

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

FIFTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

WEDNESDAY, 21 SEPTEMBER 2022

hansard.parliament.vic.gov.au

By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

The Governor

The Honourable LINDA DESSAU AC

The Lieutenant-Governor

The Honourable JAMES ANGUS AO

The ministry

Premier	The Hon. DM Andrews MP
Deputy Premier, Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop and Minister for Commonwealth Games Delivery	The Hon. JM Allan MP
Attorney-General and Minister for Emergency Services	The Hon. J Symes MLC
Minister for Training and Skills, Minister for Higher Education and Minister for Agriculture	The Hon. GA Tierney MLC
Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Trade	The Hon. TH Pallas MP
Minister for Planning	The Hon. EA Blandthorn MP
Minister for Child Protection and Family Services and Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers	The Hon. CW Brooks MP
Minister for Police, Minister for Crime Prevention and Minister for Racing	The Hon. AR Carbines MP
Minister for Public Transport, Minister for Roads and Road Safety, Minister for Industry Support and Recovery and Minister for Business Precincts	The Hon. BA Carroll MP
Minister for Energy, Minister for Environment and Climate Action and Minister for Solar Homes	The Hon. L D'Ambrosio MP
Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events and Minister for Creative Industries	The Hon. S Dimopoulos MP
Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, Minister for Local Government and Minister for Suburban Development	The Hon. MM Horne MP
Minister for Education and Minister for Women	The Hon. NM Hutchins MP
Minister for Corrections, Minister for Youth Justice, Minister for Victim Support and Minister for Fishing and Boating	The Hon. S Kilkenny MP
Minister for Commonwealth Games Legacy and Minister for Veterans	The Hon. SL Leane MLC
Assistant Treasurer, Minister for Regulatory Reform, Minister for Government Services and Minister for Housing	The Hon. DJ Pearson MP
Minister for Employment, Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy, Minister for Small Business and Minister for Resources	The Hon. JL Pulford MLC
Minister for Water, Minister for Regional Development and Minister for Equality	The Hon. H Shing MLC
Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, Minister for Community Sport and Minister for Youth	The Hon. RL Spence MP
Minister for Workplace Safety and Minister for Early Childhood and Pre-Prep	The Hon. I Stitt MLC
Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services	The Hon. M Thomas MP
Minister for Mental Health and Minister for Treaty and First Peoples	The Hon. G Williams MP
Cabinet Secretary	Mr SJ McGhie MP

Legislative Council committees

Economy and Infrastructure Standing Committee

Mr Finn, Mr Gepp, Dr Kieu, Mrs McArthur, Mr Quilty and Mr Tarlamis.

Participating members: Dr Bach, Ms Bath, Dr Cumming, Mr Davis, Ms Lovell, Mr Meddick, Mr Ondarchie, Mr Rich-Phillips, Ms Vaghela and Ms Watt.

Environment and Planning Standing Committee

Dr Bach, Ms Bath, Dr Cumming, Mr Grimley, Mr Hayes, Mr Meddick, Mr Melhem, Dr Ratnam, Ms Terpstra and Ms Watt.

Participating members: Ms Burnett-Wake, Ms Crozier, Mr Davis, Dr Kieu, Mrs McArthur, Mr Quilty and Mr Rich-Phillips.

Legal and Social Issues Standing Committee

Ms Burnett-Wake, Mr Erdogan, Dr Kieu, Ms Maxwell, Mr Ondarchie, Ms Patten and Ms Taylor.

Participating members: Dr Bach, Ms Bath, Ms Crozier, Dr Cumming, Mr Gepp, Mr Grimley, Ms Lovell, Mr Quilty, Dr Ratnam, Mr Tarlamis, Ms Terpstra, Ms Vaghela and Ms Watt.

Privileges Committee

Mr Atkinson, Mr Bourman, Mr Davis, Mr Grimley, Mr Leane, Mr Rich-Phillips, Ms Shing, Ms Symes and Ms Tierney.

Procedure Committee

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

Joint committees

Dispute Resolution Committee

Council: Mr Bourman, Ms Crozier, Mr Davis, Ms Symes and Ms Tierney.

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

Electoral Matters Committee

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

Assembly: Ms Hall, Dr Read and Mr Rowswell.

House Committee

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

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

Integrity and Oversight Committee

Council: Mr Grimley.

Assembly: Mr Halse, Mr Maas, Mr Rowswell, Mr Taylor, Ms Ward and Mr Wells.

Pandemic Declaration Accountability and Oversight Committee

Council: Ms Crozier and Mr Erdogan.

Assembly: Mr J Bull, Mr Eren, Ms Kealy, Mr Sheed, Ms Ward and Mr Wells.

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee

Council: Mrs McArthur and Ms Taylor.

Assembly: Ms Connolly, Mr Hibbins, Mr Maas, Mr Newbury, Mr D O'Brien, Ms Richards and Mr Richardson.

Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee

Council: Mr Gepp, Ms Patten, Ms Terpstra and Ms Watt.

Assembly: Mr Burgess, Ms Connolly and Mr Morris.

Heads of parliamentary departments

Assembly: Clerk of the Legislative Assembly: Ms B Noonan

Council: Clerk of the Parliaments and Clerk of the Legislative Council: Mr A Young

Parliamentary Services: Secretary: Ms T Burrows

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

President

The Hon. N ELASMAR (from 18 June 2020)

The Hon. SL LEANE (to 18 June 2020)

Deputy President

The Hon. WA LOVELL

Acting Presidents

Mr Bourman, Mr Gepp, Mr Melhem and Ms Patten

Leader of the Government

The Hon. J SYMES

Deputy Leader of the Government

The Hon. GA TIERNEY

Leader of the Opposition

The Hon. DM DAVIS

Deputy Leader of the Opposition

Ms G CROZIER

Member	Region	Party	Member	Region	Party
Atkinson, Mr Bruce Norman	Eastern Metropolitan	LP	McIntosh, Mr Thomas Andrew ⁹	Eastern Victoria	ALP
Bach, Dr Matthew ¹	Eastern Metropolitan	LP	Maxwell, Ms Tania Maree	Northern Victoria	DHJP
Barton, Mr Rodney Brian	Eastern Metropolitan	TMP	Meddick, Mr Andy	Western Victoria	AJP
Bath, Ms Melina Gaye	Eastern Victoria	Nats	Melhem, Mr Cesar	Western Metropolitan	ALP
Bourman, Mr Jeffrey	Eastern Victoria	SFFP	Mikakos, Ms Jenny ¹⁰	Northern Metropolitan	ALP
Burnett-Wake, Ms Cathrine ²	Eastern Victoria	LP	O'Donohue, Mr Edward John ¹¹	Eastern Victoria	LP
Crozier, Ms Georgina Mary	Southern Metropolitan	LP	Ondarchie, Mr Craig Philip	Northern Metropolitan	LP
Cumming, Dr Catherine Rebecca	Western Metropolitan	Ind	Patten, Ms Fiona Heather	Northern Metropolitan	FPRP
Dalidakis, Mr Philip ³	Southern Metropolitan	ALP	Pulford, Ms Jaala Lee	Western Victoria	ALP
Davis, Mr David McLean	Southern Metropolitan	LP	Quilty, Mr Timothy	Northern Victoria	LDP
Elasmar, Mr Nazih	Northern Metropolitan	ALP	Ratnam, Dr Samantha Shantini	Northern Metropolitan	Greens
Erdogan, Mr Enver ⁴	Southern Metropolitan	ALP	Rich-Phillips, Mr Gordon Kenneth	South Eastern Metropolitan	LP
Finn, Mr Bernard Thomas Christopher ⁵	Western Metropolitan	DLP	Shing, Ms Harriet	Eastern Victoria	ALP
Garrett, Ms Jane Furneaux ⁶	Eastern Victoria	ALP	Somyurek, Mr Adem ¹²	South Eastern Metropolitan	Ind
Gepp, Mr Mark	Northern Victoria	ALP	Stitt, Ms Ingrid	Western Metropolitan	ALP
Grimley, Mr Stuart James	Western Victoria	DHJP	Symes, Ms Jaclyn	Northern Victoria	ALP
Hayes, Mr Clifford	Southern Metropolitan	SAP	Tarlamis, Mr Lee ¹³	South Eastern Metropolitan	ALP
Jennings, Mr Gavin Wayne ⁷	South Eastern Metropolitan	ALP	Taylor, Ms Nina	Southern Metropolitan	ALP
Kieu, Dr Tien Dung	South Eastern Metropolitan	ALP	Terpstra, Ms Sonja	Eastern Metropolitan	ALP
Leane, Mr Shaun Leo	Eastern Metropolitan	ALP	Tierney, Ms Gayle Anne	Western Victoria	ALP
Limbrick, Mr David ⁸	South Eastern Metropolitan	LDP	Vaghela, Ms Kaushaliya Virjibhai ¹⁴	Western Metropolitan	Ind
Lovell, Ms Wendy Ann	Northern Victoria	LP	Watt, Ms Sheena ¹⁵	Northern Metropolitan	ALP
McArthur, Mrs Beverley	Western Victoria	LP	Wooldridge, Ms Mary Louise Newling ¹⁶	Eastern Metropolitan	LP

¹ Appointed 5 March 2020

² Appointed 2 December 2021

³ Resigned 17 June 2019

⁴ Appointed 15 August 2019

⁵ LP until 24 May 2022

Ind 24 May–2 June 2022

⁶ Died 2 July 2022

⁷ Resigned 23 March 2020

⁸ Resigned 11 April 2022

Appointed 23 June 2022

⁹ Appointed 18 August 2022

¹⁰ Resigned 26 September 2020

¹¹ Resigned 1 December 2021

¹² ALP until 15 June 2020

¹³ Appointed 23 April 2020

¹⁴ ALP until 7 March 2022

¹⁵ Appointed 13 October 2020

¹⁶ Resigned 28 February 2020

Party abbreviations

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

DLP—Democratic Labour Party; FPRP—Fiona Patten's Reason Party; Greens—Australian Greens;

Ind—Independent; LDP—Liberal Democratic Party; LP—Liberal Party; Nats—The Nationals;

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

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Wednesday, 21 September 2022

The PRESIDENT (Hon. N Elasmr) took the chair at 9.36 am and read the prayer.

Announcements

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

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

Petitions

Following petitions presented to house:

ELECTORAL REFORM

The Petition of certain citizens of the State of Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Council that the processes undertaken for election into the Victorian Parliament should not be compromised and that a transparent democratic process needs to be sought out at all times.

Interference through financial gain, by an individual or entity, needs to be deemed a criminal act and a transparent process must be determined. This includes, and is not limited to, taxpayer-funded positions being used as transactional arrangements or agreements.

State taxes services the salaries of state-based employees and as a result all state-based employees should remain in the state of Victoria during their allocated office hours. Exceptions should lie with the decision of the Clerk of the Parliament. Details outlining such deliberations should be tabled by the relevant Member of Parliament overseeing the employee.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Council call on the Government to introduce legislation that will criminalise the exchange of consultant goods and services, including by persons in taxpayer-funded positions of employment, in relation to preferencing deals for Legislative Council elections (also known as 'preference harvesting'), with a minimum penalty of \$400,000 or up to 12 months imprisonment for unlawful behaviour, and in the interest of transparency, require Group Voting Tickets (GVTs) to be submitted to the Victorian Electoral Commission no less than four weeks prior to election day, with all individual candidates and parties to print their GVTs on the reverse of their how-to-vote cards.

By Mr ATKINSON (Eastern Metropolitan) (358 signatures).

Laid on table.

Mr ATKINSON: (*By leave*) I think it is important when anybody comes to you requesting support for a petition to be presented to the house that we should give the opportunity for that petition to be laid before the house. It does not mean that the particular person who is sponsoring that petition actually agrees with the contents of it and supports those comments that are contained within that petition, but it is important that the petition is laid before the house.

LYNDOCH LIVING

The Petition of certain citizens of the State of Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Council that the Board of Lyndoch Living, an aged care facility in Warnambool started by the community, has lost the confidence of the community it serves.

The Board has broken a social contract between Lyndoch Living and the community which has existed for more than 70 years. This has led to a lack of transparency and accountability for the Board's actions.

The Board has refused to allow members of the community to become general members of Lyndoch Living. More than 130 applications in 2021 were rejected without any reason given. In refusing to allow general membership, the pathway for community members to join the Board has also been cut. As a result, the Board is only answerable to itself.

This lack of transparency has led to grave concerns about the priorities and direction of Lyndoch Living, including the decline in residential care, a failure to act on serious allegations raised by staff, and the viability of a \$22 million medical clinic that is now under construction that could leave Lyndoch Living insolvent.

The community has tried every avenue, including seeking legal advice, to address concerns surrounding the Board.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Council call on the Government to, in consultation with the Federal Government, take all possible steps to have the Board of Lyndoch Living removed and to appoint an administrator until a new board can be appointed through a public call for nominations.

By Mrs McARTHUR (Western Victoria) (2234 signatures).

Laid on table.

Papers

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT, LAND, WATER AND PLANNING

2021–22 Sustainability Fund Activities Report

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan—Minister for Commonwealth Games Legacy, Minister for Veterans) (09:41): I move, by leave:

That there be laid before this house a copy of the *2021–22 Sustainability Fund Activities Report*.

Motion agreed to.

DEPARTMENT OF PREMIER AND CABINET

Victorian Government Aboriginal Affairs Report 2021 and Victorian 2021 Closing the Gap data tables

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan—Minister for Commonwealth Games Legacy, Minister for Veterans) (09:41): I move, by leave:

That there be laid before this house a copy of the *Victorian Government Aboriginal Affairs Report 2021* and the Victorian 2021 Closing the Gap data tables.

Motion agreed to.

Committees

ECONOMY AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

Inquiry into the Multi Purpose Taxi Program

Ms PULFORD (Western Victoria—Minister for Employment, Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy, Minister for Small Business, Minister for Resources) (09:42): Pursuant to standing order 23.30, I lay on the table a copy of the government response to the Economy and Infrastructure Committee's report on the inquiry into the multipurpose taxi program.

Inquiry into the Commercial Passenger Vehicle Industry Act 2017 Reforms

Ms PULFORD (Western Victoria—Minister for Employment, Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy, Minister for Small Business, Minister for Resources) (09:42): Pursuant to standing order 23.30, I lay on the table a copy of the government response to the Economy and Infrastructure Committee's report on the inquiry into the Commercial Passenger Vehicle Industry Act 2017 reforms.

Papers

PAPERS

Tabled by Clerk:

- Advancing the Treaty Process with Aboriginal Victorians Act 2018—under section 43 of the Act—
Advancing the Victorian Treaty Process—Report, 2021–22.
First Peoples’ Assembly of Victoria—Report, 2022.
- Auditor-General’s Office—Report, 2021–22.
- Auditor-General’s Reports on—
Follow-up of Maintaining the Mental Health of Child Protection Practitioners, September 2022
(*Ordered to be published*).
Major Projects Performance Reporting 2022, September 2022 (*Ordered to be published*).
Quality of Child Protection Data, September 2022 (*Ordered to be published*).
Quality of Major Transport Infrastructure Project Business Cases, September 2022 (*Ordered to be published*).
- Eastern Health—Report, 2021–22.
- Education and Training Department—Report, 2021–22.
- Environment, Land, Water and Planning Department—Report, 2021–22.
- Families, Fairness and Housing Department—Report, 2021–22.
- Goulburn-Murray Rural Water Corporation—Report, 2021–22.
- Greater Western Water Corporation—Report, 2021–22.
- Health Department—Report, 2021–22.
- Justice and Community Safety Department—Report, 2021–22.
- Local Jobs First—Report, 2021–22.
- Melbourne Health (The Royal Melbourne Hospital)—Report, 2021–22.
- Melbourne Port Lessor Pty Ltd—Report, 2021–22.
- Melbourne Water Corporation—Report, 2021–22.
- Monash Health—Report, 2021–22.
- National Gallery of Victoria (NGV)—Report, 2021–22.
- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004—Report of requests for the approval of persons or bodies by the Governor in Council, 2021–22, under section 11 of the Act.
- Parliamentary Committees Act 2003—Government responses to the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee’s Reports on the—
2020–21 Financial and Performance Outcomes.
Inquiry into Gender Responsive Budgeting.
- Premier and Cabinet Department—Report, 2021–22.
- Prevention of Family Violence Act 2018—Progress on Preventing Family Violence and Violence Against Women in Victoria: First Three-Yearly Report to Parliament, September 2022, under section 15(4) of the Act.
- Public Record Office Victoria (PROV)—Report, 2021–22.
- Respect Victoria—Report, 2021–22.
- Rolling Stock Holdings (Victoria) Pty Limited—Report, 2021–22.
- South East Water Corporation—Report, 2021–22.
- Subordinate Legislation Act 1994—Documents under section 15 in respect of Statutory Rule Nos. 83, 84 and 87.
- Surveyor-General—Report, 2021–22 on the administration of the Survey Co-ordination Act 1958.
- Terrorism (Community Protection) Act 2003—Report, 2021–22, by Victoria Police, under section 37F of the Act.

The Royal Children's Hospital—Report, 2021–22.
Transport Accident Commission (TAC)—Report, 2021–22.
Transport Department—Report, 2021–22.
Treasury Corporation of Victoria—Report, 2021–22.
Victoria Police—Report, 2021–22.
Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission—Report, 2021–22.
Victorian Law Reform Commission—Stalking—Final Report, June 2022 (*Ordered to be published*).
Victorian Managed Insurance Authority (VMIA)—Report, 2021–22.
Victorian Rail Track (VicTrack)—Report, 2021–22.
Victorian Veterans Council—Report, 2021–22.
Victorian WorkCover Authority (WorkSafe Victoria)—Report, 2021–22.
Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2017—Voluntary Assisted Dying Review Board's Report of Operations, 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022.
Yarra Valley Water Corporation—Report, 2021–22.

Business of the house

NOTICES

Notices of motion given.

Notices of intention to make a statement given.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms SYMES (Northern Victoria—Leader of the Government, Attorney-General, Minister for Emergency Services) (09:57): I move:

That the Council, at its rising, adjourn until a day and hour to be fixed by the President, who will notify each member of the Council accordingly.

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan—Leader of the Opposition) (09:57): I want to indicate that we do not believe that that is the motion that should be moved today, and we should amend that motion. This is a very important matter. The chamber should be sitting closer to the election. Since the Parliament changed its format to a fixed four-year term, this will be the longest period that the Parliament has not sat if we adjourn today as proposed, and that will see in fact the longest period between the closing of Parliament and the election period—more than nine weeks.

That is not the work of democracy, it is not the work of scrutiny and it is not the work of tabling. I note the government has today given an indication that it will make available relevant pandemic reports ahead of the election. We welcome that step, although we are mistrustful of when the government will do it and the way they will do it. We believe it is preferable that they be tabled on a sitting day and be done in an open and transparent way. For that reason, for the broader reason of scrutiny and to ensure that there is maximum pressure for annual reports to be tabled, I propose to move two distinct amendments. One of them relates to a sitting day on 19 October. That would be a single sitting day, with the ability to move to a second sitting day if the government has not at that point tabled the relevant pandemic reports. If I could get the clerks to circulate that amendment that would be helpful.

Ms Shing: President, I wish to raise a point of order in relation to the amendments to the motion which Mr Davis has now foreshadowed, in the first instance seeking a further sitting day on 19 October and I suspect there is another part to this which he may well go to depending on your ruling, President. There are clear requirements within previous rulings from the Chair as they relate to a member making a change to notify and provide it to people in advance so that no members are taken by surprise. To that end I note that this is in keeping with a range of matters that have been raised as concerns by the crossbench whereby information has not been provided until the last minute. On that basis and given that Mr Davis had the opportunity to put this yesterday, it would appear that this is not

within the scope of the motion as it has been put. On that basis Mr Davis's proposed amendment—I am waiting to see what the second one would be, but in any event the timing as it relates to those two amendments would not be allowable within the standing orders or indeed *Rulings from the Chair*.

Mr DAVIS: Further to the point of order, President, these are clearly within the purview of the motion that has been moved and clearly within the matters of—

The PRESIDENT: Thank you, Mr Davis. I was going to rule on that because you have not moved your amendments yet, and I do not think the point of order at the moment is approachable. So I will wait until Mr Davis has moved his amendments.

Mr DAVIS: The second amendment—

Ms Symes interjected.

Mr DAVIS: They both stand alone, and they both can be moved separately or together.

Ms Symes interjected.

Mr DAVIS: It is one set of amendments. A sheet of amendments is what it is called. It is an amendment sheet. There are two amendments. One relates to the date and returning for a sitting day on the 19th, and the second, as I am just about to explain, relates to a tabling mechanism. I move:

1. Omit all words and expressions after 'adjourn' and insert in their place:
 'until Wednesday, 19 October 2022 and that standing and sessional orders be suspended to the extent necessary to allow the order of business on that day to be:
 Messages
 Formal business
 Members statements (up to 15 members)
 General business
 At 12 noon Questions
 Constituency questions
 General business (until 5.15 pm)
 At 5.15 pm Statements on reports, papers and petitions (30 minutes)
 Government business (maximum 2 hours)
 At 7.45 pm Adjournment (up to 20 members).'
2. At the end of the motion, omit '.' and insert in its place:
 '; and that standing and sessional orders be suspended to the extent necessary to provide that for the remainder of this session:
 - (1) Where an act of Parliament requires a document to be tabled and the document is received by the Clerk in a week in which the house is not sitting, the Clerk must:
 - (a) by 4.00 pm each Friday in a non-sitting week, notify each member of the house of the receipt of documents received by 10.00 am that day and advise that the documents are available in the tabled documents database;
 - (b) cause the document to be tabled in the house on the next sitting day;
 - (c) publish a register on the Parliament's website each Friday that lists:
 - (i) how many and the names of the annual reports for the 2021–22 financial year that have been published in the tabled documents database under this paragraph; and
 - (ii) the total number of annual reports for the 2020–21 financial year that were tabled in the Council in 2021.
 - (2) If received by the Clerk under paragraph (1), the house orders reports from the following agencies to be published if so requested by those agencies:
 Auditor-General

Commission for Children and Young People
Commissioner for privacy and data protection
Consumer Affairs Victoria
Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission
Family violence reform implementation monitor
Gambling and Lotteries Licence Review Panel
Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission
Law Reform Commission
Ombudsman
Parliamentary committees
Victorian Inspectorate.

(3) If received by the Clerk under paragraph (1), the house orders the following reports to be published:

Annual financial report of the state of Victoria
Reports of boards of inquiry and royal commissions under the Inquiries Act 2014
Community visitors annual reports
Compliance officer's statements of findings
Legal services commissioner's annual reports
Parliamentary Budget Officer's report of operations under section 27 of the Parliamentary Budget Officer Act 2017
Public advocate's annual reports
Registers of members interests
Small business commissioner's annual reports.'

We have just seen the government table a number of reports—32 of the general annual reports. There are more than 250 tabled most years. So that leaves around 220 that are still to be tabled and, frankly, will not be tabled unless there is a mechanism for that tabling to occur. This picks up the mechanism that was crafted during the COVID period and enables a mechanism for the Clerk to put into the tabled documents database the reports as they come through to the Clerk and to report on how many he has received, and in effect we can calculate how many are outstanding. This is a simple mechanism that will enable tabling of annual reports all the way through until the period that the election writs are issued when the Parliament is dissolved. It is a very simple—

Ms Shing: On a point of order, President: Mr Davis, I did not mean to cut you off. I suspect you may have been coming to the end of the second part of your point. On a point of order, President, this is again a matter which has only just been provided to the government. Again there are rulings from the Chair, and the standing orders require and indeed invite that to be provided in advance. In addition to that, the tabling of the out-of-session reports component of these two amendments is not within scope of the substantive motion as it relates to a reconvening of the house on 19 October. Further to that, President, reports can and indeed often are tabled out of session—this is nothing unusual. As it relates to Mr Davis's own drafting of the documents, he has referred to the register of members interests. That was literally tabled yesterday. The fact that we have only just seen the amendment now is a problem and, again, not within scope of the motion itself around reconvening the house.

Mr DAVIS: Further to the point of order, clearly the house's business is the house's business, and we are entitled to make sure, if you are going to close the house down, that the opportunity is there to ensure transparency and that tabling occurs. That is what this seeks to do. This is a very simple point. This is within scope. I have carefully worked this through with the clerks to make sure it was within scope.

Ms Symes: Well, why didn't you give it to me?

Mr DAVIS: Because we were hopeful that you would actually change on the 19th matter.

The PRESIDENT: Let me be clear on this. Ms Symes has moved a motion that puts the next sitting date as on a day and hour to be fixed by the President. Mr Davis moved two amendments. The second amendment is related to that, and it takes note that reports that would otherwise be tabled will not be tabled and ought to be tabled. I believe the amendment is directly relevant to Ms Symes's motion, and therefore it is in order.

Mr DAVIS: I will be very brief. I do not want to take the time of the house, but this is an important point. We should sit. We should not finish the grand final, as it were, three quarters of the way through the last quarter. We should sit on, and the scrutiny should be there. When it comes to reports, what on earth does the government have to hide? Why are they afraid of a tabling mechanism, because there are seas of red ink in a lot of the agencies and a lot of the departments. The truth is the government does not want its major projects scrutinised. What on earth has the government got to hide? I say, 'Let's bring the sitting on', and if you do not want the sitting, we will have the tablings.

Ms SHING (Eastern Victoria—Minister for Water, Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Equality) (10:05): Further to that point, Mr Davis, you have had many years to understand the scope of being able to move a substantive motion on your terms. You failed to do so, you missed the boat and now you are seeking to shoehorn that in around tabling of reports. Mr Davis, you are well aware of the nature of reports being tabled and well aware of the long-established practices of this place whereby reports can be and indeed are very frequently and ordinarily tabled out of session. Mr Davis, you are also well aware of the processes of the house, and you are well aware of the basis upon which you have previously argued in exactly the same way as the government is now arguing. For you to now claim at the last minute that you are being denied some opportunity is to ignore the reality of the way in which reports are tabled, the way in which the business of the house is conducted and indeed to ignore the reality of the situation in which you find yourself, having left this matter until the very last minute without having given the government any of the information necessary to consider this.

This is what we see and have consistently seen from you, and when I say 'we' it is not just government members, it is the crossbench who have been caught unawares by the last-minute provision of information, or indeed no provision of information whatsoever, before moving a range of matters that seek to fundamentally alter the business of the house. We have not received this information until you have bowled it up at the last minute. One might be forgiven for thinking in fact that you failed to put in the work yesterday when the opportunity was there for you within the rules—the standing orders, the existence of rulings from the Chair and the processes of the house, as has been well observed in the course of this Parliament—to move a motion in exactly these terms to make sure that this was not bolted on as a last-minute retrofit, as far as the business of this chamber goes, a reconvening on the 16th and again a request to make sure that reports could be tabled in session. You know full well, Mr Davis, the operation of the standing orders. You know full well that reports can indeed and are indeed tabled out of session. Mr Davis, I will take you—

Mr Davis interjected.

Ms SHING: All right, I am going to take that interjection up. You said, 'You can't'. Mr Davis is now on the record as saying you cannot table reports out of session in the way that he is seeking to have them done and that it is only by way of substantive motion that we in fact as a house can cure this defect. Newsflash to everybody involved—newsflash to you, Mr Davis: there is a mechanism whereby reports can be tabled out of session. You have been a member of committees. In fact you have chaired committees in a previous Parliament where reports have been tabled out of session. You have been at the helm of many inquiries, particularly—well, what is one example? The Environment and Planning Committee, Mr Davis—I was deputy chair of that particular committee, Mr Davis, when you were the chair of that committee and you accepted the tabling of reports out of session. There was not an issue for you when you were at the helm of that particular parliamentary committee as it

conducted a range of inquiries. You know full well, Mr Davis, that you have been more than happy to play by those rules until the very last minute when you neglected to actually table your motion. Because you cannot get your act together you are now expecting this place to do the lifting for you at the last minute because you never got around to drafting the motion, running it by the crossbench or putting it to us in government, and now we are expected to clean up your mess.

Frankly, Mr Davis, you know better. You know what the standing orders say, you know what *Rulings from the Chair* says and you know what the customs and the practice not only of this house but of the Parliament say in relation to the tabling of reports out of session. You have form in understanding the way in which reports are tabled. This is something which you have previously been very proud to talk about—your long history in the Parliament, your attention to detail of the way in which standing orders operate—and yet now, curiously, at the very last minute we see a sudden case of procedural amnesia in favour of making up for the complete inability for your end to put the motion as you should have done yesterday. The ship has sailed, Mr Davis, and the house should reject the motion amendments outright.

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (10:10): Well, goodness me. The government is fairly desperate with that diatribe that we have just been subjected to for the last 5 minutes. This is an important amendment, because what we have seen from this government is a lack of transparency, and I am particularly concerned about the Independent Pandemic Management Advisory Committee report. I noticed that a few days ago the Minister for Health was saying that this report would not be available until after the election, and I have spoken out publicly and other members have spoken out publicly about the concerns in relation to transparency. This state has been through so much in relation to COVID over the last few years, and what we have seen is the Parliament shut down and committees gagged. I have said several times the parliamentary processes that have gone on under this government are quite shameful, when we have members of committees deliberately not turning up so oversight committees cannot take on what they are supposed to do. And while we have got an opportunity to have another sitting day so that we can see these reports and scrutinise IPMAC and ask the government about that report that is now to be tabled, I believe, before caretaker—well, how can we trust the government on that? How can we trust the government to not be dropping this report just days—

Mr Davis: On grand final day?

Ms CROZIER: Well, on grand final day, Mr Davis. We have seen with the 000—the day before Melbourne Cup. I mean, they are up to all the tricks, but they are not open to transparency. These are quite reasonable amendments for the Victorian public to actually understand about not just that important report but also the other annual reports. Six health reports have been dumped today but there are dozens more. We must see those reports.

Members interjecting.

Ms CROZIER: It is attached to the adjournment matter. But the sitting of the house—now, the government does not want this to occur, and quite rightly because they do not want scrutiny. They actually do not want the chamber to do the work it is supposed to do. It does not want us to undertake the work we need to do. And I say because of the shocking situation in this state around health—just look at the story today; seven children have died in the last five months. There are record numbers of sentinel events.

Mr Davis interjected.

Ms CROZIER: Well, Safer Care Victoria, Mr Davis, will not undertake an investigation into all this until next year. This is what I am talking about when we need to have a greater degree of transparency and understanding about what is going on. Where are these reports that are coming out of the various health services, the various departments, the various agencies? We are all privileged to sit in this house to be representing our communities and to be putting forward the scrutiny that Victorians quite rightly expect. Yet this government we have seen has time and time again shut down

that opportunity to do so. I say that these amendments to the adjournment that we are debating now are important in the interests of every single Victorian and I would urge—

Ms Shing interjected.

Ms CROZIER: Well, you might have a problem with it, Ms Shing, but this is about transparency. This is about undertaking the work—

Ms Shing: It's you not being organised.

Ms CROZIER: No, it's not.

Mr Davis: No, it's actually precisely organised on the adjournment motion.

Ms CROZIER: I thank Mr Davis for that interjection. This is an amendment to the adjournment motion put by the Leader of the Government. It is entirely appropriate, and in the interests of transparency and proper process I urge every member to support Mr Davis's amendments.

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) (10:14): We face an extraordinary situation today where members of the government have come in here and said, 'We are from the government, trust us'. Well, I do not know too many Victorians who would trust the current government. We have been lied to by this government far too often, by this Premier and by his ministers—far too often to accept on face value anything they say. Whether it be a tweet or whether it be a sworn oath, whatever it may be, if this government tells you something you cannot take it to the bank. That is the bottom line. They have lied to us. Remember the curfew? They told us that that was based on health advice. We found out it was not based on health advice and it was not based on law and order advice. It was cooked up by the Premier. So many times we have had a situation where we have had an instruction to release the health advice; he still has not done it. Is he going to do that before we close down? I mean, what is going on? I do not care, as Ms Shing said, how many times who has done what to who. I do not care about the past. What I want to know is whether we can leave here today knowing that that pandemic report is in our keeping. We need to know.

The Minister for Health says she is not in a position to release it today. She should be. She has known for months, since she took on the job, that the Parliament was rising today. She has known that, and I have to say that if she has not got her act together then she should not have the job. If she did not know that the Parliament was rising today and that we would want to see that pandemic report before the house rose, she should not have the job. It is as simple as that.

So I will be supporting certainly the first amendment from Mr Davis, and I urge other members, particularly crossbench members, to consider the words that I have expressed and just ask yourselves this question: do I trust this government? If you trust the government, yes, you will say, 'Oh, they said it; it must be true. We'll follow them into the valley of death'. If you do not trust the government, like the majority of Victorians, you will support this amendment.

I cannot understand anybody who would give this government carte blanche for anything, because if you give them an inch, they will take 10 miles, they will take 100 miles. They have no respect for the truth. They have no respect for the people of Victoria. They certainly have no respect for this Parliament, and they have shown that time and time and time again. I would like that report released today, but if it cannot be released today, well then let us come back on 19 October and let it be released then.

Dr CUMMING (Western Metropolitan) (10:18): The way I vote today will depend on what the government is going to say in the way of a retort and a reply. I obviously want transparency and accountability for my community. We want the reports. They have been promised. I know that this government—some of the ministers, not all of the ministers but a good fat majority—are not very good at actually giving information when it is requested or answering questions in this chamber.

Mr Leane: All of us?

Dr CUMMING: Not all. The good ones in this chamber I have no issue with, but there are some in the other place, such as the Minister for Health during the pandemic, who has absolutely refused—

Mr Somyurek interjected.

Dr CUMMING: You too, Mr Somyurek. I will take that back. That is right—Mr Somyurek was wonderful when he was local government minister. But there have been many in the other place, from the Premier down—in the way of ministers in the other house—that have not responded to my questions in this place, that have not produced reports and that have promised through these debates that we would have a better way and that they would adhere to their four-day, five-day reporting mechanism, but they have not. I have spent nearly every Wednesday on my feet for 5 minutes either speaking to directions or reports—every Wednesday—so I would like to see the reports. I have no problem reading the reports as well as questioning this government on why the reports are written in the way they are, because that is what it is all about—transparency and accountability. That is why those reports are actually given to this Parliament—so we can actually question and try to improve things for our community.

Mr HAYES (Southern Metropolitan) (10:20): I would just like to follow up on Dr Cumming's request and ask the government, maybe the Attorney-General, to clarify when the reports will be released to us and the Parliament.

Ms SYMES (Northern Victoria—Leader of the Government, Attorney-General, Minister for Emergency Services) (10:20): While the amendments to the sitting of the house motion which I put some half hour ago were only brought to my attention this morning, I put on record that it was indicated by the opposition that they intended to sit an extra day. But this second component about documents was not brought to my attention until it was a printed-out document, which as Mr Davis has indicated was carefully crafted with the clerks—it was not even remotely put on my radar. In fact it was members of the crossbench that mentioned it to me this morning. I was like, 'I think there's something coming'. After four years, I reckon we have developed a bit of a rapport in this place where we kind of let each other know what is going on, so on the last day to be presented with this is pretty disappointing in that regard. In respect of the—

Ms Crozier interjected.

Ms SYMES: Can I finish? Because there is no big deal—

Ms Crozier interjected.

Ms SYMES: I pick up Ms Crozier's interjection. She just said, 'It's no big deal'. I said, 'Yes, it's not a big deal', and then she said, 'Actually it is a big deal'. I was agreeing with you, Ms Crozier. I know that that does not regularly happen. I cannot say anything without you wanting to oppose what I am saying.

What I am saying is in relation to—and I will speak to people that are listening—the first amendment to the returning to the house motion, which is seeking to compel us to come back on a Wednesday, of course, on 19 October. The government will not be supporting that amendment. I do not know about you, but I have got some commitments in my electorate, talking to people that are really interested in the positive platform that the government is proposing for the upcoming election. I am sure others have got conversations that they want to be having in their communities, speaking to the real people. We will not be supporting that amendment.

In relation to the second amendment, as Ms Shing has articulated, many of these documents can be tabled out of session. There is certainly no attempt by the government to avoid scrutiny. As we have seen this morning, based on some conversations, the Minister for Health has certainly confirmed that the Independent Pandemic Management Advisory Committee report will be made public before the caretaker period. I think she has explained that the scope of that inquiry was broadened. The

government needs to consider it, develop a response and make it public. She has given that commitment. I reaffirm the commitment on behalf of the government that that is forthcoming.

In relation to the other reports, many annual reports have been tabled today. In relation to these others, if they become available in time and they can be tabled out of session, I do not mind. That is fine. In fact if Mr Davis had come and spoken to me about this without lumping it on me, we could have had a decent conversation and probably agreed to it. So the government will not oppose this amendment, because I do not have a problem with it. But I do not want to facilitate his stunt. Mr Davis wants to stand up there and say the government is avoiding scrutiny, the government does not want to table anything. That is nonsense. That is absolute nonsense. We have received advice in this place from the Auditor-General in relation to constraints on some government agencies and the like, but in terms of anything that is available, there is no problem in making it public. That is not a problem. So I will not be opposing this second component of the amendments because it is fine. There is nothing wrong with it. It would have been nice to have a conversation about it, but Mr Davis wanted to grandstand, he wanted a stunt and it has fallen a bit flat because, frankly, I do not have a problem with it. The government will not be opposing it; I oppose the way it has been brought to the chamber.

So, to make it absolutely clear, we will be voting against the first amendment. I had at least a bit of advance notice on that one, but for the second one—despite the fact that it has only been brought to my attention within the last 45 minutes—there is nothing offensive in it. It is fine. The only thing that is offensive is the conduct of the opposition.

Dr Cumming: On a point of order, President, just to clarify the dates, through the Chair to the Clerk: what dates are we looking at, possibly, with these reports? The Attorney-General just mentioned caretaker mode.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Thank you very much. I think the contribution is finished. I am sorry, Dr Cumming. The Leader of the Government has already declared that she will support the amendment, and we are going through the process.

House divided on amendment 1:

Ayes, 16

Atkinson, Mr
Bach, Dr
Barton, Mr
Bath, Ms
Burnett-Wake, Ms
Crozier, Ms

Cumming, Dr
Davis, Mr
Finn, Mr
Limbrick, Mr
Lovell, Ms

McArthur, Mrs
Quilty, Mr
Rich-Phillips, Mr
Somyurek, Mr
Vaghela, Ms

Noes, 22

Bourman, Mr
Elasmar, Mr
Erdogan, Mr
Gepp, Mr
Grimley, Mr
Hayes, Mr
Kieu, Dr
Leane, Mr

Maxwell, Ms
McIntosh, Mr
Meddick, Mr
Melhem, Mr
Patten, Ms
Pulford, Ms
Ratnam, Dr

Shing, Ms
Stitt, Ms
Symes, Ms
Taylor, Ms
Terpstra, Ms
Tierney, Ms
Watt, Ms

Amendment negatived.

Amendment 2 agreed to; amended motion agreed to.

Members statements**FELICITATIONS**

Mr MELHEM (Western Metropolitan) (10:33): As it is the Parliament's last day today, I just want to take the opportunity to pay tribute particularly to you, President. I want to congratulate you on the achievements you have made over the years in this place. You have achieved the highest office in Parliament, and I want to wish you all the very best. You have been a fine and excellent President and loved by everyone. So, on behalf of everyone, I want to pass on my best wishes to you and your family for a bright future.

I would also like to pay tribute to our good friend Mark Gepp, who will also be retiring with this Parliament. I wish him well. We are going to miss you; you will be missed. You are one of our better speakers and contributors in this place. You have been the chair of the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee. You always know where you stand with Mark Gepp. Good luck, mate, with your endeavours—whatever the future holds.

Also, other members are retiring, including Mr Atkinson—the father of the chamber, do we call you? He is a long-serving member, including eight years as President. Good luck, Mr Atkinson, with your retirement, and to Mr Rich-Phillips. Mr Ondarchie is not here today. All the members who are not likely to make it back for the next Parliament, I want to wish you well. To the people who are coming back for the 60th Parliament—hopefully we will continue the good work of this Parliament, because it has been a very challenging four years and I think everyone should be proud of the achievements we have made. Crossbenchers—I think everyone has done a great job.

I finish off by wishing Andrew, our Clerk, all the best for whatever his next challenge is. Whoever the employer is who is picking up Mr Young will be better for it. So good luck and congratulations on your achievements.

HEALTH SYSTEM

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan—Leader of the Opposition) (10:35): I want to say something about the state government's failure with the health system at the moment. It is clear that hospitals like the Northern Hospital have been botched from go to whoa. The support has not been there to expand the hospital. The government has not put enough support into that hospital to make sure that the huge growth in population is able to be attended to and the emergency department capacity is there. We expanded the emergency department in 2011–12 and on from there, but Labor did not continue that expansion of the hospital as was required. I say the state government has made announcements recently, and there is a wake-up moment with Daniel Andrews, the Premier. He has realised that after four years of this term and four years of the term before—eight years in total—he has left the health system in a disastrous place. He has left it crumbling. He has left it in a position with the highest waiting lists in the history of the state by a long margin, and he has left it in a terrible position with respect to ESTA.

STEM EDUCATION

Dr KIEU (South Eastern Metropolitan) (10:37): I am proudly Victoria's inaugural STEM education ambassador. I thank the previous Minister for Education, the Honourable James Merlino, for my appointment and all his help. I would also like to thank the new Minister for Education, the Honourable Natalie Hutchins, and the Department of Education and Training for their unwavering support and assistance.

I have had the opportunity to visit Victoria's 18 specialist STEM education facilities, comprising 10 tech schools, two STEM centres of excellence and six science and mathematics specialist centres. I have also spoken at conferences and many other events and compiled a report entitled *STEM Education in the Education State of Australia*. The time to focus on STEM education is now. It is at

the forefront of our economic recovery, growth and social development, and it is crucial to strengthening our technological sovereignty.

What a journey this has been for me so far. My first term in the Victorian Parliament can be categorised as exciting and challenging. It has been a privilege to advocate for STEM, STEM education and our multicultural communities. I have been so honoured to represent the South Eastern Metropolitan Region and hope to continue to do so. Either way: thank you, Victoria.

FELICITATIONS

Dr KIEU: On another matter, it has been a privilege to have known and worked with members who are not coming back to Parliament next term and the Clerk: Mr Nazih Elasmr, the President; Mark Gepp; Bruce Atkinson; and Andrew Young. Thank you.

FELICITATIONS

Mr GRIMLEY (Western Victoria) (10:38): I hope this is not a valedictory speech. I plan to be here next year, but politics is a wildcard, so you never know. Given this, I want to take a moment to thank a few people on the Department of Parliamentary Services staff. A particular shout-out to Matt Jordon; to IT and particularly Chris Prasad—thanks for your help; to the Legislative Council team led by, of course, Andrew and Anne; to all the attendants, and a shout-out to Patrick and his wicked sense of humour, which has made the tough days feel not so bad; to the PSOs and security team that keep us safe, and a particular shout-out to Muhammad for his amazing recipes on YouTube—if you have not seen them, check them out; to the tabling office, Juliana, Annemarie, Savannah, Tash and others—my office cannot speak highly enough of the work that you do; to the Office of the Chief Parliamentary Counsel for drafting my bills and amendments; to Jacquie, Elise and the entire hospitality team; to past and present presidents, Mr Leane and Mr Elasmr, for keeping this place in good order—and of course to the acting presidents and the Deputy President; and to the ministers and their advisers, indeed all MPs from the opposition and crossbench and staff, thank you very much;

Of course to my own staff, to Olivia, who most of you know, thanks for all of your work over the journey—it has been invaluable—and indeed to Clinton before you as well. To those back in the office—Sarah, Amanda, Michael and Callum, and Kristian at the beginning—all of your work is appreciated, and you have made me look much better than I really am.

Finally, to my family—my wife, Mandy, and the kids, Michael and Brianna—it has been tough, but we live on. I love you and thank you for all your support.

Some of us come to this place with very little—in fact no—experience in politics. Sometimes I got it wrong, and sometimes I got it right. One thing I hope you do know is that I come from a very good place that seeks to right the wrongs of many that come before our office. So a huge and sincere thankyou, and stay safe everyone.

MAROONDAH HOSPITAL

Ms TERPSTRA (Eastern Metropolitan) (10:40): I rise to update the house about an amazing and really important investment in my region, the Eastern Metropolitan Region. As many of you know, a re-elected Andrews government will invest \$1 billion to rebuild Maroondah Hospital from the ground up. This will mean that we will have a new emergency department, new operating theatres and day procedure units, 200 new inpatient beds, a dedicated kids emergency department and a purpose-built mental health hub. This will also create 2500 local construction jobs.

AUSTIN HOSPITAL

Ms TERPSTRA: I am also really pleased to report to the house that the Austin Hospital, also in my region, will receive funding for the redevelopment of the hospital to support the continued growth in our north-eastern suburbs. The Austin redevelopment will add up to 29 extra emergency treatment spaces, boosting capacity so more patients can be treated faster. So \$250 million to \$300 million will

be invested to support an extra 30 000 emergency patients every year, ensuring hospitals can meet the needs of growing local communities. I am really pleased to be part of a government that understands and recognises how important our healthcare system is, and I am really pleased to report to the house the record investment that is being made in hospitals in my region.

FELICITATIONS

Ms TERPSTRA: Just in conclusion I want to wish everyone really well for the end of this parliamentary term. I want to thank all of the parliamentary staff, the clerks for helping us to keep this place ticking over and of course the wonderful—I am going to leave someone out, I know, and I apologise if I do. So I just want to thank everyone. I want to thank the President, Nazih, and also Shaun, the former President. I want to thank, as I said, all the staff in the parliamentary precinct. I just want to say it has been a real privilege to be part of the parliamentary year this term. I wish everyone well, and go Labor.

HAWTHORN FOOTBALL CLUB

Mr ATKINSON (Eastern Metropolitan) (10:42): I was most disturbed this morning to hear the news of what has been revealed at Hawthorn Football Club—intolerable behaviour. Whilst obviously the Parliament is not in a position to direct the AFL in what they should do, there is no doubt that a considerable amount of largesse is provided by government to the AFL and other major sporting bodies, and there is an expectation that they set a standard of behaviour that the entire community ought to be able to look up to and appreciate as being a standard that we should all be measured by. At the very least Alastair Clarkson ought to stand down for a period until there is a complete investigation and the allegations that have surfaced this morning are proven or disproven. I think Fagan in Brisbane ought to also stand aside. It is the right and proper thing to do. The coercion of young Aboriginal players was racist—absolutely an extraordinary incident of racism—but to go further and to actually insist on the termination of a pregnancy, to be coercing young men and young women, those Indigenous players, is just one of the worst things I have ever heard in my 30 years in this place and beyond. It is outrageous, and people need to stand to account. The AFL is not above the law. Clarkson might have been a great coach, but if that is the way he achieved his success then I do not want to be seeing that sort of success by anybody in the future.

GOVERNMENT ACHIEVEMENTS

Ms TAYLOR (Southern Metropolitan) (10:44): I was thinking about life in the upper house. It certainly is a wild ride, isn't it? I think everyone here can agree with that. There are a lot of late nights and a lot of very intense conversations. Speaking for myself and my colleagues—I do not want to reflect on other people, but I will say what I can reflect on from the heart—it is very much all about our progressive values, caring for the vulnerable and understanding that people go through all sorts of phases in life; that is part of being human. It is really driving forward our progressive agenda in terms of social and affordable housing and really aggressively transitioning—in the best sense—to a clean energy future and the jobs that go with it. Also very ambitious but also to be fulfilled is our LGBTIQ+ 10-year strategy, protecting the very vulnerable trans community as well. Also very bold but necessary reforms are our forthright and forward advancements in terms of transport, whether it be the Suburban Rail Loop, whether it be Metro Tunnel and low-carbon travel too. Millions of trees are being planted as we speak; I am so excited about this. The social reforms I have not even gotten to, and of course so beautiful are the First Nations reforms and really empowering our First Nations people and progressing towards treaty. Go Labor!

FELICITATIONS

Mr BARTON (Eastern Metropolitan) (10:46): We may not know what is going to happen as we come to November, so I do not want to miss the opportunity to thank everyone who has given me support. I would particularly like to thank my staff, including Norm, Emma, Kaya and Linda. I also want to thank the clerks for their patience—but seriously, they need to lighten up a little bit—and I

want to say a special thankyou to the Clerk, Mr Young. I do wish him all the very best. He has been a great support for the newbies. I want to particularly thank the friendships that have been developed, and my luncheon partners. It has been a surprise to be able to—I should not say it has been a surprise; some of you are human. I just want to thank you for forming some friendships that will go beyond November. I want to thank all my parliamentary colleagues—an interesting group of people, challenging at times, but I think you have all got good hearts.

Ms Stitt: Mostly.

Mr BARTON: Mostly. I certainly want to thank some of the more senior politicians around here who have sort of given us some guidance and professional help. Thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you and thank you. That is it. Thank you.

FELICITATIONS

Ms MAXWELL (Northern Victoria) (10:47): Well, on this last sitting day of the 59th Parliament I would like to thank the residents of Northern Victoria, firstly. It has been a privilege to represent you and to have worked closely with so many of you on issues that face our communities. We have endured the pandemic, devastating bushfires, border closures and the rebuilding from the impacts of these significant events. We are working for fair, just, safe communities, and it has been an absolute privilege to be a voice for victims of crime whose rights are so often overlooked and are a lower priority. I would like to thank the President and his staff, the clerks, the table office, the Parliamentary Budget Office, the Department of Parliamentary Services, security and catering staff—particularly the catering staff; I would like to thank them for my extra kilos. I thank my team, Wendy, Jamie, Michelle, Lynette and Joel, who have worked diligently for me and my electorate. I thank Mr Grimley for being a fantastic colleague and a pleasure to work with, and I would like to thank Derryn Hinch's Justice Party. Our parliamentary advisers Karen Rourke and Olivia Nicholls, a special shout-out to you two. You have been outstanding in your dedication, commitment and support to both Mr Grimley and me, and you have certainly allowed us to become better MPs. Finally I thank my family, because they are my rock and they are the centre of my world. It has been an honour to contribute to our democratic process, and I wish everyone well heading toward the next term of Parliament.

FARMING INNOVATION

Mr McINTOSH (Eastern Victoria) (10:49): There is no doubt farming can be particularly challenging, and this has been the case for many, many years with the weather patterns that farmers face, but in an increasingly changing climate farmers have more and more vocalised that they want the support of governments. I am very proud that the Victorian government has led the nation in many ways for farming. I was very pleased to join Minister Tierney recently at the Ellinbank SmartFarm. There was a significant group of farming peak bodies that attended, and I think one of the comments that Minister Tierney made was that it is our farming peak bodies that have led, through their farmers, the call for action on climate change, because farmers want to be prepared to deal with this changing weather and want their farms to be passed on to future generations. The work of Ellinbank farm is fantastic from a mitigation point of view—reducing the emissions that particularly our milking cows make—but also on adaptation, ensuring that as we get more intense weather the cows are having the best outputs, ensuring profitability, enabling farmers to pass their farms onto their children and ensuring that we have sustainability across generations of farmers.

FELICITATIONS

Mr HAYES (Southern Metropolitan) (10:51): This is not a valedictory, but I would like to take the opportunity in my last members statement for the year to say thanks from me and from the Sustainable Australia Party and to reflect on this term in Parliament. I think we have raised awareness of the negative impacts of overpopulation and the impact it has had on planning, as put forward in the inquiry into the planning system, and on the environment, as indicated in the inquiry into habitat decline. Both of these inquiries we took a major part in. Unfortunately one of the major reforms we sought has gone

backwards, and that is planning democracy, which has deteriorated under this government. Our efforts to bring these issues into the planning scheme have been fiercely resisted by the major parties. The Sustainable Australia Party will continue to fight for residents in their battle against overdevelopment, for their environment and against corruption. I would like to say thanks to the President; the clerks—Andrew, all the best; he has gone already; our chamber staff; our state public servants; Michael Baker and his staff on the Environment and Planning Committee; the chamber attendants; the catering staff; my own staff, Sophie, Rowan, Candy, Paul and Mia; the hundreds, if not thousands, of our supporters out there; and to all of you too, particularly the crossbench. When I came here, I was really surprised to see how friendly and cooperative and respectful all of the members of this house are to each other, and I really commend that and hope it continues. Good luck in the coming election.

TAYLAN MINDEMIR

Mr ERDOGAN (Southern Metropolitan) (10:53): This week marks 10 years since the passing of my dear friend Taylan Mindemir in a tragic road accident. Taylan and I had a lot in common. Both of our parents had migrated to Australia from Turkey. Both of our parents worked at the Ford factory in Broadmeadows. We were both raised in Melbourne's northern suburbs. We played soccer together at North Coburg United and we both supported Beşiktaş. We agreed on just about everything, with one glaring exception—I am a one-eyed Collingwood supporter and Taylan was a mad Bombers fan. I miss Taylan's banter before every Anzac Day clash, but I do not miss his constant reminders that the Essendon Football Club had one more premiership than the mighty Pies. Taylan would go on to complete his plumbing apprenticeship with my cousin Serkan, and they also formed a close friendship. During his 27 years, Taylan's cheerful personality, kindness and generosity enriched the lives of all those who knew him. Taylan's life came to an end too soon, and he is greatly missed but he is not forgotten. Taylan's parents, Mustafa and Saati Mindemir, continue to honour and celebrate his life. I pass on my sincere condolences to them once again. Taylan's passing should serve as a reminder to be careful on our roads and be mindful of the conditions this long weekend. Rest in peace, Taylan.

FELICITATIONS

Mr LIMBRICK (South Eastern Metropolitan) (10:54): I will also be reflective. For me this term of office has been a term of firsts. Mr Quilty and I were the first people elected to the Victorian Parliament on a libertarian platform, the platform of the Liberal Democrats. I was the first to organise a pro-nuclear rally in Australia. I was also probably the first to arrange a meeting between bank officials and sex workers. I was the first member to be kettled and arrested by police, and I am probably the first member to be arrested and then interrogate the Chief Commissioner of Police about it in the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee. Along with Tim and Dr Cumming, I was the first to be expelled from Parliament for medical privacy reasons and then to participate in parliamentary debate from a nightclub. I was also the first to argue for drug decriminalisation in front of a room full of conservatives at the Conservative Political Action Conference—far scarier than anything I have ever done here. I was also the only politician to witness Black Lives Matter and anti-lockdown protests. I was also the only politician to witness tradies protest and the fake news that followed. I think I was also the first to mention the great band TISM in *Hansard*. I was also the first member of this Parliament to call for the release of Julian Assange, and I am very proud to say that the Liberal Democrats was the only political party to consistently stand up for human rights throughout the pandemic. If enough people support the Liberal Democrats in November, then I will see you all again next year.

FELICITATIONS

Ms SHING (Eastern Victoria—Minister for Water, Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Equality) (10:55): We all work for and on behalf of the communities we represent, and we have different ways of going about doing that with different priorities. But I think in the main our hearts are all in the right place in what we choose to bring forward for consideration and the priorities which we advance. I want to take this opportunity on the last sitting day of this Parliament not just to reflect upon the contributions of those made within this chamber but also those made across the Parliament. I want

to respect and acknowledge the work that has been put in by members from all sides of the Parliament, crossbench, opposition and government alike, who are not recontesting for a range of reasons. I want to acknowledge their hard work and the work that has gone in at their end to make their own communities better.

I also want to acknowledge the work of those who facilitate these processes: the attendants, the PSOs, the clerks and everybody who works to make sure that our committee structures and our team efforts are duly acquitted. In particular I want to thank Hansard. Long-suffering Hansard operators are forced to transcribe all sorts of contributions. To them I say, 'I'm sorry. Thank you for adding commas and full stops where they have been appropriate and necessary'. Thank you also to the Presiding Officers. Go well, everybody, this November.

FELICITATIONS

Dr CUMMING (Western Metropolitan) (10:57): I am enjoying the challenge of leading the Independence Party. The Independence Party members want a change of government. They want hope and freedom. I want to thank all of those who have supported me as a member of Parliament: my children, my friends, community groups, sporting clubs, the local government areas and the many people who I have met as a member of Parliament. I hope that I have actually helped you in some way. I truly want to just say to my children that I love them very dearly. To my mother, who is sitting in a nursing home in Yarraville at this time, for the many years that she worked at Margaret's Bazaar and looked after my family, I want to say again, 'Mum, I love you so much'.

Also too I want to correct on the record something that I said in my maiden speech that was incorrect. When my aunty passed away on 1 October my Aunty Shirley gave me a story about my grandfather, who was her father. Because my father passed when I was 16 years old, the story that had always been relayed to me, which I laid down in my maiden speech, was actually a story of my grandfather's brother. My grandfather was a bit of a larrikin in Scotland. He jumped ship in Scotland to get his passage here to Australia, and the story that I relayed was actually about his brother up in the Mallee. My grandfather did have a wonderful little farm in the Mallee, but it was not exactly the same.

I also want to acknowledge the one-year anniversary of what occurred on the West Gate Bridge and at the Shrine of Remembrance—some of the most shocking things that I have seen as a Victorian. It has been one year, and I hope that in the years to come we can actually heal from what occurred on the West Gate Bridge as well as at the Shrine of Remembrance. I look forward, not back I am hoping, to a wonderful Parliament in the 60th Parliament.

UNCLE JACK CHARLES

Ms WATT (Northern Metropolitan) (11:00): Uncle Jack Charles was born to a nation that did not consider him a citizen. He came to the end of his life as someone who changed the very cultural, political, legal and social fabric of our state. The injustices for gay men in our legal system were not known until Uncle Jack made them known to our community. Uncle Jack had a colourful past as he battled his demons, but with his leadership and strong voice he helped shape our spent convictions legislation. But it was his truth telling for the families and descendants of the stolen generations that rest with me. He was the first elder to speak at the Yoorrook Justice Commission and there was his work with the stolen generations reparations scheme. As I reflect on the man, I think back to the call from my mum as she told me how upset she was and how she had just been yarning to him at the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service and how she will miss seeing him on his scooter on Smith Street. Me too, Mum, me too. To all the mob that mourn him, I join you in tears of sadness and celebration for what our lives look like now that we have shared it with Uncle Jack. Rest now, Uncle. Rest now.

BUSHFIRE PREPAREDNESS

Ms BATH (Eastern Victoria) (11:01): The Howitt Society is a group of learned people made up of land managers, fire managers, scientists, foresters, anthropologists and historians. Yesterday I presented a petition in this house on behalf of them, and we had two groups of people, one from the

western side of the state and one from Mallacoota. I was pleased to do that because their message was the most sincere and most learned. They were wanting to see in the landscape of our forest systems an increase in low-intensity fuel reduction burns—where possible, using traditional owners techniques and methodologies—and that was in line with the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission. They too were learned people who presented that particular recommendation. But what we see from the Andrews government and what we have seen for the past eight years is a wilful neglect of our forest systems. Fuel loads are continuing to build up to another dangerous level. We have seen shocking and horrendous fires caused primarily by apathy in regard to intensely attacking them early on but also by enabling fuel loads to build up—they are not meeting their own already low targets. We have the majority of decisions being made in Melbourne; they need to be made by listening to the likes of the Howitt Society.

Motions

EMERGENCY SERVICES TELECOMMUNICATIONS AUTHORITY

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan—Leader of the Opposition) (11:03): I move:

That:

- (1) this house notes that:
 - (a) the inspector-general for emergency management's report on the performance and serious failings of the 000 service conducted by the Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority (ESTA), titled *Review of Victoria's Emergency Ambulance Call Answer Performance*, was released publicly on Saturday, 3 September 2022, even though it was available to the government earlier;
 - (b) up to 33 deaths are linked to the failings of the ESTA call-taking system during the recent crisis in 000 call taking and these incidents, as well as others, could have been prevented had timely action been taken by the Andrews Labor government;
 - (c) the Andrews Labor government ignored warnings from 2015 and 2016 that pointed to clear failings in the ESTA 000 call service and clearly identified risks to the ability of ESTA to manage periods of increased service call demand, including a need for a secure and reliable funding base;
 - (d) the Minister for Emergency Services, the Honourable Jaclyn Symes MLC, failed to act immediately upon becoming aware of the failings of the ESTA service to ensure it had an immediate injection of sufficient funding and other necessary support to enable it to adequately deliver life-saving services; and
- (2) the house has consequently lost confidence in the Minister for Emergency Services.

This is a serious motion, and it relates directly to a very serious matter that the community has faced. The review from the inspector-general for emergency management is a significant piece of work and certainly adds to our understanding, but the government has known for a long time that there is a failing ESTA service. They have known that there has not been the capacity. There were clear indications that the earlier board was aware of the problems. The earlier board, in 2015 and 2016, did understand that there were serious issues. They did apply to the government for increased funding. The issues of secure and ongoing funding have not been addressed until very recently by this government, and the government had plenty of warning. It is clear from what has been said by the IGEM that indeed the government's refusal to deal with this matter did mean that there was not the surge capacity, did mean that investments that should have been made were not made by the government and did mean that when the difficulties came forward through COVID—and it is around the country that this happened—the government had not put in place a service that could cope with that surge in activity.

The government has tried to say, 'Oh, well, it's all COVID', but actually surges in activity were foreseeable. We know from the thunderstorm asthma incident that the government was aware that surges could occur, and advice and warnings were given to government at that time. The failure to heed those issues and failure to put in place a proper funding system—a secure funding system, an adequate funding system—and the technology that is required and the personnel that are required is a sign of failure by this government. It is a serious failure, and it almost certainly has resulted in so many

deaths. I accept that the 33 terrible incidents that are pointed to in the IGEM report and that have been discussed widely elsewhere—and a number of cases have been referred to directly in the press across a period—are matters for the coroner to make ultimate determination on. But it is clear that there is a significant pattern here, and that significant pattern has not been addressed by the government. The government ought to have taken proper action and the government ought to have put in place a proper funding system, and the truth is of course that they have not.

We have heard question after question after question in this chamber where the minister has not been fully forthcoming. The minister has tried to cover her tracks and the government's tracks on these matters, and the minister has not fully accepted responsibility for what has gone on here. It is true that the minister is a relatively recent minister to this portfolio. It is true that she was not directly responsible for the failings back in 2015 and 2016 and onwards. But it is also true that she did not act swiftly enough when the warnings came through. From the minutes of the ESTA board—and we have certainly been through the period from July 2020 all the way through until 28 April this year, so it is a long period of minutes that we have closely examined—it is clear that the minister was receiving reports. Both this minister and the former minister were receiving regular reports from ESTA, and ESTA was again and again pointing to the government and saying, 'Look, we need that financial support'. It is clear that the expenditure review committee did knock back budget bids. It is clear that the expenditure review committee did not provide the secure funding that was needed. The government is responsible for those decisions. Ultimately the minister in the Westminster system is responsible and has got to carry the can for the failings of the system.

It is true that there are other government ministers that have been involved here, not least historically, but certainly senior government ministers who made funding decisions around ESTA have got to bear some responsibility as well. But the fact is that Minister Symes is the minister responsible for ESTA currently, and it is clear even now that there are significant problems in ESTA and that the government has not dealt with all of these issues yet. Still reports come to the opposition, and more broadly, about the issues. We have made the point publicly about the terrible outcomes that have occurred for people. The length of time is just frightening on some of these calls. Look, I could go on at length through the IGEM report, but I am not going to because many people have read it. It says:

The current benchmark for ESTA's speed of call answer for emergency ambulance is that within a calendar month, ESTA answers 90 per cent of such calls within five seconds.

We have heard again and again and again about the failure to meet that benchmark. And further:

Despite ... careful planning and best endeavours ESTA's call answer speed performance for emergency ambulance ... has fallen below community and government expectations and performance benchmarks ...

It talks about how:

This review identifies significant declines in ESTA's emergency ambulance call answer times, commencing in December 2020, with ambulance call activity increasing beyond historical highs, and emergency calls queuing for completely unacceptable lengths of time—10 minutes, 15 minutes, and longer.

This I think is important to get on the record. I urge people: if they have not read the IGEM's report, they should. He said:

I identified 40 potential adverse events during the period 1 December 2020 and 31 May 2022 ... associated with call answer delays, agency command and control decisions, and/or ambulance resourcing issues. Tragically, 33 of these patients did not survive their emergencies.

Those families, those people, deserve proper answers. They deserve openness and they deserve much more transparency. The government hid this report for a period. Why did they do that? The government has been very reluctant to be transparent on these matters. He goes on to say:

ESTA missed opportunities to recruit and deploy additional emergency ambulance call-takers during the pandemic, particularly in 2020. This was for several reasons, one of which is related to the existing funding model to which ESTA is subject.

Another reason for shortfalls in call-takers related to the need to furlough ...

That is entirely predictable in a pandemic. Every state confronted this, but the deterioration in call performance was not as severe in any other state as it was in Victoria. Victoria again is the standout as the failure state, the state that is incompetent in running these matters. It is not Victoria; it is actually the Victorian government that is responsible and the minister who is ultimately responsible. The report says:

Despite liaison with counterparts interstate and overseas, and extensive planning, ESTA's governance, existing links within the Victorian emergency management sector, and funding model revealed shortcomings in its ability to rapidly scale-up its response.

The warnings were there in 2015. The warnings were there in 2016. The warnings and the requests from ESTA for a secure funding model, for additional funding, for upgrades and for additional staff were all there again and again. The set of minutes is replete. You can actually feel the tension. You can actually feel the concern of people as the board and the people at ESTA were in vain calling for additional resources. There is a desperation in those minutes, and that is not something I say often about a set of minutes from an authority. You can actually feel the tension. You can feel the fact that they know they need that funding, and they are not getting it. They are not getting the security. They cannot do the investments they need to do, and they know that it puts the organisation at huge risk and consequently puts the public at huge risk—people at risk, families at risk.

Call takers are trying to do their best, but when the calls come from members of the public with a sick family member the support is not there. They are not able to get through, the outcome is not satisfactory. I say the government has got to actually make sure that this is dealt with. We have actually got to have a system where this is dealt with.

The issue of hang-ups is again replete through that report. The minister yesterday would not answer the question: how many hang-ups were recorded in the period to 30 June for the year, and how many hang-ups were recorded for four financial years? I think we are entitled to know these sorts of basic figures, and I think the government's failure to provide those is a cover-up and is unacceptable. I think the minister has to answer for these points. So this motion is actually a very difficult motion and a very important motion. It lays out in its first part the facts of the report. It lays out the 33 deaths that the IGEM report identifies. It makes the point that in 2015 and 2016 the service issues were identified. The government knew, and it failed to act. That is culpability by this government. It is a culpable government. It is a government that is responsible for these bad outcomes. It is a government that through its failure to act, despite warnings, has exposed families and members of the public here to enormous risk. People, frankly, have died because of the government's failure to manage this and failure to take the actions that were required at an early point.

The minister did not act quickly enough when she became aware of these matters. Again, the minutes are quite clear about the time cycles, the funding requests and the requests for urgent increases in staff and that these were not met quickly enough. Then as the pandemic hit, as it did in every state, in every area of the country and elsewhere around the world, those other states, New South Wales in particular, managed it more effectively than Victoria. The failure here is due to the long-term failure but also the failure to act quickly in the early periods of the pandemic and beyond. I am still not confident that the government has found a solution on this, and I think the minister actually should do the honourable thing and step aside. What she has done here is not manage this process properly.

I accept that the government has now put additional money in—and we have identified holes in that money; my colleagues will have more to say about that. But we accept that the minister has put more money in now belatedly, after the horse has bolted, as it were, and after the terrible and tragic incidents have occurred. So, yes, new money has gone in, but there are holes in that program. We have identified those and indicated that we will deal with those if elected in November.

But the fact is that at this point the government has not provided satisfactory explanations for its failures. It has not been honest; it has tried to cover up these reports—and the government could have tabled this. The minutes make it clear that the board expected this report to be provided in June. That is what the minutes show. So I say the government has not been transparent, has not been honest and has not dealt with what is a very, very serious community situation. I urge the chamber to support the motion.

Ms SHING (Eastern Victoria—Minister for Water, Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Equality) (11:17): This is a motion that goes to the heart of some exceptionally tragic and traumatic subject matter, and I want to begin my contribution by noting the very, very human element of the subject matter we are dealing with today. This is something which Minister Symes, the Minister for Health, the Minister for Police and indeed the Premier have been very, very clear about—that nobody is walking away from the impact of the pandemic and the consequences of a global health crisis that pushed all of our systems to their limits.

To that end I want to echo the condolences that colleagues of mine have made and indeed that people have made across the Parliament at the loss and the grief that people are feeling and continue to feel following the worst of the pandemic and the waves that we have experienced. I also want to place the context for these events within the circumstances of the pandemic and the fact that comparing Victoria with other states is a difficult exercise, as much as anything because here in Victoria we had a range of circumstances that necessitated and indeed demanded an appropriate response, which limited certain opportunities, freedoms and I suppose engagements for people within a range of different contexts. This also necessitated a range of frameworks for isolation, for restrictions and indeed for furloughing. That was a large contributing factor to the challenges within ESTA and its workforce availability during the pandemic.

But when I turn my mind to the motion itself, I want to really indicate the importance of being very careful in the course of this particular debate on Mr Davis's motion. In the first instance, the inspector-general for emergency management (IGEM), Tony Pearce, is not empowered—and he has confirmed in his report that he is not empowered—to investigate or indeed to make any findings or determinations relating to the cause of death of the 33 people who Mr Davis has identified. When we talk about the loss of life it is vital that the coroner is in a position to undertake this work by reference to that particular position and indeed in a position to do so without the input of the Parliament or indeed the executive. The judicial arm of government needs to be able to reach into these matters and to make decisions about them which are free from any political interference.

When I turn my mind to the motion itself, I note that there have been a range of matters contemplated in the face of the global pandemic that have necessitated additional funding and that have necessitated additional workforce development and, as Mr Davis points out, additional funding. In the first instance, the \$27.5 million was announced by the Minister for Emergency Services within weeks of the advice being returned from the IGEM, on top of that \$46 million package, including those 43 full-time equivalent staff which were facilitated within the 2021 budget. There was further funding provided in March, and that then was followed with a \$333 million package in the 2022–23 budget to employ 400 new staff.

Following on from a system—one of many systems—under extraordinary pressure, as so many systems were and have been in the course of the pandemic, the recovery of target times is something which is important to note. The extraordinary work of ESTA call takers is not ever to be underestimated. The cost involved in being a call taker for ESTA for those workers is often enormous. The Minister for Emergency Services has detailed in this house a number of times in response to questions from those opposite the experiences that she has witnessed when sitting in on call-taking environments, and I note that in that regard the work of this particular workforce is a continuing priority for this government.

When we look at the recovery in terms of targets and meeting targets, the target of 90 per cent has actually been exceeded for August—that is now 92.8 per cent. And whilst it does not fix what has happened, we are in a position now to build upon that work and to continue those improvements over time. The Inspector-General for Emergency Management has also noted in his report that his findings and recommendations are framed with the benefit of hindsight. The benefit of hindsight is something which should guide us and indeed should guide everyone in this Parliament to continuous improvement. This is something which actually goes back a number of decades, following the sale of emergency services management processes to Intergraph and indeed the inquiry and commission by Lex Lasry into the failures of that system as it existed then. There have been so many discussions over so many decades involving criticism of the funding models but also involving the way in which systems like this have been set up and supported over time. ESTA has sought and indeed received funding commensurate with its requests in the past. We now have a funding envelope which stands to recognise the ongoing needs of ESTA and of emergency management response.

I pick up on one of Mr Davis's points made earlier about thunderstorm asthma being a salutary reminder of the system, to paraphrase him, 'not being suitably equipped'. Thunderstorm asthma was an event which lasted a number of hours. That is not to say that it was not an exceptional strain on the system, but to compare that with the pandemic, an environment of extraordinary pressure over more than 12 months, is to ignore the need to be refined and to commit to continuous improvement of our system in a way that acknowledges that where we have been in recent years is a very far cry from where we thought we would ever be—that in fact the report into thunderstorm asthma did not identify any need for a changed funding model or indeed for additional funding, that yes, we have work to do and yes, we need to lean into that improvement but that significant steps have been taken and are being taken to address these issues.

I commend Minister Symes. Again, as Mr Davis has indicated, in the relatively short period of time that she has had this portfolio she has worked really assiduously to deliver funding that goes directly to addressing the issues that those opposite have talked about and have raised on numerous occasions in question time and in other mechanisms available to the house. Leaning in to this difficult work is something which we have never turned away from, and we need to continue that work. This work also needs to be done in a way that respects the role of the coroner, in a way that recognises the ongoing work to fund and to support emergency services, telephony and assistance and also which engages with opportunities for growth and long-term improvement to meet the challenges that we now know are going to become more familiar in our landscape of public health than we ever imagined they would. A global pandemic has pushed everyone around the world to their limits—to our limits—and we have the opportunity now to improve. We have the opportunity to continue to build upon an evidence-based approach to policy and to funding. That is exactly what we are doing and exactly what we will continue to do. The government opposes this motion.

Mr BOURMAN (Eastern Victoria) (11:28): This is a very serious motion about a very serious issue. That there have been failings is probably not up, really, for debate. I think some of the things I hear a lot about—and I give my condolences to the people whose family members or friends may have died due to these things—are the failings of the government, the failings of management and all this, but I do not think enough has been said positively about the people that work there. Now, I have managed to train myself out of saying 'when I worked for the police' and 'when I did this' and all that. I think everyone was getting sick of it. But in this case I also did work for Intergraph after I left the police force, doing call taking and then dispatching, so I had an interesting perspective of basically going from an end user to a provider of the system within a matter of months.

I am going to make some comments about the nature of the call takers and the dispatchers. I think people need to know how these people are the backbone of making any system work like this. When I was using the radio as a police officer, it was fairly straightforward. I remember I used to get frustrated at delays—and most of my perspective will be from the police—and this and that, but you got used to it. But then one day I left the force and I ended up working at Intergraph and I started doing

the call taking. For me a large part of the call taking was quite easy because I knew the way the police force worked. But then came the actual use of the system and things like that, and it started to occur to me that sometimes delays were quite understandable, because all of a sudden it was someone made a call, someone took the call and someone did something with it. I remember clearly one weekday that at about 6.00 pm the traffic lights at the intersection of Centre Road, Springvale Road and Police Road all went out, and I swear we had hundreds of calls in a couple of minutes. Of course everyone in the cars did not know what everyone else in the other cars was doing, but all of a sudden the whole system became bogged down, and when I say 'became bogged down', all the call takers were busy. All of a sudden our answering times went from a number of seconds to minutes. I think 2 minutes was the longest one just trying to clear the backlog. From the police officer on the ground's point of view, it was one call: 'Oh yeah, the traffic lights have gone out', and maybe they got an update that there had been a few more, but at the other end there was a whole system toiling under a massive strain, in the end just trying to get that one job out.

It became even more apparent how difficult that was when I became a dispatcher. Obviously you answer a phone call one call at a time, but as a dispatcher all the jobs would come up. You would be sitting there, I will not say swinging in your chair, but there would be jobs here and jobs there. Then all of a sudden it was like a receipt at a supermarket. It would just go chug, chug, chug, chug and jobs would come out. You had to read them all and try to figure out what they were—merge some jobs, do this, do that—and that all took time. Whilst most of my experience was of non-critical stuff, there were some things. Where this is going is that the people that take these calls are very underappreciated. The people who do the dispatching are extremely underappreciated. Even the online supervisors have a critical job to do to get rid of some of the dead weight—some of the jobs are really not police jobs. They also have an oversight capacity. To a degree, as I said, there is justification for what is going on at a higher level. I guess I am one of the few people that has seen it from the bottom up and the top down. Not enough appreciation has been given to the ESTA call takers. There was also the 000 facility of course before that, because what is not said enough is that when you call 000 it goes to a Telstra operator who will then send it to ESTA, and they will route it to the right area and so on.

I have had a little bit of, I will call it, insight into what happens on the ambulance side of things as my wife was an ambulance dispatcher for Intergraph. In fact she was there basically from the time they went live—a little bit before that. Some of the calls she took and some of the dispatching she did surpassed anything I did. She talked to a truck driver whilst he was on the phone, trapped in his truck and dying. She talked with him all the way through until he died. These are the things that haunt people for the rest of their lives. That was just one incident. The nature of these things is that life is not pretty, life is not Disneyland; life is actually quite cruel and grotty. I do not think enough is said in appreciation of these people in the emergency services—from the 000 call taker, the ESTA call taker and the dispatcher to the emergency services unit going out sometimes to a justice facility, sometimes to a hospital, sometimes to a morgue.

To digress a little bit, I did hear the royal commission into the Intergraph contracts mentioned. I will not call it an honour, but I actually sat in on a day of that—the sole time I have ever sat in at a royal commission. It was interesting. Sadly I do not think they ever really got to the bottom of it, but that was 20-odd years ago. At the risk of rambling on, I am just going to finish up by saying that I really want the people that work in these places to know that they are appreciated, that this is not about them and that the work they do is critical. I know some of them will be haunted for the rest of their lives by some of the calls they take. I thank them for doing it.

Mr MELHEM (Western Metropolitan) (11:35): I also rise to speak on the motion moved by Mr Davis. I start by saying that when Mr Davis was the Minister for Health the first thing he did was declare war on the emergency services, and the damage he caused as a result of that is shameful. He is coming here to lecture us about how this government is dealing with the health system and emergency services, yet from when he was the minister, we are still feeling the damage today.

I just want to echo Mr Bourman's contribution in relation to ESTA workers, and I can say I echo his words and appreciation for the great work ESTA workers are doing on our behalf. They do a first-class job. They have been under a lot of pressure—enormous pressure in fact—for 2½ years. Let us not forget that we have gone through a pandemic the likes of which the world had not seen in 100 years. Every industry, every sector and everyone is struggling to cope. There are worker shocks and shortages, people are not well and people with COVID infections. People forget that.

If the opposition are fair dinkum about trying to address these things—I think there are areas we go to war over—there are areas where we could work together to address them, instead of playing politics with the people who have lost their lives. We are not sure whether they lost their lives because the calls were not taken on time, and that is a matter for the coroner to investigate. Yes, I would like—and we should have and all strive for—a first-class emergency services system. People should be able to take calls within 5 seconds. It is my understanding that ESTA are now back on top of it and are answering over 90 per cent of these calls within 5 seconds and ambulances are being dispatched. But playing politics, I think, is a bit grubby, trying to say people lost their lives. Maybe that is the case, and the coroner will address that issue. I want to join the Premier and the government in saying my thoughts are with the families of the ones who actually lost their lives—we do not know whether it was because the ambulances were not there on time—and our thoughts are with them. We do not want to see that happening. We are living in a first-class, First World country, and we want to make sure we have got First World best practice in our response system, whether that is taking the calls on time or whether it is being able to dispatch an ambulance or a fire truck or police to attend to look after our people.

Yes, from time to time we fail people. From time to time we do not achieve the result we expect to achieve. I go back. Yes, Victorians are entitled to a first-class service that makes sure we adhere to a good response in accordance with the procedures in place. Improvements needed to be made to the ESTA service, and the minister, particularly Minister Symes—I mean Mr Davis is standing here blaming Minister Symes and wanting her to stand aside. She has been in the job for 12 months, and she has responded every time there has been an issue raised and financial support and resources are required—every single time. I mean, fair dinkum, come on. His motion is talking about 2015 and 2016 reports, but Ms Symes was not even in the house then, I do not think—or was she? Yes, she was, but she was not the minister. For me, I do not think Mr Davis is genuine about anything he does. He just tries to throw mud everywhere. In his contribution he talked about how he welcomed the financial support that was given to ESTA but how that financial package has got holes in it. He could not identify the holes, but he said that there are holes in that funding and went on about the government being dishonest. There have been various reviews in relation to ESTA. As Ms Shing talked about, we can go back to why ESTA is the way it is today: it was privatised by the former Kennett government.

Hindsight is always a wonderful thing, but we have got an issue we need to deal with, and we are dealing with it. If anyone can deal with this issue, it is this government, particularly when it comes to health and particularly when it is supporting our emergency services—through the darkest period of 2020, 2021 and 2022, and we still have not recovered from that. A lot of people died as a result of the COVID situation, and unfortunately more people will. I do not think any politicians want to see any of that. We do not want to lose anyone.

We have implemented a lot of measures; all the recommendations of the various reviews either have been implemented or are in the process of being fully implemented. The financial support has been given to make sure we meet these requirements. We are recruiting new staff, we are training new staff, we are working through all the various industrial instruments to make sure we have got enough resources being put into the system. To me, we are doing this for two reasons. We do not want any lives lost in Victoria going forward due to the system not coping well or being unable to respond on time, whether it is dispatching an ambulance to take care of sick people, the police being able to attend a crisis situation or fires being able to attend a fire to put it out. We are doing everything possible to make sure we are able to achieve these targets. The other one, which Mr Bourman talked about, is that

we need to take the pressure, the enormous pressure, off our emergency services personnel, starting with the ESTA workers.

Just put yourself, for a moment, in their shoes. If they are not able to take the call within 5 seconds they take responsibility, and they feel responsible for it. They should not, because they know they are all hardworking people; they want to do their very best to make sure they answer that call in 5 seconds. When they do not meet that target they do not need to be lectured by Mr Davis or me or anyone else. They know they have not done the job, but not because of a lack of trying. Yes, they are under enormous pressure.

Yesterday Mr Davis talked about answering questions about how many calls were not answered. The minister responded that, 'Well, with some of these calls people just ring by accident and they hang up, and all the numbers are there'. Mr Davis wants to make the minister accountable for that—or even ESTA workers. He would not have the balls to actually say ESTA workers are not answering these calls, but I tell you what, given half a chance he would probably think it.

I think enough is enough about playing politics with this. We ought to support ESTA workers. We ought to make sure we give them all the necessary resources they need, which I think this government has done, to make sure they can do their job, to make sure they are able to achieve a high 90 per cent response within the 5 seconds, to make sure there are enough paramedics able to be dispatched to attend to sick Victorians should they need an ambulance, to make sure that fire trucks can actually be dispatched to a fire and to make sure our police force is able to be dispatched to attend and make sure Victorians live in secure environments. So, yes, we are all committed to achieving the best possible outcome and to achieving world's best practice. We do not want to achieve world's second-best practice; we want to be the best in the world. That is what we need to be.

I believe we have learned from previous experiences—99 per cent contributed by the COVID situation—and now hopefully with these investments by the government and recruitment of new personnel we should be able to achieve these targets and make sure we are able to respond in a timely manner to Victorians when they need us most. I will finish off in the last 30 seconds by saying I think it is time maybe the opposition stopped playing politics, got on board and put in place some constructive ideas about how we can fix this instead of just simply playing politics.

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (11:45): I am very pleased to rise and support Mr Davis's motion, because the core business of any government is to ensure truth and transparency and to keep their citizens safe. We have not seen that with this government. In fact we have seen the opposite. We have seen a lot of spin, cover-ups and lies, quite frankly. I have just listened to Mr Melhem in his contribution, and he was blaming something that happened in the last century under a former Liberal government. That is a good try, Mr Melhem, but the facts are that Labor have been in power in this state for 19 of the past 23 years. That is a fact: 19 of the past 23 years. This health crisis, which 000 is a part of, has been happening for many years, and I want to speak to that point. But what we know is that while Labor has been in power over the last eight years it has descended into chaos, and tragically too many Victorians have lost their lives.

In the general health system, the acute healthcare system, the Productivity Commission highlighted in 2019 that we were the worst funded, we had the worst response times in emergency departments and we were not keeping pace with other states. That is not to do with this issue, I acknowledge, but the point is that system was under stress before COVID. What we know with the 000 system is that it was under enormous stress prior to COVID as well, and we know that through the inspector-general for emergency management's report. It is just stunning to think that this government will continually blame this on this side for pointing out the failures. There are 33 Victorians that we know of that have died because they could not get through to 000.

I have asked many questions in this house of the minister. I have asked in relation to Mr Dave Edwards from Swan Hill, whose father was found dead on the front lawn after their family could not get through

to 000. All he really wanted was acknowledgement from the government. The first he heard from the minister's office was on the day the 000 report was handed down on the footy finals. The dismissal of Victorians who have suffered so much is just appalling. I want to point out again that it is not only us saying that, it is others saying that. Brett Adie, from the Ambulance Employees Australia Victorian branch, said:

Staffing levels at ESTA were not even keeping up with pre-Covid demand, so what hope did Victorians have that resourcing was adequate to cover Covid?

We know that the government did not prepare through the two years that we went into lockdown after lockdown—000 is part of our health system and should have been part of that preparation, yet it was not done.

I have got a letter from Mr Fletcher, who is the former minister for communications, and I have raised this in the Parliament as well on many occasions. He wrote to the minister back in October of last year, and I will read this letter:

Telstra has advised me that there have been significant delays in Victoria's Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority (ESTA) accepting the transfer of Triple Zero calls from Telstra's Triple Zero operators. The delays are most acute for calls requesting ambulance services.

The ESTA call answer times are impacting Telstra's ability answer calls from anywhere in Australia as delays to transfer calls to ESTA are utilising most of Telstra's staff.

He went on to say in a further letter to the minister that 40 per cent of those Telstra staff were taken up to deal with Victoria's emergency assistance. The original letter was back in October of last year, but the government did not do anything until this year. They said they were putting in 43 staff. Well, we know that they came in sometime this year, but they did not do the preparation. Again I say it has been well known that there were just so many issues before COVID. In that further letter, in December, from Mr Fletcher to Ms Symes, as I mentioned, Mr Fletcher said:

Managing the Victorian queue consistently occupies approximately 40 per cent of Telstra's national staff, and at times up to 50 per cent of Telstra's national staff.

That is putting stress on other states. There were huge impacts for the total mismanagement of 000 and the underinvestment, and we know that from the inspector-general for emergency management's, IGEM's, report, which said that. That goes back to that need for sustainable funding that was highlighted back in 2015. But they did not do anything about it. In fact they sacked the person that actually brought it to the government's attention. That was well before COVID. I think it is just disingenuous and again just pathetic that government MPs will stand up and blame our government from last century—23 years ago—for the failures that have occurred in recent years. No, you have had plenty of time to put in money and to put in the resources around the computer-aided dispatch system particularly. We know that the inspector-general for emergency management's report has confirmed those 33 Victorian deaths were attributed to the 000 failures, so we know IGEM has identified this and we know that there were warnings way back before COVID.

With the storm asthma event in 2016, the government was warned about the ability then. The IT system, which needs so much work done on it, has been ignored. What the government is doing is saying, 'We're putting in 400 staff over four years'. Well, we know there is an attrition rate of around 80 staff every year. They are leaving through the door in droves, and that is no reflection on them. To say that we are reflecting on those workers is quite wrong. They have been put under this incredible stress because of the failures of government, because the IT systems are not in place, because the investment has not been put in place. That is the problem here, and I am a bit sick of the government trying to spin their way out of the monumental failures that have occurred over the last 2½ years. Whether it is the failures in hotel quarantine that led to the 801 deaths, whether it is the 33 Victorians that we know about that have lost their lives because they cannot get through to 000 or, as we have found out today, whether it is the seven children in the last few months who have died in emergency departments, the government is ignoring the senior clinicians' advice.

There are just systemic failures by this government. There are a litany of examples where they continuously failed to provide what should have been there. Let us not forget—and I will talk about this—that we went into lockdown after lockdown because the government said they were preparing our health system. Well, they did not. They did not do what they needed to do. They did not provide the surge capacity. They shut down elective surgery. Of course people are going to get sicker. Of course there is going to be greater demand on emergency services, including 000, the ambulance services and emergency departments, when people are getting sicker because they cannot be seen by their surgeons. They cannot be seen as outpatients. They cannot be seen for their follow-up after cancer treatment. They cannot be seen to have the surgery that they need. There are a litany of examples and there are a litany of failures by this government.

We have said on this side of the house—the Liberals and Nationals have said—that we will invest in these emergency services. It is critical we get it right. That is why we are saying we are shelving the Cheltenham to Box Hill rail track. We are going to put that money that the government is going to spend on that into fixing this system, and that includes the IT systems, because they have had years to do it. Eight years you have been in power, and to blame our government from 23 years ago is completely pathetic, because you have been in power 19 of the past 23 years. These ongoing excuses, this blame—if it was such a big deal, then why didn't you fix it? You have had decades of being in power in this state. You ignored the issues with the storm asthma. You ignored fixing the system when we were in lockdown. As a result far too many Victorians have died. I say enough is enough. I say to every Victorian: you have got a clear choice in November. You can vote for more of this, more of the cover-up and the cronyism that has gone on around these agencies that keep continuing to cover up, more of the spin, the blame, the deflection and the lack of investment, or you can vote for a real change, because by God this state needs it. We do not need any more of these disastrous cover-ups, and I say support Mr Davis's motion because somebody has got to be accountable and it should be the minister.

Ms TERPSTRA (Eastern Metropolitan) (11:55): I rise to speak on Mr Davis's motion in regard to ESTA, and I will reflect on Ms Shing's earlier contribution that when we speak about the matters contained in Mr Davis's motion we need to recognise that there are incredible sensitivities around this matter. I want to extend my condolences and deepest sympathies to families who have lost loved ones in regard to some of the issues that have been canvassed in this motion. I note the minister is in the house right now as we head into question time, and I will be pulled up shortly because the clock will beat me. I want to say at the outset that Minister Symes has gone to great lengths in this chamber to respond in great detail to the questions that have been put in this house regarding the ESTA call takers.

I also want to note Mr Bourman's contribution, and I think Mr Bourman is spot-on when he talks about the incredible work of our ESTA call takers. Being a call taker in an emergency services environment would be an incredibly challenging environment, and I want to thank all of those emergency services call takers who work for ESTA. They do an incredible job under very difficult circumstances, and it is really important in these sorts of debates that those people know that this government supports the work that they do. We are proud of the work that they do, and we recognise how incredibly valuable they are to our emergency services system and framework.

It is very disappointing that the debate that is conducted in here, and particularly the contributions from those opposite, is always about undermining the confidence that people might have in our services and certainly attacking the workers who are in those emergency services. I know Minister Symes has touched on this before—we see the tragic circumstances where people have died continually used by those opposite, linking blame to calls not being taken and the like, and we know that the minister has gone to great lengths to explain the variety of circumstances in which those things have happened. The only person who can determine a cause of death is actually the coroner. Again, it does not matter how many times we on the government benches say that, those opposite continue to use tragic deaths in this way as a political pointscore exercise and use families who have lost loved ones in this way. Shame on those opposite, because again, it does not matter how many times we say it and it does not matter how many times the facts are actually pointed out to them, we see those opposite continually

trying to repaint history in terms that suit them, continually looking for relevance and using tragic circumstances to do it. It is really disgusting. It is really totally and utterly disgusting. To think that anyone in Victoria might actually consider those opposite as an alternative government, considering the way that they went to war with our ambulance services, they went to war with our nurses and they are now going to war with our ESTA call takers. Again, their stripes do not change, and everybody knows it. Their stripes are very well on display, and we know that we can expect much, much more of the same from those opposite, because they have no credibility when it comes to either health funding or the funding that is required to continue to support our emergency call takers.

Again I want to reiterate for those ESTA call takers who work in our emergency services call areas that this government, the Andrews Labor government, absolutely supports them and acknowledges the very important work that they do. As I said, it is a disgrace that all those opposite want to do is attack workers. Like I said, we know what their history is. We know what their pattern is. They went to war with ambos, they went to war with nurses, they cut billions and billions out of our health sector and then they say that we have got no credibility. Honestly, no-one is listening to that or believing them whatsoever.

Business interrupted pursuant to order of Council of 20 September.

Questions without notice and ministers statements

VICTORIA POLICE FORENSIC SERVICES

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (12:00): My question is for the Attorney-General. Minister, last week the ABC reported the case of Grace Stewart, who was allegedly raped in January 2020. Following this traumatic assault Ms Stewart was forced to endure 30 hours in the soiled clothing she was wearing at the time of the attack because no forensic doctors were available. Ms Stewart was unable to change clothes or have a shower and had to travel across Melbourne before she could have a medical examination the next day. This was not an isolated case. Hundreds of victims have been let down by a forensic medicine system in crisis. Minister, how is it acceptable that victims of sexual assault are left waiting for many hours in soiled and bloodied clothing before they can see a forensic doctor?

Ms SYMES (Northern Victoria—Leader of the Government, Attorney-General, Minister for Emergency Services) (12:01): I thank Ms Crozier for her question. The case involving Ms Stewart is extremely distressing and something that no victim of crime should be subjected to, absolutely. Survivors of violence should always have our support. We should always have systems in place to protect them, and I acknowledge the pain of survivors and the duty that we have to ensure that we do not exacerbate any of their experiences. Our system should be designed so that there is no retraumatisation et cetera. Not only in the first instance of the right support, I want to ensure that our system is best placed to support victims throughout a process that involves anything in relation to the criminal justice system, whether it is in relation to seeking justice, treatment or ongoing support, which we know is also important for people's recovery. It is why we are delivering major reforms on how we deal with sexual offending, including recent legislative reform that received very good support in this chamber in relation to better protections for victim-survivors of sexual offences.

We certainly know that there is more to be done in relation to the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine and the important role that they play. Some figures that would be relevant to the house: the recent Victoria budget allocated \$46.9 million over four years and \$3.2 million ongoing to support victims of sexual violence and harm. This includes \$13.3 million to Forensic Justice Services, which is the service that responds to victims, particularly at the time straight after offences when people are coming forward to report them. That investment is to improve the services for these victims, including supporting VIFM to continue to deliver the essential clinical forensic medics and services that we want to be available more quickly and more often, and I have certainly sought advice from the department about what we can do to ensure that for any gaps that are in the system, particularly as have been

identified through Ms Stewart's case, if there is anything more we can do in an immediate term, that is something we should do.

Obviously when it comes to this area of the criminal justice response there is a medical component, so it is a conversation that I also want to have with the health department and the Minister for Health in relation to ensuring that we have adequate services and the right people. There are doctors that are on hand, that are on call. They do the logistics work in relation to making sure that victims of crime can be supported and have the forensic examination that is needed for the gathering of evidence. This is an uncomfortable, necessary process, and we want it done in the best, most sensitive way. I think there is also a role for nurses in relation to this service as well, and the system is something that I am interested in continuing to look at—the options going forward.

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (12:04): Thank you for your response, Minister, but I note that you did not actually respond to how it is acceptable that this victim was waiting for so long. However, in relation to my second question, in response to the story you said you acknowledged:

... the pain of survivors and the duty we have to ensure we do not add to that pain.

We know there's more to be done and we will continue to work with victim-survivors and experts to ensure the system is delivering the services that are needed.

You have just acknowledged that, and I thank you for that. My question is, and you just said you want to identify gaps: in terms of the experts that are talking about this, the medical, forensic doctors are saying that it should be a health-first approach—what is the advice you are getting from the health minister? Why haven't you put it under the health system—

A member: How many questions?

Ms CROZIER: The question is: why haven't you put it under the health system if you have been listening to these health experts—the medical, forensic doctors who have been calling out for this?

Ms SYMES (Northern Victoria—Leader of the Government, Attorney-General, Minister for Emergency Services) (12:05): Ms Crozier, I went to these issues. I explained that the criminal justice response in relation to sexual offending involves the gathering of evidence which involves really invasive gathering of evidence for victims. We want to make it as sensitive and appropriate as possible, which is why doctors are involved in relation to this. My answer to your substantive question went to the exact point that you have raised. I want to make sure that we are involving more doctors and nurses in relation to this important work, and those conversations are underway.

The PRESIDENT: Before I call Dr Cumming, I would like to acknowledge that in the gallery we have a former member of this house, Mr George Cox. Welcome.

COVID-19

Dr CUMMING (Western Metropolitan) (12:06): My question is for the Minister for Health in the other place. What is the minister going to do to reverse the wrong and harmful health messaging and bring the community back together? Members of Parliament met with Professor Jay Bhattacharya on Monday. He is a professor from Stanford University and he explained the Denmark government is spending a lot of money at this time to reverse some of the damaging propaganda messaging that was wrong during the pandemic. The messaging is, 'Take off your mask. Smile at your neighbours'. It is on all their bus stops. I am wanting to know: what is the health minister going to do to reverse some of the wrong messages so that we can spend Christmas together and we can remove the masks that are not working?

Ms SYMES (Northern Victoria—Leader of the Government, Attorney-General, Minister for Emergency Services) (12:07): I will pass the question on to the Minister for Health.

Dr CUMMING (Western Metropolitan) (12:07): I look forward to the minister's response. When will the minister remove all the mandate requirements so all health workers can go back to work? It would seem that there are mixed messages at this particular time, and it is only the health minister that can reverse those messages, so hopefully our community will have a Christmas together not as a divided the community—the vaccinated and the unvaccinated. What is this government going to do to reverse the wrong health messages that they put in place to put fear into our community so that it can spend Christmas together?

Mr Gepp: On a point of order, President, I think I heard 18 questions in that 47 seconds. None of them made sense, by the way, but there were at least 18 questions. The member would have been better off asking for a plane ticket over to Denmark.

The PRESIDENT: Dr Cumming, have you finished your question?

Dr CUMMING: I would like you to rule on the point of order. I take great offence at Mr Gepp, and I would like him to withdraw his remarks.

The PRESIDENT: I do not know what you are referring to, Dr Cumming. I did not hear any remarks that were insulting you. Can you please outline them.

Dr CUMMING: I take great offence that he, Mr Gepp, said that none of my questions made sense. He was disparaging.

Members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT: Order! All done? I think what Mr Gepp said is within parliamentary guidelines, so I do not think I should ask him to withdraw anything. Dr Cumming, I know you are asking your supplementary question, but you are mixing too many questions into one question. I ask you to finish your supplementary, please.

Dr CUMMING: Will the minister actually answer any of the questions that I have put to this Parliament, and where is the logic of why this health minister is continuing with the mandates?

Ms Pulford: On a point of order, President, I think it will be very difficult for the minister representing the health minister to work out which of those questions is the question that we are seeking an answer to, and I think Dr Cumming very much ignored your counsel to stick to the standing orders and come up with just one question.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you, but I will leave that to the minister.

Ms SYMES (Northern Victoria—Leader of the Government, Attorney-General, Minister for Emergency Services) (12:10): Dr Cumming, your views on these matters are well known, and I am sure that the Minister for Health will be able to provide you some information on the questions that you have raised.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: LGBTIQ+ EQUALITY

Ms SHING (Eastern Victoria—Minister for Water, Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Equality) (12:11): It has been a Parliament of not only equity and diversity but also division and trauma, and in this regard I rise to update the house on the work that the Andrews government has done to ensure that equality across the state is not negotiable. It has been an effort that will continue into the future to make sure that everybody across our LGBTIQ+ communities in Victoria has the support, the dignity, the recognition, the visibility and indeed the celebration that they—that we—deserve.

To that end we are proud to lead the way with LGBTIQ+ equality and to build a state where indeed all Victorians feel safe, feel recognised and indeed feel included, and we are making sure that that is matched with dollars. We have invested \$21.7 million into the first-ever LGBTIQ+ strategy. This is a 10-year pathway to reform. It includes pride of place, it includes better access to services and it

includes an opportunity to have data collected and information gathered which tells the true story—a correct and accurate picture of where and how LGBTIQ+ people experience discrimination, harassment, vilification, isolation, self-harm and, in too many tragic circumstances, suicide. We have come a long way and we have been proud to deliver that progress, but there is still more work to be done.

To every member of our LGBTIQ+ communities across Victoria, I say: we stand with you, we see you and we are so proud of you. In particular to the trans and gender-diverse young people across Victoria, please know that there are better voices than the vocal and horrible minority that you may hear all too often. We are with you, and the work goes on.

COVID-19

Mr LIMBRICK (South Eastern Metropolitan) (12:13): My question is to the Attorney-General. During the pandemic response there have been a number of human rights that have been limited by the actions of the government, such as the right to freedom of movement, the right to peaceful assembly, the right to freedom from medical treatments without full and free consent and I would also argue even the right to participate in public life. I have also been very disappointed with what I would see as the failure of our Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities and some of the lack of action by the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission. My question to the Attorney-General is simply this: what has the Attorney done during the pandemic response and in relation to the pandemic response to defend human rights in Victoria?

Ms SYMES (Northern Victoria—Leader of the Government, Attorney-General, Minister for Emergency Services) (12:14): I thank Mr Limbrick for his question, and of course it was a Labor government that introduced the charter of human rights, a really important set of principles that underpin all government decisions and have to be applied to all legislation et cetera. It is nation leading. Other states are looking at our charter. I think there is a conversation around whether there should be a federal approach et cetera. These are important principles that apply to the state of Victoria, and appropriately so. When it comes to the assessment of rights and whether there are any limitations in relation to those rights, they undergo a balancing exercise, for example, and in relation to any of the restrictions that were applied for the protection of the health and wellbeing of the state, those assessments were completed by the appropriate authorities in relation to providing that advice or indeed enacting that advice.

Mr LIMBRICK (South Eastern Metropolitan) (12:15): I thank the Attorney for her response. My second question is probably quite predictable. I would like to see in the next Parliament better protections for human rights in Victoria, and I would ask the Attorney, if she is so fortunate as to be re-elected and the Attorney-General, what does she plan to do in the future to protect the human rights of Victorians?

Ms SYMES (Northern Victoria—Leader of the Government, Attorney-General, Minister for Emergency Services) (12:15): I like the confidence that you are oozing in the fact that I might have the opportunity to further look at the charter of human rights and these issues in the next Parliament. I lie awake at night thinking about a lot of things I would like to do if I continue to be the Attorney-General next term. The human rights charter is obviously something that has been around for some time, and I would like to have a conversation about what that might look like in the future, without giving you any commitments around a definitive assessment or change or anything like that. But of course I think I have said in this place numerous times that justice reform is never done. It will never be done. I will never complete this job. Someone else will have to take it on after me. In relation to reforms to better protect Victorians, it is something that I am quite passionate about and it is something I would love to have continued responsibility for and continued conversations with people in this chamber on, regardless of what it looks like.

INDEPENDENT BROAD-BASED ANTI-CORRUPTION COMMISSION

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan—Leader of the Opposition) (12:16): My question is to the Attorney-General. Minister, the IBAC annual plan released yesterday shows that this year's IBAC budget has been cobbled together using \$7 million as a Treasurer's advance and \$3.5 million of IBAC's own money, which in essence means more than \$10.5 million is unsecured funding. To make matters worse, IBAC have been forced to go cap in hand for a further \$1.4 million from the Treasurer. I therefore ask: why did the Andrews Labor government not properly fund the important work of IBAC and the work it does in uncovering corruption and misconduct under your government's watch?

The PRESIDENT: I was struggling with the issue of funding, Mr Davis, but I call the Attorney-General.

Ms SYMES (Northern Victoria—Leader of the Government, Attorney-General, Minister for Emergency Services) (12:18): President, you are certainly correct to give due consideration as to whether Mr Davis has directed his question to the correct minister, particularly as he is the Shadow Treasurer, I think, and would know that, with the way he has crafted his question, it is not a matter that you should put to the minister that has administrative responsibility for the IBAC Commissioner but not financial responsibility, particularly in the way that he actually brought into the question the Treasurer's advance.

Having said that, I would put on record that the base funding of the IBAC Commissioner's office has doubled if not tripled—no, doubled—since 2015. There has been significant investment provided to the IBAC Commissioner in addition to base funding, and that is often reflective of the important project work that the IBAC Commissioner might undertake, whether it is in relation to a specific IT upgrade or indeed responding to the Royal Commission into the Management of Police Informants, for example—an element of funding that needed to go to a particular role. So there has been significant funding, and some of the figures that I might bring to the attention of the house, because it is record funding under our government, are that the Victorian budget in 2022–23 provided IBAC with \$32.1 million in additional funding and an \$8.6 million ongoing uplift to its annual base funding, which fully met the base funding that was sought by IBAC. IBAC's total annual funding, as I said, is double what it received in 2015–16 and by the end of the forward estimates has an annual funding increase of \$31.3 million.

We do of course continue to work closely with Victorian integrity agencies to ensure that they have the resources and indeed the powers that they have to undertake their work. When we came to government we inherited a system that was not functioning well. They like to put on record that they are the creators of IBAC, but if it were not for the amendments and the support and the legislative reform that this government has introduced, we would have a very different integrity system. It is different now to what existed only eight years ago. We will continue to work closely with our integrity agencies. As has been demonstrated in your question in relation to a Treasurer's advance, when they come and make a case to government in relation to specific roles that they want to perform it is a matter that they bring to the attention of the Treasurer, but very often it comes up in relevant conversations with me, despite the fact that I do not have ministerial responsibility for their budget.

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan—Leader of the Opposition) (12:21): When you read the IBAC annual plan you would have to conclude that the minister is in a parallel universe. It is clear from that plan that IBAC is not properly funded, given its base funding is still in the low \$60 millions. I therefore ask: is it the Andrews Labor government's intention to starve IBAC of proper funding as a way to nobble its troublesome inquiries on corruption inside your government?

Ms SYMES (Northern Victoria—Leader of the Government, Attorney-General, Minister for Emergency Services) (12:21): Absolutely not.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: GOVERNMENT ACHIEVEMENTS

Ms PULFORD (Western Victoria—Minister for Employment, Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy, Minister for Small Business, Minister for Resources) (12:21): On our final sitting day of the 59th Parliament I thought I would reflect on some of the things that have been going on. In June 2020 I had the great privilege of becoming Minister for Employment, Minister for Small Business and Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy. In July 2021 resources was added to these responsibilities, and in July 2022 the sick pay guarantee. Through this extraordinary period of uncertainty for people in the Victorian community I was determined to ensure not only that we helped Victorians through the worst of the pandemic but that, where possible, we came out stronger and better prepared for the future. The investments this government has made have created a legacy that will continue to benefit Victorians for years and decades to come.

Our small businesses absorbed many of the shocks of the lockdowns, and we supported them every step of the way—in addition to the Small Business COVID Hardship Fund, mentoring, mental health and wellbeing, digital jobs, small business adaptation and many, many other new programs.

Our medical researchers are world leading. I am so proud we have been able to back them in. Securing Moderna to come to Melbourne gives us sovereign manufacturing capability and an mRNA ecosystem that is world leading. The \$400 million investment into the Australian Institute for Infectious Disease and \$75 million for the Cumming Global Centre for Pandemic Therapeutics will provide greater preparedness for pandemics to come.

The pandemic revealed the connectivity gaps that have been left by the former federal government, and we are now rolling out the unprecedented \$550 million Connecting Victoria program that will make Victoria the most connected state—not 3G, not 4G, but 5G.

In response to the pandemic, with the Working for Victoria program and the Jobs Victoria initiative we said we would create 200 000 jobs, but we have already well exceeded that target. In less than two years 100 000 Victorians have accessed advice and support from Jobs Victoria mentors, career counsellors and advocates, changing lives. We have supported older women get back into work, given young people a new start, helped new migrants find their very first job in Australia and backed our veterans, among others, to find new jobs.

And there is a mining and resources boom. My time is kind of up, and there is so much more I could cover. So much has been achieved, and there is of course so much more for us all to do.

NORTHERN VICTORIA REGION FAMILY VIOLENCE SERVICES

Ms MAXWELL (Northern Victoria) (12:24): My question is to the Attorney-General regarding the urgent need in north-east Victoria for a Specialist Family Violence Court and legal aid office. Yesterday I was joined by stakeholders from the north-east for a round table to discuss the incidence of family violence in the region and what they see at the coalface. They report a significant increase in family violence in the last year, especially high-risk situations, and there is an overwhelming call for a specialist court and legal aid office from them. Attorney, when we met recently and I raised this with you, you said to me, and I quote, ‘Every area wants a Specialist Family Violence Court’, and we know why. These specialist courts deliver tailored support and help victim-survivors seek justice in a safe and meaningful way. The round table recognised that demand is strong for family law services across the community of 140 000 people. We are establishing an advisory group and would like to meet with you to discuss the need in the region, so my question is: will you meet this advocacy group with me during October, hear their views and advise their bid for a family violence court and a legal aid office in the north-east?

Ms SYMES (Northern Victoria—Leader of the Government, Attorney-General, Minister for Emergency Services) (12:25): I thank Ms Maxwell for her question. At the outset there are multiple ministers that have responsibility for family violence in our government, and with good reason,

because we are leading the nation when it comes to family violence response and family violence investment. There is no other state that is even close to the efforts that we have made in relation to family violence. We have made it a priority and it continues to be so. A little bit like the law reform that I referred to before, there is always going to be more to do.

In relation to the north-east, I did note that you had a round table yesterday—very familiar faces, obviously, as someone who has represented the region for eight years and had a lot to do with the people that you met with. I am related to people that work in this industry based in Wangaratta as well, so in terms of the issues that you raise, they are all too familiar to me as Attorney-General, as a member for Northern Victoria and in a personal capacity as a topic of issue for that region. Of course it has been something that is very important to me—access to services in regional Victoria—given that I am very familiar with that region. It is where I grew up and it is where I live.

The royal commission's recommendations around Specialist Family Violence Courts are targeted at headquarter courts, being the courts in each region with the highest volume of matters, and we are progressively rolling these out as a priority. I really like going to the courts and talking to those that have been gazetted as Specialist Family Violence Courts, because there is such passion from the people that work in our Magistrates Courts in relation to wanting better services for victims of family violence—simple things such as separate entries and waiting rooms, places for the kids to be looked after et cetera. This is all about creating a system that is victim focused and supporting particularly women who are victims of family violence.

In relation to the region, the Shepparton Specialist Family Violence Court is currently operational and further Magistrates Courts around the state have some aspects of specialist family violence services. In terms of your quote of me in a private meeting, which is a bit unusual, of course I would love to put a Specialist Family Violence Court in every Magistrates Court in the state, but I am confined by the reality of what you can deliver in government. But I think our record speaks for itself in the fact that we are out there spending more money on this than any other state and will continue to do so.

I do want to note that there are important, dedicated services in the north-east. I have met with the Hume Riverina Community Legal Service, for example—fantastic, passionate people—and of course a lot of their business is family violence, unfortunately. They do a fantastic job in their support of victim-survivors of family violence. Many people might know that there is an Orange Door network in the Ovens-Murray area that commenced operation in August 2021, and it provides services for people experiencing family violence across several areas, including Wodonga, Wangaratta and Benalla. My department, Victoria Legal Aid and legal assistance sector partners do monitor the legal need across Victoria—*(Time expired)*

Ms MAXWELL (Northern Victoria) (12:28): Thank you, Attorney. You did not actually get to answer the question. When the Specialist Family Violence Courts were rolled out in 2019, an important component was co-located legal and community services. This is important for providing holistic support, but it seems they are not a guarantee for the rest of the Specialist Family Violence Courts. Can you confirm if the government will continue to fund and co-locate legal and community services with Specialist Family Violence Courts to ensure victim-survivors have access to the support that they need?

Ms SYMES (Northern Victoria—Leader of the Government, Attorney-General, Minister for Emergency Services) (12:29): It is difficult with small amounts of time to answer with great detail on these important matters, but in relation to the co-location of services I am not in a position to predict future budgets, Ms Maxwell, so I cannot give strong commitments around that. I think in general I like co-located services but I also do like to be informed by the people that provide those services on the ground. Making sure that they are in the one building works for some people, but some people prefer that the services be provided in a neighbouring-type facility because there are many people that like to access the services but are fearful of courts, for example, and that is particularly relevant for people

from non-English-speaking backgrounds who would be much more comfortable accessing services that are not within court buildings.

KINDERGARTEN FUNDING

Dr BACH (Eastern Metropolitan) (12:30): My question is for the Minister for Early Childhood and Pre-Prep. The *Age* on 8 September ran a story about how the government's so-called free kinder program may result in services being reduced and staff ratios increased. It described a system with onerous bureaucratic burdens. Minister, what do you say to those many kindergartens that will have to reduce services because of your funding model?

Ms STITT (Western Metropolitan—Minister for Workplace Safety, Minister for Early Childhood and Pre-Prep) (12:30): I really do thank Dr Bach for asking me this question, because it gives me the opportunity to dispel some of the misinformation that may be out there about our nation-leading Best Start, Best Life reforms—reforms that will transform early childhood education and care in this state. Nice try, Dr Bach, because I know that you actually think these reforms are pretty good. In support of children, in support of strong participation rates in kindergarten and importantly in support of families who are doing it tough with cost-of-living pressures, kinder will be free for every three- and four-year-old child in the state from next year. This is about access and equity. This is about making sure that where you live or what your parents earn is no barrier to getting a quality education for two years before you go to primary school. I do not accept for a moment that there are going to be reductions in quality or service as a result of our reforms. In fact the reality is the absolute opposite: 98.9 per cent of sessional kindergartens signed up to free kinder in 2021—98.9 per cent.

The guidelines for our funding arrangements have been out in the sector for two weeks only, and already, Dr Bach, 85 per cent of sessional kinders have said, 'Yes, sign me up. Sign me up for free kinder next year'. So I would urge you, if you know about kindergartens that want more details about how the funding will operate and how they will be able to transition from their current model to free kinder next year, to get them to talk to the Department of Education and Training (DET), who will sit down and work through those issues with them.

It is very important to dispel a particular myth that is doing the rounds, and that is that somehow high-fee-charging kindergartens provide better quality services than others. Nothing could be further from the truth. The truth is that some of the highest rated kindergartens in terms of the national quality standards are in fact charging below the funding envelope that the government will be providing. Rather than concentrating on a couple of kindergartens in your particular part of metropolitan Melbourne, I would urge you to ask those services to talk directly to DET, because I can assure you that the overwhelming majority of kindergarten services in this state—and I talk to a lot of them—are absolutely rapt with this policy and cannot wait for free kinder to roll out.

Dr BACH (Eastern Metropolitan) (12:33): Respectfully I will not take the minister's advice and ask the many people who run sessional kindergartens to do what she said. These people are not dills; they have an excellent understanding of how the government's funding model will work. My supplementary is: Minister, will you increase the funding from \$2500 to ensure all kindergarten services can remain viable?

Ms STITT (Western Metropolitan—Minister for Workplace Safety, Minister for Early Childhood and Pre-Prep) (12:34): The funding guidelines have been set by the government. \$2500 per child is actually way over the odds for the vast majority of kindergarten services in our state. The average is actually \$1900, so we are very confident that we have pitched that funding model at the right spot. What Dr Bach is failing to acknowledge is that there are a very small number of very high fee charging kindergartens that, I acknowledge, will need to adapt their operation as a result of the funding guidelines that the government has arrived at. But there is transitional support available for those services. So what you need to do, Dr Bach, rather than scaremonger about this, is get those services to directly engage with the Department of Education and Training, because I know many examples of where that has occurred and kindergarten services are confident and are signing up.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: VICTORIAN TRAINING AWARDS

Ms TIERNEY (Western Victoria—Minister for Training and Skills, Minister for Higher Education, Minister for Agriculture) (12:35): I rise today to acknowledge the 68th annual Victorian Training Awards and congratulate the winners along with all of the finalists. The Victorian Training Awards recognise the outstanding achievements of apprentices, students, teachers, employers and training providers in the Victorian vocational education and training system. This year’s winners reflect the variety of skills, talent and determination that thrives in the sector. Each year our very talented vocational design students are invited to pitch an item for me to showcase on the night.

This year I sought interest from students who could design a wrap celebrating and honouring the LGBTIQ+ community while promoting inclusion. It is with heartfelt thanks to Holmesglen student TJ Van Der Meulen and their teacher Anna Whitehall that I wear this scarf so proudly in this chamber today. Thank you, TJ. The production line to create this wrap was incredible, using digital software to create the repeated pattern, carefully maintaining the integrity of the silk scarf and finally hemming the wrap with an industrial machine on campus. TJ, you did more than nail it. Every flag is represented: lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, intersex and asexual. TJ also included non-binary, pansexual, poly and Philadelphia progressive pride flags to shine a light on the smaller and lesser known groups of the community. Like the LGBTIQ+ community, TJ’s design is colourful, diverse and full of expression. I pay my deepest respects to the entire spectrum of the rainbow. Once again, to TJ and Anna, thank you so much.

SOW STALLS

Mr MEDDICK (Western Victoria) (12:37): My question is for the Minister for Agriculture. Today it was revealed through an undercover investigation that at least six Victorian piggeries are still confining pregnant pigs to stalls, despite an industry phase-out deadline of 2017. Footage shows sows languishing in rows of cages where their suffering is immeasurable. For up to 26 days they are confined to spaces so small they are unable to turn around, an image far removed from the misleading products that line our supermarket shelves. Following release of the footage, some piggeries have admitted to the continued use of sow stalls, whilst others admit to using mating cages more than four times longer than the industry committed to. The government trusted the pork industry to self-regulate, but it has had more than seven years to phase out sow stalls. We are five years past that deadline, and without enforcement the industry has claimed cruelty-free products free from scrutiny. What will the minister do to intervene in light of these new revelations?

Ms TIERNEY (Western Victoria—Minister for Training and Skills, Minister for Higher Education, Minister for Agriculture) (12:38): I thank Mr Meddick for his question and his ongoing advocacy in the area of animal welfare. Thank you. This is an issue that has come to light in recent times, and indeed there was an article in the *Guardian* as recently as today. I have received some correspondence from a range of people in respect to this issue in recent times as well. This government is absolutely committed to animal welfare rights. I think that we have been able to demonstrate that in a number of ways, including the most recent budget of \$18.6 million. Of course that money will go into developing a newer, modernised piece of legislation that will come before the house if we are re-elected to government. But it also is an investment in the new Ballarat animal hospital. It also is an investment in Victoria’s first pet census and an investment in and the development of a cat management strategy, as well as support for the 17 recommendations that came about as a result of the Taskforce on Rehoming Pets. So it is not as if we are not active in this space, Mr Meddick.

What I can say to you is that as recently as 2 September this year I have put out for consultation and public comment ideas from the community in terms of what changes they would like to see. I have asked the Victorian community to get in contact or get on the Engage Victoria website. They have until I think it is midnight on 16 October to provide government with their ideas about what they would like to see in legislation that would come before this house. Of course there will be a lot of discussion also at the conclusion of being able to pull those comments together as we develop that legislation. I

am looking forward to seeing that develop. I know that there has been a lot of active interest in this area for some time, but it is actually getting to that point where we can see light at the end of the tunnel. I again would encourage Victorians to get involved, have their say and say their piece.

In terms of the specifics that you raise with me that were in the *Guardian* this morning, I have asked the department to provide me with an update on that. I know that there are a number of animal activists that are active in this area. I want to be able to be informed and advised as to exactly what has been or is purported to have happened and indeed whether this is occurring at any Victorian piggeries. I look forward to receiving that advice from the department.

Mr MEDDICK (Western Victoria) (12:41): Thank you, Minister, for that answer. Before I ask my supplementary, I too would encourage all Victorians to get on the Engage Victoria website to have their say on the new animal welfare act. Can the minister please advise what efforts have been taken to monitor compliance of the industry in the industry-led phase-out of sow stalls in Victoria?

Ms TIERNEY (Western Victoria—Minister for Training and Skills, Minister for Higher Education, Minister for Agriculture) (12:41): The member would be aware that in terms of the agreement it was a voluntary agreement by the industry. So you know that. What I would say to you is that, if there are any cases that people are concerned about in terms of animal welfare, I would encourage them to contact Agriculture Victoria and provide all of the details so that there can be an investigation and a checking out of the situation.

COVID-19

Ms BATH (Eastern Victoria) (12:42): My question is to the Minister for Small Business. In January this year Colli's Hair Design had two authorised officers visit their Moe salon without identifying themselves or requesting to see the business's COVID-safe plan. At the end of the inspection the owner, Mr Colli, asked the officers if there was anything that he could do to improve on, and in effect the officers replied, 'No, everything is just fine. Keep doing what you're doing'. To Mr Colli's absolute horror, a fine rocked up in the mail of \$13 631 shortly after the visit of the COVID officers. Minister, how is it fair that their small business was compliant, acted according to the coronavirus guidelines, which state that under the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 a COVID-safe plan 'must be kept' on the premises and 'must be available for inspection on request by WorkSafe or other authorised officers'.

Ms PULFORD (Western Victoria—Minister for Employment, Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy, Minister for Small Business, Minister for Resources) (12:43): I thank Ms Bath for her question on behalf of this business. I am familiar with the matter that Ms Bath raises, in the same way that Ms Bath would be familiar with the minister with responsibility for the authorised officers COVID enforcement and the fines regime that she has referred to being the Minister for Police. I have sought a review of this matter, and I would perhaps take on notice if I can the rest of the question so that I can, when I have the outcome of that requested review, provide Ms Bath with that information as well as the industry organisation that is advocating on behalf of this business to me directly.

Ms BATH (Eastern Victoria) (12:44): I thank the minister for her response. It has been very distressing for this small business that has been forced to shut down, forced to operate under COVID-safe practices and did so most willingly and then to have this on their shoulders. It has been very distressing, so I appreciate your following this up and I ask you to ensure that this fine is overturned.

Ms PULFORD (Western Victoria—Minister for Employment, Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy, Minister for Small Business, Minister for Resources) (12:45): If I could just respond, it is not within my power to ensure that this fine is overturned. I think Ms Bath would appreciate that, and I understand from the industry advocate that I have been dealing with directly on this matter that the business in question is aware of that as well in terms of roles and responsibilities. But in response to the comments that Ms Bath made along with her supplementary

question, I join Ms Bath in thanking this business for their efforts. It is an industry that has been quite significantly impacted, along with many others. Insofar as I understand these circumstances, they have willingly done their part to keep the community safe, and I thank them for that.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: VETERANS SERVICES

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan—Minister for Commonwealth Games Legacy, Minister for Veterans) (12:46): Today I would like to update the house on the interim report from the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide, which was handed down last month. The report included 13 urgent recommendations and seven preliminary observations, providing a step forward in enacting much-needed change to better support veterans.

The first five recommendations are in line with what I have heard from Victorian veterans. I want to concentrate on two of them: to simplify and harmonise the veteran compensation and rehabilitation system; and to improve the administration of the claim system. At a recent veterans wellbeing task force meeting chaired by the federal minister, Matt Keogh, I suggested on behalf of Victorian veterans and their family members that we should be able to enact these two recommendations. What Victoria has consistently said is that if a veteran or a family member reaches out for help then they should just be helped and they should be believed. There is so much money spent on not believing veterans and their family members; it is at the point of being ridiculous. Everyone across the country that has to deal with this system understands that and knows that.

Despite the change of federal government, we are consistent, as far as the Victorian government goes, that this system needs to be completely overturned and to stop being adversarial. If we are going to believe any cohort of people in the first instance, it is this cohort of people.

WRITTEN RESPONSES

The PRESIDENT (12:48): Regarding questions and answers today: Dr Cumming to the Minister for Health, two days, question and supplementary, Ms Symes; and finally, Ms Bath's question, one day, Minister.

Ms Pulford: On a point of order, President, I am not sure it is quite within my power to provide that information within one day, because it is another portfolio that is seeking a review of an independent decision. I will provide that to Ms Bath as soon as it exists, but right now it does not.

The PRESIDENT: Are you happy with that?

Ms Bath: I will be happy when the business has that overturned.

Questions on notice

ANSWERS

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS (South Eastern Metropolitan) (12:49): I would like to raise two outstanding questions on notice. The first is 3699, which was asked of the Minister for Planning on 25 May last year and remains unanswered. I think that is represented in Ms Shing's portfolio. The second one is 5065, which was asked on 2 August for the attention of the Minister for Environment and Climate Action, which I think falls with Mr Leane. I was wondering if I could have a response on where those answers are. I have written to the ministers accordingly and would love an answer as soon as possible.

Ms SHING (Eastern Victoria—Minister for Water, Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Equality) (12:49): I would be delighted to seek that answer for you, Mr Rich-Phillips.

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (12:49): I have previously written to a number of ministers, but I have a list of 81 outstanding questions on notice to the ministers for health, education, planning, transport and early childhood and pre-prep. So I am hoping those questions will be answered before 26 November.

Constituency questions

NORTHERN METROPOLITAN REGION

Ms PATTEN (Northern Metropolitan) (12:50): (1988) My constituency question is for the Minister for Health and relates to a new northern hospital. The Northern Hospital has only 400 beds. It has the busiest emergency department in the state, treating approximately 100 000 patients each year. The Northern Health catchment includes three of the state's six largest growth areas—Hume, Whittlesea and Mitchell. The swift development of new suburbs in the north will see our population grow by 17 per cent, or 85 000 people, in the next five years alone and over 50 per cent by 2036. The Northern Metropolitan Region needs more than an expanded Northern Hospital. It needs a new hospital to meet demand. So I ask: what steps has the minister taken in considering the development of a whole new hospital for Melbourne's northern growth suburbs?

EASTERN METROPOLITAN REGION

Dr BACH (Eastern Metropolitan) (12:51): (1989) My constituency question is for the Minister for Transport Infrastructure. My question is: Minister, on what basis do you reject today's findings from the Auditor-General regarding the so-called Suburban Rail Loop? The minister has responded to this stunning report by saying she 'respectfully disagrees' with that assessment. That assessment from the independent Auditor-General's office is that the Suburban Rail Loop simply does not stack up. In fact the assessment from the Auditor-General is even worse than the previous assessment by the independent, apolitical Parliamentary Budget Office. The assessment today is that the benefit-cost ratio for this project is 0.5—0.5! I remember when the Labor Party railed against projects with a BCR of 1.4. We are going to be wasting 50 cents on the dollar. The minister previously has said she respectfully disagrees with the PBO, Infrastructure Australia, Infrastructure Victoria, the Grattan Institute and the Rail Futures Institute, just to name a few. Now she is at odds also with the independent Auditor-General's office. On what basis does she disagree this time with another catastrophic independent assessment of this dog of a project?

NORTHERN VICTORIA REGION

Ms MAXWELL (Northern Victoria) (12:52): (1990) My constituency question is to the Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, and it is about the harmful sexual behaviours program. This is a voluntary therapeutic service for children and young people aged five to 17 years. Referrals can be made directly from families, community organisations, police, health professionals, schools, government departments, statutory authorities and court orders. We recently debated important consent laws in this Parliament, and education programs are key to ensure there is the best understanding of lawful and safe behaviours. Over three years funding for this program has only increased minimally, despite the data reflecting a clear need, with a 400 per cent increase in demand for the program. The Centre Against Violence has delivered the program for 116 young people in the last year, 87 more than three years ago, but their funding meets less than a fifth of this need. Additional investment could provide some preventative psychoeducational presentations to schools and youth and sports groups, so my question is: will the government commit more funding to this important program?

WESTERN VICTORIA REGION

Mrs McARTHUR (Western Victoria) (12:53): (1991) My constituency question is for the Minister for Health and relates to the availability of paediatric services in south-west Victoria. Warrnambool parents Monique Patterson and Bill Powell first attempted to seek paediatric help for their three-year-old son in late July. At that time they were advised there would be a lengthy delay to access care. Earlier this month they requested an update from the city's only public clinic, only to be told the clinic was not accepting any more patients with behavioural issues. The temporary pause, they were told, would be reviewed in February. That is an eight-month wait and potentially much, much longer. The alternative is to travel 2 hours to either Ballarat or Geelong. Given the damage done during

the COVID-19 lockdowns, this family is not alone in the need for help. Minister, what are you doing to resolve the paediatric health crisis in this state, especially in regional Victoria?

NORTHERN VICTORIA REGION

Mr QUILTY (Northern Victoria) (12:54): (1992) My constituency question is for the Minister for Planning. Recently I was in Bright talking to locals. The number one issue raised was the housing crisis—the lack of housing for locals and for businesses chasing staff. One family I spoke to is renovating their family home to accommodate their adult children as they have no hope of finding a rental or being able to buy a home locally for many years—if ever. I have heard stories of people who have found work around Bright but who just cannot find housing living in tents. Anyone who has spent time in Bright in winter knows just how desperate a measure this is. A local business owner even told us how he spent three months living in the back of his car. The Liberal Democrats have solutions to Victoria's housing crisis: tiny homes, granny flats, more planning resources to fast-track approvals, relaxed planning rules, higher density and abolishing stamp duty—short-term fixes and long-term real changes. Only more homes being built can change this. Without urgent changes the economies of small regional towns will be strangled. Minister, what are you doing to fix Northern Victoria's housing crisis?

SOUTH EASTERN METROPOLITAN REGION

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS (South Eastern Metropolitan) (12:55): (1993) My constituency question is to the Minister for Education. My office has done a lot of work on the issue of the removal of asbestos in schools in the south-east, and the most recent correspondence we have received on this matter from the previous Minister for Education back in May raises some questions around schools where it appears not all asbestos has been removed. In the letter former Minister Merlino refers to Cranbourne West Primary School, Hampton Park Primary School, Frankston Primary School and Wheelers Hill Secondary College, where he says they have had all previously identified A3 asbestos removed from accessible areas on the school sites, which raises the question of whether there are areas where asbestos has not been removed. The letter further goes on to say Cranbourne South Primary School will have its asbestos removed as part of an ongoing capital works program, but given there is community concern around this, my question to the minister is: has that asbestos now been removed from Cranbourne South Primary School?

WESTERN METROPOLITAN REGION

Dr CUMMING (Western Metropolitan) (12:57): (1994) My question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety in the other place, and it is from Mitchell in West Footscray. Can the current inner-west truck ban and curfews be extended to Roberts Street in West Footscray to improve safety? A large number of trucks are using the residential part of Roberts Street as a rat run between Sunshine Road and Geelong Road. This street has bike lanes that are just not safe when these trucks are running down and parking across them. There is already an alternative route that trucks can use to get between Sunshine Road and Geelong Road that avoids residential areas by using Geelong Street in front of Bunnings, but trucks are choosing to bypass this route and drive through residential streets. This has been an issue in Melbourne's inner west for a long time, and sadly today there have been reports of a death in Deer Park of a gentleman who was changing his tyre on the side of the road. God bless everyone, and let us hope that people are driving safely between now and Christmas.

EASTERN VICTORIA REGION

Ms BATH (Eastern Victoria) (12:58): (1995) My constituency question is for the Minister for Environment and Climate Action in the other place, and it comes from the people of Orbost and also Forest and Wood Communities Australia. They have invited me and they have also invited the minister for environment and indeed the Premier to come to a public meeting on Tuesday, 4 October, at 5.30 pm at the football clubrooms in Orbost. This is a town that is being strangled by government ineptitude and ongoing court injunctions that the government is failing to stop, and it is within the

government's own hands to be able to stop these court injunctions by various means at its disposal. This community is facing an absolute downturn because of the loss of timber jobs and mill jobs, and therefore I ask the minister: will she attend this meeting and speak directly and listen to the community of Orbost?

EASTERN VICTORIA REGION

Mr BOURMAN (Eastern Victoria) (12:59): (1996) My constituency question is for the Treasurer. It is regarding Gippsland youth homelessness. A great organisation is ready and willing to address youth homelessness in Gippsland, but they need help. *Victoria's Infrastructure Strategy 2021–2051* acknowledges eight out of 10 of the top disadvantaged local government areas are in regional Victoria, where poverty and socio-economic disadvantage are at higher levels than in metro areas. Quantum Support Services is an NGO, and they are seeking capital funding of \$12.6 million. Quantum is already committed to the project for land acquisition costs and Latrobe council last week approved the sale of Hazelwood House, a former aged care facility, to them. Financially supporting the construction of a new 44-bed youth foyer in Gippsland will give more young people far better opportunities by improving access to local facilities, jobs and transport. My question for the government is: will they commit to the capital funding needed to complete this Gippsland youth foyer project?

WESTERN METROPOLITAN REGION

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) (13:00): (1997) My constituency question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. The western suburbs of Melbourne are experiencing unprecedented population growth. People living in the outer west are particularly impacted by severe traffic congestion on roads that were built many years ago—long before many of what are now booming suburbs experienced any human habitation. Every day more housing developments are attracting people to these new areas and roads cannot cope at all. Every week local residents waste untold numbers of hours sitting in traffic jams on clogged roads. It is a disgraceful situation. Minister, what plans do you have to alleviate this burden felt by my constituents, and when can we expect them to be implemented?

Sitting suspended 1.01 pm until 2.07 pm.

Motions

EMERGENCY SERVICES TELECOMMUNICATIONS AUTHORITY

Debate resumed.

Ms TERPSTRA (Eastern Metropolitan) (14:07): I will continue my contribution on this motion moved by Mr Davis. I had started my contribution just before question time and the lunch bell, so I will continue. I want to move on to some of the substance of the points that have been raised in this motion. I will just recap in terms of what the minister, the Honourable Jaelyn Symes, has been saying in this chamber. I think she has been doing an excellent job responding to the many questions that have been raised by the opposition in this chamber in regard to this motion. As I said earlier, we must recognise that the ESTA call takers do an amazing job in very difficult circumstances. I could only begin to imagine what it must be like to be on the end of phone calls where people are desperately seeking help and quite concerned. They could be faced with life-and-death situations. This is why training is so important for those people. Obviously you need to have a clear head and a calm mind to be able to deal with that and to also get the relevant information that you need in order to make sure emergency services are directed to the right places, and quickly. Again, I just want to highlight the fact that, in terms of the inspector-general for emergency management report, the IGEM was also keen to point out that omicron made it impossible for anyone to prepare for the demand that we experienced during the pandemic. We know that demand really escalated and put extreme pressure on those services. In that report it was noted that:

... the speed of the Omicron wave made it impossible for—

ESTA—

... to produce an accurate forecast and therefore required staffing, before impacts occurred.

What is absolutely clear through all of that is that the assertion in this motion that claims our government did not act immediately upon hearing concerns about call answer performance is entirely wrong. The first time serious concerns were raised with government about the impact of COVID-19 on call answer performance was by the IGEM in October 2021. Minister Symes secured an immediate injection of \$27.5 million within weeks of this advice. This was on top of the \$46 million package, including 43 full-time equivalent employees provided in the budget in May 2021. Further funding was also provided in March, and we then provided the biggest ever investment in ESTA, with a \$333 million package in the 2022–23 budget to employ 400 new staff. So you can see, and I have just laid out in those few points there, the record funding that we have provided to ESTA. We have absolutely responded appropriately to the unforeseen demands that were placed on the services during the pandemic, and we are committed to working through all of those demands. As I said, there is record funding, and Minister Symes acted entirely appropriately in those circumstances. She acted on the advice that was provided to us immediately upon it being provided, and I think it is a real credit to her, as the minister, in terms of what she has been able to secure.

I know this has been said in this chamber a number of times, and Minister Symes has gone to great lengths to explain that you just cannot employ someone to jump onto a phone within 3 minutes. It is not that kind of call-taking service. As I said before, you need people who are trained appropriately and able to take on the demands of this role. These roles are not like any other role of call taker. They require a particular mindset, a level of skill and expertise, and that takes time. Also the training that is provided must be appropriately targeted to make sure we get the right people and give them the skills they need to make sure they undertake the role appropriately. So again, to continually come in here with these sorts of motions and to hear this stuff being levelled at the government during question time is just a stunt. We know it is a stunt. The opposition want to keep ventilating this in the vain hope that they will get some kind of traction.

A member: How is that working for them?

Ms TERPSTRA: It is not working for them, but they want to continue; it is not going anywhere. The bottom line is that every time that something is brought up on the government benches, we are able to demonstrate the level of action and activity that is being taken to meet those issues. These challenges are brought to government when we are made aware of them, and we act appropriately and quickly.

I want to again acknowledge the ESTA workers. I want to acknowledge ESTA as an organisation and the amazing work that it does. I think this motion, again, is ill informed and nothing other than a stunt, and of course we are opposing this motion today. Again, I want to acknowledge and offer my sincere condolences and sympathies to the families who have lost loved ones. I look forward to the coroner's work to determine the cause of death in regard to these matters, and we know there is obviously more to come with that. Again, I acknowledge the amazing efforts that our ESTA call takers do and the circumstances in which they perform these very difficult tasks. I will conclude my contribution there, and in doing so I reject this motion and encourage others in this chamber to vote against it as well.

Ms BATH (Eastern Victoria) (14:13): I am pleased to rise to throw my support behind the motion moved by Mr Davis in terms of the 000 issues and the compounding flaws in the ESTA call centre. It is funny, we just heard a member of the Labor Party, an MP, speak on this, and she spent a considerable amount of time stating that we were grandstanding on this issue and then her last words were, 'But of course we want to send our condolences to the families that have been significantly affected'—that is, those who lost loved ones through the flaws in the system.

It is the community's expectation when you pick up the phone and dial 000 that somebody is there in a timely manner and that there are time lines set for this to occur, but far too many Victorians are left

hanging on that line. The inspector-general for emergency management only last week came out with an in-depth report that confirmed that at least 33 Victorians have died due to 000 failures. They are names and faces and loved ones that have been lost. So I find it disingenuous that the minister and members on the other side of this house would come and say, 'It's all grandstanding', when there are people at the end of these 33 statistics, Victorians at the end of these 33 numbers.

I also have raised in this house over the past couple of years issues that have affected constituents in my Eastern Victoria Region, and there have been a number from the Latrobe Valley, from the Bass Coast shire and from South Gippsland, where constituents frustrated beyond belief have rung and said that their experience was they were hanging on the line waiting for that call centre uptake. Then there can be a compounding interest, we will say, on their distress when the ambulance takes a long, long, long time to arrive. And then there can be that occurrence, even though some of those patients, those people, have been asked by their GP to contact the ambulance if X and Y happens, that then they have said, 'Look, we've got to go to another call; find your own way in'—and they are left in the driveway. Just these few occurrences show the flaws in the system.

These flaws have been there for some time. Indeed, back in 2016 we had the then CEO speaking about the underfunding and the need for increased funding, the need for more resources. When the Liberals and Nationals put through a freedom-of-information request, we saw that during peak times ESTA tested its new software back in 2020, and the board minutes show that the CEO reported that despite the delays they were confident in the quality of the software. However, move to November 2020 and May 2021, when the bungled upgrade of ESTA's computer-aided dispatch system, the computer aided dispatch, caused it to shut down at least five times. And there are other demonstrable reports and minutes to say that when the CAD system is under great stress they end up using pen and paper. Now, this is a modern society. We have got people ringing up and having an expectation. Their expectations are not being met, their stress levels are considerable, they are watching family members in dire situations and yet 'We're giving it a go' and 'We're still using pen and paper where we have to'.

The Nationals and the Liberals have committed to an increase to fix that CAD system—\$125 million to increase that funding to fix the CAD system—and, as a priority, not to be looking at corporate positions or consultative positions but to actually refocus funding for staff recruitment on the front line, to support those fantastic people who are there working in very stressful situations, to support them for there to be more of them and for there to be a more fluid situation so that they do not feel so stressed by the level and volume of these calls. For those on the government benches to say that we are being disingenuous—people contact my office and say, 'I want you to raise this on my behalf', and I have done so in the past.

I will not continue on too much longer other than to say that this government, the Labor government, has been at the control wheels of this dispatch system for 19 out of 23 years. The blame here is at the feet of Daniel Andrews, and it needs to be fixed. It is unfair that people continually have lost confidence in the ESTA dispatch system. A Guy and Walsh Liberals and Nationals government will provide that additional \$125 million to top up the \$300 million allocated in the 2022–23 budget to fix it, upgrading the CAD system to facilitate multiple-service training of 50 per cent of all call-taking and dispatch staff so you can have that cross-referenced training to refocus on the frontline people, to support those people, to add to them and to give ongoing and sustainable funding to this very important service to our community. With that I say I fully support the motion moved by Mr Davis.

Ms MAXWELL (Northern Victoria) (14:20): I rise to speak on this motion relating to the inspector-general for emergency management's (IGEM) report on the performance of ESTA. First and foremost can I say that this is certainly no indictment or criticism of the ESTA staff themselves. We know emergency services are a key function of the state government and ESTA's call-taking and dispatch services are the gatekeeper. They are the first point of call, and when the system fails the consequences can unfortunately be fatal.

As a party—and this will be no surprise to this chamber—we have deliberately tried to steer clear of overtly partisan motions, instead trying to focus our attention on issues and evidence, so I will speak from that standpoint. It is true that our health system is under sustained pressure. It may be difficult to plan for everything, pandemics included, and the public is understanding of this fact. But I have been raising ambulance service issues consistently with the government across the past three years. These issues have been for the attention of multiple ministers and highlight the challenges my communities face with ESTA call handling, ambulance emergency response times and hospital ramping, and how community paramedics and first responder services could be supported to reduce the strains on our health system.

The recent review of the IGEM confirms the government failed to address the structural funding deficit within ESTA that was well known and had been identified as early as 2015. Supplementary funding each year only served to put a bandaid on the problem, but the consequence was that ESTA could not scale up its staffing to meet demand. It has also limited ESTA's ability to plan and to implement long-term investments to improve the service. It seems that work is ongoing between the Department of Justice and Community Safety, the Department of Treasury and Finance, Emergency Management Victoria and ESTA to provide government with options on a sustainable funding model; however, this work began more than 10 years ago and it still has not been completed.

Further frustrating is confirmation of what we already know: that ESTA and Ambulance Victoria failed to implement a system that gives callers an estimated arrival time for their ambulance. Finding 40 of the review says that AV and ESTA learned that providing an estimated time of arrival for the ambulance was important to callers to assist them in making decisions on whether to wait for an ambulance or take alternative action during a surge event. This was very clearly identified during the 2016 thunderstorm asthma event and should have led to change.

I turn to the case of Mr Tony Hubbard, whose wife, Gayl, died on 7 October 2019 while waiting more than 40 minutes for a code 1 ambulance response. This was before the pandemic and it was not during a surge event. Mr Hubbard was told the ambulance was on its way, but it did not arrive for more than 40 minutes, and his wife died. Mr Hubbard could see the ambulance station whilst he was giving CPR to his wife. He assumed it was coming imminently. I have detailed in this Parliament previously that Mr Hubbard, whilst seeing the ambulance station, could have made that decision to pick his sick wife up and take her to the hospital. In February 2020 I raised this matter with then ambulance services minister Jenny Mikakos in question time. I referred to a letter dated 20 January 2020 from Ambulance Victoria to Mr Hubbard, and in this letter Ambulance Victoria promised to raise directly with ESTA the advice of Mr Hubbard that an estimated arrival time should always be quoted whenever someone requests an ambulance. The minister said at the time that Ambulance Victoria was following up with ESTA on this issue. It was too late, however, for Mrs Hubbard, and more than four years after the thunderstorm asthma event. The IGEM's review details that Ambulance Victoria delayed in making a formal change request to ESTA after the issue was identified during the 2016 thunderstorm asthma event, and the change request was pending with ESTA for several months before the onset of the pandemic.

Ambulance Victoria is now working on a technical solution to provide estimated arrival times for ambulances during surge events, and ESTA has commenced work on it. I will note, though, that much of my electorate is littered with areas where an ambulance does not arrive within the 15-minute benchmark for a code 1 response, even outside of surge events. The government response to the IGEM review says it supports in principle the seven recommendations from the major public health emergencies review and the eight recommendations from the ambulance call answer review. It says they will waste no time bringing this important work together and will be better prepared for our next major public health emergency. The government needs to stop the spin and be better prepared for every emergency; that is what Victorians deserve. It is not the failure of one minister, but it has been a failure of this government.

Mr ERDOGAN (Southern Metropolitan) (14:26): I rise to speak on the motion moved by Mr Davis that is before the chamber. This motion has many parts to it; it has a part (1), (a) to (d), and a part (2), and a number of matters which Mr Davis points to, some of which are not in my opinion factually correct or a reflection of what has actually occurred or is happening. I will seek to inform the chamber of the actions taken to address some of the findings and recommendations from the inspector-general for emergency management (IGEM) review and also the Ashton report which our government has already undertaken. I also commend the work of the minister in listening to what the findings were and taking immediate action in a timely fashion. That is why I do not agree with the premise of the motion before the house, and I think it is important that we correct the record.

Obviously it is important to have context when debating matters such as this. Even in its review, the IGEM itself understood that it was conducting a review after the fact. It is always great to have hindsight. I am sure some of the state opposition would like to have hindsight when they were calling for us to open up in 2020 at the peak of the pandemic—‘Just open up, just let it go’.

Mr Leane: They weren’t big on health then.

Mr ERDOGAN: Yes, they were not big on health then—‘Just let it rip’. Obviously the sensible approach taken by our government to wait for the vaccine rollout to take place before lifting those public health restrictions made sense. I think it was a more commonsense approach. With hindsight and seeing in retrospect these matters, it is much easier to form an opinion once you have got the information and something has taken place. The context of ongoing challenges is important, and prior to the pandemic surges ESTA was meeting or exceeding the monthly emergency call-taking target for answering 90 per cent of emergency ambulance calls in 5 seconds each year since 2015. Again, the context is that prepandemic a lot of the targets were being met or being exceeded.

The government provided significant amounts of funding to ESTA before and during the pandemic to help meet demand. Obviously the inspector-general for emergency management, or IGEM, review states that:

ESTA has been able to recruit and retain sufficient ambulance call-takers to meet its business-as-usual demand for ambulance calls prior to the COVID-19 pandemic surge ...

This indicates overall the growth of ambulance call takers since 2014 has been sufficient to meet demand on an average yearly basis. We know that there was peak demand with the omicron wave, which Ms Terpstra reflected on. During that period there was almost double the amount of daily calls received by the services, and that obviously posed a significant challenge. It is also important to understand that, like every frontline health service, ESTA’s workforce has also been significantly impacted by the pandemic, with up to 20 per cent of their staff furloughed with illness or caring for someone with an illness at some point.

Predicting demand on ESTA’s ambulance call service also became more challenging as the different surges of COVID-19 went on. Even the ESTA report itself understood that it was difficult to predict it month to month during the height of the pandemic. In fact finding 16 of the report highlights:

As COVID-19 infections increased in the Victorian community during late 2021 and into 2022, this presented significant challenges for the Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority ... to accurately forecast call demand and therefore staffing requirements.

Again, IGEM accepts that fact as well. In making these in-hindsight decisions it is very simple for the state opposition, whose own record when it comes to ESTA or call-taking services—who can forget the Jeff Kennett era when it was privatised? I am not sure if people can remember that far back. I see Mr Meddick is nodding. He remembers. It was a privatised service, just to remind the chamber, and was tendered out, obviously. The contractor was cooking the books—some on the opposite side like cooking the books, I guess—and they were cooking the books so much that a royal commission in Premier Bracks’s time found that they were making phantom calls to their own service to make their statistics look better.

A member interjected.

Mr ERDOGAN: Yes. The 2001 Metropolitan Ambulance Service Royal Commission found that the company that had the tender for the call-taking service, which was given by the Kennett government, was actually cooking the books to make their service look better. To quote Premier Bracks at the time:

They are a damning indictment on the previous government.

He was talking about the Liberal-Nationals government.

The contract from the very start was flawed. The contract obviously was not effectively administered by the previous government. And the previous government failed to investigate properly and fully the claims that were made, which led, of course, to this finding now—this conclusive finding of improper conduct, deliberate conduct, which is inappropriate and obviously will require further prosecution.

So the company that had the tender for the ambulance and emergency dispatch service had illegally made phantom calls to boost its performance for financial gain. Disgraceful. That is the state opposition's record in terms of privatising this essential service and its delivery. When people want to talk about capacity to deliver services in this space, the state opposition is not in a good position to comment based on their record.

Minister Symes's record is in a really good place because, as I said, she should be commended for acting swiftly as soon as she became aware. The first time serious concerns of call answering performance were raised with her was in October last year by IGEM. She secured an immediate injection of \$27.5 million, which we should all be aware of. Again, she listened and she acted swiftly, so she should be commended. I am surprised by the wording of this motion. I am not sure if it is a typo of Mr Davis's or if he is just being mischievous. We should maybe ask that question of him. Mr Davis has moved the motion that he has lost confidence. He should be commending the minister. Is that an error on your behalf in terms of part (2) of the motion?

Mr Davis interjected.

Mr ERDOGAN: Yes, it is about people's lives, and I am correcting the record on the minister's endeavours in this part, in responding swiftly. Obviously on top of that a \$46 million package had already been in place for 43 full-time equivalent positions in the budget of May 2021. Further funding has already been provided in this budget, which we would be aware of, for a total package of \$333 million and a budget to employ 400 new staff. Again, we have taken on board the issues as soon as we have been made aware. The government has acted and Minister Symes should be commended.

Obviously our government's investment in and support of ESTA is not new. Like I said, from day dot after we were elected at the 2014 election, so from 2015 onwards, there have been significant funding increases, but obviously the most significant was during the pandemic as demand on all health and frontline services increased. It was not predictable. I am not sure anyone could have predicted the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, but I am sure that maybe some of those opposite might believe they have a solution—they predicted it. They might claim now in hindsight that they saw it coming, but no-one could. As part of the government, I am proud of the fact that that \$27.5 million was immediately injected and further commitments were made in this budget, and we had already taken action on the other review that happened, the Ashton review.

I also want to talk about how we are responding to that review, because they are intertwined; they are looking at the same service provider. In terms of the time frame, the government has previously committed to delivering on all 20 recommendations within the Ashton review by December 2023, and the IGEM's recommendations will now also be delivered in conjunction with this existing work program. Therefore the findings or, in particular, the recommendations from both reviews we are going to action straightaway. Obviously it takes time to deliver this properly—by December 2023, and that is pretty swift action in terms of delivering on all those recommendations.

Some of the work is already underway to address critical recommendations from IGEM. I want to go over them. For recommendation 1, for example, ESTA has increased participation at the national level and is building stronger relationships across the sector. This includes interjurisdictional working groups with other state and territory agencies and increased cooperation with the Commonwealth and Telstra. Through this engagement, ESTA will advocate for improvements to our national 000 call answer policies. That is just one example.

Obviously I could go through every single recommendation, but I know my time is limited in this chamber and there are a number of other speakers that want to contribute. Nonetheless I just want to state that I will not be supporting the motion before the house. I do not think it is a fair reflection. I commend the minister for taking swift action and supporting ESTA workers and making sure all Victorians are cared for.

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan—Leader of the Opposition) (14:36): This is a very important motion. Victorian lives are at risk. There could not be a more important matter than ensuring that this is fixed. The government has not fixed it, and they should have acted earlier. The minister should have acted earlier. Under the Westminster tradition, she is responsible.

House divided on motion:

Ayes, 12

Atkinson, Mr
Bach, Dr
Bath, Ms
Burnett-Wake, Ms

Crozier, Ms
Cumming, Dr
Davis, Mr
Finn, Mr

Lovell, Ms
McArthur, Mrs
Rich-Phillips, Mr
Vaghela, Ms

Noes, 22

Barton, Mr
Elasmar, Mr
Erdogan, Mr
Gepp, Mr
Grimley, Mr
Hayes, Mr
Kieu, Dr
Leane, Mr

Maxwell, Ms
McIntosh, Mr
Meddick, Mr
Melhem, Mr
Patten, Ms
Pulford, Ms
Ratnam, Dr

Shing, Ms
Stitt, Ms
Symes, Ms
Taylor, Ms
Terpstra, Ms
Tierney, Ms
Watt, Ms

Motion negatived.

Business of the house

NOTICES OF MOTION AND ORDERS OF THE DAY

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan—Leader of the Opposition) (14:43): I move:

That the consideration of notices of motion, general business, 864 to 861, and orders of the day, general business, 1 and 2, be postponed until later this day.

Motion agreed to.

Motions

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Mr GRIMLEY (Western Victoria) (14:44): I move:

That this house:

(1) notes that:

- (a) child sexual abuse occurred extensively within government institutions, notably in schools between the 1960s and 1990s;

MOTIONS

- (b) the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (royal commission) heard evidence of abuse that took place in Victorian government institutions, even though it was heavily focused on religious institutions;
 - (c) since the royal commission's conclusion, more victim-survivors have come forward to share their story and some have sued or are suing the government for sexual abuse suffered in schools;
 - (d) the national redress scheme has received 1639 applications in relation to abuse that took place in Victorian government institutions and of these applicants 318 have successfully claimed redress for abuse that took place in education facilities and this number is in addition to the many survivors who have sued the Department of Education and Training;
 - (e) of the survivors who are suing, many endure breaches of the model litigant guidelines (MLG) and the common guiding principles (CGP) by the state government as the defendant;
- (2) calls on the Premier to publicly apologise to victim-survivors on behalf of successive Victorian governments before the state election;
- (3) calls on the government to immediately begin complying with its own MLG and CGP when dealing with child sexual abuse complaints, such as that it:
- (a) acts fairly, consistently and without unnecessary delay; and
 - (b) avoids litigation.

I rise to speak on motion 851 standing in my name. As you all walked in this morning I hope that you saw the colourful ribbons tied to the fence outside Parliament. I hope when you saw those colourful ribbons you knew the meaning behind them. As is their intention, I hope you reflected on the impact of child sexual abuse. This is a loud fence, and I believe it is the first time one is being displayed at Parliament.

Child sexual abuse is a core issue for Derryn Hinch's Justice Party. Our party leader went to jail twice for standing up against paedophiles. It was 1986—almost 36 years ago—that Hinch exposed Michael Glennon, a man who had already been jailed for the rape of a young girl and who then went on to abuse children within the church. The church covered Glennon's tracks, much like they did for Ridsdale and several other prolific paedophile priests. Mr Hinch said in 2012:

I make no apology for attacking those cover-ups year after year, decade after decade.

Derryn wanted to see the offenders jailed for good. Fast-forward almost four decades and we are still fighting for the same message, attacking the cover-ups of child sexual abuse, but this time it is not the church, it is successive state governments in Victoria. A lot of progress has been made over the years, which is great, but there is still some way to go. An apology would be a fitting next step.

That brings me to today. Where do we begin? When you think of a primary school, I am sure you picture a playground and kids running around having fun, laughter, your favourite teacher, reading books and so on. When the survivors of sexual assault at Beaumaris think of their primary school, they see an institution that failed them. They get feelings of guilt, shame and anxiety from an institution which led their lives down a path of depression, drug and alcohol addiction, crime and other complex mental health challenges. It was not a playground. To them it was hell.

Earlier this year I met a survivor, Glen, who was abused at Beaumaris Primary. He told me one of the hardest things he has had to grapple with in his journey is that he has never received an apology for the sex offending that took place at the school. Not just that, but in some cases convicted paedophiles and in other cases offenders who were known to the principal, the teaching staff and members of the community kept offending. I could not believe it was true at first. However, upon investigation I found out it was entirely true.

The Victorian government has never apologised for the atrocities that took place not just at Beaumaris but at all government schools. Scott Morrison made an apology post the royal commission in 2018, and most other states have apologised since then. In Tasmania, coincidentally, they are currently conducting a commission of inquiry as they realised the royal commission was limited in scope. The government and its departments were being flooded with new stories and lawsuits, and so the inquiry

began. I anticipate the Victorian story is the same—that the royal commission did not properly investigate abuse in government institutions given its focus on religious bodies. Victoria had the Betrayal of Trust inquiry in 2013 in this place, but it did not look at government organisations. The ACT, Queensland and Victoria are the only states that have never apologised. So what are we asking the state government to apologise for? As I mentioned, the abuse that took place in health facilities, prisons and youth detention but predominantly schools was abhorrent. More importantly to the survivors, it was the systemic shuffling of alleged and convicted paedophiles which enabled more children to have their innocence taken away from them.

Russell Jackson, a journalist with the ABC, has spoken to over 100 survivors of government sexual abuse from the bayside area alone. He estimates conservatively that there are over 500 survivors in that area. Of the 1639 applications made to the national redress scheme about abuse in government settings, 318 were from government schools. This is in addition to the many private civil claims made. We are potentially talking about thousands of children who have never had their experience recognised by the institution that allowed their abuse to take place.

My office has spoken to one of 12 survivors from one perpetrator in the western region of Hamilton and Ballarat. I am sure 12 is a conservative number, but it demonstrates that this is so much bigger than any of us could simply imagine. Further, many of those who were abused will never be able to share their story because they are no longer here with us. This is why an apology is so necessary. Offenders who sue the state can often get a direct apology as part of their settlement, but what about those who cannot afford to sue? What about those who have committed suicide or died young due to the effects of their abuse?

Trevor Foster was abused at Beaumaris Primary School. He is no longer with us. He went on to have a life impacted by the offending. Trevor's coroner's report could not conclude how he was killed, but it was not a very nice way to go. Ian Walker is another one who I have spoken about before, and his sister Karen carries on his legacy and is admirably fighting for change. There are many others who have died in their darkest moments, inevitably due to their abuse. They and their families deserve an apology just as much. At Beaumaris the offenders included Gary Mitchell, his brother-in-law Darrell Ray and Graham Steele, and there are allegations against David McGregor and others. This was a sizeable chunk of the teaching staff, so helpless children could not escape it. In fact some of these abusers infiltrated the local little league clubs to continue their offending. One survivor recounts that the coaches would offer to drop the boys off to their homes after training and everyone would fight for the back seat. You can only imagine why. They would get told off by their parents for coming home all muddy, but they could not tell their parents the reason they did not shower at the clubrooms. The teachers in some instances abused their victims in front of the entire class. There was no discretion. I will not speak to the specifics of their abuse because we have some survivors here with us in the gallery and I think that it is unnecessarily retraumatising. I will just place on the record that the abuse was horrific.

Gary Mitchell has been sentenced in 1996, 1999, 2000, 2005 and 2018. I do not think that will be the last time he sees a courtroom, either. More broadly across the education system these sex offenders include Brian Sword, a principal who worked at many schools including in Bendigo. In 1999 his victims reported their abuse to police and he then committed suicide. I think it is safe to say that I hope he is rotting in hell.

Vincent Reynolds was reported against by a parent of a child in 1980. The Department of Education's psychiatrist said at the time:

It was absolutely ... stupid sending you back to the classroom because you will just keep on ...

offending against children. He went on to teach at a new school in 1981. He then got to teach at four more schools following this. In 1992 he was finally charged and convicted for offending against 14 boys and he received a \$16 000 fine. In 2019 he was charged with 42 offences against 38 child

complainants aged between just five and 12 years old. He got nine years non-parole and the victims got a lifetime of pain and trauma.

Bob Morris taught at Cranbourne and Ringwood primary schools and across western Victorian country schools between 1966 and 1980. Several reports were made by parents and, in one case we know about, to a senior department employee. Morris kept on teaching and kept on abusing children. Rightside Legal's Michael Magazanik said:

... even after police became involved in 1978 and charged Morris, he was acquitted, but he was sent back to teaching and immediately resumed offending.

...

The Education Department shuffled a paedophile from school to school for years, effectively supplying a child abuser with new victims year after year.

More tragedy could not be spoken.

In my region Gerard Coffey, the brother of the disgraced Bryan Desmond Coffey, taught at Forest Street Primary School in Wendouree, Kent Road Primary School, Urquhart Primary School in Ballarat and apparently also within the education department itself. He was tried in 1972 and found not guilty. The 12 young female victims were labelled liars, and he kept on teaching. One survivor tells me:

It's sad that we just weren't believed when we were kids ... for the Education Department to shift the paedophiles around was just disgraceful.

To top off all of this, when whispers were going around the school grounds and to senior staff and principals about the abuse, some teachers were sent to the education department into what was known as the paedophile room. Some were then given references of some sort, because they ended up teaching at schools later on. In the case of Darrell Ray, he taught at Tucker Road primary in Moorabbin from 1967 to 1970 and then for five years at Beaumaris Primary School and one year at Mount View Primary School in Glen Waverley. He was then charged with public indecency in 1978 and was sentenced to three months jail, but he went on to teach at a school for intellectually disabled children at Rossbourne School for close to two decades after, and I cannot imagine what happened in all those years. It is just incomprehensible. One prominent child sex abuse lawyer said to me:

It is just rampant. There are so many examples of teachers going unheeded by principals. They are every bit as bad as the Catholic Church was in that day.

In true fitting with their deplorable character, some of these sex offenders changed their name or the spelling of their name so they would be untraceable. Just on that note I did announce today that if we are re-elected in November I will establish an inquiry into child sexual abuse within government institutions, particularly schools. That is my promise here to survivors across the state.

Something that I still cannot comprehend is that after all these men and women have been abused in an institution that was supposed to be keeping them safe, the government is not complying with their own guidelines when dealing with each civil claim. The Attorney-General has told this place that she expects all government departments to comply with the guidelines, but the reality is they are not. They say it is a big accusation to make, and I agree, but it is not coming from us, it is not coming from me, it is coming directly from those who deal with the government on these cases.

As an example, I have had numerous lawyers tell me that when they are representing survivors suing the state, the mandatory mediation hearing seven months before trial is taken as a joke. Apparently the government solicitors come unprepared, not in good faith and without any preparation to negotiate fairly. In the words of Judy Courtin, a senior solicitor who specialises in child sexual abuse claims, 'If you're not going to negotiate, why are you here?'

In terms of other non-compliance, they often unnecessarily drag out court proceedings. Many lawyers observe that they do this to either get the survivor to buckle and accept a low offer or withdraw their case. One lawyer stated that they will drag it out until the last minute before a trial. They said that the

day or week before trial the government lawyers buckle. They said they know the true value of the claim and that sometimes the state is not too bad but at other times they fight to the death.

In a call to my office last week it was made clear by the government that they do not accept that their departments and solicitors have been acting in this way. To that I say: listen to those working in this space. The rebuttal that breaches may be accidental is an admission that breaches are occurring. Further, it is not just a few lawyers that I have spoken to. It is a consistent story from four separate law firms, and it was published in the *Age* last year, so it is not new.

So what is the effect of the abuse and the arduous court process on the victim? In their words, they do not know how to regulate emotion. Some have resorted to drugs and alcohol, some push away people they love, some have thought about suicide regularly since their abuse and some end up in prison. For example, Rod Owen, a very talented St Kilda footballer, celebrated his 20th anniversary of getting out of prison last Wednesday. This stint was caused by the abuse that he had suffered in a number of institutions, including a government school. Suffice to say we are all very proud of the corner that Rod has turned and the help that he is providing others.

I really do not look forward to hearing the government talk about how they have done enough for historical child sex abuse survivors without committing to the apology today. Because actions do speak louder than words, that is absolutely true, but if you cannot apologise are you really doing all you can for survivors and their recovery? This is about acknowledging what happened and the magnitude of how successive state governments have failed these children. The government speaks about how there is litigation on foot, so it cannot comment. I would say that is a double standard. Puffing Billy survivor Justin Drew was suing the state at the time the government made an apology to him and other railway survivors in November 2019. He said the apology means the government are:

... accepting liability, which they didn't years ago. Hopefully we'll get it sorted out and I can get on with life. It will be a weight off my shoulders.

They deserve that apology. Today we are talking about hundreds of children in government schools who have never had an apology, and the government's culpability is arguably much higher. If everyone tries to say, 'You're just making this issue political', I would say my office has been trying to work with the Premier's office since May on this apology and my adviser had three meetings before I said anything in this place. It was only made public because we were being stonewalled.

We have now had over five meetings and constant contact with their office to try and see how things could be progressed and what we can do to assist, but to no commitment. The member for Bentleigh in the other place has known about this issue since June. It seems we may be on the nose, despite our best intentions. This is not for me, by the way. It is not for Derryn Hinch's Justice Party. This is for victim-survivors of childhood sexual abuse and their families, nothing more and nothing less.

I wish it did not have to be raised today, because I was hoping this would be the day when the apology could take place, but we are here. Being a former sexual offences and child abuse investigation team detective and having interviewed many survivors of all ages, this is something extremely important to me and I hope the government can do this.

There are several people here today in the gallery, upstairs, that I would like to acknowledge. Glen, Lyn, Rick, Marita, Helen and Brian, thank you very much for coming here today. Earlier today we had Rod, Tim, Terri and Judy Courtin, of course. Hopefully I have not missed anybody out up there, but I really appreciate them coming in today. They are incredibly brave and they represent themselves not only as victim-survivors but also as family members and advocates speaking on behalf of victim-survivors who are no longer with us. Your bravery is to be commended, and your advocacy is remarkable. I thank you. Without your bravery, this abhorrent behaviour would not be known about and the offenders would still be among us, continuing to perpetuate violence against innocent people.

I would also like to thank Russell Jackson of the ABC, who has done the most incredible investigative journalism on this issue. Your perseverance and friendship to the survivors has been immeasurable.

Also thank you to Shannon Deery and Mark Santomartino for sharing their stories to bring others forward too. But a special thanks to Glen for bringing this injustice to my attention, and I am sure my jaw dropped to the floor when I was told there would be no apology. I cannot imagine how this has made you all feel, and I hope you do get one because, frankly, it is the least you deserve. If it does not happen, still know that you have been part of the change, and for all of that you should be bloody proud.

In what could be one of my final speeches in this place—I hope not, of course, but anything can happen—I just want to say that I am proud of the people and the issues that Derryn Hinch's Justice Party has stood for. Ms Maxwell and I have only been here for one term, but I feel like we have achieved a great deal, especially for the victims of crime, and I hope we find ourselves back in this place in the next term, because there is so much more to do, including on this matter. On that note, I commend this motion to the house.

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan—Minister for Commonwealth Games Legacy, Minister for Veterans) (15:02): Can I first up say that having listened to Mr Grimley on some of the historic horrible events that he outlined in his address to us and some of the individuals involved—some of the perpetrators—I completely agree with him. I am not a religious person, so I do not believe in heaven and hell, but if I am wrong and there is a hell, I hope those people are burning in hell. I seriously do hope they are burning in hell. I cannot think of a more evil thing that anyone could have perpetrated on a child. It is absolutely appalling. I have been in this house a while, and we have had a number of debates around similar issues. It always puts us all back. Whether a member of the government, whether a minister in the government or whether in opposition, all of us in here are humans, and I think we are all good humans. We cannot comprehend what some young people would have gone through—children. Of course, whether a member of the government or not—me being a minister of the government—we feel enormous sorrow for what those people went through. I am not going to pretend to comprehend it. I do my best to comprehend what they have had to deal with since then in their adult lives. As I said, I am not going to even pretend to be able to comprehend what they have had to deal with in their lifetimes, being the victims of evil people that were in a place of trust with their families. It is just appalling.

The opposition and the government do not always acknowledge good work, but I applaud the Liberal-Nationals for the *Betrayal of Trust* report, released when they were in government. I think it might have been Premier Baillieu who championed and led it. I absolutely applaud them for that. I think that was a trigger for a royal commission; I really think it was. I think that was a sign of leadership from the government of the day, and as I said, I cannot applaud them enough. I think we may have been to some degree naive about the extent of these horrible criminal acts back then. I think we might have been a bit naive as to their extent. We did not really understand how widespread this was and how many of these evil people there were. I think we were naive about what institutions these criminals were acting in and how widespread the amount of evil activity was. We have not always known the extent. I will give credit to the Baillieu government of the time. A series of governments and our government have grappled with good intent to try to do the right thing by these people, and we will continue to do that with all good intent. We commit to that. I am sure if Dr Bach is a minister in a couple of months time, he will be doing the same thing on behalf of his government. I will not say we have tried; it been a partisan effort to do the right thing by these people whose lives have been shattered by evil—the worst type of human beings. I cannot even comprehend that someone could be that evil.

I thank Mr Grimley and everyone in this chamber. I do not think it is just Mr Grimley; I think there have been a number of people. I know over the years Mr Finn has been very vocal about how evil these people are and how they should be treated. There are members of the opposition, members of the government and members of the crossbench—many people have been vocal. I understand the government of the day has responsibility, but the Parliament does as well. I think these debates are important. We all need to strive together and have good intent. We in no way can take away what happened. We have not got time machines. We wish we did. We cannot take away what happened,

but I think we all can have the best intent to acknowledge, support and do whatever we can for people that have found themselves victims of these evil, evil—I was going to say human beings; I do not know what they are—betrayers of such terrible, terrible acts, which I know none of us in here can comprehend.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Bourman): Before we go on, I would like to acknowledge the presence of a former president, Bob Smith, in the gallery. Welcome.

Dr BACH (Eastern Metropolitan) (15:09): It is good to follow Minister Leane and Mr Grimley, and I find myself in deep agreement with both of them. I would also like to acknowledge the presence of numerous victim-survivors with us today for this important debate. I wholeheartedly concur with what Mr Leane said. It is only over the very recent past—actually through processes that Mr Leane spoke about—that we have come to even a superficial understanding of the ubiquity of some of the appalling practices, unspeakable practices, that are the subject of Mr Grimley’s motion.

I actually think as a former teacher myself, the son of a state schoolteacher and the grandson of a state school principal that there is something particularly evil about the perpetration of abuse by teachers and other educators. I say that as somebody who is proudly supportive of our teachers and educators. That is because as teachers and educators we have access to so much important information about the children in our care. I was teaching 2½ years ago, before I came into this place, and it was really important for me in seeking to teach my year 7 English class effectively to have access to a whole series of very personal pieces of information about the girls in my classes—information about their mental health, information about their family status, information about whether they were going through particular gender issues. So the idea that somebody in that position would use their significant power over children and misuse the information that they had at their fingertips that was supposed to be used to safeguard the wellbeing of young people first and foremost is something uniquely horrific.

It is interesting Mr Grimley talked about Rossbourne School. I went to a state school down the road from Rossbourne School and knew some kids who started off at my school and went to Rossbourne. Shane Kamsner, the principal of Rossbourne, is a mate of mine. I used to work very closely with him. He is a child psychologist. I have been to that school recently, and again there are vulnerable kids at that school. My wife’s former principal was recently released from prison after having been found guilty of raping a child at his school. So I concur with what Mr Leane said, that I am afraid the sorts of appalling crimes that we are talking about happen far, far too often—certainly historically they happened more often. And then Mr Grimley spoke about the kinds of practices that so many institutions engaged in to cover up, shift people around—practices that were designed to protect perpetrators rather than give justice to victims.

I appreciate what the minister said about the role of the Liberals and Nationals in the *Betrayal of Trust* report, but truth be told that report was so powerful because of the wonderful engagement of members from all parties, most certainly members from the then Labor opposition and independent members as well. I remember there were people who said at the time, ‘Well, this is the wrong process. Members of Parliament should not be the ones to engage in this process’. It was actually a fantastic thing that the work of that report, as harrowing as it was, was carried out in such a strongly multipartisan way. Mr Leane is right, of course; most people’s analysis is that it was only because of the *Betrayal of Trust* report. It was most certainly not a Liberal and Nationals achievement; it was an achievement of the Victorian Parliament and something that was advocated for by so many victims and survivors which then led to the royal commission.

I take Mr Grimley’s point, and I agree with his point that of course there has been a particular focus in these discussions on abuse in religious institutions, and that abuse is appalling. We know that, I am afraid, historically—please God let us hope it does not still happen, certainly not to the extent that it did—there were dreadful processes, criminal processes, in state institutions and state schools that actively facilitated the ongoing abuse of so many children. I agree with Mr Grimley that there has not been the sort of focus on abuse in these settings that there has been in other settings, so I very much

appreciate the opportunity to speak on this important motion. It has a huge amount to commend itself. I think Mr Grimley, after listening as I know he has done to so many victims and survivors, is most genuine in his desire to see better outcomes. We can do that working together, and like other members I sincerely hope that I am here with Mr Grimley and other members of this place post November to continue that work together.

Ms TAYLOR (Southern Metropolitan) (15:15): Thank you to Mr Grimley for bringing forward this motion, and also thank you to members of the gallery who are here with us today. That is incredibly brave, to say the least. I know that everyone here is determined for this to be very much a collaborative and bipartisan space, as it really needs to be, and that is the only way that the best possible outcomes can be achieved in this space. I concur with all who have spoken here today that it is actually excruciating to even contemplate the sheer betrayal of trust, because every child—every student—should have the right to be able to turn up to school each day and expect that those in charge will respect them in return and honour their boundaries and their right to be able to learn free from any kind of untoward interference whatsoever. So to have that trust, for want of a better word—and I do not want to be presuming how different people respond or feel, but ‘obliterated’ I think might hopefully go some way to encapsulating what that might be like. I am not here to presume what it is like. Only those who have been through that would know authentically what that space is like.

I did not have a long career like you had, Dr Bach, in teaching. I did teach for a brief period of time and I can recall—and this debate is not about me and my teaching; I am getting to the point—my goal each day was to make sure that I kept the class calm, that students had interesting work, that they actually learned something, hopefully that they were happy and that they got something out of that hour or whatever that I had with them. To imagine any outcome other than that is horrifying to me as someone who did have that position of trust when I was a teacher. As I say, it was only a year or so in my life, but to contemplate that anyone could abuse the privilege of having that kind of auspice over a room of young and vulnerable children is absolutely horrifying.

I can only imagine, and as I say, I have to imagine; I am not here to presume how different people would experience that kind of betrayal and that kind of abuse. It is abuse, obviously. I can only imagine how one gets over that. How do you recover from that kind of extraordinarily painful—and I would say also it must be incredibly confusing, because as you say you should be able to go to school or the relevant learning institution with hope and with joy and with aspiration for a positive future. To have that space completely, for want of a better word, destroyed, the space of trust and faith that you will give your best that you can each day and have that returned and respected by the member of authority that is the teacher or otherwise in front of you—that should be the minimum that you should expect from that experience. Learning about the horrifying things that have taken place and were never, ever the fault of those who have experienced the abuse—never—there is no excuse for it. There is no excuse for it, so I hope having this debate today one of the elements that may be born out of it is enhancing the awareness and understanding of what victim-survivors of abuse have been through.

Obviously there are many, many other very complex elements to this debate that are warranted, and this is one of the many spaces where such things can be discussed in a very respectful way. But, yes, it is horrifying to think of the extent and the prevalence of it as well. I know this is not actually relevant to this discussion here, but even from having friends and relatives who were victims of abuse the prevalence is pretty shocking. I am not saying anyone in the chamber is not aware of that, but I am just reflecting here as we have this debate. It is mortifying to think that there are those who have severely crossed and betrayed the trust of vulnerable young people in our state, and certainly it has to be and is a priority to make sure that does not ever happen again. I would say another relevant element to this debate is also the preventative element of protecting children into the future, but also obviously it is critical to be very up-front and frank about what has happened—I do not think anyone here is resiling from what has happened—and to make sure that those who have been through such horrors are absolutely believed, because there is nothing worse than having those kinds of traumatic experiences not believed as such. I would have thought that is absolutely vital.

The final point I was going to make—and it is further to a point that Minister Leane made—is I think as parliamentarians we would seek to come to the chamber with good intent every day for every debate, but I think a debate of this nature really brings out that very human element and that most vulnerable element that I would like to think we are relating to in this very sensitive moment that we are having with this discussion in the chamber right now. Again I will thank all the victim-survivors for coming here today. It is incredibly courageous, but I think it is certainly very much appreciated. I would just like to say that authentically. I think, speaking for everyone here in the Parliament—although it is probably best that people speak for themselves—that this discussion is absolutely approached in earnest and with sensitivity and compassion for the extraordinary pain that so many victim-survivors have been through, which they should never have had to go through. It is extraordinarily unfair, to say the least. I might leave my discussion there.

Mr BARTON (Eastern Metropolitan) (15:24): I rise to speak on the motion brought to this house by Mr Grimley. This is very sad, this subject, and I want to thank you for coming here today and sharing. An apology to those who have suffered abuse in government schools is appropriate, and it is needed. We know how important an apology can be in acknowledging the unfair pain and suffering experienced by victims and their families. It is not always closure, but it goes a long way in making victims feel heard and understood and loved. A public apology allows us to all agree that what occurred was unacceptable and that we must always work to make sure that this does not happen again. There is a precedent for Victorian government apologies, and I can see no reason why this apology cannot be done.

On the matter of governments and departments acting as a model litigant, I have some experience in this. I have stood in this house multiple times and reminded ministers and the Attorney-General of their obligations to ensure departments are acting as a model litigant. Clearly this has fallen on deaf ears. As the courts have firmly held since 1912 it is an expectation that the state and its agencies will act as a model litigant—that is, that they will act with propriety, fairly and to the highest professional standards. In particular the model litigant guidelines also include that the state and its agencies are to keep litigation costs to a minimum and to deal with claims promptly so as not to cause any unnecessary delay. In my experience, when I consider Commercial Passenger Vehicles Victoria (CPVV) and the Department of Transport, they have failed to meet all these obligations. After four years in court, taxi and hire car families—some of the poorest people—in the Supreme Court received a ruling for Commercial Passenger Vehicles Victoria to hand over the requested documents and pay 80 per cent of the families' legal fees. One year later taxi families were forced to renegotiate. It is obvious that the regulator was trying to run these families out of money. There is no doubt.

Not only is the CPVV trying to cripple families who have already faced discriminatory regulation reforms in the CPVV, but this agency has also behaved questionably in other court battles. I am told the regulator employs over 20 lawyers within their department, yet they have gone outside their organisation to spend big bucks on the government's preferred secret keeper, Mick Batskos. This was after Victoria's privacy commissioner ruled in my favour that the documents requested in the freedom-of-information request should be handed over for a trial in Geelong. Taxpayer money is being used by the regulator merely to hide the outcomes of a six-person trial that ran for eight weeks in 2020. With such money involved to fight the privacy commissioner's ruling, we all wonder what the regulator was hiding at this trial. After multiple hearings at VCAT we have resolved the matter and most documents were released. Imagine how many taxpayer dollars would have been saved if they had just handed the information over, as they were required to do, in the beginning. This causes enormous stress to those families, having to go through this. This is not transparency. This is not accountability. These are not the actions of a model litigant.

Only yesterday I saw the *Age* report on the secretive nature of the Victorian government's departments. The Victorian information commissioner revealed that more FOI requests were lodged in Victoria than in any other jurisdiction in Australia, including the Commonwealth. This is unbelievable. Clearly this government and the bureaucracy have a lot they do not want released. In 2021 alone over

42 000 FOI requests were lodged in Victoria. This was a new record, and it is expected we will exceed that record again. It comes down to this getting of information. Who is responsible for ensuring departments behave as model litigants?

I thank Mr Grimley for bringing attention to this issue. It is a very important issue. We need a commitment from whoever is to hold government come 26 November that these departments will meet their obligation to behave as model litigants and operate transparently and with integrity. Certainly much needs to be done to bring the bureaucracy into line with community expectations. I commend this motion to the house.

Mr McINTOSH (Eastern Victoria) (15:30): I would like to start off by acknowledging everyone here with us today. This is not as personal for me as it obviously is for some, but I grew up in Ballarat, so all I can say is that my life and our community has been changed by the events that occurred over many, many decades.

I will just start off by saying that I have recently joined the Parliament, and in my first speech I spoke about the loss of a lot of mates. I have lost far too many mates for my age but also co-workers, and one of those co-workers I will not mention by name. I was a sparky. I worked on construction sites, and there are some pretty tough guys on them. This guy had a big business and a lot of money and ran a lot of blokes and had a nickname that was very bravado, and tragically he took his life. It only came out later—what he had been through when he was young—and at the time we did not have any idea.

I have probably had more exposure to the stories of what has gone on particularly in the church than many, as I have had family who have been in the priesthood and have fought a battle for a very, very long time, for decades. And the cover-ups went on for decades, and we know that now. I do not cry very often in my life, but watching the movie *Spotlight* a few years ago, it really got to me at the end of the movie in the cinema.

There are a number of things I want to talk about on this, but perhaps I will start with how much admiration I have for survivors. It is sort of interesting—well, maybe ‘interesting’ is not the right word—but over time you become aware of more individuals and more families, and all I can speak to is the courage or the resolve of people who are survivors who are still with us. I am so thankful they are because of the six or seven mates I have lost. I have got my suspicions about why they are not with us, but I do not know that for sure. But I wish that they had either had the support or the capacity to be as incredible as those that are still with us. So I start off by paying absolute respect to survivors.

To those that are perpetrators, I try and disconnect myself from them as opposed to those that have covered up and enabled them for so many years. I am a lot less angry now than I used to be. I used to be very, very angry. I am just glad that steps have been taken over the last decade to expose—and I am talking very much from a Ballarat perspective and of the church there—some of those who did so much wrong. Because the way heels were dug in—from the knowledge I have, my understanding, which I believe to be correct, and as we have heard so many reports of—for so many decades and the increased trauma that put into our communities just boggles my mind. We are here and we believe in equality and equal opportunity and access to equality in communities.

Somewhere like Ballarat has just had entire layers of damage put into it, and then there is the subsequent drug abuse and alcohol abuse, which are completely understandable. That additionally makes my blood boil—that so much trauma, generational trauma, has been inflicted on a community by people who were supposed to be doing exactly the opposite. So many people expected the best, and the best of religion and churches is very good. But the worst, as we have seen, has been atrocious, and that has not only destroyed communities broadly, with the trauma in there, but it has also taken away a lot of people’s faith and a lot of people’s communities of faith. Again, we are talking about these flow-on effects. I am very mindful not to talk about flow-on effects because those who are directly impacted are the people that we need to be directly mindful of.

For me, I just hope that we never again see anything like this inflicted on anyone, let alone on this sort of scale and level. I hope that we never see it again and the lessons are learned that we cannot ignore things like this that have gone on and have occurred. I think by doing so it has just inflicted so much (a) suffering but (b) pain that never should have occurred. It is very difficult to find any words that are adequate, but I just want to say again how much respect I have. I wish everyone all the best.

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) (15:38): First of all I would like to commend Mr Grimley for bringing this matter to the house today. It is, I would suggest, long overdue for this matter to be addressed. Secondly, I would like to commend those brave individuals who are in the gallery today—commend them on their efforts. They want what I want, and that is justice. This Parliament is supposed to be about justice. If we are not about justice, then nobody is about justice. This motion will bring a degree—I do not say all but a degree—of satisfaction with regard to justice in this particular matter. I hope that that justice is delivered very soon, because it is long overdue.

I remember some years ago in the midst of the appalling revelations of abuse in religious schools a police officer said to me, ‘Yes, this is bad, but wait until you see what’s happened in the government sector’. He was not just talking about schools; he was talking about social services. He was talking about a whole range of government institutions where child abuse, in his view, was rife and had been rife for many, many years. You have got to realise that schools and, well, basically anywhere where children gather are like a light on a hot night; they attract paedophiles like mosquitoes. As much as I would like to whack the paedophiles like I whack the mosquitoes, we have to find a way to stop them from abusing these kids. We have to find a way of exposing these creatures for what they are. We have to find a way to stop them from getting near the kids. We have to find a way of protecting those children. We cannot allow—if I use the word that I want to use I would probably be thrown out—these creatures. If we could find a way to siphon off these creatures, then I think we would go a long way towards protecting these kids.

I spend a great deal of my life, and have for a long time, fighting for children—for tiny children, but children nonetheless. I am appalled by what I have discovered over recent years. As I have said in this house often enough, I am ashamed of myself that I did not actually believe it to begin with. I thought it was too horrific. I thought it was too far fetched to be true. Unfortunately what we have seen come out over probably the last 20 years is too much evidence to deny, and I fear what is coming, because I think once we start investigating what has been going on in government institutions we are going to see an enormous additional amount of some pretty horrific activity.

The pain and the suffering of children, of their parents and of their siblings—and the flow-on effect, as Mr McIntosh spoke of a minute ago, through their families and through their friends. I have spoken in the past of a good mate of mine at school who, about a year after we finished up, shot himself. He and I had been together at Rupertswood in Sunbury at school—both boarders. I had no idea what was going on. They left me right alone, which is a good thing in my view. But there were others who were abused horrifically. Some of the teachers that I had at school—priests, if you do not mind—are still in jail. May they rot in jail, and once they have finished in jail, may they rot in hell—that is my view.

Some of these priests were great actors. They should have been in Hollywood. The front that they put up—but at the same time they were committing some of the most evil acts imaginable. They would teach you about the faith one day; then that night they would be abusing the kids—just unbelievable. It took me a very, very long time to come to grips with that, I have to say, and I am not sure that I have completely done that yet. The fact is that I had friends, I had schoolmates, who were being abused at the same time I was living with them. We were sleeping in the same dormitory together. You know, we were as close as you could possibly be to other human beings. They were being abused and nobody knew about it. Nobody could protect them. Nobody could stop what we did not actually know was happening. It was an extraordinarily dreadful experience, a dreadful feeling. When I found out what was going on I felt a sense of guilt, in fact, that I had not known and was not able to do anything to stop it. And that guilt, I have to say, still lingers with me. It might be misguided, I do not know, but it is there nonetheless.

I am very hopeful that this motion is passed today. I believe the victim-survivors, those here today and those outside of this building, deserve an apology from the state. I can understand that the state would not want to declare liability because they would probably find themselves in court, but the fact is they are liable. This happened in government institutions. Governments control these places. Governments employed the people—and I use the term ‘people’ very, very loosely—the creatures who committed these crimes. Governments employed them and paid them. It is the government’s responsibility. One of the reasons I came into Parliament was to make government responsible for what it did on a whole range of fronts, and this is most surely one where they should.

Whether it be the Andrews government, the Guy government or any other government after 26 November, whichever government it is, one of the first things they should do in the next term is to apologise on behalf of the government to the victims of this abuse. I think that is just so important for the mental health of those who have been abused to know that they at least have a government which accepts that they are telling the truth and they have been telling the truth—because a lot of kids, whether it be in government institutions or schools or religious schools, were told for years, ‘Don’t be stupid. Of course that didn’t happen’. Well, it did. It did, and it is really important that they be told that we as a society, we as a community, accept that they were not lying, that they were telling the truth and that we put, figuratively, an arm around them and hold them and let them know that we are on their side. The government should apologise.

Mr BOURMAN (Eastern Victoria) (15:48): I rise to give my thoughts on Mr Grimley’s motion. Obviously I support it. My experience of dealing with paedophiles was that I struggled to treat them as people, and Mr Grimley will know what I am talking about. We were doing the same thing for a while. It was child protection services back when I did it. I really do not know how you did it in the sexual offences and child abuse investigation team, Mr Grimley. I could not have done it without getting myself in jail. Very early on I learned that these people might look like people, they might look human, they might act human sometimes, but they were not. I have stepped in things that have been better than them, and yet they all thought that they had done nothing wrong. That was the thing I struggled with most. But fortunately I managed to get through my time without doing anything to them that they deserved.

Whilst I am not religious in any way, I am a bit Old Testament in what I think punishment should be, and I think our legal system has a lot to answer for, particularly in sentencing. Finding people guilty is one thing; putting them away forever, which is what most of them deserve—or more—is another. Nothing makes my blood boil more than watching someone’s sentence get reduced after doing something like this. There was a recent one where someone assaulted, I think, an eight-week-old baby, and they ended up with their sentence reduced for some reason. As the father of a 2½-year-old daughter in my later years, I will give fair notice that if anyone touches her they will not have to worry about the legal system.

But getting back to business, funnily enough this year some news came out, or I finally found it out, about Beaumaris Primary School in the 1980s. As it turns out, I ended up at Beaumaris high school in the early 1980s after moving to Melbourne. Beaumaris is a suburb that is affluent, leafy—

Mr Davis: A very good suburb.

Mr BOURMAN: It is a very good suburb, Mr Davis. Unfortunately the primary school had paedophiles there. I was at the high school, to be fair, but I knew nothing about them—my world was fine. Whilst I was never interfered with in any way, people very close to me were. Maybe that influenced my thoughts later on in my various careers.

The cover-ups are what bothers me. It is not the cover-ups when someone is complicit in the act, the crime; it is the cover-ups to hide embarrassment, whether it is institutional or personal. That is probably the most disgusting thing I have ever heard. It is not just going to the religious things where priests were moved around to try and keep them out of the eye of the public; I am sure that happened with

some of the paedophile schoolteachers too. But what on earth goes through someone's mind when someone has done something like that and they try and cover it up? Despite having parliamentary privilege I still have to watch my mouth in this place, because I would have to retract some of the things I would say.

I am going to go to Mr Grimley's motion, and there is a lot of stuff in there that has been said a thousand times. Let us go to the national redress scheme. Of 1639 applicants, 318 have successfully claimed redress, and that is not counting the people that sued. Being a model litigant actually should be critical to a government. There are other instances where I know they have been model litigants, and to be frank it has got nothing to do with this sort of thing. But it annoys me—if they can be model litigants in winning cases against interest groups, then they can be model litigants for people that have suffered personal attacks in government institutions. They can do the right thing; it is not that hard. I was listening to Mr Barton talking about his things with the taxi industry. Unfortunately it is not just aimed at these people, it is a problem that the government look at. In fact I am pointing at both sides, really, opposition and government, because at times they will be either. It is something they need to do. They need to keep an eye on it.

When a government is formed, the government takes responsibility for the people. It governs for the people, and it provides services. Like any service provider, it has a degree of responsibility, and that responsibility is that you can go to school and not get attacked by a pervert. When these things happen and we find out down the line, then it is the government's responsibility to deal with that properly, to deal with that expeditiously and to deal with that fairly. No amount of money will make up for the harm that people received. I am deliberately not looking at the people behind me because I struggle with these things—their strength, I think, is monumental. But I get so angry at how these people were attacked for doing nothing, that these people were attacked in a government institution and that they are now struggling to get some form of redress.

Obviously I am supporting this motion, but I would like to think that an apology will be given. We have apologised for all sorts of things in this place, and if being attacked by a pervert in a government institution is not worthy of an apology, then what is? Really, what is? It needs to be done. It is only fair. Basically the government needs to comply with its own guidelines and let these people repair themselves as best they can and get further away from the hell that was supposed to be their childhood.

Sitting suspended 3.55 pm until 4.15 pm.

Dr KIEU (South Eastern Metropolitan) (16:15): I rise with a heavy heart to speak to the motion moved by Mr Grimley from Derryn Hinch's Justice Party about victims of institutional child sexual abuse. In a society such as ours we fully expect that we are able to protect against and provide redress for the most hideous and horrific of crimes, those being perpetrated against children in our society. The perpetrators should be and must be prosecuted to the full extent of the law. I myself and the Victorian government fully condemn any act of abuse against children. Those victims of child sexual abuse have to endure a lot of suffering, trauma and difficulties in life. Some people who were victims are no longer with us, and those who survived certain abuses have to learn to live with long-term effects from their childhood to their adolescence to their adulthood with all the emotional distress, with all the mental issues and physical health issues, with their personal relationships and with their intimate relationships. They can never get over and away from what happened to them early in life. And not just them—their families, their partners, their siblings and all those around them also suffer the long-term effects and the traumas that their loved one had to go through. The impact of this trauma is something that our government recognises, acknowledges and has actively sought to address.

Through the federal government's Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse we have heard absolutely horrific accounts of the abuse of children by adults who were entrusted with their care. The federal government's royal commission played a critical role in shining a light on the scope of abuse and provided a valuable platform for victims to have their stories heard, considered and listened to. In the scope of reform, we the government welcomed the release of the

royal commission's final report in December 2017 and we published our response in July 2018. In the response we committed to taking the responsibility to make sure no child would be failed again and that the needs of survivors would be prioritised going forward. Every year we continue to report on our progress on the recommendations coming out of the royal commission and have tabled and published four consecutive annual reports on the progress of our implementation of the royal commission's recommendations.

It has been excellent to see that the new federal government has already affirmed their support for the national redress scheme, with the Minister for Social Services announcing a substantial amount in grant funding to boost support services available to victims, which will go to 28 different organisations that provide redress support services to victims. The Victorian government was one of the very first states to opt in to the national redress scheme for institutional child sexual abuse. Our work in implementing the recommendations of the royal commission builds on the five-year program of reform to implement the recommendations of the landmark Victorian parliamentary inquiry into the handling of child abuse by religious and other non-government organisations, which returned the *Betrayal of Trust* report in 2013. We have implemented all 15 of the recommendations of the inquiry of 2013, including new criminal offences for the grooming of a child with intent to commit child sexual abuse and a failure to disclose offence, which places a positive obligation on adults to report to police where they have reasonable doubt and believe that a sexual offence has been committed. We also implemented as a criminal offence a failure to protect, which requires people within organisations who know of risks of child sexual abuse to remove or reduce the risks.

In 2015, furthermore, we became the first jurisdiction in Australia to completely remove the statute of limitations for civil claims founded on child abuse, through the Limitation of Actions Amendment (Child Abuse) Act 2015. This means victim-survivors are now able to sue organisations responsible for the abuse they endure regardless of how long ago the abuse took place. This was a critical reform, particularly given that many of the instances of abuse were historical and the prolonged impact that they have had on those victim-survivors. From September 2019 the Children Legislation Amendment Act 2019 commenced, allowing courts to set aside a prior judgement or settlement in respect of damages for child abuse if it is just and reasonable to do so. As recently as the end of last year further legislation was passed to support victims and their families and the loved ones of the victims of sexual offending to have greater autonomy and control over sharing their narrative as a victim impact statement.

In a society such as ours we have rights and the expectation to protect our most vulnerable, our weakest and our children, so recognising any role that governments' failings have played for victims is crucially important, as are the actions taken to ensure that such atrocities do not happen again and that Victoria's children entrusted into state care or non-government care are better, and always, protected. With that, I would like to end my contribution and to acknowledge the suffering and trauma of not just the victim-survivors but also their families and what their loved ones have had to go through as a result of what happened to them in their childhood.

Mr MELHEM (Western Metropolitan) (16:25): I also rise to speak on the motion by Mr Grimley in relation to the victims of child sexual abuse. In doing so I just want to say at the outset that first and foremost our government unequivocally condemns any act of abuse against children, and particularly that which occurred within institutional settings. These horrible things have been occurring for many decades. It is abhorrent that any child is abused, particularly in an institutional organisation, whether it is a church or a government institution. More, as a government—as members of Parliament, as members of government—when these children are under our care we owe it to them to make sure they are safe and they are not subjected to any abuse. Unfortunately these abuses have occurred and for one reason or the other were not dealt with properly over the years and the perpetrators got away with it. But the victims of these abuses have to suffer with that. Their families have to suffer, and they have to carry that throughout their lives, and that is not acceptable.

Absolutely every government, every Premier, every—I apologise even for things that were not necessarily committed under our watch but were committed 20, 30, 40, 50 or 60 years ago. I think an apology is absolutely important. My understanding is that the Premier has apologised, and we all apologise, for these horrible crimes—and I call them crimes—committed against children, innocent people, who were in our care. Obviously that is not acceptable.

As a father, I do not want that to happen to my children. I have got adult children now, but my children went to school in the early days, and I do not want their children to be subjected to the same thing. The point of this motion is to deal with how we can say to the victims that we are sorry that we let them down, that our predecessors let them down, but also—and I think it is important—they want us to make sure that it does not happen again. That is part of it as well. I think there is enough—well, never enough, I suppose, but there are a lot of changes that have occurred, particularly under the Andrews Labor government over the past eight years. Post the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse a lot of changes have been made and implemented resulting from the royal commission, and I am sure there are more to come.

I am sure we do not have a perfect system going forward, but I think it is important to recognise that a lot of work has been done in that space to make sure we address these issues over the years, in making sure victims are looked after and making sure that they are able to put their evidence and put pressure on the state to make sure we are a model litigant—absolutely. I think the first thing is we should not be going out there—and that was the biggest problem in the past, about how we said no and how we stopped people from advancing their claims. I think the first approach is, ‘We believe you’, and then we go through that. I think the Premier himself has been one of the greatest advocates in that space, and I think that is the right approach to go about that. So definitely we should be a model litigant, and my understanding is we have made a lot of changes to actually reflect that.

In the last 40 seconds I have I would just say, ‘I am with you; I believe you. I think this government will continue working with the Hinch Justice Party and other MPs—any representative—to make sure we get it right and we continuously improve our response in addressing the issues you are going through and make sure that you are given the support you need and importantly make sure that it does not happen ever again in the state of Victoria’. With that, I commend Mr Grimley for bringing this motion to the house.

Mr GRIMLEY (Western Victoria) (16:30): This motion is about two things: firstly, an apology for those children who were abused in government institutions, in particular schools; and also an assurance that the government will adhere to model litigant guidelines. Unfortunately today I have heard very little from the government in relation to these issues, apart from what Mr Melhem just said then. I would just like to point out, Mr Melhem, that the Premier has never apologised for any abuse suffered by children in government institutions. In 2006 Premier Steve Bracks apologised to children that were in Department of Human Services care for their abuse, but there has been nothing for the children that were in government schools. No apology has been made whatsoever by any Premier of any government in Victoria.

Thank you to those who have spoken on this motion, in particular Dr Bach for his personal experiences as a teacher. I do concur. As a teacher myself, I know what he is talking about. Mr Barton spoke on the personal experiences with model litigant disasters that he has gone through. I thank Mr Finn for elaborating on his personal experiences.

Most importantly, thank you to the people up there in the gallery. They have displayed incredible patience today. They have been here all day, from the morning until right now. We have had a few delays, but they have stuck thick and fast, and I thank them. A few have had to go home for various reasons, and I thank them as well. Patience is a virtue. Although there has been no commitment made today by the government in the chamber, by the sound of it, which is disappointing, if anybody can have patience, it is people like you. So regardless of what happens from today, we will continue to fight and box on and make sure that that apology does come.

Just on that note, I do note that Premier Andrews said in a press conference a few weeks ago that it was not the right time to make a statement or comment on the apology as the Queen's death was around that time and that he would have more to say in due course. Today I am hearing that he has said that he would work with victims of crime and look into the issue. Well, I have got to say: victims of crime, victim-survivors of childhood sexual abuse, do not need any more looking into the issue. All right? They just want an apology. He further went on to say that today is not the day for him to expand on that but that that day may well come.

My question is: why wait? Why are we waiting a single day longer for this apology to come? I have said it before and I will say it again: an apology costs absolutely nothing. An apology is a regretful acknowledgement of the failures of the system. That is what it is. But it means so much to victim-survivors, their families and the families of deceased victims, like I have said many, many times. I just do not understand why the delay and why the reluctance to commit to making an apology. I just do not understand why the Premier cannot at his next press conference stand in front of the people of Victoria and apologise on behalf of successive governments for the failures in looking after the children who were supposed to be taken care of in government schools. I urge the Premier to make that commitment, to make the apology, and I also urge the government to ensure that the model litigant guidelines are being adhered to. On that note, I commend the motion.

Motion agreed to.

Business of the house

NOTICES OF MOTION

Mr GRIMLEY (Western Victoria) (16:34): I move:

That the consideration of notice of motion, general business, 862, be postponed until later this day.

Motion agreed to.

Bills

ENERGY LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (TRANSITION FROM COAL) BILL 2022

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Dr RATNAM:

That the bill be now read a second time.

Ms SHING (Eastern Victoria—Minister for Water, Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Equality) (16:35): I always rise in this place to talk about the transition away from coal-fired power toward a renewable energy future with a sense of both optimism and frustration. On the one hand I am optimistic because of the work that has been undertaken by our government in introducing and indeed passing the Victorian renewable energy target. On that same hand I am also heartened by the work that has been done and continues to be done to bring us toward meeting and indeed exceeding our renewable energy targets and objectives. One of the things, though, I find difficult when I think about the work that has been done and the work that is underway is the fact that for the Greens it is never enough. The fact that it is never enough is based on a pretty narrow world view of the way in which our state operates, the way in which our communities live and work, the way in which our infrastructure functions and indeed the demands and pressures occasioned by a complete lack of coordination as it relates to a national energy policy.

I know as a regional member the work that it takes to bed down social licence, to provide support, encouragement and incentives to achieve net zero targets and indeed the work that is required to make sure that communities are in a position to realise the benefits and the outcomes that are generated by their changed behaviour and by their, and indeed our, collective acknowledgement of not just the importance of climate change—not just man-made, human-centred climate change—but the

importance of innovation in renewable energy technology, of reduction in the use of energy and indeed making sure that the future that we craft today is based on a mix of energy resources that deliver a future that provides jobs, economic growth and certainty of supply and can fit within an overall matrix of a network and of transmission that links us all up around the country.

I am heartened and I am optimistic about that work when I look at the list of what has been achieved around this state. As a regional member, as a member in this place who represents the Latrobe Valley, I look to what has happened in that particular part of the world, my particular part of the world across Eastern Victoria Region, and I see that we have come so far since the construction of those coal-fired power stations decades ago. This has not been a journey that has been all smooth sailing. In fact nothing could be further from the truth. What we saw in the development and indeed operation of these coal-fired power stations was a reliance upon a single source of energy output. Spread across the Latrobe Valley, for example, Loy Yang A and B, Yallourn and Hazelwood were the nexus of power generation for the state of Victoria and indeed for the national grid as it relates to the eastern seaboard. What we also then saw following the privatisation of the State Electricity Commission of Victoria in the 1990s was a range of consequences which caused far-reaching devastation and occasioned a ripple effect that continues today. We saw the SECV go from employing 200 apprentices every year to its complete cessation. We saw thousands of people lose their jobs. We saw people leave the Latrobe Valley, people lose money, people put their investments into enterprises that did not succeed locally because there was no consumer spending. We have seen the consequences of that set of decisions continue to play out across the valley today. And this is where the hard work of transition and development really turns to become a priority, not just in environmental terms, not just in economic terms but in social terms, in geographic terms, in terms of health and wellbeing.

When I think about the transition work that is being undertaken in the Latrobe Valley and I think about when I walked through the streets of Morwell in 2014 when the mine was on fire, when the air was thick with smoke, when the open cut glowed red, I think about the fact that governments have a lot of work to do alongside industry to make sure that economies and communities are taken care of, that environments and futures are taken care of.

Fast-forward to today; fast-forward to that hard work taking root in transition and in development. Fast-forward to more than \$2 billion invested across the Latrobe Valley region directed toward the achievement of transition and development. I will tell anybody here and I will tell anybody in the other place and indeed anybody in the community that this work continues but it is not yet done. We have construction sites and projects that have been completed. We have place-based initiatives and improvements to infrastructure. We have better health care than ever before. We have a range of opportunities through free TAFE, through vocational training and education pathways, new campuses and job opportunities, but we still have so far to go.

When we think about the way in which we need to turn our minds to a greater uptake of renewable energy, I want to also confirm that I agree wholeheartedly with the need for this approach. I agree wholeheartedly with the need to achieve our targets that face the reality that coal-fired power lacks the investment attraction appetite that was until relatively recently a key driver in investment in this sort of infrastructure globally. That has ground to a halt, and in Victoria it is grinding to a halt.

We have negotiated in relation to Yallourn power station a seven-year notice period prior to cessation of production in 2028. This is the longest notice period of anywhere in Australia. We have not done this because we wish to pay lip-service to the importance of tackling climate change. We have done this because we know full well that without proper planning a transition cannot be effective. It cannot provide the assistance, the engagement, the follow-through, the support and indeed the momentum for affected workers and their families and for the communities within which they live.

We know that Yallourn will also build a large-scale battery on site as it moves through that notice period—300 kilowatts, huge. We also know that off the coast of Gippsland, the Star of the South project, in prime position for offshore wind generation, is working through a set of conversations with

the state government and indeed the Commonwealth government to provide that better mix of energy resources, harnessing some of the cleanest and best and most reliable energy generation of all. We know also that our work to provide incentives, updates, information and encouragement to people to access solar panel rebates and solar hot-water rebates and indeed to access the best possible deals on their power through the power saving bonus are having an effect. I know as Minister for Water that the work that we have done through our water authorities—those nine catchment management authorities and 18 water corporations—to agree to, sign up to and indeed begin to implement the statement of obligation will take us to a target where by 2035 there will be 100 per cent net zero emissions. We will have achieved that target by 2035.

When I think about the overall mix of what has been achieved and I think about the work led by Minister D'Ambrosio in the other place, it has been squarely balanced between our ambition to secure effective, considered and durable actions that tackle climate change and acknowledge the reality of changes in our economic fabric and in the fabric of infrastructure and indeed the demands and requirements of our economies to secure supply.

I look at the fact that the Victorian renewable energy target was opposed by those opposite and that this work is continuing not because of them but despite them, and I think about the fact that it is all too easy to move a bill like this here today and to seek the stars and the moon without acknowledging what is happening on the ground. We are not blind to the realities of climate change, we are not blind to the impact that these volatile conditions are having on our daily life, on biodiversity, on the way in which we live and work, on access to services, on health care and on life expectancy. We are not blind to the modelling that talks to an increase in mean temperature and what that will mean at that critical 1.5-degree mark. But a bill like this says that it is either perfection or it is nothing, and perfection, if we are to take it to its logical conclusion, requires government to abandon communities who for generations have been linked to existing industries—industries such as coal-fired power generation in the Latrobe Valley, Portland and Alcoa—and the other work that continues around the state to transition to renewable energy and says that that should be enough, that that must be enough and indeed that it can be an all-or-nothing prospect, and that ignores the reality of the world in which we live.

In the Latrobe Valley and across the Gippsland Climate Change Network there is a huge appetite for solar. People are installing PV panels like never before. People are using this technology alongside batteries and domestic battery and storage opportunities to reduce their power bills, to make a positive difference in their immediate environments and indeed to share in that social licence which continues to gather pace around the state and indeed Australia and the world. We work towards an achievement of those targets with a sense of urgency, investment and care that enables us to bring people and communities along the journey with us.

I cannot stand here and accept the fact that an all-or-nothing proposal towards a transition from coal-fired power generation is responsible or appropriate when it means that we will effectively, if this bill applies itself to the reality of the world around us and to the reality of the world particularly in Eastern Victoria Region and particularly in the Latrobe Valley, overnight see hundreds more workers—direct workers, downstream workers and workers in the supply chain—displaced. I cannot stand here in good conscience and say that there is an appropriate basis within this bill, as proposed, to facilitate this transition at a pace that goes beyond the urgency with which we are already working. We have invested record amounts of money into renewable energy uptake. We have invested record amounts of time and often frustration into arguing with a very difficult Commonwealth government over the last nine years in the absence of a national energy policy. We have had numerous attempts to engage with a former government that thought that a Prime Minister who brought in a lump of coal was a good idea. We faced a steady and uphill battle around the wilful blindness of those sitting within Liberal-National ranks to the reality of the world in which we live. And yet instead of actually taking issue with the completely immovable approach taken by those in the coalition, we get a bill like this that says that we are not doing enough because it is not happening fast enough, because it is not happening overnight,

because we do not have a magical solution that fixes everything in place now, and that there are no other considerations that should be at play because the objectives of this bill trump everything else.

It requires a level of maturity to face the reality of the world in which we live now and the direction that it is heading. I would hazard a guess, and I am not sure—I hope that Dr Ratnam will correct me—but it would appear that Dr Ratnam is wearing a scarf. I have seen many of these scarfs before knitted in the colours of climate change and climate and mean temperature variations over the course of a period of time. If it is not one of those scarves, I do stand to be corrected. But what I would say is symbols like this are important, but actions are in fact more important. What you can do is talk and wear a scarf and go to the heart of the fact that government is not doing enough, but it then comes down to the fact that that scarf is not going to enable a family to feed themselves, to send their kids to school or indeed to take up the opportunities that everyone around the state deserves because of that all-or-nothing approach.

Climate change is real. Man-made climate change—absolutely real. We have just declared a third La Niña. We are looking at record-high storage levels in our water catchments, but that is not going to last. Look at what is happening in the Northern Hemisphere. The Thames has run dry. The Rhône is exposing ships and boats that sunk decades and generations ago. The Po in Italy—again, it has run dry. People in the United States are running out of water. Cartage is now the new normal. Water bills are astronomically high. Water is the new commodity that is at its highest value in an environment where prolonged drought bites hard. I do not walk away from that reality. Nobody on these benches walks away from that reality. What we do need to make sure that we do, though, is commit to steadfast action, durable action, action that fundamentally changes the way in which people use energy, the way in which people innovate to take up additional technology that reduces consumption and indeed that provides better options for uptake across a mix of energy resources. What we need to do is to continue to facilitate and to build that social licence. We are not sitting on our hands. It would be a cheap shot to suggest that we are, and yet I suspect that in bringing a bill like this we are looking at cheap shots.

A 1.2-degree Celsius increase since 1910 is no small matter. It is what has indeed prompted Minister Lily D'Ambrosio to fight as long and as hard and as loudly as she can—and that is loudly and that is with an extraordinary sense of stamina and tenacity—for a policy position joined with other jurisdictions that leans in to the reality of where we are. We need to make sure, as we take action to avoid doubling the number of very hot days in our state by the 2050s—and I know and everyone here knows that that is the reality of what we are facing—that a high-emissions scenario is not a viable option. I will say that again: a high-emissions scenario is not a viable option. But in order to actually bring our emissions down, the work is hard. The work requires incremental, careful, thorough, diligently researched and adequately resourced approaches in a framework that covers the entire state, in a framework that addresses socio-economic circumstances within various communities, particularly in rural and regional communities and particularly as it relates to transition from a highly carbon-intensive economy to one that has, as we know here in Victoria, cut emissions by almost 30 per cent since 2005 while growing our economy.

We have, and Minister D'Ambrosio is rightly proud of this on behalf of Victoria because it has been a collective effort, smashed our 2020 emissions reduction target. We have reduced emissions by almost double our initial 2020 emissions reduction target of between 15 and 20 per cent below 2005 levels. Thanks to us, in 2020 the state was responsible for fewer emissions per person than all of the other states and territories except for Tasmania and the ACT. Our emissions dropped almost 6 per cent between 2019 and 2020, and that was while the population and indeed the economy continued to grow. We know that renewable energy uptake makes sense economically, we know that it makes sense environmentally. We also know, and I know firsthand, that transition needs to be developed and delivered carefully and thoroughly and done with a process that engages with communities and delivers social licence—that social licence that is so critical to not only transition but the development of the entirety of our state.

We have delivered on climate change initiatives, including through the Climate Change Act 2017, to make it our goal to achieve net zero emissions in Victoria by 2050. We were one of the first jurisdictions in the world to take that step. This is not lip-service to the very real situation in which we find ourselves. This is not a token gesture to some idea that if we tick a box we can move on. We have walked the talk in every way as it relates to leaning in to the problems, the challenges and the realities of climate change. But to my mind the problems, the challenges and the opportunities of leaning in to climate change are multifaceted. They are not just about a scarf. They are about making sure that we have new targets around Australia, making sure that the contribution that we have made is by extension able to be adopted and implemented by other jurisdictions.

Those opposite voted against the Climate Change Act, and yet in bringing this bill it is we who have not done enough. We are doing what needs to be done to create something that lasts, to create something that indeed takes as many steps in as many ways as we possibly can to cut emissions, to bring our targets down to zero, to get beyond the momentum that we have already delivered to smash those targets further whilst also securing jobs, whilst also securing economic development for our regions and whilst looking after those who are bitten hardest by climate change. It is not the wealthy who are at the forefront of managing climate change, it is poor people. It is poor people not only in parts of the state or of Australia but indeed around the world who face those challenges in a way that means that they deserve the care and the wraparound assistance of governments to make sure that their needs are met immediately as they relate to job creation, the provision of assistance to retrofit energy-efficiency mechanisms into houses and assistance with upgrading obsolete and indeed energy-guzzling devices. Whether it is a stove, whether it is a heater, whether it is the installation of a battery or whether it is a solar panel rebate, these are the things that matter to people for whom every dollar counts and for whom every 0.1 degree of an increase will make an exponentially greater difference to their standard of living and to their prospects.

We have never walked away from that. We have never shied away from needing to do the hard work. This is not an all-or-nothing proposition that can simply be delivered with a click of the fingers and a scarf, albeit a lovely looking scarf. This is about making sure that people know why they are doing what they are doing—that people know when they can access more energy-efficient appliances for their homes, when they can access rebates to install solar, when they can see their energy bills coming down or plateauing or indeed stop arriving in their mailboxes because they no longer have energy bills. That in and of itself makes a positive contribution to achieving our net zero emissions targets.

These things do not happen in isolation. When we are delivering on the cost of living and putting downward pressure on what that looks like and when we are arguing for better everyday access to environmentally progressive technology, programs, services and indeed delivery of assistance through state and federal governments, we are also making sure that the cost of living is met head-on as a significant challenge whilst we deliver on those emissions target objectives. It is hard work, and it is not straightforward work. If it had been straightforward work, it would have been done by now. We cannot walk away from this work that we are doing, and I will not stand here and say that we should indeed walk away from those people who are yet to receive the benefit of wealth, of corporate largesse or indeed of a metropolitan life that gives them so many different options and perhaps broader options than people who live, for example, in the Latrobe Valley. We need to proceed carefully.

Victorians deserve the opportunity to walk towards a future that is an insignia here in this state of our net zero emissions commitments, which enables us to lead the way for Australia and in fact enables people to develop skills—whether it is in solar photovoltaic installation, whether it is in making wind turbines or whether it is in servicing and maintenance of renewable energy technology. We need to combine our discussions on commitments to environmental outcomes on the one hand with an understanding of the deep economic, social and community-based factors involved on the other. It is a balancing act. It is a careful balancing act. And should there be any temptation to say that we are ignoring the problem, we are not ignoring the problem.

We have set the standard for climate change targets around Australia. We are smashing those targets. The figures speak for themselves. Yes, our temperature has increased on average by 1.2 degrees Celsius since 1910. Nobody is disagreeing with that. Climate change is real. I do not know, there may be a couple of people still in this house who disagree with that; their views are not our concern. We need to make sure, though, that when we debate this bill we are not simply doing so in terms of light and shade, of black and white. Understanding the multidimensional elements of this debate are as important as achieving the outcomes that we all want. We will get to those targets, and we will get to those targets with the commitment, the social licence and the buy-in of Victorians everywhere. We will do that hand in hand with them while we secure their economic prosperity and the prosperity and livability of this state.

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS (South Eastern Metropolitan) (17:05): I rise to make some brief comments on Dr Ratnam's bill this afternoon, which seeks to ban the use of thermal coal by 2030 and seeks to mandate 100 per cent renewable energy also by the end of 2030. I make the point that the coalition will not support this bill. Dr Ratnam in her second-reading speech makes a number of very emotive statements around this bill. She talked about how:

The climate crisis is here ...

She talked about how:

Europe is experiencing a summer of deadly heatwaves ...

Rivers in France are drying up.

In India, temperatures have soared to a scorching 49 degrees ...

et cetera—very emotive language in Dr Ratnam's second-reading speech. The reality is that the measures in Dr Ratnam's bill would not change that, because the reality is that Victoria accounts for around one-third of 1 per cent of global carbon dioxide equivalent emissions. So nothing Victoria does by itself is going to change the circumstances of climate change that Dr Ratnam talked about in her speech. She refers to the need for Victoria to show leadership. What she does not identify is who she expects is going to follow that, because unless it is the large polluters—the Chinas of this world, who continue to grow and will continue to grow their carbon dioxide equivalent emissions for coming years—these measures are not going to have any impact. They are not going to have the impact that Dr Ratnam desires, but they certainly will have an impact on the households and businesses in Victoria.

I was interested to read Dr Ratnam's speech where she refers to Scotland having achieved 100 per cent renewable energy. In her speech Dr Ratnam says:

... when it comes to replacing coal with 100 per cent renewable energy, the great news is that it's absolutely achievable.

Scotland has made it, so have the ACT and Tasmania.

So I took the time to quickly google Scotland and renewable energy, and the very first news article that came up was an article from BBC Scotland from earlier in September. I have not got the date, but I think it was about 8 September. The headline is 'Scottish firms facing 200% energy bill rises "are the lucky ones"'. The article goes on to say:

Many small businesses in Scotland could see increases of up to 500% on their 2023 energy bills ...

The body which represents them said this was:

... a "grotesque situation" where firms facing 200% rises were "actually the lucky ones".

It quotes a local baker in Scotland as:

... having to find at least £79,000 for its future gas bill—a rise of £71,000.

Individual firms and trade bodies want a plan to ease the pressures.

Last week the energy regulator in Scotland set the price cap on residential bills at an increase of 80 per cent. So that is what 100 per cent renewable energy in Scotland has delivered. Price rises for households of 80 per cent, price rises for businesses, if they are lucky of 200 per cent—if they are unlucky, increases of 500 per cent.

In July I had good the fortune to spend a bit of time in Europe, where the realities of the energy situation are starting to bite. Many of the jurisdictions in Europe have gone down the path of renewable energy; they have decommissioned their nuclear power, they have decommissioned their coal power and of course now they are experiencing supply issues with gas because of the Russia-Ukraine situation. The reality for many European communities is in winter they are not going to have the energy they need. The European community, many of the cities through Germany and in the UK are absolutely furious with the situation their governments have put them in with this rush to renewable energy which has not given the security and reliability of supply that is needed. They are going to face the very real effects of that when winter arises in November and December.

The policy Dr Ratnam sets out here may sound good in a press release, may sound good in Brunswick, but the reality of the impacts is significant. Europe is starting to see it. This proposal as laid down by Dr Ratnam is frankly dangerously negligent with the impact it would have on businesses and households in Victoria, and we will not be supporting this bill.

Ms PATTEN (Northern Metropolitan)

Incorporated pursuant to order of Council of 7 September 2021:

I rise to speak to the Energy Legislation Amendment (Transition from Coal) Bill 2022.

We should not forget for a week, a day, an hour, that the most important question of our time is how to restore a safe climate now, including a fast transition to zero emissions.

I think, if we take one lesson from COVID-19, it is that we can act quickly as a community to achieve society-shifting change, where we have the collective willpower and leadership to do so.

Because COVID-19 posed a risk to human life, we acted. Climate change poses no less threat—it is existential—so we must act.

While the climate crisis is daunting, the problems and solution are known.

Burning coal and gas is the biggest contributor to the climate crisis. In Victoria, we derive two-thirds of our electricity from burning dirty brown coal, which is our state's single biggest source of climate pollution.

We need to replace it with clean, renewable energy.

This bill sets a certain end date for coal burning in Victoria of 2030 by providing that the EPA cannot issue licences for thermal coal activity after 2030.

It is an ambitious bill, but it is possible if we direct our collective will to solving this issue.

And that is what we must do if we are to act in time to limit global warming and the catastrophic weather events that entails.

We can and we must.

I commend the bill to the house.

Mr LIMBRICK (South Eastern Metropolitan) (17:10): I move:

That debate on this bill be adjourned until later this day.

Motion agreed to.

Motions

MAROONDAH HOSPITAL

Dr RATNAM (Northern Metropolitan) (17:10): I move:

That this house:

- (1) notes that Maroondah Hospital is named using the Woivurrung language and is one of very few public places in Victoria using First Nations language for naming conventions;
- (2) further notes that ‘Maroondah’ means ‘throwing’ and ‘Maroon’ means ‘leaves’;
- (3) condemns the government for its proposal to change the name of Maroondah Hospital to the Queen Elizabeth II Hospital, thus erasing First Nations language;

and calls on the government to reverse its decision and retain Woivurrung language in the naming of Maroondah Hospital.

This concerns a really disrespectful decision this government has made just in the last few days to rename a hospital—Maroondah Hospital—that uses Woivurrung First Nations language for its current name to the Queen Elizabeth II Hospital. It is one of the very few public places in Victoria that uses First Nations language for naming conventions, and this government wants to erase it, replacing it with the name of a foreign monarch who represented colonisation. This is not what treaty looks like. Astonishingly the Premier yesterday doubled down on this decision rather than if it was a mistake, admitting it and reversing it. And in response to criticism from the First Peoples’ Assembly, effectively told them to stay in their lane.

Mr Rich-Phillips: On a point of order, Acting President, I appreciate that Dr Ratnam does not have long for this motion, but my point of order is that it is actually disorderly to reflect on the monarch, as Dr Ratnam has in her comments about the monarch reflecting colonisation et cetera. I would put to you that it is actually out of order to do so.

Dr RATNAM: Acting President, I am happy to withdraw that sentence if I can proceed.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Bourman): Thank you, Dr Ratnam, but just on that, obviously we just need to be careful about how we reflect on the monarch, because it actually is in the standing orders. But if you are happy to withdraw it unreservedly, we will just go on.

Dr RATNAM: Certainly; withdrawn. In response to criticism from the First Peoples’ Assembly the Premier effectively told them to stay in their lane, saying that they had only been elected to negotiate treaties, simultaneously trying to silence First Nations voices while erasing their language and their history in favour of an institution that represents to First Nations a very traumatising history. This is extremely disrespectful. Jill Gallagher described the renaming as:

... yet another piece of our culture erased and replaced by the culture of the invaders.

Marcus Stewart, co-chair of the First Peoples’ Assembly, said:

With just a few words the government has turned the Maroondah hospital into a culturally unsafe place for our people ...

This is a stark reminder of why treaty is so critical, it can put an end to the hurtful platitudes of the powerful.

Nerita Waight, CEO of the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service, has said:

I echo the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices that have criticised the Premier for choosing to erase an Aboriginal word and name a hospital after a former Monarch of the British Empire.

Words matter, and the Premier’s choice of words are another reminder that our people don’t matter. Our lives don’t matter to the systems and people who have power in Victoria.

Treaty means listening to First Nations communities. Treaty is not something that is only going to happen sometime in the future. The treaty process is about showing respect now, listening now and

acting now. If the Premier is so prepared to be disrespectful of the voices of First Nations communities over this issue, it raises the question of what attitude the government will take—

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Bourman): Order! Dr Ratnam, if I could just get you to hold on for a second. Just for those in galleries, if you would not take pictures, thanks.

Dr RATNAM: It raises the question of what attitude the government will take to actual treaty negotiations. The outpouring of criticism of this decision—a change.org petition has over 20 000 signatures already—shows Victorians are ready and willing to stand with First Nations communities. I hope this government is too. I urge the Premier to reverse this decision: do the right thing.

Ms TAYLOR (Southern Metropolitan) (17:14): On Sunday the Premier announced that a re-elected Labor government will invest up to \$1.05 billion for a major redevelopment of the Maroondah Hospital, rebuilding the hospital from the ground up. Our eastern suburbs are growing, and the Maroondah needs to grow with them to keep providing the best possible care in state-of-the-art facilities. Construction on the project is expected to start in 2025 and create about 2500 jobs during construction.

Business interrupted pursuant to order of Council of 20 September.

Statements on reports, papers and petitions

PAROLE ELIGIBILITY

Petition

Mr LIMBRICK (South Eastern Metropolitan) (17:15): I wish to make a statement on the petition regarding the life imprisonment of the Frankston serial killer. When a libertarian stands in this place and calls for someone to spend the rest of their life in prison, you can know that they do not do it lightly, but even libertarians believe that some people are so dangerous to society that they must be separated from us forever—and if anyone fits this description, it is this person. He viciously murdered three women back in 1993—Elizabeth Stevens, Debbie Fream and Nat. At the time, when he was sentenced, we felt that there was justice. He was sentenced to three life terms without parole plus eight years for another attempted murder. Subsequently we were shocked that on appeal—for a technical reason, which to this day I feel was totally wrong—that sentence was reduced to 30 years non-parole on a life term. That 30 years ends next year. Next year Denyer will be eligible for parole, and for those that were close to this and indeed for the people of Frankston who were also shocked by what I would consider an injustice, we have been waiting, dreading this day for almost 30 years now.

I have spoken to the government repeatedly about this and asked for them to take action. For whatever reason, much to my disappointment, they have not taken any visible action that I am aware of, and it is too late in this term of Parliament to take any action now. The government appears to have chosen the course of placing complete faith in the system. I must say that I have my concerns about doing that. However, that is the course that we are on now. All I was asking of the government—and there is still time for the government to do this—is to provide some sort of reassurance to the people who were affected by this that Denyer will never kill another woman. That is all we want.

I will give my commitment that, whether I am elected or not, next year I will be paying very, very close attention to this issue, which I believe will become a large issue because there are many people interested in this. As we saw from the petition, over 5000 people signed that petition. There are many, many people who have contacted me about this; they are very concerned. Again, I reiterate that I think it is imperative that the government provide some sort of reassurance to people. All I can do personally is provide a commitment that I will continue to hound the government, either inside or outside this place, to make sure that no other woman is harmed by this man. That is all I have to say on this.

VICTORIAN PUBLIC SECTOR COMMISSION*Report 2020–21*

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS (South Eastern Metropolitan) (17:19): I rise to make a statement on the Victorian Public Sector Commission annual report 2020–21. The annual report sets out some detail on the state of the public service in Victoria—its headcount and its growth—and it talks about the values of the Victorian public sector as well, and the values the report covers are responsiveness, integrity, impartiality, accountability, respect, leadership and human rights. The area I would like to touch on today is the need for those values to be extended, if you like, to include courage. I raise courage in the context of risk management and risk avoidance. One of the things I have observed in working with the public sector in Victoria over a long period of time is the need to develop a better framework by which the VPS and its members can make decisions and can manage risk. Risk management for the public sector is a big challenge because the easiest thing for many people in the VPS to do is to avoid risk, and the best way to avoid risk is to either not make a decision or to make a decision which merely preserves the status quo. Now, that will not get the best outcomes for Victoria. We need members of the public service who are willing to make decisions that advance the state, who are willing and able to manage the risk of decision-making rather than simply avoiding the risk of decision-making by making no decision or preserving the status quo.

Last night I spoke briefly about the need for procurement reform in Victoria. One of the elements that was raised by the Australian Information Industry Association in their brief on procurement was the need to revise the suppliers code of conduct. Part of that suppliers code of conduct basically makes it impossible for public servants to engage with potential vendors who are looking to bid for government contracts. As soon as a potential contract is announced, the shutters go up and nobody can talk to each other, which is not getting the best outcomes for the state and it is not getting the best outcomes for vendors who are trying to deal with the state. What we need is a mechanism where that risk is managed. Yes, there is a risk of malfeasance in any sort of engagement, but we need to manage that risk and recognise the need to manage the risk, rather than simply trying to avoid the risk by having the shutters go up.

One of the things that really is required to create a culture and an environment where risk management and decision-making is encouraged, rather than simply risk avoidance, is to accept that from time to time the wrong decisions will be made, that from time to time the public service will get it wrong. Where that is not wilful or negligent, we need to accept that is the case—that from time to time, there will be the wrong decisions. Yes, if they are wilful and negligent, action should be taken. But if it is merely the case that a decision went bad—a decision was made and went bad—we need to accept that is the case.

We also need to look at mechanisms to incentivise our public service to make decisions. Previously there were bonus mechanisms in the employment of public servants. That was removed by this government. So now there is no incentive mechanism for public servants to go above and beyond—to make decisions, to take risks and to advance the state—and our state is the poorer for that. One of the areas I would like to see reformed in the future through the public service commission and through its values is to recognise the need to manage risk—to take decisions and manage risk—rather than simply trying to avoid risk by avoiding decision-making. We need to provide the incentives to ensure that our public servants and public sector leaders are encouraged to do so.

CORIO BAY GAS IMPORT TERMINAL*Petition*

Mr MEDDICK (Western Victoria) (17:23): Not too long ago I raised the spectre of the proposed floating gas platform as an adjournment matter in this house with the then Minister for Planning, the Honourable Richard Wynne. Nothing has changed, except that the need for action from the new minister, the Honourable Lizzie Blandthorn, is becoming more urgent. I repeat that request now: that

the minister deny the application from Viva Energy in Geelong to establish a gas transfer platform in Corio Bay in the same manner that the AGL floating gas platform application was denied. I repeat: there was a huge outcry and campaign when AGL announced their plans for a gas platform, and the government was bound, as always, to consider it on its merits. They had to consider all the impacts and balance them against the commercial wants of a large corporation and the disastrous outcomes for the environment and population should something go wrong.

The two proposals differ in many ways, not least of which are the characteristics of the location. Many visitors to the nearby area would see what at first glance looked like not much of the typical idyllic Victorian foreshore and because of the abundance of houses might think that the area was already in some sort of decline. The north of Geelong has long been unfairly maligned in this way and been treated as a dumping ground for all that the more aspirational suburbs did not want. This is because historically the area was part of Geelong's industrial heartland. But let me tell you: Geelong's north is home to the most honest, hardworking, passionate and down-to-earth Victorians, and the establishment of a gas platform next to their homes has them scared and angry.

One breach of a single LNG compartment from a ship would result in an asphyxiating flammable vapour cloud extending a minimum of 2.5 kilometres from the source, straight into the heavily populated suburbs. The smallest of sparks would ignite a blaze so fierce that all buildings and human life would be consumed in a fire that cannot be extinguished but relies upon the entire fuel source to be consumed before going out. Their lives are as important as anyone's and a large multinational has no right to put them at risk. It has been said that the foreshore there is bereft of life and also the bay, and certainly it would seem a miracle that there would be life beneath those waters after all the chemical spills that have occurred there over the years. But life there does exist. Pockets of thriving habitat provide homes for a varied population of bay dwellers that for many years were in decline, but all are making a steady comeback, and that rejuvenation should not be threatened by the potential for a disaster.

Viva Energy has an appalling record on safety. They are fined for spills into the bay with monotonous regularity. They injure workers severely at an alarming rate. So when they say they can be trusted not to cause a disaster to both the environment and human life, they simply cannot. Make no mistake, the impacts of a huge disaster from their lax measures will not just be felt by the residents of the north but by all of Geelong and all of Melbourne. This would be a catastrophe we have not seen since Coode Island, and it will be worse. Will the minister listen to the people of the north of Geelong and deny this application just as her predecessor denied the one from AGL?

LYNDOCH LIVING

Petition

Mrs McARTHUR (Western Victoria) (17:27): Today I tabled a petition with 2234 signatures calling for the removal of the board of Lyndoch Living and the appointment of an administrator. Put simply, the board has lost the confidence of the community. I asked a question in this place on 28 October 2021 alerting the minister to some of the concerns held around the governance and operations of this organisation. On 30 March this year I was assured by the minister that the department was 'engaging regularly'. Unfortunately the plight of Lyndoch has worsened.

Lyndoch Living aged care and disability service has been a beloved community asset in Warrnambool for over 65 years. It has grown to have offices located in Warrnambool, Hamilton and Terang. Lyndoch employs more than 400 staff and provides a diverse range of direct care and support services to over 3500 individual clients and residents throughout south-west Victoria. Lyndoch is not owned by the government. Let me be very clear, the petitioners are not seeking for this to become a government-run asset. The Kirner government sought to merge Lyndoch with the Warrnambool Base Hospital, a most unwelcome idea. Lyndoch is a publicly funded community asset and a much-loved one at that.

In 2018 Lyndoch became a company limited by guarantee. Board members must be sourced from a pool of general members. The board has a history of rejecting applications for membership, even from eminently qualified and motivated individuals. The rejection pile numbers over 200. There have been no general members outside of board members and executive staff. On 17 September this year, some weeks after our petition closed, the Lyndoch Living board announced that they had a transparent nomination process. This is a case of too little too late. The Lyndoch AGM—

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Bourman): You cannot take photos up there in the gallery. If you could delete whatever photo you have taken, that would be good, thanks. You can continue, Mrs McArthur.

Mrs McARTHUR: Thank you. I will start again. On 17 September this year, some weeks after the petition closed, the Lyndoch Living board announced what they term as a transparent nomination process. This is a case of too little too late. The Lyndoch AGM has been called for October—next month. Under the new system announced by the board recently, an independent panel will assess nominations from the public and make recommendations to the board to fill three newly created positions. This still leaves the existing board in place and in control of who is and is not chosen to join the board. They remain the gatekeepers.

This is not acceptable to the community, as evidenced by the more than 2200 signatures on the petition. There has been significant senior staff upheaval at Lyndoch, but accountability starts and stops with the board, and this is where the community feels that change is most needed. Under their watch the Warrnambool aged care home failed numerous safety standards in three consecutive Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission audits. Areas of non-compliance included consumer dignity and choice, personal and clinical care, services and supports for daily living, and human resources and organisational governance. The board must immediately open up general community memberships as permitted under its constitution and let these general members vote at the AGM for the new board members. This is clearly the desire of those who signed the petition. Further, the community seeks direct input and consultation with residents, staff, families and interested community members. The Lyndoch Living AGM is rapidly approaching. The proposal of the current board is unacceptable. In order to avoid chaos, the petitioners request the appointment of an administrator to oversee a transition to a new way of implementing the existing constitution. Lyndoch deserves a board who are seen to be acting for and on behalf of the community, striving for excellence not only in the provision of care but of restoring trust and confidence in the governance of this cherished community asset. So I repeat what the petition said:

The petition of certain citizens of the State of Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Council that the Board of Lyndoch Living, an aged care facility in Warrnambool started by the community, has lost the confidence of the community it serves.

MOOROOPNA SECONDARY EDUCATION

Petition

Ms LOVELL (Northern Victoria) (17:32): I rise to speak on the petition I tabled yesterday that calls on the government to ensure a high-quality and high-equity local high school in Mooroopna is opened as soon as possible. This is a petition that has come from a passionate group of parents, a group of parents who have formed a group called COOL, College of Mooroopna Learning. These are people who are disgruntled with the Andrews government's removal of choice in education in Greater Shepparton. They are not the only group that has started up. A long time ago a group called Greater Shepparton Voice 4 Choice Public Education also started up because they were so dissatisfied with the Andrews government's policy that established a single secondary college and closed our four former colleges. This has caused a lot of angst in Shepparton. Parents and students want choice. This school that they established, the Greater Shepparton Secondary College, suits some students but not all students. We are a community of over 65 000 people. We need more than one secondary school in

that community, and when that school is established it will be governed by the community under a Liberal government.

The year before the current school started out there were 2645 students in the four secondary schools in Greater Shepparton. According to the *Shepparton Education Plan* document—the government’s own document—that figure was due to increase to 3117 students by 2026. Currently today that figure is at 2088 students, so we have around 600 students that are just missing. We do not know where they have gone. In June of this year I actually did ask the government, when it was at 500 students missing, to investigate that and to report back on the reasons that these students had moved on. Had they gone to other schools? Well, we know the numbers have not gone up that greatly that they had gone to other schools. Are they being homeschooled, or are they just lost to the education system altogether? The government’s answer was no, they would not do that. They are just determined to push ahead with the single-school model.

The Liberal Party, in stark contrast to Labor, has consulted with the Greater Shepparton community. We know the Greater Shepparton community wants choice in public education. We have made an election commitment that if we are elected in November we will establish a second secondary college in Greater Shepparton, but unlike the current government, who when they did their so-called consultation gave the community a couple of choices that really were not choices—it was, ‘Keep your four schools and we’ll do nothing or have two schools and we’ll do a little bit or have a brand new school’—we will actually consult with the community on what they want that second school to look like and where they want that second school to be located. I congratulate Lea Campbell, who started this petition and who started the COOL group. I also congratulate Robyn Morrison, who heads up Greater Shepparton Voice 4 Choice Public Education for being leaders in our community, leaders amongst parents, who are advocating for this second school.

As I said, we will conduct genuine consultation with the Greater Shepparton community on what they want that school to look like and where they want that school to be located. Of course this particular survey does come out of Mooroopna, with Lea and her group, the COOL group—College of Mooroopna Learning. Mooroopna is a city of around 8500 residents. There is no wonder a group has stood up there saying, ‘We want a secondary college’, because they do not have a secondary college in that community. All the children from Mooroopna and from Tatura, which is a community of around 4700 residents that is further to the west than Mooroopna, have to travel into Shepparton every day to go to this single school, which does not suit every student.

Kialla is an area that has around 8600 residents as well, and there is a strong group in the south of Shepparton that have started up, as there is a strong group in Tatura that are also advocating for that second school to be located there. So we have Mooroopna, we have Tatura and we have the south of Shepparton. There have also been approaches from the north of Shepparton. We have groups who had already started up before the Liberal Party even made their policy announcement to say they wanted that second secondary college in their community. We will conduct genuine consultation and we will establish a second secondary college for families in Greater Shepparton.

CORIO BAY GAS IMPORT TERMINAL

Petition

Dr RATNAM (Northern Metropolitan) (17:37): I am pleased to speak today on our final day of this Parliament in support of a petition calling on the Victorian government to reject Viva Energy’s application for a gas import terminal in beautiful Corio Bay near Geelong. I want to acknowledge every single one of the 2072 people who have signed this petition, and I would also like to thank my colleague Mr Meddick for bringing this petition to Parliament.

For anyone unfamiliar with this issue, Viva Energy currently runs an oil refinery in Geelong. Now Viva Energy is proposing to expand their fossil fuel operations in the area by building a gas import terminal in Corio Bay. This would essentially be a giant floating ship bringing gas into Victoria. The

gas would be fracked gas from elsewhere in Australia or it could be Australian gas exported overseas and then reimported. So to be clear on just how ludicrous the situation is, Victoria produces gas, mostly in the Bass Strait. We send it north to Queensland, where it is largely exported. Now we are looking at closing this ridiculous loop by reimporting it back, all the while producing massive greenhouse gas emissions that are fuelling catastrophic climate change.

We only need to look around the world to see the worsening climate crisis. My heart is with the flooded people of Pakistan right now, and I am also thinking of everyone in Europe facing deadly heatwaves and drought and the US where fires are burning at a scale never seen before. Climate change is here now, and the world cannot afford any new fossil fuel projects; the International Energy Agency has made this clear and so have the world's climate scientists.

I want to thank the crew of the Geelong Renewables Not Gas campaign for taking a stand against Viva Energy's proposed gas terminal. It is not easy to go up against big fossil fuel companies. Viva's project has real safety and environmental risks for the local community. It would be pouring more fuel on the climate crisis. I call on everybody in this place to support this petition. The Labor government should have ruled this project out from the get-go. The Victorian Greens and I will continue to do everything we can inside and outside of Parliament to stop it in its tracks, and I really hope that MPs from all parties will do the same.

TRAIN NOISE POLLUTION

Petition

Dr RATNAM: I also want to make some brief remarks on the petition I tabled yesterday to reduce the noise pollution from train horns. My office has been contacted by many residents who live and work near stations and along rail corridors who are extremely frustrated by hearing horn blasts hundreds of times a week when trains leave stations and travel through level crossings. On weekends when services run 24 hours a day train blasts are sounded through the night and in the early hours of the morning. While intermittent, the noise from horns can range from 45 to 60 decibels. Noise pollution has serious effects on health and wellbeing and causes sleep disturbance and cardiovascular problems and reduces quality of life.

The national Rail Industry Safety and Standards Board has recently released a new code of practice on train horn use which seeks to minimise the use of horns and reduce their impact on the community. While horns are sounded as a safety measure, there are alternative safety measures that can be implemented to help reduce the use of horns, such as fencing along railway tracks and improved announcements, lighting and bells. Over 2500 residents have signed this position calling on the government to reduce the noise sounded by train horns by investigating alternative rail infrastructure such as fencing along railway tracks or alternative means for safety.

In response to residents' concerns the Department of Transport has created a train horn working group to identify opportunities to reduce the impact of train horn noise on the community. Residents have attempted to contact the department to seek information about the progress made on this working group but have had little luck. I encourage the Minister for Public Transport and his department to meet with residents groups and involve them in the work of the working group.

PAROLE ELIGIBILITY

Petition

Mr GRIMLEY (Western Victoria) (17:41): I rise to speak on Mr Limbrick's e-petition regarding the life imprisonment of Paul Charles Denyer. A resounding 5421 other people agree with the sentiment of keeping Denyer in jail for life, and so does Derryn Hinch's Justice Party. The petition calls on the government to ensure that the Frankston serial killer remains imprisoned for life to prevent further trauma to people impacted by his crimes through future parole hearings. Put simply, this man is a sociopathic psychopath who should never see freedom. He will never not be a risk to the

community and frankly should not be offered that option. Denyer was given a life sentence, but he appealed this and was later given a non-parole period of 30 years. The original sentencing judge, Justice Vincent, said this reflected the impact of his crimes on the entire community, especially women, not just the families and friends of the victims.

Due to his own predispositions and mental issues, Denyer took three innocent lives in cold blood, whose names we should never forget: Elizabeth Stevens, Deborah Fream and Natalie Russell. Each was innocently just going about their life before it was prematurely taken away from them without any provocation or reason. Our thoughts are with each of the victims' families and friends, including our colleague Mr Limbrick, who was Ms Russell's boyfriend at the time. You never forget events like this, and we offer our condolences but also our support to those who continue to be affected by these crimes. It is important in speaking to the motion to mention that in his police interview Denyer said, 'I just hate 'em', referring to women, as his justification for these murders. His reason for taking three innocent lives was that he did not like women. The renowned crime reporter John Silvester said of Denyer:

Once he decided to confess he wasn't begrudging or ashamed he was enthusiastic, it's like he was bragging to police about how clever he was.

I just cannot comprehend how such a person, who has still been having mental issues in prison, could even be considered for parole. Mr Limbrick and I do not agree on everything in this place, but he said no-one in Victoria could feel safe if he is released, especially women, and I wholeheartedly stand by his statement.

There is always pushback from legal figures and courts, who want to maintain their independence when there are calls like this from politicians, but unless you have been affected by these crimes it is difficult to argue. Mr Limbrick does not call for the detainment of Denyer as a politician, he calls for it as a secondary victim. It is clear to us that some people do not deserve freedom and should not be in the community, because they will never change. If you believe everyone can change, get your head out of the sand, because it is simply not true. Some people will never change. Bernie Rankin, a Frankston detective senior sergeant at the time of Denyer's crime, said he 'will never not be a risk to the community. Never'.

It is for these reasons that Denyer should not be eligible for parole—not in 2023, not ever. I commend this e-petition to the house, and I congratulate Mr Limbrick on his advocacy for Ms Russell and the families and friends of other victims as well.

Motions

CLERK OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Ms SYMES (Northern Victoria—Leader of the Government, Attorney-General, Minister for Emergency Services) (17:47): I move, by leave:

That this house notes:

- (1) the recent announcement that Mr Andrew Young will resign from the offices of Clerk of the Legislative Council and Clerk of the Parliaments and as the trusted adviser to the President and members of the Legislative Council;
- (2) that Mr Young commenced his service to the Victorian Parliament with the Legislative Council in May 2005 and has served as Clerk of the Legislative Council since July 2014 and the Clerk of the Parliaments since August 2017;

and places on record its deep appreciation of the long and valuable services rendered by him to the Parliament and the state of Victoria.

In speaking to my motion I want to take the opportunity to personally thank Andrew for his commitment to the people of this chamber, the people of Victoria and indeed the Parliament over a reasonably lengthy period of time. I know he is incredibly uncomfortable sitting there as we talk about him, and I am taking great delight in this. But I do want to draw on some characteristics that come to

mind when you think of Mr Young, and the things that come to mind are professional, knowledgeable, approachable, responsive, extremely tolerant and very fair. He has successfully navigated a range of topics in this chamber. The range of questions that he is asked, I am sure, could fill the next version of *Erskine May*.

Ms Shing interjected.

Ms SYMES: And Ms Shing is going to set you that challenge, I think, absolutely. She is ready for the next volume to devour.

But there have been plenty of challenges and a lot of unforeseen and unpredictable circumstances that he has had to lead his team through and indeed provide advice to us on, none more so than in the most recent years in relation to adapting the practices to ensure that members of this chamber and members of his team and those that come to Parliament are kept safe, particularly in the heights of the pandemic.

So to you, Mr Young, you should be rightly proud of your achievements. You have made an absolutely tremendous contribution to this Parliament and to Victoria, and I certainly wish you and your family all the best for the future.

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS (South Eastern Metropolitan) (17:50): I am pleased to rise and support this motion moved by the Leader of the Government to acknowledge Andrew Young's service to the Parliament. I well remember the appointment of Mr Young as Clerk in 2014, because prior to that appointment appointing a Clerk was a bit like the accession of a monarch. It was very much apostolic succession: a Clerk retired and everyone else took a step up. The appointment of Andrew Young broke with that tradition, and it broke with that tradition for a very good reason. It was supported obviously by the President of the day, Mr Atkinson, but it was supported by all the party leaders in the chamber because we saw in Andrew somebody who was committed to the institution of Parliament and committed to continuing the traditions of this place and improving the operation of this place. It was absolutely supported across the chamber that taking Andrew as the Clerk would be the right thing to do.

We have seen since then Andrew's commitment to this chamber but also his commitment to Westminster parliaments. Whether it is through the Australian and New Zealand Association of Clerks-at-the-Table—the association of clerks—or whether it is through the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Andrew has continually shown his commitment to the institution of Parliament. And it is something that matters. Last week we had a procedure that we have not seen for 70 years with the transition of a monarch. That really highlighted why having someone who is knowledgeable and committed to the institution is important, and in Andrew we have had that. We have also had someone who has been committed to some excellent work with the Victorian Parliamentary Former Members Association and to doing a lot of work behind the scenes working with that association. I think that is something we will see more of in the next Parliament, and it is a great credit to Andrew that that work has been supported and carried out.

I would like to thank Andrew for his wise counsel and for his willingness to engage and debate on matters of parliamentary and constitutional propriety. It has always been very worthwhile to be able to have those discussions with Andrew around what sections of the constitution mean and whether a bill is in fact a taxing bill or not or an appropriation bill or not. We have had that numerous times. The Legislative Council has been very well served by Andrew Young as Clerk. He leaves large shoes to fill, and I wish him very well for his future.

Ms TIERNEY (Western Victoria—Minister for Training and Skills, Minister for Higher Education, Minister for Agriculture) (17:52): I wish to add comments of support, congratulations and great thanks for the efforts that Andrew has brought to this chamber. I agree with Mr Rich-Phillips in that Andrew's commitment to the Westminster system and his understanding of it is unsurpassed in many ways. It has held him in very good stead in terms of providing advice to us, because he absolutely understands the genesis of the principles behind a lot of what the Westminster system represents. In

terms of modernisation of some of the processes that we have wanted to bring about in this chamber, it has been important that the integrity of those principles has been maintained at the same time as we have been able to move ahead. I greatly appreciate that, but also his frank and considered advice while I was Deputy President and in other circumstances is much appreciated. The other thing is that his rigour in undertaking research to get to the nub of what the real issue is, I think, also unsurpassed. I thank you for that.

It is interesting that Andrew comes from Western Australia. In terms of the clerks fraternity, it is quite unusual because in terms of the public service and various other things there is often mobility between Victoria and New South Wales in particular. It is interesting to see that in terms of this area of expertise Western Australia plays a significant role. We will not call it the Western Australian mafia, Andrew, but the fact of the matter is that that group of people has held many parliaments in good stead for a long time, and I am sure that they will continue to do so. But I think it is important that we do give a shout-out to Western Australia in terms of leading the way.

I also personally want to thank you, just in terms of those MPs that have shown an interest from time to time in parliamentary processes or the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. You have also provided a lot of informal support and information to us when we have wanted to know more about how to get more involved and what is available not just here in Australia but also internationally. I know that Shaun and I have attended a number of conferences and courses that have held us in good stead, not just in terms of practices here but also in terms of our general thinking towards what can be possible.

So again, thank you for your contribution. It has been amazing, it has been very solid and it has been very considered. You will be very much missed, and we look forward to seeing you around. We wish you the very best for you and your family for your future, and indeed I hope that you can make a serious contribution once you have had a bit of a rest.

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan—Minister for Commonwealth Games Legacy, Minister for Veterans) (17:56): I promise to be very brief because I know people have got some important business. At the start of this term I said that we have the best boffins in the Commonwealth, and I meant that in terms of the clerks, who have obviously been led by Andrew and his trusty assistant, Anne. But what people did not see that I saw—and one thing that I give Andrew Young credit for as an example of his character—is that in the first COVID lockdown Andrew fought passionately for his staff so that none of them would be disadvantaged, and then he joined me in making sure that in other departments no-one there would be disadvantaged either.

A conversation I had with him—and MPs will be interested in this—was about when MPs leave this place and how they have great skills and should be assets to the community, but they cannot get a job because they have been MPs. Andrew and I with the past MPs association developed with Deakin Uni a paper, and apparently it is the first paper like this and has been discussed around the Commonwealth. Andrew told me that it has had international acclaim recently, this paper. So I suggested to Andrew that he and I should go on a TED Talk tour—around the world probably—to help out the world.

I also just wanted to finally say what a fantastic privilege it was working with Andrew and accessing his knowledge—not just at the time I was President but the whole time I have been here. When I was President, I had fun with him. As the bells were ringing, I would say to him, ‘I’m going to create a precedent today, Andrew’. I would not, but I would just watch him, and he would say, ‘Can you tell me? Can you tell me what it is?’. Anyway, I am sure he will be greatly missed by all of us.

Mr LIMBRICK (South Eastern Metropolitan) (17:58): I also rise in strong support of this motion. As a new member of Parliament, Andrew was one of the first people that I met in this place, and he has been invaluable in providing guidance and education, which I think is a really important function of what his role is. It has been invaluable in proving the extent of my own ignorance of parliamentary processes, but also his education has shown me just how important the parliamentary system is and

given me a deeper appreciation of what we have in this state and throughout the Commonwealth, and it has made me really consider how we need to look at these traditions with more respect than many people do. I think that the role of the Clerk in many ways is to be a guardian of this history. He has made me very conscious of that, and for that I thank him.

Also, on a personal level, I would like to thank Mr Young for the many times he has helped me, including in times when I have been in stressful situations. I am sure that in future we may talk about this, but there have been many, many situations. I spoke to Mr Young only today about how I do not think that anyone considered that he would be out the front of Parliament trying to convince police not to arrest MPs for being on the steps of Parliament, but Mr Quilty and I received his guidance and advice in that particular situation also, regardless of the fact that it was at night and quite a stressful situation. For all those things, I thank him. I wish him all the best in the future, and I am sure he will shine no matter what path he chooses from here.

Ms PATTEN (Northern Metropolitan) (18:00): I would like to join in this motion. I stand here as someone who has put up a number of private members bills and done a number of things which I think even Mr Young would have said were precedents. When I was elected in 2014 it was probably the first time we had seen a significant number of crossbenchers in this place. It did change the balance of this place, and Andrew guided us through that. I was probably one of the few crossbenchers who was an Acting President as well, and his advice from where he was sitting was extremely welcomed. As someone that does not have the backbone of a large party behind me to guide me through the perils of the standing orders and the perils of the parliamentary processes, I have leaned heavily on Andrew and the rest of the clerks. I would just like to express my gratitude. I am looking forward to seeing Andrew without a heavy black cape.

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) (18:02): I rise to congratulate Andrew Young on the job that he has done as Clerk and to compliment him on his knowledge of this place and how it runs and for keeping some members—I will not say who—on track. I have to say there have been times when I have been mid-flight and I have looked over towards Andrew and he has been in deep conversation with the President. I have thought to myself, ‘I’m in trouble here’, and sure enough I was. I would like to compliment Andrew, because he almost got all of those right—not all, but almost all. As I say, his contribution to this place is quite substantial and significant and will be remembered for quite some time. It is really something. I take my hat off to him. He has just done a brilliant job as Clerk. It is a great personal disappointment to me that he is leaving, but I think it is a great disappointment to the house and to the Parliament that he is leaving as well.

Can I just add that Mr Rich-Phillips may have been talking about the standing orders and what is a money bill and what is not a money bill and so forth, but Andrew and I spent a fair bit of time talking football too. Many a time we would see each other in the car park, and an hour later we would still be talking about what happened in the 1974 grand final. That I will miss as well.

Andrew, I wish you all the very best for your future endeavours. I am sure whatever you turn your hand to you will be successful. I thank you on behalf of everybody, and obviously myself, for everything that you have contributed as Clerk and before that to the Victorian Parliament.

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan—Leader of the Opposition) (18:04): I am very pleased in one sense to rise to compliment Andrew on the enormous work that he did in this place but also deeply saddened to lose him. I do think we owe a great debt to Andrew. He came to this place in July 2014, and Bruce was President at the time.

Andrew, your wisdom, your good advice, your sense, your preparedness to advise and the integrity with which you have gone around these things I think cannot be faulted in any way. I really do believe that we can be very proud of the contribution that you have made, and you should take that away from this place. I did say to you earlier in the day that it is not too late to reconsider. We could still retain the Clerk; it is not too late.

One of the things I think with clerks is that it is that deep knowledge that is important and the ability to help people find a way through. Standing orders and sessional orders should not be a blockage. There should be a way through in a structured way, and Andrew has over the years been extremely thoughtful and knowledgeable in advising how to achieve things in a thoughtful and proper way. I should say that not just as Clerk here but as Clerk of the Parliaments he has done an amazing job. He is respected internationally, and I think that that is important, that this Parliament is able to project its abilities and knowledge base more broadly. I, for one, will deeply miss you here, Andrew, and I know that your contribution has been amazing. Thank you, and it is not too late.

Mr BOURMAN (Eastern Victoria) (18:06): I will make a short contribution. Eight years ago when I came to this place I thought I knew a bit about law, being an ex-copper and all that sort of thing, but I knew nothing. But for everything I needed to know I went and saw Andrew. I never really expected to be a parliamentarian—it kind of worked as planned instead of not—but Andrew and his staff took all of us new crossbenchers under their wing and looked after us. It would have been impossible to do it without the good grace, the good humour and basically just tolerating a whole lot of people that really had no great idea about how a place like this worked. It is not just standing orders and policies, procedures, conventions and all that sort of stuff, but in the time that I have been here I have grown to respect your knowledge. I do not think you have ever not been able to answer anything that I have asked either off the top of your head or within about 30 seconds of contemplation, and that is amazing given the amount we have to know here.

I heard something about characteristics before. You have got the most amazing poker face, because when stuff is going down in here you are sitting there and you are just a beacon of serenity. I do not know what you are thinking. Right now is not a good time to say it, but I do not know what you are thinking. You are just sitting there like a statue and no-one would ever guess. We are going to miss you.

Ms LOVELL (Northern Victoria) (18:08): I rise to join this motion. Like Mr Davis, I am very happy to congratulate Andrew on his service to the Parliament but very saddened to be losing Andrew. Andrew has been a bit like the Queen. The Queen was one constant in my life until just recently, and I think Andrew and I arrived in this Parliament at a very similar time. Andrew and I think Greg Mills have been the two constant staff of the Parliament that have been here for the 20 years that I have been here.

Andrew, your knowledge, as everyone has said, is just amazing, and we will certainly miss you here in the Victorian Parliament, but I am sure that everybody here joins me in wishing you all the best for whatever you choose to do in the future. I think your family will be the winner out of this; they might get to enjoy a little bit more of you. For the rest of us, we will struggle on without you. We would love you to change your mind, but we wish you all the best for the future. Personally I would like to thank you for all the assistance that you have given me as Deputy President over the past four years.

Mr ATKINSON (Eastern Metropolitan) (18:09): Andrew Young was probably one of my best decisions in so much as I had the opportunity to choose a Clerk. Certainly I had a reference panel and consulted with the leaders of the parties that were in this place at that time, and there was agreement from all that Andrew was an applicant for that position who would bring a vision to this Parliament to take us forward. At the time I do not think that we appreciated just how much we would rely on that vision and that ability to be a change maker for the better. Andrew had already served this Parliament, having done an apprenticeship in Western Australia, as Ms Tierney referred to, and came here well credentialled. Under Wayne Tunnecliffe he obviously blossomed in terms of his experience and the contribution that he was able to make in the role as an assistant clerk. Andrew was a very easy choice to make when it came to the retirement of Wayne Tunnecliffe and needing to find somebody who would continue with the good judgement and the goodwill that Wayne Tunnecliffe had brought to this place. Andrew, without a doubt, is a very talented person and a very wise person.

I do not want to repeat what others have said, but I certainly concur with the comments that have been made by various speakers in the course of this motion. But one thing I would say is that it is interesting that people are never aware of exactly the full extent of a job that people do. In Andrew's case there would be many people who simply think that this chamber is the world, that this is the job. But, as some other members have alluded to, his work has encompassed so many other facets of not just this Parliament's management but contributions to parliaments around the world. We have, through the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, a significant relationship with a number of Pacific Islands countries and broader into areas such as Kenya, Botswana and Myanmar where we have provided support. Andrew has certainly been a contributor to the programs that have enabled those parliaments to either establish—re-establish as in Fiji—or build their resources and their talent base. And through other organisations as well, as was mentioned, such as the Australia and New Zealand Association of Clerks-at-the-Table, which is a parliamentary clerks junkie sort of role—they get off on all sorts of interesting, quirky things that happen in parliament. But he has made a great contribution in that area to the Australasian Study of Parliament Group, and coming back to this Parliament, both as Clerk of this house and as Clerk of the Parliaments, he has been a significant contributor to the management of the Parliament overall.

Whilst we have three departments, they work collaboratively, and Andrew's contribution over the time that he has been the Clerk of this house has been very significant—significant in a time of change, in a time of challenge. Some of that change has been in terms of even the personnel of this place, which has been significant and could not possibly have been anticipated eight, 10 years ago. But Andrew has been able to work through that. Obviously COVID—who would have believed that we would have the sorts of challenges that have occurred as a result of that and having to think differently about the way this place should and could operate? That is really something that has been, arguably, very difficult for parliaments to do—making changes historically. They evolve, but ever so slowly, glacially, and yet in this period under Andrew's clerkship we have had significant change driven partly by his vision, which was very much part of the line of questioning at his interview for the job, and certainly by the fact that he has brought that experience from the other places where he has worked, contributed and observed back to the benefit of this Parliament.

This Parliament is much the richer, much the better, for the contribution of Andrew Young as Clerk over this past seven years or so and indeed the time before he took the main role. Can I join with those others here to extend my best wishes to you and your family for the future. I am disappointed that my choice for Clerk has decided to leave quite so early, because I think that you had much more to contribute, but no doubt your talent will be applied to the benefit of this community in other ways. Thank you for your work. Thank you to your family for the support of your work here. Thank you for the contribution that you have made to the development of so many of our staff and our organisation, and all the best, Andrew, going forward.

Dr RATNAM (Northern Metropolitan) (18:16): I too, on behalf of the Greens, my current and also former colleagues, want to join in this motion and echo the sentiments that have been shared already in this chamber this afternoon. Thank you, Mr Young—Andrew—for your service. Reflecting on your service here, I am reflecting that there is a special group of people in this place who are and must be the stewards of the integrity of this institution, and, Andrew, you and your team have certainly exemplified this at every single turn. Your work has allowed people and the Victorian people to trust and have confidence in the work that we do, and we are in a stronger position because of the work of you and your team that you have led. I just want to thank you so much for your service, your expertise, your wisdom and your counsel, shepherding us through some pretty challenging and tricky times at times but always trying to support and enhance all the work that we do. I just want to wish you all the very best on behalf of the Greens.

Dr CUMMING (Western Metropolitan) (18:17): Thank you, Andrew. Look at that smile. Mr Young and I met at Parliament kindergarten the day before I was sworn in when I had to walk straight up to Mr Young and say, 'My biggest problem is I think Derryn Hinch is going to do me a

favour and disendorse me. What's going to happen tomorrow when I get sworn in as an independent, and who should I tell?' And Andrew was absolutely delightful in helping on that particular day, the days after that and then the whole four years, every time I had a problem, giving me that honesty and integrity and making me feel calm around seeing some of the most dishonest things I have ever seen. But thank you, Mr Young. You promised me that I may get one of your black jackets for Halloween, and if there is one kicking around this place that I can use on 31 October, I really would appreciate it. And, yes, we both are not morning people. You are starting to come alive. Enjoy the rest of the time with your family.

Ms SYMES (Northern Victoria—Leader of the Government, Attorney-General, Minister for Emergency Services) (18:18): That was a lovely tribute to Andrew. And thank you to everyone who made contributions. You are still a little bit red, but that is a good thing. There is lots of love in the room for you, so thank you so much on behalf of the government once again.

I want to take the opportunity briefly to extend that goodwill to the broader Parliament in a brief summing up. To Anne Sargent—amazing. To your team, you are exceptional, and we all appreciate the hard work that you guys put in. The full team of clerks, the committee staff, the table office staff—teams of great people who have been incredible in their stewardship and wise counsel throughout the 59th Parliament.

I think at the end of every term it is always described as, 'That was a challenging Parliament', but this has to trump them. I am not letting anybody else take that mantle. The 59th Parliament has been the most challenging. To that end I do want to extend my thanks on behalf of the chamber to Greg, Chris, Patrick, Philip, Peter and Jim, amazing people who we love to see each and every sitting day. To catering, the library, security, protective service officers, maintenance, garden staff and Hansard, thank you; you all deserve the utmost thanks and respect and praise. Many of them are here when we are not, particularly Hansard, who are here after hours and are subjected to so much that they do not deserve. Thank you to them.

To all members, all the best for the coming months. Many of you have really assisted me in my role of ensuring that this place operates as effectively as possible, and we have completed a lot of really good work on behalf of Victorians. There are several members that we know will not be with us next term, and we will hear from some of them shortly—obviously Mr Rich-Phillips, Mr Ondarchie, Ms Burnett-Wake, Mr Atkinson and Mr Somyurek. Part of the reason I am hijacking the opportunity to do this now at the end of Andrew's motion and not later in the day is that we will hear from Mr Gepp and Mr Elasmarr, and I know that after I have heard from them, I will not get through what I am trying to get through now. They are exceptional humans. To the President, the ascension, the nomination of your role here was met with absolute multiparty—

A member: A standing ovation.

Ms SYMES: A standing ovation; I will take up the interjection. You have not wavered by losing any of that support from any person in this chamber, I can guarantee that. You are an exceptional person. Geppy, your contributions, your wit, your compassion—that heart—will be missed from this place. My Northern Victoria colleague, personally we will absolutely miss you. But I will absolutely be keeping in contact with you both.

Although not likely to go far, I do want to make the point that this chamber will be worse off with Ms Taylor joining the Assembly. There of course may be some people that are here today who as a result of electoral outcomes may not get to return to this place, and to those people I express my regards. This chamber is a reflection of diverse and vibrant democracy. We all come with different perspectives, values and motivations. But on the whole I know that we are all here to do our very best for Victorians, and I thank everyone for those endeavours. There are some remarkable people in this place.

With the indulgence of the chamber, to my Labor team, you are the best. I am so proud of you and everything that we have achieved. I want to see you back on this side of the chamber post November.

Motion agreed to.

The PRESIDENT: On that basis, I call the Clerk to stand. I do not want to repeat what I said to you this morning, but I believe I should repeat that you always put the integrity of Parliament first, and you should be as proud of that as we are proud of you. On behalf of everyone, thank you very much and good luck.

Members applauded.

Members

MS BURNETT-WAKE

Valedictory statement

Ms BURNETT-WAKE (Eastern Victoria) (18:23): Thank you, President, for the last time. It has been a great honour and privilege to be the first female Liberal member of Parliament to represent the residents of Eastern Victoria. I am extremely grateful to have had this opportunity, and I am proud of the work and the impact I have had. I have met many wonderful people and community groups during my time representing Eastern Victoria, and I know many of those connections made will be lifelong. I am thankful to have had tremendous support from my family and friends and a number of my colleagues too.

Firstly, to my family—my husband, Peter, and our sons, Dylan and Adrian—thank you for the love and support. You are my foundation. To my parents, my sisters and their families, thank you. To my staff, who have been on this journey with me—Julia, Taylah, Sarah, Michael and Ranj—thank you for all your contributions. I could not have done this job without the dedication, loyalty and support you all provided.

In my inaugural speech I spoke about the Liberal Party as family, and I certainly have a supportive one. Thank you to Holly Byrne, Frank Greenstein, Scott Newstead, Ben Zerbe, Michael McKinnell, Alistair Osbourne, Sarah and Ray Krummins, Aaron Violi, Gareth Ward, Steve Macarthur, Sophie Wiseman and all the other members, too many to mention, who have supported me too. I should also mention the Knox Ranges Liberal women's group—Janet Williams, Kerrie White, Jen Fenandez and others. You ladies are truly inclusive and have the best interests in seeing women elected and supporting any woman. Thank you for your support and for coming today. To all my Liberal colleagues, thank you for your support. It has been wonderful to get to know my non-Liberal colleagues in this place, as well as the parliamentary staff that work so hard to support us and keep this place running smoothly.

Although my time here has not been as long as I wished, I have been rather busy. I have talked a lot, something I have always had a bit of a reputation for, but a good quality for a politician, surely. Taylah, one of my wonderful staff members, has informed me I have spoken 95 times over 14 sitting weeks. I am informed that is more than some MPs have spoken in their entire career of several terms—no names mentioned. As well as talking in this place a lot to advocate on behalf of those I represent, whether it be debates on bills, motions or adjournments or in constituency questions, I have been actively involved in committee work. The committee work has been an unexpected highlight. I have had the privilege of working on three different inquiries: the inquiry into Victoria's criminal justice system, the inquiry into children affected by parental incarceration and most recently the inquiry into extremism in Victoria. I have learned a great deal from these inquiries, and they were all important; however, the extremism inquiry is especially timely.

I entered politics because public service and assisting those who need help have always been something I have done. I have always approached life with an attitude of 'If I can help, I will'. And if

there is a way to get a positive outcome for those that I represent, I will find a way. I am also often asked why I am in the Liberal Party. Not long after I first started, Fiona Patten asked me, 'How does a girl from Moe end up in the Liberal Party?'. It is a fair question. For me it is about true liberal values. I believe in individual freedom and free enterprise. People often like to label politicians. I have been labelled everything from a right-wing conservative to a woke, leftie, greenie social justice warrior. Neither label is accurate.

I am very much liberal in the original sense that Menzies proposed. I am a fiscally conservative, free market liberal who is socially moderate. I am happy to be labelled 'liberal' if that is what it means, but not when reactionary extremists try to appropriate the word to describe their menacing agenda of hatred, repression, exclusion, division and opposition to hard-won women's rights. What they want is not liberal, it is reactionary conservatism. I believe passionately in true representative democracy and stable governance that represents the majority and works in their best interests. We need to be compassionate and address the issues facing vulnerable minorities, but the heart of democracy is delivering the best outcomes for the most people.

Regardless of economic and social philosophy, at their best all political parties should work to prevent the theft of power by self-appointed elites and autocrats. There is a mood for change in the way politics is done and who the community want to represent them. It represents an opportunity for change and improvement but also a danger that extremist groups will be allowed to set the agenda. We can see that voters are also worried by these groups—as they should be. When voters are disappointed by all the choices offered to them, they lose faith in democracy. When people cast their vote and it makes no difference, faith in the electoral system is undermined. Some are seeking alternative ways to bring about change. We cannot afford for people to turn away from democracy, because the alternative is all too obvious—it means less freedom, less prosperity, less fairness.

A lesson from the extremism inquiry is that extremist groups share a range of toxic characteristics that do not appeal to the majority. Most have an anti-democratic, autocratic agenda. They may disguise this as restoring freedoms or correcting fabricated injustices, but their real goals are to increase the power, wealth and influence of their self-appointed leaders and to scapegoat minorities for fiscal and legal policy failings. It is their determination to subvert democracy and the law that makes them unacceptably extreme. They cannot win mainstream support legitimately, and they rely on misinformation and cult-like practices to build a following. These dishonest actors are currently thriving in an environment where sensational lies get more social media engagement than the truth. Chillingly, political events in the US have encouraged factions who now believe the time has come for their racist, nationalist, LGBTIQ-hating, pro-conversion and anti women's rights agendas to come to the fore. Their family values are far from mainstream Australian family values.

Coded language and deniable symbolism allow demagogues to incite violence and division while protecting themselves from laws intended to stop the hate speech they spread. They use obscure language and references to disguise aggressive, menacing behaviour on the internet and render it deniable. These cults try to splinter our society while, ironically, speaking of oneness and unity. Their extreme positions always serve a divide-and-conquer approach. Ordinary Victorians need to awaken to the threat from these groups. Some are involved in politics, building factions with detailed and effective plans to undermine and corrupt democracy in Victoria and Australia today. 'Infiltrate, impact, impel' is their strategy. They are seeking routes to destroy the guardrails that obstruct their autocratic goals, and it is fair to say that this is not the exclusive preserve of right-wing groups. Their goal is to target faltering democratic institutions, where a well-organised minority can effectively disenfranchise the majority, removing moderate representation options for voters and degrading faith in democratic process.

Truth, honesty and clear, unambiguous language are being destroyed by relentless engines of misinformation, both local and foreign. I do not see any signs that the war over language, our very words, being fought between the extreme left and right is subsiding. Rather, it is escalating, with ordinary people constantly being divided and forced to pick sides on fringe issues. Vulnerable groups

are being used as political footballs as each side indulges in Orwellian propaganda. These groups and practical, moderate policy are victims of this lurch towards extremes that leaves voters frustrated by dogmatic attacks on freedom, from both sides.

Politics is a transactional numbers game. If you are in a political party, you need the numbers to get preselected, after which you need the numbers to get elected. Then you need the numbers to pass bills and motions. If we do not have a representative Parliament but groupings who have extreme views and hold the numbers, it means they will be able to set the legislative agenda without democratic checks and balances. That is concerning. I have previously stood in this chamber and said, 'Change is on the horizon', and it is. We must be vigilant, and we must ensure that our democracy is upheld.

Despite all the concerns, I want to remain positive in the face of distressing events, both local and global. I believed that becoming involved in politics was the right way to be most effective and to do the most good, not in service of some abstract cause or idea or for the bidding of others but directly for the benefit of the eastern region, Victoria and Australia.

Moving forward I am not sure if I will return to politics. That is yet to be determined. However, what I do know is that I will carry on public service in some form. I will pick up my volunteering. I will be active in my local community. I will try to do good wherever I can. I look back at my time here with great pride and fondness for the people I have met and knowing just how brutal and challenging but rewarding stepping into the arena of politics can be.

Members applauded.

MR ATKINSON

Valedictory statement

Mr ATKINSON (Eastern Metropolitan) (18:35): It is an extraordinary privilege and honour to be elected to this place and to represent fellow citizens. In many respects we are a jury representing those citizens, a jury which is invested with their trust and their hopes. Indeed in my view the Parliament is more important for those who are not here in this place than for those who are, those who have the opportunity, the rare opportunity, to give voice and effect to the aspirations of our communities. In most cases those of us in this place are far less qualified and have less knowledge or lived experience than those who are outside, those people that we represent.

So Parliament is not a place we should see as a platform for power and ambition for politicians or their parties. Indeed it is a privilege that we have that comes with significant responsibilities. The Parliament is a safeguard of our democracy and the rule of law and the guarantee of the equality, security and freedoms of our citizens. When we enter the Parliament, through the front door there is a quote from the book of Proverbs in the Christian Bible, 'Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety'. It is an important reminder to us of the value of the diverse knowledge and experience of the members of this place, their responsiveness to the advice of others outside the Parliament and to the expression of the citizens in choosing their representatives and their governments.

It is an arrogant and foolish government or alternative party that believes that they have all the answers and an exclusive mandate. Indeed former Speaker Telmo Languiller used to say there are two mandates in the Parliament: one for the government to pursue its manifesto and the other for the opposition—and that might well be extended to the minor parties as well—to question the government's decisions and actions and to propose alternative propositions. I am dismayed at the diminished accountability of governments to their parliaments and to the people who have entrusted them to use that power wisely and even cautiously.

Tolerance and respect are not a one-way street, and the right to free speech is not exclusive to some citizens or organisations but rather to all citizens and organisations in a strong and robust democracy. The crucial responsibility to Parliament is to protect the right of free speech, yet all too often we are

seeing instances of intolerance, bullying and a lack of respect for each other, even in this place. How many times do we see that children who come in school groups to this place are horrified to see the behaviour of members of Parliament; we are supposed to provide the exemplar of how people should behave. We are the ones who complain about bullying, we are the ones who complain about intolerance, and yet so often the behaviour in this place can be intimidatory.

Can I indicate that I think that the importance of Parliament is certainly to nurture and empower our citizens and our communities and to encourage and inspire young Victorians who will be our future leaders. We have a very significant and onerous responsibility to protect the vulnerable. My filter has always been on the future. I guess at my age in particular I reflect always on what the impact is of the decisions that I and we make on our children and our grandchildren. I often say to audiences of people about my age, ‘You know, governments can make decisions, and we can pinch you and pull you a little bit, but by and large the die is cast on your lives and it won’t change a massive amount’. But the decisions we make have such an impact on our children and grandchildren going forward. I am conscious, as some people have spoken about in this place and certainly I agree, of the way we are depleting the resources of this world and our country—that we are not actually considering sufficiently the future needs of those future generations, that we are brutal at times in the way we approach the management of our environment and that we do not recognise some of the issues of things that have actually protected and enriched our lives but on a basis where we are actually borrowing from our children, and I think that we need to do better.

Indeed I have certainly believed in this place, going back to that tolerance factor, that it is really important to listen to other people. In my 30 years I would hope that the public record would show and affirm that I have never sought to ridicule other people in this place. I think that I have tried to set a standard in the way I have behaved in this place, and I have tried to make sure that my focus is on contesting ideas, not actually trying to destroy other people, to bully other people. It is important to me to listen to what other people have to say, because I have found throughout my life that by listening to others I have actually come to better decisions. Our governments cannot afford to be arrogant and foolish in dismissing the views of other people, the views of other parties. No-one comes to this place with all the answers, and whilst we operate in an adversarial system, that does not mean that we ought to simply trample all over the views of others, and more importantly, we should not play the man—we should not be trying to ridicule somebody for the ideas that they bring to this place. Because what is really crucial in this place is free speech—the protection of free speech; making sure that we uphold the rule of law, not just in enacting those laws but in fact in the way we practise our own behaviours and the way we set examples to others.

I am asked from time to time, as no doubt many of you are, what is the best thing about being a member of Parliament. What I always answer is: the inspiring people that I meet. I have had the good fortune of meeting kings and queens, including Her Majesty Elizabeth II on several occasions; presidents and prime ministers from around the world; movie stars—some of whom I did not even know who they were—and sports stars, who I had more familiarity with. But I met these famous people, and I say to those who ask me what I find inspiring or what I have liked most about being a member of Parliament that it is the inspiring people I met in our communities: the women or men on a canteen at a local football ground who worked there for 20, 30, 50 years; the people who have been school crossing supervisors; the people who have done Meals on Wheels; the people who support palliative care programs—inspiring people, and also young people, the young people who are our future leaders.

Throughout my period in this place of three decades, I brought in school captains from my electorate every year, bar the two years of COVID, sadly. I have brought them in and shown them this place and talked to them, and in fact by good grace a number of members around this place from all parties have had the opportunity to meet with some of my school captains and talk to them as we have moved around the building. And can I say that when I meet those young people I am encouraged about the future. I have no doubt about their leadership, about their commitment to a better world and about their recognition of some of the really important issues that are ahead of us and that we must confront and

their impatience with us for not addressing those issues more effectively and not addressing those issues more quickly, particularly things like climate change—contentious for some, not for me.

The climate has been changing since the day the world started, but there are real issues now in how we are compounding some of that change and certainly for us in terms of, if nothing else, what we need to do to mitigate some of the impacts of that change—in this country obviously bushfires and droughts—leading on to things that we have got to consider, like food security.

One of the great privileges that I have had has been working with multicultural communities. It has been a passion. Those communities have contributed so much to this state and its advancement. I get annoyed, really annoyed, at how patronising some people are, some members of Parliament are, let alone people in the community, to those multicultural communities. So many people talk about their food and their festivals and think, 'I've ticked the boxes. I've recognised our multicultural communities' contribution'. Hey, that does not even go close. What we really need to appreciate in these multicultural communities is the extraordinary diversity of those communities, the knowledge, the experience and the ideas that they bring, the enterprise that they bring. People from multicultural communities are far more likely to start a new business than Australians, probably because the biggest decision of their life was actually to leave their home country to come here, and once you have made that sort of a decision, starting a business is a cinch. But those communities give us so much. I know there are a number of members in this place, particularly Mr Tien Kieu, who I have shared many platforms with in multicultural communities, and I know that he and I particularly appreciate the great possibilities for these communities to take our state and our country forward. It is not just about the food. It is not just about the fashion. It is not just about the festivals. It is about the real strength that they bring in enriching our community.

When I came to this place in 1992 the state debt was a little over \$30 billion, and we were really worried about it. Today the state debt is six times that and headed north. The excuse is COVID. To some extent, yes, there is some legitimacy in that argument, but really there has been too much ignorance in terms of what we are doing in this state in our spending. The reality is that at \$170 billion already in the forward estimates, this state cannot possibly pay back that debt. It is not possible with the taxes that we have. The federal government might be able to recover the excessive outlays that were made over the last couple of years, again in the shadow of COVID, because of the taxes that are available to them and the growth of the economy, but that is simply not possible for the state government when you look at the range of taxes that we have available. So going forward our state governments need to be very careful about their spending and about the sorts of projects that they manage and make sure that that management is a lot tighter than it has been in recent times, because the challenges that face this state are significant. Economic growth is stifled where that debt is excessive. Opportunities for young people are stifled where that debt is excessive. The challenges of things like climate change have price tags, and the ability to meet those costs, the ability to pay those prices, is restricted if the debt is excessive. It is extraordinary to think back to the concerns that we had about a \$30 billion debt, and the way that was addressed was by the sale of some enterprises in particular. Those opportunities are not available to us today.

I have had a remarkable career in this place, and I have worked with some extraordinary people. There are many people who have been with me on this journey over the course of that 30 years who have certainly enriched my life, who have taught me a lot and who have given me a perspective on life that perhaps I would not otherwise have had but that I have certainly appreciated. I thank all of the people who work in this place, the staff of this Parliament—I will not go through names because the danger is I could leave people out, and they all know who they are anyway—and certainly all of those people who have supported us in this chamber and beyond in this Parliament; my staff in my electorate office over that 30 years; people in community organisations; people that I have worked with in so many different organisations as an adjunct to my parliamentary career; obviously family and friends, who have underpinned the work that I have done and to whom I owe a great debt of gratitude; and of course my colleagues in the Liberal Party.

I join with Cathrine Burnett-Wake in some of the remarks that she has made, because what I have appreciated is those people who have aligned with the values that I have seen as important as a Liberal and that I think my community has valued in my party's philosophy. I know at times there are people in the Liberal Party who get into all sorts of strife, and you can tell when they are in strife because they evoke the ghost of Menzies. Most of those people do not really read their history very well, because as Cathrine Burnett-Wake pointed out, Menzies brought together two components, conservatives and Liberals, and melded them into an effective party. There are those people today who dismiss the Liberals and who believe that the way forward is purely conservative. That is not the way forward. We need as a party to be responsive to changing community needs and aspirations. The Liberal Party has been very good at that for more than five decades, back to the 1940s in fact, so it is considerably more than five decades—maths is not my strong suit. But the party has always been responsive, and it has therefore been electorally successful. It is important that it remains a broad-based church, that it remains responsive to a community, that it remains socially progressive and economically responsible, which goes to the points that I made about state debt here in particular.

There are many challenges going forward: energy, housing for young people, transport—changing circumstances there, obviously the environment and so forth. Future parliaments are going to continue to have challenges. Whilst Jaclyn Symes as the Leader of the Government has indicated this was probably one of the most, if not the most, challenging parliaments, no doubt the future will bring its own suite of challenges, and some of them may well be greater than those we have faced.

I wish those who follow us every success and every wisdom in the decisions they make to ensure that this state continues to be one of the great places in the world to live, to work, to invest, to raise a family, to in fact create the sort of future that we want our children and grandchildren to have and the sort of future that those people from multicultural communities came to this country to achieve. I thank you all for the extraordinary privilege that I have had to serve in this place.

Members applauded.

MR RICH-PHILLIPS

Valedictory statement

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS (South Eastern Metropolitan) (18:59): When I first stood in this place 23 years ago I did not imagine the extraordinary journey that was to follow. Being a member of Parliament is not merely a job; it is a vocation, a unique vocation. It is a rare privilege that requires an all-encompassing commitment that spans the electorate, that spans the Parliament, and for most of us spans the party. In return, though, it offers extraordinary opportunities to meet and engage with people across the state from all walks of life on a whole range of issues and to participate in the most important events and decisions of the day, and of course no two days are ever alike.

It has been an incredible honour for me to serve in the Legislative Council, representing the Eumemmering Province and South Eastern Metropolitan Region, and to serve 17 years on the frontbench as a minister, shadow minister, Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party and Deputy Leader of the Opposition. I have had the privilege of serving in six parliaments, and all of them have been unique; all have had different political make-ups and different characters based on who was here. This Parliament is very different to the last Parliament, and no doubt the next Parliament will be very different again.

My journey has included serving with 130 other members of the Legislative Council: six Liberal leaders, six presidents, six premiers, five governors and three clerks, and now unexpectedly serving under two sovereigns. In my time here we have dealt with 1682 bills and the state budget has grown from \$23 billion to \$99 billion last year. For me policy has always been more interesting than just the politics, and I have been very fortunate to have been involved in areas of interest to me, such as industry policy, treasury, finance and governance.

I was fortunate to spend my first 11 years here on the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee, and I cannot think of a better learning ground to understand how government really works. So much of the good work of parliamentary committees goes unnoticed. I have been privileged to chair multiple select committees and standing committees in the Legislative Council, including the Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration in the 56th Parliament, which was I think the closest we have ever come to having a genuine public accounts committee, and it was a testament to that Parliament that it saw value in putting together a structure like that. As chairman of the select committee into the port of Melbourne sale, I was proud that that committee's work actually led to significant legislative change which produced better outcomes for port users, better outcomes for regional Victorians and ultimately a better budget bottom line.

The majority of my time in this place, 19 of 23 years, has been in opposition, which is challenging in its own way and often frustrating. However, serving as deputy leader alongside then upper house opposition leader Mary Wooldridge and working closely with my good friends Ed O'Donohue and Georgie Crozier was one of the rare highlights of being in opposition. But of course serving as a minister is the ultimate opportunity to make a difference for Victorians, and I am proud to have served in the cabinets of premiers Ted Baillieu and Denis Napthine in the portfolios of Assistant Treasurer, which was very much an internal government-focused portfolio, and also the externally focused portfolios of technology and aviation industry.

As Assistant Treasurer I led a team that delivered the rewrite of the WorkCover legislation, which was based on the recommendation of the Hanks review. We withdrew Victoria from national OH&S harmonisation. If there was ever an example of where harmonisation had gone wrong, where a model required everyone to drop to the lowest common denominator rather than rise to best practice, it was OH&S harmonisation, and we stand by our decision to take Victoria out of that. We twice lowered premiums for WorkCover and we saved Victorian businesses over \$340 million while keeping the scheme solidly in the black.

I was pleased to be Victoria's Treasury rep on the ministerial council that set up the NDIS. It was an interesting ministerial council. It had Treasury reps from each jurisdiction and it had community services reps from each jurisdiction. It became very clear early in that process that while there were a lot of opportunities for Victoria there were also a number of risks to the WorkCover scheme and to the TAC scheme, which both ran similar supported care schemes to what NDIS now does. In response to that we were very successful in securing the headquarters of the National Disability Insurance Agency to go to Geelong, where we had announced WorkCover would go alongside the TAC, and we worked with Deakin University to set up a centre of insurance excellence to ensure that those three agencies could collaborate, that we could build a skills base and importantly that we could manage the risk to TAC and WorkCover. We modernised and simplified the procurement framework to prioritise value for money for government and to minimise costs for vendors, and this is something which continues to need reform to this day. Working with Kim Wells, Robert Clark and Michael O'Brien, we stabilised what at the time was a deteriorating budget position and went on to deliver four surplus budgets and what turned out to be quite complex tax reform in introducing the fire services property levy.

Soon after coming to government we received a series of Ombudsman's and Auditor-General's reports which were highly critical of the way in which a number of large-scale ICT projects had been undertaken. As Minister for Technology it fell to me and my team to put in place a new platform, which we did through a whole-of-government ICT strategy which reformed the way in which government purchased ICT, with a focus on buying scalable off-the-shelf products rather than building massive bespoke projects from scratch.

We introduced the first data access policy. We recognised that government holds enormous volumes of data and does very little with it, but it is actually very valuable, so we undertook reform of the intellectual property framework in the state. We launched the DataVic access policy to require

agencies to release their data—make it available to other agencies and make it available to the private sector—so that we could have innovation and better policy outcomes.

At the time, skills in technology were in short supply, and we implemented a comprehensive policy to attract and retain skilled ICT workers, both school leavers and mature-age people who were seeking a career change. On the industry development front we facilitated more than 5500 jobs and \$1.1 billion of private sector investment in ICT, in biotech and in the small tech sector. Through that period Victoria was rated as the national leader in digital government.

One of my great passions is the aviation industry, and I was privileged to be Minister responsible for the Aviation Industry in the Liberal government. Few people know that Victoria is actually home to the largest Boeing factory outside North America, and in Gippsland we have had Mahindra GippsAero building the only certified Australian-designed aircraft in the country. In my own electorate we have got Marand and RUAG, which build critical components for the joint strike fighter. So we have got a world-class aerospace industry, and it was my brief as minister to work with the aerospace industry and the aviation industry to develop export opportunities and to attract investment. Some of that related to manufacturing and a lot of it related to pilot training, attracting international contracts to Victoria. One of the last projects we worked on, which I was particularly proud of, was the AIR 5428 Australian Defence Force pilot training contract, which was secured just after the change of government on the back of work that we had done through our period of government to secure it for Sale. It was a particularly competitive project. We worked with Lockheed Martin and Pilatus to get it to Victoria. The competitor was Tamworth, which is in the electorate of the then Deputy Prime Minister, Barnaby Joyce; we managed to wrest it away from New South Wales and get it to Victoria, which was a great outcome.

A lot of that work was underpinned by our government's Regional Aviation Fund, with which we supported the upgrade of 22 regional airports across Victoria. It was a program which demonstrated that with a small amount of money you can leverage a lot of contributions in kind from local communities. With that small amount of money we were able to see some projects brought forward and a lot of those projects delivered much earlier than otherwise would have been the case. One of my fondest memories of that program is actually from a weekend when I ended up in Cobden, in the south-west of the state, in Mrs McArthur's electorate. I went into Cobden on Saturday morning, and they were holding a sausage sizzle. The sausage sizzle was in fact to raise funds to fund the sealing of the runway at their local airport, which was used by the air ambulance and aerial ag operators. Having bought a sausage, I was actually without a hint of irony able to say to them, 'I'm from the government and I'm here to help'. Within 12 months they had the grant and they had finished the sealing of the runway, which was years earlier than would have been possible had they been relying on just raising funds through the sausage sizzle.

Public life is a noble and worthwhile profession, yet it is also deeply misunderstood by a fairly cynical electorate. The Australian National University has done research that shows that in 1981 around 56 per cent of Australians had trust in our parliamentary system. By 2018 that had fallen to only 28 per cent. Parliament is central to our democracy, and I have always believed that my most important role, without doubt, has been as a parliamentarian. I have had the opportunity to serve in this place alongside some great parliamentarians, people who truly respected and understood the constitution, the conventions and practices of this place, why they are important and how to make them work—people like Bill Baxter, Roger Hallam, Philip Davis, Gavin Jennings and Greg Barber, who all stand out for their commitment as parliamentarians—parliamentarians who also understood that Parliament should involve genuine debate, not just proforma speeches, and parliamentarians who knew how to work both on and off the record and the fact that conversation out there in the corridor behind the President's chair could be as effective at getting outcomes as what happens in this place.

As members of Parliament we make decisions for all Victorians and we have a duty to all Victorians, not just those in our own electorates. Lawyers understand the concept of being an officer of the court—that is, having a duty to support the judicial system and uphold the judicial system as well as

representing their clients. As parliamentarians we also have a duty to protect and uphold the supremacy of the Parliament ahead of partisan or political convenience, and this is a fundamental duty. It is easy for parties and governments of all colours to want to circumvent, sidestep or dismiss parliamentary convention, oversight or scrutiny for their own convenience. As parliamentarians we have a duty to Parliament to ensure that does not happen—a duty which transcends responsibility to our party, a duty which must be upheld if trust in the parliamentary system is to improve. Too often as members of Parliament we fixate on the next election, either winning government or staying in government, yet none of us was elected to simply campaign for the subsequent election. We were elected to do our duty in the four years we are in this place to deal with the issues by our best judgement, and I think we need to invest more time in looking at the issues of the day on the merits of the day rather than looking at them through a filter of what it means for the next election.

One of the huge challenges we face as members of the Victorian Parliament is the decline in community interest, knowledge and engagement in the state political process. When I first arrived here in 1999 that trend had already started. Media reporting of state politics was already largely a by-line compared with the coverage of the national sphere. There were, however, at least authoritative news sources. We had two daily newspapers. We had three commercial channels and the ABC. If you wanted to see the news, you had to watch it at 6 o'clock. So there was a fairly narrowly defined set of sources of news. But of course the rise of social media over the last 15 years has changed that inexorably. The media market is now fragmented into thousands of different channels, and the news is what you want it to be. At the same time, mainstream media resources have been hollowed out in an effort to compete. So capturing the attention of the Victorian community on the serious issues we face is more challenging than ever, and as we increasingly resort to social media and chase the tweet or the 6-second TikTok video it is easy to resort to dumbed-down messages; however, as parliamentarians we need to put substance over form for the long-term interests of this state.

Over this journey I have had the privilege of working with so many people committed to the service of Victoria. In particular I acknowledge and thank the staff of the Department of Treasury and Finance; the then Department of State Development, Business and Innovation; WorkCover; the TAC; the Emergency Services Superannuation Scheme; Cenitex; and the other agencies I worked so closely with as a minister. The Parliament of Victoria has outstanding professional staff, from the chamber departments to the support departments to those that run, maintain and secure this building. I particularly highlight the work of the clerks, the table and the chamber staff, who are the custodians of the traditions and the privileges of this house, and I thank them sincerely for all their assistance over the last 23 years. I would like to thank the people of Eumemmerring Province and the South Eastern Metropolitan Region for electing me five times and for the privilege they have given me in being able to represent them in Parliament. It has been enormously rewarding to represent an area that over time has spanned from Springvale to Frankston to Bunyip to Warburton to Reefton and over that time to work with so many local communities on a variety of local issues.

I thank the Liberal Party for the opportunity it gave me as a 25-year-old to serve in this Parliament and later to serve as a minister and as deputy leader. Without the Liberal Party it would not have been possible for me to be a member of Parliament. I would like to thank my electorate chairmen and electorate council and the thousands of party volunteers who have supported me over the years. In particular I thank the preselectors who put their faith in a 25-year-old candidate in 1999. I hope that I have repaid that faith.

Nothing is achieved alone, and I would like to thank my electorate and ministerial staff for their incredible loyalty, dedication and hard work. When I was first elected MLCs only had one staffer, and for me that was Janet Cummings. For 16 years, until she died, Janet was a wise, capable and loyal office manager and a friend who I miss to this day. Later Janet was joined by Susanne LaFontaine, Yvonne Ashton, Colleen Holland and Sammy Analytis, each of whom gave dedicated service, and I thank them all. For the last six years Sophie Biviano has been a mainstay of the office, bringing

commitment and tenacity, now ably supported by Laura Hammond. I thank them both for their continuing hard work.

I thank my ministerial team: my chiefs of staff, Nick and Peter; Duncan, Andrew, Lisa, Arti, Christine and Courtney, who worked in government and continues to do the hard yards in opposition; and Brian Fitzpatrick, who made the jump from opposition to adviser to chief of staff—I could not have had anyone better watching my back and helping deliver our agenda. Neil Lucas, a former member, has been a friend and mentor for two decades.

Tim, Daniel, Erhan and Simon have all been good friends and trusted sounding boards. Cameron has been there from day one, personally and professionally. I thank each of them. I thank Ann for her perseverance and unwavering support.

I owe great thanks to my family. My father, Ken, and my late mother, Joy, provided endless love and instilled in me the values I have carried through this journey. It was Mum who encouraged me to first become active in the Liberal Party. My sister Susan was my strongest supporter from day one of the preselection campaign and with Doug has supported me every step of the way.

Having entered Parliament as the youngest ever member of this place, I have now spent almost half my entire life as a member of the Legislative Council. We were reminded last week that no period of service, no matter how great or how long, lasts forever, and so it is for all of us here. I have always been mindful of that fact, and it is a rare privilege for members to choose the time of their own leaving. The splendour of this chamber is as thrilling to me today as it was 23 years ago. It has been the privilege of my life to serve Victoria as a member of Parliament and as a minister. It is a privilege I will never forget, and I thank everyone who has made it possible.

Members applauded.

MR GEPP

Valedictory statement

Mr GEPP (Northern Victoria) (19:20): Following the previous speakers, it is an honour to rise in this place. Mr Rich-Phillips is absolutely right: if ever you think that this is a forever gig, I invite you all, if you have not, to go and have look at the transition plan that was sent out by Parliament a few weeks ago and just have a read through that and the dates. It is very, very blunt about when you return your pass, when you return your computer, when you return your car and when you are turned into a pumpkin. It is absolutely true, Mr Rich-Phillips; I could not concur any more with you that this is not a forever gig.

I think it is fitting that as the 2022 footy season concludes its business on Saturday this contribution also draws the curtain on my six footy seasons in this place. I want to make some personal reflections about my time as an MP, and of course I will also say the appropriate thankyou. In terms of the footy analogy, it is not lost on me that as many of us rejoiced in that one-point victory of the Sydney Swans on the weekend and the demise of Collingwood, there will be some that will not be too upset to see me depart this show as well. I was not sure, when Mr Atkinson was talking about standards in this place, if he was looking at me. If I have offended anyone, I will not say I did not mean it, because I think I probably did at the time, but I hope you did not take it personally.

Others who are leaving this place and their role as an MP have described it as their life's honour. Whilst I understand that sentiment, it is not one, I confess, that has been true for me in terms of being my life's honour. That is not to diminish in any way, shape or form the role that the Parliament or we as individual MPs play. It has been a magnificent highlight of my professional career, one of the many highlights in my professional career in the labour movement, and it has certainly been an honour to represent the great Australian Labor Party and to serve the people of Northern Victoria. You have to pinch yourself on some occasions to believe that you are in a particular room or a particular place or with a particular person or group of people or that you have the floor talking about the most remarkable

issues. It can be breathtaking, as we know, and without a doubt it is a great privilege that only 128 Victorians get to experience every four years. I am sure I probably have not met the same array of people that Mr Atkinson mentioned, but I did meet one of the great presidents of our time, I think, Peggy O'Neal, last Friday. I actually had breakfast with Peggy along with Ms Watt. It does put you in touch with some people that you do admire, and I absolutely agree with him that it is a great privilege to be able to do that. I have never seen it as the greatest honour of my life because I see myself as part of a whole moving wheel of people who make a contribution—whether it is the clerks, whether it is the table office, whether it is the security people, whether it is the IT people, whoever it might happen to be, whether it is our constituents, whether it is the staff, the ministerial office—and we all play a role in this very complex, very intriguing and very interesting dynamic that is the Parliament of Victoria. I am pleased to have been able to play a part, absolutely, and I will cherish that.

To the people of the Parliament, the staff—I have been around the public sector all my life. We talked about how Mr Quilty and I are alumni from the tax office. 1981 is when I started in the tax office. I have been around the public service and public servants all of my life, and I have got to say—and I think I said it yesterday when I tabled the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulation report—how blessed we are to have people of such outstanding quality to provide the service. People get to see the theatre and the show that we put on here from time to time, but it is the classic of the duck on the water with the legs underwater, furiously going. To all of you—I will not name you individually—you are marvellous people, and we owe you a debt of gratitude.

On a professional level, I think the thing that I most cherish in my time in the labour movement is my time with my unions. I am a trade unionist, and I spoke about that when I first came into this place. I joined the mighty CPSU. It was not the CPSU then; it went through amalgamation. I joined the union when I first started in the tax office, and that union gave me the greatest honour in my professional life when they made me a life member. For people who come from trade union backgrounds, that is everything. That is the pinnacle. In fact the organiser who signed me up on my first day in the tax office went on to become—my wife, Sue, is in the gallery—our best man. So those friendships run deep and for a long time.

After leaving the CPSU, I joined the Finance Sector Union. I had a variety of jobs there. It was a bit of a hodgepodge really. I am not sure if it really set me up for Parliament, but I did everything from running their policy and political program to their front-end member engagement operations and administration. But I was popular back then, particularly in the ALP, because I actually was very instrumental in affiliating both the CPSU and the FSU to the Labor Party. Particularly in the left—people sort of scratch their head, 'Really? A white-collar union such as the CPSU', and then I buttered up with the FSU. Certainly the synergy of the work that I did in those days did carry on into this place.

But it was not those unions that got me here, and I know this bloke will be watching, because the person who is responsible is a fellow by the name of Shaun Reardon. Shaun was the assistant secretary of the CFMEU at the time. I was at home on the back verandah, having a cup of coffee on a Sunday morning, and Sean's number popped up on the phone. I said, 'Oh, that's a bit interesting. What does Shaun want on a Sunday? What on earth could be going on at the CFMEU?'. And I had no clue what he was about to say, but he said that there was a vacancy about to come up in Parliament, that the CFMEU wanted direct representation in the Parliament and that they wanted me to be their dog in the fight. For those of you that know Shaun, Shaun is a very, very difficult man to say no to. But he is a beautiful man. I walked inside, and I must have had a look of fear on my face. I do not know, but Sue said, 'Gee, what's happened?'. I said, 'I think I just agreed to try and go into Parliament on behalf of the CFMEU'. And life changed for a while after that. Shaun has been nothing but absolutely supportive of me ever since that phone call, and he and his wife, Brenda, are very, very dear friends of Sue and me to this day. I love you, mate. Thank you.

My next call was to my other great mate in the union movement—or one of my other great mates—the state secretary of the FSU, Darren Martin. Funnily enough, Darren is now working for the

CFMEU. But like Shaun, Darren could not be any more supportive than he has been over the journey, and I am thrilled to say that Darren and Jane remain lifelong friends of Sue and me.

This government—I had no clue when I came into this place about the reform. You know, when you are not in this place you hear people talk about the government and often characterise the Andrews Labor government as the most progressive government in this country. They do that for a very good reason—because it is. I have had to pinch myself on many, many occasions, just thinking about the things that I have had the great privilege to be involved in as a member of the great Labor caucus, a member of the great Australian Labor Party and a member of the Andrews Labor government. It has been a tremendous honour. There are far too many achievements of this government for me to go across. I could have a crack if you want, but I think, given the time, people might—

Members interjecting.

Mr GEPP: Do you want me to? I have been encouraged to incorporate it into *Hansard*. I will not go through them, but it will not surprise anyone here, I do not think, that out of everything that I have had the privilege of seeing in this place and being a part of nothing will top the Big Housing Build—nothing. I am not sure if I have told anyone in this place before, but I actually have a pretty deep connection with public housing.

Members interjecting.

Mr GEPP: No, no. I do. For me, as I alluded to in my inaugural, having affordable and secure housing is the most basic of human rights. Everything else is white noise. If you do not have decent housing, you have got nothing.

I was thrilled at the policy announcement of that great Minister for Housing, and he will go down in the annals of Victorian history, I think. No disrespect to the current housing minister of course—he will forge his own path—but Richard Wynne will rightly be recognised in the history books of this state for the tremendous reform that he introduced into this Parliament. I was delighted when Richard was making that announcement that he also announced that 25 per cent of the dwellings would be built in regional Victoria; it is so important. And I was delighted when I heard the current housing minister just earlier today update the house in the other chamber that we have to date built in excess of 6300 of those new houses. So to Minister Wynne and now Minister Pearson, thank you from somebody who has lived it. It is so important.

I had the opportunity earlier to bump into Dick Wynne in Strangers, and I told him about starting life in the Flemington public housing estate. I was not certain a few days ago whether I would actually be making a contribution this afternoon—I had not made up my mind—but what made up my mind was that I decided to go back to the old digs. I wanted to go back to where it all began: Holland Court, Flemington, flat 4/65. Proudly, it does not exist anymore. It is gone. That joint that I grew up in almost 60 years ago thankfully has now gone. But it has been rebuilt, and some mum and dad and some other little boy and his big sister will get the chance to live in a place where it is safe, where it is warm, where it is sustainable—and I am very, very proud of that. I am very, very proud of that.

If I can briefly talk about my electorate of Northern Victoria, the first thing I want to say about it is—President, excuse me for my language: shit, it is big. It is 100 000 square kilometres. It is massive. I feel very, very sorry for Jaclyn, for Tim, for Tania and for Wendy. We should have eight MPs in that electorate; it is that big. It is massive. For anybody who is going to put their hand up—

Mr Melhem: Give them helicopters.

Mr GEPP: ‘Give them helicopters’—on 25 November, if you do not like driving, do not do it. Do not run for office, because it is a big place. I reckon I passed Mike and Mal Leyland on the road at least 38 times; that was just in the first year.

Of course the best part of the job, as we all know, is the incredible people that you get to work with in your electorate. We know that there are stars in this place—and there are—and emerging stars and people who make wonderful contributions and do wondrous things, but it is the folk out in the electorate, the people who roll their sleeves up, whether it is a footy canteen or whatever it is, who do so much. Before I mention them, and I do want to mention just a couple of them, I do want to generalise by thanking the 315 000 people in Northern Victoria who did not vote for me. I want to thank them because I reckon I have met every one of them. One of the great things about having a regional electorate is that people look you in the eye and tell you that they did not vote for you but they do it with good humour and they do it respectfully, although I do have to say that on a couple of occasions it was a bit disconcerting. You would turn up somewhere—it could be in the middle of nowhere, and believe me the middle of nowhere exists in certain parts of Northern Victoria—and you would have some bloke sidle up to you and say, ‘Shit, mate. You’re brave. We haven’t seen a Labor member here for God knows how long’, and you would just want to make sure that the car was placed in a space where you could get out quickly. Look, they were fantastic, everybody that I came across in Northern Victoria. No, they did not vote for me, I understand that, but they did say it respectfully and they did do it with a lot of humour—and 141 000 of them actually did vote for me, so there you go. Bigger Jon Snow being king of the north.

I have a couple of favourite projects that I do want to quickly mention if I might. There is the Echuca Cancer and Wellness Centre. There is a bit of a story, and I will tell it very quickly, behind this, with the board president, John Quirk, and the then CEO, Mike Delahunty—yes, of the famous Delahunty family. He was the CEO of Echuca hospital. Not long after I started Mike got me into the hospital for lunch, and he said, ‘I want to show you around the hospital. I do not want any cameras there; let’s just do it one on one. I’ll just show you that’. It was terrific. He took me to all the shiny bits and showed them to me, and it was sensational. Then he went to his office and his boardroom. We had a beautiful lunch, and I said, ‘Mate, I’ve really got to go’. He said, ‘Yeah, your staff told me quarter past. It’s 5 past’. I said, ‘Yeah, that’s right’. He said, ‘I’ll walk you out’, and he walked me out, of course, through the worst part of the hospital. It was the dialysis and oncology unit. We trudged up the stairs; we had to get up the stairs. I said, ‘Why are we walking up the stairs?’, and he said, ‘Because the lift’s broken’. So we had all of these cancer patients and people on dialysis having to do that. When I came back to Parliament I got in touch with Minister Hennessy’s office at the time and told her the story, and very proudly in not too long a time we were able to make an announcement of \$6 million for an upgrade of that centre.

The Crossenvale Community House—Sheradin Clark runs that community centre. I got the pleasure of going there earlier this year and last year as well. We gave them a grant of \$50 000, and you would have thought that we had given them \$50 million. What an outstanding group of people that coalesce around that Crossenvale community centre. They are the real heroes of northern Victoria.

Shepparton Legacy—look, there are too many stories about Shepparton Legacy, but I do want to single out my friend Leonie Wilson. I think I met Leonie at an Anzac Day function. Leonie introduced me to five other women, and this group of volunteers had all been diagnosed with breast cancer very recently. And they decided that they could either wallow or they could band together and they could do something for their community—and they did. They provide an excellent service for the people of Shepparton Legacy. They do a power of work in their community. Leonie, I do not know if you are watching, but if you are—love you.

Two last ones that I want to mention are not big projects. These are not big things that happened. Outside of the cancer and wellness centre at the hospital, these are just small things, but they mean so much. There is I Wish I’d Asked. Two people, Eva Gruen and Danny Finley, approached me. They had come up with this concept called I Wish I’d Asked. It was about connecting kids in secondary school with people in aged care. They were concerned about the loneliness being experienced in aged care. We worked together and we got the grant up—I think it was about \$125 000—and you have never seen bigger smiles on the faces of secondary students in the Shepparton area, particularly

Wanganui. That is where most of the kids came from, and their connection with the people in that aged care facility was just a beautiful thing.

Finally, the project dearest to my heart, Ardmona primary. There were a number of announcements that we were making around a particular budget, and there is this little school, which is, I do not know, 15 kilometres out of Shepparton. I drove out there and knocked on the door of the principal, Jean Varty, and I said, 'Oh, look at me!'. I had made one of those big, cheesy cheques that we are not allowed to use anymore—if anyone has got any use for about 30 of them, I have got them; you can have them—and I said, 'You've got a cheque for \$15 000' or whatever it happened to be. And Jean was very, very grateful, very polite, but I sensed that there was something wrong. This little school has about two dozen kids, maybe 30 on their best day, and it was a beautiful old building. And I said to Jean, 'Can you show me around if it's not too much trouble?'. And she would not let me into this old building; she kept me away. And I thought, 'That's a bit odd'. Anyway, I pressed the point, and it turned out that they had a rec room for the kids, and there was also a kitchen area with four stoves. It was the place where they used to have breakfast club and teach the kids some life skills—because these kids all come from challenging backgrounds, and if not for that school, I do not know what they would be doing. And the roof was falling in, and it had been that way for some 18 months. And then I went out to the staff room, and they had chicken wire on the bottom of the staff room door. 'What's the chicken wire for?'. 'Oh, that's to keep the snakes out'. And I was thinking, 'Gee, there's a few issues here'.

I want to thank James Merlino, because I actually had to visit a few other schools that day in the area, and all of them said, 'Oh, yes, we've got to close Ardmona down'. And I thought, 'Well, hang on, if these kids don't go to Ardmona, they're not going anywhere'. And I came back and I spoke to James about it and worked with James and his staff over the next 12 months, and I am so proud—I think it was \$593 000. Do not quote me, but it was somewhere in that sort of vicinity. And if you want to have a look at what this school is like now, go on and google Ardmona Primary School. They have now become a school of choice in the area. I am most proud of that project out of everything else I have done.

I know I have gone on and I said I would not, but this is the last time, so just a little bit more. I hope that I have been true to my values in this place. I have tried my best to let them guide me. Sometimes they have gotten me into trouble, I will grant you that, but the repercussions of standing up for my values and my friends were never important to me. It never bothered me that there may be some repercussion for me, that there might be a cost; that did not matter. My values are my values, and they are who I am.

As most of you know, I have had a bit of a perilous journey over the last three years, health wise. I have got to say that on more than one occasion Sue and I were not quite sure about whether we were going to get through it. Things got a bit hairy. In fact what saved me—I will tell you the full story one day—was when Martin Foley stood up last year and announced that there were going to be some restrictions on critical care. That actually saved me. I was on the table at the time and about to undergo a 10-hour operation, and they pulled the pin on it and said, 'Well, we'll try something else', and 'something else' seemed to have worked. So—touch wood—thanks, Marty. I appreciate your intervention.

There were some times I could not rise to the challenge; try as I might, I could not answer the bells. That did not sit well with me, because we do have a responsibility in this place, and you should make every effort. There were other days of course when I should not have been here but was able to make it and drag myself over the line. I want to thank all of my colleagues, who knew that there were just times when I could not do it—that I would try, but I would leave a gap, and it might just happen at a moment's notice. So thank you for picking up the slack.

I also want to particularly acknowledge the opposition, who were aware of the circumstances. Pairing at the time was—and still is—a bit of a prickly issue in this place, but I have got to say that Mr Finn

and Mr Ondarchie reached out to me on behalf of the opposition and said, ‘We will always grant you a pair’, and that meant a lot. It gave us a lot of comfort, Sue and I, that if I could not answer the bell, the team would not be punished because I could not get to the line, so thank you.

Very quickly, I want to thank my staff. They are not here. I did not decide until very late that I was going to do it. I know that they are a bit pissed off that I did not forewarn them so that they could come in, but to Antony, Zeynep, Jamie, Lela, Darren and Kate, you are wonderful people, and I am very lucky to have you. I promise that I will buy you lunch, and it might go for a few hours.

Can I thank all of the ALP branches across my electorate of Northern Victoria for their support and for the support that they have given Jaclyn and me. It was never geographically easy for us to get to all of those meetings, and we thank you for your understanding.

My mate Jane is not here. We made a pact that we would do this together. Unfortunately we are not able to do that. It would be remiss of me not to mention her today. I have said a lot about her over the last two months. I thank the family for giving me that opportunity, and yet it does not matter how many times I speak about her, it always seems to be insufficient. Friends for life—sometimes in life you really get lucky. Mr Barton said in an earlier contribution that new friendships get struck up in this place and that they will endure—and they will, absolutely they will. In addition to those new friendships, I have gained two brothers for life. My two Lebanese mates, Nazih and Cesar, you know what you have done, and I love you for it.

To the broader Labor caucus, current and future, I wish you well. Only a Labor government can deliver the sort of life that I think our citizens, our children need and deserve, and I wish you nothing but success. If I can in any way, shape or form turn a vote, then I will turn a vote. I will give it a crack.

To my family, none of us can do this work without the support of our families, and I have had unwavering support from my kids, Amanda and Daniel. Thank you, and I love you. My biggest family support has come from a little mate who I know is watching through that camera. We had a bit of a game that we would play over the last six footy seasons where I would scratch my nose if I was up on my feet and he would know that that was for him. Landen, I do not have to do that today. He gave me a little photo frame on Father’s Day, because he is with his mum and only his mum. He gave me a frame, and on it was the title ‘Best mates’. It was the best gift that I have ever gotten, and the best thing that I am going to do after this, Landen, is spend so much more time with you, mate.

My beautiful wife, Sue, and I first went out on 16 February 1983—it is embedded in my brain—and for all of that time it has been about unions and politics, campaign after campaign. Sue, I do not propose to put you through another 40 years of me. I do not think anyone deserves that. But I do promise that now is your time. I love you.

Finally, solidarity forever, and carn the Tigers!

Members applauded.

The PRESIDENT: We have in the gallery former members Mr Young, Mr Boardman and Mr Theophanous. Welcome.

MR ELASMAR

Valedictory statement

The PRESIDENT (19:54): Firstly, I wish to acknowledge the owners of the land and pay my respect to the elders past, present and emerging.

My fellow parliamentary colleagues and friends, I believe I am the last to give a valedictory speech, and I am pleased you have stayed to hear it. Born in Lebanon and coming from a teaching and academic background, I migrated to Australia at 20 years of age. It was very difficult leaving my country, but with enthusiasm I came to my new home, Australia. I was to face many challenges, but

with much hope and hard work I persevered and overcame many obstacles, chasing my dream to become a member of Parliament as I believed I could make a positive difference and contribution. In 2006 I was endorsed by the Australian Labor Party and had the wonderful opportunity to enter Parliament, elected to represent the Northern Metropolitan Region. I thank the party for the trust given to me to serve in the Legislative Council and to advance our Labor values. I also thank those in my electorate for their vote and trust in me.

During my parliamentary career I encountered so many wonderful, talented and accomplished people—too many to mention. I have been incredibly privileged and proud to assist my constituents and to hear their stories, their concerns and about their struggles. My door was always open. There is no greater honour in my view, no greater responsibility or greater undertaking in our democracy, than to be entrusted by our fellow constituents with the duty to represent them and the opportunity to contribute to legislation that protects their needs, serves their interests and shapes our great state.

I pay tribute to many communities and advocates in the Northern Metropolitan Region that I have had the great pleasure of working with and supporting over the last 16 years. This includes health, social justice, schools, sport, disability, ethnic groups, local government, women's groups, environment, arts, LGBTIQI, RSLs and Indigenous organisations—and particularly the many volunteers for their tireless work and input. They are to be commended. A dedicated local member needs to listen, work hard and fight hard to get results. A local member also needs to treat everyone decently and with much respect. I take pleasure in knowing the lives of many people in my electorate have changed for the better, and this gives me great fulfilment.

The last 16 years have been incredibly rewarding and enriching years to be part of, and it has been gratifying to experience progressive reform, good policy and the changes that have been achieved so far. We face and deal with enormous issues, demands and expectations, and the implication of our decisions can be daunting—such as in the recent pandemic, especially when it was at its height. I cannot begin to tell you how at times matters that looked simple could become amplified and exaggerated.

We empower Parliament to work efficiently. We seek or are given advice. Most importantly we implement our best in order to ensure that we are transparent and clear—and then move forward. This is what we do. I was guided—guided and judged—but I believe I was guided with the best of my abilities, which was the best of my judgement, wisdom and integrity, and I sincerely believe this made me the man I am humbled to be today.

I particularly wish to acknowledge and thank my loyal electorate office staff: Alison Donohue, who has been with me from the beginning; Ana Sarakinis and Arcade Collins, who have supported me endlessly; as well as my past staffers Hannah, Lea, Stephanie, Daniel and Jonathan.

In my current role as President of the Victorian Legislative Council I wish to thank the Premier, the Honourable Daniel Andrews, and the caucus for endorsing me. I wish to thank the Leader of the Government for nominating me. I wish to thank you all for electing me. At the time you may recall I stated I would do my utmost to protect the integrity of Parliament, as the Parliament is for the people and we are here to represent this great state, and if I had not, I would have betrayed the integrity of Parliament, my colleagues and most importantly myself. I believe I did the best with what I had. There is plenty of criticism that parliamentarians attract, but I will leave as a great advocate of our profession, of the demands on all our lives and for the importance of good government and the importance of the institution of the Parliament.

I wish to acknowledge and thank my former and current staff in the President's office, Jody Milburn and Christina Smith, and also I would like to thank Lex, who makes sure I am always on time. As well my thanks go to the Deputy President and acting presidents; to all of you, my colleagues; and to the amazing clerks and parliamentary staff as well as department staff. Their unwavering commitment, guidance, loyalty and patience were always appreciated. It goes without saying that the quality and

integrity of the people who fill these positions are absolutely vital to the respectable progress of this Parliament—a difficult and valued job. Well done.

I therefore will leave Parliament proud, honoured and humbled to the very end, and I truly hope that I fulfilled my duties. I hope and believe that my work ethic, duty of devotion and integrity not only to my constituency but also to the Parliament never faltered. I believe I am wiser, feel rewarded and see things differently, though I wish at times they could have been different. I cannot adequately find the words to convey to you the sense of the feeling of independence, and I sincerely thank you all individually very much indeed.

I wish to also sincerely thank my Lebanese community, who have been my rock. Their belief in me, their spirit and their support never faltered, and I hope I have done them proud. I look forward to the next generation of my community being involved in politics and better contributing to the Victorian way of life.

I am leaving with sadness but with renewed enthusiasm. I look forward to better days ahead. I will take with me many eventful, amusing and funny memories.

To my late parents—and I know you are watching from above, with my two brothers—you taught us with God's blessing to be proud, to be loyal and to be honourable, and for that I say thank you. To my brothers, sisters, nephews, nieces, cousins, in-laws and friends, I thank you all for your ongoing support and faith in me. The blessing in my life, I feel my main achievement, which gives me most happiness and fulfilment, is my family, who are here today: my wife, Heam; my son Riad and his wife, Jodie, and my grandchild, who is probably asleep; my daughter, Adele; and my son Robert. I am a proud husband, a proud father, a proud father-in-law and a proud grandfather. Siobhan always adds a smile to my face. Heam, you have always been who you are, always next to me whispering in my ears—sometimes in English, sometimes in Arabic. To all of you, I have been there most of the time for you, but you have been there all of the time for me, and I thank you.

In the end, it has been a pleasure to work with you all. Thank God, I leave with a life fulfilled and I look forward to my retirement. Before I finish, I promised my family I would say what is written is written. They wanted to know what I meant by it, and I told them, 'I'll tell you tonight'. I just want to remind you of my birthday: 16/4/53. What is written is written: 16/4/53. At the age of 53, I entered Parliament—four terms, 16 years. Thank you very much.

Members applauded.

Bills

DISABILITY AMENDMENT BILL 2022

Introduction and first reading

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Melhem) (20:13): I have a message from the Assembly:

The Legislative Assembly presents for the agreement of the Legislative Council 'A Bill for an Act to amend the **Disability Act 2006** in relation to the Secretary's functions, the sharing of information, residential services, restrictive practices, compulsory treatment and other related matters, to amend the **Residential Tenancies Act 1997** in relation to SDA enrolled dwellings, to amend the **Disability Service Safeguards Act 2018** in relation to registration requirements, to make consequential amendments to other Acts, and for other purposes'.

Ms PULFORD (Western Victoria—Minister for Employment, Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy, Minister for Small Business, Minister for Resources) (20:14): I move:

That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Read first time.

Ms PULFORD: I move:

That the second reading be made an order of the day for the next day of meeting.

Motion agreed to.

RACING AMENDMENT (UNAUTHORISED ACCESS) BILL 2022

Introduction and first reading

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Melhem) (20:14): I have another message from the Assembly:

The Legislative Assembly presents for the agreement of the Legislative Council ‘A Bill for an Act to amend the **Racing Act 1958** to prohibit unauthorised access to certain areas of racecourses during race meetings and official trial meetings and for other purposes’.

Ms PULFORD (Western Victoria—Minister for Employment, Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy, Minister for Small Business, Minister for Resources) (20:15): I move:

That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Read first time.

Ms PULFORD: I move:

That the second reading be an order of the day for the next day of meeting.

Motion agreed to.

Adjournment

Ms PULFORD (Western Victoria—Minister for Employment, Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy, Minister for Small Business, Minister for Resources) (20:15): I am about to move the adjournment, but what an extraordinary group of valedictory speeches we have just had to conclude an extraordinary 59th Parliament. I congratulate both our retiring Clerk and the five members that I think have just left us all with a great deal to reflect on as we depart. I wish them the very, very best in what comes next for them and everybody else the very best for the contest that lies ahead. If anyone is brave enough to try and follow those five remarkable acts, they should feel free to do so, because I move:

That the house do now adjourn.

TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan—Leader of the Opposition) (20:16): (2140) On the adjournment I want to raise a matter for the Minister for Transport Infrastructure. Before I do so, I want to compliment the Liberal speakers tonight, who have made remarkable contributions. We will miss Bruce Atkinson and his thoughtful and understanding liberalism but also his huge links to and depths in the multicultural communities and his understanding of the business community. We will miss Mr Rich-Phillips in particular because of his understanding of this chamber, his huge commitment to democracy and his commitment to the Liberal Party. He has been a friend of so many

in this chamber. I note his decision not to recontest, and we will miss having him here in the next Parliament.

Ms Cathrine Burnett-Wake also made an amazing contribution. I do want to put on record it is a brief contribution that she has made, but it has been a remarkable contribution. She has been one of the most impressive newer members of this chamber, and I do want to place on record my thanks and the thanks of the Liberal Party in particular for her enormous contribution. The President's contribution was deeply heartfelt, and all of us are very aware of his huge heart and contribution to our multicultural community and the state more broadly. His integrity and his strong focus on advancing the interests of the chamber show that he had the trust of the chamber in a way that we can all be proud of.

In my adjournment tonight I want to raise the Auditor-General's report that was tabled in the Parliament today for the Minister for Transport Infrastructure's attention. The Minister for Transport Infrastructure has been out on a frolic the last few days trying to talk up a number of her large infrastructure projects. Well, this is the report card—the independent report card—on the processes behind those projects, the independent report card on the benefit-cost ratio of those projects. The airport rail fails seriously. I think the Auditor has done an enormous service to the community in Victoria in the release of this report, and I pay tribute to the very good auditing skills involved, against what I think was clear resistance from the bureaucracy.

In the case of the Suburban Rail Loop, what a disaster. It does not stack up. The benefit-cost ratio, when applied in a normal way with normal parameters and the normal arrangements that Treasury would normally apply and should normally apply, stacks up at 0.51. That means that for every dollar put into the project the community gets 51 cents back. What a complete and utter disaster the framing of this project has been. What a complete and utter disaster the so-called business case is. The Auditor points to the many failings in the business case—the failure to properly analyse alternatives and the failure to apply the right arrangements in proper assessment. The high-risk, high-value arrangements were not applied to the Suburban Rail Loop. It is the biggest project in the state's history, and it is a project that is already careering out of control. The Parliamentary Budget Office has made it very clear that the capital costs of the first two parts of the project are \$125 billion when the Premier and the transport infrastructure minister told us that the total cost of the project would be \$50 billion for three stages—

A member: Up to 50.

Mr DAVIS: Up to \$50 billion is what they said. What a lie, frankly, and what a travesty. It is no wonder the state's financial position has deteriorated so dramatically, exactly as Mr Atkinson has outlined. What I ask of the transport infrastructure minister tonight is to follow the lead of the Liberal Party and the National Party and shelve the Suburban Rail Loop and divert the cash from the Suburban Rail Loop into health projects around the state. Our health system is crumbling, as Ms Crozier has well highlighted. Our ESTA system is crumbling—the 000 system. They badly need bolstering. The state government has a project that does not stack up. They should shelve it and put the money into health care, so that is what I ask the minister to do: shelve that project.

ASSISTANCE DOGS

Mr GRIMLEY (Western Victoria) (20:25): (2141) My adjournment debate is for the Minister for Workplace Safety, and the action that I seek is for the report WorkSafe is commissioning to be publicly supplied prior to the time it is issued.

On 4 March 2020 the Workers Compensation Commission of New South Wales issued a decision that an assistance dog is a reasonably necessary medical treatment for the purposes of their Workers Compensation Act 1987. Ms Bunce was an experienced registered nurse who experienced an aggressive patient who threatened her before he had to be restrained. She had also witnessed a similar incident which resulted in a homicide by an aggressive patient in 1999. In 2018 her son obtained a dog as a pet. She found the presence of the dog to be helpful to her condition, and her psychologist

supported the idea of obtaining an assistance dog, as assistance dogs have been shown to improve anxiety and depressive symptoms in patients. Ms Bunce made a claim for the purchase of an assistance dog and the cost to maintain that dog for the course of its life. Unfortunately the insurer denied her claim and argued that an assistance dog was not medically related treatment as defined in the act and not reasonably necessary. This exact behaviour happens in Victoria regularly.

The matter was then heard by arbitrator John Wynyard. Wynyard determined that the supply of an assistance dog could only be covered by the definition contained within their act where it provides for therapeutic treatment given by direction of a medical practitioner. He held that the proposed treatment was reasonably necessary as the medical experts' opinions were unanimous that the proposed treatment was appropriate and indeed had been effective for Ms Bunce's condition as she had obtained great benefit from her assistance dog already. Wynyard ordered that the insurer pay the cost of provision and maintenance of an assistance dog. Significantly, Arbitrator Wynyard found that an assistance dog falls neatly into the definition of 'medical treatment' as provided by section 59(b) of the act.

WorkSafe Victoria has been settling such claims, hoping to avoid litigation to ensure a binding decision is not made in the courts—just disgraceful. Minister, I have been speaking with you and your office about this for more than 12 months, since the passing in this place of my motion to recognise psychiatric assistance dogs in official workplace safety as a treatment option. We are still waiting for the WorkSafe report, and the election is almost around the corner. Many stakeholders are anxiously waiting for a decision and progress to be made. Psychiatric assistance dogs literally save lives. They are a cost-effective treatment option. Ron Fenton, if he were alive and here today, would be shocked that more action has not been taken to give life back to mentally injured emergency services workers. What is Victoria waiting for?

GLENELG SHIRE COUNCIL RATES

Mrs McARTHUR (Western Victoria) (20:24): (2142) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Local Government and concerns the extraordinary situation facing Glenelg Shire Council ratepayers. This year the Glenelg council changes its rating method, transitioning from a rebate to a differential rating system. The Fair Go for Glenelg Shire Ratepayers Group has advised me that this change is catastrophic, with a 20 per cent increase in the general rate and 22 per cent for primary production land. The fair go group has rightly described it as a blatant grab for money. This comes at a time when a 2 per cent rate cap is in place across the state. The council argues that it is technically still within a 1.75 per cent rate cap. In reality, the Glenelg councillors have enabled a rate rise in excess of eight times the rate cap. It is tricky maths. It also comes at a time when cost-of-living expenses, including interest rates, are on the rise and rise. Energy costs are set to spiral, milk costs more, bread costs more, fruit and vegetables cost more and in the Glenelg shire the rates will cost 20 per cent more. It is highly likely that some ratepayers will not be able to afford the change. One farmer, Howard Templeton, said the change will push his rate bill from \$25 000 to \$40 000. He has described the rating change as 'morally wrong'.

Such is the anger about the rating change that more than 1700 people have signed a petition. The petition is directed to the Essential Services Commission, the Victorian Auditor-General's Office and the Victorian Inspectorate office. The petition seeks a full audit inquiry of the Glenelg Shire Council proceedings and financial management. The petitioners:

... challenge the legitimacy of the 2022–2023 Budget ... that was passed on Tuesday June 28—

this year—

and which seeks to impose **HUGE and DISPROPORTIONATE** rate increases upon the wider community within the Shire.

Regional Victorians are already well alert to the fact that this Andrews Labor government only cares about proceedings, perceptions and politics within the tram tracks of Melbourne. Despite this, the

action I seek from the minister is to take up the petitioners' desperate position and initiate a review into the rating change at the Glenelg Shire Council and a broader inquiry into the Glenelg Shire Council itself.

WESTERN SUBURBS

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) (20:26): (2143) I wish to raise a matter this evening for the attention of the Premier. In the 16 years that I have represented Melbourne's west in this place it has been my very, very deep concern that there has been significant disadvantage among my constituents in the western suburbs compared with perhaps the eastern suburbs, the leafy green suburbs of the east, as we have often heard them referred to, or the southern suburbs for that matter or even some of the northern suburbs—I will throw the lot in. It seems to me that we have seen a lot of the western suburbs getting a raw deal for a very, very long time. We just do not get our fair go. It is almost as if we do not pay taxes and so we are not entitled to largesse from the government. I have no doubt this is largely because there are no marginal seats out there. I would say almost certainly that is what it is about, because we know at the beginning of every election campaign we see both the ALP and the Liberals saying, 'That's the western suburbs. They're going to vote either for us or against us. We don't worry about them at all'. They are off the planning board altogether. So perhaps if I could—and I know I cannot—I would also address this matter to Matthew Guy as opposition leader.

What I am asking the Premier to do is to give us a fair go. Give us some of our money back, which is being spent over the other side of Melbourne. We in the west have worked hard and we have paid huge sums in stamp duty. The development in the western suburbs is quite extraordinary, and the amount of money that is going into government coffers as a result of that development is quite extraordinary. But do we see any of it back? Not on your Nellie. That is not going to happen anytime soon. What I am asking the Premier to do is to balance the ledger, to give the western suburbs their fair share. We have got a Minister for Equality. How about a bit of equality for the western suburbs? That would not go astray. That would be very, very good indeed. What I am hopeful the Premier will do, when he is allocating billions of dollars for this and billions of dollars for that in the lead-up to this election, is keep in mind that people in the western suburbs are Victorians too and that we need and we deserve a fair go. I am hopeful that the people in the west will actually change their voting patterns this time and make it a bit more marginal. But even if they do not, I ask the Premier to give us a fair go.

SAFER CARE VICTORIA

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (20:29): (2144) Before I go to my adjournment matter, can I also acknowledge the speeches that have been made this evening regarding the motion on the Clerk, Mr Andrew Young. Can I also put on record my appreciation for all your support, guidance and professionalism that I have been privileged to have throughout the time I have been here. I wish you all the best in the next chapter of your life. You will be greatly missed in this place.

To all those members who are outgoing: we did hear some magnificent speeches tonight. I want to bring into my adjournment matter, which is for the Minister for Health, that I think it was Mr Atkinson who spoke about the need for debate and why we are in here—to raise issues and to put forward solutions but also to highlight those concerns of our constituents. What we have seen in today's paper about seven children who have died in emergency departments across Victoria is truly shocking. I am very, very concerned about the state of our health system, as many of you know. I have put into this house for many, many months now the concerns of what is happening around the state when it comes to Victorians' health concerns and how they are being treated and managed and, quite frankly, the tragedy that is unfolding with so many that have lost their lives through the failures of 000, not being able to get a bed, not being able to get their surgery or, as we read today, those seven children who died.

Safer Care Victoria, which is the watchdog in the Department of Health on these matters, has refused to disclose how many paediatric sentinel event reports have actually been undertaken this year. I do

not think that is good enough. I think that is shameful. If we do not understand what is going on, how on earth can we fix it? This government has a history of cover-up. It has a history of blaming others, obfuscation, deflection—you name it. It is everybody else's fault but theirs. But this is a truly appalling situation, where children are dying in emergency departments and there are fears by senior clinicians that something is wrong. When those senior clinicians are speaking out, saying, 'Don't disband that committee, Government. We need to have some oversight; we need to be there to be putting our views forward so that we don't have these tragedies', then I think it is truly appalling that the government ignores those pleas from those senior paediatric clinicians. I cannot do much about the minister and I cannot do much about the Premier—Victorians will decide that—but the action I seek tonight, and I will have this before the election, is that the government provide how many paediatric sentinel event reports have happened this year.

TIMBER INDUSTRY

Mr QUILTY (Northern Victoria) (20:33): (2145) My final adjournment matter for the year is for the Minister for Agriculture, I believe. The Victorian timber industry, an exemplar of sustainable environmental practice, is being ground to death, and this government is complicit in that. The government has signed the death warrant for the industry and for timber communities, but it is now allowing the execution to take place ahead of schedule. A recent article in the *Weekly Times* talked about 115 jobs to be lost in Orbost, with two mills on the brink of closing due to a lack of logs. The future of this town and indeed all timber towns under this government is to become retirement villages for older unemployed people while the young move away.

A few weeks ago this Parliament passed an amendment to Victoria's forestry laws that increased penalties for people who disrupt logging work. The laws are designed to target people who do not just protest but who sabotage and interfere with workers at their worksites. The problem the workers are facing is called lawfare. Well-funded activists will break the law to cause disruption, and when they get sued for the damage they cause they will use their financial backing to draw out court cases and drain resources from their victims. Activists also bring frivolous lawsuits against VicForests and draw out proceedings, which drives up costs and causes delays.

In its 2021 report VicForests revealed a cost of \$4.8 million from legal proceedings brought against it. Some of these cases had been already investigated by the regulator before legal actions were taken. The ongoing court cases choke the supply of timber and are killing the industry. This kind of lawfare should not work in a properly functioning legal system. Judges should identify the practice and award legal costs in addition to damages. The recent bill increased penalties for disruptive behaviour, which makes it more expensive for activists to engage in this kind of lawfare, but despite passing this legislation the government is helping cause the problem in the first place. They are playing both sides.

Documents obtained via a freedom-of-information request show the former minister, Mary-Anne Thomas, directed VicForests to avoid recovering the \$2 million debt owed by MyEnvironment activists. When questioned at the time the minister lied and said she had not given this direction to VicForests. She covered up her lie by denying the freedom-of-information requests on false grounds. The only reason we have those requests now is because of an appeal that was lodged through VCAT.

In the past lies and cover-ups were a big deal; after eight years of the Andrews government, they appear to be par for the course. It is time we had an honest government. I call on the minister to stop playing both sides and to provide clarity to both VicForests and logging activists regarding which logging is legal and which is not. Just make the regulations make sense, let VicForests recover reasonable costs and stop the destruction of the industry ahead of time. It is not too much to ask.

MINISTERIAL CONDUCT

Ms LOVELL (Northern Victoria) (20:35): (2146) My adjournment matter is directed to the Premier, and he was here before—I was rather excited; I thought he might have answered it. My adjournment matter concerns a number of adjournment matters and constituency questions I have

asked in 2022 that are overdue for response and remain unanswered by ministers, and the action that I seek from the Premier is for him to ensure these responses are provided as a matter of priority, as is required under the standing orders of the Legislative Council.

The Victorian Parliament is the people's parliament and a place where members can raise issues on behalf of their constituents. We are the voice of our respective communities as we raise prominent issues with the relevant minister with a view to seeking a resolution that satisfies our constituents. One convention available to seek a resolution on an issue is to ask a question or seek an action of a minister through a constituency question or an adjournment matter. The standing orders of the Parliament require a minister to respond to a constituency question within 14 days of it being asked and allow them 30 days to respond to an adjournment matter. It is unfortunate that many ministers regularly ignore this obligation and have failed to provide a timely response to matters I have raised in 2022.

On constituency questions, I have nine outstanding constituency questions, of which eight are overdue. The two oldest I asked of ministers this year were to the Minister for Emergency Services, on 24 February, seeking funding to build new fire stations in Yarrawonga and Corowa, and to the Attorney-General, on 8 March, regarding one of my constituents. Inexplicably, no response has been forthcoming from Ms Symes, who holds both ministerial positions. There are a further six constituency questions I have asked this year that remain unanswered and are overdue for response—these are questions to the Minister for Health, asked on 10 May and 2 August; to the Minister for Education, on 24 May; another to the emergency services minister, on 21 June; to the Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers, on 17 August; and to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, on 30 August.

I also have a number of adjournment matters that are overdue. There are seven adjournment matters that have not been answered, four of which are overdue. They are matters that I directed to the former Minister for Health, who is a serial offender and has ignored all issues raised by members on this side of the house, with him failing to respond to matters from me raised on 24 and 25 May and 21 June. I also have one other matter that remains unanswered for the Minister for Housing, asked on 4 August. I would certainly not be the only member with questions that have not been answered, and I call on the Premier to bring his ministers into line and have them do their jobs.

MEN'S BEHAVIOUR CHANGE PROGRAMS

Ms MAXWELL (Northern Victoria) (20:38): (2147) My adjournment is to the Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, and the action I seek is for the government to initiate a pilot of a residential men's behaviour change program based on the successful Breathing Space in Western Australia. I have had some interest in seeing what a core and cluster model might look like for perpetrators of violence as an alternative to victim-survivors having to leave their family home. I mentioned this idea to the minister during a recent meeting. Breathing Space was the first residential men's behaviour change program in the Southern Hemisphere. It commenced operation in June 2003, so it has actually been running for nearly 20 years. Breathing Space describes itself as a specialist therapeutic intervention that provides men with up to six months of accommodation while they undertake an intensive program, including educational group work, counselling and change management in order to change their behaviour. I have had some concern about the potential for perpetrators to engage in group victimisation, but what happens in reality is that the program helps them practise new ways of relating while they are living in a complex and shared environment.

The program is divided into two stages, the core program and the transitional program. The core program is three months of intensive formal and informal supports, with a focus on risk assessment and monitoring, case management, group work, individual counselling, life skills and opportunities for behaviour change. It builds personal responsibility before participants move into the transitional program. In order to take part in the transitional program, residents need to demonstrate a consistent commitment to behaviour change. They are provided with transitional accommodation and remain engaged in therapeutic maintenance groups, case management support and a targeted plan to

reintegrate into employment and longer term accommodation. Their objectives are to build accountability of perpetrators, helping them take responsibility for their violence and abuse, and teach different strategies as an alternative to violence. They work to build empathy within the perpetrator around the impacts of their abuse on family members while also providing affected family members with support.

Curtin University conducted an evaluation of Breathing Space, and it was found to be successful in reducing inward suppression, propensity for abusiveness, physical and verbal aggression and emotional instability. The model was found to create a more pervasive supportive environment, and feedback from victim-survivors was positive. Following the success of the program, the Western Australian government has now established a second residential unit.

We deliver men's behaviour change programs in Victoria in a very limited way. Programs are oversubscribed, waitlists are long, engagement is mixed, and it has been difficult to determine if a program really works to reduce violence. The residential therapeutic model is proven to work, and I strongly believe it is worthy of a trial in Victoria to deliver lasting behavioural change for perpetrators of violence.

CHILD PROTECTION

Dr BACH (Eastern Metropolitan) (20:42): (2148) My adjournment matter tonight is for the Minister for Child Protection and Family Services, and the action that I seek is for him to urgently work with leaders in the community sector and young people with lived experience to radically improve the collection and availability of data. In the massive dump of reports today there were several very interesting reports from the Auditor-General. I have spoken already about a report into numerous major infrastructure projects that demonstrate that several simply do not stack up, notably the government's so-called Suburban Rail Loop, but there were also other reports into child protection failures. Some people may not necessarily be particularly excited about data collection, but when it comes to our most vulnerable children, the collection of data—reliable data—is incredibly important. The Auditor-General said today that is not happening. The Auditor-General said today that that is placing vulnerable children at risk—at risk of harm and at risk of not receiving the health services that they need. The Auditor-General said that around 200 of our most vulnerable children known to child protection do not even have recorded addresses. How can you help these children if you literally do not know where they are?

These are issues of long standing. More than a year and a half ago now there was outstanding reporting by the ABC about a former youth worker who gained access inappropriately to children's data and then used that data to track down and rape at least one vulnerable young person known to child protection. At that time I asked questions and other members of the opposition through the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee and in other forums asked questions of the child protection minister. At that time it was Minister Donnellan. We have had four child protection ministers in the last 10 months alone. With all due respect to those ministers, what happens is every time there is a reshuffle on the government side the most junior member of the new cabinet gets given child protection as a consolation prize. Well, I am biased, but my view is that child protection is the most important portfolio in government.

We have seen a total lack of focus from this government. It has dropped the ball, and we have seen shocking outcomes for young people: record numbers of children known to child protection dying, record numbers of Indigenous babies taken from their families—the list goes on and on. It has not always been the case under Labor governments. I was born into the care system under John Cain's Labor government. You can say what you like about the economic management of those governments, but they cared about vulnerable children and they had a wonderful child protection system. I was a product of it. The governments of Steve Bracks and John Brumby had a real focus on child protection, as did the Baillieu and Napthine governments, with a big beast in cabinet, Mary Wooldridge, holding that portfolio for a full four years. It is actually shameful that we have had four ministers in the last

10 months. It shows a total disregard for our vulnerable children and for this immensely important portfolio. The minister needs to finally step up and fix this egregious problem.

WESTERN METROPOLITAN REGION TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

Dr CUMMING (Western Metropolitan) (20:45): (2149) As it is the last adjournment of the 59th Parliament, I guess I should just start by saying that my adjournment matter is for the Premier, Mr Daniel Andrews, and the action that I seek is for him to resign now. But this government loves infrastructure, so my adjournment matter is to the Minister for Transport Infrastructure in the other place and the action that I seek is for the minister to produce a transport plan outlining all the future transport infrastructure projects for the outer west, with time lines for delivery. Over the next 30 years the outer west, including the cities of Melton, Wyndham and Hume, will increase by 1.25 million residents, and that is the size of Adelaide. Now, over 70 per cent of their workforce leave that area every day to access work, and as a result they have congested roads, they have pressure on their public transport networks and many residents cannot even get to public transport to get to work, education and health services.

Projects such as the Melton hospital, the western intermodal freight terminal and the East Werribee precinct will deliver tens of thousands of jobs. Current infrastructure cannot cope. There are already eight dangerous level crossings between Caroline Springs and Melton, let alone Yarraville and Spotswood and other areas, and the Wyndham and Melton lines still have not been electrified, despite promises before the last election. There is a 10-kilometre stretch of rail between already congested Watergardens station and Diggers Rest station without a station. Residents in Hillside, Taylors Hill, Fraser Rise and Plumpton need a train station in Calder Park on the Sunbury line. Residents on the Thornhill Park, Mt Atkinson and Aintree side need a train station on the Melton line.

Melton Road has unsealed shoulders, open drains and no pedestrian access. Hopkins Road, which connects the two municipalities, has over 27 000 vehicles a day, and traffic modelling indicates that that will increase to over 40 000 vehicles per day by 2031—and that needs upgrading. New bus routes are needed urgently to service new estates so people can get to jobs, schools and services. It sounds like a lot, but there is a lot needed in the western suburbs. We need equality with the eastern suburbs to actually look like the rest of Melbourne. If this government is not going to do it, I hope the next government, a new government, will. We need a change of government, and I hope the Premier resigns.

MORWELL RIVER DIVERSION

Ms BATH (Eastern Victoria) (20:48): (2150) President, I think that I may well have been the first female, the first lady, to sign the book under the reign of King Charles III, so I am very pleased to be the last member of Parliament to make an adjournment this evening during your reign as President in the 59th Parliament.

My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Water, and it relates to the Morwell River flood diversion, which was completed in February of this year. Now, in June 2021 there was a significant flooding event—we had the floods throughout Gippsland—but it led to cracks and flaws in the Morwell River diversion. At the time there were concerns that this floodwater would actually spill into the Yallourn mine, so a diversion was constructed so that repairs could be carried out. A group of concerned farmers contacted me recently because of the effect of this diversion, because there is now sustained flooding upstream on their farming land. It is a flood plain, but the difference is a great deal of their property is being flooded for up to two weeks at a time, in essence killing all the grass and meaning that in some cases 90 per cent of their property and their farm is actually under water for prolonged periods of time.

The system was designed so that 400 megalitres per day must continue down the Morwell River. Once this rate has been exceeded the water can then be diverted into the Hazelwood mine. When the Hazelwood mine is only allowed to divert 3 gigalitres a day, these upstream farmers are being severely

affected, and as I have said, their farmland is damaged. Two to three days or three to four days was the current rate that had been considered and that they have been putting up with, we will say, for the last 10 to 15, 20 or 50 years. However, two weeks is killing off their property.

Engie is the company that is between a rock and a hard place in effect. They have met with farmers, but no government agency has met with farmers to hear their plea on how this can be addressed. So the action that I seek is for the Minister for Water to meet with this group of affected farmers with the aim of working through a solution, listening to their issues and working out any compensation as required.

As Mr Andrew Young has just arrived at his seat for the last time, I would also like to congratulate him on his exemplary service to this community of Parliament and note that he has now bought a residence in God's own country, Eastern Victoria Region.

RESPONSES

Ms PULFORD (Western Victoria—Minister for Employment, Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy, Minister for Small Business, Minister for Resources) (20:51): Thank you, President. Thank you, clerks. Thank you to the staff of the Parliament and to all members. We are the stayers; everybody else left half an hour ago. We are adjourning. Travel safe and well, and I wish you all the very best for the coming weeks and, for those of you that are leaving, for the coming months and years.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you again, everyone. On that basis the house stands adjourned.

House adjourned 8.51 pm.