



2019 Briefing e-Book



Key issues
from the 58th
Parliament

October 2019

Acknowledgments

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2019 Briefing e-Book

This Briefing e-Book was compiled by staff in the Parliamentary Library's Research & Inquiries unit. It is designed as an overview of issues that were prominent during the 58th Parliament, as shown through developments in legislative action, parliamentary debate, media coverage, and public research. The following briefings should not be considered comprehensive guides to each subject area, but rather, they are intended to be a reference guide to key issues, publications, and resources to inform future debate. This Briefing e-Book provides links to sources, some of which can only be accessed on the Parliamentary network. For further information, readers are directed to contact the Research & Inquiries unit in the Parliamentary Library & Information Service.

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Foreword

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We understand how busy Members of Parliament can be. We are here to support your work in legislating for our vibrant democracy and representing your diverse constituencies.

The Library has a range of services and resources to help you operate effectively at Parliament and in your electorate. Most of our resources are provided online, so you can find what you need at a time and place that suits you: in your office, via your mobile devices or on the parliamentary network.

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Through the Library Enquiry Desk you can lodge requests on virtually any subject. The information we provide is timely, confidential, and impartial.

With your information needs in mind, the Research & Inquiries team prepares research publications on upcoming Bills before Parliament, publishes statistical surveys, and provides individual briefings for Members. Publications produced include research papers, Bill Briefs and New Bills InfoLinks.

This Briefing e-Book provides a snapshot of key issues by portfolio from the previous Parliament. We hope this provides you with a useful background to your current work.

I warmly invite you all to visit the Library where professional staff are ready to assist.

Call the Library Enquiry Desk on **9651 8640**, or email research@parliament.vic.gov.au



Carolyn Macvean
Manager, Parliamentary Library & Information Service
October 2019



Parliamentary Library Services

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The Library's Enquiry Desk can answer Members' requests for information on a wide range of topics. We provide access to:

- Newspaper and broadcast media
- Books, journal articles, and reports
- Facts and statistics
- Background for speeches
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This service is confidential, impartial, and provided in a timely manner. It is important to let us know how much information you require and your timeframe, so we can deliver material that best suits your needs.

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Contact

Telephone: (03) 9651 8640 / 9651 8641

Email: research@parliament.vic.gov.au

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- Bill Briefs – analysis on selected components of new Bills and topical issues
- New Bills InfoLinks – links to key information on all new Bills

Additional Services

- Statistics – electorate and regional data
- Hot Topics – key links on topical issues
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- Library Fellowships – academics conducting research on key issues
- Library seminars – regular seminars on topical issues

Parliamentary Interns

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The Library provides access to a range of news and media resources to keep you up-to-date with breaking news and current issues. Assistance with news and media resources can be obtained through the Enquiry Desk.

- MediaPortal – private email alerts for newspaper articles
- News Archive – archive of newspaper articles (Nov 2002 – present)
- Broadcast News – radio and TV clips available daily on your desktop
- Media Releases – archive of all party and independent media releases (1992 – present)

Databases

The Library provides additional databases to assist in your information needs:

- Academic Search Complete (multidisciplinary academic journals)
- Australian Public Affairs
- Legal information (WestlawAU and Lawlex)
- Victorian election policies (1930s – present)
- Government Agencies and Departments (1800s – present)
- Ministers & Shadow Ministers
- By-elections
- Inaugural Speeches
- Biographies of Victorian MPs (Re-Member, 1851 – present)

These can all be accessed from the Library's [intranet page](#).

Loans Desk

A comprehensive collection of non-fiction material, including government reports, is available for loan. Items may be reserved or renewed through the [online catalogue](#) and can be collected from the Loans Desk or posted to your electorate office if required. If the Library doesn't have an item you need, we may be able to purchase a copy or borrow it from another library.

Many publications are now available as downloadable PDF attachments via the Library catalogue on the intranet. The catalogue provides basic or advanced searching under keyword, author, title, subject, or series.

The 58th Parliament of Victoria



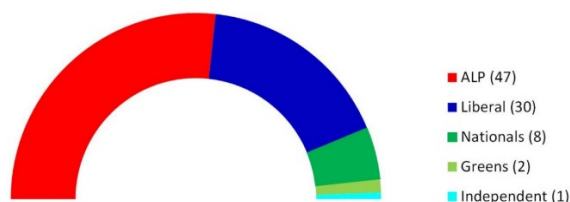
The 58th Parliament of Victoria

An overview of parliamentary events and developments relating to the work of the Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council during the 58th Parliament of Victoria, including parliamentary composition, procedural reform, and committee work.

Elections, by-elections, and joint sittings

The Australian Labor Party (ALP) won control of the Legislative Assembly and formed government at the [2014 Victorian election](#). ALP leader, Daniel Andrews, was sworn in as the 48th Premier of Victoria in December that year. Following the declaration of the polls, Labor held 47 seats in the Legislative Assembly, but only 14 in the Legislative Council. The following charts provide a snapshot of the composition of the houses at the beginning of the 58th Parliament of Victoria.

Legislative Assembly – Seat results



Legislative Council – Seat results



For more information, please see the Library's research paper on [the 2014 Victorian state election](#).

Four by-elections took place during the Parliament, resulting in one change to the party composition of the Legislative Assembly.

Three by-elections took place in 2015 for the Legislative Assembly electorates of Gippsland South, Polwarth, and the South-West Coast. The first was held on 14 March for the seat of Gippsland South, following the resignation of sitting Nationals Party Member, Peter Ryan. The seat was [retained by the Nationals](#) (Danny O'Brien, who had resigned his seat in the Legislative Council in order to contest the Legislative Assembly seat). The remaining two by-elections were held on 31 October, following the resignation of the sitting Members, Denis Naphthine and Terry Mulder. Both seats were retained by the Liberal Party and, again, did not affect the composition of the house: Polwarth was [won by Richard Riordan](#), and South-West Coast was [won by Roma Britnell](#).

A by-election for the seat of Northcote in the Legislative Assembly was held on 18 November 2017, following the passing of Labor Member and Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, the Hon. Fiona Richardson. This seat was [won by Lidia Thorpe](#) for the Victorian Greens. The by-election increased the Greens' representation from two to three seats in the Legislative Assembly and decreased the ALP's from 47 to 46 seats. Lidia Thorpe became the



first female Indigenous Member elected to either house of the Parliament of Victoria.

A number of casual vacancies in the Legislative Council were resolved by way of joint sittings during the course of the Parliament. These joint sittings selected new Council Members [Melina Bath](#) for the Eastern Victoria region in April 2015 (replacing Danny O'Brien); [Luke O'Sullivan](#) for the Northern Victoria region in October 2016 (replacing Damian Drum); [Mark Gepp](#) for the Northern Victoria region in June 2017 (replacing Steve Herbert); [Samantha Ratnam](#) for the Northern Metropolitan Region in October 2017 (replacing Greg Barber); and [Huong Truong](#) for the Western Metropolitan Region in February 2018 (replacing Colleen Hartland).

Work of the Parliament

Reform of parliamentary allowances

The Andrews Government [announced](#) an overhaul of the parliamentary allowances system on 24 April 2017, following a number of allegations of misuse of entitlements. These reforms included restricting access to the [second residence allowance](#), which is provided for Members of Parliament whose home is more than 80km from Melbourne and who have a second residence closer to the city. Under the changes, the allowance was renamed the [parliamentary sitting accommodation allowance](#), and only Members of Parliament representing regional seats are eligible (upon providing evidence of their home address).

Other changes included tightening allocations in electorate office budgets for official business travel and restricting the commercial transport allowance for rural Members so that it applies only to air travel.

In December 2017, the Andrews Government introduced draft legislation to establish an [independent remuneration tribunal](#) to oversee the setting of salaries and allowances for Members of Parliament and other selected public office holders. The proposed tribunal would also receive, and decide upon, cases of alleged misuse of allowances and other funds, with a 25 per cent penalty applied to the repayment of any funds found to have been inappropriately used. The purpose of the Bill was to [increase transparency and public scrutiny](#) of spending by Members of Parliament, and it would have required all claimed allowances to be published on the Parliament's website each quarter. The Bill was removed from the Government

Business Program on 21 June 2018 and lapsed at the end of the 58th Parliament.


Parliamentary Budget Office

The creation of an independent budget office for the Victorian Parliament has been a subject of political discussion [since at least 2010](#). The Victorian Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) was established by the [Parliamentary Budget Officer Act 2017](#), which received the Royal Assent on 27 June 2017. The PBO is an independent office of the Parliament and is [mandated to provide](#) policy costings and related advisory services for all Members of Parliament. Prior to the existence of the PBO in Victoria, non-government Members of Parliament did not have access to public sector financial, fiscal and economic expertise, or advice and policy costing services. The PBO provides equal access for all Members and parties, and can scrutinise the financial aspects of policy announcements, as well as potentially minimise errors in policy estimates. It was operational in time to provide policy costings for Members ahead of the 2018 Victorian election.

Similar offices have been established in the [Commonwealth Parliament](#) and [New South Wales Parliament](#), although the New South Wales office operates on a temporary basis around the time of an election.

Committees

The parliamentary committee system was revised during the 58th Parliament, following passage of the [Parliamentary Committees and Inquiries Acts Amendment Act 2015](#). This Act provided for the integration of a number of joint investigatory committees, merging six committees into three. A [separate Bill](#)



proposed to merge two further joint investigatory committees (the Accountability and Oversight Committee and the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Committee). This Bill lapsed at the end of the 58th Parliament.

Two select committees were appointed by the Legislative Council to inquire into the [Firefighters' Presumptive Rights Compensation and Fire Services Legislation Amendment \(Reform\) Bill 2017](#), and into the [proposed lease of the Port of Melbourne](#). The Legislative Assembly appointed one select committee, to inquire into [penalty rates and fair pay](#)—the first select committee appointed by the house in over 30 years.

The Legislative Council referred allegations of misuse of Members' staff budget entitlements to the Privileges Committee in March 2018, following a [report](#) of the Ombudsman on the matter. This referral constitutes the [first time](#) this committee has been formed in the Victorian Parliament. The Committee's [final report](#) endorsed the recommendations made by the Ombudsman, which the Government supported in its [response](#) to the Committee's report, in September 2018.

Over the course of the 58th Parliament, joint investigatory committees tabled a total of 125 inquiry, scrutiny and other reports; standing committees tabled 36 reports; and select committees tabled five reports.

Standing and Sessional Orders

Sessional Orders are temporary procedural rules that last for the duration of the current session of parliament, or until the parliament expires or is prorogued. They can add to, or supersede, the permanent

Standing Orders that govern the procedure and workings of each house.

Both houses adopted a number of Sessional Orders during the course of the 58th Parliament. One major change was the introduction of 'video on demand', a service that allowed Members to access and republish video clips of their speeches in the chamber. This followed a Legislative Council Procedure Committee [report](#) into a potential 'on demand' system for obtaining recent footage for viewing and reuse, which was handed down in September 2017. Republishing was made subject to certain conditions, including that the video could not be used for satirical purposes or for commercial advertising.

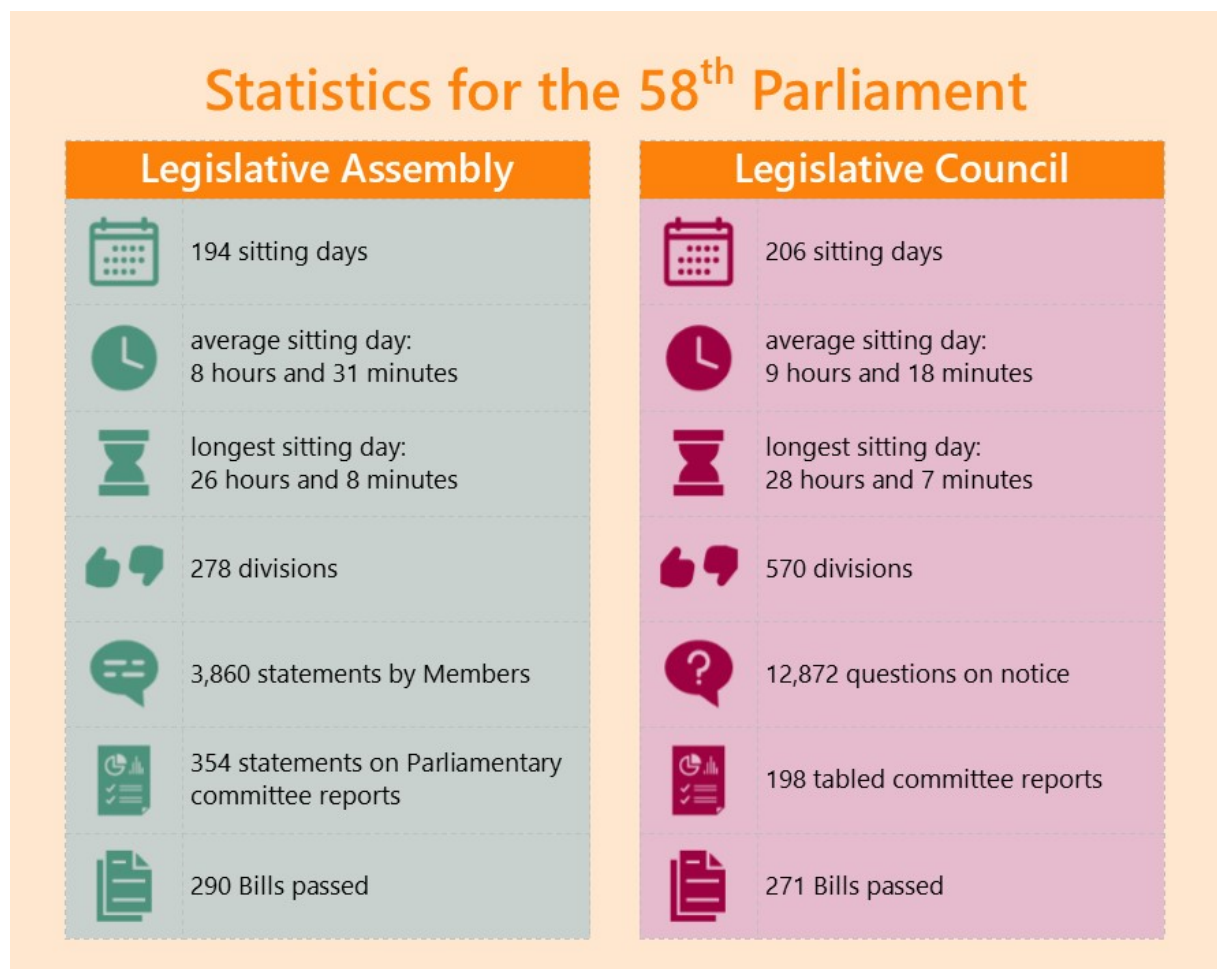
A further significant change was the amendment of the Assembly's sitting hours at the commencement of the 58th Parliament, to allow Members to finish earlier without losing substantial time in debate. The Council made less significant changes to its sitting hours.

Both houses also introduced Sessional Orders that allocated questions to non-government members only, thereby removing the capacity for government backbenchers to ask Ministers pre-arranged questions during question time, a practice known as 'Dorothy Dixers'. These Sessional Orders instead assigned time for Ministers' Statements. These statements can be made at certain times with the purpose of informing the chambers about government projects and achievements within each Minister's portfolio. Other Sessional Orders adopted by both houses included the introduction of constituency questions, allowing Members to request information from

Ministers on issues in their respective electorates; and an amendment of the time of the ringing of the bells for a division from three minutes to four minutes, due to the new Members' office building being opened behind the original Parliament building.

The Legislative Council also adopted a new Standing Order, 10.10, relating to

[electronic petitions](#) (e-petitions) in March 2017. This allows members of the public to submit petitions at the Parliament of Victoria's website, which are then made publicly available on the website and open for further signatures. The Legislative Assembly continues to accept only [paper petitions](#).



Sources: [Statistics for the 58th Parliament](#), Procedure Office, Legislative Assembly of Victoria (2018); [Legislative Council Statistics 18 to 20 September 2018](#), Chamber Support Office, Legislative Council of Victoria (2018)

Legislation

The following selection of legislation was introduced during the 58th Parliament. For further information, see the [Legislation](#) website.

- [Parliamentary Committees and Inquiries Acts Amendment Act 2015](#)
- [Parliamentary Budget Officer Act 2017](#)
- [Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal and Improving Parliamentary Standards Bill 2017](#) (lapsed)
- [Electoral Legislation Amendment Act 2018](#)

Library research publications

The Parliamentary Library Research & Inquiries unit produced the following research publications on issues of relevance during the 58th Parliament.

- [The 2014 Victorian state election](#), Research Paper, Victorian Parliamentary Library & Information Service (2015)
- [E-petitions](#), Research Paper, Victorian Parliamentary Library & Information Service (2016)
- [Independence of Parliament](#), Research Paper, Victorian Parliamentary Library & Information Service (2017)
- [The 2017 Northcote by-election](#), Research Note, Victorian Parliamentary Library & Information Service (2017)

Committee inquiries

- [E-petitions](#), Legislative Council Procedure Committee, Parliament of Victoria (2016)
- [Inquiry into sitting hours and operation of the House](#), Legislative Assembly Standing Orders Committee, Parliament of Victoria (2016)
- [Inquiry into the conduct of the 2014 Victorian state election](#), Joint Investigatory Committee on Electoral Matters, Parliament of Victoria (2016)
- [Video on demand](#), Legislative Council Procedure Committee, Parliament of Victoria (2017)
- [Inquiry into civics and electoral participation in Victorian state parliamentary elections](#), Joint Investigatory Committee on Electoral Matters, Parliament of Victoria (2018)
- [Inquiry into matters relating to the misuse of electorate office staffing entitlements](#), Legislative Council Privileges Committee, Parliament of Victoria (2018)
- [Review of the Standing Orders \(58th Parliament\)](#), Legislative Council Procedure Committee, Parliament of Victoria (2018)

Arts, sport and recreation



Arts, sport and recreation

An overview of developments within the arts, sports and recreation portfolios during the 58th Parliament, including key issues, legislation and reports.

Arts

There was much planning in the creative industries space during the 58th Parliament, which culminated in the *Creative Victoria Act 2017*. The Act repealed the *Arts Victoria Act 1972*, which the Government felt no longer reflected its policy and activity in relation to the arts, culture and the creative industries. The legislation provided new recognition for the private and public benefits of the arts and creative industries and the centrality of Aboriginal culture and art to Victoria's cultural life. It also established the office of Chief Executive for Creative Victoria. This Act drew upon and reflected the findings from a *discussion paper* and *consultation paper*, which led to *Creative state: Victoria's first creative industries strategy 2016–2020*.

The National Gallery of Victoria (NGV) received positive *media coverage* for ranking among the top 20 most-visited art galleries in the world, as well as Australia's most popular gallery, welcoming over *3.3 million visitors in 2017–18*. It received \$28.7 million over two years in the *2017–18 State Budget* to continue funding for summer exhibitions, the Triennial of Contemporary Art and Design, the development of permanent exhibitions and the management of the state collection. The *Van Gogh and the Seasons* exhibition in 2017 recorded the most ticketed visits for a single exhibition in the Gallery's history, generating almost *\$56 million* for the Victorian economy.

The Geelong Performing Arts Centre received *\$30 million* in the 2015–16 Budget for a redevelopment including more dance studios, a brand new façade and a conversion of the nearby church into a 150-seat cabaret and music venue.

The Andrews Government expanded the White Night Festival into the regional areas of Ballarat, Bendigo and Geelong in 2017 and 2018, which received much positive local *media coverage*.

In 2018, the Government *announced* a 'once-in-a-generation' *redemption of Melbourne's arts precinct* which includes a contemporary art and design gallery. The Government pledged \$208 million towards the first phase of the project, which also requires substantial philanthropic and federal government contributions.

Film industry

In 2015, amendments were made to the *Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) (Enforcement) Act 1995*, which followed changes to the *Commonwealth Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Amendment (Classification Tools and Other Measures) Act 2014*. These amendments streamlined exemption arrangements for festivals and cultural institutions; expanded the exceptions to the modification rule so that films and computer games which are subject to minor modifications do not require re-classification; and enabled certain content to be classified using tools such as online questionnaires.



In April 2018, the Minister for Creative Industries, Martin Foley, [announced funding for the Australian Centre for the Moving Image \(ACMI\)](#) to undertake ‘the biggest transformation of the Centre in its 16-year history’. The 2018–19 State Budget allocated [\\$36.6 million](#) over two years to redevelop ACMI, including building a new permanent exhibition, technology-enhanced visitor interaction and a new learning centre.

Music Industry

In July 2015, the Andrews Government established [Music Works Grants](#), a program to support musicians, music managers and industry organisations. In May 2016, the Minister for Creative Industries announced [grant opportunities for live music venues](#) of up to \$25,000 to improve venue sound-proofing, under the [Good Music Neighbours](#) initiative, as part of the [Music Works](#) Program.

Sport and recreation

Racing

Several pieces of legislation in the 58th Parliament dealt with racing and racing integrity issues.

Greyhound racing

In February 2015, the ABC’s *Four Corners* aired an [investigation](#) which documented controversial practices in the greyhound racing industry, including live baiting, which is illegal under the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986*.

Following the investigation, Victoria’s [Chief Veterinary Officer](#) and the [Racing Integrity Commissioner](#) conducted separate inquiries into the matter. The first was commissioned by the Minister for Agriculture and the Minister for Racing, while the second was an [own motion inquiry](#). Together, the two inquiries produced a total of 68 recommendations.

The recommendations led to the [Racing and Other Acts Amendment \(Greyhound Racing and Welfare Reform\) Act 2016](#), which [increased penalties](#) for baiting, bleeding and luring greyhounds, while strengthening powers and imposing greater accountability on Greyhound Racing Victoria (GRV) for animal welfare within the industry. The Act also provided for the creation of a new, mandatory [Code of Practice for the Keeping of Racing Greyhounds](#)—a key recommendation of Victoria’s Chief Veterinary Officer.

The Code was subsequently [approved](#) and released by the Andrews Government on 23 April 2018, with a scheduled commencement date of 20 January 2020. The Code replaced the existing *Code of Practice for the Operation of Greyhound*

Establishments made under the *Racing Act 1958* and enforced by GRV.

Other developments included the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment Act 2015*, which created new offences and penalties for ‘baiting, bleeding and luring’. In April 2018, the Andrews Government [announced](#) that, as of 1 January 2019, pet greyhounds would no longer be required to be muzzled in public. The [RSPCA](#) and [Australian Veterinary Association](#) welcomed the move as improving the image of greyhounds and increasing their prospects for adoption.

Horseracing

In August 2015, the Minister for Racing, Martin Pakula, introduced amendments to the *Racing Act 1958* into the Parliament. A [media release](#) explained that the legislation sought to establish new governance arrangements for the Board of Harness Racing Victoria, a Harness Racing Advisory Council and increased information-sharing powers for the Racing Integrity Commissioner. The legislation followed from recommendations of the [Monteith Report](#), an independent audit of the industry.

In December 2016, Mr Pakula [announced](#) the Government’s intention to introduce legislation in 2017 to create an independent Board for Racing Victoria. This was later achieved through the [Racing Amendment \(Modernisation\) Bill 2017](#), which was introduced in June 2017 and passed in March 2018.

Other developments included the *Racing Amendment (Integrity and Disciplinary Structures) Act 2018*, which also amended the *Racing Act 1958* to establish the Victorian Racing Tribunal. The Tribunal was

established to hear and determine matters involving serious offences across the racing codes; to limit certain rights of appeal to VCAT; and to make other administrative amendments. This followed the recommendations of the [Bittar review](#) into the integrity structures of the Victorian racing industry.

Tennis

There has been ongoing development of the [Melbourne and Olympic Parks](#) precinct. In August 2016, the Minister for Sport, John Eren, introduced the [Melbourne and Olympic Parks Amendment Bill 2016](#) to amend the *Melbourne and Olympic Parks Act 1985*. The legislation, passed in October 2016, contains enabling provisions for the development of a pedestrian bridge connecting Flinders Street Station to Melbourne Park, which is part of stage 2 of a \$338 million [redevelopment of Rod Laver Arena](#) and the broader precinct.

Ticket Scalping

Ticket scalping—the reselling of event tickets by secondary agencies, often at prices well above face value—continued to impact [major Victorian events](#). The *Major Events Legislation Amendment (Ticket Scalping and Other Matters) Act 2018* makes it illegal to sell, or advertise for resale, tickets to any declared event for more than 10 per cent above face value.

Legislation

The following selection of legislation was introduced during the 58th Parliament. For further information, see the [Legislation](#) website.

- *Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) (Enforcement) Act 2015*
- *Racing Amendment Act 2015*
- *Melbourne and Olympic Parks Amendment Act 2016*
- *Racing and Other Acts Amendment (Greyhound Racing and Welfare Reform) Act 2016*
- *Creative Victoria Act 2017*
- *Major Events Legislation Amendment (Ticket Scalping and Other Matters) Act 2018*
- *Racing Amendment (Integrity and Disciplinary Structures) Act 2018*
- *Racing Amendment (Modernisation) Act 2018*

Reports

The following selection of reports was produced during the 58th Parliament. See the [Library catalogue](#) for further reports.

- *2015 Own motion inquiry into live baiting in greyhound racing in Victoria*, S. Perna, Racing Integrity Commissioner (2015)
- *Cultural and creative industries: Consultation summary report*, Creative Victoria (2015)
- *Investigation into animal welfare and cruelty in the Victorian greyhound industry*, Dr C. Milne, Chief Veterinary Officer (2015)
- *Let's get creative about Victoria's future: Developing Victoria's first creative industries strategy*, Creative Victoria (2015)
- *Report on the audit of Harness Racing Victoria*, D. Monteith (2015)
- *Review of the integrity structures of the Victorian racing industry*, P. Bittar (2016)
- *Creative state: Victoria's first creative industries strategy 2016–2020*, Creative Victoria (2016)

Crime and justice



Crime and justice

An overview of developments within the crime and justice portfolios during the 58th Parliament, including key issues, legislation and reports.

Courts and legal services

Court facilities and services

New court facilities and improved court services were developed during the 58th Parliament, including the [\\$73 million multi-jurisdictional Shepparton Law Courts](#), which commenced operation in April 2018. The new Courts Koori Portfolio Committee was also established. The core role of the Committee is to advise the Courts Council on Indigenous issues and to consolidate governance arrangements as they relate to Koori programs across the courts.

The [Judicial Commission of Victoria Act 2016](#) established the [Judicial Commission of Victoria](#). As a new independent body, the Commission has authority to hear complaints about the conduct of judicial officers and Victorian Civil & Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) members.

According to the [2017–2018 Court Services Victoria \(CSV\) annual report](#), additional state government funding was provided to increase the capacity of the Victorian court system. The investment included funding for a new Supreme Court judge, two new County Court judges and 18 new magistrates. It will also enable the acquisition of land for any future development of new courts in Bendigo and Wyndham.

Legal aid and community legal centres

The Department of Justice and Regulation released its [Access to Justice Review](#) in 2016, which made 60 recommendations aimed at reducing the barriers disadvantaged people face when accessing the legal system. In total, 57 recommendations were accepted from the review, with the Andrews Government providing \$34.7 million in 2018 towards their implementation. The package included \$7.23 million of additional legal aid grants to ensure better access to legal representation; \$6.85 million to expand the Legal Help phone service and increase alternative dispute resolution services; and \$4.55 million to modernise and streamline VCAT services.

Also resulting from the review was the [Justice Legislation Amendment \(Access to Justice\) Act 2018](#). The Act, which came into effect in May 2018, gives Victoria Legal Aid a new role coordinating Victoria's legal assistance sector, as well as working with the Government and other sectors to deliver legal assistance services across the state.

Sentencing and criminal justice

Serious and organised crime

The *Criminal Organisation Control Amendment (Unlawful Associations) Act 2015* limits the ability of criminal gangs, including outlaw motorcycle gangs, to recruit new members and maintain existing members. The amendment makes it clear as to whom the laws around consorting offences will apply, as well as permitting Victoria Police to issue warnings to people against further unlawful associations.

Relatedly, the *Justice Legislation Amendment (Unlawful Association and Criminal Appeals) Bill 2018* was set to amend and clarify laws designed to prevent the formation of criminal networks, by prohibiting those convicted of serious offences from associating with others. This Bill was second read on 7 September 2018 but lapsed at the end of the 58th Parliament.

In 2016, the *Confiscation and Other Matters Amendment Act 2016* amended the *Confiscation Act 1997*. Loopholes had previously allowed for criminals to hide their wealth by purchasing assets with a loan and then repaying those loans with the proceeds of crime. The new Act ensures that Victorian criminals repaying mortgages using the proceeds of crime cannot claim that houses bought with those mortgages were lawfully acquired.

Support for toughening Victoria's stance on organised crime was reflected in the *2018–19 State Budget*. Notably, the Budget included \$24.2 million to strengthen Victoria's response to serious and organised crime online, including disrupting drugs and firearm trafficking

syndicates, money laundering and child exploitation networks.

Firearms

In the 58th Parliament, the Andrews Government introduced a new suite of reforms that targeted the illicit firearms trade that fuels drug trade and crime across the state. The *Firearms Amendment (Trafficking and Other Measures) Act 2015* lowered the number of unregistered firearms that is considered a trafficable quantity from ten firearms to three firearms over a 12-month period. Additionally, in recognition that theft of firearms increases the flow of firearms in the community, the Act enforced a higher penalty for theft offences. The Act is also intended to help Victoria Police to deal with firearms held by serious and organised crime groups, such as motorcycle gangs. Where a firearm is found, but those present deny any knowledge of the weapon or claim it is not theirs, the new laws placed the onus on that person to prove the firearm is not in their possession.

In December 2016, the Andrews Government released the first *Community Safety Statement* publicising its community safety priorities. Among its objectives were the increase of powers, tools and investment for Victoria Police to better address firearm-related offences. In alignment with these objectives, the *Firearms Amendment Act 2018* introduced firearm prohibition orders and new and updated offences. The Act also introduced complementary police powers to help Victoria Police disrupt serious criminal activity associated with the illicit use of firearms. In 2018, the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party introduced a *Bill* in the Legislative Council, which aimed to make

firearm silencers available to recreational shooters. The Bill was subsequently defeated.

Counter-terrorism

Violent incidents in Victoria during the 58th Parliament triggered consideration as to whether Victoria's counter-terrorism legislation adequately guarded against the evolving threat of terrorism. This resulted in a suite of amendments to strengthen Victoria's counter-terrorism laws.

The first major counter-terrorism Bill to pass in the 58th Parliament was the [Terrorism \(Community Protection\) Amendment Bill 2015](#). Amending the *Terrorism (Community Protection) Act 2003*, it sought to grant various special police powers, which include extending the operation of preventative detention orders and prohibited contact orders, as well as enabling remote entry into a suspect's computer for the purpose of covert search warrants.

A second set of reforms came about following a [siege and hostage incident](#) in the suburb of Brighton in June 2017. Days after this incident, the Andrews Government established an independent expert panel on Terrorism and Violent Extremism Prevention and Response Powers. The panel reviewed the laws that protect the community against terrorism and produced two reports. From these reports, 16 recommendations from [Report 1](#) and recommendations 18 to 21 and 24 from [Report 2](#) were implemented. On 7 August 2018, the [Justice Legislation Amendment \(Terrorism\) Act 2018](#) came into effect, implementing these key recommendations. With an additional \$20.9 million allocated by the [2018–19 State Budget](#) to implement these reforms,

the Act enables police to detain terror suspects without a court order for up to four days, creates a presumption against bail and parole for those who pose a terrorism risk, and clarifies police powers to use lethal force.

Sexual offences

Completing a process that began in 2010 as part of the Victorian Government's overhaul of sexual offence laws, the Andrews Government introduced the [Crimes Amendment \(Sexual Offences\) Act 2016](#) in July. Where the law has failed to keep pace with new ways of offending, especially following technology advances, the Act reformed and expanded more than 50 offences. It also includes new offences that apply regardless of whether an offence occurs in person or using the internet.

In 2015, reforms under the [Crimes Amendment \(Child Pornography and Other Matters\) Act 2015](#) created three new offences concerning child pornography, as well as increasing the penalty for the offence of possession of such materials.

In 2016, Victoria Police were given stronger powers under the [Sex Offenders Registration Amendment Act 2016](#) to monitor and investigate registered sex offenders. This includes the ability for police to search registered sex offenders and their homes to ensure compliance with reporting obligations. In 2017, further amendments were made to the *Sex Offenders Registration Act 2004*. These amendments enable young adults who were found guilty of one or more specified sex offences to apply (in limited circumstances) for a court order exempting them from being

'automatically' registered as a sex offender upon sentencing.

Community correction orders

After the assault and murder of drug trafficker Carl Williams in Barwon prison in 2010, [media reports](#) announced in 2014 that Williams' family could be awarded up to \$740,000 as 'victims of crime.' Subsequently, legislation around victims of crime was reviewed and in November 2015, the [Wrongs Amendment \(Prisoner Related Compensation\) Bill 2015](#) was passed by Parliament. The legislation restricts the amount of damages that may be awarded for non-economic loss in respect of mental harm caused by the death or injury of a prisoner if, as an adult, the claimant has been convicted of an offence.

[The murder of schoolgirl Masa Vukotic](#) by a man with a lengthy criminal history while out on bail in 2015 prompted reforms to strengthen the parole system and better protect the community from dangerous sex offenders. This resulted in the enactment of the [Corrections Legislation Amendment Act 2015](#), in June 2016. The legislation gives Victoria Police significantly greater powers to enter the home of a serious sex offender to check if they are complying with their orders. It also clarifies the conditions for the automatic cancellation of parole due to reimprisonment either in or outside Victoria for offences committed before or during a parole period. Drawing on these reforms in relation to serious sex offenders in 2015, the [Corrections Legislation Amendment Act 2016](#) established a new safety role for the security and emergency services group of Corrections Victoria in supervising prisoners on parole.

Family violence

Tackling family violence was a key issue during the 58th Parliament. The Royal Commission into Family Violence followed [reported](#) crime statistics reflecting an increase in recorded family violence incidents of [70.2 per cent since 2010](#), with incidents taking up 40 per cent of Victoria Police's case load and costing the Victorian economy \$3.4 billion a year.

Relevant issues, reports and legislation, including the Royal Commission into Family Violence, are discussed in the [Human Services](#) section of this Briefing e-Book.

Victims of crime

A number of reforms and initiatives were introduced to better protect and support victims of crime during the 58th Parliament.

The *Victims of Crime Commissioner Act 2015* came into effect in October 2015, formally establishing the Victims of Crime Commissioner and Victims of Crime Consultative Committee. The Act ensures the continued existence of the Committee as well as giving the Commissioner specific powers—including the power to undertake inquiries or refer cases to the Ombudsman, Chief Commissioner of Police or the Director of Public Prosecutions.

In 2016, the Victorian Law Reform Commission tabled its report on *The role of victims of crime in the criminal trial process*. A number of the Commission's recommendations were implemented by the *Victims and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2018*. The Act amends the *Jury Directions Act 2015* to provide a new jury direction on the language and cognitive skills of child witnesses. The Act also ensures that, for victims of crime, relevant historical care and protection orders are not treated as convictions or findings of guilt.

Another Act resulting from the Commission's findings was the *Justice Legislation Amendment (Victims) Act 2018*, which came into effect in February 2018. The Act introduces a role for intermediaries in court processes. These are skilled communications specialists who work with victims and assist them in giving evidence to police and in court. The legislation also prevents child sex offenders from using evidence of good

character to argue for more lenient sentences, and it removes the two-year time limit for childhood abuse victims to seek compensation from the Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal.

In the *2017–2018 State Budget*, the Andrews Government allocated \$28.5 million to increase the number of frontline staff and support services for victims, witnesses and vulnerable children.

Legislation

The following selection of legislation was introduced during the 58th Parliament. For further information, see the [Legislation](#) website.

- *Corrections Legislation Amendment Act 2015*
- *Crimes Amendment (Child Pornography and Other Matters) Act 2015*
- *Criminal Organisation Control Amendment (Unlawful Associations) Act 2015*
- *Firearms Amendment (Trafficking and Other Measures) Act 2015*
- *Judicial Commission of Victoria Act 2015*
- *Terrorism (Community Protection) Amendment Act 2015*
- *Wrongs Amendment (Prisoner Related Compensation) Act 2015*
- *Confiscation and Other Matters Amendment Act 2016*
- *Crimes Amendment (Sexual Offences) Act 2016*
- *Sex Offenders Registration Amendment Act 2016*
- *Victims of Crime Commissioner Act 2016*
- *Corrections Legislation Further Amendment Act 2017*
- *Firearms Amendment Act 2018*
- *Firearms Amendment (Silencers) Bill 2018 (defeated)*

- *Justice Legislation Amendment (Access to Justice) Act 2018*
- *Justice Legislation Amendment (Terrorism) Act 2018*
- *Justice Legislation Amendment (Unlawful Association and Criminal Appeals) Bill 2018 (lapsed)*
- *Justice Legislation Amendment (Victims) Act 2018*
- *Victims and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2018*

Reports

The following selection of reports was produced during the 58th Parliament. For further reports, see the [Library catalogue](#).

- *Report and recommendations*, Royal Commission into Family Violence (2016)
- *The role of victims of crime in the criminal trial process*, Victorian Law Reform Commission (2016)
- *Report 1: Expert Panel on Terrorism and Violent Extremism Prevention and Response Powers*, Department of Premier and Cabinet (2017)
- *Report 2: Expert Panel on Terrorism and Violent Extremism Prevention and Response Powers*, Department of Premier and Cabinet (2017)
- *Annual report 2017–2018*, Court Services Victoria (2018)

Corrections, bail and parole

Prisons

During the 58th Parliament, the number of incarcerated persons in Victorian prisons continued to increase. The Victorian adult prison population grew from 4,224 persons in 2008 to 7,666 persons in 2018, and the male imprisonment rate rose during that period from 201 to 288.3 per 100,000 male population. The incarceration rate includes both sentenced and unsentenced prisoners, with unsentenced prisoners making up [approximately 35 per cent](#) of the prison population (up from 19 per cent in 2008).

Approximately half of all prisoners in 2018 had previously been imprisoned.




Source: [Prisoners in Australia](#), Australian Bureau of Statistics (2018)

See the Parliamentary Library's research publication, [Victorian crime statistics by LGAs](#), for breakdowns of statistics by local government area.

Corrections Victoria opened the new Ravenhall corrections centre in [October 2017](#) to assist with demand. The prison is medium security and has capacity to accommodate up to 1,000 male persons, with 75 dedicated mental health beds and additional forensic mental health services. Expansion of the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre was also finished in [March 2019](#), and

included a dedicated mental health treatment facility.

A new [24-hour operational centre](#) for security staff responding to prison incidents and emergencies (the Security and Emergency Services Group) was opened at the Metropolitan Remand Centre in July 2017. This followed an [investigation](#) into a major riot incident at the Metropolitan Remand Centre in June 2015. Further upgrades to the Centre are continuing.



Penalties for possession or use of prison contraband were expanded under [legislation](#) that was passed in December 2017. This included the introduction of a new criminal offence for the possession or use of certain serious types of contraband, including explosives, firearms, weapons, drugs, child exploitation material, and electronic communication devices. Offenders can be sentenced to up to two years' additional imprisonment on top of their existing sentence. A ban on the use of drones in and around prisons and correction centres came into effect on 1 February 2018.

The State Budget 2018–19 allocated [\\$689.5 million](#) to the construction of a maximum-security men's prison at the Lara Prison Precinct, as well as \$91 million for extra beds and updated security arrangements at existing prisons.

Statistics relating to prisons, including attempted and actual escapes, deaths in custody and prisoner employment rates, are contained in the Department of Justice [annual reports](#).

Bail and parole

During the 58th Parliament, there were a number of high-profile incidents of persons committing serious crimes while on bail or parole. A number of legislative and policy changes were introduced in this area in the aftermath of these incidents.

Following the Bourke Street tragedy on 20 January 2017, a [review of Victoria's bail system](#) was undertaken by the Hon. Paul Coghlan QC. During the review, 115 submissions were considered and 39 consultation sessions took place, culminating in 37 final recommendations aimed at improving the bail system. In its [response](#) to the review, the Victorian

Government committed to implement the majority of these recommendations (consulting further on certain recommendations).

Two tranches of reforms to the bail system were subsequently introduced, the [Bail Amendment \(Stage One\) Bill 2017](#) and [Bail Amendment \(Stage Two\) Bill 2017](#), coming into effect by July and October 2018, respectively. Among the reforms were a presumption against bail for an increased number of serious offences; refusal of bail for persons who breach terms of bail, summons or parole; and police powers to keep a person in custody for up to 48 hours while waiting for availability of a court to hear their bail application.

The Bail and Remand Court, operated by the Melbourne Magistrates' Court, was [opened in May 2018](#) and hears applications for bail after hours and on weekends. The Victorian Government announced in the 2018–19 State Budget an allocation of [\\$97 million](#) for new staff and police prosecutors for the court, and a [\\$37.3 million grant](#) to Victoria Legal Aid to assist the court's operations.

Several changes were also made to Victoria's parole system during this period, including the limiting of circumstances in which certain offenders can be granted parole, such as for persons convicted of murdering police officers.

A 2018 Victorian Auditor-General's Office report into the [administration of parole in Victoria](#) stated that there are 'now fewer prisoners who receive parole, and as a result, more offenders are not receiving the support and supervision during reintegration into the community that the parole system offers'.

Post-sentence preventive supervision and detention

Victoria's post-sentence scheme provides for the supervision and/or detention of a person following the completion of a term of imprisonment, where they are considered to have a risk of reoffending or present a danger to the community.

Supervision orders allow for the monitoring of a person following the end of their term of imprisonment, whereas detention orders allow for a person to continue to be detained despite their term of imprisonment having finished.

In 2015, the Victorian Government commissioned an extensive review into the governance of serious sex offenders in Victoria, commonly referred to as the 'Harper review'. A number of legislative and other changes were subsequently made to Victoria's post-sentence scheme, which had previously only applied to certain offenders convicted of serious sex offences. Following passage of the *Serious Offenders Act 2018*, the scheme was expanded to include persons convicted of serious violent offences.

The *Post-Sentence Authority* came into operation in February 2018, with the role of providing independent oversight of Victoria's post-sentence preventative detention regime, as well as monitoring of individual offenders on post-sentence supervision or detention orders. It replaced the Detention and Supervision Order Division of the Adult Parole Board.

See the Parliamentary Library's research publication, [Serious Offenders Bill 2018](#), for further information on recent changes to Victoria's post-sentence preventative detention regime.

Legislation

The following selection of legislation was introduced during the 58th Parliament. For further information, see the [Legislation](#) website.

- *Corrections Legislation Amendment Act 2015* – made a number of amendments, including the conditions around the cancellation of parole, and the powers of the Adult Parole Board.
- *Justice Legislation Amendment Act 2015* – made a number of miscellaneous amendments, including allowing CrimTrac to host the Victorian Sex Offender Registry database within the National Child Offender System.
- *Serious Sex Offenders (Detention and Supervision) and Other Acts Amendment Act 2015* – provided for further police powers to monitor and manage persons on detention and supervision orders.
- *Wrongs Amendment (Prisoner Related Compensation) Act 2015* – made changes to damages available with respect to claims by relatives of prisoners who are injured while in custody.
- *Bail Amendment Act 2016* – introduced a presumption against bail for persons charged with committing certain terrorism offences; and made changes to the bail system for children.
- *Corrections Legislation Amendment Act 2016* – made a number of amendments, including introducing new powers for certain prison officers who supervise prisoners on parole.

- *Justice Legislation Amendment (Parole Reform and Other Matters) Act 2016* – introduced reforms to the parole system for persons convicted of murdering police officers, as well as in circumstances referred to as ‘no body’ cases.
- *Serious Sex Offenders (Detention and Supervision) Amendment (Community Safety) Act 2016* – introduced in response to the Harper review, it provided for mandatory minimum terms of imprisonment for reckless breaches of certain conditions applying to supervision orders, emphasised the importance of community safety, and provided for further police powers.
- *Sex Offenders Registration Amendment Act 2016* – introduced the prohibition order scheme, based on recommendations from the Victorian Law Reform Commission's 2011 review of the *Sex Offenders Registration Act 2004*.
- *Bail Amendment (Stage One) Act 2017*
- *Corrections Legislation Further Amendment Act 2017* – contained miscellaneous amendments, including new offences relating to possession or use of prohibited contraband in prisons; and a new security officer role to provide security at the adult parole board.
- *Corrections Legislation Miscellaneous Amendment Act 2017* – introduced an offence to fly a drone above prisons or youth justice facilities; and tightened parole provisions for persons convicted of certain serious crimes, including aggravated home invasion and aggravated carjacking.
- *Serious Sex Offenders (Detention and Supervision) Amendment (Governance) Act 2017* – introduced in response to the Harper review, it established the Post-Sentence Authority and expanded information-sharing and other mechanisms between government departments and agencies.
- *Sex Offenders Registration Amendment (Miscellaneous) Act 2017* – introduced a number of miscellaneous reforms relating to the Victorian sex offenders register.
- *Bail Amendment (Stage Two) Act 2018*
- *Corrections Amendment (Parole) Act 2018* – amended the conditions for making a parole order for persons convicted of murder of a police officer.
- *Serious Offenders Act 2018* – repealed the existing post-sentence scheme and reintroduced an expanded version to include persons convicted of serious violent offences as well as those convicted of serious sex offences.

Library research publications

The Parliamentary Library Research & Inquiries unit produced the following research publications during the 58th Parliament.

- *Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Amendment Bill 2016*, Research Note, Victorian Parliamentary Library & Information Service (2016)
- *Youth justice in Victoria*, Research Paper, Victorian Parliamentary Library & Information Service (2017)
- *Serious Offenders Bill 2018*, Bill Brief, Victorian Parliamentary Library & Information Service (2018)
- *Victorian crime statistics by LGAs*, Research Paper, Victorian Parliamentary Library & Information Service (2018)

Reports

The following selection of reports was produced during the 58th Parliament. For further reports, see the [Library catalogue](#).

- *Administration of parole*, Victorian Auditor-General's Office (2016)
- *Crime data*, Victorian Auditor-General's Office (2018)
- *Safety and cost effectiveness of private prisons*, Victorian Auditor-General's Office (2018)

Police and emergency services

Victoria Police

The [Crime Statistics Agency](#) commenced operations on 1 January 2015, following passage of the *Crime Statistics Act 2014* in August 2014. It assumed responsibilities for collating, analysing and reporting Victorian statistical crime data.

The Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC) in 2014–15 conducted an [inquiry into sex discrimination and sexual harassment, including predatory behaviour, in Victoria Police](#). This inquiry was based on a direct referral from Victoria Police, who were commended for ‘showing much needed leadership to bring about change’. The VEOHRC surveyed more than 5,000 people, conducted a number of confidential interviews with Victoria Police personnel, and received confidential written submissions. The VEOHRC handed down its findings in a report released in December 2015, stating that ‘an entrenched culture of ‘everyday sexism’, coupled with a high tolerance for sexual harassment, has left many current and former Victoria Police employees harmed, sidelined and deeply disillusioned.’

The recommendations made in the report centred around creating the foundations to support organisational change; establishing work plans, monitoring mechanisms and training content; and implementing, monitoring and evaluating actions aimed at diminishing sex discrimination and harassment within the organisation. Victoria Police accepted the findings and are in the process of implementing all of the recommendations.

Following passage of the [Justice Legislation Amendment \(Police Custody](#)

[Officers\) Act 2015](#), the new role of ‘Police Custody Officer’ was introduced to supervise prisoners in police custody, allowing police officers to return to regular duties. Since [June 2018](#), 391 Police Custody Officers have been recruited, trained and posted throughout Victoria.

In November 2015, Victoria Police commissioned an [independent review of the mental health and wellbeing of Victoria Police employees](#). The report found that the ‘current organisational mental health risk profile is significant’, including post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety disorders and substance abuse. Victoria Police subsequently developed its [Mental health strategy and wellbeing action plan 2017–20](#), as a forward plan for improving the mental wellbeing of its employees.

The Protective Services Officer (PSO) role was expanded during the 58th Parliament. The [Justice Legislation Amendment \(Protective Services Officers and Other Matters\) Act 2017](#) provided PSOs with additional powers, including the ability to execute search warrants; search a person in a designated place; seize suspected weapons; and to arrest and detain a person for breach of a parole order. By June 2016, the PSO program was fully implemented, patrolling 212 train stations across Melbourne, as well as four regional stations.

In 2017–18, the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Committee conducted an inquiry into the [external oversight and investigation of police corruption and misconduct in Victoria](#). The committee found that ‘the complaints and police oversight system needs significant improvement’, and [made 69](#)

recommendations to improve its efficiency, transparency and effectiveness.

Fire services

In July 2015, the Minister for Emergency Services, the Hon. Jane Garrett, announced a review into Victoria's two firefighting services, the Country Fire Authority (CFA) and the Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB).

The *Fire services review* investigated the resourcing, operations, management and culture of the organisations. It reported significant issues in areas such as workplace culture, diversity and collaboration between the organisations. The Victorian Government **accepted most of the report's recommendations**, rejecting those relating to an amalgamation of 'the CFA and MFB at any level'.

A subsequent **2016 VEOHRC review** into equity, diversity and discrimination in the MFB and CFA was subject to legal action by the United Firefighters Union of Australia Victoria Branch, in an attempt to prevent publication of the report. The Victorian Court of Appeal **handed down its final decision** in favour of the United Firefighters Union on 4 October 2018.

In May 2017, the Victorian Government released a **Fire Services Statement** which 'outlines the next steps in reforming Victoria's fire services'. The **Firefighters' Presumptive Rights Compensation and Fire Services Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2017** was subsequently introduced to implement some of these steps. The Bill aimed to abolish the MFB board and certain executive positions and establish a new body, Fire Rescue Victoria, to take on their functions; and recognise the CFA as a fully volunteer fire service. It also contained provisions creating a presumption for firefighters with certain

types of cancer that the cancer is due to the nature of their firefighting work. The Bill was defeated at the third reading in the Legislative Council.


Emergency services

The Victorian Government made a number of changes to **emergency response arrangements** in 2015. This included introduction of a statutory obligation for agencies to adhere to the **State Emergency Response Plan**; and expansion of Victorian State Emergency Service powers, such as the ability to be able to access private property in an emergency. The *Emergency management strategic action plan 2015–18* was launched in July 2015 by Emergency Management Victoria.

Following reports of **poor ambulance response times and high attrition rates**, the Victorian Government established an Ambulance Performance and Policy Consultative Committee, to examine service delivery and workplace culture. The subsequent report, *Victoria's ambulance action plan: Improving services, saving lives*, was released in December 2015, and included five focus areas for future service delivery and workplace support.

Data **released in August 2015** confirmed high suicide rates and mental health issues within Ambulance Victoria, leading to the introduction of a **workplace mental health strategy** in 2016.

A new emergency warning app and hotline, both called **VicEmergency**, were **launched in November 2016** to provide comprehensive information on a variety of natural disasters and emergencies across the state.



During 2018, a number of protests were held across Victoria regarding assaults against emergency services workers. Following a spate of high-profile attacks, the Victorian Government committed to introducing reforms that would ensure custodial sentences for persons convicted of assaulting an emergency worker. These laws passed in September 2018.

In 2018, the Victorian Government also introduced a new legislative framework for emergency management planning. This framework included integrated planning for all stages of emergencies; a new governance structure; and quality assurance and accountability mechanisms.

Legislation

The following selection of legislation was introduced during the 58th Parliament. For further information, see the [Legislation](#) website.

- *Emergency Management (Control of Response Activities and Other Matters) Act 2015* – made a number of amendments, including expansion of SES powers, and introduction of a statutory requirement for emergency response agencies to act in accordance with the State Emergency Response Plan.
- *Justice Legislation Amendment (Police Custody Officers) Act 2015* – created the new role of Police Custody Officer, and provided for their duties and powers.
- *Victoria Police Amendment (Validation) Act 2015* – amended the Victoria Police Act 2013 in relation to authorisations for drug and alcohol testing by police officers.
- *Justice Legislation Further Amendment Act 2016* – provided for warrant information to be transferred electronically, among other amendments.
- *Police and Justice Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Act 2016* – made a number of miscellaneous amendments to the operation of the Police Registration and Services Board, including changes to hearings and reporting requirements.
- *Victoria Police Amendment (Merit-based Transfer) Act 2016* – provided for the transfer of police officers to general duties positions in country stations based on a merit process.
- *Crimes Legislation Amendment (Protection of Emergency Workers and Others) Act 2017* – introduced new offences for persons using motor vehicles who harm on-duty emergency services workers.
- *Firefighters' Presumptive Rights Compensation and Fire Services Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2017* (defeated in the Legislative Council at the third reading)
- *Justice Legislation Amendment (Body-worn Cameras and Other Matters) Act 2017* – authorised police and ambulance officers to use body-worn cameras and tablet computers in the course of their duties.
- *Justice Legislation Amendment (Protective Services Officers and Other Matters) Act 2017* – provided new powers for Protective Services Officers and created the new role of Police Custody Officer Supervisor.
- *Emergency Management Legislation Amendment Act 2018* – established a new, integrated, emergency management planning framework.
- *Justice Legislation Miscellaneous Amendment Act 2018* – made miscellaneous amendments, including introducing mandatory custodial sentences for persons who commit an injury offence against an emergency services worker.



Reports

The following selection of reports was produced during the 58th Parliament. For further reports, see the [Library catalogue](#).

- *Emergency service response times*, Victorian Auditor-General's Office (2015)
- *Special report concerning police oversight*, Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission (2015)
- *Crime data*, Victorian Auditor-General's Office (2018)
- *Inquiry into the external oversight of police corruption and misconduct in Victoria*, Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Committee (2018)
- *Police management of property and exhibits*, Victorian Auditor-General's Office (2018)

Committee inquiries

The following committee inquiries were conducted during the 58th Parliament.

- *Inquiry into the CFA Training College at Fiskville*, Environment, Natural Resources and Regional Development Committee, Parliament of Victoria (2016)
- *Inquiry into fire season preparedness*, Environment and Planning Committee, Parliament of Victoria (2017)
- *Inquiry into the Firefighters' Presumptive Rights Compensation and Fire Services Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2017*, Legislative Council Fire Services Bill Select Committee, Parliament of Victoria (2017)

Education



Education

An overview of developments within the education portfolio during the 58th Parliament, including key issues, legislation, committee inquiries and reports.

In its first Victorian State Budget, delivered for the financial year 2015–16, the Andrews Government allocated nearly \$3.3 billion for Victoria's education system. The Minister for Education [stated](#) that it was 'the single biggest increase in school funding in Victoria's history'. This Budget, he argued, reconfirmed the Government's commitment to the Gonski agreement, 'the principles of which are central to making Victoria the Education State'.

VET reforms

Following the 2014 State Election, in February 2015 the Andrews Government [announced](#) a review of the funding for the state's Vocational Education and Training (VET) system. The training sector, it argued, had been left 'in crisis' by the former Coalition Government, and this review was about 'rebuilding our TAFE and training system by developing a more stable and sustainable funding model to better meet the changing skills needs of our economy'.

The Government also commissioned [external research](#) into quality assurance in Victoria's VET system, to contribute to the broader funding review. In light of this research, the Government later [implemented](#) a 'blitz' that resulted in a number of Registered Training Organisations being investigated and a number of providers having their contracts terminated.

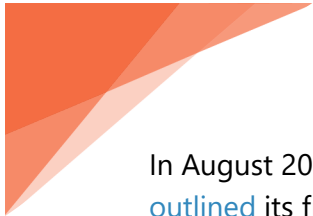
The VET funding review's [Final report](#), released in September 2015, made over 100 recommendations. In its [response](#) to the report, which the Government acknowledged as its 'first step in reforming the VET system', six themes were outlined to guide future reforms of the sector. They included having a 'clear vision for VET in Victoria' and 'defining

clear roles for TAFEs and community sectors'.

TAFE funding

Technical and Further Education (TAFE) funding was a Victorian Labor Party [election promise](#) and included an announcement of a \$320 million TAFE Rescue Fund. In a post-election [media release](#), the new Premier stated that the Rescue Fund was intended to 'repair the damage of the previous Liberal Government's cuts and closures'. The funding was [allocated](#) in the 2015–16 State Budget.

Similarly, in March 2015, the Government [announced](#) its TAFE Back to Work Fund, a \$50 million fund that would offer grants to TAFEs to 'develop and expand courses that align with the needs of local employers, including those eligible for the Back to Work Scheme'. Later that year, in December 2015, the Government appointed the first Victorian Skills Commissioner. The Minister for Training and Skills [stated](#) that the role signalled a 'new direction' in how industry would engage with the training system, with the Commissioner to advise government on how the system could address skills shortages, meet workforce training needs, and boost productivity.



In August 2016, the Government then [outlined](#) its framework for overhauling Victoria's training and TAFE system, known as Skills First. Coming into effect from January 2017, Skills First [advocated](#) a new approach to training, including that industry have a clearer voice in identifying the courses that received government funding. A key feature of the Skills First framework included the Workforce Training Innovation Fund, [launched](#) in January 2017. The Government [allocated](#) \$43.1 million to the Fund to assist industry to develop courses with TAFE and training providers, in response to changing workplace needs. Through the Fund, grants of up to [\\$5 million](#) were made available to allow training providers and businesses to collaborate on the development of new training programs and approaches.

Additionally, another funding announcement included the Free TAFE initiative, which was allocated \$172 million in the [State Budget 2018–19](#) to provide free training at TAFE for 30 priority courses. The Premier [stated](#) that the initiative formed part of a \$644 million package 'to strengthen TAFE and apprenticeships and provide 30,000 extra government-subsidised training places'.

Other TAFE-related initiatives announced by the Government during the 58th Parliament included:

- an allocation of \$116 million to build ten [Tech Schools](#) across Victoria;
- an in-principle [industrial agreement](#) with the Victorian TAFE institutes and teachers;
- an allocation of \$50 million in [community service funding](#), to support vulnerable students; and
- [amendments](#) to the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*, to allow for staff and students to be included on university councils and TAFEs boards.

Schools and infrastructure

The Andrews Government allocated significant funding to schools and infrastructure in the various state budgets during the 58th Parliament.

The 2015–16 State Budget allocated **\$730 million** to build, upgrade and maintain schools across Victoria. The Government termed its first budget the 'Education State' budget, **stating** that it was 'transforming Victoria into the Education State so that all children have access to high-quality schools regardless of their background and where they live'.

In its second State Budget, delivered for 2016–17, the Andrews Government allocated **\$924 million** to new and upgraded school buildings—claimed to be the 'biggest school building program in Victoria's recent history'. In its third State Budget, for 2017–18, **\$509.2 million** was allocated for the construction, planning and purchase of land for new schools, as well as for school upgrades.

In its final State Budget, for 2018–19, the Andrews Government allocated **\$1.1 billion** for new schools and school upgrades. In delivering his final budget for the 58th Parliament, the Treasurer **stated** that, since coming to office in November 2014, the Andrews Government had invested \$6 billion in Victoria's schools.

Other developments

In the education portfolio, funding was provided for a number of other initiatives, including **kindergartens and early childhood services**, careers education, **IT upgrades**, student health and wellbeing, and **relocatable classrooms**. Prior to its election in 2014, the Andrews Government also committed **\$100 million** to the school **asbestos removal program**.

Legislation

The following selection of legislation was introduced during the 58th Parliament. For further information, see the [Legislation](#) website.

- *Education and Training Reform Amendment (Child Safe Schools) Act 2015*
- *Education and Training Reform Amendment (Funding of Non-Government Schools) Act 2015*
- *Education and Training Reform Amendment (Miscellaneous) Act 2015*
- *Education Legislation Amendment (TAFE and University Governance Reform) Act 2015*
- *Education and Training Reform Amendment (Miscellaneous) Act 2016*
- *Education and Training Reform Amendment (Victorian Institute of Teaching) Act 2016*
- *Melbourne College of Divinity Amendment Act 2016*
- *Education and Care Services National Law Amendment Act 2017*
- *Education Legislation Amendment (Victorian Institute of Teaching, TAFE and Other Matters) Act 2018*

Library research publications

The Parliamentary Library Research & Inquiries unit produced the following research publication during the 58th Parliament.

- *Education and Training Reform Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2015*, Research Note, Victorian Parliamentary Library & Information Service (2015)

Reports

The following selection of reports was produced during the 58th Parliament. For further reports, see the [Library catalogue](#).

- *Review of quality assurance in Victoria's VET system*, prepared by Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu for the Department of Education and Training (2015)
- *VET funding review: Final report*, B. Mackenzie & N. Coulson, State Government of Victoria (2015)
- *Technical and Further Education Institutes: 2015 Audit snapshot*, Victorian Auditor-General's Office (2016)

Committee inquiries

The following committee inquiry was conducted during the 58th Parliament.

- *Inquiry into career advice activities in Victorian schools*, Economic, Education, Jobs and Skills Committee, Parliament of Victoria (2018)

Health



Health

An overview of developments within the health portfolio during the 58th Parliament, including key issues, legislation, committee inquiries and reports.

Medicinal cannabis

In the lead up to the 2014 state election, the Labor party put forward its [policy](#) that medicinal cannabis should be legalised in Victoria. Following the party's election to government, the Attorney-General [asked](#) the Victorian Law Reform Commission (VLRC), in December 2014, to report on options for changes to the existing law to allow, in exceptional circumstances, for certain people to be treated with medicinal cannabis.

In March 2015, the VLRC produced an [issues paper](#). It also [held](#) public consultations in metropolitan and regional Victoria, and received 99 submissions. The VLRC final report was due in August 2015 and, in the meantime, the Andrews Government [announced](#) in April that it would be joining with the NSW Government in medicinal cannabis trials.

In October 2015, the VLRC's [final report](#) was tabled in Parliament, and [made](#) 42 recommendations for changes to the law to allow for a medicinal cannabis scheme. The Andrews Government fully accepted 40 of the VLRC's recommendations and accepted two in principle, and [stated](#) its intention to legalise access to locally manufactured medicinal cannabis products from 2017.

In December 2015, the Andrews Government introduced the [Access to Medicinal Cannabis Bill 2015](#). In doing so, Victoria became the first Australian jurisdiction to introduce a Bill to legalise medicinal cannabis through a state-based

scheme. In her [second reading speech](#), the Minister for Health stated that the Bill was seeking to allow for 'the lawful cultivation and manufacture of safe and reliable medicinal cannabis products to help Victorians in exceptional circumstances'.

The Bill made its way through both houses, undergoing some amendments in the Council, and received the Royal Assent in April 2016. Sections of the Act [came into effect](#) from 8 June 2016 and, in August of that year, an Independent Medical Advisory Committee on Medicinal Cannabis was [established](#). In September 2016, [Regulations](#) were also established under the Act. In March 2017, the first people to legally [access](#) medicinal cannabis under the legislation were children with severe epilepsy.

Meanwhile, in February 2016, the federal Liberal Government [introduced](#) its Narcotics Drugs Amendment Bill 2016, which sought to establish 'a clear national licensing scheme allowing the controlled cultivation locally of cannabis for medicinal and scientific purposes'. In her [second reading speech](#), the federal Minister for Health stated that the national approach would 'allow the Commonwealth, acting with the states and territories, to closely manage the supply of cannabis products from 'farm to pharmacy'.' The Bill had [bipartisan](#) support and [received](#) the Royal Assent on 29 February 2016, with some sections coming into effect from that date.



Following this development at the federal level, the state Government's four-year *Industry Development Plan* was released, in January 2018, and **set out** eight key actions the Government intended to take to support the emerging medicinal cannabis industry in Victoria. The Plan included the stated objective that the local industry would supply half of Australia's medicinal cannabis by 2028.

Voluntary Assisted Dying

In April 2015, Greens MLC, Colleen Hartland moved a **motion** calling on the Attorney-General to refer the matter of voluntary euthanasia for terminally ill people to the Victorian Law Reform Commission for inquiry, consideration and report. Then, in early May 2015, Australian Sex Party MLC, Fiona Patten, gave **notice** of a motion to have the issue of 'dying with dignity' referred to a parliamentary committee.

Subsequently, on 7 May 2015, the Legislative Council agreed to a **motion**, put by the Special Minister of State, the Hon. Gavin Jennings, for the Standing Committee on Legal and Social Issues to inquire into, consider, and report on 'the need for laws in Victoria to allow citizens to make informed decisions regarding their own end-of-life choices'.

At the time of its **interim report**, published in November 2015, the Committee had received 1,016 submissions and had heard from 119 witnesses at public hearings across the state. The Committee also later conducted research on assisted dying frameworks in international jurisdictions, including the Netherlands, Switzerland, Canada and the United States.

In June 2016, the Committee tabled its final report, *Inquiry into end of life choices*, and made 49 recommendations, including that the Victorian Government should introduce a legal framework providing for assisted dying.

The Andrews Government released its **response** to the Committee's final report in December 2016, and committed to review the implementation of an assisted dying framework in Victoria. This led to

the establishment of a Ministerial Advisory Panel, tasked with exploring how voluntary assisted dying would look in practice. The Panel submitted its [final report](#) in July 2017 and made 66 recommendations, informed by the work previously undertaken by the Standing Committee.

In September 2017, Minister for Health, the Hon. Jill Hennessy, introduced the [Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2017](#) in the Legislative Assembly. In her [second reading speech](#), the Minister stated that the Bill would provide

a rigorous process with safeguards embedded at every step to ensure that only those who meet the eligibility criteria and who are making an informed, voluntary and enduring decision will be able to access voluntary assisted dying.

Long and vigorous debate ensued. The Bill passed the Legislative Assembly without amendment, then was later amended in the Legislative Council. On 29 November 2017, the [Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2017](#) was passed by the Victorian Parliament and on 5 December 2017 received the Royal Assent.

Sections of the Act [came into effect](#) from 1 July 2018, with all provisions set to come into effect by 19 June 2019.

In order to access the voluntary assisted dying framework, the Act stipulates that a person must:

- be aged 18 years or more;
- be an Australian citizen or permanent resident;
- be a Victorian resident for at least 12 months;
- have decision-making capacity;
- be diagnosed with a disease, illness or medical condition that is incurable, advanced, and is expected to cause death within six months; and
- be suffering in a manner they consider intolerable.

The Act also establishes the [Voluntary Assisted Dying Review Board](#) to monitor matters related to voluntary assisted dying and the Act's functioning. In June 2018, the Minister for Health [announced](#) the appointment of former Supreme Court Judge, Betty King QC, as chair of the Board.

Safe access zones

In August 2015, Australian Sex Party MLC, Fiona Patten introduced the [Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment \(Safe Access\) Bill 2015](#). Ms Patten [stated](#) that the Bill was intended to

create safe access around premises offering reproductive health services, in order to protect and promote women's reproductive health. It's about medical privacy and the rights of women who are accessing a legal medical service to do so without fear of intimidation or harassment.

Specifically, the Bill sought to insert a new 'Part 9A – Safe access to reproductive health services' into the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*. The new Part defined a safe access zone as 'an area within a radius of 150 metres from premises at which reproductive health services are provided'. It also sought to introduce two new offences relating to engaging in prohibited behaviour in a safe access zone, and publishing or distributing a recording of a person accessing or attempting to access reproductive health services.

The Bill's objectives were broadly supported by the Andrews Government. However, Victorian Attorney-General, Martin Pakula, [stated](#) that the Bill 'may require amendments, and it may require another piece of legislation, but we are working with Fiona Patten on it'.

Following the Bill's introduction, the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee [questioned](#) whether some of the provisions complied with both constitutional limitations and the state's Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities.

Subsequently, the Government introduced a new Bill, known as the [Public Health and](#)

[Wellbeing Amendment \(Safe Access Zones\) Bill 2015](#), in the Legislative Assembly on 21 October 2015. In her second reading speech, the Minister for Health [stated](#) that the Bill was 'designed to support women's reproductive health choices by ensuring that all women can access health services that provide abortions without fear, intimidation, harassment or obstruction.'

The Government Bill [differed](#) in a number of ways to the private Member's Bill. For example, it sought to introduce safe access zones around 'premises at which abortions are provided', rather than premises providing reproductive health services. It was also more specific in what constituted a prohibited behaviour within a safe access zone, had lower penalty units for engaging in prohibited behaviour, and introduced broader police enforcement and seizure powers.

The Government Bill [passed](#) both houses without amendment, received the Royal Assent on 1 December 2015, and by [proclamation](#) the Act came into effect on 2 May 2016.

Medically Supervised Injecting Centre

On 20 February 2017, Victorian State Coroner, Jacqui Hawkins released her [finding](#) of the inquest into the death of Ms A, who died from a heroin overdose. Coroner Hawkins stated that she had conducted the inquest to ‘explore the nexus between heroin-related harms and deaths and the City of Yarra, with particular focus on potential prevention opportunities in the Richmond area’.

A number of people and organisations were invited by the Coroner to provide written submissions to the inquest, the majority of which recommended or supported the introduction of a safe injecting facility in North Richmond (no submissions opposed such a facility). Coroner Hawkins [concluded](#) that heroin addiction is a public health issue and recommended that the Minister for Mental Health ‘take the necessary steps to establish a safe injecting facility trial in North Richmond’. The recommendation was supported by the Victorian branch of the [Australian Medical Association](#), as well as by [Ambulance Employees Australia](#) (Victoria), among others.

Earlier in February and prior to the Coroner’s findings being made public, Australian Sex Party MLC Fiona Patten, who sat through Hawkins’ coronial inquest in December 2016, introduced a private Member’s Bill, the [Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Amendment \(Pilot Medically Supervised Injecting Centre\) Bill 2017](#). In her [second reading speech](#), Ms Patten stated that the intention of the Bill was to establish an 18-month trial of a medically supervised injecting centre (MSIC) in Victoria. This Bill, she explained,

was modelled closely on legislation introduced in New South Wales that established an MSIC in Sydney’s Kings Cross.

On 22 February, the Bill was [referred](#) to the Legislative Council’s Standing Committee on Legal and Social Issues, which was asked to review the Coroner’s recommendations, relevant reports, current regulations, and policing policy. The Committee tabled its [final report](#) on 7 September 2017 and made 11 findings, noting that 46 of 49 submissions to its inquiry supported a trial of an MSIC in North Richmond.

Following the high number of heroin-related deaths reported for the 2016 calendar year—which was the highest number in 16 years—[media](#) reports indicated that pressure was growing on the Andrews Government to introduce a trial for a safe injecting room in North Richmond. Subsequently, the Government introduced the [Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Amendment \(Medically Supervised Injecting Centre\) Bill 2017](#) on 31 October 2017. Mental Health Minister, Martin Foley [stated](#) that the proposed legislation would have ‘much stronger regulatory, medical and licensing protocols in place’ than those proposed in the private Member’s Bill.

In a [media release](#), the Premier stated that the Government would undertake an initial two-year trial of an MSIC at the North Richmond Community Health Centre, with the option to extend the trial for a further three years. The Premier also indicated that an expert panel of health and community experts would be established to oversee and report on the MSIC’s effectiveness.

The Government Bill passed both houses without amendment and received the Royal Assent on 19 December 2017, [coming into effect](#) on 28 February 2018. A licence was subsequently [issued](#) to North Richmond Community Health Ltd to operate an MSIC from 30 June 2018.

Other developments

Other developments within the health portfolio during the 58th Parliament included:

- the [Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment \(No Jab, No Play\) Act 2015](#), to increase immunisation rates for young children in the community; and
- the [Medical Treatment Planning and Decisions Act 2016](#), which provides for statutory recognition of advance care directives and a single medical treatment decision-making mechanism.

Legislation

The following selection of legislation was introduced during the 58th Parliament. For further information, see the [Legislation](#) website.

- [Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment \(No Jab, No Play\) Act 2015](#)
- [Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment \(Safe Access Zones\) Act 2015](#)
- [Safe Patient Care \(Nurse to Patient and Midwife to Patient Ratios\) Act 2015](#)
- [Access to Medicinal Cannabis Act 2016](#)
- [Medical Treatment Planning and Decisions Act 2016](#)
- [Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Amendment \(Medically Supervised Injecting Centre\) Act 2017](#)
- [Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2017](#)

Library research publications

The Parliamentary Library Research & Inquiries unit produced the following research publications during the 58th Parliament.

- [Assisted Reproductive Treatment Amendment Bill 2015](#), Research Note, Victorian Parliamentary Library & Information Service (2015)
- [Exclusion zones in Australia](#), Research Note, Victorian Parliamentary Library & Information Service (2015)
- [Update: Exclusion zones in Australia](#), Research Note, Victorian Parliamentary Library & Information Service (2015)
- [Access to Medicinal Cannabis Bill 2015](#), Research Note, Victorian Parliamentary Library & Information Service (2016)
- [Children and young people in statutory out-of-home care: Health needs and health care in the 21st Century](#), Library Fellowship Paper, Victorian Parliamentary Library & Information Service (2016)
- [Medical Treatment Planning and Decisions Bill 2016](#), Research Note, Victorian Parliamentary Library & Information Service (2016)
- [Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2017](#), Research Note, Victorian Parliamentary Library & Information Service (2017)

Reports

The following selection of reports was produced during the 58th Parliament. For further reports, see the [Library catalogue](#).

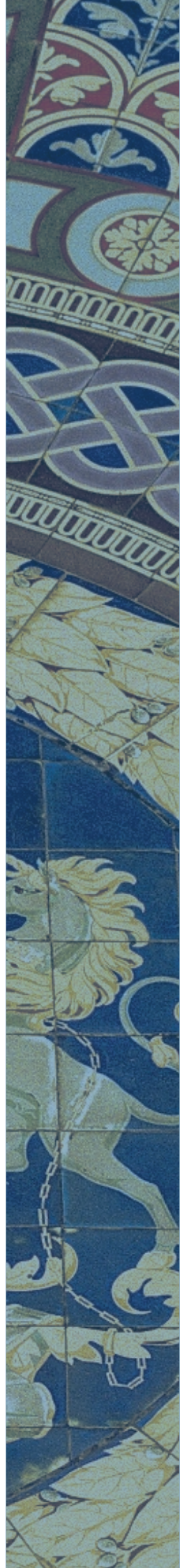
- *Medicinal cannabis: Report*, Victorian Law Reform Commission (2015)
- *Government response to the inquiry into end of life choices: Final report*, State Government of Victoria (2016)
- *Interim report of the Ministerial Advisory Panel: Consultation overview*, Prof. B. Owler et al., Department of Health and Human Services (2017)
- *Ministerial Advisory Panel on Voluntary Assisted Dying: Final report*, Prof. B. Owler et al., Department of Health and Human Services (2017)
- *Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill: Discussion paper*, Department of Health and Human Services (2017)

Committee inquiries

The following committee inquiries were conducted during the 58th Parliament.

- *Inquiry into end of life choices: Interim Report*, Legislative Council Legal and Social Issues Committee, Parliament of Victoria (2015)
- *Inquiry into end of life choices: Final report*, Legislative Council Legal and Social Issues Committee, Parliament of Victoria (2016)
- *Inquiry into end of life choices: Final report - Summary booklet*, Legislative Council Legal and Social Issues Committee, Parliament of Victoria (2016)
- *Inquiry into the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Amendment (Pilot Medically Supervised Injecting Centre) Bill 2017*, Legislative Council Legal and Social Issues Committee, Parliament of Victoria (2017)
- *Inquiry into drug law reform*, Law Reform, Road and Community Safety Committee, Parliament of Victoria (2018)
- *Inquiry into drug law reform – Summary booklet*, Law Reform, Road and Community Safety Committee, Parliament of Victoria (2018)

Human services



Human services

An overview of selected developments in aboriginal affairs, housing, youth affairs and family violence during the 58th Parliament, including key issues, legislation passed, committee inquiries and reports.

Aboriginal affairs

Yarra River protection

The protection of the Yarra River was provided a legislative framework with the introduction of the [Yarra River Protection \(Wilip-gin Birrarung murron\) Bill in June 2017](#). The Bill was passed in September 2017. The Bill was a culmination of a consultancy process which began in December 2015 with the appointment of a Ministerial Advisory Committee. The Committee released a discussion paper, [Protecting the Yarra River \(Birrarung\)](#), in July 2016 for public comment, and submitted its [final report](#) in December 2016. The Government's response—[Yarra River action plan: Wilip-gin Birrarung murron](#), released in February 2017— included the creation of the Birrarung Council as an independent advisory body. The Birrarung Council comprises Traditional Owners as well as representatives from environmental, farming and community groups.

The introduction of the Bill was a first for the Victorian Parliament, when [business](#) of the House was suspended to allow for Wurundjeri elders to [address](#) the Legislative Assembly in English and Woi-wurrung language. [Aunty Alice Kolasa](#) became the first Wurundjeri person to speak from the floor of the Parliament, explaining the connection of the Wurundjeri with the Yarra River and the importance of protecting the river for future generations. The co-title of the Bill

and the preamble were also written in Woi-wurrung language.

Treaty

The [Advancing the Treaty Process with Aboriginal Victorians Bill 2018](#) was introduced in March 2018. Attempts at treaty-making with Aboriginal Australians have had a long and difficult political history. The Bill is considered as an attempt to legislate a treaty process with Aboriginal Victorians. The Bill provided, in the first instance, for the establishment of the Aboriginal Representative Body. The Representative Body, as 'the voice of Aboriginal Victorians', would then be responsible for the ongoing treaty-making process with the state.

See the Parliamentary Library's Research papers on [the Bill](#) and [treaties](#).

The introduction of the Bill was noteworthy for the Victorian Parliament in that a Government [motion](#) was passed enabling the Treaty Commissioner, Jill Gallagher AO and five members of the Aboriginal Treaty Working Group, [onto the floor](#) of the chamber. On 28 March 2018, following the second reading of the Bill, Ms Gallagher, a Gunditjmara woman, [addressed](#) the House, followed by Mick Harding, Dhaagungwurrung man and Chair of the Aboriginal Treaty Interim Working Group. Mr Harding [addressed](#) the House in English and Dhaagungwurrung language.

Legislation

The following selection of legislation was introduced during the 58th Parliament. For further information, see the [Legislation](#) website.

- [Aboriginal Heritage Amendment Act 2016](#)
- [Traditional Owner Settlement Amendment Act 2016](#)
- [Yarra River Protection \(Wilip-gin Birrarung murrn\) Act 2017](#)
- [Advancing the Treaty Process with Aboriginal Victorians Act 2018](#)

Library research publications

The Parliamentary Library Research & Inquiries unit produced the following research publications during the 58th Parliament.

- [Treaty discussions in Australia: An overview](#), Quick Guide, Parliamentary Library & Information Service (2018)
- [Advancing the Treaty Process with Aboriginal Victorians Bill 2018](#), Bill Brief, Parliamentary Library & Information Service (2018)
- [Treaties and self-determination: Case studies from international jurisdictions](#), Research Note, Parliamentary Library & Information Service (2018)
- [Land and water rights of Traditional Owners in Victoria](#), Research Paper, Parliamentary Library & Information Service (2018)

Reports

The following selection of reports was produced during the 58th Parliament. For further reports, see the [Library catalogue](#).

- [Protecting the Yarra River \(Birrarung\): Discussion paper summary](#), Yarra River Protection Ministerial Advisory Committee (2016)
- [Protecting the Yarra River \(Birrarung\): Ministerial Advisory Committee final report](#), Yarra River Protection Ministerial Advisory Committee (2016)
- [Yarra River action plan: Wilip-gin Birrarung murrn](#), Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (2017)

Housing

Access to affordable housing continued to be a challenging social policy issue for the new Government. Rising house prices and the availability of secure tenancy in the rental market were key issues for Victoria and for Melbourne, in particular. The increased visibility of homelessness as evidenced by rough sleeping—particularly in the CBD—prompted a number of [policy](#) and legislative measures to address the issue of access to affordable housing as well as the pressing need for social housing.

See the Parliamentary Library research papers on [housing affordability](#) and [homelessness](#).

Rooming houses

The [Rooming House Operators Bill 2015](#) was introduced in December 2015 to protect vulnerable tenants in rooming houses by establishing a licensing scheme to implement a ‘fit and proper’ person test for rooming house operators. The Bill was a response to one of the 18 recommendations from the State Coroner in 2009, following an investigation into the deaths of two people in a rooming house fire. (See the Parliamentary Library [research note](#) on the Bill.)

Social housing

The Victorian Housing Register was established in September 2016 as a single social housing waiting list, combining the existing public housing and community housing waiting lists. The [Housing Amendment \(Victorian Housing Register and Other Matters\) Act 2016](#) additionally provided for the security and privacy of client information on the Register.

Homelessness


Circumstances precipitating homelessness are complex. Consequently, housing needs range from access to an affordable private rental market, to victims of family violence seeking safe crisis accommodation and stable housing. In January 2017, the Government [announced](#) ‘Towards Home’, an emergency response package providing housing and support for people sleeping rough in metropolitan Melbourne.

Tony Nicholson, from the Brotherhood of St Laurence, was appointed to oversee the delivery of Towards Home, as well as develop recommendations for a long-term strategy to reduce rough sleeping and long-term (chronic) homelessness. Mr Nicholson delivered his recommendations to the Government in October 2017.

[Victoria’s homelessness and rough sleeping action plan](#), released in January 2018, was developed in response to those recommendations.

Residential tenancies

The introduction of prescribed minimum standards for residential rental properties was one of the reforms introduced as part of a major overhaul of residential tenancy laws. The reforms followed a [review](#) of the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997* which began in 2015 and was completed in 2017. The key amending legislation, the [Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill 2018](#), introduced on 7 August 2018, also placed limits on rental rate rises, allowed for renters to own pets, introduced protections for vulnerable renters, such as [victims of family violence](#), and the appointment of a Commissioner for Residential Tenancies. The Bill was passed on 6 September 2018.



The [Residential Tenancies Amendment \(Long-term Tenancy Agreements\) Bill 2017](#), introduced in August 2017 (but not passed until August 2018), was the first piece of legislative reform following the review of the Act, and allowed for tenancy agreements longer than five years.

The changes were welcomed by [renters' advocacy groups](#) but criticised by the [REIV](#), the real estate peak body, which argued that the new laws would see a [withdrawal of properties](#) from the rental market experiencing low vacancy rates. The legislation also addressed conditions for alternate forms of housing such as rooming houses and caravan parks. Reform of the residential tenancies law was a [pre-election commitment](#) of the Andrews Government.

Affordable housing

The [Planning and Building Legislation Amendment \(Housing Affordability and Other Matters\) Bill 2017](#) proposed to amend the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*, defining 'affordable housing' and specifying that it be an objective of the Act. The reforms would facilitate councils to enter into voluntary agreements with developers to provide for affordable housing, which was described as a voluntary benefits scheme.

In August 2017, on a [motion](#) from the Greens in the Legislative Council, the government's [Public Housing Renewal Program](#) was referred to the Legal and Social Issues Committee for investigation. The program, whereby nine existing public housing estates were to be sold for private development of mixed private and public housing, raised concerns that, while the program was intended to yield an increase of at least ten per cent in social housing

units, it would not significantly address the size of the public housing waiting list. The Committee published its [report](#) in June 2018, making 28 recommendations which included clarifying the decision-making process and tying the program to a decrease in the [Victorian Housing Register](#).

Legislation

The following selection of legislation was introduced during the 58th Parliament. For further information, see the [Legislation](#) website.

- [Estate Agents Amendment \(Underquoting\) Act 2016](#)
- [Housing Amendment \(Victorian Housing Register and Other Matters\) Act 2016](#)
- [Rooming House Operators Act 2016](#)
- [Planning and Building Legislation Amendment \(Housing Affordability and Other Matters\) Act 2017](#)
- [Residential Tenancies Amendment \(Long-term Tenancy Agreements\) Act 2017](#)
- [Residential Tenancies Amendment Act 2018](#)

Library research publications

The Parliamentary Library Research & Inquiries unit produced the following research publications during the 58th Parliament.

- [Rooming House Operators Bill 2015](#), Research Note, Parliamentary Library & Information Service (2015)
- [Housing affordability in Victoria](#), Research Paper, Parliamentary Library & Information Service (2017)
- [Homelessness in Victoria](#), Quick Guide, Parliamentary Library & Information Service (2018)
- [Homelessness in Victoria](#), Prof. Guy Johnson, Parliamentary Library Seminar presentation (2018)
- [Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill 2018](#), Bill Brief, Parliamentary Library & Information Service (2018)

Reports

The following report was produced during the 58th Parliament. For further reports, see the [Library catalogue](#).

- [Victoria's homelessness and rough sleeping action plan](#), Department of Health and Human Services (2018)

Committee inquiries

The following committee inquiries were conducted during the 58th Parliament.

- [Inquiry into the retirement housing sector](#), Legal and Social Issues Committee, Parliament of Victoria (2017)
- [Inquiry into the public housing renewal program](#), Legal and Social Issues Committee, Parliament of Victoria (2018)

Child safety

The Andrews Government continued with the introduction of legislation to implement the recommendations of the Family and Community Development Committee in its *Betrayal of trust* report tabled in the previous Parliament. The Committee had made recommendations to improve the way organisations respond to and prevent child abuse from occurring in their organisations.

The *Education and Training Reform Amendment (Child Safe Schools) Act 2015* implemented minimum standards for maintaining 'child safe environments' for all organisations with direct and regular contact with children. As part of the reform, 'child safe standards' were to be developed and applied to government schools in the first instance. These standards included requirements for schools to have procedures in place to respond to and act on allegations of child abuse.

The Commission for Children and Young People 2015 report, "*... as a good parent would...*", had also recommended the development of and adherence to 'child safe standards' by community service organisations providing residential care for vulnerable children.

In October 2015, the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards Standards) Bill 2015* was introduced to reform child safe standards in non-government organisations providing services to children. These included registered schools, out-of-home care services and hospitals, sporting clubs and youth organisations receiving limited or no government funding. The Bill also provided powers for the Minister to

prescribe additional organisations to be subject to the standards. The Bill was passed in November 2015.

Legislation

The following selection of legislation was introduced during the 58th Parliament. For further information, see the [Legislation](#) website.

- *Limitation of Actions (Child Abuse) Act 2015*
- *Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Oversight and Enforcement of Child Safe Standards) Act 2016*
- *Children Legislation Amendment (Reportable Conduct) Act 2017* – introduced a reportable conduct scheme requiring certain organisations providing services to children to report centrally on any abuse allegations.
- *Wrongs Amendment (Organisational Child Abuse) Act 2017* – creates provisions for organisations to be liable for child abuse.
- *Legal Identity of Defendants (Organisational Child Abuse) Act 2018* – removes the legal technicality known as 'Ellis defence' protecting unincorporated organisations from being sued.

Child protection

Victoria's Commission for Children and Young People tabled a report in August 2015 on an inquiry into the adequacy of residential care services for children and young people who had been subject to sexual abuse or sexual exploitation whilst residing in residential care. The "*... as a good parent would...*" report had recommended an extensive overhaul of the residential care model. This included improved home-based care options and a reduction in the number of children in residential care.

The *Children, Youth and Families Amendment (Restrictions on the Making of Protection Orders) Act 2015* reinstated a provision concerning oversight by the Children's Court of the Department of Health and Human Services in making child protection orders. This provision was to be removed with the commencement of a *2014 Amending Act*. The Legal and Social Issues Committee held a self-referenced inquiry on the Bill. Submissions expressed concerns that, while the 2014 Act would not have improved permanent care arrangements (which was the desired outcome), the intent had been to expedite the process as recommended in the *2012 Cummins Inquiry*.

The *Roadmap for reform: Strong families, safe children*, released in April 2016, set out the policy response for the child protection sector of the Andrews Government. Legislation built on the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Family Violence (see that section, [below](#)). These included the *Children Legislation Amendment (Information Sharing) Act 2018*, enabling a child-information sharing scheme based on a 'wellbeing or safety' threshold for sharing of information between entities to be prescribed in the Act. The Royal Commission into Family Violence, the Cummins Inquiry, the Victorian Auditor-General (VAGO), the Commission for Children and Young People, and the Coroners Court reports had all identified the sharing of information about vulnerable children as critical in preventing child deaths.

Legislation

The following selection of legislation was introduced during the 58th Parliament. For further information, see the [Legislation](#) website.

- *Children, Youth and Families Amendment (Aboriginal Principal Officers) Act 2015*
- *Children, Youth and Families Amendment (Restrictions on the Making of Protection Orders) Act 2015*
- *Children Legislation Amendment Act 2016*
- *Children Legislation Amendment (Information Sharing) Act 2017*

Reports

The following selection of reports was produced during the 58th Parliament. For further reports, see the [Library catalogue](#).

- *"... as a good parent would...": Inquiry into sexual abuse or sexual exploitation of Victorian children and young people in residential care*, Commission for Children and Young People (2015)
- *Roadmap for reform: Strong families, safe children*, Department of Health and Human Services (2016)

Committee inquiries

The following committee inquiry was conducted during the 58th Parliament.

- *Inquiry into the Children, Youth and Families Amendment (Restrictions on the Making of Protection Orders) Bill 2015*, Legal and Social Issues Committee, Parliament of Victoria (2015)

Youth justice

Youth justice continued to be a challenging issue during the 58th Parliament. A protest by inmates at the Parkville Youth Justice Remand Centre in March 2016 received prominent media attention. Following further riots at Parkville in November 2016, which halved the capacity of the facility, the Government decided to relocate the young offenders to the Grevillea Unit at the adult Barwon Prison, pending the rebuild of the Centre. This decision attracted a legal challenge from the Human Rights Law Centre and the Fitzroy Legal Service, culminating in the [Supreme Court ruling](#) that such a move was unlawful. In January of 2017, riots also erupted in the regional Youth Justice Centre at Malmsbury.

See the Parliamentary Library research paper on [youth justice](#).

The 2015–16 Youth Parole Board annual report showed that 80 per cent of young people in custody were on remand, while the *Children's Court of Victoria Annual report 2014–15* indicated a 57 per cent increase in the previous 12 months of the number of children admitted on remand to the youth justice centres. According to the Court, the reforms to the *Bail Act 1977* that had taken effect at the end of December 2013, making breach of bail conditions an offence, had precipitated the increase in numbers of alleged young offenders.

To ease the pressure in the youth justice centres, the Government introduced a number of measures including amendments to the *Bail Act 1977*, which was anticipated to reduce the number of young people on remand. The [Bail](#)


[Amendment Bill 2015](#) provided for presumption of summons rather than arrests when initiating criminal proceedings against children, and exemptions for children breaching bail conditions. The Government also extended bail support programs enabling young people to remain in the community rather than being remanded in custody, as well as assisting at-risk young people to comply with bail conditions.

For more details on changes to bail and parole, see the [Crime and Justice](#) section of this Briefing e-Book.

With the [announcement](#) in February 2017 that responsibility for youth justice would move from the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to the Department of Justice and Regulation (DJR), youth justice facilities came under the auspices of Corrections Victoria. The Government also announced the construction of a new youth justice centre in Werribee South, which would accommodate remand and sentenced clients, as well as a mental health unit and an intensive supervision unit. In March 2017, the location of the proposed facility was [moved](#) to Cherry Creek in Wyndham.

Between 2015 and 2018, youth justice centres at Parkville and Malmsbury had become the subject of several inquiries (some confidential), including reports from the [Victorian Ombudsman](#), the [Commission for Children and Young People](#) and the Legislative Council's [Legal and Social Issues Committee](#).

Concerns that the 16-year-old policy framework for the youth justice system needed updating prompted the Government to commission an independent review in September 2016.



The *Youth justice review and strategy: Meeting needs and reducing offending*, conducted by Penny Armytage, former Secretary of the Department of Justice and Regulation, and Professor James Ogloff, Director of the Centre for Forensic Behavioural Science, was released in August 2017.

The review made 126 recommendations for meeting the diverse needs of children at each stage of their interaction with the justice system and for ensuring that the Government fulfils its responsibilities for these young people. Key recommendations included the development and creation of a new Youth Justice Act separate from the current *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005*, as well as culturally specific programs for offenders of Koori, Pacific Islander/Maori and African heritage who were over-represented in the justice system.

The review also noted that there were no high-intensity intervention programs for a small cohort of young offenders who had committed violent offences and who were likely to reoffend, nor were the youth justice centres able to manage the challenging and violent behaviour of difficult young people. A secure unit providing intensive rehabilitation programs to control and remediate violent behaviour was recommended. The recommendations were largely *accepted, or accepted in principle*, by the Minister for Children and Families.

Smart Justice for Young People (SJ4YP), a group of 40 legal, youth, health, welfare and community organisations, welcomed the report and its recommendations. SJ4YP, however, did express concerns that some of the recommendations appeared

to clash with the Youth Justice Reform Bill which was proceeding through Parliament at the time.

Outbreaks of youth gang violence, as well as reports on violent car-jacking and home invasions, had received extensive media coverage in 2016. This precipitated legislative responses from the Government with the introduction of the *Children and Justice Legislation Amendment (Youth Justice Reform) Bill 2017* in May 2017, which aimed to increase penalties for 'serious and violent crimes'. The Bill also sought to create an offence of recruiting a child to commit an offence.

On a motion of the Legislative Council in November 2016, the Legal and Social Issues Committee was asked to inquire into youth justice centres, looking at a range of issues including youth offending behaviour, diversion programs, the Children's Court, staffing problems and post-release services. The Committee published its *report* in March 2018 and made 39 recommendations, all of which received Government support or support in principle. In its *response*, the Government noted that many of the recommendations aligned with the Armytage/Ogloff review, such as those concerning over-representation of culturally and linguistically diverse groups, support for custodial staff, and the need for therapeutic approaches to youth justice.

Legislation

The following selection of legislation was introduced during the 58th Parliament. For further information, see the [Legislation](#) website.

- *Bail Amendment Act 2016*
- Children, Youth and Families (Youth Offenders) Bill 2016 (PMB) (defeated)
- *Children and Justice Legislation Amendment (Youth Justice Reform) Act 2017*
- Children, Youth and Families Amendment (Youth Offender Compliance) Bill 2018 (lapsed)

Library research publications

The Parliamentary Library Research & Inquiries unit produced the following research publication during the 58th Parliament.

- *Youth justice in Victoria*, Research Paper, Parliamentary Library & Information Service (2017)

Reports

The following selection of reports was produced during the 58th Parliament. For further reports, see the [Library catalogue](#).

- *Report on youth justice facilities at the Grevillea unit of Barwon Prison, Malmsbury and Parkville*, Victorian Ombudsman (2017)
- *The same four walls: Inquiry into the use of isolation, separation and lockdowns in the Victorian youth justice system*, Commission for Children and Young People (2017)
- *Youth justice review and strategy: Meeting needs and reducing offending*, P. Armytage and J. Ogloff (2017)
- *Inquiry into youth justice centres in Victoria: Final report*, Legal and Social Issues Committee, Parliament of Victoria (2018)

Family violence

When Victoria Police Chief Commissioner, Ken Lay, announced his [retirement](#) in December 2014, the Commissioner was commended by family violence campaigner, Rosie Batty, for his role in shifting community attitudes on violence against women and children.

Commissioner Lay had pointed to this change in community attitudes as his proudest achievement during his term.

Following his [appointment](#) as the new Chief Commissioner, in May 2015, Graham Ashton declared that family violence would remain a matter of utmost importance to Victoria Police. This reflected the social policy direction law and order would take under the new Andrews Government. In Opposition, the ALP had framed family violence as a law and order issue, promising to establish a royal commission should Labor win government at the 2014 election.

On 22 February 2015, Premier Daniel Andrews and Fiona Richardson, Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, [launched the Royal Commission into Family Violence](#). The Royal Commission, chaired by the Hon. Justice Marcia Neave, comprised 25 days of public hearings, held community conversations and received almost 1,000 written submissions. Under its [Terms of Reference](#), and with an allocated budget of \$36 million, the Commission investigated the criminal law, corrections and court systems, and considered the role of support services, the health system, alcohol and drug treatment services, refuges, housing and education.


On 26 November 2015, Rosie Batty was invited to [address](#) a joint sitting in the

Legislative Assembly. In her address, Ms Batty, who received the 2015 Australian of the Year for her domestic violence advocacy, spoke of family violence as a gendered issue. She said that after decades of struggle for funding and resources, the safety of women was finally being recognised, with changes and investments being made in Victoria. She commended the work of Victoria Police in reviewing its own organisation and working to change its culture. Ms Batty called for a shift and change in attitudes of the culture at large that had to start with the individual. Furthermore, there was a need to switch from victim-blaming to perpetrator accountability and, importantly, the need to have the structures in place to support victims and keep them safe.

The Royal Commission's [final \(eight-volume\) report](#) was tabled in Parliament on 30 March 2016, making 227 recommendations. These recommendations included: the establishment of safety hubs; mechanisms for information-sharing; housing; specialist courts; expanded police capacity; workforce training and respectful relationships education in schools; as well as the establishment of an independent Family Violence Agency.

The Government introduced a series of legislative measures and budgetary commitments in response to the recommendations.

First, the [National Domestic Violence Order Scheme Act 2016](#) ensured the enforcement of domestic violence orders across all Australian jurisdictions (this was not the case before the implementation of the Act).



The *Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor Act 2016* enacted in December 2016, established an independent statutory entity to monitor and report on the implementation of the recommendations of the Royal Commission.

The *Family Violence Protection Amendment Act 2017* streamlined the process for serving family violence intervention orders, as well as strengthened the powers of courts to dismiss appeals against, and breaches of, such orders. The Act also established the legislative basis for the Victorian Systemic Review of Family Violence Deaths unit under the *Coroners Act 2008*. The Royal Commission considered the work of the unit to be valuable in providing the evidence for systemic factors leading to family violence-related deaths.

The *Justice Legislation Amendment (Family Violence Protection and Other Matters) Act 2018* allowed for victim-survivors of family violence to be able to provide statements via body-worn cameras and enacted new statutory examples of behaviour that may constitute family violence.

Fulfilling the 188th Recommendation of the Royal Commission, the *Prevention of Family Violence Act 2018* established a new statutory authority, *Respect Victoria*. The primary purpose of the organisation is to prevent family violence before it starts by conducting community research, evaluation and engagement.

The *2016–17 State Budget* set aside \$572 million to implement the Royal Commission's recommendations. The following year, the *2017–18 State Budget* committed \$1.9 billion to its ten-year strategy, *Ending family violence: Victoria's plan for change*. Initiatives to be funded included safety hubs, victim assistance packages, public housing support, workforce development, as well as new case management systems across the courts.

On 23 August 2017, the Parliament was shocked by the *sudden passing* of Fiona Richardson, Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence—the first person to hold such a Ministry in Australia. The Member for Northcote had steered the Government's policy response to *family violence*, and was acknowledged as a strong campaigner against family violence and an advocate for *gender equality*.



Legislation

The following selection of legislation was introduced during the 58th Parliament. For further information, see the [Legislation](#) website.

- *Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor Act 2016*
- *National Domestic Violence Order Scheme Act 2016*
- *Family Violence Protection Amendment Act 2017*
- *Family Violence Protection Amendment (Information Sharing) Act 2017*
- *Justice Legislation Amendment (Family Violence Protection and Other Matters) Act 2018*
- *Prevention of Family Violence Act 2018*

Reports

The following selection of reports was produced during the 58th Parliament. For further reports, see the [Library catalogue](#).

- *Ending family violence: Victoria's plan for change*, Department of Premier and Cabinet (2016)
- *Report and recommendations*, Royal Commission into Family Violence (2016)

Industry, innovation and employment



Industry, innovation and employment

An overview of developments within the portfolios of industry, innovation and employment during the 58th Parliament, including key issues, legislation, committee inquiries and reports.

Industrial relations

In November 2014, the [unemployment rate](#) in Victoria was at 6.8 per cent—the highest it had been since 2003. In response to this, the Andrews Government introduced reforms to encourage employment growth in the Victorian economy. The [Back to Work Act 2015](#) established a back-to-work scheme with a [\\$100 million fund for payroll tax relief](#) allocated to companies who hire unemployed young people, the long-term unemployed and retrenched workers.

The last 50 years have seen [drastic changes in workplaces](#) and employment circumstances, including [greater casualisation](#), increasing female participation and a growth in remote work (thanks to technology changes). In acknowledgement of the changing landscape, the Government called for multiple inquiries and reviews to be undertaken, which resulted in significant law reform. The Government [announced a review](#) of Victoria's long service leave arrangements, which resulted in the passing of the [Long Service Leave Act 2018](#) in April 2018. The new law ensures that parents will not lose accrued long service leave entitlements when taking a career break to care for their children. Previous arrangements had disproportionately affected women.

Similarly, a [committee inquiry](#) into long service leave entitlements found that certain pockets of the workforce—namely those working under contract and casual

labour arrangements—were precluded from service leave entitlements, despite having worked in the same job long enough to qualify. In response, Parliament passed the [Long Service Benefits Portability Act 2018](#), making long service leave available to workers who had missed out through no fault of their own.

Two inquiries—one [federal](#) and one [state-level inquiry](#)—revealed that labour hire workers were not sufficiently protected from exploitation and abuse. They exposed systemic underpayment of award wages, poor occupational health and safety practice and maltreatment of workers. This resulted in the [Labour Hire Licencing Act 2018](#), which introduced a licencing scheme to protect workers and better regulate labour hire providers.

In 2018, further improvements to regulatory regimes within the building industry were made. The [Building Amendment \(Registration of Building Trades and Other Matters\) Act 2018](#) tightened the regulation of pool and spa barriers and high-risk cladding products. The Act also made it an offence for persons to carry out certain types of building work without a licence.

By contrast, the Victorian Government recognised that hairdressers and makeup artists are not high-risk when it comes to non-compliance with standards. Accordingly, [changes to legislation](#) ensured that these businesses need only pay to register their premises once, rather than annually.

Alcohol and gambling

The 58th Parliament introduced a raft of gambling harm-minimisation measures.

In 2018, the [Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation 2017–18 annual report](#) stated that the proliferation of betting advertising was an issue of increasing community concern. In response, the [Gambling Legislation Amendment Act 2018](#) commenced operation in March 2018, amending the [Gambling Regulation Act 2003](#) to ban gambling advertising on public transport, near schools and on public roads.

With the rapid growth of online gambling, the Government sought to realign its taxation framework to suit the increasingly digital environment. After consulting industry stakeholders on design considerations and potential industry impact, the [Gambling Regulation Amendment \(Wagering and Betting\) Act 2018](#) was passed, implementing a point of consumption tax on wagering and betting companies.

Other alcohol and gambling harm-minimisation measures implemented by the 58th Parliament include:

- Imposing a \$500 withdrawal limit through EFTPOS at gaming venues during a 24-hour period under the [Gambling Regulation Amendment \(Gaming Machine Arrangements\) Act 2017](#);
- Removing a loophole that allowed minors accompanied by a guardian or parent to be served alcohol on a licensed premises, and implementing fines for persons who knowingly deliver alcohol to a minor without reasonable excuse ([Liquor and](#)

[Gambling Legislation Amendment Act 2018](#)); and

- The conferral of new policy and advocacy powers to the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation under the [Gambling Legislation Amendment Act 2015](#).

Sharing economy

Instances of Airbnb and other peer-to-peer platform accommodation services [damaging neighbourhood amenity](#) were an issue addressed during the 58th Parliament.

After the Government appointed an independent panel to conduct a [report into short-stay accommodation](#), the panel's recommendations were subsequently incorporated into a new Act. The [Owners Corporations Amendment \(Short-stay Accommodation\) Act 2018](#) sets out inappropriate conduct that is characteristic of unruly short-stay parties. Among other reforms, it empowers VCAT to impose fines on unruly short-stay occupants or award compensation for those adversely affected.

The rise of Uber and other ridesharing services has required significant taxi and hire car industry reforms. Following a [parliamentary inquiry into ride sourcing services](#), Parliament passed the [Commercial Passenger Vehicle Industry Bill 2017](#), which received the Royal Assent in August 2017. The legislation requires drivers to pass police, medical and driving history checks. It also introduced [\\$494 million in assistance](#) for the existing taxi and hire car industry.

For more information on Uber and Ridesharing, see the Library's [research paper](#).

Small business

In 2017, the *Small Business Commission Act 2017* established the Victorian Small Business Commission. The Commission's primary purpose is to facilitate and encourage the fair treatment of small business. The Act also outlines the functions, powers and duties of the Small Business Commissioner as head of the Commission.

In an effort to [create new opportunities for local businesses](#), the *Victorian Industry Participation Policy (Local Jobs First) Amendment Act 2018* enshrined local jobs policy in law. The Act ensures that small and medium-sized enterprises have the opportunity to compete for government contracts, by mandating minimum local content on major projects, including a 90 per cent minimum on construction projects. The Act also established a [Local Jobs First Commissioner](#) to facilitate connections between Victorian businesses and government project opportunities.

Automated vehicles

The rise of [automated vehicles](#) is [imminent](#), with a number of trials having occurred during the 58th Parliament. To avoid technological advancement outpacing legislation, the Andrews Government secured the passage of the *Road Safety Amendment (Automated Vehicles) Act 2018*. The new Act amends the *Roads Safety Act 1986* to establish a permit scheme for the trialling of automated vehicles on Victorian roads. According to the [second reading speech](#), the potential for automated vehicles to reduce human error and therefore greatly improve road safety was the main impetus for introducing the legislation. The speech also acknowledges the social,

environmental and economic benefits presented by vehicle automation.

For more information, see the Library's research papers on [automated vehicles](#) and [transitional policies for Victoria's automotive manufacturing industry](#).

Future Industries Fund

The 2015–16 State Budget established a \$200 million [Future Industries Fund](#), which the Treasurer Tim Pallas described in [his budget speech](#) as designed to 'turbocharge the emerging industries that will give our state a new face and a new future'. Administered by Business Victoria and Invest Victoria, the Fund offers grants of up to \$1 million to firms working in six different sectors: medical technology and pharmaceuticals; new energy technology; transport defence and construction technology; food and fibre; international education; and professional services.

In March 2016, the Andrews Government [announced](#) it was establishing three further initiatives under the Fund: a \$20 million New Energy Fund, a \$20 million Sector Growth Program and a \$5 million Future Industries Manufacturing Program. Each initiative offers grants of varying value to promote scoping, planning and feasibility studies; assist projects that create jobs in renewable energy or green technologies; and to implement new manufacturing technologies. At this time, the Government also released future industry strategy reports for the following sectors: [Construction Technologies](#); [Defence Technologies](#); [Food and Fibre](#); [Sector Strategy](#); [International Education](#); [Medical Technologies and Pharmaceuticals](#); [New Energies Technologies](#); [Professional Services](#); and [Transport Technologies](#).

Other reforms

After an [internal review](#) of the Freedom of Information (FOI) Commissioner's office uncovered a range of issues, legislation was passed to strengthen Victoria's integrity and accountability system. The [Freedom of Information Amendment \(Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner\) Act 2017](#) merged the FOI Commissioner with the Commissioner for Privacy and Data Protection Office to create the [Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner \(OVIC\)](#). OVIC was granted extra powers, including the ability to review decisions to withhold documents based on Cabinet-in-confidence exemptions, and a requirement for agencies to respond to FOI requests quickly.

Another authority established under statute during the 58th Parliament was [Development Victoria](#). The [Urban Renewal Authority Amendment \(Development Victoria\) Act 2017](#) created Development Victoria to deliver the Government's property development and social and economic capital works projects. The body will coordinate long-term development in key urban precincts, as well as projects already underway.

In the increasingly digital 21st Century environment, much focus has been on managing and streamlining the growing number of online business dealings, without compromising information and data security. Acknowledging this digital shift, the [Associations Incorporation Reform Amendment \(Electronic Transactions\) Act 2015](#) enables incorporated associations to conduct the majority of their business with Consumer Affairs Victoria online.

Relatedly, the rise of digital tokens known as cryptocurrencies has been subject to considerable media attention. Digitisation and cryptocurrencies present new policy challenges around data for the Victorian Government and governments globally.

For more information, see the Library's research papers on [cryptocurrency](#) and [protective data security in the Victorian public sector](#).

Legislation

The following selection of legislation was introduced during the 58th Parliament. For further information, see the [Legislation website](#).

- *Associations Incorporation Reform Amendment (Electronic Transactions) Act 2015*
- *Back to Work Act 2015*
- *Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment (Hairdressing Registration) Act 2015*
- *Alpine Resorts Legislation Amendment Act 2016*
- *Building Legislation Amendment (Consumer Protection) Act 2016*
- *Consumer Acts and Other Acts Amendment Act 2016*
- *Commercial Passenger Vehicle Industry Act 2017*
- *Freedom of Information Amendment (Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner) Act 2017*
- *Gambling Regulation Amendment (Gaming Machine Arrangements) Act 2017*
- *Small Business Commission Act 2017*
- *Urban Renewal Authority Amendment (Development Victoria) Act 2017*
- *Building Amendment (Registration of Building Trades and Other Matters) Act 2018*
- *Gambling Legislation Amendment Act 2018*
- *Gambling Regulation Amendment (Wagering and Betting) Act 2018*
- *Labour Hire Licensing Act 2018*
- *Liquor and Gambling Legislation Amendment Act 2018*
- *Long Service Benefits Portability Act 2018*
- *Long Service Leave Act 2018*

- *Road Safety Amendment (Automated Vehicles) Act 2018*
- *Victorian Industry Participation Policy (Local Jobs First) Amendment Act 2018*

Library research publications

The Parliamentary Library Research & Inquiries unit produced the following research publications during the 58th Parliament.

- *Transition to where? Thinking through transitional policies for Victoria's automotive manufacturing industry*, Library Fellowship Paper, Victorian Parliamentary Library & Information Service (2016)
- *Food Amendment (Kilojoule Labelling Scheme and Other Matters) Bill 2016*, Research Note, Victorian Parliamentary Library & Information Service (2016)
- *Uber and ridesharing*, Research Paper, Victorian Parliamentary Library & Information Service (2016)
- *Automated vehicles*, Research Paper, Victorian Parliamentary Library & Information Service (2017)
- *Protective data security in the Victorian public sector*, Research Paper, Victorian Parliamentary Library & Information Service (2017)
- *Cryptocurrency and blockchain explained*, Quick Guide, Victorian Parliamentary Library & Information Service (2018)
- *Labour rights in the gig economy*, Quick Guide, Victorian Parliamentary Library & Information Service (2018)

Reports

The following selection of reports was produced during the 58th Parliament. For further reports, see the [Library catalogue](#).

- *Independent Panel on Short-Stay Accommodation in CBD Apartment Buildings: Final report*, Independent Panel on Short-Stay Accommodation in CBD Apartment Buildings (2015)
- *Future directions paper: How Victoria will continue to support the development of automated vehicles*, VicRoads (2016)
- *Peer-to-peer pressure: Policy for the sharing economy*, Grattan Institute (2016)
- *Victorian Government long service leave discussion paper*, Industrial Relations Victoria (2016)
- *Victorian inquiry into the labour hire industry and insecure work*, Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport & Resources (2016)
- *Hidden in plain sight: An inquiry into establishing a Modern Slavery Act in Australia*, Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade (2017)
- *Point of consumption tax: Consultation paper*, Department of Treasury and Finance (2017)
- *Annual report 2017–2018*, Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation (2018)

Committee inquiries

The following committee inquiries were conducted during the 58th Parliament.

- *Inquiry into fuel prices in regional Victoria*, Economic, Education, Jobs and Skills Committee, Parliament of Victoria (2016)
- *Inquiry into portability of long service leave entitlements*, Economic, Education, Jobs and Skills Committee, Parliament of Victoria (2016)
- *Inquiry into ride sourcing services*, Economy and Infrastructure Committee, Parliament of Victoria (2017)
- *Inquiry into the Freedom of Information Amendment (Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner) Bill 2016*, Legislative Council Legal and Social Issues Committee, Parliament of Victoria (2017)
- *Inquiry into electric vehicles*, Legislative Council Economy and Infrastructure Committee, Parliament of Victoria (2018)

Planning and environment



Planning and environment

An overview of developments within the planning, environment, local government, and rural and regional portfolios during the 58th Parliament, including key issues, legislation, committee inquiries and reports.

Planning

Infrastructure Victoria

The Andrews Government delivered a key election promise in 2015 when it legislated to create [Infrastructure Victoria](#). The independent statutory authority was established to identify and prioritise Victoria's short- and long-term infrastructure needs, providing transparent and expert infrastructure advice.

Infrastructure Victoria released Victoria's first 30-year infrastructure strategy in December 2016 after consultation across all sectors. The Government responded by releasing the [Victorian infrastructure plan](#) in September 2017, which outlined the Government's infrastructure priorities for the next five years.

Infrastructure and contributions system

The [Planning and Environment Amendment \(Infrastructure Contributions\) Act 2015](#) introduced a new system for levying contributions towards the provision of infrastructure in priority growth areas. The simplification of developer contributions, which help pay for roads, parks and sporting facilities, was designed to speed up development approvals. The infrastructure levy comprised a standard and a supplementary levy. The system was further reformed in 2018 (by the [Planning and Environment Amendment \(Public Land Contributions\) Act 2017](#)) with the introduction of a [land contribution model](#),


whereby land for public purposes can be provided as part of an infrastructure contribution when land is developed.

Smart Planning

In April 2016, the Andrews Government committed to a suite of 'Smart Planning' system reforms designed to streamline and modernise planning rules. The reforms provided users with an [online portal](#) for planning applications, information and services. The [Amendment Tracking System](#), announced in July 2018, provides for the centralised online management of Victoria's 82 planning schemes. Also in July, [Amendment VC148](#) was gazetted to reform the Victorian Planning Provisions by introducing an integrated [Planning Policy Framework](#) (PPF), which combined state and regional policies into a single source. In August 2018, the Government offered support to councils to incorporate their local planning policies into the PPF.

Plan Melbourne

The Government initiated a 'refresh' of [Plan Melbourne](#) by reconvening the original Ministerial Advisory Committee. A public discussion paper was released for further consultation in October 2015. With the population of Victoria approaching six million and the annual growth rate at 1.8 per cent, the Plan was revised to include issues such as housing affordability, climate change and the new Government's transport priorities, including the Metro Rail Tunnel.



Subsequently, *Plan Melbourne 2017–2050* was released in March 2017 and was designed to be a long-term plan to accommodate Melbourne’s future growth in population and employment. The strategy targets Melbourne’s ‘middle ring’ of suburbs for greater housing density, removing the limit of two dwellings per block, but imposing mandatory maximum height limits in neighbourhood and general residential zones for new dwellings. New developments are required to have a mandatory percentage of garden space. A separate five-year [implementation plan](#) with 112 actions was also released, with the first review due in 2022.

Fishermans Bend

Early in its term, the Andrews Government began to review plans for the 480-hectare Fishermans Bend urban renewal area. A Ministerial Advisory Committee, announced in July 2015, produced 40 recommendations based on its review of the planning process to date. A dedicated taskforce was subsequently established and began work in January 2016. A ‘recast vision’ document for the area formed the basis of a new framework, the final version of which was released in October 2018 following a 12-month public consultation.

The *Fishermans Bend framework* is intended to guide investment and development, balancing growth and liveability for the 80,000 residents anticipated to call the area home by 2050. It includes plans for parks, schools, roads, transport and community facilities. Planning Minister, the Hon. Richard Wynne, ‘called in’ 26 live tower development proposals for assessment against the new planning controls. A [Fishermans Bend Development Board](#) was

[announced](#) in August 2018 to take the lead on community engagement and to advise on future developments.

Apartment design

In May 2015, the Planning Minister released a discussion paper, *Better apartments*, to gather ideas from the property industry and the community about the design, amenity and functionality of apartments and apartment buildings. After successive years of record apartment approvals, there were growing concerns about poorly designed units. Draft standards, released in August 2016, did not specify minimum apartment sizes. Instead, they addressed building setbacks, room depth, accessibility, waste and water, energy efficiency, storage, open space and noise minimisation. The *Better Apartments Design Standards* were implemented in the Victorian Planning Provisions and all planning schemes with [Amendment VC136](#) in April 2017. The *Apartment design guidelines for Victoria* and *Urban design guidelines for Victoria* were finalised in August 2017.

Illegal building works

The unauthorised demolition of the Corkman Hotel in Carlton in October 2016 led to legislative reforms. The [Building Amendment \(Enforcement and Other Measures\) Bill 2017](#), passed in May 2017, included significant fines and up to five years’ jail for developers found guilty of illegal building work. The Bill followed consultation with the building industry and addressed recommendations made by the Victorian [Auditor-General](#) regarding building practitioner registration, the building permit levy system and the role of local government. It also gave the courts new injunction powers to enable them to prevent unlawful building works.

Heritage issues

The Government released a [discussion paper](#) in June 2015 to canvass opinion regarding a review of the *Heritage Act 1995*, with the aim of strengthening protection for Victoria's historic heritage places and objects of state significance. Key changes included providing a greater role for local government in permit processes, removing 'undue financial hardship' considerations in permit decisions, reforming the heritage nomination process and increasing maximum penalties for unauthorised works affecting registered heritage sites and objects. Following a public consultation, the *Heritage Act 2017* passed both houses of Parliament in March.

The Bourke Hill precinct, which includes historic buildings in the area bounded by Lonsdale, Exhibition, Little Collins and Spring Streets, received greater protection in 2015 when the Planning Minister approved [Amendment C240](#) to the Melbourne Planning Scheme. The amendments included a mixture of height and setback controls, plus heritage rules to maintain the area's low-scale built form. New planning controls were also put in place along St Kilda Road around the Shrine of Remembrance in 2016, to protect the Shrine and Albert Park Reserve from overshadowing.


The Andrews Government honoured an election commitment regarding the historic [Palais Theatre](#), which was refurbished in a \$20 million joint project between the Victorian Government and the City of Port Phillip. The theatre reopened for public performances in May 2017. Festival Hall, another iconic venue, was [granted permanent heritage protection](#) in November 2018. The site's

cultural heritage was recognised following an application by the owners to sell the site to developers who planned to demolish it and construct apartment buildings.

In December 2017, the [Government announced](#) that an 'Apple Global Flagship Store' would open at Federation Square, replacing the Yarra building as part of a reinvigoration strategy. Despite support from Donald Bates, one of the Square's architects, there was [widespread criticism](#) of the proposal over the lack of planning transparency and public consultation. A revised design was submitted to the City of Melbourne in July 2018, with a lower building profile and more public space. In August 2018, Heritage Victoria issued an [interim protection order](#) for Federation Square while considering permanent heritage protection for the site. In October 2018, the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria [recommended](#) that Federation Square be included on the Victorian Heritage Register for its historical, architectural, cultural and technical significance to the state of Victoria.

Flammable cladding

A façade fire at the Lacrosse building at Docklands in November 2014, which was fuelled by non-compliant combustible aluminium cladding, led to an audit of residential and public buildings at the direction of the Victorian Building Authority. The audit found an ['unacceptably high' level](#) of non-compliance, including similar cladding installed on two hospitals. The tragic Grenfell Tower fire in London in June 2017 prompted increased scrutiny. In July 2017, the [Victorian Cladding Taskforce](#) was appointed to investigate the extent of the non-compliant cladding problem.



The Taskforce released an [interim report](#) in December 2017, finding three factors that contributed to the cladding problem: the supply and marketing of the wrong building materials; a poor culture of compliance in the industry; and the failure of regulatory systems to address the issues. A statewide building audit ensued, as well as a [ban](#) on the use of flammable building cladding. In September 2018, the Parliament passed legislation to provide a low-interest, long-term loan scheme ([Cladding Rectification Agreements](#)) for affected owners to finance cladding replacement on residential buildings.

Land Use Victoria

The Government indicated that it would investigate commercialisation options for the Victorian titles registry office, [Land Use Victoria](#), in the 2016–17 Budget Papers. Concerns were raised by a number of organisations about potential privacy issues, higher fees and data security, which caused the Government to narrow the focus of the offer. Essential services such as the Valuer-General, the Surveyor-General and the Victorian Government Land Monitor were subsequently excluded. In March 2018, the Government issued an Expression of Interest for the service that would run for a 40-year period.

A [parliamentary inquiry](#) into the issue, conducted by the Environment and Planning Committee, found that the Government expected to retain about [70 per cent](#) of the expected annual \$380 million revenue once the office was privatised. The Committee's recommendations included greater protections for consumers and increased transparency. In August 2018, the Government [announced](#) that it had

granted a concession to Victorian Land Registry Services (a subsidiary of the First State Superannuation Scheme) to run the Land Titles and Registry office. The transaction resulted in a \$2.86 billion windfall for the Government.

Other developments

- The Government appointed the [Managing Residential Development Advisory Committee](#) in November 2015 to review Melbourne's residential planning zones. A series of '[State of play](#)' reports, containing demographic and housing information for metropolitan Melbourne and regional cities, along with suggested improvements, were released for comment in February 2016. The Advisory Committee released its [report](#) in July 2016, recommending that the zones be updated to provide consistent, mandatory height controls and building coverage requirements.
- In 2015, the Government introduced a new [decision-making consideration](#) into the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* that requires the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal to consider the number of objections and the social impact of developments. The concerns of local objectors will be factored into proposals that may reduce access to community facilities or affect health and safety.
- The Government launched a review of [planning for the Melbourne CBD](#) in September 2015, bringing in interim planning controls while a public consultation was underway. At the time of the review, there were no planning controls for density or amenity in the CBD. The controls required minimum setbacks and plot ratios (restricting inner city buildings to a maximum of 24 storeys if built to the block borders) which angered the building industry. The Urban Development Institute said the changes would [restrict development and cut jobs](#). The Minister for Planning

and the City of Melbourne signed a [Memorandum of Understanding](#), with the council made a referral authority for planning permits before the State Government.

- The Government established a new statutory authority with the [Victorian Planning Authority Act 2017](#). The [Victorian Planning Authority](#) (VPA) replaced the former Growth Areas Authority. The VPA will be the lead agency for planning in designated areas such as urban renewal sites, growth areas and regional cities and towns. With expanded powers, the VPA will undertake integrated land use and infrastructure planning and coordinate state government action in planning the use, development and protection of land.

Legislation

The following selection of legislation was introduced during the 58th Parliament. For further information, see the [Legislation](#) website.

- [Infrastructure Victoria Act 2015](#)
- [Planning and Environment Amendment \(Infrastructure Contributions\) Act 2015](#)
- [Planning and Environment Amendment \(Recognising Objectors\) Act 2015](#)
- [Building Amendment \(Enforcement and Other Measures\) Act 2017](#)
- [Heritage Act 2017](#)
- [Victorian Planning Authority Act 2017](#)
- [Building Amendment \(Registration of Building Trades and Other Matters\) Act 2018](#)
- [Planning and Environment Amendment \(Distinctive Areas and Landscapes\) Act 2018](#)
- [Planning and Environment Amendment \(Public Land Contributions\) Act 2018](#)

Reports

The following selection of reports was produced during the 58th Parliament. For further reports, see the [Library catalogue](#).

- [Better apartments: A discussion paper](#), Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (2015)
- [Review of the Heritage Act 1995: Discussion paper](#), Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (2015)
- [Victoria's consumer protection framework for building construction](#), Victorian Auditor-General's Office (2015)
- [Residential zones: State of play reports](#), Managing Residential Development Taskforce, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (2016)

- [Residential zone review](#), Managing Residential Development Advisory Committee (2016)
- [Apartment design guidelines for Victoria](#), Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (2017)
- [Plan Melbourne 2017–2050](#), Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (2017)
- [Plan Melbourne implementation actions](#), Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (2017)
- [Reformed residential zones](#), Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (2017)
- [Urban design guidelines for Victoria](#), Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (2017)
- [Victorian Cladding Taskforce: Interim report](#) (T. Baillieu & J. Thwaites, co-chairs), Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (2017)
- [Victorian infrastructure plan](#), Department of Premier and Cabinet (2017)
- [Fishermans Bend framework: The next chapter in Melbourne's growth story](#), Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (2018)

Committee inquiries

The following committee inquiry was conducted during the 58th Parliament.

- [Inquiry into the proposed long term lease of the land titles and registry functions of Land Use Victoria](#), Environment and Planning Committee, Parliament of Victoria (2018)

Environment

Parks

In May 2015, the Government honoured an [election commitment](#) when it permanently banned cattle from grazing in the Alpine National Park and six River Red Gum national parks. The [National Parks Amendment \(Prohibiting Cattle Grazing\) Act 2015](#) amended the *National Parks Act 1975* to close a loophole that had allowed cattle grazing for scientific research.

The [National Parks Amendment \(No 99 Year Leases\) Act 2015](#) reversed an initiative of the previous Coalition Government that had invited private operators to apply for development opportunities in the state's national parks. The amendment, passed by Parliament in October 2015, reduced possible lease periods to a maximum of 21 years. The legislation was supported by the Victorian National Parks Association but the Victoria Tourism Industry Council [expressed the view](#) that lease terms of anything less than 50 years would stifle development. The legislation coincided with the release of a report, [Valuing Victoria's parks](#), which sought to establish a framework to recognise, quantify and value the ecosystem services provided by Victoria's parks, as well as the benefits that they generate for the environment and the community.


In December 2016, the Andrews Government reviewed the Point Nepean master plan (having been unable to reach agreement with the developer granted a 50-year lease under the previous Coalition Government). A [discussion paper](#) was released for consultation in December 2016. The [final master plan](#) was released in January 2018. It included the establishment of the Point Nepean

Advisory Group (reporting to Parks Victoria), new staff and camping areas, and infrastructure upgrades and repairs.

A new 641-hectare park was created in Ballarat with the passage of the [Crown Land Legislation Amendment \(Canadian Regional Park and Other Matters\) Act 2016](#). The park comprised the Canadian State Forest and former Victorian Plantation Corporation land in the Mt Clear area. The Act also established the Hepburn Regional Park and the Kerang State Game Reserve. After a community consultation process run by Parks Victoria, the park was renamed [Woowookarung Regional Park](#), ([Parks and Crown Land Legislation Amendment Act 2017](#)) acknowledging the area's Traditional Owners, the Wadawurrung people.

The [Greater alpine national parks management plan](#) was released in December 2016 by Parks Victoria. The plan was developed in consultation with the community and key stakeholders and incorporated input from over 500 submissions to the 2014 draft plan. The management plan aims to protect and enhance the natural, cultural and recreational values within the parks that cover over 900,000 hectares in Eastern Victoria.

The [Parks Victoria Act 2018](#) established [Parks Victoria](#) as a stronger and more independent park management agency with improved governance arrangements. The Act moved the agency from a service provider in a purchaser-provider arrangement to a statutory authority having direct control and management of Victoria's national parks and other reserves. The Minister provided Parks



Victoria with a [statement of obligations](#) in October 2018.

Environmental Protection Authority

A comprehensive public review of the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) commenced in June 2015, led by an advisory committee. The review examined the role, powers, governance and funding of the state's environmental regulator. The [final report of the inquiry](#) was released in May 2016. The [Government response](#) in January 2017 gave either full or partial support to all 48 recommendations and outlined a five-year reform program to modernise the EPA, including an overhaul of legislation. The EPA released a new organisational strategy, [Our environment, our health](#), in August 2017.

A two-stage legislative response followed. The [Environment Protection Act 2017](#) established the EPA as an independent statutory authority and legislated a Governing Board, Chief Executive Officer and Victoria's first Chief Environmental Scientist (whose appointment was announced in March 2017). In 2018, [an amending Bill](#) introduced an enforceable General Environmental Duty to hold polluters responsible for risks posed to human health or the environment.

The legislation also included stronger powers for EPA authorised officers, third-party rights to allow affected community members to seek civil remedies, as well as a more flexible environmental audit system and increased penalties for key offences. Environment Victoria [supported](#) the 'legal right for the community to enforce pollution control laws' but critics, such as the Minerals Council of Australia, said the new third-party rights could threaten jobs in the minerals industry. The

new scheme is due to be fully operational by 1 July 2020.

Air quality

[EPA AirWatch](#), an interactive map showing air quality information from monitoring stations around Victoria, was launched in January 2016. Portable air monitoring equipment was also made available for use during events such as bushfires. The Andrews Government introduced stronger air quality standards in August 2016. The standards limit large and small air particles (known as PM10 and PM2.5 respectively) and address a [recommendation](#) of the Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry. A trial of new air-monitoring equipment, designed in collaboration with a community panel, took place in the Latrobe Valley in December 2017.

In March 2018, the Victorian Auditor-General reported that there were serious shortcomings in the EPA's [air quality monitoring](#) program. The EPA accepted all five recommendations that required it to expand, improve and update its air quality monitoring, and to work with local government to deal with air quality issues at the Brooklyn industrial precinct in Melbourne's west. The Government released [Clean air for all Victorians: Victoria's air quality statement](#) in May 2018. The Government conducted a Clean Air Summit in August 2018 to identify actions to improve air quality, followed by further regional consultations. The Government also indicated that it planned to release a [Victorian air quality strategy](#) during 2019.

Flora and fauna

In April 2017, [Protecting Victoria's environment - Biodiversity 2037](#) was produced by the Department of

Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP). The plan promotes collaboration across government, business, communities, Traditional Owners, Aboriginal Victorians and private land managers to invest in the parallel goals of restoring biodiversity and strengthening the economy. The *Biodiversity 2037 implementation framework* (February 2018) outlines a four-year action plan to prioritise the care and protection of the natural environment.

The Government's *Living with wildlife action plan*, released in April 2018, aims to balance the protection of animals and native wildlife with the management of wildlife impacts in a way that is effective, sustainable and supported by science. In July 2018, feral cats were *declared established pest animals* on specified Crown land in Victoria under the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994*.

In May 2018, the Government introduced the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Amendment Bill* which sought to improve the conservation status of threatened species, provide longer-term protection for critical habitats and improve enforcement powers and penalties for all offences. A *consultation process* had been conducted during 2017. The Bill lapsed on the expiration of the 58th Parliament.

Forests

In November 2015, the Government *released* terms of reference for a Forest Industry Taskforce, in order for major stakeholders to reach agreement on recommendations about issues facing the industry, such as job protection, economic activity and the protection of threatened native flora and fauna. An inquiry into VicForests' operations was initiated by the

Parliament's Economy and Infrastructure Committee in May 2017 and the Committee *tabled its report* in October. The Government was generally supportive of the Committee's recommendations, which called for more robust oversight mechanisms, improved management of timber contracts and an industry transition plan focusing on the use of plantation timber.

The economic value of Victorian forests was the subject of a number of reports. A *report* by Australian National University (ANU) in June 2016 claimed that the Victorian Central Highlands forests had greater value for carbon sequestration than for forestry. VicForests disputed the findings of the ANU report and commissioned a report from *Deloitte Access Economics*, in 2017. The Deloitte report gave a positive analysis of the economic impact of forestry on the Victorian economy. A 2017 *report by the Nous Group*, commissioned by Victorian environmental groups, forecast economic benefits if the proposed Great Forest National Park was established as a centre for eco-tourism.

Also in 2017, the Government *moved to secure jobs for the struggling Heyfield timber mill in Gippsland*, with an in-principle agreement struck in July, and the purchase of the mill finalised in September. Australian Sustainable Hardwoods (ASH) continued to operate under the combined ownership of the Government and an ASH shareholder group. Difficulties faced by the mill include cuts to the supply of native hardwood, the impacts of fire, and restrictions on logging areas to protect habitat for the critically endangered *Leadbeater's possum*.

See also the [Primary Industries](#) section of this Briefing e-Book.

The Victorian Government signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Commonwealth Government in March 2018 that extended the [Regional Forest Agreements](#) (RFAs) for the North East, East Gippsland and Central Highlands until 2020, when the West Victoria and Gippsland RFAs are due to expire. The Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, the Hon. Lily D'Ambrosio, said the extension would allow time for consultation with scientific bodies, industry and the community to modernise the state's RFA framework to better manage Victoria's forests.

Bushfire preparedness

In February 2015, the [Government asked](#) the Inspector-General for Emergency Management Victoria (IGEM) to review performance targets for bushfire fuel management on public land. The review compared the existing hectare target approach with an alternative risk-reduction target. The IGEM [recommended](#) a risk-reduction target as being more effective, providing better incentives and allowing for adaptive management. The Government accepted the recommendations and produced a policy document, [Safer together](#). The document outlines the new approach, which will measure the efficiency of fuel management activities and prioritise local communities in decision-making processes. The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning began the process to transition to the new target. [Aboriginal traditional burning](#) was returned to Victoria in 2017 to reduce bushfire risk, in a partnership between Forest Fire Management Victoria and the

Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation.

Marine and coastal consultation

An expert panel was appointed in June 2015 to identify the key challenges to integrating marine and coastal health and management in Victoria. A [consultation paper](#) was launched in August 2016 to outline objectives and a series of proposed improvements to Victoria's coast and marine management system. The objectives included clearer governance and institutional arrangements, strengthening marine management, integrating planning systems and adapting to climate change. A [consultation summary](#) (March 2017) outlined the feedback received from 115 submissions.

In December 2017, the Government introduced the [Marine and Coastal Bill 2017](#), which sought to provide a whole-of-government approach to planning and management of the marine and coastal environment. The Bill sought to establish the Marine and Coastal Council (replacing the Victorian Coastal Council) to advise the government on statewide policy and strategy. The Bill was supplemented by a [transition plan](#) to outline the wider reforms and address recommendations (such as improving knowledge of coastal hazards) made in the Victorian Auditor-General's report, [Protecting Victoria's coastal assets](#) (March 2018). The legislation received the Royal Assent in June 2018.

Plastic bags

The Government expressed support for a national approach to reduce the impact of plastic bags on the environment at a [roundtable in early 2016](#). In April 2016, the Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications

released an inquiry report, *Toxic tide: The threat of marine plastic*, which recommended action on marine plastic pollution and microplastic. Later the same year, a private Member's Bill to ban plastic bags, packaging and microbeads was referred to the Parliament of Victoria's Environment and Planning Committee. The Committee report recommended further consideration of the issue and an assessment of the wider impact of the Bill. (The Bill was subsequently defeated in the Council, in October 2017.)

In October 2017, the Government announced its intention to ban single-use, lightweight plastic bags in Victoria, releasing a discussion paper and a cost-benefit analysis paper for public consultation. The consultation report summarised feedback from over 8,000 submissions, the majority of which expressed strong support for banning plastic bags. The Government said it would establish a reference group to develop a plastic pollution plan and that single-use plastic bags (less than 35 microns in thickness) would be banned from late 2019.

Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability

Late in 2015, the Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability (CES) tabled the State and Benefit Framework that would guide the approach to the 2018 State of the Environment Report. The Framework introduced reforms such as aligning reports with international environmental reporting frameworks, using digital platforms to aid understanding and demonstrating the use of environmental economic accounting.

The *State of the Bays* report was the first report released (in December 2016) under the new Framework, providing a baseline study of the health of Port Phillip Bay and Western Port.

As part of the *Yarra River Protection (Wilip-gin Birrarung murron) Act 2017*, the reporting role of the CES was extended to incorporate the environmental state of the Yarra River and its lands. In July 2018, the CES released the *Interim Victorian state of the environment report 2018*. The final report, due to be tabled in March 2019, will apply the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) framework to Victorian environment reporting. The SDG framework has also been applied to the *State of the forests* report and the inaugural *State of the Yarra and its parklands* report, both produced in 2018.

The CES commissioned a report from Deloitte Access Economics on *Megatrends and the Victorian environment* (November 2018), which outlined a number of high-level environmental challenges for Victoria leading up to 2030. The megatrends identified in the report were: the physical impacts of climate change; reducing the state's carbon footprint; citizen input to help shape business and government practices; disruptive technologies; and natural resource constraints.

Climate change

The Government initiated a review of the *Climate Change Act 2010* in June 2015, with an independent committee asked to propose options to strengthen the Act. The [findings of the review](#) were tabled in February 2016, with 33 recommendations including a five-year Climate Change Strategy. [Victoria's climate change adaptation plan](#) was published soon afterward, outlining the Government's blueprint for climate adaptation over four years. The Government also released [Victoria's climate change framework](#) in

January 2017, setting out its long-term vision for climate change action.

The [Climate Change Bill 2016](#) was introduced with the Government's stated intention to 'lead the nation' on climate change by committing to a series of five-year interim targets. The targets are designed to achieve the longer-term goal of net zero [greenhouse emissions](#) by 2050. The legislation introduced [TAKE2](#), an emissions-reduction pledge program for government, the community and the private sector. The [Bill was passed](#) by the Parliament in February 2017.

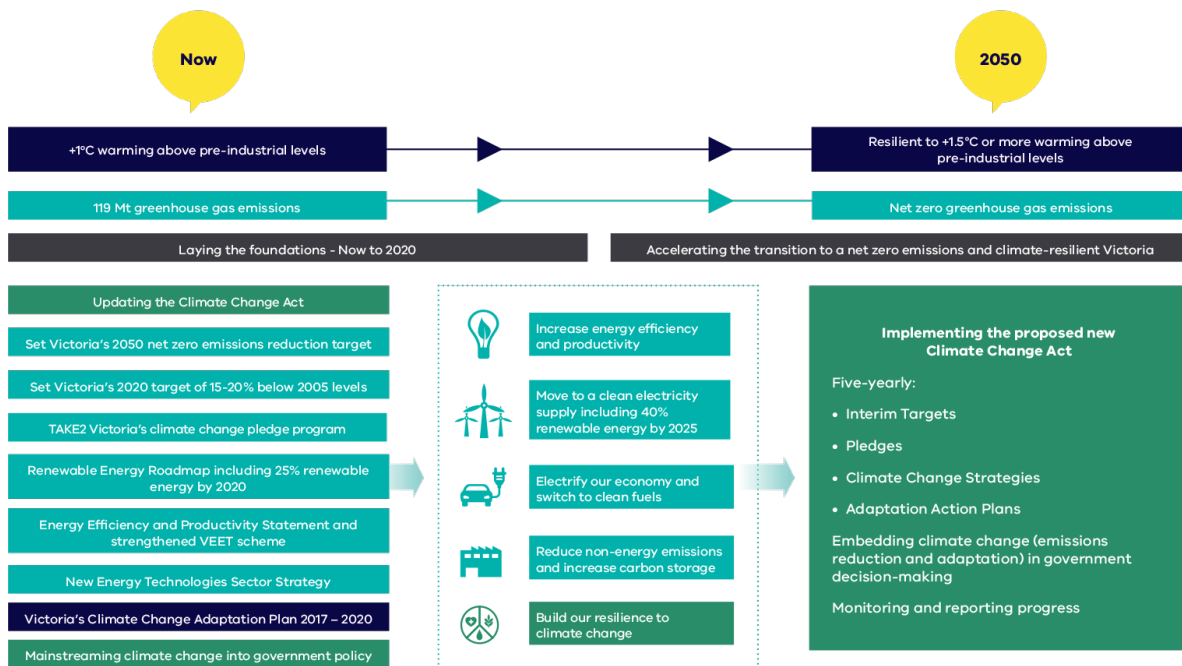


Image: DELWP website: [Victoria's Climate Change Framework](#)

Waste management


The Government launched a [discussion paper](#) on banning e-waste from landfill in September 2015. It noted that the volume of e-waste (including televisions, white goods, computers and other electronic devices) was growing three times faster than general municipal waste in Australia. A public consultation on the implementation of the ban began in October 2017, with the release of a [proposed policy package](#). A \$16.5 million funding boost for councils was [announced](#) in October 2018, aimed at upgrading over 130 e-waste collection and storage sites. The ban on e-waste was scheduled to begin on 1 July 2019, allowing time for councils to prepare, for new infrastructure to be developed, and for the roll-out of a statewide education campaign.

Following a consultation process, a [Metropolitan waste and resource recovery implementation plan](#) was finalised in October 2016, prioritising the reduction of waste sent to landfill, increasing the recovery of organic waste and planning for Melbourne's growing population. The Government launched the [Victorian waste education strategy](#) in August 2016, with the ten-year plan being a key priority of Sustainability Victoria's [Statewide waste and resource recovery infrastructure plan](#) (SWRRIP). An update of the 2015 SWRRIP, a 30-year 'roadmap' intended to chart current waste and resource recovery infrastructure and guide future planning, was produced in 2018. The updated SWRRIP included seven [regional implementation plans](#) which were incorporated as part of a wider [consultation process](#) in 2017. The [circular economy concept](#) is central to the plan, which seeks to increase the diversion of

waste from landfill beyond the 2018 rate of 67 per cent.

In February 2017, the Andrews Government promoted a Waste to Energy Infrastructure Fund to boost sustainable energy production using organic commercial and industrial food waste. Thirteen councils signed up to [contracts for organics processing](#) in March 2017, through the Metropolitan Waste and Resource Recovery Group. Yarra Valley Water opened a purpose-built [waste-to-energy facility](#) in Wollert in June 2017, capable of converting food waste into 22,000 kilowatt hours per day of electricity for water treatment. In October 2017, the Government released a discussion paper: [Turning waste into energy](#) and a number of [other projects](#) around Victoria received grants to develop waste-to-energy technologies.

In July 2017, a large stockpile of recycling materials caught fire at the [SKM Recycling plant in Coolaroo](#), generating acid smoke and requiring the evacuation of neighbouring homes. The fire—the fourth at the same facility—prompted the Andrews Government to set up a joint taskforce to audit key recycling sites to ensure public safety. Chief Executive of the Australian Council of Recycling, Grant Musgrove, [commented](#) that successive Victorian governments had failed to invest in recycling. Chaired by the EPA, the [Resource Recovery Facilities Audit Taskforce](#) comprised the MFB, CFA, Emergency Management Victoria, Worksafe Victoria and DELWP. The Taskforce provided an interim report to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change in December 2017.



The Minister released an interim waste management policy in August 2017, with the aim of improving safety standards at all Victorian waste and resource recovery centres, especially those that stored combustible materials. The EPA acted to reduce large stockpiles of tyres at [Stawell](#) in August 2017, clearing millions of tyres from the site, which the CFA had assessed to be a high fire risk. The final version of the policy ([Waste Management Policy \(Combustible Recyclable and Waste Materials\)](#)), which emphasised managing waste materials in order to minimise harm to human health and the environment, came into effect in August 2018.

Pressure was placed on councils and the recycling industry by China's decision to stop importing low-quality mixed recyclable materials in January 2018. (China had [flagged its intentions](#) regarding import restrictions to the World Trade Organisation in July 2017.) In February 2018, the Victorian Government provided a [\\$13 million package](#) to support kerbside recycling collection and set up a recycling industry taskforce to develop a strategic plan for industry transition. The Government provided a further \$37 million package in July 2018, as part of the [Recycling industry strategic plan](#), designed to stabilise the sector by increasing the quality of recycled materials, developing new markets and improving productivity.

In late August 2018, a serious [chemical fire](#) at a warehouse in West Footscray forced evacuations and school closures in the western suburbs. The Metropolitan Fire Brigade issued a 'watch and act' warning to residents. [Concern was expressed](#) in the community about the possible health effects of the smoke from the fire, as well as the effects of contaminants on nearby

Stony Creek. In September 2018, the Government [committed \\$1 million](#) to a restoration package for Stony Creek, which included ongoing monitoring and a long-term recovery plan.

Other developments

- The Government re-opened consultation on the revised draft Victorian Floodplain Management Strategy in June 2015, after fielding concerns raised about issues such as construction funding and levee maintenance in rural areas. The [new strategy](#) was released in April 2016 and was boosted by \$25 million in the 2016–17 State Budget to support implementation of the Victorian and regional strategies, local flood-mitigation measures and local water authorities.
- The [National Parks and Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Acts Amendment Act 2016](#) was designed to broaden the advisory role of the [VEAC](#) and to improve the operation of the Act. The changes established a second type of process by which the VEAC can provide advice and assessments on matters that are limited in scope and may not warrant a full investigation under the provisions of the Act.
- The EPA's [Illegal Dumping Strikeforce Program](#), using drones to capture video evidence of illegal industrial waste dumps, [was launched](#) in December 2016.

- A [review](#) of native vegetation clearing regulations was released in December 2016, following the publication of a [consultation paper](#) for public feedback. The changes, enacted through [Amendment VC138](#) to the Planning Scheme, are designed to provide better protections for Victoria's native vegetation, safeguard biodiversity and improve monitoring and reporting.
- The development of the [Port Phillip Bay environmental management plan 2017–2017](#) was undertaken over a two-year period by DELWP, in partnership with the EPA and Melbourne Water. Two rounds of public consultation gathered community views to refine the final plan (launched in November 2017), which aims to address key challenges to the Bay's health. The challenges include pollution, sediments, litter, habitat decline and marine pests. Complementary activities are included in a number of related strategies, such as Melbourne Water's [Healthy waterways strategy 2018–2028](#) and DELWP's [Water for Victoria: Water plan](#).

Legislation

The following selection of legislation was introduced during the 58th Parliament. For further information, see the [Legislation website](#).

- [National Parks Amendment \(No 99 Year Leases\) Act 2015](#)
- [National Parks Amendment \(Prohibiting Cattle Grazing\) Act 2015](#)
- [Crown Land Legislation Amendment Act 2016](#)
- [Crown Land Legislation Amendment \(Canadian Regional Park and Other Matters\) Act 2016](#)
- [Environment Protection Act \(Banning Plastic Bags, Packing and Microbeads\) Bill 2016 \(defeated\)](#)
- [National Parks and Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Acts Amendment Act 2016](#)
- [Environment Protection Act 2017](#)
- [Parks and Crown Land Legislation Amendment Act 2017](#)
- [Environment Protection Amendment Act 2018](#)
- [Flora and Fauna Guarantee Amendment Bill 2018 \(lapsed\)](#)
- [Marine and Coastal Act 2018](#)
- [Parks Victoria Act 2018](#)
- [Planning and Environment Amendment \(Distinctive Areas and Landscapes\) Act 2018](#)
- [Planning and Environment Amendment \(Public Land Contributions\) Act 2018](#)

Library research publications

The Parliamentary Library Research & Inquiries unit produced the following research publication during the 58th Parliament.

- [The Circular economy: An explainer](#), Research Note, Victorian Parliamentary Library & Information Service (2018)

Reports

The following selection of reports was produced during the 58th Parliament. For further reports, see the [Library catalogue](#).

- *Independent review of the Climate Change Act 2010*, Victorian Government (2015)
- *Review of performance target for bushfire fuel management on public land*, Inspector-General for Emergency Management (2015)
- *Safer together: A new approach to reducing the risk of bushfire in Victoria*, Victorian Government (2015)
- *State and benefit framework for the 2018 state of the environment report*, Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability Victoria (2015)
- *Valuing Victoria's parks: Accounting for ecosystems and valuing their benefits: Reports of first phase findings*, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (2015)
- *Greater alpine national parks: Management plan*, Parks Victoria (2016)
- *Independent inquiry into the Environment Protection Authority*, Ministerial Advisory Committee (2016)
- *Metropolitan waste and resource recovery implementation plan 2016*, MWRRG (2016)
- *Our environment, our health: Building our future together*, Environment Protection Authority Victoria (2016)
- *State of the Bays 2016*, Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability Victoria (2016)
- *Toxic tide: The threat of marine plastic pollution in Australia*, Senate Environment and Communications References Committee (2016)
- *Victoria's climate change adaptation plan: 2017–2020*, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (2016)
- *Victoria's climate change framework*, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (2016)
- *Water for Victoria: Water plan*, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (2016)
- *Great Forest National Park: Economic contribution of park establishment, park management, and visitor expenditure*, Nous Group for The Wilderness Society (2017)
- *Marine and Coastal Act: Consultation summary*, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (2017)
- *Port Phillip Bay environmental management plan 2017–2027*, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (2017)
- *Protecting Victoria's environment - Biodiversity 2037*, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (2017)
- *The economic impact of VicForests on the Victorian community*, Deloitte Access Economics (2017)
- *Turning waste into energy: Join the discussion*, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (2017)
- *Biodiversity 2037 implementation framework*, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (2018)
- *Clean air for all Victorians: Victoria's air quality statement*, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (2018)
- *Healthy waterways strategy 2018–28*, Melbourne Water (2018)

- *Improving Victoria's air quality*, Victorian Auditor-General's Office (2018)
- *Interim Victorian state of the environment report 2018*, Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability Victoria (2018)
- *Living with wildlife action plan*, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (2018)
- *Megatrends and the Victorian environment*, Deloitte Access Economics for the Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability Victoria (2018)
- *Parks Victoria Act: Statement of obligations*, Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, *Victoria Government Gazette*, No. S 521, 30 October (2018)
- *Point Nepean National Park master plan 2017*, Parks Victoria (2018)
- *Protecting Victoria's coastal assets*, Victorian Auditor-General's Office (2018)
- *Recycling industry strategic plan*, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (2018)
- *Reducing the impacts of plastic on the Victorian environment*, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (2018)
- *State of the forests 2018*, Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability Victoria (2018)
- *State of the Yarra and its parklands 2018*, Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability Victoria (2018)
- *Statewide waste and resource recovery infrastructure plan Victoria 2018*, Sustainability Victoria (2018)

- *Waste Management Policy (Combustible Recyclable and Waste Materials)*, Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, *Victoria Government Gazette*, No. S 397 (2018)

Committee inquiries

The following committee inquiries were conducted during the 58th Parliament.

- *Inquiry into the Environment Protection Amendment (Banning Plastic Bags, Packaging and Microbeads) Bill 2016*, Environment and Planning Committee, Parliament of Victoria (2016)
- *Inquiry into fire season preparedness: Final report*, Environment and Planning Committee, Parliament of Victoria (2017)
- *Inquiry into VicForests operations*, Economy and Infrastructure Committee, Parliament of Victoria (2017)

Local government

Rate caps

In February 2015, the Andrews Government acted on an election commitment to limit annual council rate increases to the inflation rate. The [Essential Services Commission](#) (ESC) was appointed to advise on a proposed rate-capping system for local government. The ESC released a [discussion paper](#) in April 2015, which began the public consultation process. The CEO of the Municipal Association of Victoria, [Rob Spence](#), said the policy would create challenges for councils to manage their business. The Victorian Local Governance Association [estimated](#) the cap would cause councils to lose up to \$150 million of revenue in 2016–17.

On 27 May 2015, the Legislative Council's Standing Committee on Environment and Planning established an inquiry to gather community views on rate capping and to monitor implementation. The Committee [tabled four reports](#) during the 58th Parliament, each with recommendations. The Andrews Government responded by supporting selected recommendations either in full or in principle, but noted that a number of recommendations fell outside the Committee's terms of reference.

Minister for Local Government, Natalie Hutchins, established a Local Government Sector [Reference Group](#) to give a wide range of stakeholders a formal avenue of consultation during the development of the 'Fair Go Rates' framework. The ESC released its [draft report](#) in July 2015 and outlined 11 draft recommendations, including one rate cap to apply equally to all councils. The ESC released its final report in October 2015, at the same time

as the Government introduced the [Local Government Amendment \(Fair Go Rates\) Bill 2015](#). The Bill proposed a rate cap based on the Melbourne Consumer Price Index forecast, as well as greater powers for the ESC to oversee council spending and compliance. The Bill passed the Parliament in late November 2015 and the [first rate cap of 2.5 per cent](#) became effective from 1 July 2016. In March 2016, the Minister asked the ESC to publish its rate cap recommendations on an annual basis.

Councillor conduct standards

Updates designed to improve the [councillor conduct framework](#) were introduced with the passage of the [Local Government Amendment \(Improved Governance\) Act](#) in October 2015. The legislation required councillors to adopt codes of conduct (by July 2016), outlined methods for dealing with misconduct and allowed for serious misconduct to be reviewed by independent Councillor Conduct Panels. In August 2016, it was [reported](#) that over 100 councillors were facing disqualification for failing to comply with the new code of conduct. The [Local Government Amendment Act 2016](#) granted a reprieve to councils that had either made administrative errors or not satisfied the technical requirements, by extending the compliance date to within four months of the October 2016 council elections.

Monitoring and compliance

Throughout the course of the 58th Parliament, [municipal monitors](#) were appointed to a number of councils to review governance issues. In June 2015, two special inspectors of Municipal Administration were assigned to work with Darebin Council following the identification of problems (related to non-

compliance with policies and disrespectful behaviour) in a [report](#) tabled by the Municipal Monitor. After implementing a number of changes, the inspectors [reported](#) to the Minister in December 2015.

An independent [Commission of Inquiry](#) was appointed to investigate the City of Greater Geelong in late 2015. It followed the completion of the Halliday [Workplace cultural review](#), which found concerns relating to the culture and structures of the council. The report of the three-month investigation led to legislation to dismiss the council in April 2016, with the Government accepting the Commission's [12 recommendations](#). Administrators were then appointed. A Geelong Citizens' Jury (comprising 100 representative residents) delivered [its final report](#) on the best future design of the council in January 2017. The [City of Greater Geelong Amendment Act 2017](#) was passed in June 2017, with new electoral boundaries for the council confirmed the same month. Two municipal monitors were [appointed](#) in September 2017 (through to 2020) to assist the council with the implementation of the Commission's recommendations and with the council's longer-range plans.

The Ombudsman's June 2016 [report](#) into the mishandling of a special charge scheme by Casey Council resulted in the appointment of a municipal monitor. In September, the Monitor [reported](#) on the council's response to the recommendations of the Ombudsman and reviewed the actions taken to prevent similar governance issues happening again.

An investigation by the Local Government [Compliance and Investigations](#)

[Inspectorate](#) into Central Goldfields Shire Council led to the appointment of a municipal monitor to provide support and advice during the council's caretaker period. After further governance issues were identified by two monitoring reports, [a Bill to dismiss the council](#) was passed by the Parliament on 23 August 2017. Three long-term administrators were appointed in December 2017.

In June 2017, a Commission of Inquiry was appointed to review governance processes related to the development of Ararat Rural City Council's budget, including its methods of consultation. The Commission's [report](#) was tabled in Parliament on 9 August 2017, with recommendations for the Council's rating strategy and community engagement procedures, as well as its financial stability and governance issues. A Municipal Monitor [was appointed](#) for two years to assist the Council to make the required changes.

Recommendations from the Local Government Investigations and Compliance Inspectorate resulted in the appointment of municipal monitors at two more councils during the 58th Parliament: Frankston City and South Gippsland Shire. A Monitor was appointed for 18 months to report on governance at Frankston City Council in December 2017, following reports of [councillor boycotts](#), cost blowouts and extended meetings. In June 2018, a Monitor [was appointed](#) for a 12-month term to South Gippsland Shire Council to investigate concerns about the council's meeting procedures, policies and processes to manage conflicts of interest, and the management of confidential information.

Local Government Act review

Minister for Local Government, the Hon. Natalie Hutchins, released a [Ministerial Statement on local government](#) in August 2015 that outlined a number of reforms planned for the sector. The Local Government Reform Agenda included improvements to the integrity, capacity, performance, sustainability and value delivered by local government for Victorians. Along with the Fair Go Rates system, a substantially modernised Local Government Act was central to the plan.

Terms of reference for a review of the 1989 Act were released in August 2015 and consultation began with a discussion paper and website launch ('Your Council, Your Community') the following month. Ten community forums, six technical working groups and meetings with peak associations informed the process. [Act for the future: Directions for a new Local Government Act](#) was released in June 2016, with proposals for greater consistency across council structures and practices.

In November 2016, the Government announced that it would require all councils to develop four-year plans with their communities, giving residents more opportunities to engage with their councils. New Local Government Minister, Marlene Kairouz, released an exposure draft of the proposed Bill for public comment in December 2017. It was accompanied by the explanatory document, [A new Local Government Act for Victoria](#). The Bill was introduced in Parliament in May 2018 and [passed the Assembly in June](#); however, it did not progress in the Council and lapsed when the 58th Parliament expired.

Other developments

- The Ombudsman produced a report on [councils and complaint handling](#) in February 2015, with recommendations for defining complaints consistently with the national standard and requiring councils to have an internal review function in dealing with complaints. [Councils and complaints: A good practice guide](#) was developed by the Ombudsman, in consultation with all councils and key stakeholders, to provide practical guidance for improved council complaint-handling systems.
- The [Know your Council](#) website was launched in November 2015, allowing the public to compare the performance of councils across a range of services.
- A [KPMG review of public library funding](#) in Victoria was released in May 2016, recommending continued investment in [programs](#) such as the Living Libraries Infrastructure Program and investigating options for shared services across Victoria's library services.
- The Government created the [Suburban Development portfolio](#) in May 2016 in order to achieve a number of outcomes: to develop five-year jobs, services and infrastructure plans for Melbourne's suburbs; to oversee the development of [Metropolitan Partnerships](#) between the three levels of government; and to coordinate the State Government's social, economic and environmental investments in Melbourne's suburbs. A [Suburban Development Statement](#) was published in 2017.

- The [Victorian Auditor-General's Office](#) published a number of reports during the 58th Parliament that examined aspects of local government and made recommendations for improvement in areas such as [community engagement processes](#), [economic development and sustainability](#), and the [planning and review of service provision](#).
- The [Growing Suburbs Fund](#) replaced the Interface Growth Fund in May 2016, supporting the infrastructure needs of ten interface councils on Melbourne's urban fringe: Cardinia, Casey, Hume, Melton, Mitchell, Mornington Peninsula, Nillumbik, Whittlesea, Wyndham, and Yarra Ranges.
- The Government sought to give local government candidates the option of providing more information about themselves with an update to the electoral regulations in June 2016. Section 38 of the [Local Government \(Electoral\) Regulations 2016](#)—which related to the insertion of how-to-vote cards in council postal packs—was subject to a rare [resolution of disallowance](#) in the Legislative Council on 31 August 2016.
- More women were returned at the [local government elections](#) in 2016; all councils elected at least one woman and women comprised 38.1 per cent of all councillors. The Government produced a [Best practice guide for gender equity in local government](#) in July 2018, in a bid to boost the representation of women on local councils to 50 per cent by 2025.
- The [Victorian Aboriginal and local government action plan](#) was launched in December 2016, providing a new resource for councils to build their relationships with local Aboriginal communities, promote reconciliation, and engage Aboriginal people in planning, decision-making, employment, programs and services.

Legislation

The following selection of legislation was introduced during the 58th Parliament. For further information, see the [Legislation website](#).

- [Local Government Amendment \(Fair Go Rates\) Act 2015](#)
- [Local Government Amendment \(Improved Governance\) Act 2015](#)
- [Local Government Legislation Amendment \(Environmental Upgrade Agreements\) Act 2015](#)
- [Local Government Amendment Act 2016](#)
- [Local Government \(Greater Geelong City Council\) Act 2016](#)
- [Local Government \(Central Goldfields Shire Council\) Act 2017](#)
- [Local Government Bill 2018](#) (lapsed)

Reports

The following selection of reports was produced during the 58th Parliament. For further reports, see the [Library catalogue](#).

- *A blueprint for change: Local government rate capping and variation framework: Final report*, Essential Services Commission (2015)
- *City of Greater Geelong: Culture review 2015–2016*, S. Halliday, City of Greater Geelong (2015)
- *Councils and complaints: A good practice guide*, Victorian Ombudsman (2015)
- *Darebin City Council: Final report to the Minister for Local Government*, (M. Madden & B. Mountford) Inspectors of Municipal Administration (2015)
- *Local government – Rates capping & variation framework: Consultation paper*, Essential Services Commission (2015)
- *Ministerial statement on Local Government*, Minister for Local Government (2015)
- *Act for the future: Directions for a new Local Government Act*, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (2016)
- *Municipal Monitor's report for Casey City Council*, B. Jaboor (2016)
- *Victorian Aboriginal and local government action plan*, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (2016)
- *Victorian public libraries review*, KPMG for Local Government Victoria and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (2016)
- *A new Local Government Act for Victoria*, Minister for Local Government (2017)
- *Commission of Inquiry into Ararat Rural City Council: An independent Commission of Inquiry established by the Minister for Local Government*, The Commission (2017)
- *Final report*, Geelong Citizens' Jury (2017)
- *Protecting integrity: Central Goldfields Shire Council investigation*, Local Government Investigations and Compliance Inspectorate (2017)
- *Public participation and community engagement: Local Government sector*, Victorian Auditor-General's Office (2017)
- *Suburban development statement*, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (2017)
- *Best practice guide for gender equity in local government*, Local Government Victoria (2018)
- *Delivering local government services*, Victorian Auditor-General's Office (2018)
- *Local government and economic development*, Victorian Auditor-General's Office (2018)

Committee inquiries

The following committee inquiries were conducted during the 58th Parliament.

- *Inquiry into rate capping policy*, Environment and Planning Committee, Parliament of Victoria (various dates, 2015–2017)
- *Inquiry into the sustainability and operational challenges of Victoria's rural and regional councils*, Environment, Natural Resources and Regional Development Committee, Parliament of Victoria (2018)

Rural and regional

Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund

In 2015, the *Regional Development Victoria Amendment (Jobs and Infrastructure) Act 2015* replaced the Regional Growth Fund and established the Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund (RJIF), which is a regional development package that invests in creating jobs and building infrastructure in regional Victoria. As outlined in the Minister's *second reading speech*, the fund was set up to provide better infrastructure, facilities and services, strengthen the economic, social and environmental base of communities, and create jobs and improve career opportunities. The legislation also established the *Regional Development Advisory Committee*, an independent committee that provides regional development policy advice. Following this legislation, the *2015–16 State Budget* allocated the Fund \$500 million over four years, starting from 1 July 2015. This included a Regional Jobs Fund of \$200 million and a Regional Infrastructure Development Fund of \$250 million.

Managed by Regional Development Victoria (RDV), the RJIF is comprised of three programs: the *Regional Infrastructure Fund*, the *Regional Jobs Fund* and the *Stronger Regional Communities Plan*. Under these programs, ten grant streams opened for applications from 1 July 2015. Since its inception, RJIF has generated \$1.3 billion in regional investment, according to Regional Development Victoria's *2017–18 annual report*.

Of the RJIF's many initiatives, major funded regional infrastructure projects include:

- *Redevelopment of the Eureka Stadium and Ballarat Sports Precinct*: The Eureka Stadium, which opened in August 2017, was upgraded to meet AFL standards as part of a \$31.5 million investment in Ballarat sporting Infrastructure;
- *Stage Two redevelopment of the Geelong Performing Arts Centre*: The \$38.5 million second stage of the Ryrie Street redevelopment began in 2017, to be completed in 2018;
- *Completion of the Grampians Peak Trail Revamp of Bendigo's Cathedral precinct*: A \$27 million project to be implemented over three stages, the world-class walking experience is expected to create 35 full-time jobs and boost the local economy by \$6.4 million per year;
- *Shepparton Art Museum*: A \$10 million investment from the RJIF towards the \$34.5 million Shepparton Art Museum redevelopment project will see the facility moved to the more prominent and accessible location of the Victoria Lake Park; and
- *Development of Latrobe Valley University Training Clinic and Dental Prosthetics Laboratory*: The \$5.3 million facility, which opened in December 2017, is the only dental prosthetics laboratory in Victoria with enough capacity to supply all Victorian dentists, reducing the need for imports as well as presenting opportunities for export for the region.

Regional partnerships

Consultations during the 2015 *Regional economic development and services review* highlighted that regional Victorians felt that governance arrangements were limited in delivering outcomes for regional

communities. In response, *Victoria's regional statement* in 2015 outlined the development of nine new Regional Partnerships designed to help regional communities build stronger connections with government. Building on the work of existing regional leadership and advocacy groups, Victoria's nine **Regional Partnerships** were established in 2016 with the aim of giving rural and regional Victorians a stronger voice in decision-making and policy development that affects their areas. Partnerships were established in the following regions: Mallee, Wimmera Southern Mallee, Great South Coast, Central Highlands, Loddon Campaspe, Barwon, Goulburn, Ovens Murray and Gippsland.

Substantially increasing the \$27.5 million allocated in the **2017–18 State Budget**, the 58th Parliament's **final budget** delivered \$760 million to projects identified as key priorities by Victoria's nine regional partnerships. These projects included: rail infrastructure, tourism, business and innovation and support for those impacted by family violence and homelessness.

Natural disaster recovery

With **climate change** increasing the likelihood of extreme weather, the Andrews Government increased attention on planning for high-risk areas, mitigation projects and disaster management funding during the 58th Parliament.

Regional Development Victoria

collaborated with government bodies such as Agriculture Victoria, Emergency Management Victoria and local councils to facilitate rural and regional recovery responses. There were a range of natural disasters that affected regional Victoria

during this period, including drought, floods and storms, with each of RDV's key recovery projects supported by the Victorian Government's \$500 million RJIF.

The **Christmas Day bushfires** devastated communities along the Great Ocean Road, including Wye River and Separation Creek, in December 2015. Wye River was hit the hardest, with **116 houses** lost after fires burned for 34 days. In January 2016, the Andrews Government announced a \$2.75 million package to assist the recovery.

The regions were also responding to drought conditions, with seven of the ten drought-declared local government areas located in the Grampians Region. In response, the Victorian Government announced a **\$27 million package** to target drought-affected farmers and small businesses. The **package** was designed to supply free kinder, rural financial counselling and the fast-tracking of infrastructure projects, among other initiatives.

In November 2016, serious thunderstorms impacted Mildura, causing damage to **236 buildings** and approximately **\$77.6–156.8 million** worth of damage to the farming sector. The Commonwealth and Victorian Governments established a number of disaster relief and recovery arrangements, including a \$120,000 Community Recovery Fund which provided grants of up to \$25,000 for affected primary producers.

In 2016, a series of floods impacted 51 local government areas around Victoria, causing over \$150 million worth of damage. To mitigate future incidents of this kind, the 2016–17 Victorian Budget provided **\$25 million** in funding to help

prepare for future floods, which included a new [Victorian floodplain management strategy](#). In April 2017, it was announced that a Community Recovery Fund of up to \$3.4 million would be set up to help areas impacted by flooding.

In 2018, the Government provided [\\$9.1 million](#) for community recovery projects and a Natural Disaster Resilience Grants Scheme. The funding, which was jointly provided by the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments, aims to help communities minimise the impacts of natural disasters with mitigation projects and grants of up to \$250,000 for flood planning.

Other reforms

Despite the Victorian [Government having sold part of Rural Finance Corporation of Victoria \(RFCV\)](#) to Bendigo and Adelaide Bank in 2014, some residual obligations remained under the *Rural Finance Act 1988*. To meet these obligations, the [Rural Assistance Schemes Act 2016](#) came into effect to finalise the winding up of the regional RFCV and to establish the Rural Assistance Commissioner (RAC). The remaining functions of RFCV were subsequently delegated to the RAC. [Proceeds from the sale of the RFCV](#) have helped fund the [Murray Basin Rail Project](#), a \$440 million project that upgrades Victoria's rail freight network.

Additionally, the passage of two Acts provided for the revocation of several permanent reservations over regional Crown land, enabling the sites to be sold or used for other purposes. The first was the [Land \(Revocation of Reservations – Regional Victoria Land\) Act 2016](#), which revoked four regional Crown land reservations: Burke's Flat, Campbelltown,

Lake Charm and Walpeup. The second was the [Crown Land Legislation Amendment \(Canadian Regional Park and Other Matters\) Act 2016](#), which created two regional parks (the Hepburn and Canadian Regional Parks) and the Kerang State Wildlife Reserve. The Act also helps [support the apiary industry](#) by introducing reforms to bee site licensing on Crown land.

In September 2016, the Economic, Education, Jobs and Skills Committee was asked to investigate the factors affecting fuel prices in regional Victoria. After a public consultation process, the Committee tabled its [report](#) in February 2018. It found that local market factors and the level of competition (and the presence of independent fuel discounters) can significantly affect regional fuel prices. The Committee recommended ways of stimulating competition, such as greater use of fuel price apps, support for the RACV's efforts to cover fuel prices with crowdsourced data, and the review of barriers to new entrants into regional fuel markets. The Government [supported](#) all of the recommendations made by the Committee.

On 7 September 2017, the Economic, Education, Jobs and Skills Committee received [terms of reference](#) to conduct an inquiry into the [NBN](#) rollout in regional Victoria. The Committee was tasked with investigating the implications of poor internet connectivity and speed on productivity and job growth in regional Victoria, as well as reporting on the consequences of not rolling out the NBN with 'fibre to the node.' The inquiry lapsed at the expiration of the 58th Parliament.

Legislation

The following selection of legislation was introduced during the 58th Parliament. For further information, see the [Legislation](#) website.

- [Regional Development Victoria Amendment \(Jobs and Infrastructure\) Act 2015](#)
- [Crown Land Legislation Amendment \(Canadian Regional Part and Other Matters\) Act 2016](#)
- [Land \(Revocation of Reservations – Regional Victoria Land\) Act 2016](#)
- [Rural Assistance Schemes Act 2016](#)

Reports

The following selection of reports was produced during the 58th Parliament. For further reports, see the [Library catalogue](#).

- [2014 Master plan: Grampians Peaks Trail](#), Parks Victoria (2014)
- [Annual report 2014–15](#), Country Fire Authority (2015)
- [Regional economic development and services review: Final report](#), Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources (2015)

- [Victoria's regional statement](#), State Government of Victoria (2015)
- [Annual report 2015–16: Regional Development Victoria](#), Regional Development Victoria (2016)
- [Victorian floodplain management strategy](#), Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (2016)
- [Annual report 2016–17: Regional Development Victoria](#), Regional Development Victoria (2017)
- [Climate change and the Victoria bushfire threat: Update](#), Climate Council (2017)
- [Annual report 2017/18: Geelong Performing Arts Centre](#), Geelong Performing Arts Centre Trust (2018)
- [Annual report 2017–18: Regional Development Victoria](#), Regional Development Victoria (2018)

Committee inquiries

The following committee inquiry was conducted during the 58th Parliament.

- [Inquiry into fuel prices in regional Victoria](#), Economic, Education, Jobs and Skills Committee, Parliament of Victoria (2018)

Primary industries



Primary industries

An overview of developments within the primary industries portfolios during the 58th Parliament, including key issues, legislation, committee inquiries and reports.

Agriculture

Omnibus Bill

The [Primary Industries Legislation Amendment Bill 2017](#), introduced in November 2017, proposed amendments to a number of Acts relating to dairying, plant biosecurity, meat processing and fishing. This included amending the *Dairy Act 2000* to allow camel milk to be regulated and licensed in Victoria by the state's specialist dairy regulator, Dairy Food Safety Victoria, and changes to the *Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981* to regulate the cultivation and processing of industrial hemp (low-THC cannabis). The Bill reached the third reading in the Legislative Council in May 2018, with amendments. The amendments were yet to be considered in the Legislative Assembly when the 58th Parliament expired and the Bill consequently lapsed.

Fishing

Target One Million was the Government's plan to increase the number of participants in recreational fishing in Victoria to one million, by 2020. The policy had been a [pre-election commitment](#) with the intention of attracting recreational fishers to regional Victoria. This plan also included a commitment to increase the fish stocking program. A key initiative of this policy was the phase out of commercial net fishing in Port Phillip Bay and Corio Bay through the buyout of licences. The former independent Member for Gippsland, Craig Ingram, was

[appointed](#) by the Government in May 2015 as a special coordinator to assist with implementing the plan.

The plan, which also set catch limits, attracted criticism from [Seafood Industry Victoria](#), who saw it as a 'right-to-farm' issue, and expressed concerns about the impact of the changes on the health and wellbeing on those in the fishing industry. VRFish, representing recreational anglers, had been campaigning for the removal of commercial fishing from Port Phillip Bay and [welcomed](#) the catch limits. Catch limits did not, however, set species limits. By December 2017, the [Victorian Fisheries Authority](#), which had been monitoring commercial catch returns, reported an increased take in key recreational species. This prompted the Government to propose a [revision](#) of the management arrangement in March 2018, following public consultation.

The [Fisheries Amendment Act 2015](#) banned commercial net fishing in Corio Bay from April 2018 and in Port Phillip Bay from April 2022. It also set out a compensation scheme for commercial licence-holders.

Domestic animals

Puppy farms

Puppy farms received extensive [media coverage](#) at the beginning of the 58th Parliament. Animal welfare activist groups and the RSPCA had waged a campaign for increased regulation of commercial domestic animal breeders and pet shops. The RSPCA estimated that a high proportion of dogs sold in pet shops were

sourced from puppy farms, linking the impulse buying of puppies in pet shops with eventual high [abandonment rates](#) at animal shelters.

In January 2015, the Andrews Government [requested](#) a formal investigation into animal welfare practices at a North Melbourne animal shelter, following claims of high euthanasia rates at the shelter.

The Government had made an [election commitment](#) before the 2014 State Election to regulate the industry and amend the existing *Code of Practice for the Operation of Breeding and Rearing Businesses 2014*. Amendments to the Code, requiring breeders to obtain veterinary health checks for female dogs, were proposed by the new Minister for Agriculture in [March 2015](#) and came into effect on [1 July 2015](#).

The *Domestic Animals Amendment (Puppy Farms and Pet Shops) Act 2017* limited the number of female breeding animals per registered business to ten, by April 2020. Pet stores are also limited to selling dogs and cats sourced from registered pounds and shelters, only.

The Act ensured that commercial breeders who obtain ministerial approval ('applicable organisations') are able to keep a maximum of 50 female dogs, but are also subject to stricter regulations and adherence to the Code. It requires breeders with up to ten fertile female dogs to register with the local council. Domestic animal breeders were [reported](#) to be angry at having their businesses and livelihoods threatened.

On 25 October 2016, the Legislative Council Economy and Infrastructure Committee undertook a self-referenced

[inquiry on the Bill](#), following its introduction in the Legislative Assembly. The Committee's report criticised the level of consultation, the limit of ten fertile female dogs as having 'no clear scientific reason', and the possibility of a reduced supply of livestock working dogs. The Committee Inquiry attracted [concerns](#) in Parliament that the report had been leaked to the media prior to being tabled.

In response to these issues, the Government introduced several amendments to ensure the passage of the Bill through the Legislative Council. The Bill eventually passed on 15 December 2017 following a close [19 to 17 vote](#) in the Legislative Council. There was a [celebratory gathering](#) on the front steps of Parliament House by advocates (the group, Oscar's Law) and their dogs on the passing of the legislation.

Restricted breed dogs

The *Domestic Animals Amendment Act 2015* placed a moratorium on the destruction of restricted breed dogs until September 2016. This was to allow Parliament's Joint Investigatory Committee to report on its [inquiry](#) into existing legislative arrangements concerning such breeds. Under the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*, a dog could be destroyed solely because of its status as a restricted breed under the Act. The 'breed specific' nature of the legislation was a concern expressed by the community in submissions made to the Committee.

The Committee tabled its [report](#) to Parliament on 23 March 2016. The *Primary Industries Legislation Amendment Act 2016* extended the moratorium for a further 12 months, to 30 September 2017. This was to enable the Andrews Government to

implement its [response](#) to the Committee's recommendations and prevent, in the meantime, the destruction of any dogs held under the Act.

The [Domestic Animal Amendment \(Restricted Breed Dogs\) Act 2017](#) allowed for the registration of restricted breed dogs in Victoria as recommended by the Committee. Restrictions on the ownership, management and importation of these dogs remained in place, as recommended by the Committee. These restrictions, together with registration, allow councils to keep track of the dogs' locations, aiding the eventual phasing out of such breeds in Victoria. The moratorium on dogs being euthanised under the Act continued until the registration regime was instated. The Act also clarified the status of 'retired' guard dogs as dangerous dogs, maintaining that once a dog is deemed dangerous it must continue to be registered as dangerous for its lifetime.

Animal welfare

The Government [released](#) a draft animal welfare action plan in September 2016, developed with the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee. The establishment of Animal Welfare Victoria was announced in October 2017. Victoria's first [Animal welfare action plan](#) was [released](#) in January 2018, with four priority areas: a policy and legal framework that safeguards and improves animal welfare; collaborations that promote investment in animal welfare; education and communication; and effective compliance and enforcement.

For information on legislation and developments relating to greyhounds, see the [Arts, sport and recreation](#) section of this Briefing e-Book.

Food and Fibre

In July 2015, the Government released a [discussion paper](#) on job growth and prosperity in Victoria's [food and fibre sector](#) as part of the \$200 million Future Industries Fund. The sector (identified as one of six priority sectors) employs over 190,000 people, accounts for one in six jobs in regional areas and contributes 4.9 per cent to gross state product. A number of areas were within the scope of the consultation: agriculture, fisheries, forestry, animal feed, textile, clothing, footwear, and food and beverage manufacturing. The Government released the [Food and fibre strategy](#) in early 2016, which supported the establishment of an 'innovation network' to drive employment, investment and modernisation in the sector.

SPC

In 2014, the Coalition Government had funded upgrades to the SPC Ardmona fruit processing plant in Shepparton, contributing \$22 million to the \$100 million renewal project as a co-investment with parent company, Coca-Cola Amatil (CCA). The first stage of the modernisation project [opened](#) in May 2015. At the end of the four-year deal, CCA initiated a [strategic review](#) of the business in August 2018. The IXL jam brand, based in Kyabram, was [sold](#) in September 2018, with the new owners committing to continue the business. Later the same year, CCA announced that SPC was [on the market](#), but that it would be 'business as usual' in the meantime.

Timber

In March 2017, a convoy of logging trucks [blockaded](#) Spring Street outside Parliament House. Timber workers mounted a protest in response to news of the imminent closure of the Heyfield timber mill. Australian Sustainable Hardwood Ltd had [announced](#) that it intended to shut down its Victorian mill operations in the central Gippsland district of Heyfield by September 2018 and move to Tasmania. The decision followed a reduction in timber allocation by VicForests after June 2017, when the existing contract expired. The new allocation of 80,000 cubic metres of timber per year was deemed by the company to be unviable to maintain its operations in Victoria.

VicForests' modelling, as well as a federal government advisory body's [assessment](#) of the conservation status of the critically endangered Leadbeater's possum, indicated timber harvesting needed to be reduced. The 2009 Black Saturday bushfires had resulted in a substantial loss of the Leadbeater's possum habitat, contributing to the possum's endangered status.

Federal MP Barnaby Joyce weighed in to the [debate](#), offering to release protected forests in Victoria's Central Highlands, as well as seeking the intervention of Federal Minister for the Environment, Josh Frydenberg, in reviewing the status of the Leadbeater's possum.

Following these developments, the Parliamentary Economy and Infrastructure Committee initiated a [self-referenced inquiry](#) into the operations at VicForests in May 2017. The Inquiry focused on VicForests' compliance with its utilisation

standards as related to the availability and supply of timber to industry. The Committee focused on the accuracy of VicForests' modelling. The Committee heard submissions stating that innovation and investment in new technologies were needed to meet future challenges in supply, the necessity of plantation timber to augment supply, and new markets that favoured products with environmental certification.

The [flagged closure](#) of the Heyfield timber mill in early 2017 threatened over 200 jobs in the Gippsland timber industry. The Government was prompted to consider purchasing and operating the mill. By September 2017, the Government [announced](#) that it had finalised the purchase of the mill from the Hermal Group. The challenging issue of timber allocations and the viability of the state's timber mills continued throughout the 58th Parliament.

See also the [Planning and Environment](#) section of this Briefing e-Book.

Legislation

The following selection of legislation was introduced during the 58th Parliament. For further information, see the [Legislation](#) website.

- [Domestic Animals Amendment Act 2015](#)
- [Primary Industries Legislation Amendment Act 2016](#)
- [Domestic Animals Amendment \(Puppy Farms and Pet Shops\) Act 2017](#)
- [Domestic Animal Amendment \(Restricted Breed Dogs\) Act 2017](#)
- [Primary Industries Legislation Amendment Bill 2017](#) (lapsed)

Reports

The following selection of reports was produced during the 58th Parliament. For further reports, see the [Library catalogue](#).

- [Food and fibre: Sector strategy](#), Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources (2016)
- [Animal welfare action plan: Improving the welfare of animals in Victoria](#), Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources (2017)
- [Industry development plan: Developing a medicinal cannabis industry in Victoria, 2018–2021](#), Agriculture Victoria (2018)
- [Victoria: Invest in agriculture and food processing - Overview](#), Agriculture Victoria (2018)
- [Victorian food and fibre export performance report 2017–18](#), Agriculture Victoria (2018)

Committee inquiries

The following committee inquiries were conducted during the 58th Parliament.

- [Inquiry into the Domestic Animals Amendment \(Puppy Farms and Pet Shops\) Bill 2016](#), Economy and Infrastructure Committee, Parliament of Victoria (2016)
- [Inquiry into the legislative framework relating to restricted breed dogs](#), Economy and Infrastructure Committee, Parliament of Victoria (2016)
- [Inquiry into VicForests operations](#), Economy and Infrastructure Committee, Parliament of Victoria (2017)

Energy and resources

Victorian Energy Efficiency Target

The Andrews Government [announced](#) that it would be retaining the Victorian Energy Efficiency Target (VEET) scheme in December 2014, indicating that 2,000 sustainable energy-sector jobs would be saved as a consequence. (A Coalition Government Bill to phase out the scheme had lapsed at the conclusion of the previous Parliament.) The VEET scheme is designed to make energy-efficiency improvements more affordable for households and businesses and to encourage investment in industries that supply energy-efficient products. The Government announced stronger VEET targets at an energy summit in August 2015 and [introduced legislation](#) in October 2015 to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 30 million tonnes over five years. The energy-efficient certificate program was rebranded as [Victorian Energy Upgrades](#) in 2017. A [public consultation](#) was conducted to update the Victorian Energy Efficiency Target Regulations in 2018.

Unconventional gas

The Andrews Government asked the Environment and Planning Committee to inquire into the exploration, extraction, production and rehabilitation for [onshore unconventional gas](#) in May 2015. An inquiry into the issue was one of Labor's election commitments. A moratorium on all onshore gas activities had been in place in Victoria since 2012. After 1,600 public submissions and a number of public hearings, the inquiry resulted in [four minority reports](#) tabled in December 2015. In August 2016, as part of their response to the inquiry, the Andrews Government announced a permanent ban on the

exploration and development of all onshore unconventional gas in Victoria, including hydraulic fracturing ('fracking') and coal seam gas. The Government cited the [protection of primary producers](#), regional communities and the natural environment as reasons for the ban. The [Resources Legislation Amendment \(Fracking Ban\) Bill 2016](#) passed Parliament in March 2017. The legislation also extended the moratorium on onshore conventional gas to 30 June 2020, to allow for further geoscientific research.

Energy plans

The Andrews Government released [Saving energy, growing jobs: Victoria's energy efficiency statement](#) in June 2015. The statement formed part of the [Government's plan](#) to create jobs in new energy technologies, to position energy efficiency as the main driver of improved energy affordability, and to transition Victoria to a low-emissions economy. In August 2015, the Government unveiled a [Renewable Energy Roadmap](#) and sought community feedback through a consultation process. The Roadmap outlined initiatives for accelerating the development of renewable energy projects in Victoria. The renewable sector was supported by the appointment of Victoria's first [Renewable Energy Advocate](#) in December 2016. A [New energy technologies: Sector strategy](#) report was produced in 2016, as part of the [Future Industries](#) program.

See also the [Industry, innovation and employment](#) section.

The development of the Government's action plan was informed by feedback to the Roadmap, as well as by the [Finkel Review](#) (June 2017) of the national

electricity market. Former US Vice President, Al Gore, was on hand in July 2017 to launch the Victorian [Renewable energy action plan](#), which invests \$146 million across three areas: supporting sector growth; empowering communities and consumers; and modernising Victoria's energy system. The Action Plan—which aims to ensure an affordable, reliable and resilient electricity supply—includes [\\$48.1 million](#) to buy renewable energy certificates, most of which will be used for solar power to run the tram network and grid-scale batteries, which can store renewable energy to help with periods of peak demand.

Energy consumers

The [Energy Legislation Amendment \(Consumer Protection\) Bill 2015](#), which passed Parliament in October 2015, [banned early exit fees](#) for fixed-term electricity and gas plans in cases where the retailer increases the price. The legislation also gave more power to the Essential Services Commission (ESC) to enforce compliance with energy-sector consumer protections. The [Energy Legislation \(Publication of Retail Offers\) Act 2015](#) requires energy retailers to provide their gas and solar feed-in tariff offers to an online price comparator service nominated by the Minister, enabling consumers to compare energy offers.

In October 2015, the Government launched the [Victorian Energy Compare website](#) (which replaced My Power Planner). The new comparison website [allows consumers](#) to enter data from their power bills to find electricity and gas offers that will potentially save them money. As an incentive, the Andrews Government offered all Victorians a [\\$50 Power Savings Bonus](#) in the 2018–19 State

Budget for using the website. In the lead-up to the 2018 State Election, the Government announced a [50 per cent rebate](#) on solar panel systems for eligible households, and discounted solar hot water systems, under the Solar Homes program.

An [Independent and Bipartisan Review of the Electricity and Gas Retail Markets in Victoria](#)—undertaken by John Thwaites, Terry Mulder and Patricia Faulkner—was [established in November 2016](#) to investigate ways to improve outcomes for Victorian consumers. In August 2017, the [final report](#) made [11 recommendations](#). This included abolishing standing offers and a requirement for all energy retailers to provide a basic service offer to customers. Rebates for households on expensive default standing offers [were negotiated](#) with the three major retailers (Origin, AGL and EnergyAustralia) in November 2017. In October 2018, the Government announced its intention to implement all the [supported](#) recommendations, including a commitment to establish a Victorian Default Offer, new methods to empower consumers and ways to assist vulnerable consumers.

An overhaul of the Essential Services Commission's (ESC) [Payment Difficulty Framework](#) resulted in a [doubling of the threshold](#) at which residential customers can be disconnected (from \$132 to \$300). As part of an [Energy Retail Code review](#) in 2016–17, the ESC simplified its framework for customer entitlements to assistance. The ESC also established a register so that residents living in apartments and communal properties could identify their electricity provider and access the

Victorian Energy and Water Ombudsman to resolve complaints.

Feed-in Tariffs

The *National Electricity (Victoria) Further Amendment Act 2015* was designed to allow [easier connection](#) to the electricity grid for households with rooftop solar panels, reduce waiting times and provide access to a dispute resolution process.

The Essential Services Commission was asked to conduct an inquiry into the [energy value of distributed generation](#) in September 2015. It followed the Government's election commitment to fairly compensate Victorians for the energy that their solar panels contribute to the grid. The inquiry was split into two stages, with reports finalised in 2016 and 2017.

The ESC recommended introducing multiple feed-in tariffs that vary according to the time of day, having regard for the environmental and social value of small renewable energy generation electricity. A Bill to [enact the new feed-in tariffs](#) (among other amendments) passed Parliament in February 2017. In the same month, the [Government announced](#) that the minimum feed-in tariff for solar households would increase from five cents to 11.3 cents per kilowatt hour, from 1 July 2017.

Power stations

A fire that broke out at the Hazelwood coal mine in the Latrobe Valley in February 2014 lasted for 45 days. It was a major, complex fire emergency and a serious risk to public health. The *Mineral Resource (Sustainable Development) Amendment (Latrobe Valley Mine Rehabilitation Commissioner) Act 2017* set up the Office of a Commissioner to monitor and report on the rehabilitation of the Hazelwood mine.

The Office of the Commissioner was a recommendation of the [Board of Inquiry into the Hazelwood Coal Mine Fire](#). The Board was chaired by the Hon. Bernard Teague, and presented its [final report](#) in April 2016. In September 2014, the Board had submitted its [report and recommendations](#) to the 57th Parliament. The 2014 Inquiry reported on the origin and circumstances of the fire, and the adequacy and effectiveness of the response from the mine owners, emergency services, and relevant government agencies. In May 2015, the Inquiry was reopened, and the terms of reference were extended to include the potential [health impacts](#) of the fire on the Latrobe Valley communities, as well as options for the [rehabilitation of the mine](#).

A further recommendation of the Inquiry was the establishment of a statutory authority to monitor the rehabilitation obligations of mines. The *Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Amendment Bill 2018*, introduced in August 2018, sought to establish the Mine Land Rehabilitation Authority by July 2020. The Bill, however, lapsed at the end of the 58th Parliament.

Alcoa ceased operations at the small [Anglesea mine and power station](#) in August 2015, with the shutdown followed by consultation on an environmental rehabilitation process for the site. Wholesale electricity price rises and a greater reliance on gas followed the closure of the [Hazelwood power station](#) in the Latrobe Valley in March 2017. Hazelwood's majority owner, French energy company Engie, had announced [the closure](#) of the power station in November 2016; the power station had previously supplied over 20 per cent of Victoria's base load electricity and five per cent of national energy demand. The Government later put [measures in place](#) to ensure a minimum of five years' notice for the closure of the Yallourn and Loy Yang power stations.

In March 2018, both the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) and the Australian Energy Regulator [reported](#) potential energy security issues for Victoria and [higher prices](#) in the national electricity market. AEMO later reported on the increased likelihood of power [outages](#) during periods of extreme energy demand. The agency also noted the rapid growth of utility-scale wind and solar generation in Victoria. [Media commentary](#) at the time highlighted warnings from both AEMO and the Finkel Review regarding the need for heavy investment in the national transmission network—particularly in western Victoria—in order to get renewable power to market.

A review was conducted into power outages that affected almost 95,000 Victorians during a heatwave on the Australia Day long weekend in 2018. The outages were [attributed](#) to a series of local failures in the privately-owned distribution

networks, rather than a lack of energy supply, and a number of recommendations were made to address outage prevention and consumer protections.

Renewable energy

The Andrews Government [made a commitment to develop](#) the wind energy industry by reducing the buffer zone for dwellings near wind projects from two kilometres to one kilometre. Planning rules were relaxed in mid-2015 to [simplify wind farm applications](#), with the Minister for Planning becoming the responsible authority for permit applications for wind farm facilities. A tender process was [announced](#) in November 2015 to source [renewable energy certificates](#) from new projects in Victoria, to encourage jobs and investment in the industry.

In May 2015, the Andrews Government [called for the federal Government](#) to remove section 7c from the *Renewable Energy (Electricity) Act 2000* (Cth), which was understood to prevent state governments from having schemes similar to the Renewable Energy Target (RET). In June 2015, Australia's large-scale renewable energy target was reduced by [federal legislation](#) to 33,000 gigawatt hours (or 23.5 per cent of electricity generation) by 2020, which was seen as a potential restriction on the development of major renewable energy projects in Victoria.

A year later, in June 2016, the Victorian Government sought to stimulate the renewables sector with the [announcement of new targets](#): 25 per cent of electricity to come from renewable energy by 2020, rising to 40 per cent by 2025 (requiring 5,400 MW of large-scale wind and large-

and small-scale solar power to be built). Based on a [mechanism used in the ACT](#), the Victorian scheme (VRET) was [designed to complement](#) the national scheme and give confidence to investors in the renewable energy market. The targets are designed to be met by reverse auctions for competing project developers (with an emphasis on large-scale solar) and will be [additional](#) to the national target after 2020.

Two new Victorian wind farms were [announced](#) in July 2016, with the Government signing contracts for projects in Mt Gellibrand and Kiata with the potential to generate up to 100 MW of capacity. A large wind farm [officially opened](#) in Ararat in June 2017, capable of generating 240 MW of electricity. The [Kiata](#) wind farm in western Victoria opened in January 2018. A number of other wind power projects were also underway or proposed at locations including Lal Lal, Moorabool, Dundonnell and Murra Warra.

A [consultation opened](#) on the renewable energy auction process in August 2016, seeking feedback on the system that would invite industry bids to build new renewable energy capacity in Victoria. In November 2017, the [Victorian Renewable Energy Auction Scheme](#) opened, having a target to deliver up to 650 MW of large-scale renewable energy from suppliers who would enter into 15-year government support agreements. The first reverse auction [resulted in six projects](#) in regional Victoria (three solar farms and three wind farms), with a combined capacity to deliver 928 MW of renewable energy when completed.

A solar certificate tender was [announced](#) in March 2017 for large-scale solar plants, designed to build up to 75 MW of new solar projects in regional Victoria. The two [successful tenders](#) went to Bannerton Solar Park, near Robinvale, and Numurkah Solar Farm, near Shepparton. The Andrews Government also [announced](#) an investment in large-scale energy storage initiatives around the state, such as batteries, pumped hydro and solar thermal, in order to help manage periods of peak energy demand. Two [large-scale battery projects](#), delivered by private consortia with funding from the Government and the Australian Renewable Energy Agency, were announced in March 2018. The battery projects are located at the Gannawarra Solar Farm (south-west of Kerang) and at Warrenheip, near Ballarat.

The Victorian Parliament passed the [Renewable Energy \(Jobs and Investment\) Bill 2017](#) in October 2017. The legislation [formally set](#) the previously announced renewable energy targets and established schemes to promote the generation of electricity by large-scale facilities that either use or convert renewable sources into electricity. The VRET was [expected to cut](#) the average cost of power for Victorians by around \$30 a year for households, \$25,000 a year for medium businesses and \$140,000 a year for large companies, leading to a 16 per cent reduction in electricity sector greenhouse gas emissions by 2034–35.

Other developments

- The [Economic, Education, Jobs and Skills Committee](#) was given a reference in June 2016 to inquire into community energy projects. It reviewed the role of social enterprises and community ownership in the energy sector and investigated ways to increase the uptake of a diverse range of [community energy](#) projects.
- An [independent review](#) of Victoria's electricity and gas safety networks was conducted during 2017, chaired by Dr Paul Grimes. The final report and the Government response were released in August 2018. The [Andrews Government supported](#) most of the 43 recommendations, a number of which were directed towards strengthening the governance of the Essential Services Commission and consolidating energy safety legislation.
- A review of the [Essential Services Commission](#), conducted by the Department of Treasury and Finance in late 2016, resulted in the [Essential Services Commission \(Governance, Procedural and Administrative Improvements\) Amendment Bill 2018](#), which was designed to improve the operation of the ESC in 2018. The review made [ten recommendations](#), which were supported by the Government. The Bill, which sought to establish the ESC as the economic regulator of Victoria's energy, water and transport sectors, lapsed at the expiration of the 58th Parliament.
- The [Electricity Safety Amendment \(Bushfire Mitigation Civil Penalties Scheme\) Act 2017](#) is intended to reduce the bushfire threat posed by powerline faults to regional and rural Victorian communities. It [requires](#)

electricity distribution businesses to meet enhanced powerline fault detection and suppression obligations, replacing bare wires with covered conductor or underground powerlines in high bushfire-risk areas of Victoria.

- The Government established the [Victorian Energy Policy Centre](#) in collaboration with Victoria University in June 2018. The Centre will focus on policy challenges in energy for Australia and Victoria.

Legislation

The following selection of legislation was introduced during the 58th Parliament. For further information, see the [Legislation](#) website.

- [Energy Legislation Amendment \(Consumer Protection\) Act 2015](#)
- [Energy Legislation Amendment \(Publication of Retail Offers\) Act 2015](#)
- [National Electricity \(Victoria\) Amendment Act 2015](#)
- [Victorian Energy Efficiency Target Amendment \(Saving Energy, Growing Jobs\) Act 2015](#)
- [National Electricity \(Victoria\) Further Amendment Act 2016](#)
- [Energy Legislation Amendment \(Feed-In Tariffs and Improving Safety and Markets\) Act 2017](#)
- [Electricity Safety Amendment \(Bushfire Mitigation Civil Penalties Scheme\) Act 2017](#)
- [Mineral Resource \(Sustainable Development\) Amendment \(Latrobe Valley Mine Rehabilitation Commissioner\) Act 2017](#)
- [Renewable Energy \(Jobs and Investment\) Act 2017](#)
- [Resources Legislation Amendment \(Fracking Ban\) Act 2017](#)
- [Electricity Safety Amendment \(Electrical Equipment Safety Scheme\) Act 2018](#)
- [Essential Services Commission \(Governance, Procedural and Administrative Improvements\) Amendment Bill 2018 \(lapsed\)](#)
- [Mineral Resources \(Sustainable Development\) Amendment Bill 2018 \(lapsed\)](#)
- [Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Amendment Act 2018](#)

Library research publications

The Parliamentary Library Research & Inquiries unit produced the following research publication during the 58th Parliament.

- [Electricity and gas in Victoria](#), Research Paper, Victorian Parliamentary Library & Information Service (2017)

Reports

The following selection of reports was produced during the 58th Parliament. For further reports, see the [Library catalogue](#).

- [Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry report](#), Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry, Victorian Government (2014)
- [Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry report 2015/16 Vol. II – Investigations into 2009-2014 deaths](#), Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry, Victorian Government (2015)
- [Renewable energy roadmap: Delivering jobs and a clean energy future](#), Department of Economic Development, Jobs, transport and Resources (2015)
- [Saving energy, growing jobs: Victoria's energy efficiency and productivity statement](#), Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources (2015)
- [The energy value of distributed generation: Distributed generation inquiry Stage 1, Final report](#), Essential Services Commission (2016)
- [Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry report 2015/16, Vol. III – Health improvement](#), Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry, Victorian Government (2016)
- [Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry report 2015/16, Vol. IV - Mine rehabilitation](#), Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry, Victorian Government (2016)

- *New energy technologies: Sector strategy*, Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources (2016)
- *Review of the Essential Services Commission Act 2001: Report to the Minister for Finance*, NERA Economic Consulting for the Department of Treasury and Finance (2016)
- *Final report*, Independent Review into the Electricity and Gas Retail Markets in Victoria (2017)
- *Independent review into the future security of the National Electricity Market: Blueprint for the future*, A. Finkel (et al.), Commonwealth of Australia (2017)
- *Independent review of Victoria's electricity and gas network safety framework: Final report*, P. Grimes for the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (2017)
- *The network value of distributed generation: Distributed generation inquiry Stage 2 final report*, Essential Services Commission (2017)
- *Payment difficulty framework: Final decision*, Essential Services Commission (2017)
- *Renewable energy action plan*, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (2017)

Committee inquiries

The following committee inquiries were conducted during the 58th Parliament.

- *Inquiry into unconventional gas in Victoria: Final report*, Environment and Planning Committee, Parliament of Victoria (2015)
- *Inquiry into community energy projects*, Economic, Education, Jobs and Skills Committee, Parliament of Victoria (2017)

Water

Water for Victoria

Water for Victoria—a statewide water-management strategy—was released in October 2016. The water plan was the outcome of an 18-month community engagement process on the impact of the state's population growth and climate change on its water resources.

The Andrews Government had flagged the development of the new water plan in April 2015. A series of workshops were subsequently held around the state. The workshops included water corporations, catchment management authorities, water user peak bodies, such as the Victorian Farmers' Federation, Dairy Australia, Devondale Murray Goulburn, and the Environmental Water Holder. Feedback from the wider community was then sought on the resulting discussion paper, released in March 2016.

Key elements of the water plan included: an implicit recognition of the connection to water for Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians; the impact of the Millennium Drought on the perception of water for Victorian communities, including its recreational use; access to water for the agricultural sector; market transparency; and the importance of improving environmental health.

The *Aboriginal Water Program*, established under the plan, ensured participation of Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians in the planning and management of water resources. In November 2017, the first Aboriginal Commissioner was appointed to the [Victorian Environmental Water Holder Commission](#).

To secure water supply for the agricultural sector, the plan included an [expansion of the water grid](#) and modernisation of irrigation infrastructure. These included rural water system upgrades at Wedderburn, Bacchus Marsh and Werribee, and support for irrigation modernisation projects in the Goulburn-Murray and Macalister Irrigation Districts, the Werribee Irrigation District and the Sunraysia Irrigation District.

The expansion of the [water grid](#) also included the [Lance Creek Water Connection](#) project in the South Gippsland region. The project seeks to enable towns in the north of the region to be connected to the Melbourne water supply grid, ensuring water security for domestic use and food processing enterprises. One of the feasibility studies announced in 2016 provided the option for extending the water grid in South Gippsland from Foster to Yanakie to support dairy farmers. This would mitigate the pressures that the region's dairy farmers were facing from the drought, as well as lower milk prices.

Goulburn Murray Water's [Connections project](#) (commenced in 2008) is the largest irrigation modernisation project in Australia, with an investment of \$2 billion from the Australian and Victorian Governments. The project is upgrading irrigation infrastructure to minimise evaporation and leakage. When complete, the project should recover an estimated 429 gegalitres (GL) of water annually for irrigators and the environment. A mid-term Connections project review and consultation resulted in a [project 'reset'](#) by the Andrews Government in 2016. A key feature of the reset was a commitment to a channel-by-channel assessment, including greater landowner engagement

and improved transparency. A \$100 million [winter works](#) program in 2017 (aimed at a 2020 finish) was followed by a [review](#) of the structure and operations of Goulburn Murray Water to reduce costs and improve performance management.

The [Water and Catchment Legislation Amendment Bill 2017](#) was introduced in December 2017 to implement the key elements of the water plan. These included Aboriginal and traditional owner participation, recreational values, and planning for future challenges such as climate change and population growth. The Bill also sought to clarify the legal framework around salinity management in the Mallee region and the contributions required from irrigators. The Bill lapsed at the expiration of the 58th Parliament.

Murray-Darling Basin

The Murray-Darling Basin Plan commenced in November 2012. A [participant in the Plan](#) since it was signed into law in 2012, Victoria is committed to deliver 1,075 GL to the environment as its share of the total water target of 2,750 GL. The Plan sets Sustainable Diversion Limits (SDL) on how much water can be taken from the Murray-Darling Basin for irrigation, drinking water and industry. Water for the environment is purchased from landholders through a water-trading scheme.

Projects that deliver water into the Basin through efficiency measures, rather than reductions to irrigators, can be used to offset the total SDL allocation and attract Commonwealth funding under the SDL Adjustment Mechanism scheme. In December 2017, an additional 605 GL for the Basin in environmental offset projects was requested of participating states.

Victoria had, at that point, submitted 22 projects for Commonwealth funding under the SDL Adjustment Mechanism scheme. At the [Ministerial Council](#) meeting in June 2018, it was agreed that [no water would be taken](#) from Victoria's irrigators, following the approval of the 605 GL offset projects and Victoria's commitment to deliver an additional 62 GL to the Basin.

A review of the Commonwealth-funded [Victorian Farm Modernisation Project](#) (VFMP) was conducted to address community concerns that the transfer of entitlements by irrigators under the Project was causing unintended negative impacts on communities, such as reduced water availability. The VFMP water recovery program began in 2013 and was delivered through the Farm Water Program, led by the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority. In August 2018, [the review](#) recommended against funding further on-farm irrigation upgrade works, which would have resulted in further water transfers to the Commonwealth as part of the Basin Plan. The Victorian Government decided to discontinue the on-farm programs in favour of increasing penalties for water theft and supporting greater water efficiency.

Desalination plant

In March 2016, the Government [announced](#) that it would place its first order for 50 GL of [desalinated water](#) from the Wonthaggi plant, to be delivered the following summer. Melbourne's water storages were then at 65 per cent and Geelong storages below 39 per cent. The three metropolitan water retailers recommended the order, which was designed to improve water security for Melbourne and regional centres such as

Ballarat and Geelong. The decision was criticised by Nationals leader, the Hon. Peter Walsh, who said the decision (forecast to cost \$12 per household) would unfairly hit consumers. At the same time, the Government reactivated the Target 155 water-savings program in the face of rising consumption levels.

The Minister for Water later confirmed that water customers would not be charged for the 50 GL water order, after savings were found within the water contracts. In 2017, the Government's order from the Victorian Desalination Plant was set at the minimum 15 GL, funded through the sale of surplus Renewable Energy Certificates. The minimum order was confirmed for three years as a trial to boost water security, improve plant and pipeline management and to help stabilise prices.

Environmental water

The Environment, Natural Resources and Regional Development Committee self-referenced an inquiry in June 2017 into the management, governance and use of environmental water. The inquiry focused on issues such as 'blackwater', fees and charges, and the barriers to more efficient use of environmental water. The five recommendations of the Committee were generally supported by the Government, which included a commitment for agencies to collaborate to find the cause of significant water quality issues and explain those issues to the community in a timely manner.

Other developments

- The former Auditor-General, Des Pearson AO, was appointed in February 2015 to head an inquiry into the operation of the former Office of

Living Victoria (OLV), particularly the process for awarding grants. The Andrews Government had fulfilled an election commitment by immediately closing the OLV and announcing an inquiry. The inquiry report found poor financial record keeping, concerns about contract management and grants administration, and a lack of engagement with the water sector.

- A five-year Regional riparian action plan was launched in December 2015 to improve the health of Victoria's rivers, wetlands and estuaries. Developed in consultation with key stakeholders, the plan included benefits for farmers, including easier stock management.
- In March 2018, Parliament approved the transfer of Victoria's 29 per cent interest in Snowy Hydro Limited to the Commonwealth under s. 6(2A) of the *Snowy Hydro Corporatisation Act 1997*. The sale, worth \$2 billion to Victoria, was finalised in June 2018. Together with the sale of New South Wales's stake, the deal cleared the way for the proposed federal Snowy Hydro 2.0 initiative, without changing Victoria's existing water arrangements.
- A rural drainage strategy was released in October 2018, along with funding for 11 pilot studies to address difficult rural drainage issues. The strategy aims to balance agricultural productivity with protection of the environment and cultural assets.
- In August 2018, the Minister for Water called on the federal Government to better support Victorian farmers and irrigators experiencing dry conditions by exploring opportunities for the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder to trade water into the market.

Legislation

The following legislation was introduced during the 58th Parliament. For further information, see the [Legislation](#) website.

- [Water and Catchment Legislation Amendment Bill 2017](#) (lapsed)

Reports

The following selection of reports was produced during the 58th Parliament. For further reports, see the [Library catalogue](#).

- [Office of Living Victoria: Independent review](#), D. Pearson for the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water (2015)
- [Regional riparian action plan: Working in partnership to improve riparian land in regional Victoria](#), Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (2015)
- [Water for Victoria: Closing the loop: Feedback report](#), Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (2016)
- [Water for Victoria: Discussion paper: Summary](#), Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (2016)
- [Water for Victoria: Water plan](#), Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (2016)

- [Social and economic impacts of the Basin Plan in Victoria](#), TC&A with Frontier Economics (2017)
- [Enhancing the grid: Victoria's water grid partnerships in 2018](#), Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (2018)
- [Socio-economic impacts in the southern Murray-Darling Basin: Implications for additional basin plan water recovery](#), Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (2018)
- [Victorian farm modernisation project: Options review](#), Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (2018)
- [Victorian rural drainage strategy](#), Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (2018)

Committee inquiries

The following committee inquiry was conducted during the 58th Parliament.

- [Inquiry into the management, governance and use of environmental water](#), Environment, Natural Resources and Regional Development Committee, Parliament of Victoria (2018)

Transport



Transport

An overview of developments within the portfolios of public transport, roads, and ports during the 58th Parliament, including key issues, legislation, committee inquiries and reports.

Public transport

As the fastest-growing state in Australia, Victoria's expanding economy and increasing population depend on an efficient and effective public transport system. Public Transport Victoria's latest [annual report](#) shows that people are using Victoria's trains, trams and buses in record high numbers.

With the aim of further integrating and coordinating Victoria's growing transport system, the Andrews Government introduced the [Transport Integration Amendment \(Head, Transport for Victoria and Other Government Reforms\) Act 2017](#). The Act commenced in April 2017 and established the Head of Transport for Victoria as a new statutory office. The objective of establishing the Head is to strengthen the state's ability to plan and coordinate metropolitan and regional public transport, road, freight and ports. The Head will lead the transport portfolio by advising the Government on strategic directions for the whole transport system through policy, planning, legislation, system design and integration.

The issue of fare evasion was subject to major review during the 58th Parliament. Previously, in 2014 the Napthine Coalition Government introduced Australia's first (and only) on-the-spot penalty fine system. The scheme gave commuters who were intercepted by Authorised Officers without a valid ticket an option to pay an on-the-spot penalty of \$75 or have a \$229 infringement sent to them in the mail.

The review produced a number of publications, including [a report by the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources](#) and an ['own motion' investigation](#) by the Victorian Ombudsman, with submissions from community and legal organisations. The Ombudsman's investigation considered the on-the-spot fining system to be disproportionate and poorly targeted, giving its users no right to an appeal or a refund.

In response to the review, the [Transport \(Compliance and Miscellaneous\) Amendment \(Abolition of the Penalty Fares Scheme\) Bill 2016](#) was passed to abolish on-the-spot fines, and came into operation on 1 October 2017.

For more information on the Government's decision to abolish the penalty fares scheme, see the Library's [Research Note](#).

Airport rail link

The Melbourne Airport rail link is the proposed railway link between the Tullamarine Airport and Melbourne CBD. The project has been on and off Victoria's agenda since 1963, with the first Bill introduced in 1965 by then-Minister of Transport in the Bolte Government, Edward Meagher.

For an in-depth history of the rail link, see the Library's [Research Paper on the Melbourne Airport rail link](#).

In the [2017–18 State Budget](#), the Andrews Government committed \$10 million towards a business case for the Melbourne

Airport rail link. Subsequently, the Federal Turnbull Coalition Government committed \$30 million to help plan for the rail link in its 2017–18 Federal Budget. The Andrews Government has [announced](#) the suggested route via Sunshine as its preferred route, which is consistent with recommendations from the 2013 [Melbourne Airport rail link study](#). The Sunshine route will include 27 kilometres of new rail track between Southern Cross in the CBD via a ‘superhub’ at Sunshine and on to the airport. According to [Transport for Victoria’s strategic appraisal](#), the business case is expected to be complete by 2019–2020 with the project likely to commence in 2022, subject to statutory approvals.

Contemporary reasons for building the rail link include easing congestion on the Tullamarine Freeway and environmental and sustainability benefits, as well as promoting public transport policies and stimulating economic development. Another main driver is population growth, with [research](#) revealing more than 35 million passenger movements were handled by Melbourne Airport from 2016 to 2017—this figure is expected to double by 2038.

North East Link

Since 1969, successive Victorian governments have identified the need for a freeway-standard road link through Melbourne’s north-east to complete the city’s orbital connection.

Most recently, [Infrastructure Victoria’s 30-year strategy](#) (released in 2016) identified a North East Link (NEL) as Victoria’s next priority road project. The NEL is the proposed new 26-kilometre freeway connecting an upgraded Eastern Freeway

to the M80 Ring Road in Melbourne’s north-east. In response to Infrastructure Victoria’s recommendations, the Andrews Government [announced](#) its commitment to the NEL, commencing the planning phase in 2017. The 2017–18 State Budget provided the first \$100 million to prepare for the NEL, with construction set to begin in 2020.

As well as constructing a new freeway, the \$16.5 billion project is set to overhaul new lanes and technology on the Eastern Freeway, as well as launch a new Doncaster Busway, with dedicated express bus lanes.

Media coverage relating to federal funding for the NEL has been significant. Several [media reports](#) have quoted Premier Daniel Andrews on the issue, who has stated that the Morrison Government is withholding \$3 billion of Victoria’s money for the project in a ‘locked box’. Federal government finance for Victorian infrastructure continues to be a point of contention.

Level crossing removal

Given Melbourne’s rapid population growth, the Government is faced with the challenge of ensuring an integrated transport system so that people and goods can move efficiently in and around Melbourne. The Victorian Government has recognised that level crossings, which occur where a railway line and road (or path) cross at the same level, are contributing to congestion, amenity and [safety problems](#) in Victoria’s transport system.

In response to this issue, the Andrews Government commenced the eight-year [Level Crossing Removal Program](#) in 2015.

Established that same year was the Level Crossing Removal Authority, which assumed responsibility for managing the program from VicRoads. In the [2015–16 State Budget](#), the Andrews Government committed up to [\\$2.4 billion](#) to kick-start the removal of 75 level crossings across Melbourne. In total, [29 level crossings were removed](#) during the 58th Parliament, surpassing the 2014 election commitment to remove 20 level crossings by 2018.

Port of Melbourne

The Port of Melbourne is Australia's largest maritime trade and logistics hub and is a key economic asset supporting international trade for the Victorian economy. According to the Port of Melbourne Corporation's 2015–16 [annual report](#), the business year saw record high levels of trade through the Port, with revenue of \$394.2 million.

In 2016, Parliament passed the [Delivering Victorian Infrastructure \(Port of Melbourne Lease Transaction\) Bill 2016](#). The legislation authorised the leasing of the Port of Melbourne's existing land and assets to a private sector entity. In October 2016, a government [media release](#) announced that the Andrews Government had successfully leased the port for more than \$9.7 billion to the Lonsdale Consortium. The contract stipulates a 50-year lease, with an option for renewal for a further 20 years, as provided for under the Act.

The anticipated proceeds, together with the federal government's 15 per cent asset recycling initiative, will contribute to the Victorian Transport Fund, to be used for the Level Crossing Removal program and other infrastructure projects.

Metro Tunnel


As Victoria's population continues to grow, daily passenger use of City Loop stations is predicted to rise, from 580,000 in 2011 to 1.1 million by 2031. In response to such rapid growth, the Andrews Government [committed \\$11 billion](#) to deliver the Metro Tunnel in its 2015–16 State Budget.

With construction having commenced in 2018, the new tunnel aims to enhance Melbourne's rail network by relieving congestion in the City Loop. The project will deliver twin nine-kilometre rail tunnels from the west of the city (Sunbury) to the south-east (Cranbourne/Pakenham) as well as five new underground railway stations. The development intends to significantly reduce overcrowding, allowing for 20 per cent more passengers and [increasing capacity for 504,000 more people](#) to catch the train during each peak period.

West Gate Tunnel project

The West Gate Tunnel (WGT) project is designed to stop over-reliance on the West Gate Bridge and deliver a dedicated route to the Port, moving trucks off local streets and out of residential areas. The [\\$6.7 billion dollar project](#) (proposed by infrastructure company Transurban in 2014) is aimed at addressing inadequate transport capacity on the M1 corridor, which links Melbourne's western suburbs to the CBD, the Port and beyond. The project also aims to make it [easier and safer for pedestrians and cyclists to get around](#).

According to the WGT Authority's [Environment effects statement: Summary report](#), the project has three components. First, the West Gate Freeway will be



widened to include express lanes between the M80 and the West Gate Bridge, reducing merging and weaving traffic that causes congestion. Second, the tunnels component will include twin tunnels, one inbound and one outbound under Yarraville, catering for three lanes of traffic in each direction. Third, the project will deliver 14 kilometres of new and upgraded cycling and walking paths from Werribee to the city on a continuous, separated path. These paths are set to complete missing links in the Federation Trail and Kororoit Creek Trail, including an elevated 2.5-kilometre veloway, giving cyclists a safe and express route to and from the city.

Construction began in January 2018, with the [tunnel set to open in 2022](#).

Roads

The 58th Parliament introduced several new laws to improve road safety and functionality.

Brought before the Parliament by the Victorian Greens in 2015 (and again in 2016 and 2017) was the [Road Safety Road Rules 2009 \(Overtaking Bicycles\) Bill 2015](#). The Bill, which defines the 'sufficient distance' to be kept when a motor vehicle overtakes a bicycle, failed to pass through Parliament on each occasion. An [inquiry into the Bill](#), which concluded in 2016, found that specified minimum passing distances occur within a broader context, meaning other factors—such as tram infrastructure—interact with the proposed rule.

The [Road Safety Amendment Act 2015](#) created a regime whereby a police officer may take a blood sample for analysis if the driver of a motor vehicle is involved in an

accident resulting in serious injury or death. Before this amendment, drivers involved in fatal crashes could refuse blood tests if they did not require medical care at the scene of the crash. This loophole made it difficult for police to obtain evidence of the amount of a drug in a driver's system. In his [second reading speech](#), the Minister for Police, the Hon. Wade Noonan, cited a fatal crash in the Docklands in 2014 as prompting reforms.

The [Transport Legislation Amendment \(Road Safety, Rail and Other Matters\) Act 2017](#) implemented the cancellation of a driver licence or learner permit and disqualification for a minimum period, following a finding of guilt or conviction for any drink-driving offences. The new law imposed a mandatory alcohol interlock following disqualification.

In a bid to protect car park users from unfair and misleading practices of car park operators, the [Road Safety Amendment \(Private Car Parks\) Bill 2015](#) was introduced. The legislation restricted the ability of private car park operators to obtain the names and addresses of vehicle owners from the VicRoads registration database. It also inhibited the practice of car park operators abusing the process of preliminary discovery.

[Reports](#) of growing community concern regarding the quality of regional Victorian roads encouraged further investigation. On 23 November 2016, the Law Reform and Community Safety Committee (LRCSC) received [terms of reference](#) to inquire into the effectiveness of VicRoads' management of country roads. Produced in 2018, the [LRCSC's interim report](#) examined the creation of a separate country roads organisation, which could

focus on issues specific to country and rural roads. Additional findings from a 2017 report by the Victorian Auditor-General's Office concluded that an increasing proportion of the state road network was in very poor condition and that not enough funding was being allocated to regional road maintenance.

In response to these reports, the 2018–19 State Budget allocated \$941 million towards fixing Victoria's regional network. Additionally, a new division to VicRoads, Regional Roads Victoria (RRV), was established in 2018. Based in Ballarat, the RRV division focuses on delivering a safer and smoother regional road network for country Victoria and is responsible for regional road upgrades, maintenance and safety across rural Victoria.

In 2018, Victoria saw its lowest number of recorded road deaths.

Legislation

The following selection of legislation was introduced during the 58th Parliament. For further information, see the [Legislation](#) website.

- *Heavy Vehicles Legislation Amendment Act 2015*
- *Road Safety Amendment Act 2015*
- *Road Safety Road Rules 2009 (Overtaking Bicycles) Bill 2015 (defeated)*
- *Delivering Victorian Infrastructure (Port of Melbourne Lease Transaction) Act 2016*
- *Road Legislation Further Amendment Act 2016*
- *Road Management (Bus Stop Delivery Powers) Act 2016*
- *Transport Accident Amendment Act 2016*
- *Transport (Compliance and Miscellaneous) Amendment (Abolition of the Penalty Fares Scheme) Act 2016*
- *Transport (Compliance and Miscellaneous) Amendment (Public Safety) Act 2016*
- *Ports and Marine Legislation Amendment Act 2017*
- *Transport Integration Amendment (Head, Transport for Victoria and Other Government Reforms) Act 2017*
- *Transport Legislation Amendment (Road Safety, Rail and Other Matters) Act 2017*
- *Transport Legislation Amendment (Better Roads Victoria and Other Amendments) Bill 2018 (lapsed)*

Library research publications

The Parliamentary Library Research & Inquiries unit produced the following research publications during the 58th Parliament.

- *Transport (Compliance and Miscellaneous) Amendment (Abolition of the Penalty Fares Scheme) Bill 2016*, Research Note, Victorian Parliamentary Library & Information Service (2016)
- *Melbourne Airport rail link*, Research Paper, Victorian Parliamentary Library & Information Service (2017)

Reports

The following selection of reports was produced during the 58th Parliament. For further reports, see the Library catalogue.

- *Melbourne Airport rail link study: Study overview and findings*, Public Transport Victoria (2013)
- *Select Committee Inquiry Submission*, Department of Treasury and Finance (2015)
- *Annual report 2015–16*, Port of Melbourne Corporation (2016)
- *Investigation into public transport fare evasion enforcement*, Victorian Ombudsman (2016)
- *Report of the review into public transport ticketing compliance and enforcement*, Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources (2016)
- *Victoria's 30-year infrastructure strategy*, Infrastructure Victoria (2016)
- *Level crossing removal program project business case*, Victorian Government (2017)
- *Maintaining state-controlled roadways*, Victorian Auditor-General's Office (2017)
- *Managing the level crossing removal program*, Victorian Auditor-General's Office (2017)
- *West Gate Tunnel Project: Environment effects statement: Summary report*, Western Distributor Authority (2017)

- *West Gate Tunnel Project: Inquiry and Advisory Committee report*, West Gate Tunnel Project Inquiry and Advisory Committee (2017)
- *Annual report 2017–18*, Public Transport Victoria (2018)
- *Melbourne Airport rail link: Sunshine route strategic appraisal*, Transport for Victoria (2018)
- *Tunnel and stations public private partnership: Project summary*, Melbourne Metro Rail Authority (2018)

Committee inquiries

The following committee inquiries were conducted during the 58th Parliament.

- *Inquiry into infrastructure projects*, Economy and Infrastructure Committee, Parliament of Victoria (2015)
- *Inquiry into the proposed lease of the Port of Melbourne*, Port of Melbourne Select Committee, Parliament of Victoria (2015)
- *Inquiry into the Road Safety Road Rules 2009 (Overtaking Bicycles) Bill 2015*, Economy and Infrastructure Committee, Parliament of Victoria (2016)
- *Inquiry into VicRoads' management of country roads: Interim report*, Law Reform, Road and Community Safety Committee, Parliament of Victoria (2018)

Treasury and Finance



Treasury and finance

The following is an overview of developments within the treasury and finance portfolios during the 58th Parliament, including key issues, legislation passed, committee inquiries and reports.

Budgets

During the 58th Parliament, [four Budgets](#) were handed down: the 2015–16 Budget, the 2016–17 Budget, the 2017–18 Budget and the 2018–19 Budget.

In his 2015 [Budget speech](#), Treasurer Tim Pallas presented the first Budget of the Andrews Government, with a focus on families and the basics of jobs, schools, hospitals and transport. The first budget was branded as ‘getting on with it’.

Treasurer Pallas’s second [Budget speech in 2016](#) focused on three main objectives: bolstering the state’s financial position, delivering significant infrastructure investments and investing in people, and ensuring safe communities and enviable living standards. He described it as a ‘getting it done’ budget.

In his third [Budget in 2017](#), Treasurer Pallas delivered a speech with an emphasis on people and communities. It included an investment package to address family violence, the education system, the health system and investment in infrastructure, Victoria Police and regional Victoria. He described it as a ‘getting on with the job’ budget.

Treasurer Pallas’s [fourth Budget speech in 2018](#) was about more skills, more jobs, more schools, better hospitals and a better transport network. The Andrews Government emphasised that it was ‘getting things done’, continuing the job of delivering its plan for Victoria’s future.

See the Library’s [pages on the 2018–19 State Budget](#) for a breakdown of the key initiatives of the last Budget.

The last Budget update prior to the commencement of the 59th Parliament was the [Pre-Election Budget Update](#), released on 5 November 2018.

Macroeconomic indicators

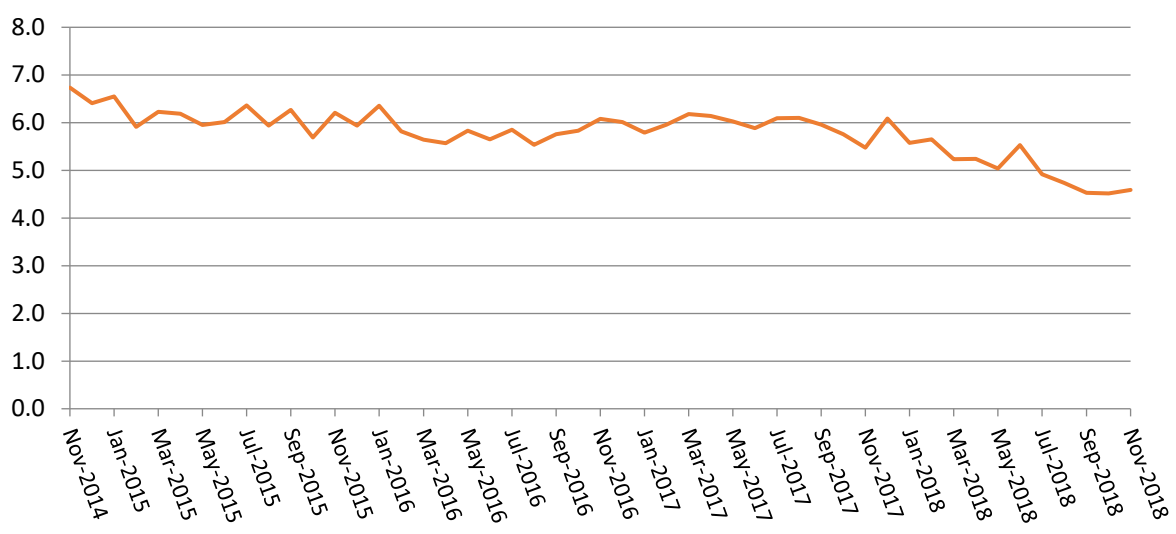
According to the [Australian Bureau of Statistics](#), Victorian Gross State Product (GSP) has grown at an average of 3.7 per cent per annum from 2015–16 to 2017–18. [General government net debt](#) shrank from \$22.3 billion in 2015–16 to \$20.0 billion in 2017–18.

Meanwhile, the [general government operating surplus](#) shrank from \$2.7 billion in 2015–16 to a forecast operating surplus of \$2.2 billion in 2018–19.

Victoria held a [AAA credit rating](#) from Standard & Poor’s and Moody’s over the course of the 58th Parliament, which is the highest possible rating and has [benefits](#) such as the ability to secure government debt at lower interest rates.

The number of [employed persons](#) in Victoria (seasonally adjusted) grew from 2,920,400 in November 2014, to 3,347,200 in November 2018. The unemployment rate decreased from 6.7 per cent in November 2014, to 4.6 per cent in November 2018, while the participation rate grew from 64.6 per cent in November 2014, to 66.0 per cent in November 2018.

Seasonally Adjusted Unemployment rate, Victoria (%)



Source: *Labour Force, Australia*, Australian Bureau of Statistics (2018)

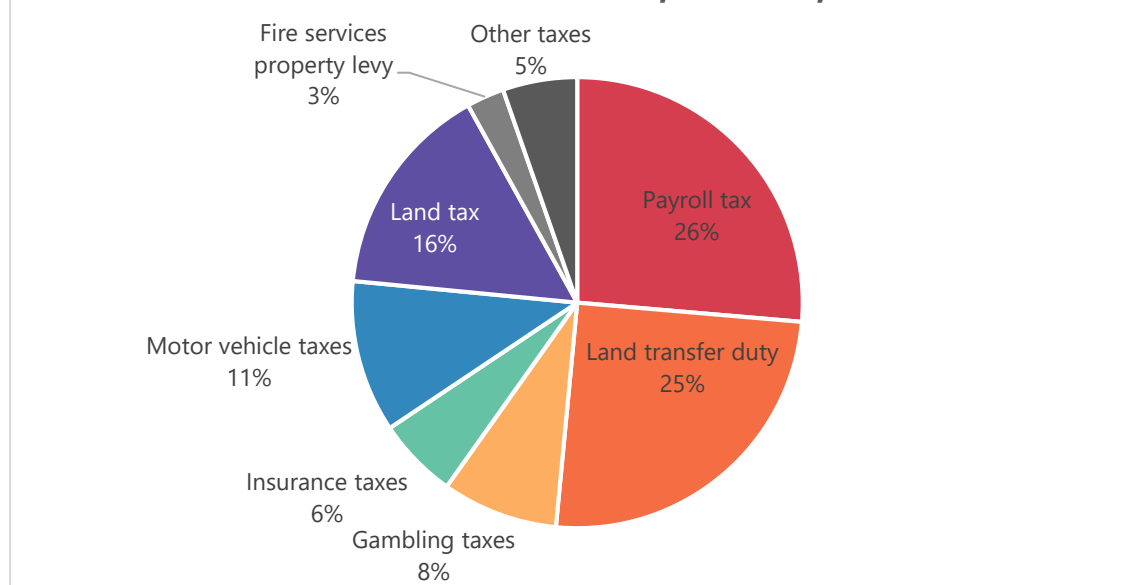
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See also the *Industry, Innovation, and Employment* section of this Briefing e-Book.

Taxation

The primary sources of taxation revenues in Victoria are payroll taxes, property taxes (especially land tax and land transfer duty), insurance taxes and motor vehicle taxes.

Sources of taxation revenue, Victoria, 2018–19



Source: *Taxation revenue – Annual*, Department of Treasury and Finance (2019)

The [payroll tax rate](#) was 4.85 per cent throughout the duration of the 58th Parliament, but was reduced for [regional employers](#) to 3.65 per cent from 1 July 2017 and further reduced to 2.425 per cent from 1 July 2018.

The [land tax rates](#) have remained unchanged since 2009.

[First home buyers](#) who entered into a contract to purchase a home on or after 1 July 2017 may be eligible for the the first home buyer duty reduction where the home has a dutiable value of:

- \$600,000 or less to receive the first home buyer duty exemption; and
- \$600,001 to \$750,000 to receive the first home buyer duty concession.

Commonwealth–State financial relations

Under the federal financial framework, state governments receive funding from the Commonwealth government in two forms: general revenue grants (made up of GST revenue) and specific purpose grants (made up of National Specific Purpose Payments, and [National Partnership Payments](#) which are tied to specific purposes, projects or outputs). According to the *Victorian State Budget 2018–19 Budget Paper No. 5: Statement of Finances*, Commonwealth grants were expected to represent 48 per cent of Victorian government revenue in 2018–19, with 24.0 per cent to come from GST revenue.

GST distribution

Since the [introduction of the GST](#) in 2000–01, Victoria has consistently received less revenue than it would if GST was distributed on a per capita basis. This is because the [Commonwealth Grants](#)

[Commission](#) (CGC) distributes GST revenue to the states based on the method of 'horizontal [fiscal equalisation](#)' whereby states receive funding to ensure each state has the same fiscal capacity to provide public services. Factors taken into account include a state's capacity to raise its own tax revenue (e.g. through royalties on mineral deposits), property sales and payroll taxes, and the extent of vulnerable populations (e.g. remote Indigenous communities) and dispersion of the population.

However, the [Commonwealth Grants Commission's 2018 Update Report](#) determined that Victoria's share of the GST should rise from 24.0 per cent in 2017–18 to 25.6 per cent in 2018–19 because of its reduced fiscal capacity; that is, its strong population growth, need for greater investment in infrastructure and a continued smaller share of Commonwealth grants. This would grant Victoria an extra \$1.8 billion in GST revenue and a total of \$16.83 billion.

Legislation

The following selection of legislation was introduced during the 58th Parliament. For further information, see the [Legislation](#) website.

- [Appropriation \(2015–2016\) Act 2015](#)
- [Appropriation \(Parliament 2015–2016\) Act 2015](#)
- [State Taxation Acts Amendment Act 2015](#)
- [State Taxation Acts Further Amendment Act 2015](#)
- [Appropriation \(2016–2017\) Act 2016](#)
- [Appropriation \(Parliament 2016–2017\) Act 2016](#)
- [State Taxation Acts Further Amendment Act 2016](#)

- *State Taxation and Other Acts Amendment Act 2016*
- *Treasury and Finance Legislation Amendment Act 2016*
- *Appropriation (2017–2018) Act 2017*
- *Appropriation (Parliament 2017–2018) Act 2017*
- *State Taxation Acts Amendment Act 2017*
- *State Taxation Acts Further Amendment Act 2017*
- *Appropriation (2018–2019) Act 2018*
- *Appropriation (Parliament 2018–2019) Act 2018*
- *State Taxation Acts Amendment Act 2018*
- *Treasury and Finance Legislation Amendment Act 2018*

Library research publications

The Parliamentary Library Research & Inquiries unit produced the following research publications during the 58th Parliament.

- *2015–16 State Budget*, Victorian Parliamentary Library & Information Service (2015)
- *2016–17 State Budget*, Victorian Parliamentary Library & Information Service (2016)
- *2017–18 State Budget*, Victorian Parliamentary Library & Information Service (2017)
- *2018–19 State Budget*, Victorian Parliamentary Library & Information Service (2018)

Reports

The following selection of reports was produced during the 58th Parliament. For further reports, see the [Library catalogue](#).

- *Auditor-General's Report on the Annual Financial Report of the State of Victoria, 2015–16, 2016–17, 2017–18*, Victorian Auditor-General's Office (2016–18)
- *State of the public sector in Victoria, 2015–16, 2016–17, 2017–18*, Victorian Auditor-General's Office (2016–18)
- *Victoria's Economic Bulletin, Volume 1; Volume 2*, Department of Treasury and Finance (2018)

Committee inquiries

The following committee inquiries were conducted during the 58th Parliament.

- *Various inquiries*, Public Accounts and Estimates Committee, Parliament of Victoria (2015–2018)
- *Inquiry into the State Taxation Amendment Bill 2015*, Economy and Infrastructure Committee, Parliament of Victoria (2015)
- *Inquiry into infrastructure projects*, Economy and Infrastructure Committee, Parliament of Victoria (2018)

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Research & Inquiries service

This publication has been prepared by the Research & Inquiries service for use by Members of the Victorian Parliament. Research publications are prepared for Parliament in response to Members, in anticipation of their requirements, and in areas of interest to the Victorian legislature.

Information was current as at the time of printing. This publication should not be considered as a complete guide to the particular subjects and legislation covered. While it is intended that all information provided is accurate, it does not represent professional legal opinion.

Some hyperlinks may only be accessible on the Parliament of Victoria intranet. All links were current and available at the time of publication.

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