vehicles on the roads in Victoria—and nationally, I guess—that we probably do not really want on the roads because they are just not safe.

There are so many elements to what new technology can assist with in terms of vehicles. Mr Rich-Phillips remarked on the luxury vehicle charge that is in the budget. I know that there certainly is a view in the community that the more you spend on a car the safer it is or that some safety features only exist in, say, a many hundreds of thousands of dollars, state-of-the-art fancy new Tesla or whatever,

but there are cars on the market for \$22 000, \$23 000 or \$24 000 that have the same safety features and that successfully attain 5-star ANCAP ratings. Again, having more and more safe cars on the road and less unsafe cars is very much part of our challenge.

It has been a tragic start to the year. I do welcome the debate and the proposed work schedule of the committee. I want to briefly introduce three amendments. I move:

1. In paragraph (1), omit the words ‘a joint select committee of seven members be established to inquire into, consider and report to both houses,’ and insert in their place ‘this house requires the Economy and Infrastructure Committee to inquire into, consider and report,’.
2. In paragraph (1)(c), after the words ‘adequacy of current speed enforcement measures’, insert ‘and speed management policies’.
3. Omit paragraphs (2) to (7).

While the amendments are circulated, 2019 has demonstrated to us that for us to collectively stop people from dying on our roads we need to do more and we need to do things differently. We cannot expect to keep doing the same thing and expect a different result. The challenge is significant. The work of this committee will be incredibly important, as has been the work of all of the parliamentary committee inquiries into road safety—the previous seven in the last seven years and the many over five decades or more that have made such an important contribution to the 80 per cent reduction that we have already experienced.

In conclusion, if I could just explain to the house the purpose of my amendments. I think I have had the opportunity to speak to most members, certainly to all parties, about these. One is a minor proposed change of a policy nature and another is really a procedural question on what kind of committee considers this question. I will speak to the second amendment before I speak to the first one.

The second amendment would simply add ‘and speed management policies’ to follow the words ‘adequacy of current speed enforcement measures’. I think that rigorously interrogating the efficacy of speed enforcement is very important but this is also a really opportune moment to consider speed-setting policy and arrangements. I certainly would be grateful if the committee could give that some thought and consideration.

Amendment 1 is really quite separate from the subject of road safety and goes to a debate that we have had in the house a little bit over the course of the term and over previous terms. It is about how we organise our parliamentary committees. It is the view of the government that the existing committee structure is best served to interrogate these important questions. Mr Rich-Phillips has proposed the creation of a new parliamentary committee; I am proposing that this very important matter goes to an existing parliamentary committee.

I thank members for their contributions to the debate and for their care and compassion for people in the Victorian community who are impacted by road trauma, and I look forward to seeing the outcome of the committee’s work.

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) (14:20): I move:

That the debate be adjourned until later this day.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned until later this day.

Motions**WASTE AND RECYCLING MANAGEMENT**

Dr CUMMING (Western Metropolitan) (14:21): I move:

That this house calls on the government to:

- (1) commission advice on appropriate targets to enable action and support consistency of food and organic waste collection across Victoria;
- (2) support and work in partnership with local government to divert organic waste, including food waste, from landfill and ensure it is collected and managed with clearly identifiable and market-ready end products;
- (3) explore funding options for an organic waste recycling scheme through the current waste levy;
- (4) ensure that the frameworks, guidelines and standards developed according to the *Victorian Organics Resource Recovery Strategy: September 2015* meet the implementation targets of:
 - (a) enabling all councils across the state to implement food waste collection services for residential, commercial and industrial food waste that suits the needs of their municipalities;
 - (b) ensuring processing facilities are equipped to meet demand by mapping currently available facilities, including capacity for processing and proximity of sites to municipalities, expanding what is currently available and establishing additional facilities in strategic locations to minimise transport costs;
 - (c) clearly identifying and establishing markets for recovered and recycled products; and
 - (d) ensuring redistribution of viable food within local communities through partnerships between the private and not-for-profit sectors;
- (5) expand to a comprehensive, statewide education and behaviour change community program and ensure the program:
 - (a) reduces the amount of food waste generated;
 - (b) increases compliance with organic waste recycling;
 - (c) follows state guidelines and is adapted to suit local communities; and
 - (d) encourages ongoing innovative solutions through communities, universities and industry.

I wish to acknowledge that I am standing upon the land of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation and pay my respects to their elders, past and present, Mr Finn. I wish to acknowledge their connected relationship with and their care of country.

I rise today to move my motion, proud to deliver this during the celebrations of World Environment Day. I am also proud that this is a motion for health—health of the environment and health of all of us. Today I stand for what I stand on. The human challenge has always been to live in harmony both with each other and with the environment. Not a surprise to the many who know me, the subject of caring for the environment, and in particular the relationship between the environment and waste management, is a longstanding passion of mine. It is fundamentally important for all of us to care for the environment—not just for our health's sake but for our children, their children and so on. The voice for the environment does not belong to one person, and certainly not to a political party. It is a universal voice and it is calling for action.

Organic waste, especially the impact of food waste on the environment, is the focus of my motion today. Organic waste is a public, environmental and socio-economic concern for everyone in Victoria and around the world. Simply put, we have to stop putting organic waste into landfill and redirect it into our soil. The action is critical for the health of the environment and especially for the future of our food production. For the last 20 years I have sat on waste boards and been consulted numerous times by various state governments regarding the solution to our waste problems. The consultations became talkfests and every state government during that time lacked the political will to make it a number one priority.

Reviewing the multiple government department policies, reports, plans, strategies and updates, the issues have not moved forward. We do not have a comprehensive approach to the management of our organic waste. What we do have is all the data. We know how much waste there is and where it is. We have the money to prioritise this issue through waste levies. As a government we know environmental issues are a community priority and are now overtaking budget concerns. We have the evidence. We have the support. We have the paper trail.

The state government's *Victorian Organics Resource Recovery Strategy* from September 2015 sets a five-year target to produce frameworks, guidelines and standards. Of course these are essential to ensure safe and efficient delivery of services. However, it is time to move from a space of strategy to action. It is time for targets that support consistency about organic waste management across Victoria, targets that meet the demand now of our growing population. Through this motion I am demanding long-term comprehensive solutions to organic waste recovery and recycling be in place by the end of this government's term and for a comprehensive statewide educational and behavioural change program to be activated, together with a suitable budget allocation to fund and sustain this. While many within this place battle to find the courage to start acting, the idea of a quick fix to improve the impact on the environment seems somewhat delusional. But what if there is a quick fix? What if in fact there are many quick fixes? Would you get on board? I believe the best way to start is to begin, and it is time for action.

As a community we are all familiar with the collection of garden waste such as grass and garden clippings. We are familiar with the collections of plastic, glass, cans and paper. However, the average household bin, the one where you throw all of the rest of your rubbish, normally weighs around 10 kilos, and a massive 35 per cent of that is food waste. Collectively 250 000 tonnes of food waste is thrown away each year, and as of September 2018, only 15 of the 79 councils across the whole of Victoria were collecting kerbside food waste. That is 18 per cent of the councils collecting 10 per cent of all food waste. So what happens to the rest? Well, the rest is dropped into landfill and buried, and what is shocking about this? Get ready for some science. We know that one of the greatest contributors to pollution and the toxicity of our atmosphere is the mismanagement of our food waste. But food waste can be composted and returned to our soil. To produce quality food we need nutrient-rich soil. The soil in this country is struggling. When all food scraps we toss into our regular garbage bins are collected and buried in landfill, a natural process of composting is arrested. Buried food waste is converted into methane that poisons our air and produces bioproducts that pollute our waterways and denature our soils. The remaining nutrients in the food are lost forever. We cannot afford to keep doing this; indeed I am demanding to know why we are allowing this to happen.

In a proper composting process our organic food scraps and garden waste are a priceless resource—a resource. That is a word we really need to focus on. Rubbish is not rubbish; it is a resource. Our food scraps are jam-packed full of nutrients, even if they are squishy or unpeeled and rotting in the back of your fridge. These nutrients are converted, and they can actually be transformed into nutrient-rich soil during the composting process. This is the new soil that grows our future plants, our future food. Converting our food and garden waste is the organic recycling solution that builds our health, and also this diverts food and garden waste from landfills. It is a climate solution, lowering our climate impact. It is a win-win. The answer may be lying in the back corner of your fridge. We know in our hearts we need to care for the planet and that time is of the essence. We know how to create healthy people and a healthy planet by diverting food waste from landfill, and yet we have a disconnect. We have to question ourselves: why is our food waste still ending up in landfill? We can make a choice today, on World Environment Day, to speed up our solutions to handling our organics with care, to cooling our planet, to building better soils and to growing a healthy community.

Composting is cool for the planet, and it is a two-part process. The first is about infrastructure. It is about a government understanding that having a world-class organic composting system is an investment in the future that will repay us a millionfold. Now, I know that that does not sound like a very scientific data-based analysis, but you get what I mean. We need to accelerate the rollout of food

organic and garden organic systems. We need kerbside food organic and garden organic bin collection and compost processing as a major priority. We need to have how we do this sorted, but we do not get things done by just having systems. We need to get these great things done with our hearts, our heads and our hands in alignment.

The second way to improve composting in our state is to have a world-class statewide education program around composting throughout the whole community. We need a statewide approach to food education—one story. And why I say this is that we have 79 councils doing 79 different things, with 79 education programs. We need a statewide approach. We need a statewide education program. We need to use part of our waste levy for this statewide approach. This government must have a system that enables all councils across the state to implement food waste collection services for residential, commercial and industrial food waste that suits the needs of their municipalities; ensures that our processing facilities are equipped to meet the demand by mapping currently available facilities, including the capacity for processing and the proximity of these sites to the municipalities; and expands what is currently available and establishes additional facilities in strategic locations to minimise transport costs. We need clearly identified and established markets for recovered and recycled products and the surplus, the viable food, to be redistributed to those in need within our local communities through partnerships between the private and the not-for-profit sectors.

Evidence suggests that the transition to separating organic waste will not be too difficult. You know why it will not be too difficult? It is because people actually get it. When you tell the community that this is an organic bin, that it only has green waste and food waste, they comply. They get that plastic and glass do not go in that bin, but it would seem that our recycling system, with all the different packaging, becomes a confusing situation. When we talk about organic waste, when we talk about green waste, it is not that hard. But when the bin is not available or home composting is not available, it gets thrown into landfill, and at that time this is what is creating the methane in our atmosphere.

In addition, we should plan for the future by encouraging innovative and ongoing solutions through communities, universities and industry. As a state we have the chance to make a profound and long-lasting permanent change to the relationship we have with our organic waste and our organic resources. There is a clear hierarchy known to great waste educators around the world. The first focus is to reduce our food waste: to inspire our communities to buy only what we need, to preserve our surplus and to eat our leftovers—and with food that is edible we need to feed the hungry. When we compost, we transform the soil. It is one story—one shared story from the whole world. Let this be a legacy of this day. Let it be written into history that on 5 June 2019, World Environment Day, this government and all of us in this place committed to change for a healthier planet and a healthier community.

Waste is not a sexy topic, and there are others that feel this should already be occurring. I know that there may be people who get up today and wish to talk down my motion. I say to them: why? Why would you speak against this motion? Why does this not make perfect sense? I am looking forward to hearing others talk about this important issue.

I have heard many times before, ‘Why are the councils not doing this—every single council? Why have 79 councils across Victoria not started collecting food waste? Why are 79 councils across Victoria not collecting organic waste?’. Then I hear, ‘Well, country Victoria is different to city Victoria’. I hear all the excuses under the sun. It is pretty simple that if we want to make change we, the whole state of Victoria, have to make a concerted effort to remove food waste and organic waste out of our system, out of our landfill bins, and we need to treat it accordingly. We feel that councils somehow have all the money to buy all the bins and they can just do this, but that is not the situation.

The community over 10 years have been putting money into a waste levy, and for 10 years the government has not kept up with the community’s expectation on spending. I truly, dearly hope that this government sees this as a priority and that they will actually spend money from their waste levy, that we will have a campaign across the whole of Victoria to educate the community on how easy this

is to do, and that there is a concerted effort and real targets in real time—not targets of ‘in 25 years time’ or ‘in 10 years time’—to get this done.

Another excuse that I have heard for why we cannot promote organic or green waste and get all of this out of our system is that there is not the capacity. Let me say that from what I understand from this system there is capacity for 500 000 tonnes with the current facilities we have available here in Victoria and we are only collecting 300 000 tonnes. So there currently is capacity for another 200 000 tonnes before we even build another brand-new, from scratch organic facility. So I say this: if the education was there, the community would actually do it. With the education plus the resources—being that people actually had a compost bin or a worm farm or that bin out the front of their home—they would be able to use this. There needs to be a connect from this government to local governments to spend that waste levy to make sure that all Victorians have those facilities. We also need to help industry and the commercial sector to make sure the levy is available to them. Currently there is only a small amount of that levy made available and the process of filling out paperwork for the grant is quite onerous.

I hope that there is a larger budget allocation over the next couple of years to fast-track this very important aspect of the environment, that we do it today and that at the end of our parliamentary term we will all go into the next election with the community on board for organic waste and food waste.

Mr MELHEM (Western Metropolitan) (14:40): I also rise to speak on the motion moved by Dr Cumming. I moved a similar motion back in 2014 along with a petition with 11 000 signatures of residents of Caroline Springs, Deer Park, Burnside, Ravenhall and the surrounding area. It came out of the issue that organic waste and food waste was causing methane generation at the Ravenhall tip, which was at the time operated by Boral. Since then it has been operated by Cleanaway. I have to give Cleanaway a bit of credit—they have done a better job of containing the methane spill and the odour around the place, which I think is because of that contribution last time and the residents. It has been a big issue. I know that actually. I do not live far from the place and I can relate to that. I can recall that when Boral put in an application to extend their operation for a further 35 years I had not known the tip actually existed. I just assumed the smell was coming from people with new houses getting built and putting blood and bone on their gardens, but that was not the case. It was the methane seeping out. The odour was awful.

People do not have to put up with this in the 21st century—not in Melbourne. That is why I will be supporting the motion. The government is supporting the motion. I think it is important in the 21st century that we do not send this sort of waste to landfill. I personally will continue my advocacy in this place and any other forum to make sure that we get to a stage where we are able to come up with solutions. I will tackle some of the solutions the government have already implemented in the last few years and the plan going forward to address that.

But definitely I accept and agree that food waste and municipal waste which generates methane, or even single plastic bags, should not finish up in landfill. You have got the odour, you have got the methane and you have got plastic bags floating all over the place. You only have to drive past a few of those landfills to see the mess. I think we are all in agreement that we need to work towards eliminating this and getting to a stage where we can actually ban this sort of waste going to landfill. I will personally continue to advocate for that.

The government has not been sitting idle for the last four years in relation to that issue. There is a fair recognition that there is a problem that needs to be fixed, and councils around Victoria have been grappling with that issue for the last few years and trying to find a solution. A number of solutions have already been put in place by various councils with the assistance of the state government over the years, in particular looking at organic waste composting. A number of projects have already been put in place, and the government has put in some money to encourage local government and the private sector to do something in that space—for example, \$2.5 million for the Victorian organic resource recovery strategy. We provided funding to support the rollout of kerbside food organics and garden

organics (FOGO) collections across the City of Greater Geelong, the City of Greater Bendigo and the City of Ballarat. That program involves a new kerbside organic service for more than 74 000 households across those local council areas. There are various other projects. For example, \$1 million was given to the kerbside food organics and garden organics collection service. That program was to support a new food and garden organic collection at the cities of Wodonga, Bendigo and Shepparton. There are more and more of these facilities opening all over the place, including in Wodonga and also in the south-eastern suburbs.

Of the 79 councils—and I think Dr Cumming talked about this—22 offer the FOGO collection service, which mixes the red bin with the green bin. There may be different coloured bins in other councils. Your organic garden waste and your kitchen waste are basically mixed into one. As I said, there have been a lot of projects around the state. About 400 000 tonnes have been converted to create fertilisers which can be used in food production in farming areas. That is great, but then we are talking about over 4 million tonnes of waste in the state of Victoria. We have still got a fair way to go, so what do we do with the rest of it? I do not think we will be able to just convert all that into organic waste and turn it into fertiliser. We need to come up with some other options other than just sending it to landfill. That is why recycling is very important. That is why education is the key.

In one of the areas that I am responsible for—as are various members of this house—the Environment and Planning Committee, which I have the privilege of chairing, is looking at this very issue in relation to recycling and waste management Victoria. In fact we have a hearing tonight at which we will hear from the National Waste and Recycling Industry Council. That is one of the options we are looking at. The government also made an announcement a couple of weeks ago and asked Infrastructure Victoria to put a strategy in place to start implementing some policies around recycling and waste in general, because we need to now start talking about finding a solution.

The government last week asked the Essential Services Commission to treat recycling in particular but also waste in general as an essential service, so we have a bit more control and take this issue seriously. Apart from the bad smell and the old method of sending organic waste to landfill, we know the China National Sword policy had some sort of impact. Let us face the facts. Victoria can be credited with being one of the best waste recyclers in the world. I think we do a pretty good job. We do a very good job in how we deal with our waste and recycling in general. We do it at the front end, where we have got the three bins, and we were able to export most of our waste to China and Asia and they actually dealt with it and converted it to various other products. The current ban has caused a problem. We had the stockpiling of recycling in Victoria, and hence we had the SKM fire and various other fires, and now the question is what we do with the recyclable waste that we cannot export to other countries to deal with.

On the other hand, that is something we have not been exporting. I do not think we can export food waste—commercial food waste and municipal food waste—because I do not think anyone will buy it; it is a bit more difficult. But we can find solutions to turn that into a useful product instead of sending it to landfill. Turning that into a fertilising product is one way. The other way is doing what a company in the Yarra Valley is doing, and that is turning that product from waste to energy. They use various technologies, such as the digestion technology, which is basically putting it into a processing plant, introducing some sort of bacteria into the waste and then that generates steam and electricity. That is in the Yarra Valley and is working really well. There are some other smaller operations around the state, but they are on a much smaller scale. The question here is then how, as a state government, as a local council, we can provide the leadership and the opportunities for industry to invest.

Going back to last year, I was commissioned by Minister D'Ambrosio to actually look at that particular issue, and I produced a report for the minister in relation to waste. One of the main focuses of that was waste to energy and how we can deal with that issue. That is a real option. I was very pleased with one of the things that came up when we did community consultation, particularly around the Ravenhall area where the tip is, and in Wyndham where there is another tip, when we asked people, 'Do you

mind, for example, paying a bit of extra money to make sure that does not end up in landfill, if we come up with alternative solutions?'. I was not really surprised, but the answer was that, yes, people are happy to pay extra if we are actually able to show them and demonstrate we are doing something useful with that waste instead of just basically dumping it in a landfill.

One of the areas we tested for was waste to energy, and there was significant support for that. The issue with waste to energy, for example, was that using other methods like turning organic waste to fertiliser was going to be far more expensive than the levy which you now pay to dispose of that waste into landfill. Now the industry has taken a different approach. In fact it is very competitive now. You do not have to double the price of converting that waste to a useful product, whether it is waste to energy or whether it is fertiliser. It is actually a very competitive price, and in fact most operators are saying, 'We can do it for the same price. The only thing we need is some direction from the state in relation to what is our policy medium to long term, so we have some certainty'. Councils would need some direction. One of the areas is they would need a long-term contract, because with this sort of contract you need somewhere between 15 and 20 years to make that viable.

I am pleased that one of the companies looking at doing something similar to that is called Recovered Energy Australia. They have got their approval from the City of Wyndham to start construction for a plant in Laverton, which will be able to deal with about 200 000 tonnes a year of that specific product, and we know Australian Paper is looking at a big plant at their operation in Gippsland with around 650 000 tonnes. Again that could take care of the municipal waste and food waste in the south-eastern suburbs, and I did make a contribution on this issue a few weeks ago. In fact they turned up to one of the hearings, and I wanted to congratulate them on that approach, because what I did not want to have in five years time, with the current landfill facility contract finishing up in the eastern suburbs, was the rubbish or waste finishing up in my electorate, at Ravenhall. That is something I do not want. So I am wishing Australian Paper well to make sure that they stay on the other side of town.

So there are a lot of things happening in that space. The government is investing a lot of money in converting current waste to a useful product. I think the current wording being used for that is the 'circular economy'. That is very important, and I know Minister D'Ambrosio is getting a lot of people working to make sure there is a solution put in place. There is a major policy to be announced in the next 12 months for implementation in 2020 to basically address the issue of recycling in general to make sure we overcome the current ban, where China basically will not accept our recycled waste, and we will be able to use that waste here.

Last week I was at the launch of a new recycling plant by Alex Fraser in Laverton. That is hopefully going to resolve or fix our problem with recycled glass. They will be able to reuse 150 000 tonnes of recycled glass, converting that to a road product, which equates to about a billion bottles a year. That is exciting.

As part of the review the government will obviously be looking at procurement policy, because I think that is very important. We need to lead from the front. We need to be able to demand in our major contracts that construction companies use recycled products. The other thing that is being talked about is stewardship of product, where companies are being made to take responsibility for their own product and whatever packaging they use. At the end, when the consumer is finished with that product, they should be able to track that and have some process in place so that product can be disposed of. So that is another area that is being looked at.

In my limited time, in light of the list of speakers speaking on that issue, I do not want to take too much time, but if I can go back in relation to that specific motion about organic waste, I think it is very important that we have support from all sides of politics, whether opposition, crossbenchers or government. It is time now to find a solution going forward, and I am sure that Minister D'Ambrosio is working very hard in that space to make sure we find that solution.

We know the trigger for that goes back to 2014 and the uproar in the community in relation to the Ravenhall tip—the stinky tip, I call it. Whether it is in relation to the China Sword policy about recycling or whether it is the recent fires in Footscray and Campbellfield, they are all triggers for us to act, for us to actually put in a medium to long-term policy to have one fix so we do not have to revisit that issue again. I have got full confidence that the Andrews Labor government and Minister D'Ambrosio in particular will put the right solution in place.

We are tracking in the right direction. I am looking forward to the passing of this motion, and hopefully we will be able to report at the Environment and Planning Committee with some recommendations that hopefully the government will adopt and we will find a long-term solution for this problem that we should be able to fix. With these words, I commend the motion to the house.

Ms LOVELL (Northern Victoria) (14:56): I rise to speak to Dr Cumming's motion. I congratulate Dr Cumming on bringing her first motion to the house and wish her well with it. Recycling is a very important and very topical subject, and it is particularly fitting that we are debating this motion here today on World Environment Day. As this motion focuses so heavily on diverting organic waste from food, the redistribution of viable food and also reducing the amount of food waste generated, I am going to speak on a slightly different topic.

Everyone else has talked about a lot of the recycling issues, but I am going to speak about a very special Victorian-founded organisation that is currently achieving all of these objectives, and that organisation is SecondBite. SecondBite was founded in 2006 by Ian and Simone Carson. The Carsons are well-known to those of us in the Liberal Party, as Ian is a former state president of our party, and they are personal friends to many of us on this side of the chamber. In 2006 Ian and Simone decided that they could no longer watch food go to waste while people went hungry. Being people who do not sit back and say someone should do something about it, the Carsons rolled up their sleeves and did something about it themselves. Together with the help of friends who they would recruit to the cause, Ian and Simone visited stalls in Melbourne markets at the end of the day to collect surplus food, which they would then drop off to local charities. In their first year they redistributed over 600 kilograms of food. This is food that otherwise would have gone to waste, into landfill, that was viable food that was redistributed to charity organisations for use.

Over the past 13 years SecondBite has grown from its initial humble beginnings to be a leading national food rescue organisation, with over 600 volunteers, 50 staff members and warehouse locations in Melbourne, Brisbane, Sydney, Adelaide and Perth. They have rescued 64.5 million kilos of food and provided more than 129 million meals, and they currently support more than 1400 community food programs. In 2011 SecondBite entered into a national partnership with Coles, who continue to be a big supporter of SecondBite. This partnership helps to ensure much greater access to food for people in need and achieves the objectives set out in Dr Cumming's motion. However, with over 4 million Australians experiencing food insecurity, more still needs to be done.

On Monday night, together with former Premier Ted Baillieu and other former Liberal MPs, I attended SecondBite's Waste Not Want Not dinner. It was a sensational night with some of Australia's leading chefs, including Curtis Stone, Gary Mehigan and George Calombaris, providing the meals for the dinner. The food and company made it a very enjoyable night, but at every opportunity we were reminded of the need to assist SecondBite in their endeavours. However, it was entering the dinner that I think gave most attendees the most poignant reminder of why we were there. The dinner this year was held at Melbourne town hall, and as guests approached the entrance they could not have helped but notice the many homeless Victorians who were settling in for a very cold night in the doorway of the building—I think it is the Mercantile Mutual building—on the corner of Collins Street and Swanston Street, right opposite the town hall. For every dollar that is donated to SecondBite they can actually provide five nutritious meals to those in need. So I would encourage every member of this house to make a donation to SecondBite, and I hope the proceeds from the dinner on Monday night will provide many thousands of nutritious meals for those in need.

SecondBite is a great example of how recycling food waste can not only benefit the environment but also be beneficial to so many individuals in need. It is also a great example of the work done by hundreds of volunteers and, importantly, an example of how an idea conceived by one couple with a passion to drive it can grow to be such an important organisation in our country.

Ian and Simone Carson have been widely recognised for their important contribution to assisting those less fortunate than themselves. In 2016 Simone was inducted into the Victorian Honour Roll of Women. In 2017 both Ian and Simone were recognised in the Queen's Birthday awards, each of them being honoured as a Member of the Order of Australia, more commonly known as an AM. In 2018 Ian and Simone were named Melburnians of the year, and in fact they are the current Melburnians of the year, and they were also finalists in the Victorian Australian of the Year Awards. I know that Ian and Simone do not seek recognition for the work that they do, but it is testament to the respect they have from others that they have actually been recognised in this way.

I would like to thank Dr Cumming for bringing this motion to the house. It is a great motion for us to be here debating. It is very topical to debate this on World Environment Day. I also thank all of those in our community who are doing great work to ensure that people who are less fortunate than us do have access to nutritious meals, in particular SecondBite for the work it does to avoid that food going into landfill, to recycle it and to make sure that before it has completely passed its use-by date and needs to be scrapped it is actually used to provide for those less fortunate than ourselves.

Mr HAYES (Southern Metropolitan) (15:03): I rise to support Dr Cumming's motion. Notwithstanding the work of the Environment and Planning Committee, which is holding an inquiry into waste and recycling, I think it is timely that the government makes a move on this issue and starts seeking information and trying to coordinate councils and the existing services in this area of green waste and organic waste. The motion says 'support consistency of food and organic collection across Victoria'. I know some councils are already doing this. They are not only using their green bins to collect garden rubbish and refuse but also now encouraging people to put kitchen scraps—as long as it is clean organic waste—into the bins. That will be rolling out across several councils. I think 15 councils are already starting to implement this, but the problem is there are 26 councils that do not even have the green bins for garden refuse. This is where the government can take some action to coordinate councils and see if we can roll this out across all of Victoria's councils and make it something that is easy for people to comply with.

The result of mixing tree branches and lawn clippings with organic waste like kitchen scraps, vegetables and even meat of some descriptions—as long as it is picked up quickly and frequently—is that it all goes together, breaking down to make a good compost. The mixture of the high carbohydrate content in leaves combined with the more nitrogenous sort of waste in the kitchen scraps actually aids the process of composting. If composting is done the right way, the methane gas can also be collected and used as an energy source. So what you have got is a pretty high value sort of process going on.

The good thing is if it is done at the local council area level and two or three councils combine, it can be done very locally, so you are not going to have the extra cost and greenhouse gas production involved in transporting large quantities of waste across the city to various high-volume recycling centres, which would be the case if it was all going to a high-temperature burning or pyrolysis facility on the other hand. You could be separating out stuff of high value earlier on in the waste cycle. So I think that is great. But I do think that councils that have not got green bins already will have to be helped into getting the green bins, and there will have to be a fair bit of community education on the value of contributing your kitchen scraps into the green bin for the purposes of composting to help us with our environment. It is very fitting on World Environment Day that we are talking about this.

Having been on a council—I was on Bayside council as a councillor and as mayor for several years—we talked about food waste, and we were already looking at doing this some years ago, even though it had not started to be implemented. It has been implemented now—councils have been starting to put this into practice. But we were also talking about the problem of food waste from restaurants. At

the moment that goes into commercial waste disposal, a lot of which goes to landfill. They pay the high landfill charges and get rid of it there. But it causes a problem with pests and greenhouse gas emissions for landfill too. If we could somehow provide bins for commercial restaurants, that would be great—if we could start taking some of their food waste and putting it into the high-value compost somehow too. I think that that would require some sort of legislation to help bring that about and to treat that waste separately to the stream it is going into now. I know that many landfills have problems with huge numbers of seagulls picking over food waste, and that really should not be happening, so this would be a way of dealing with that—if we could hive off that organic food waste from restaurants and maybe from supermarkets. But I do appreciate that supermarket food can also go to the homeless and to needy people too. It is important that these facilities are strategically placed throughout the metropolitan area. As I said, much of this can be converted into mulch and fertiliser and be made available to residents at their council depots if we go about doing this the right way.

Once again, instead of seeing waste as a problem, which is the way we have looked at it—and we have used the old ‘out of sight, out of mind’ technique of sending a lot of our recycling away—this is a way of looking at our whole waste stream in a coordinated manner. I think it is a great step in the right direction, and it can inform our decision-making about the whole waste and recycling stream and how we deal with it, from the production of goods to their eventual re-use and recycling preferably. We really want to minimise what would go to landfill anyway, and this is one way of separating out a high-value component and using it. I commend the motion.

Ms PATTEN (Northern Metropolitan) (15:10): I am delighted to rise to speak to Dr Cumming’s inaugural motion to this house. Congratulations on bringing this forward. It is an important motion, and I think it is great to speak about this alongside the recycling inquiry that is being undertaken. I think it adds some greater depth to the conversations that we are having and is also beautifully timed for World Environment Day. So well done, Dr Cumming. You did that extremely well. This is an important motion. I am not going to go over what Dr Cumming and also the previous speakers have said about why we must do this and why it is absolutely imperative that we do this.

I did just want to touch on a couple of businesses in my area. While this motion talks largely about councils, what I have seen in my region are some businesses recycling and also councils enabling businesses to recycle their food waste. Degrares Street in the Melbourne CBD is an excellent example of this. The City of Melbourne worked very well with, I think it is, about 25 or 30 businesses down on Degrares Street, and all of their food waste is now composted onsite. Sometimes when I am walking to work through Carlton Gardens, I will see these steaming piles of compost—steaming brown piles of compost—feeding the garden beds of Carlton Gardens, as well as Fitzroy Gardens. It is a real delight to see my coffee and my leftover egg and bacon roll going back into those gardens and doing what it should do and that we are doing what we can with it.

I have a lot of breweries in my region. I am very proud to say that Northern Metropolitan Region has more microbreweries than any other region in Victoria. I have attempted to visit them all—not in one day, but I am working my way through them. On one day I had the great delight of visiting Hawkers Beer up in Reservoir and Temple Brewing over in Brunswick East. Both of them collect all of their waste—all of the hops waste and all of the waste from making the beer—and send it out to local farms. For any vegetarians here, I apologise now. Ms Shing, please close your ears for this bit. Temple Brewing does this delightful thing. They send all of their hops waste to feed cows, and then they buy those cows back, and we eat them at Temple Brewing for lunch. So it is this wonderful circle—you know, a really great circle.

Mr Finn: The circle of life.

Ms PATTEN: The circle of life, that is right. We drink down the beer that creates the food to feed the next lot of cows, which bring us back to eating the steak that we drink the beer with that then feeds the cows. We are seeing some businesses doing this, and I would like to see councils encourage businesses to do this.

But I do agree that we do need to bring local government into it. We need to stop this going into our waste. I am one of these people who do it. I am a great composter up at my farm, but I live in a very small place, and I do not have the ability to compost at home. Enabling my council to provide something for me would be good. I did come across a Sustainability Victoria program called Love Food Hate Waste, which seems to be doing some really good work, again, with businesses—less with household waste, more with business waste. Obviously that is probably the larger source of food waste in our community.

I hope this debate adds to the recycling inquiry. I am sure local governments are putting in submissions too to the recycling inquiry. I hope that recycling inquiry really looks at ways to enable local government to do this, because it is a cost to the state, and this is a very important thing to do.

So I am hoping that Minister Somyurek will work with Dr Cumming to see how this can best work. With Dr Cumming's experience and the experience of many members in local government, they obviously have been there on the ground and have seen what works and what does not work. No doubt we will see these conversations happening in the recycling inquiry that we are undertaking. I support this motion. I certainly look forward to seeing the ability for me to put my waste to better use.

Ms Shing: Waste not, want not.

Ms PATTEN: Yes. I do try to only buy what I need, but sometimes this house keeps you here—

Ms Shing: If only we could do the same with the verbiage in this chamber.

Ms PATTEN: And on that note, I commend this motion to the house.

Dr RATNAM (Northern Metropolitan) (15:16): I am pleased to rise to support this motion and thank Dr Cumming for bringing it on for debate today. When we are in a crisis we must do everything we can to identify solutions and implement change as soon as possible. So in our current crisis, the waste crisis, we need to take immediate steps to strengthen and improve waste management and recycling in our state, including looking at the steps set out in the motion today.

The Greens have always been strong supporters of a comprehensive local recycling industry in Victoria. We have led the push for a container deposit scheme in Victoria, championed a ban on plastic bags and other single-use plastics and called for the government to invest in our local industry rather than relying on other countries to import our waste. We know that in a climate emergency we cannot afford to keep sending millions of tonnes of waste to landfill. It is time to move towards a zero waste Victoria, a Victoria that has a circular economy, where we maximise our use of resources and minimise our waste.

This motion today is about a waste that makes up a significant proportion of our landfill—food waste. Australians throw away an estimated \$5.2 billion worth of food every year. Only 40 per cent of food waste is recycled, meaning hundreds of thousands of tonnes of organic waste is sent to landfill each and every year. Last year in Victoria we sent about 887 000 tonnes of food and green waste to landfill, enough to fill 90 000 trucks. And once in landfill, food waste produces methane and leachate, which pollute our air and waterways and further damage our environment.

Instead of disposing of our food waste, we should be increasing our use of the best way to recycle food waste—compost. Composting returns food waste to our environment, where it grows and replenishes gardens, farms and parkland, instead of polluting them. But there is no statewide food and green waste collection service, which means the government has shifted the responsibility for organic recycling onto individuals and local councils. Currently only some local councils in Victoria offer food and green organic waste collection services. For people who live outside these councils, they need to use their own individual compost bins, set up their own worm bins or hope there are community compost gardens nearby.

Many Victorians are already composting and recycling their food waste, taking the initiative to act where the government has failed. But we believe the government must play a role in organic recycling, just as it does in waste and other recycling. Before the election the Greens announced our plan to extend kerbside food and green organic waste collection to every Victorian household. We want to support every council to extend their kerbside waste collection to include food and green organic waste, taking this waste to a local organics recycling plant to be turned into compost.

Investing in food organic recycling would divert an additional 354 000 tonnes of food and green waste out of landfill every year; recover an additional 350 000 tonnes as compost every year; provide an additional 4000 tonnes of food every year to Victorians in need; reduce over 665 000 tonnes of greenhouse gas per annum, equivalent to taking 145 000 cars off the road; and create over 320 secure green jobs. Our costings put this at just \$200 million—much less than what is currently sitting untouched in the Sustainability Fund. I would urge the government to use the fund to invest in food recycling for Victoria so that everyone can benefit from kerbside food organic collection. I commend this motion to the house.

Ms TAYLOR (Southern Metropolitan) (15:20): I have no arguments with the concept of food waste recycling. I am absolutely a convert. I think you will find the Andrews Labor government is absolutely all over this. We love it, and that is why we are embracing it and have been investing in it for some time. I will go into a little more detail about that.

Mr Jennings: We are all over it.

Ms TAYLOR: We are all over it, yes. Actually I am very grateful that I grew up with parents who encouraged composting at home from a very young age. So for me it is just a natural concept not to tip all your orange peels and everything into the bin, although you cannot put orange peel into your worm cafe. May I make it clear that it is a worm cafe, not a worm farm, that I have at home. This is where food organics and garden organics (FOGO) actually comes in handy. What happens is it is not that the worms will not chew up the peel and so forth; it is just that they will leave that until later. They go for the easier stuff first.

Mr Jennings: As in fact we did when we ate the orange.

Ms TAYLOR: Yes, exactly—totally. That is why it is so great that we have FOGO available. I have to say I was on the Glen Eira council when we actually introduced FOGO collections, and so I know how great it is and how important it is to really make it very clear how the process is to be undertaken so that people do not accidentally put plastics and other things into the organic or green bins at the end of the day. There is green and there is green: there is the dark green bin and the light green bin. I am talking about the light green bin where you put your green waste as well.

When we are looking at the perspective on how much organic waste contributes to our overall waste in Victoria, we know that around 2.5 million tonnes of organic waste is generated annually, which represents about 20 per cent of overall waste that is generated for the state. But then if we drill down to homes and businesses, that percentage is around 42 per cent of the waste that businesses and homes—people like ourselves—are putting in the bin or otherwise diverting from landfill.

There was a comment made that it is just being left to councils, but actually there has been significant investment from the Andrews Labor government for FOGO and in supporting councils to get to the finish line by investing in FOGO in regional and rural areas and in the metropolitan area. I have actually witnessed it myself. Recently, on behalf of the Honourable Lily D'Ambrosio, I attended the opening of Sacyr, the south-east Melbourne organics facility in Dandenong South. This is not some little or minor sort of step in the water. My goodness, eight councils have been signed up, and you cannot believe the sophistication of this facility. This is a serious and real investment in composting in Victoria. I was really so thrilled to be able to go there and see it for myself because I could see the extent of the investment in terms of the size of the facility but also in terms of the lengths they are

going to with sophisticated techniques to suppress methane—and that was mentioned before. The dangers of methane can represent about 25 times that of carbon dioxide in terms of contributing to greenhouse gases.

So why am I saying this? I am just saying to Dr Cumming: do not worry, you do not have to convince us; we know this is really important, and that is why the investment is going in, and it is serious. So I say: good on you for raising this issue, but just know that it is well and truly factored into the whole waste scenario, as it should be.

The other thing with this facility is that they are able to expedite the breaking down of the waste. It also diffuses smell by having negative air pressure in the facility. The breaking down of that waste in an expedient way also means that it can go out to agriculture and, as has been discussed extensively here, can nourish gardens as well, even local gardens. It provides a relatively cost-effective way of improving the outcome of our food production at the end of the day, because we really do not want to be having to use all these expensive and toxic fertilisers. It is actually much better if we can generate our own healthier varieties of fertiliser and nourishment for the soil.

At the end of the day, we are looking at the big picture here, but of the 79 councils, 22 offer FOGO. I think someone said 15, but it is actually 22. That is a minor clarification just to be precise on that issue. Twenty-three offer garden waste collection services. This means that 56 per cent of councils offer an organics collection service currently. There are four additional councils planning the transition from garden waste to FOGO. This is good and a step in the right direction.

Dr Cumming: Not the whole 79.

Ms TAYLOR: Yes, I know, but you have got to start somewhere. Labor was not the government at the time, but the good thing is that it has been scoping out market development programs since 2013. It is one thing to be able to break down all of this waste and make it into a very nourishing and viable product for agriculture, but you have got to have somewhere to put it. I have had some experience of this—and I am sorry to diverge from the motion—and I have nothing against Bokashi, which is another home-style composting system, but you have got to dig it into the soil, and I actually ran out of space to keep digging the end product.

Mr Jennings: You've got to know when to stop digging.

Ms TAYLOR: That is exactly right. I do not have a big paddock, so that was a problem. I recognised that it is great—

Dr Cumming: Take it to the local park or school.

Ms TAYLOR: You could, but I think there are obviously hygiene and management aspects to the whole waste system. I am not saying this to be in any way patronising, but people do have to be really careful of the depths they are digging if they are going to dig in that kind of waste so that they do not attract vermin and the like. There are parameters to this, and that is where it comes down to education.

I know that our government has also invested in programs to demonstrate the benefits of this to councils and the like. I was part of the Eastern Alliance for Greenhouse Action, and I talked to other councils, who I have to say were quite envious of Glen Eira getting in there and getting it happening. There is a financial aspect, but they also needed to be convinced that it could be done—that people would take it up and would embrace it—because sometimes we take for granted that everyone will just automatically want to do it. I have to say that I am a little pedantic with bins. If you have ever inspected bins and seen some of the aspirational recycling that people do, it is to be commended. Let us not put this down; it is to be commended—

Ms Garrett: Aspirational recycling.

Ms TAYLOR: Aspirational recycling—some of the techniques used at times. In spite of people's best efforts, you do have to convince people that this is really the way to go, and sometimes that cannot be done in one day. This is not to take anything away from it. We are all for it—we are 100 per cent for it—but I am just saying that there is human nature to factor in, and we do need people to be on board, focused and making sure—

Ms Garrett interjected.

Ms TAYLOR: That is exactly right, and I have been part of that process of educating local members of my community. But this is something that has to be taken on board in a very concerted and specific way. How long have I been speaking? I have lost track of myself.

Dr Cumming: You've got 6 more minutes.

Ms TAYLOR: That is good because I want to say a few more things, so I am very happy about this. I actually think waste is a sexy topic—truly. I think it is how you manage it. It is what you do with it, at the end of the day, isn't it? Absolutely.

Dr Cumming: We want to be European, like the Germans, and do it well.

Ms TAYLOR: We are perfectly capable in Australia, and I think we have demonstrated that already. Mr Melhem has demonstrated that we are actually really, really good at recycling. We should give ourselves a little pat on the back.

Mr Jennings interjected.

Ms TAYLOR: No, I cannot say that. We are really good at it, and statistically that is proven to be so. I should say when we are looking at how serious our Andrews Labor government is in terms of recycling that it continues to build on its record \$100 million investment to develop domestic markets and support the waste and recycling industry's transition to a more circular economy. This is not just some little tap in the water; this is serious investment, and we totally understand how significant it is. We all live in Victoria too, so we want the waste managed for us as well. There is a little bit of self-interest here, which is always helpful for our communities because we know how much they care about what happens to the waste.

This budget invests an additional \$35 million from the Sustainability Fund to improve the resilience of the waste and recycling sector. I had the joy—it was joy—was it last week? Yes, and I am not making light of it.

Mr Jennings interjected.

Ms TAYLOR: No, I have some moments of joy in my life.

Members interjecting.

Ms TAYLOR: I have a happy life. One of those moments was when I visited the Alex Fraser Group. At their plant they are able to recycle something like a billion tonnes or whatever of glass. It is just an amazing capacity. You see all these piles of sand there. Ordinarily you would say, 'This is ugly; this is one big quarry'. Then you recognise that there is not a hole in sight. What you find instead are viable materials that have been lifted to reach VicRoads specifications so they are able to be used in roads. This kind of facility alone has the potential to overcome the recycling crisis we have with glass. We are talking about serious investment, and we are looking at the holistic perspective, because obviously organics is a significant part of the waste issue, but it is not the whole issue. I am not in any way defusing it. I am just saying that as a government we have to tackle all facets of the waste and recycling issue. That is not what you are saying, but if we only focus on organics, then there would be a big, big problem.

What was also exciting when I visited the Alex Fraser Group facility was that there was virtually no odour, because they are very careful. When you have got all those cans and bottles you will have a little bit of leftover residue, and that fermentation could lead to methane in the long run. What was really great and impressive was to see industry actually holding its weight and doing the right thing, with the support of the Andrews Labor government, to make sure that when they actually crush down the bottles, the asphalt et cetera they are not generating a further problem and creating methane at the end of the day. So that was also impressive, because there are obviously people who live in proximity to those facilities. That is the other issue, which Mr Melhem alluded to—that we have to live adjacent to the waste management facilities at the end of the day.

So having a more thoughtful, circular economy or supporting the circular economy and making sure that we have a more thoughtful and scientifically managed waste management mechanism or mechanisms means that at the end of the day it is actually better for all of us because we are not being exposed to methane, which is obviously dangerous for the planet but also not nice on the nose either. I recall that I had cousins who used to live near the tip down in Dingley, and on certain days that was not good.

Members interjecting.

Ms TAYLOR: Not pleasant. Hence, it is imperative that we have organic waste management and keep building and growing that capacity in our great state to make sure that we minimise methane and also that we look after all other facets of the recycling discussion, which includes obviously bottles, plastics and the like. I believe that our government is on track. We are taking it seriously. We have the waste inquiry, and we also have Infrastructure Victoria looking into this matter. But there are continuing programs in this space. It is not just that we woke up yesterday and said, ‘Oh, there’s a waste problem’. This has been evolving over the last 20 years or so, and it is getting better and better day by day.

Ms TERPSTRA (Eastern Metropolitan) (15:34): I rise to speak in support of Dr Cumming’s motion today, and I note that the crux or focus of the motion of Dr Cumming is how we can improve recycling, if you like, of our organic waste or how we deal with our organic waste—that is, food waste. As my colleague Ms Taylor has indicated, I am also fortunate to be on the recycling and waste inquiry with Ms Taylor. Whilst this motion is to look at food waste, the recycling inquiry will also look at more broad-ranging issues to do with recycling and waste more generally. I note that this motion does call on the government to do a range of things, and I do believe that the recycling inquiry will in fact provide a lot of insight into the steps that Dr Cumming in fact wants the government to take. I think we are in very good and safe hands in terms of what the inquiry might in fact uncover in its work, and I might just take some time to perhaps talk about some of the things that other contributors have mentioned earlier today.

One of the things I think Dr Cumming and others have talked about is what we do with food. There has been a lot of discussion around, for example, what individuals could in fact do with their food. Dr Cumming, your submission was about perhaps making sure that you are eating the food in your fridge without throwing it in the waste and perhaps shopping a bit smarter and those sorts of things. But also there is work that can be done with companies. I am personally aware of a chain of bakers, for example, that has a policy that at the end of the day of trading for that particular company, one of the requirements is that they always have fresh baked goods on the shelves. What might happen to those baked goods if they are not sold—I have seen it personally, and it is not a very good thing—is that they all end up being put into plastic bags and thrown out. Ms Lovell talked about how there are organisations like SecondBite, which is in fact based in Heidelberg West, which is part of Eastern Metropolitan Region, my region, that do work with corporations to encourage them to do more with their food waste. But it is voluntary; there is no obligation on companies to take up those opportunities. In fact when I see companies like the one that I am talking about, that perhaps do not donate those baked goods at the end of the day, I do think that is a very sad state of affairs.

But perhaps you can look at what happens in other countries. I have seen in Japan, for example, that at some food outlets where they are cooking fresh food what they do is make a plastic replica of the dishes as they would be served up. You cannot really have fresh food on display, because it goes off. It is a very clever way of reducing food waste, because you are not having to recook or have something on display for a long period of time. I know there was a very well known chocolate manufacturer based in Sydney that did something similar. Rather than having fresh chocolate in the window for their displays, they would in fact have rubber chocolates, so they did not go off or perish, and they looked a particular way. So again, companies can be encouraged to look at ways to display their products that do not contribute to the ongoing amount of organic food waste that ends up going into landfill.

Another example comes from when I was working at the nurses union. The nurses union, in fact, in moving into its new building, undertook a range of actions to be sustainable, and that included things like having its own organic composting system in the basement of the new building. Now, the thing with that was that it could only take certain types of food for composting, whereas, for example, if you are fortunate enough to have your own compost bin at home—you might have it in the garden out the back—it seems to me there are a broad range of organic materials that could be put in that compost bin. So at the nurses union there were a lot of coffee grounds in that compost, and it smelled very much like coffee. It was a beautiful smell, and the good thing was that we were encouraged to take away the composted material to put on our own gardens. So that was a really good benefit. But yes, there was a lot of coffee in those composted materials. It was a good thing, and that was something the union was able to do to contribute to greening the planet and making sure we reduce and reuse those sorts of things.

It is something that other commentators have talked about, and of course my colleague Ms Taylor also mentioned in the contribution just before me that she was very fortunate to be able to open the south-east organics facility on behalf of Lily D'Ambrosio, the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change. Again, the Andrews Labor government consistently demonstrates its commitment to reducing waste and also to recycling.

I might just make mention of something I was fortunate enough to see when Sustainability Victoria gave evidence before the recycling inquiry. I know that there have been some contributions made today that put some facts on the table that might just need to be looked at in context. We talk about the statistical information that has been provided by government agencies. It may be a good opportunity to perhaps correct the record a little bit. For example, the total materials that were recovered and recycled in Victoria for 2016–17 were 12.9 million tonnes. That is the amount of waste that was generated by Victorians. Of that, 4.2 million tonnes were sent to landfill. So 8.6 million tonnes were diverted from landfill at a rate of 67 per cent from landfill and recycling. So Victorians actually do a fantastic job. That is not to say that we cannot do better and it is not to say that we cannot improve things, but of course that is an impressive recycling rate. So Victorians as a population are invested in recycling and reusing. Interestingly also, 14 per cent of our recycled materials were exported overseas—only 14 per cent. That means that we were dealing with 86 per cent of those recycled materials; they stayed here Victoria. That is a good thing. Again, we are dealing with our own waste. Rather than creating it and then creating problems elsewhere, it was something that we were dealing with ourselves.

Talking about Dr Cumming's point, the information that was presented by Sustainability Victoria was that in fact 40 per cent of what goes in our garbage bins is food. Not all food is recyclable. Some food cannot be recycled. You could compost some of it, but it might take a very long time to break down. As my colleague Ms Taylor talked about, if you put some things in the ground, they might attract vermin and those sorts of things, so you have to be careful when you are looking at those things. For example, if you are putting meat in a compost bin, it will smell. There are things that you need to consider when you are doing these things. Perhaps there might need to be improvements in the sorts of systems that can take account of these two different types of materials.

One thing I would like to draw your attention to as well, Dr Cumming, is that there is another significant proportion of waste that goes into our rubbish bins. This is something that I think Australian Paper made a submission on as well. They have a proposal on the table before the inquiry about the waste-to-energy transfer station. There are things like textiles, for example, and shoes. I know as a parent that when my children were younger they were growing out of their school shoes every six months just about—or perhaps they did not survive a few rounds of handball in the schoolyard because they had been scraped on asphalt and all those sorts of things. So potentially you might be buying joggers or school shoes for children every six months and they more than likely end up in a bin—and what happens to them? There is something that we could be doing with those. Also things like bedding—pillows, blankets and doonas—once those things wear out they go in the rubbish bin. There are things about which we can again drill down further, not just food. Food is important but there are other things that cannot be necessarily dealt with. There are also things like nappies.

Part of the proposal that was on the table before the recycling inquiry was to in fact deal with some of these things. The proposal is to take out potentially 40 per cent of what goes in the rubbish bin for the waste-to-energy proposal to deal with. Again, you can recycle the product and turn it into things like road base, which can then be reused. There is also the capturing of gases and other things. These proposals are well advanced and from my recollection of reading that proposal there are very few countries in the world that have a zero rate. I think Switzerland might have been the only one that put nothing into landfill. A number of countries were studied—not every country around the world—and from the proposal that I looked at I think Switzerland was the only country that had a zero landfill rate. We are fortunate to be in the position of being able to learn from other countries and other places that have dealt with this issue as well.

I might take some time to just comment on Dr Ratnam's contribution on this. The Victorian government does take this matter very seriously. In fact, we have invested at least \$50 million in government programs through infrastructure investments. I will take some time to go through these things. There is \$25 million for the Resource Recovery Infrastructure Fund, which currently has 47 projects underway. So it is not quite the case to say that there is money just sitting there not being accessed by people. It is the case that 47 projects are underway arising from that fund. Also, there is \$3 million available there for a waste education campaign. I know, Dr Cumming, you talked about the importance of local government playing a role in education. It is not just local government and individuals. As I have commented before, we can do more in working with businesses to also encourage recycling and perhaps look at what they do with their organic and other waste as well.

Additionally, the other thing the government is driving in this sector is increasing demand for products and materials through a \$1.6 million government procurement program. We have talked about things like road base. I know you have talked about the circular economy and all those sorts of things. What I am demonstrating to the chamber today are the actions the government has actually taken. We are well-advanced in this particular space. There is also \$15 million for upgrades to the 122 facilities to support the e-waste landfill ban. I know that is not organic waste but I know that Mr Limbrick is very keen on that and that is something that is being discussed at the recycling and waste inquiry. There is also \$4.5 million for market development projects to support high-quality market products. That is just a small snapshot of the things that the government is in fact doing to encourage recycling and to make sure we live more sustainably.

Just going back to the south-east organics facility, which is part of the issue that you, Dr Cumming, have raised in terms of food, the investment the government has made in this facility, in the opening of this project, means that 100 jobs were created during construction and it will continue to create over 20 new ongoing roles now that that facility has become operational. The facility also expects to receive 80 000 tonnes from participating councils in the first year, with room to increase the amount processed to 120 000 tonnes per year. Again, we are well-advanced down the path of making sure we do everything we can to reduce our landfill. Facilities like the south-east organics facility support the government's ambition to move towards the circular economy in Victoria by turning organic waste

into compost and returning it to our gardens and farmlands. It is again something this government has spent a lot of time considering, and you can see, as I have indicated, that we are well down the path.

Something that I think you, Dr Cumming, could be satisfied about is that the government is already doing a lot of the things you have suggested. But we can always do more and we are very happy to look at all those things. Again, we have a strong track record in managing our waste. As I indicated earlier, only 14 per cent of our recycled material was in fact shipped overseas. We do have a strong record of managing our own waste here in Victoria and also recovering valuable resources from the waste stream. This demonstrates national leadership in waste management.

I might leave my contribution there. As I said, I am happy to indicate my support for this motion, and I look forward to the outcome of the recycling and waste inquiry and what it might recommend in regard to organic food waste.

Ms GARRETT (Eastern Victoria) (15:48): I am really pleased to make a contribution, albeit a very short one—but good things come in small packages, like food and other things that we seem to be consuming with great abandon, and that does need to stop. There have been a lot of learned words in the room and my colleagues are doing amazing work in their roles. I did want to commend you, Dr Cumming, for moving this. It is not going to happen tomorrow, as you know, but this is a nice and really important framework involving both the state government and local government. Those of us who have worked on local government and love local government know so well that that is the tier of government that most people deal with and most people know, and it is often the best tier to get things done; it is good to have that partnership approach. Yes, there are a hell of a lot of things already going on, and we are really pleased about those, but you should be proud of this motion.

I did just want to touch on the journey of waste. I started the day talking about toilets, and now I am talking about the journey of waste. I remember as a kid the big issue was the Big Mac containers, and now I cannot even remember the name of that—

Dr Cumming: Polystyrene.

Ms GARRETT: Polystyrene. We had to get that off. Then it was, ‘What are we going to do with the paper?’. Then it was the recycling of bottles and plastics. And now it is the recognition that plastic straws are in the deepest bottom of our oceans. These were the issues, and now it is food. Yes, a lot of people have already been over the issue of food and organics, but a lot of us have not and do not really think about it because we are focused on, ‘Is that bottle in the right bin?’. So it is about putting the focus on educating the community and about saying, ‘Right, lift your eyes from there and start looking at this—all of this over here, with all of the methane gas arising from there. You might need to broaden your horizons and broaden your thinking’. I mean, we have to broaden our horizons and broaden our thinking. So well done.

As I conclude I would like to say, with so many of the crossbenchers here, it has been really great for this house—the work you are doing, the contributions you are making and the keeping faith with your election mandates. I look forward to many more of these debates. On this particular issue, I look forward to this motion contributing to the outstanding work that the Andrews Labor government is already doing in this most important area.

Motion agreed to.

Committees**JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE***Establishment***Debate resumed on motion of Mr RICH-PHILLIPS:**

That:

- (1) a joint select committee of seven members be established to inquire into, consider and report to both houses, no later than 1 December 2019, on the increase in the Victorian road toll in 2019, including but not limited to an examination of the:
 - (a) current Victorian *Towards Zero* road safety strategy 2016–2020 and progress towards its aim of a 20 per cent reduction in fatalities with 200 or less lives lost annually by 2020;
 - (b) adequacy and scope of the current driver drug and alcohol testing regime;
 - (c) adequacy of current speed enforcement measures;
 - (d) adequacy of current response to smartphone use, including the use of technology to reduce the impact of smartphone use on driver distraction;
 - (e) measures to improve the affordability of newer vehicles incorporating driver-assist technologies;
 - (f) adequacy of current road standards and the road asset maintenance regime;
 - (g) adequacy of driver training programs and related funding structures such as the L2P program; and
 - (h) adequacy and accuracy of road collision data collection;
- (2) the committee shall consist of:
 - (a) four Assembly members, comprising three members from the government nominated by the Premier and one member from the opposition nominated by the Leader of the Opposition;
 - (b) three Council members, comprising one member from the government nominated by the Leader of the Government in the Council, one member from the opposition nominated by the Leader of the Opposition in the Council and one member from among the remaining members in the Council nominated jointly by minority groups and Independent members;
- (3) a majority of the members appointed pursuant to paragraph (2) will constitute a quorum of the committee;
- (4) in addition to exercising a deliberative vote, when votes on a question are equally divided, the chair, or the deputy chair when acting as chair, shall have a casting vote;
- (5) the committee may proceed to the despatch of business notwithstanding that all members have not been appointed and notwithstanding any vacancy;
- (6) the committee shall operate under the provisions laid out under joint standing order 15; and
- (7) the foregoing provisions of this resolution, so far as they are inconsistent with the standing and sessional orders or practices of both houses will have effect notwithstanding anything contained in the standing and sessional orders or practices of both houses.

and Ms PULFORD's amendments:

1. In paragraph (1), omit the words 'a joint select committee of seven members be established to inquire into, consider and report to both houses,' and insert in their place 'this house requires the Economy and Infrastructure Committee to inquire into, consider and report,'.
2. In paragraph (1)(c), after the words 'adequacy of current speed enforcement measures', insert 'and speed management policies'.
3. Omit paragraphs (2) to (7).

Ms BATH (Eastern Victoria) (15:51): This is a very important motion, and the reason it is an important motion is that the ultimate aim and outcome of this motion is to save lives and protect people on the roads and indeed hopefully create an environment where there are sufficient deterrents, preventative measures and also support mechanisms for people who drive on our roads to get home safely at night. When I was a wee girl, just born, we did not even have seatbelts in our cars. During the 1970s seatbelts were made compulsory. During the early years when I learnt to drive there was the

introduction of a drink-driving campaign by the Transport Accident Commission. There was certainly a very catchy phrase, and I cannot repeat it in Parliament because there is swearing involved, but I will say the 'If you drink, then drive, you're a jolly idiot' tag was born. It was very, very important and very effective. Indeed in 1989 when the campaign started there were 114 drivers and motorbike riders who died in crashes, and this figure dropped in 2009 to 41. So advertising in this capacity certainly had a huge impact on our thought processes and on our behaviours as well.

We know that enforcement of a whole range of measures certainly acts as a strong deterrent, but over the last 12 months we feel in effect that we have been losing the battle. To date, over the last 12 months 140 lives have been lost. This figure represents almost a 60 per cent increase on the previous 12 months, from June 2018, and unfortunately rural Victoria certainly outweighs Melbourne in terms of fatalities, with 84 people perishing on our regional roads. This is a 75 per cent increase from the same time last year. More alarming for my patch and my people in Gippsland is our road toll has doubled in the past 12 months. The end point of that of course is that we have families who have someone missing at the kitchen table and lives that will have to be rebuilt with the loss of a most beloved family member.

There are certain patches in rural and regional Victoria with certain aspects that create an environment where there is a lack of safety and proper road maintenance that has created some of these concerns around our road safety. I note in terms of Mr Rich-Phillips's motion that it talks about the adequacy and scope of the current drug-driving and drink-driving regimes. This is very, very important. I was speaking with a police officer a couple of months ago, and he said he was quite frustrated because they were only issued a certain amount of drug-testing pieces of equipment, and once that is gone for the year they cannot actually access any more. If you want to create a deterrent in relation to testing, you must be able to have the equipment that does that—you pull someone up and think they may be under the influence, but unfortunately you are not able to do that testing. Certainly these sorts of things are very important—that we can create that environment where police can enforce the road rules, can enforce our drink-driving charges, can enforce our drug infringement operations.

The other point that is really important is that people need to have a very good standard of roads. One of the parts of this motion that captures this is a review of road standards and the road maintenance regime. What we know unfortunately with this government is that they removed the country roads and bridges program and then for four years they had no specific targeted funding for our rural roads and their maintenance. With that, there is now a huge backlog of maintenance needed on our local roads and that requires our councils to look toward that. The government has put some money on the table, but the fear of many councils is that they are going to have to do a one-for-one, dollar-for-dollar implementation of these programs, or even \$2 for \$1. They just do not have those funds sitting in their coffers, particularly under a rate capping environment. So the government should be mindful about this. We really need to be able to look at road standards and look at maintenance and work through those.

In the past we have had joint select committees and they have worked very, very well. Indeed there was one some time ago in 2006. The Law Reform, Road and Community Safety Committee looked into a whole range of specifics around crashes, existing laws, data collection and the use of mobile phones and gadgets. That is now some 13 years ago, and it is very much time that this government and this house enabled people to have a very fulsome review, a joint house review, so there can be a very impressive and comprehensive analysis of these very important issues. With that, The Nationals will certainly be supporting this inquiry. It needs to happen in terms of a multi-house capability; it needs to be a joint select committee. I wish this motion a speedy passage through the house.

Dr KIEU (South Eastern Metropolitan) (15:59): I rise to support the amended motion as proposed by the Honourable Jaala Pulford. As a former member of the board of the Transport Accident Commission, road safety and saving lives are issues very close to my heart. I am very glad that Mr Rich-Phillips has raised the issue. Mr Rich-Phillips was the TAC minister in the former coalition government, and he has contributed some input points for an inquiry.

Those are the well-known facts and those are the ones that we as the government have done a lot of work on, but it is also worth looking into this issue as an inquiry. That includes the *Towards Zero* initiative, the drug and alcohol testing regime, speed enforcement, technology to reduce the impact of smartphone use and reduce or totally eliminate driver distraction, newer vehicles with driver assistance technologies, the road asset maintenance regime, the funding structure that sets out the L2P learner driver mentor program to assist younger drivers who are taking on the road themselves and data collection for road collisions.

Last Friday Minister Pulford and the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Lisa Neville, called a road safety summit to further investigate and address the challenges that we are facing this year and also to begin the process of developing our next road safety strategy. To date for the year 2019 there has been a big spike in road fatalities—up to last night 141 lives have been lost on our roads, and that is unacceptable.

The road safety initiative *Towards Zero* was actually initiated by some other countries like Sweden in the 1990s. As a nation Sweden is ranked number one in the world for road fatalities at present, with two lives lost per 100 000 in the population. Australia as a whole ranks number five, with five lives lost per 100 000 in the population. But that is for the whole of Australia. For Victoria we are doing better, but it is still too high.

For 2016 to 2020 the government introduced the *Towards Zero* initiative, with a record investment of \$1.4 billion in the program. Those investments have gone into making improvements on sections of Victoria's 20 highest risk road segments, addressing run-off-road accidents and collisions on high-speed roads in metropolitan and also regional areas, and the Road Smart program that supports our young people and their supervising drivers in the early stages of learning to drive. Money has also been invested in the L2P learner driver mentor program, as well as \$7 million invested for the free licence scheme for safe young drivers.

In terms of drink-driving and drug-driving enforcement, money has been put into the booze and drug buses, and in terms of education there is an exhibition for the Road to Zero complex at the Melbourne Museum. It is the world's first dedicated road safety education complex. I have been there and I would encourage members of the house and also their younger family members to visit it. It is a world first and also very entertaining as well as educational.

The *Towards Zero* initiative is a holistic program trying to address our concern and our trauma on the road. As a government we take the lives lost on our roads very, very seriously. For the first half of 2019 up until now the government has increased road policing shifts by an additional 300 across Victoria, and of course we are focusing on regional areas. Sadly up to last night the number of lives lost in regional areas was 84 out of 141, which is around 60 per cent. That is way too high.

The government has also increased mobile camera hours by an additional 430 hours per month from March until the end of June this year. We have also increased the number of roadside drug tests by 50 per cent. Drug testing is very expensive but worth doing. We are also investing in a new fleet of six alcohol and drug-testing vehicles. The government is continuing to invest in safe system road infrastructure improvements, with \$229 million invested as part of the 2018–19 budget and an extra \$111 million committed just three months ago, in February 2019. At the road safety summit last Friday a new Transport Accident Commission campaign was launched, a campaign on distraction to get people off their phones. Using phones while driving is the drink-driving of this generation, and we have to tackle that.

In regional Victoria the Labor government is delivering for regional road users and doubling the coalition's maintenance spend. In 2013–14 the coalition spent just over \$200 million on regional road maintenance. In the 2019–20 budget the Andrews government is forecast to spend more than double that—namely, \$400 million—on rebuilding, resurfacing and repaving our country roads.

In the 2019–20 state budget \$804 million is set aside to improve roads and road safety across regional Victoria and to carry out maintenance across the whole of regional Victoria. There is also more than \$318 million to upgrade Barwon Heads Road and a substantial amount of money is invested for four improvement projects under the local roads and intersections upgrade program.

We as a government have also established Regional Roads Victoria. It is a new division of VicRoads. This division is now based in Ballarat, right in regional Victoria, with staff in regional centres across the state giving regional Victorians the roads they can rely on. Regional Roads Victoria provides a coordinated statewide approach to improve the safety and quality of regional roads and to identify critical network improvements to meet the needs of regional communities and stakeholders. It has been alarming for us to learn that the opposition have said they would review Regional Roads Victoria if they won office. That is something that is alarming and of concern to us.

There has also been investment in motorcycle safety. Up until last night the number of fatalities for motorcyclists represented around 15 per cent of the 141 lives lost. Sadly the increase is 50 per cent more than the same time last year, so earlier this year Minister Pulford announced \$1 million in new measures to increase motorcycle safety. The package is now being funded through the motorcycle safety levy and introduces a large range of safety, educational and rider mobility initiatives. A learner and novice rider pack will be developed which contains tips and resources to give motorcyclists a safe start on the road. The package will also include high-visibility vests and other safety equipment. Motorcyclists are not protected by the metal shell of a car, and being on two wheels also makes them very sensitive to the road conditions and the road surface. So the VicRoads surveillance officers will be trained and equipped to better identify road imperfections and other potential hazards for motorcyclists. It goes without saying that there is nothing more important to this government than keeping people safe.

I would like to touch upon some other measures to improve the affordability of newer and safer vehicles incorporating life-saving driver-assist technologies. It is a myth that only luxury cars can provide a high-rating safety standard. We do not need to go to high-end Maseratis, BMW M5s and the like to be safe and to have safe vehicles. Minister Pulford has pointed out that there are also less-expensive non-luxury cars with a 5-star Australasian new car assessment program rating.

The Victorian government has led the country in the past with making electronic stability control mandatory from 2011, eight years ago, and under *Towards Zero* we are ensuring the state government's fleet is the safest it can be. The government is also investing in developing safety automated vehicle technology suited to Australian roads through co-investment into projects and trials with some big companies like Bosch, Telstra and Lexus, such as the \$9 million *Towards Zero* and connected and automated vehicle trial grants programs.

The government has also invested heavily in young drivers through the young driver safety package, which includes Road Smart, a program designed to build the foundation for safe road use for younger people. It comprises of in-class sessions delivered within schools and also in-car sessions delivered by accredited driving instructors in either an on or off-road environment. The government has invested heavily and put a strong emphasis and priority on road safety and lives saved on roads. We are welcoming the inquiry with the terms as amended by Minister Pulford.

Mr LIMBRICK (South Eastern Metropolitan) (16:13): I would like to acknowledge Mr Rich-Phillips for bringing forward this very important motion.

A member interjected.

Mr LIMBRICK: Yes, he is absent right now. The Liberal Democrats have a strong belief in improvement in road safety, and we think this is very important. As Mr Rich-Phillips alluded to in his speech, there are some issues with road safety that are more philosophical in nature. This may be where we have some disagreements with the current regime. There are two areas of this that I would like to focus on. The first is the drug-driving regime and the second is the issue of economics and the ability for people to afford newer cars that have better safety features.

Firstly, on drug driving, I will give a quote from Benjamin Franklin:

Those who would give up essential liberty to purchase a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety.

If we look at what is happening with the drug-driving regime, I have asked a number of questions of the Minister for Road Safety and the TAC over the last few weeks and I have come to the conclusion that I do not think there is a big difference between my observations of how the regime is working and the government's view of how it is working. Where we have a difference is the philosophy on whether that is appropriate or not. If we look at the drug-driving regime, my main concern with it at the moment is not the fact that we do not want people who are drunk or on drugs driving on our roads, because we do not, that would be a very silly thing to do. Where we do have a difference is we have very serious concerns about people who are not impaired by drugs being swept up as collateral damage in the current drug-testing regime.

If we look at why there is very widespread support for roadside breath testing for alcohol, the reason is there is a very close correlation between the amount of alcohol in your body and your impaired driving level. People support that and they believe that is true. This is not the case with drug testing. With drug testing you can have some drugs in your body, residual by-products, that will be picked up days later from which you would be under no impairment whatsoever, and you would be picked up and lose your licence for six months and have a very hefty fine. It is my view that when people learn how this regime actually operates, they are not as enthusiastic about it. People want people taken off the roads who are impaired by drugs; they do not want people taken off the roads who are not impaired by drugs but who are swept up in this, as I said, as collateral damage.

If you compare it to the alcohol testing regime, the way the drug-testing regime works is very similar to a situation where you got drunk on a Saturday night, you sobered up on Sunday and then you went for a drive on Monday morning and got arrested for drunk driving. That is pretty much how the drug-driving regime works at the moment. There are some people who get tested for impairment, but most people who get done for drug driving are not done for drug driving while impaired, they are simply done for drug driving because the impairment testing is quite complicated. The numbers that I have is there are about 800 police officers—only 800 police officers—who are trained to do these impairment tests. The philosophical difference here is it is like an end justifies the means, so the end is reducing the road toll and if a few innocent people get swept up on the way, then that is considered a justifiable means, but I have very serious problems with that.

There are very negative unintended consequences of this. People are aware of the limitations of the drug-testing regime. It only tests for three substances at the moment is my understanding. It tests for cannabis, it tests for amphetamines and it tests for MDMA. People who take drugs know this, and what happens, I have heard anecdotally from festivals and things like that, is people who are driving to these festivals do not want to smoke cannabis at these festivals anymore because they know they might get picked up on the way home so they switch to other, more dangerous drugs such as GHB, such as cocaine, such as other drugs that are either not tested or clear your body very quickly, and we have seen the effects of these very dangerous drugs on people at parties and things like that throughout the state. Also, when people learn how this regime works and get busted—sometimes they are very

surprised to get these fines and lose their licences—when they get into trouble they cause a lot of noise and they undermine the relationship between police and motorists because they feel that this is very unfair and they are very upset about it.

The other thing that I would like to look at is what I mentioned before about the economics and new cars. Everyone knows that newer cars—this has been a big factor in the improvements in road safety—have better features. In fact my wife got a newish car recently and it has got all sorts of features. If someone is walking behind my car from the side, it gives an alarm, and it also has a camera that looks at the lanes on the road and if you drift into another lane, it nudges you back into your lane. It also looks at the speed limits and tells you whether you are going over the speed limit or not—it knows what the speed limits are. But the very important thing to remember is that these things cost more money and there were actions taken in the last budget such as raising taxes on luxury cars. There have been comments here that people do not buy these luxury cars anyway, but it does feed through to prices in the second-hand market. On top of that there was also a lot of money taken out of the Transport Accident Commission that could have been returned to motorists in the form of lowering their registration fees and that would have allowed some of those motorists on the margin to be able to afford a better car over time. I think that taxing people actually contributes negatively to road safety by them not being able to afford more modern cars. I would be interested to see the numbers in that. I do not have the numbers at hand, but maybe the Parliamentary Budget Office could help with that. These are a couple of the issues that I would like to look at. I am very much looking forward to this inquiry and I will try to take part as a participating member.

Mr DALIDAKIS (Southern Metropolitan) (16:21): It is a hard act to follow when Mr Limbrick speaks because sometimes he says something that is both clear and in plain English. I was waiting for Mr Grimley to interject as Mr Limbrick was talking about how people could take drugs and not be impaired despite the drugs still being in their system, because of course Mr Grimley had a fine career in Victoria Police. I thank him for his service before and of course his service now in a slightly different role, albeit sometimes probably more frustrating, I would suspect, than that which he had in Victoria Police, and of course our own Acting President Bourman spent some time in Victoria Police, and if he were to contribute to this debate, I would be interested to hear what he had to say.

Let me touch on this issue before I come back to the substance of the motion before us. I do say from the outset that it is disappointing that Mr Rich-Phillips is not here to listen to the contributions in person. I do understand of course that Ms Wooldridge is a fine replacement for him, but given that it is Mr Rich-Phillips's motion it would have been better for him to be able to listen to the substantive nature of our debates.

The important thing is that the government's position is to move amendments to Mr Rich-Phillips's motion and then be supportive of it, so in fact we are not that far away from what Mr Rich-Phillips is wanting to do. The major disagreement between the government and Mr Rich-Phillips's motion is that he wishes to create a new joint committee in order to hear this and we believe there is already an existing house committee that can deal with the substantive nature of this motion. I understand my colleague the Minister for Roads in the government and member of this place, Minister Pulford, has already moved her amendments. Her amendment 1 is to omit the reference to a joint select committee and insert in its place 'that this house requires the Economy and Infrastructure Committee', which has previously dealt with matters such as the one we are debating right now.

I would have thought, given that the opposition continues to pride themselves or at least advertises themselves as being a party of efficiency, a party of ensuring that resources are not overtly spent or wasted, that they would have been supportive of our ability and our desire to use an existing committee structure rather than try to create a new one. Nevertheless, I know that our friends in the Liberal Democratic Party do not like public resources being wasted unnecessarily, so I look forward to them supporting the amendments—why create something new when you have already got something there that can do it? Of course what we are wanting to do is be, as I said from the outset, supportive of the

motion that has been moved. Shock horror there are times when government likes to work with other parties, whether it be from the crossbench or indeed from the opposition, to try to see good public policy outcomes.

I will get to the substance of the motion, but this has been I think an important point to begin the contribution with because what we need to set from the very outset of the debate is that the government and the opposition would like to work together on this. We just believe, pardon the pun, that there is a slightly different road we can follow to get there—a safe road, let me add.

I said that I would come back to some of the issues that Mr Limbrick raised in relation to substance abuse. Now this may be the first time I have ever uttered these words in *Hansard*, but I do not know everything. As I get older I do learn some new tricks. I do have the ability of self-reflection—not that some people in this place ever thought it so—and in relation to the issues of substance abuse I certainly am not across either the science or the body of evidence about what impairment actually looks like. I do not know whether or not having a substance in your body 48 hours after you have taken it means that you are 0.1 seconds slower in your reaction speed, which may be critical in being able to avoid or not create an incident. I do not know whether if you have a substance in your body 72 hours later, that is still the case. The scientific evidence will have to guide us, and on this particular issue I would like to think that VicRoads and also Victoria Police are guided by much of that information. But that is a minor part overall of the issues before us.

We are talking about of course trying to reduce the road toll. We are talking about trying to save lives. I think that, again, this is the most noble of public policies that we can pursue in this place, because one life lost is one too many. The nature of the campaign of *Towards Zero* is to understand and appreciate that having no lives lost should be the very basis of our public policy pursuits.

Those of us who have been in motor vehicle accidents and have been able to walk away from them count our lucky stars. I can recall—it probably would have been back in 1999—being involved in a very serious car accident where a car went through a red light and T-boned me. It hit the front-right wheel of my car. A fraction of a second later it would have hit my driver-side door and the outcome would have been very different. The other driver, as I understand it from my recollection, was charged by Victoria Police. But the point is that I was able to walk away. We are dealing, very sadly, with scores of people that have not been that lucky. We are dealing with a road toll at this point that is significantly higher than last year's, noting that last year's was the lowest on record.

These issues are not ones that should see partisanship. These issues are not ones that should see us divide over the very public policy pursuits that we are attempting to reach. Of course if we are able to reach the goal, eventually, of *Towards Zero*, regardless of when that may be, we could probably look very favourably and fondly back on this day and know that we have played a very small part, a very small role, in achieving both a fantastic public policy outcome and a fantastic outcome for our community. Again, we should never, ever lose sight of what we are trying to achieve.

In terms of the strategy, *Towards Zero* has seen an unprecedented \$1.4 billion investment. I understand, as per the motion that Mr Rich-Phillips moved—let me put the joint select committee to the side, because that is the only area, as I have said, where Mr Rich-Phillips's motion differs from the government's position—it calls for an examination of obviously the current *Towards Zero* road safety strategy and its aim of progressing a 20 per cent reduction in fatalities, with 200 or less lives lost annually by 2020; the adequacy and scope of the current driver drug and alcohol testing regime, which Mr Limbrick and I both touched on briefly; the issue of current speed enforcement measures; the adequacy of the current response to smartphone use, including the use of technology to reduce the impact of smartphone use on driver distraction; and of course measures to improve the affordability of new vehicles incorporating driver assistance technologies. It goes on at some length and I would unfortunately use up all my time if I went through the whole motion. Suffice to say that it would become an important review of a government program.

I have got to say I am very proud to acknowledge that driver education, driver programs and road fatality reduction schemes are bipartisan. They are policies that see us actually come together and be the best that we can be in Parliament. They allow us to work together for a common goal, and that common goal of course is saving lives. Let me finish on that lofty objective. Let me finish on the note that working together to achieve a greater outcome—to save lives—is something that brings us together rather than keeps us apart. I will support the motion with the amendments moved by the government, and I do hope to get the support of our crossbench because we have an existing committee structure to do this.

House divided on amendments 1 and 3:

Ayes, 25

Barton, Mr
Bourman, Mr
Cumming, Dr
Dalidakis, Mr
Garrett, Ms
Hayes, Mr
Jennings, Mr
Kieu, Dr (Teller)
Leane, Mr

Limbrick, Mr
Meddick, Mr
Melhem, Mr
Mikakos, Ms
Patten, Ms
Pulford, Ms
Quilty, Mr
Ratnam, Dr

Shing, Ms
Somyurek, Mr
Stitt, Ms
Symes, Ms
Taylor, Ms
Terpstra, Ms
Tierney, Ms
Vaghela, Ms (Teller)

Noes, 11

Atkinson, Mr
Bath, Ms
Crozier, Ms (Teller)
Davis, Mr

Finn, Mr
Grimley, Mr
Lovell, Ms
Maxwell, Ms

McArthur, Mrs
Rich-Phillips, Mr
Wooldridge, Ms (Teller)

Amendments agreed to.

Amendment 2 agreed to; amended motion agreed to.

Business of the house

NOTICES OF MOTION

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan—Leader of the Opposition) (16:39): I move:

That the consideration of notice of motion, general business, 90, be postponed until later this day.

Motion agreed to.

Motions

WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

Dr RATNAM (Northern Metropolitan) (16:40): I move:

That this house notes that:

- (1) Wednesday, 5 June, is World Environment Day, a day to encourage worldwide awareness and action to protect our environment; and
- (2) the theme for World Environment Day this year is 'Air pollution', with governments, industry, communities and individuals urged to take action to improve air quality in cities and regions across the world.

I spoke yesterday about how we cannot take our clean air for granted in Victoria and the things we can do right now to clean up our air, including requiring our coal-fired power stations to meet global best practice with new limits on toxic emissions, putting a stop to new pollution projects to burn our rubbish and making public transport and active transport like walking and cycling a priority for our transport system. Because it is World Environment Day, it is a day to appreciate the beautiful environment that

we depend on for our survival and to recommit to protecting and preserving it. Sadly today, however, there is not much to celebrate, with the extinction events the world is facing.

Today I want to speak more broadly about the environmental crisis we are facing globally but also here in Victoria. In a comprehensive report for the UN, eminent scientists from around the world are saying that 1 million species are at risk of extinction. The flow-on effects for human life from such a mass extinction are difficult to comprehend, but the reality is that we too are threatened. This is not a faraway problem in the distance; this is happening right here in Victoria too. The *Victorian State of the Environment 2018 Report* recently released found that our environment is worsening in health in 51 out of the 170 categories that were measured.

By any measure of success, that is not a record card to be proud of. Perhaps what is most disheartening about all of this is that we know what to do to protect and preserve our environment. We have the intelligence, the skills and the technology to save our threatened species and our biodiversity, but our governments lack the courage and vision to make it happen. I joined thousands of people on the steps of Parliament House just over a week ago who were taking to the streets to express their outrage and to call for their leaders to act on this existential threat. Those young people do not know how people in places like this, in places of decision-making power, do not turn up the alarm and start acting with the urgency that is required now.

In Victoria our very own animal emblem, the Leadbeater's possum, is facing extinction because of native forest logging; so too the greater glider. Two of the most well-known species are now at risk of extinction in Victoria. Other recent reports are now sounding the alarm about the koala and threats facing their population. Joining this list are the mountain pygmy possum, Murray crayfish, spotted tree frog and the Baw Baw frog. This is just the tip of the iceberg of the list of threatened species, which is getting longer.

Modelling has been produced by Australian National University researchers who have found that there is a 92 per cent chance that the mountain ash forests in our highlands will not be able to support the current ecosystem—like the animals, like the Leadbeater's possum, that are critically endangered—by 2067. That is not too far in the future. With this we lose our animal species and our plant species, and we also risk our water supply. That is why we need to create a great forest national park, and that is why the Greens will continue to champion the solutions to the environmental destruction we are facing.

On World Environment Day let us remember all the various parts of our environment that make our ecological system function. And with the theme this year focused on air pollution, I want to talk about the problems of air pollution that we are facing. Ninety per cent of the world's population breathe polluted air, and every 5 seconds somebody around the world dies prematurely as a result of air pollution. They are issues that we cannot ignore anymore. David Boyd, the UN special rapporteur on human rights and environment said the failure of governments across the world:

... to ensure clean air constitutes a violation of the rights to life, health and well-being, as well as the right to live in a healthy environment.

In Australia and Victoria our air quality is fairly good by international standards, and Victoria's air quality has improved over recent years, but the current challenges mean that we are facing new challenges to our air quality. Population growth, more cars, our transport being dependent on cars—that means pollution—infrastructure and industries all contribute to air pollution. Climate change, more heatwaves and harsher bushfire seasons also put pressure on the health of our air. The sources of air pollution include transport, with 75 per cent of air pollution coming from motor vehicle emissions; from waste—we have talked about organic waste and the need to revolutionise our waste and recycling systems in Victoria because our waste and recycling impact the quality of our air as well; and coal.

We cannot talk about the environment, about protecting it and about saving our planet from dangerous climate change without talking about coal. Burning coal sends toxic chemicals like mercury and sulphur into the air, and Victoria has the dirtiest coal power plant in Australia—Yallourn. Yallourn, Loy Yang A and Loy Yang B collectively pumped more than a tonne of mercury into the air in 2017–18. Much of this could have been avoided if available emissions capture technology was retrofitted. We know the health impacts, and we are starting to see the worsening health impacts of poor air quality. There is a clear link between increased air pollution and respiratory and cardiovascular diseases and premature mortality. And now evidence of adverse birth outcomes and diabetes is also emerging. Air pollution causes 7 million deaths a year worldwide and a quarter of lung cancer cases, heart attacks and strokes.

We know the impacts of climate change are worsening, contributing to melting glaciers and rising temperatures. Air pollution and climate change are very closely linked; by reducing one we reduce the other. Keeping our environment healthy is critical to our health and wellbeing. On this World Environment Day let each of us, individually and collectively, recommit to doing everything that we can to protect and preserve our environment. This is no longer something that we can do on the sidelines and hope that incremental change will keep our beautiful natural environments that we so love and treasure alive for decades to come. The very existence of our ecosystems, our ecological system and therefore the future of civilisation depends on the health of our ecosystems. If we do not begin to face and solve the extinction crisis and protect our biodiversity, the very health and survival of human beings is at risk for the future.

I say to all those thousands of young people who are protesting on the streets more regularly than we have ever seen before because they know the dangers that are facing us: we are with you. We will not give up until we do more right now with the urgency that is needed to protect and preserve our environment.

Ms TERPSTRA (Eastern Metropolitan) (16:47): I rise to make a contribution to Dr Ratnam's motion on World Environment Day. I am proud to say that as a new member of the Andrews Labor government I have been quite excited to learn about all of the things and initiatives that this government is doing to in fact improve our environment. Indeed Dr Ratnam mentioned in the previous debate that we had in the house the need for recycling and waste initiatives. My colleague Ms Taylor and I are proud members of the Legislative Council Environment and Planning Committee. We have been learning a lot about some of the initiatives that are happening in the waste and recycling industry, and of course we hope to learn much more about that once the committee inquiry report is completed.

I might just take a moment to also just touch on some of the environmental initiatives that this government is taking. For example, you have just heard me talk about strengthening Victoria's recycling industry. This is important because we know there are challenges in the recycling industry. The government is investing \$34.9 million to assist with the reduction of plastic pollution and to assist with packaging and recycling reforms. That will assist the recycling sector to cope with some of the challenges that are afoot at the moment. There are also a range of other things—for example, some junior Landcare grants. There are a multitude of things.

We have programs that recognise Resource Smart Schools awards, we have grants for Victoria's environmental volunteers and of course we have the new Solar Homes project. So there are a range of things that the government is doing on a number of levels. There are meaningful environmental wins that balance the interest of all Victorians. As I have indicated, we have invested in many programs, but in fact we have invested over \$1 billion in a range of measures in this term of government alone. I might just touch on some of those now. For example, we are improving the management of our state's extensive public parks network and the services provided to visitors, delivering a 20-year strategy to protect and improve Victoria's biodiversity. This will ensure that we dedicate support to improving our sensitive marine and coastal environments, cleaning up contaminated land and providing habitat restoration and breeding programs for some of our state's most iconic species. We are also providing

funding to ensure the future of our recycling industry, as I just mentioned and as we talked about in a previous debate.

We have also created the new Climate Change Act 2017, which is world-leading legislation that sets an emissions reduction target of net zero emissions by 2050. This is an ambitious but achievable target, and I have much confidence in the Andrews government's ability to reach this target. In 2017 Victoria became the first state in Australia to enshrine its renewable energy targets into law. The Victorian renewable energy targets are 25 per cent by 2020 and 40 per cent by 2025, so once again this government is putting Victoria out front, leading our nation. We have also returned Victoria to the forefront of environmental protection with a complete overhaul of the Environment Protection Act 1970, enshrining a general environmental duty at the heart of the new scheme. The new Environment Protection Amendment Act 2018 passed the Parliament in August and is backed by an unprecedented investment by this government.

We know as Victorians that climate change is a critical issue that we all face. Victoria is already hotter and drier and has higher temperatures and less rainfall, and more frequent extreme events are inevitable. This will impact vulnerable Victorians—the elderly, the unwell and the frail, and also our regional communities and farmers—the most, and we care about those people. This is why we are working with households, industries and communities across Victoria to not just reduce emissions but to prepare for extreme weather events and conditions, which we are already experiencing. The Andrews Labor government, as I mentioned, legislated the world-leading Climate Change Act in 2017 for net zero emissions by 2050 and a path to get there. The Andrews Labor government is committed to reducing our emissions by 15 per cent to 20 per cent by 2020, and we are indeed on track to meet this important and significant target. We also legislated for 40 per cent renewable energy by 2025 and we will increase that to 50 per cent by 2030. So as I have just demonstrated with those changes, some of which have already been implemented and some that we are well on the way to towards achieving, we are indeed committed to working with impacted communities as our state and the world transition to a low carbon future. We do not want to leave anyone behind. The Andrews Labor government is proud that Victoria is taking action to preserve what we have for future generations.

We did previously have a debate on this topic, but in terms of the waste and recycling sector, with China's National Sword Policy, we along with other markets are currently experiencing the closure of the biggest mixed plastic recycling market in the world. The established Australian model of exporting sorted waste has been impacted by changes in international practice. We heard much about this in the recent recycling inquiry. Indeed even the industry itself, which gave evidence before the recycling inquiry in the last few weeks, also indicated that in fact the China National Sword Policy, as it was implemented—although mooted a number of years ago—also caught industry by surprise as the changes were implemented in a very swift fashion.

This actually does present a timely opportunity for us to review and improve Victoria's waste and recycling industries as a whole, and that is why we are investing to ensure sustainability of the recycling industry in Victoria. While a rapid change in policy might in fact eventuate, this does present opportunities to make improvements. The Andrews Labor government is committed to a resilient and effective recycling strategy, and it will continue to work in partnership with councils, industry and the community to help achieve these goals. The Andrews Labor government continues to build on its record of \$100 million in investment to develop domestic markets and support the waste and recycling industry's transition to a more circular economy. This budget invests an additional \$35 million from the Sustainability Fund to improve the resilience of the waste and recycling sector as a key component of the broader waste industry, with diverse investors and a strong economic base. This investment will also facilitate innovation to develop alternative uses and new markets for recycled materials and will aid Victorian recycling companies to expand their facilities and build new plants, driving investments and to take on larger volumes of recycling.

In a contribution I made on a previous matter before the chamber, I talked about the exciting possibility for industry to perhaps look at building waste-to-energy transfer stations. These would in fact have the potential to reduce waste that is going to landfill by up to 40 per cent, so that is an exciting possibility, and it is good to see that the investments that the Andrews Labor government is making encourages those sorts of innovations to be made. Funding will also build on the strong foundations of the \$37 million *Recycling Industry Strategic Plan*, released in July 2018, bringing this government's investments in the waste and resource recovery industry to more than \$135 million.

I might just touch for a moment on air quality. The Andrews Labor government has a strong reform agenda in environment protection, including to improve air quality. I heard Dr Ratnam's contribution when she talked about the potential of vehicles that produce emissions. I actually feel optimistic about the future in this regard. We talk about driving investment and the potential for innovation to in fact take place. We have seen that in Europe it is now quite commonplace for vehicles to be manufactured that cut out when they are idling at traffic lights, for example. In Australia there are some vehicles on the road that do in fact cut out when idling; they are not quite commonplace, but hopefully over time they will become more commonplace. What I would hope to see in future is that with more innovation and improvements in technology we may see a reduction in the usage of vehicles that use fossil fuels, so I am optimistic and open to possibilities. We cannot just continue to view our situation with air pollution and the emissions that might come from vehicles as a static situation. To do so would be very narrow and would not contemplate future innovations, so I am quite optimistic about that. In Australia we are known for our research and development abilities, and we have made some great innovations in a range of areas. So I do look forward to other innovations, particularly with vehicles.

In the 2018–19 state budget \$1.2 million was provided to develop and commence implementing an air quality strategy for Victoria. This is significant. The strategy will set out the government's policy priorities to underpin air quality monitoring and management actions from now to 2030. This is vital as our population and economy continue to grow and our climate, as I indicated earlier, becomes warmer and much drier. This does have significant impacts on various sections of our community. The funding is being used for necessary research, analysis and consultation to ensure development of a robust and effective strategy to deliver clean air. We looked forward to informing the strategy of government with *Clean Air for All Victorians: Victoria's Air-Quality Statement* in May 2018. This initiated a discussion with the community on actions that government should take to secure a clean air future. This is significant, and you can see that the government does in fact take every opportunity to consult with all stakeholders and of course the community as well to make sure their views are heard and to inform government policy more significantly.

Perhaps finally—I might just finish on this point briefly—the government also held the Victorian Government Clean Air Summit in Melbourne in August 2018 and subsequent consultations in Ballarat, Healesville and the Latrobe Valley, as I touched on earlier. We recognise the importance of consulting with regional communities, because some of the regional communities, as I have mentioned earlier, are severely impacted by the effects of climate change. We need to make sure their views are included in policy consultations so we become better informed and are able to better meet the challenging needs that they have in those communities. I thank the house for taking the time to listen to my contribution, and I will leave it there.

Mr HAYES (Southern Metropolitan) (16:59): As Mr Quilty would say, I will be brief—and I have to be brief. I am very glad to stand here and speak on Dr Ratnam's motion on World Environment Day. I think it is an extremely important day, and it is an extremely important subject. It is our future we are talking about. Australia is leading a huge loss of biodiversity and habitat. It is bad worldwide, but Australia has got the highest percentage of species extinction. As I have said before, humans are winning and the animals are losing. As we spread around the planet we are wreaking havoc in our chase after resources and consumption. According to the UN biodiversity report, human population growth chasing economic growth, with associated consumption and pollution, is threatening the health

of the planet. In the Alliance of World Scientists' second warning to humanity it says that we must stabilise our population growth urgently.

Now, these are two international reports that mention population growth as being at the heart of our problems with pollution and loss of biodiversity and habitat on a worldwide basis. Yet we have our politicians talking about a big Australia, saying we can double our population. The main reason they give for this is that we need it for economic growth, and yet these are the very drivers of our problems: they talk about doubling the population and say we will get economic growth through pumping up our population. Well, see where that is getting us. All down the east coast of Australia we are seeing developments occurring, and as that is happening down the east coast, we are losing the mangroves and forests. The koalas are a threatened species.

It is unfortunately a different Australia that our kids are growing up in compared to the Australia that we were lucky enough to grow up in. The future of the planet, our living environment and our way of life in Australia is threatened. When we talk about doubling the population, what on earth are we really thinking? Can we keep doing this? Is it an infinite world of infinite growth? Is it possible?

Ms STITT (Western Metropolitan) (17:02): I will keep it brief. I do rise today to make a contribution to Dr Ratnam's motion on World Environment Day, an important day that this house should acknowledge and is acknowledging. I think that obviously at the forefront of many people's minds are the great challenges that we have in tackling some of the issues associated with our environment, our biodiversity and climate change and all of the challenges that we face not just as a state and a nation but as a world. I do not, however, hold such pessimism, because I actually am quite proud to be part of a government that takes these issues incredibly seriously in terms of the commitments that we have made to address some of the problems in the environment.

We have invested over \$1 billion in a range of measures in this term of government alone, so that is a significant commitment to tackling some of these challenging and difficult issues. These initiatives include improving the management of our state's extensive public parks networks; delivering a 20-year strategy to protect and improve Victoria's biodiversity, a very important issue; dedicated support to improve our sensitive marine and coastal environments; cleaning up contaminated land; habitat restoration; and breeding programs for some of the state's most iconic species. These are all measures that are being funded by this government, and some of my colleagues have talked quite extensively about our efforts in trying to ensure that our recycling industry is tackling some of the challenges that we face in that space. I will not repeat what they have said, in the interests of time.

Victorians are obviously very aware that climate change is one of the most critical issues that we face. January 2019 was the hottest month ever recorded in Australia, and the 2018–19 summer was the hottest on record, according to the Bureau of Meteorology. So we are facing a situation where the state is hotter and drier, with higher temperatures and less frequent rainfall.

Mr Finn interjected.

Ms STITT: Have you been to regional Victoria lately, where they are facing significant drought impacts? The Andrews Labor government is not sticking its head in the sand over these issues. The Andrews Labor government is taking these issues on, funding the measures that are required to tackle climate change. We have also legislated the world-leading Climate Change Act 2017 for net zero emissions by 2050. Not only have we done that but we have also set out a map of how we are going to get there.

I am incredibly proud of the government's commitment to solar energy because if we are serious about reducing emissions and improving our air quality, which is what Dr Ratnam's motion calls for, then we must tackle emissions. One of the most significant policies that we have introduced and funded in the Victorian budget, to the tune of \$1.3 billion, is our Solar Homes package. It is worth going through just a couple of the key stats in that important policy initiative. We intend to roll it out to

770 000 homes in Victoria. That will include solar panels, solar hot water and solar batteries, as our technology improves. The Andrews Labor government is putting Victorians back in control of these things through these policy measures and through the commitment in the budget of \$1.3 billion to make this a reality. From 1 July, rebates will be available for solar panels, hot-water systems and batteries, and people will be able to access zero interest loans, so households can install half-price solar with no up-front costs. Since the program was first announced, more than 34 000 Victorians have already taken advantage of the opportunity to slash their power bills by an average of \$890 per year. We are going to expand the scheme, as promised, to include renters, because it is really important that these initiatives are available across our community. This will reduce our carbon emissions by almost 4 million tonnes. That is the equivalent of taking 1 million cars off our roads.

Mr Finn interjected.

Ms STITT: Well, Mr Finn, we all have to do our bit, don't we? It is also going to contribute 12.5 per cent of Victoria's 40 per cent target for renewable energy by 2025. We know that these are real challenges that we must come to grips with, that we must tackle from a policy perspective and also that funding initiatives are going to be required to bring down our emissions. I am very happy to support Dr Ratnam's motion, and I commend it to the house.

Motion agreed to.

CORKMAN HOTEL

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan—Leader of the Opposition) (17:08): I move:

That this house:

- (1) expresses its concern at the inadequate response by the Minister for Planning, the Honourable Richard Wynne, MP, to the illegal destruction of the historic 1858 Corkman hotel in Carlton;
- (2) notes the illegal dumping that occurred following this unacceptable destruction; and
- (3) calls on the minister to ensure, through the use of his powers, that the property developers, Mr Raman Shaqiri and Mr Stefce Kutlesovski, who have been convicted of these actions, described by Magistrate Ross Maxted as 'reprehensible', or companies associated with either man, are not permitted to profit from their illegal actions.

I am pleased to rise late in the day to begin debating a motion on the Corkman. The Corkman story is an absolute disgrace. It is a failure of government response; it is a failure to deal with what is a terrible, terrible outcome. The government came to this chamber about a year ago to strengthen some of the provisions for illegal activities of this type, but it is pretty clear that they have not been successful. It is also clear in this particular case that in fact the Corkman outcome is just a disaster for the community. It was a historic hotel and in my view and the view of many it should have had historic building protections over it, but it did not have the protections that were desired. However, that in no way diminishes the actions that occurred there, where the developers moved in without proper permits and destroyed that building—and they have been found guilty of that destruction. They subsequently dumped asbestos and other building materials in a number of locations around the city and were subsequently fined by the Environment Protection Authority Victoria.

I have to say that what has occurred here is indefensible. The minister has significant powers. He could have used section 20(4) of the Planning and Environment Act 1987. It gives him very significant powers to put protections and controls over any piece of land in the state. He could have put in train an acquisition of the property and he could have ensured that it was used for a whole range of good and public purposes. It ought in fact to have been rebuilt. That was what the minister initially said, but he did not follow through with his commitment to ensure that it was in fact—

Ms Shing interjected.

Mr DAVIS: Oh, yes, I have. But let me just say what has now occurred is a travesty. The outcome—

Ms Shing interjected.

Mr DAVIS: What I will tell you is that it is deeply, deeply inadequate.

Ms Shing interjected.

Mr DAVIS: Oh, yes, I have. Let me just be quite clear on a number of points here. I want to talk closely about the history of this hotel. I want to be quite clear that it is something of great significance to the broad Victorian community. It is also a hotel that I think ought to have been rebuilt in a suitable and adequate outcome for the community. What has occurred here, though, is not that outcome. The minister has dithered in the way that he has approached this. The minister had not been prepared to be strong enough.

Let us be clear also that the government has other links to these developers, via its member for Burwood in Will Fowles. He was the lobbyist, as we know from questions in this chamber. He was one of the people who was involved in these dirty arrangements. He was one of the people who did the wrong thing in this. He was clearly advocating for the developers. He was clearly working for them in a way that is completely scandalous. He clearly—

Ms Shing: On a point of order, President, if Mr Davis wishes to raise allegations of this nature, then he should do so by way of a substantive motion.

Mr Finn interjected.

Ms Shing: Let's look have a look at *Hansard*, then, in relation to what Mr Davis has said.

Mr DAVIS: There is no point of order. It is a matter of public record. In fact the Leader of the Government has stated that Mr Fowles was the registered lobbyist who was working for this particular firm, so—

The PRESIDENT: Thank you, Mr Davis—

Mr DAVIS: I mean, the *Hansard* transcript is quite clear.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you. I was thinking to myself that this is a substantive motion, and if Mr Davis actually mentioned the particular member that he is mentioning now in that motion, then he would be at liberty to say what he is saying, but he is not mentioned in the motion, so I uphold Ms Shing's point of order.

Mr Finn: Then we'll have to bring on another one.

The PRESIDENT: That is your right.

Mr DAVIS: I think that a key point here is that these developers or any companies associated with either man should not benefit from these outcomes, and companies—

Ms Shing interjected.

Mr DAVIS: Well, let me be quite clear. Mr Fowles was a lobbyist who was paid cash by these grubby developers.

Ms Shing: On a point of order—

The PRESIDENT: Order! There is no point of order. Getting back to my ruling before, there is no need for a point of order, I have got to say. If Mr Fowles was mentioned in this particular motion, then I think the Leader of the Opposition would be at liberty to actually discuss his involvement as he sees fit, but he is not actually mentioned, so I would suggest that Mr Davis steer away from that.

Business interrupted pursuant to sessional orders.

Questions without notice and ministers statements

WRITTEN RESPONSES

The PRESIDENT (17:15): There was a point of order called by Mr O'Donohue regarding Minister Mikakos's answers to his questions not being responsive, and he requested a written response. I have actually looked at the questions and the answers, and I have determined that there is no need to ask the minister for a written response. The minister may not have been responsive to a part of Mr O'Donohue's supplementary question, but in the form of the question there were actually two questions asked, and I have deemed that the minister was responsive to one of those questions.

Adjournment

Ms PULFORD (Western Victoria—Minister for Roads, Minister for Road Safety and the TAC, Minister for Fishing and Boating) (17:16): I move:

That the house do now adjourn.

WIRE ROPE BARRIERS

Ms LOVELL (Northern Victoria) (17:16): My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Roads and Minister for Road Safety and the TAC, and it relates to safety concerns involving the wire rope barriers in the middle of the road on the Midland Highway near Tatura. I am glad that the minister is in the house tonight. The action I seek is for the minister to order a safety audit to be carried out by VicRoads on the section of the Midland Highway between Turnbull Road and Starritt Road regarding the installation of warning signs for drivers of upcoming wire rope barriers in the middle of the road.

Recently I was contacted by a constituent expressing concern regarding safety for motorists on the Midland Highway between Ardmona and Tatura. In particular the constituent expressed concern about the lack of warning signs when approaching the commencement of wire rope barriers between Turnbull Road and Starritt Road. My constituent stated that the barriers are difficult to see at night whilst travelling either east or west on the Midland Highway. There is no lighting of course at this point on the highway. The constituent stated that poor visibility of the wire rope barriers was hard enough for locals who travel on the roads on a regular basis but was even worse for the many motorists who travel on this major thoroughfare. My constituent stated that she has contacted VicRoads and informed them of her concerns about the lack of visibility of the barriers.

Fog, rain and the glare from the headlights of oncoming cars are contributing to motorists being unable to see the wire rope barriers on the Midland Highway between Turnbull and Starritt roads. There are no signs at either end of the barriers to warn drivers that the barriers are impending and any vehicles near to the centre of the road could possibly collide with the barriers. At the start of the wire rope barriers near Turnbull Road my constituent recently witnessed a motorist, oblivious to the presence of the barriers, drive straight up the middle of the barriers and the vehicle was then left balancing precariously on the wires. The constituent stated that the old white line markings that were used on the road prior to the installation of the barriers are still visible to motorists and that this is also causing confusion for drivers. My constituent has asked VicRoads officers to inspect this section of road during the day and at night in all weather conditions to understand the issue for motorists.

The installation of signs warning drivers travelling both east and west on the Midland Highway of the impending wire rope barriers would properly inform motorists of their existence. The action that I seek from the minister is for her to order a safety audit to be carried out by VicRoads on the section of the Midland Highway between Turnbull Road and Starritt Road regarding the installation of warning signs for drivers of upcoming wire rope barriers in the middle of the road.

CAR SAFETY RATINGS

Mr BARTON (Eastern Metropolitan) (17:19): The matter I raise tonight is to Minister Jaala Pulford, Minister for Roads. The action I seek is that the minister work with her federal counterparts to bring about a ban on the import of 1 and 2-star safety rated vehicles into Australia. I wish to thank the minister for the invitation to attend the road safety summit held here in Melbourne last week. This was an interesting forum, with presentations from the Transport Accident Commission (TAC), a Vision Zero expert from Sweden, Regional Roads Victoria and a panel discussion that included police and road safety researchers. I do not need to repeat the terrible statistics for Minister Pulford; she gets an update on these every morning and knows them well. But I remind the rest of us that 140 lives have been lost on the roads this year, a 60 per cent increase on this time last year, and 37 of these deaths were in rural Victoria. That is a heartbreaking 80 per cent increase in lives lost on our country roads.

It was reassuring to hear that our experts had many good answers to the problem of how to reduce lives lost and serious injury on the roads. They know that speed is a huge problem and that Victorians must learn or re-learn to drive within the conditions. They know we do not have the infrastructure or capacity to bring every road to the highest safety standards. Reducing speed limits on inferior roads will be the answer. However, the experts also know many of the solutions will not be popular, but then we did not like having to wear seatbelts when that law was introduced. Now that simple act is second nature and we know it saves lives. The public did not like speed cameras or alcohol and drug testing, but again we know that these measures save lives. New technology to detect the use of phones in cars shows promise for stopping the increasing problem of distracted driving. I commend the TAC on its new campaign—we are indeed driving blind when we glance at our phone for just 2 seconds.

But what struck me as an obvious and potentially achievable measure to reduce injury and lives lost on our roads was a total ban on the import of vehicles with a safety rating less than 3 stars; 2 and 3-star rated cars are not safe. At the summit Victoria Police assistant commissioner Stephen Leane spoke of the frustration of pulling young people with serious brain injuries out of 1 and 2-star rated vehicles after accidents. An Australian Bureau of Statistics census of Australian motor vehicles at the end of January 2018 showed the average age of the Australian fleet was 10 years. Let us get the old fleet to retire naturally and work to bring in a ban on imported cars that are not safe. So I ask the minister: can she work with her federal counterparts to investigate legislation that bans the import of 1 and 2-star vehicles into Australia and investigate incentives to move Victorians into safer vehicles?

GREAT OCEAN ROAD—NELSON STREET, APOLLO BAY

Mrs McARTHUR (Western Victoria) (17:22): My adjournment matter tonight is also for the Minister for Roads, and it concerns Regional Roads Victoria's plans for the construction of a roundabout on the Great Ocean Road at Nelson Street in Apollo Bay. This proposal is estimated to cost \$3.5 million and the Apollo Bay community will lose 22 metres of their precious foreshore. Regional Roads Victoria are the responsible authority, but they failed to properly consult with the Apollo Bay community about this proposed roundabout and most locals barely knew anything about it until it appeared in the media. Their failure to engage the community in this significant change has been breathtaking. They claim that they have received a 70 per cent approval rating; however, they refuse to disclose the data to justify this statistic. Their information session held in the local RSL facility attracted about a dozen locals but adjacent residents were not invited.

Following media coverage and pressure from the Colac Otway shire, Regional Roads Victoria were forced to hold two more consultation sessions but provided limited opportunity for comment on the Regional Roads Victoria options, and they were certainly not interested in alternative suggestions that would improve the traffic flow without resorting to wholesale destruction of an iconic part of Apollo Bay. Regional Roads Victoria dubiously cite 'safety concerns' about the intersection, but there is no crash data to justify such an extensive change.

A more significant problem is the lack of adequate signage for Twelve Apostles tourists in the area. This proposal, involving the relocation of a famous and iconic war memorial plus the elimination of precious car parking space, is overkill in the extreme. Some simple, less expensive options would improve traffic flow and ensure safety. Repairs to coastal road erosion and dangerous intersections are far more important to locals and tourists alike, rather than a roundabout endorsed by bureaucrats unfamiliar with local concerns.

The action I seek is for the minister to ensure Regional Roads Victoria releases the community consultation data that supposedly reveals 70 per cent support for this project, outline what the government is doing to ensure the Great Ocean Road is kept functional and inform the Apollo Bay community of the crash data for this intersection that justifies a \$3.5 million taxpayer-funded spend.

DUCK HUNTING SEASON

Mr MEDDICK (Western Victoria) (17:24): My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Agriculture. The action I seek is that she join me in seeing some of the survivors of the 2019 duck shooting season being released. Weeks ago the recreational slaughter of our native waterbirds came to an end. Finally, our tranquil wetlands have become sanctuaries for wildlife again, just as they always should be. Despite duck shooter numbers being at the lowest ever on record, both game and protected birds were ruthlessly and needlessly slaughtered this year. It is estimated that one in every four birds shot during the duck shooting season will be wounded but not killed. They can suffer from their injuries for days, even weeks on end, before being taken by predators, dying of infection or drowning. When there are up to 20 000 locations where duck shooting can take place in Victoria, it is hard to imagine the level of suffering that goes on.

But there are a few lucky ones. Volunteer duck rescuers that I am proud to support do the work of finding shot and abandoned native waterbirds so that they can be given veterinary treatment. Often it is a matter of relieving their suffering through humane euthanasia. It can be very hard to rehabilitate injuries from shotgun pellets, which include broken legs, wings, pellets in vital organs, broken beaks and even shots in the eye. Some birds can be helped, though, and after their vet work they go to carers who put in long hours rehabilitating them to the point where they can be released into the wild again. It is a beautiful moment among something that is defined mostly by heartbreak and tragedy. On Monday I will watch a little coot, which is a protected species and never should have been a target of duck shooters, be released at Lake Bolac. I hope the minister will join me so she can see for herself the work and dedication of duck rescuers and wildlife carers. Their dream is for there to no longer be a need for them to do this work, and I join them in that dream.

TULLAMARINE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) (17:26): I have a matter this evening on the adjournment for the Minister for Education, and it is a matter that has come to my attention as a result of an email from a constituent who has a child at Tullamarine Primary School. The constituent has explained to me that her son is on the autism spectrum, as indeed are a number of students at Tullamarine Primary School, and she has expressed some very, very grave concerns about their safety in the playground. It seems that a number of works have recently occurred and the playground and indeed the grounds of the school itself have been upgraded. Parts of the upgrade, in my constituent's opinion, have created dangers for children, particularly children on the spectrum, and she is very concerned that despite complaints to the principal, the deputy principal and the school council, nobody seems to be taking the necessary note of her concerns.

This obviously is something that we cannot allow to occur if indeed my constituent is right. I am not saying one way or the other that she is right or wrong, but I am saying that what we need to do—and I am asking the minister to do this—is to send in an inspector, send in somebody from the department, to inspect the new playground and the new school grounds to see if the new works do provide a danger for any child, much less a child on the spectrum. As I am sure every member would be aware, schools

should be safe havens for children. They should not be posing any threat or any danger to those children. Given the concerns that have been expressed to me by my constituent, I am asking the minister to, as a matter of urgency, find out the truth of the concerns that my constituent has, particularly as I understand and she understands more works are underway or will be underway very shortly for upgrades at the school. I am asking the minister to ascertain the truth of this matter and to ensure that that schoolyard at Tullamarine Primary School is safe for all children.

CULTURAL HERITAGE MANAGEMENT PLANS

Mr QUILTY (Northern Victoria) (17:30): My adjournment debate item tonight is for the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. Members might recall that in a previous debate I raised the issue of Parks Victoria locking regional Victorians out of public lands because of a lack of cultural heritage management plans. For example, a thriving small business outside of Warrnambool, Rundell's Mahogany Trail Rides, had access to four out of five trails suddenly cut off, including their most popular trail at Hoon Hill. A cultural heritage management plan would cost them tens of thousands of dollars and could well achieve nothing. The Sea Lake Mallee Rally, held at Lake Tyrrell, was cancelled this year due to difficulties obtaining a cultural heritage management plan. Parks Victoria also suddenly decided to lock out rock climbers from iconic climbs in the Grampians.

While city people get the warm and fuzzy feeling of something being done, country Victorians are being made to bear all the costs of this regional lockout push. The program of reconciliation is going to fail where the burdens are being unfairly shared around. Given how people in regional Victoria have been treated, I would like to draw the minister's attention to a book by Meyer Eidelson called *Melbourne Dreaming*. In it he identifies 30 sites around Melbourne of cultural significance to Indigenous people. This includes the MCG, which was once a corroboree site for young Aboriginal men. To demonstrate that the lockouts of Rundell's trail rides, the Sea Lake Mallee Rally and the Grampians are not a case of city-centric bullying, I call on the minister to close the MCG until such time as a heritage management plan can be obtained. Maybe when the pain of these regulations is felt by all Victorians we will see a push to bring back common sense.

DROUGHT ASSISTANCE

Ms BATH (Eastern Victoria) (17:32): My adjournment matter this evening is for the Minister for Agriculture, the Honourable Jaclyn Symes. The issue that I want to raise has been first and foremost in the minds of Gippsland farmers for a long time, and that is the issue of drought. Many farmers over many months have come into my office seeking help in one way or another for the drought issue and for the increasing burden that they are facing in terms of providing stock with feed and keeping their animals alive. There are drought assistant packages available from the state government in terms of the Wellington shire and East Gippsland shire, and we have had a small amount of very welcome rain in Central and East Gippsland, but the problem is that the rain patterns do not recognise the fact that the Latrobe Valley borders onto the Wellington shire but cannot receive at this point in time any drought assistance. There are farmers and families along that border of Flynn, into Glengarry and around that area who cannot access any of the small cash grants that can be so very welcome. Even in their small amount they can still provide some support for farmers to be able to either put food on the table or put food on the paddock in front of their animals.

There have been many people coming in, but there is just one gentleman that I would like to raise in terms of his situation to highlight this issue. He runs a small beef farm located on the eastern border of the City of Latrobe. He sold off the majority of his herd last October but is keeping a small amount of his breeding herd, which is a very special breed. Most of those are remaining in calf. At the moment he is feeding out potatoes because that is all he can afford and due to the lack of hay. He has applied for multiple state grants without success. He has also been in constant contact with Rural Finance and even came into my office only yesterday to have a conversation. My fabulous office staff rang the rural financial counsellor, who said this man's only remaining option is to indeed sell off the herd. This is a man who has a passion for his animals and who has a huge investment, and they will be the

platform for him to respond and regrow in terms of his farming capacity. It is a terrible sight to see a grown man in such a bad state. So the action I am seeking from the minister is to broaden the capacity of this government and to include the City of Latrobe as a drought-affected area—and it is—and therefore the likes of this wonderful farmer will be able to have the opportunity to seek drought assistance. Declare the City of Latrobe in drought and enable these farmers to survive.

RESPONSES

Ms PULFORD (Western Victoria—Minister for Roads, Minister for Road Safety and the TAC, Minister for Fishing and Boating) (17:35): Seven members raised adjournment matters this evening. Ms Bath and Mr Meddick raised matters for the Minister for Agriculture, Mr Finn raised a matter for the Deputy Premier and Mr Quilty raised a matter for the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. Three members raised matters for my attention, and I might be able to partly dispatch some of these—perhaps not quite completely dispatch any of them, but let me just do my best.

Ms Lovell was concerned about the safety barriers near Tatura on the Midland Highway. She described in her adjournment matter a reasonably disturbing incident and has some suggestions about improved lighting and perhaps some science to help people make the change in their driving habits. I am happy to take that to Regional Roads Victoria or the Safer Road Infrastructure Program team, who are responsible for the *Towards Zero* infrastructure program, to provide me with some further advice which I will come back to her on.

Mr Barton asked that I work with my federal counterpart to ban the importation of 1 and 2-star rated cars. I thank Mr Barton for his contribution and his reflections on the road safety summit on Friday. As I indicated in the debate on Mr Rich-Phillips's motion earlier, I have had a preliminary discussion with my federal counterpart, the Deputy Prime Minister, Michael McCormack, and I look forward to the opportunity to have further discussions with him along those lines. In terms of Mr Barton's request that I work with the federal government to deal with unsafe vehicles on our roads, absolutely I give that commitment. I look forward to those discussions and hopefully making some progress there. In terms of the specifics about whether it is a ban on importation or some other mechanism around setting safety standards, because that area really is the remit of the federal government, I am not sure exactly how they might do that. But certainly in the spirit of working with them constructively to get a better outcome for not just Victorian drivers but all drivers on this question of poor safety quality vehicles entering the market here, it is something I am very, very happy to do. I thank Mr Barton for that.

Mrs McArthur raised some concerns from the Apollo Bay community about a roundabout project and some related issues around the very high number of visitors that travel to what is arguably the most beautiful part of Victoria—certainly the most visited part of Victoria. Managing the traffic with such huge visitor numbers is of course an enduring challenge, so I can happily undertake to continue to work with Mrs McArthur and the Apollo Bay community with and through Regional Roads Victoria to ensure the safest possible arrangements for that iconic, very high demand and popular spot.

In terms of the specifics about the Apollo Bay roundabout community consultation, I am aware of some of the details of that. If I am able to provide some further information around that and if there is a need for some further engagement with the community in relation to that project, then we will make sure that that happens. My expectations of Regional Roads Victoria, as were the expectations of my predecessor, Minister Donnellan, are very high in terms of what we expect in the way of community engagement. I think that generally they do a rather fabulous job of this, but if there are areas for improvement, then we are always happy to hear about those.

I have written responses to adjournment debate matters raised by Mr Limbrick on 1 May and Mr Finn on 2 May.

The PRESIDENT: The house stands adjourned.

House adjourned 5.39 p.m.

Written adjournment responses

Responses have been incorporated in the form supplied by the departments on behalf of the appropriate ministers.

Wednesday, 5 June 2019

GRAMPIANS ROCK CLIMBING

In reply to Mr LIMBRICK (South Eastern Metropolitan) (1 May 2019)

Ms D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park—Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, Minister for Solar Homes):

The Grampians National Park's diverse landscape is a place of environmental and cultural significance.

I acknowledge the importance of rock climbing as a recreational and sporting pursuit for many people, and value the contribution it brings to the local and regional economy. More than 60 per cent of the park remains available for rock climbers, offering hundreds of popular sites for the climbing community.

The nature of rock climbing activities has evolved with practices such as the use of climbing bolts, which is damaging important rock art, and bouldering, which leads to significant damage and loss of vegetation. These practices are causing ongoing risks to irreplaceable Aboriginal cultural heritage, and risks to visitor safety. Photographic evidence of the damage is located on Parks Victoria's website at: <https://parkweb.vic.gov.au/explore/parks/Grampians-national-park/plans-and-projects/rock-climbing-faq>

Parks Victoria has legislative requirements to protect and manage this estate in partnership with Traditional Owners, government and the broader community. This includes protecting the cultural rock art as well as other Aboriginal cultural heritage sites from damage.

Over the coming year, Parks Victoria will review the Grampians National Park Management Plan and work closely with rock climbing representatives through this process. To support strong engagement, a Stakeholder Reference Group will be established which will have representatives from recreation groups and other key stakeholders.

YARRAVILLE PARKING METERS

In reply to Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) (2 May 2019)

Mr SOMYUREK (South Eastern Metropolitan—Minister for Local Government, Minister for Small Business):

I thank the Member for Western Metropolitan for his question regarding the current status of the Yarraville parking meters.

I understand that pay parking is being re-introduced in central Footscray by the end of June, and as part of this process some parking ticket machines in Footscray require renewal. I understand that a decision has been made by Council to utilise the unused machines in Yarraville, which will see them transferred to Footscray.