

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

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

Thursday, 26 November 2015

(Extract from book 18)

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By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

The Governor

The Honourable LINDA DESSAU, AM

The Lieutenant-Governor

The Honourable Justice MARILYN WARREN, AC, QC

The ministry

Premier	The Hon. D. M. Andrews, MP
Deputy Premier and Minister for Education	The Hon. J. A. Merlino, MP
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Minister for Public Transport and Minister for Employment	The Hon. J. Allan, MP
Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade	The Hon. P. Dalidakis, MLC
Minister for Industry, and Minister for Energy and Resources	The Hon. L. D'Ambrosio, MP
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Minister for Training and Skills	The Hon. S. R. Herbert, MLC
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Special Minister of State	The Hon. G. Jennings, MLC
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Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water	The Hon. L. M. Neville, MP
Minister for Police and Minister for Corrections	The Hon. W. M. Noonan, MP
Attorney-General and Minister for Racing	The Hon. M. P. Pakula, MP
Minister for Agriculture and Minister for Regional Development	The Hon. J. L. Pulford, MLC
Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence	The Hon. F. Richardson, MP
Minister for Finance and Minister for Multicultural Affairs	The Hon. R. D. Scott, MP
Minister for Planning	The Hon. R. W. Wynne, MP
Cabinet Secretary	Ms M. Kairouz, MP

**OFFICE-HOLDERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FIFTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT — FIRST SESSION**

Speaker:

The Hon. TELMO LANGUILLER

Deputy Speaker:

Mr D. A. NARDELLA

Acting Speakers:

Mr Angus, Mr Blackwood, Ms Blandthorn, Mr Carbines, Mr Crisp, Mr Dixon, Ms Edwards, Ms Halfpenny,
Ms Kilkenny, Mr McCurdy, Mr McGuire, Ms McLeish, Mr Pearson, Ms Ryall, Ms Thomas,
Mr Thompson, Ms Thomson, Ms Ward and Mr Watt.

Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Premier:

The Hon. D. M. ANDREWS

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Deputy Premier:

The Hon. J. A. MERLINO

Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party and Leader of the Opposition:

The Hon. M. J. GUY

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party and Deputy Leader of the Opposition:

The Hon. D. J. HODGETT

Leader of The Nationals:

The Hon. P. L. WALSH

Deputy Leader of The Nationals:

Ms S. RYAN

Heads of parliamentary departments

Assembly — Clerk of the Parliaments and Clerk of the Legislative Assembly: Mr R. W. Purdey

Council — Clerk of the Legislative Council: Mr A. Young

Parliamentary Services — Secretary: Mr P. Lochert

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

Member	District	Party	Member	District	Party
Allan, Ms Jacinta Marie	Bendigo East	ALP	McLeish, Ms Lucinda Gaye	Eildon	LP
Andrews, Mr Daniel Michael	Mulgrave	ALP	Merlino, Mr James Anthony	Monbulk	ALP
Angus, Mr Neil Andrew Warwick	Forest Hill	LP	Morris, Mr David Charles	Mornington	LP
Asher, Ms Louise	Brighton	LP	Mulder, Mr Terence Wynn ²	Polwarth	LP
Battin, Mr Bradley William	Gembrook	LP	Napthine, Dr Denis Vincent ³	South-West Coast	LP
Blackwood, Mr Gary John	Narracan	LP	Nardella, Mr Donato Antonio	Melton	ALP
Blandthorn, Ms Elizabeth Anne	Pascoe Vale	ALP	Neville, Ms Lisa Mary	Bellarine	ALP
Britnell, Ms Roma ¹	South-West Coast	LP	Noonan, Mr Wade Matthew	Williamstown	ALP
Brooks, Mr Colin William	Bundoora	ALP	Northe, Mr Russell John	Morwell	Nats
Bull, Mr Joshua Michael	Sunbury	ALP	O'Brien, Mr Daniel David ⁴	Gippsland South	Nats
Bull, Mr Timothy Owen	Gippsland East	Nats	O'Brien, Mr Michael Anthony	Malvern	LP
Burgess, Mr Neale Ronald	Hastings	LP	Pakula, Mr Martin Philip	Keysborough	ALP
Carbines, Mr Anthony Richard	Ivanhoe	ALP	Pallas, Mr Timothy Hugh	Werribee	ALP
Carroll, Mr Benjamin Alan	Niddrie	ALP	Paynter, Mr Brian Francis	Bass	LP
Clark, Mr Robert William	Box Hill	LP	Pearson, Mr Daniel James	Essendon	ALP
Couzens, Ms Christine Anne	Geelong	ALP	Perera, Mr Jude	Cranbourne	ALP
Crisp, Mr Peter Laurence	Mildura	Nats	Pesutto, Mr John	Hawthorn	LP
D'Ambrosio, Ms Liliana	Mill Park	ALP	Richardson, Mr Timothy Noel	Mordialloc	ALP
Dimopoulos, Mr Stephen	Oakleigh	ALP	Richardson, Ms Fiona Catherine Alison	Northcote	ALP
Dixon, Mr Martin Francis	Nepean	LP	Riordan, Mr Richard ⁵	Polwarth	LP
Donnellan, Mr Luke Anthony	Narre Warren North	ALP	Ryall, Ms Deanne Sharon	Ringwood	LP
Edbrooke, Mr Paul Andrew	Frankston	ALP	Ryan, Mr Peter Julian ⁶	Gippsland South	Nats
Edwards, Ms Janice Maree	Bendigo West	ALP	Ryan, Ms Stephanie Maureen	Euroa	Nats
Eren, Mr John Hamdi	Lara	ALP	Sandell, Ms Ellen	Melbourne	Greens
Foley, Mr Martin Peter	Albert Park	ALP	Scott, Mr Robin David	Preston	ALP
Fyffe, Mrs Christine Anne	Evelyn	LP	Sheed, Ms Suzanna	Shepparton	Ind
Garrett, Ms Jane Furneaux	Brunswick	ALP	Smith, Mr Ryan	Warrandyte	LP
Gidley, Mr Michael Xavier Charles	Mount Waverley	LP	Smith, Mr Timothy Colin	Kew	LP
Graley, Ms Judith Ann	Narre Warren South	ALP	Southwick, Mr David James	Caulfield	LP
Green, Ms Danielle Louise	Yan Yean	ALP	Spence, Ms Rosalind Louise	Yuroke	ALP
Guy, Mr Matthew Jason	Bulleen	LP	Staikos, Mr Nicholas	Bentleigh	ALP
Halfpenny, Ms Bronwyn	Thomastown	ALP	Staley, Ms Louise Eileen	Ripon	LP
Hennessy, Ms Jill	Altona	ALP	Suleyman, Ms Natalie	St Albans	ALP
Hibbins, Mr Samuel Peter	Prahran	Greens	Thomas, Ms Mary-Anne	Macedon	ALP
Hodgett, Mr David John	Croydon	LP	Thompson, Mr Murray Hamilton Ross	Sandringham	LP
Howard, Mr Geoffrey Kemp	Buninyong	ALP	Thomson, Ms Marsha Rose	Footscray	ALP
Hutchins, Ms Natalie Maree Sykes	Sydenham	ALP	Tilley, Mr William John	Benambra	LP
Kairouz, Ms Marlene	Kororoit	ALP	Victoria, Ms Heidi	Bayswater	LP
Katos, Mr Andrew	South Barwon	LP	Wakeling, Mr Nicholas	Ferntree Gully	LP
Kealy, Ms Emma Jayne	Lowan	Nats	Walsh, Mr Peter Lindsay	Murray Plains	Nats
Kilkenny, Ms Sonya	Carrum	ALP	Ward, Ms Vicki	Eltham	ALP
Knight, Ms Sharon Patricia	Wendouree	ALP	Watt, Mr Graham Travis	Burwood	LP
Languiller, Mr Telmo Ramon	Tarneit	ALP	Wells, Mr Kimberley Arthur	Rowville	LP
Lim, Mr Muy Hong	Clarinda	ALP	Williams, Ms Gabrielle	Dandenong	ALP
McCurdy, Mr Timothy Logan	Ovens Valley	Nats	Wynne, Mr Richard William	Richmond	ALP

¹Elected 31 October 2015

²Resigned 3 September 2015

³Resigned 3 September 2015

⁴Elected 14 March 2015

⁵Elected 31 October 2015

⁶Resigned 2 February 2015

PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

ALP — Labor Party; Greens — The Greens;
Ind — Independent; LP — Liberal Party; Nats — The Nationals.

Legislative Assembly committees

Privileges Committee — Ms Allan, Ms D’Ambrosio, Mr Morris, Ms Neville, Ms Ryan, Ms Sandell, Mr Scott and Mr Wells.

Standing Orders Committee — The Speaker, Ms Allan, Ms Asher, Mr Brooks, Mr Clark, Mr Hibbins, Mr Hodgett, Ms Kairouz, Mr Nardella, Ms Ryan and Ms Sheed.

Joint committees

Accountability and Oversight Committee — (*Assembly*): Mr Angus, Mr Gidley, Mr Staikos and Ms Thomson.
(*Council*): Ms Bath, Mr Purcell and Ms Symes.

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

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

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

Environment, Natural Resources and Regional Development Committee — (*Assembly*): Ms Halfpenny, Mr McCurdy, Mr Richardson, Mr Tilley and Ms Ward. (*Council*): Mr Ramsay and Mr Young.

Family and Community Development Committee — (*Assembly*): Ms Couzens, Mr Edbrooke, Ms Edwards, Ms Kealy, Ms McLeish and Ms Sheed. (*Council*): Mr Finn.

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

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

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

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

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

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Thursday, 26 November 2015

The SPEAKER (Hon. Telmo Languiller) took the chair at 9.34 a.m. and read the prayer.

The SPEAKER — Order! When the Chair makes an error it is important that the Chair own up and that error be corrected. Yesterday the Attorney-General raised a point of order regarding the absence of the member for Warrandyte from question time. The Chair erred in the upholding of that point of order. The Chair cannot direct a member or minister to attend the house. However, as I stated yesterday, it is important that every member do their utmost to ensure that they are in the house for question time. It appeared to the Chair that the member for Warrandyte might have withdrawn himself voluntarily in anticipation. I assure the member that the Chair had no such agenda, so the Chair welcomes the member for Warrandyte.

PETITIONS

Following petitions presented to house:

Family violence

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

Our serious concern that dowry demands, demands for money and gifts in the context of a new marriage (up to seven years) is a significant contributor to family and domestic violence within certain cultural communities of Victoria. We are concerned that this pattern is similar to the one reported in India with documented extensive evidence of serious domestic violence in the context of demands for dowry and gifts by the groom and his family.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria amends Family Violence Protection Act 2008 section 6 titled 'Meaning of Economic Abuse', 'Examples', as soon as possible to add the words 'dowry or coercive demands for gifts or cash in the context of a new marriage (up to seven years)'.

By Ms VICTORIA (Bayswater) (125 signatures).

Lentil as Anything

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of Victorian residents points out to the house of the Legislative Assembly that the future of pay-as-you-fee restaurant Lentil as Anything is in jeopardy. The Abbotsford Convent Foundation (ACF) is conducting a competitive selection process to determine who will operate from the Abbotsford site and service the convent's 1 million yearly visitors. The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria ask the ACF to keep Lentil as Anything at the convent.

By Mr PERERA (Cranbourne) (10 855 signatures).

Pyalong Primary School

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of residents of the Euroa electorate draws to the attention of the house the Andrews government's decision to remove Pyalong Primary School's portable school building, which is used for art, music, sports, playgroup and before and after school care.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly calls on the Andrews government to recognise the value of these activities and the school's anticipated growth by reversing its decision to strip the school of its portable building.

By Ms RYAN (Euroa) (236 signatures).

Murchison Primary School

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of residents of the Euroa electorate draws to the attention of the house the Andrews government's decision to remove Murchison Primary School's portable school building, which will impact on the school's ability to deliver art, music, library services, before and after school care and early childhood services.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly calls on the Andrews government to recognise the value of these activities and the school's anticipated growth by reversing its decision to strip the school of its portable.

By Ms RYAN (Euroa) (546 signatures).

Supported playgroup guidelines

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

Residents in the Ripon electorate draw to the attention of the house that the Department of Education and Training are changing the current guidelines for the running of a supported playgroup.

The petitioners therefore call on the Legislative Assembly of Victoria to retain the guidelines in rural areas.

Specifically, the following guidelines will disadvantage small rural supported playgroups:

specific card holders (i. e. healthcare card holders);

disadvantaged families (must complete an enrolment form to attend);

non-disadvantaged families who have a healthcare card will not be guaranteed a place;

location may be changed to the local primary school;

facilitator will need to be diploma trained (current facilitator has experience but is not formally trained).

By Ms STALEY (Ripon) (59 signatures).

Laid on table.

Ordered that petition presented by honourable member for Ripon be considered next day on motion of Ms STALEY (Ripon).

Ordered that petition presented by honourable member for Cranbourne be considered next day on motion of Mr PERERA (Cranbourne).

Ordered that petitions presented by honourable member for Euroa be considered next day on motion of Ms RYAN (Euroa).

Ordered that petition presented by honourable member for Bayswater be considered next day on motion of Ms VICTORIA (Bayswater).

DOCUMENTS

Tabled by Clerk:

Linking Melbourne Authority — Report 2014–15, together with an explanation of the delay.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING

Minister for Energy and Resources

Message received from Council seeking agreement to resolution.

Council's resolution:

That this house requests the Legislative Assembly to grant leave to the Minister for Energy and Resources, the Honourable Lily D'Ambrosio, MP, to appear before the Legislative Council environment and planning committee to give evidence and answer questions in relation to the committee's inquiry into onshore unconventional gas.

Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport) — I move:

That the message be taken into consideration tomorrow.

Mr CLARK (Box Hill) — I wish to speak on the question as to when the message from the Legislative Council will be taken into consideration. I wish to speak against the question as proposed by the Leader of the House.

This is an urgent matter. It is a request from the Legislative Council that this house agree to the Minister for Energy and Resources appearing before a Legislative Council committee. It is a committee considering a reference in relation to unconventional gas, which is of course a very important subject to the Victorian community. It is a reference that has been

given to this committee by the government, and the committee is expected to report to the Legislative Council next sitting week.

If the minister is to be given leave by this house to appear before the upper house committee, it is a matter that cannot be postponed until another day. The form of the motion moved by the minister will preclude this matter being dealt with this sitting day, given the matters that the house has already resolved upon in relation to family violence. Accordingly this side of the house believes that this matter needs to be dealt with forthwith so that this house can give permission for the Minister for Energy and Resources to give evidence to the upper house committee. We are prepared to give leave for that to occur, and we call on the government to agree to do that.

It is, of course, highly desirable that this house does give permission for the minister to appear before the Legislative Council committee. There is a question as to whether a resolution of the house is necessary, but to put the matter beyond doubt and in accordance with convention this message has been sent to us by the Legislative Council and we should do the Legislative Council the courtesy of dealing with it in a timely manner.

If the government wishes to reject that request, if the government wishes to protect its minister from appearing before a Legislative Council committee, it should do that by dealing with this question and voting against the Council message. But it cannot run away from the issue and protect its minister from going before the upper house committee and giving an account to that committee of what the government's views are on unconventional gas by simply refusing to take this matter into consideration.

The opposition's view is that the question proposed by the minister to delay and avoid this matter being dealt with should be defeated and this house should then proceed to consider the request from the Legislative Council and agree to it forthwith.

Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport) (*By leave*) — I am shocked that the opposition would choose today of all days to delay a very important and indeed solemn time for this Parliament. As we know, on Tuesday this house agreed to a motion that today be set aside, following members statements, to hear an address from the Australian of the Year, Rosie Batty, and to then hear from six speakers who have a range of different experiences and backgrounds in relation to the critical issue of addressing and preventing family violence.

The motion that has come before the house involves a range of significant procedural issues, and members of the opposition know full well what those issues are.

The request for a minister to appear before a parliamentary inquiry from another place is being regarded as interfering with the functions of executive government.

As I indicated, this is a matter that should be dealt with at a later stage, not today when the Parliament has set aside the day to consider the important issue of addressing and preventing family violence. I am shocked that opposition members are choosing to insert this political stunt into this day of all days, and so we vigorously oppose the proposition that has been put by those opposite. We want to get on with hearing from the Australian of the Year. We want to get on with the debate that we have set aside this day for, and we resoundingly reject — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms ALLAN — We roundly reject the base political operation of those opposite.

Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) — The member for Box Hill made an important point: this debate needs to be brought on forthwith, not later today but right here and right now. We are prepared to debate this very important matter now for a number of important reasons. The first point is that this particular committee is set to report by the end of this parliamentary sitting, which means that this will be the only opportunity for the minister to appear before this committee before it is due to report. It is a very important committee.

What must be considered is that the government committed to undertake this inquiry as part of an election commitment it made. The government committed to put this inquiry in place, and the inquiry has now been put forward by the government. Furthermore, the committee, which includes members of the Labor Party, has voted to ask the minister to appear before the committee. Therefore government members want to hear from the minister, and I ask: what is the minister hiding and what is the government hiding?

This is all about transparency. The matter of onshore gas is an important matter for the people of Victoria. This inquiry has received a record number of submissions. Over 1800 submissions have been put before this inquiry, including a submission by the government, yet the government will not allow its own minister to report to the committee. What are government members hiding? They are protecting the

minister. This is a perfect opportunity to debate this matter right here and now and not put it off until next year when it is too late. The people of Victoria deserve better from the government; they do not deserve political games being played. We request that the government bring on the debate right now so that we can get the minister before the inquiry.

There is precedent for this matter. In December 2007 the then Minister for Consumer Affairs, Tony Robinson, was brought before an inquiry regarding the Liquor Control Reform Amendment Bill 2007 to give the committee conducting the inquiry the opportunity to ask him, as the responsible minister, about the bill. It has happened before in previous Parliaments, and it should happen right here and now. We ask that government members stop playing games, that they start to show some transparency and not hide and protect the minister from this very important inquiry.

Mr CARROLL (Niddrie) — Following on from the contribution of the visiting professor from Caulfield, let us be very clear: we have had bipartisan support for today's visit by the Australian of the Year and for dedicating this day to discussing the prevention of family violence. Now we have the visiting professor from Caulfield wanting to talk about unconventional gas. Within the hour the Australian of the Year, Rosie Batty, will be in the chamber talking about family violence, and he wants to talk about unconventional gas. The member for Caulfield should get back to working on his résumé and stick to the facts.

Honourable members interjecting.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Thomson) — Order! Members do themselves no credit. It is put that this message be taken into consideration tomorrow.

House divided on motion:

Ayes, 45

Allan, Ms	Kilkenny, Ms
Andrews, Mr	Lim, Mr
Blandthorn, Ms	McGuire, Mr
Brooks, Mr	Merlino, Mr
Bull, Mr J.	Nardella, Mr
Carbines, Mr	Neville, Ms
Carroll, Mr	Noonan, Mr
Couzens, Ms	Pakula, Mr
D'Ambrosio, Ms	Pallas, Mr
Dimopoulos, Mr	Pearson, Mr
Donnellan, Mr	Perera, Mr
Edbrooke, Mr	Richardson, Mr
Edwards, Ms	Richardson, Ms
Eren, Mr	Scott, Mr
Foley, Mr	Spence, Ms
Garrett, Ms	Staikos, Mr
Graley, Ms	Suleyman, Ms

Green, Ms
Halfpenny, Ms
Hennessy, Ms
Howard, Mr
Hutchins, Ms
Kairouz, Ms

Thomas, Ms
Thomson, Ms
Ward, Ms
Williams, Ms
Wynne, Mr

Noes, 40

Angus, Mr
Asher, Ms
Battin, Mr
Blackwood, Mr
Britnell, Ms
Bull, Mr T.
Burgess, Mr
Crisp, Mr
Dixon, Mr
Fyffe, Mrs
Gidley, Mr
Guy, Mr
Hibbins, Mr
Hodgett, Mr
Katos, Mr
Kealy, Ms
McCurdy, Mr
McLeish, Ms
Morris, Mr
Northe, Mr

O'Brien, Mr D.
O'Brien, Mr M.
Paynter, Mr
Pesutto, Mr
Riordan, Mr
Ryall, Ms
Ryan, Ms
Sandell, Ms
Sheed, Ms
Smith, Mr R.
Smith, Mr T.
Southwick, Mr
Staley, Ms
Thompson, Mr
Tilley, Mr
Victoria, Ms
Wakeling, Mr
Walsh, Mr
Watt, Mr
Wells, Mr

Motion agreed to.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Adjournment

Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport) — I move:

That the house, at its rising, adjourns until Tuesday, 8 December 2015.

Motion agreed to.

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

Olinda golf course site

Mr MERLINO (Minister for Education) — The Olinda golf course has been closed since 2012. This is a unique and beautiful open space of 34 hectares in the Dandenongs, and it also plays a vital role as a firebreak in the hills. There is a huge amount of interest in the community about the future of this beautiful piece of land, and earlier this year I held a public meeting, which hundreds of local residents attended. Great ideas were raised, including an off-lead dog area, a football-cricket ground, netball facilities, tennis courts, tourism opportunities, a community garden, a business incubator, mountain biking and art programs.

I was delighted recently to host in the hills the fantastic Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water,

who is at the table, alongside community representatives James Edge from the Save the Olinda Pool campaign, and president Ben Selby-Hele and secretary Tim Scott of the Hilltop Recreation Association, to announce the next step in realising a new vision for the former Olinda golf course. There is \$110 000 from the Andrews Labor government for a precinct plan. We will work with Parks Victoria, the Yarra Ranges Shire Council and the local community over the course of the next 6 to 12 months developing the precinct plan. That is a very exciting initiative for my community, and again I thank the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water.

Hastings electorate government performance

Mr BURGESS (Hastings) — The Hastings electorate has been ignored during the Premier's first year in office. For 11 years under the Bracks and Brumby governments budget after budget neglected our area. In stark contrast, over the four years the coalition was in government hundreds of millions of dollars were poured into badly needed upgrades to local infrastructure and services. Unfortunately this year's state budget was an immediate return to form for Labor, with no new funding at all provided for my community.

The budget did, however, contain an act of total betrayal of my community, something that unfortunately has become typical of Labor under the Premier. As is noted on page 89 of budget paper 4, Labor stripped the Port of Hastings Development Authority of \$80 million. We do not know where that money has gone, and the government is silent on that. The funding would have seen the planning phase of this critical project completed and a pathway created to turn the existing 100 mostly local jobs into thousands of jobs that would change the future for so many Hastings children and their families, secure Victoria's freight and logistics industry and underpin our state's economy in the process.

When you look at the previous four years under the coalition, you realise there could not be a starker contrast between governments. The former government provided \$110 million for the development of the port of Hastings, \$16.3 million for a new Somerville police station, \$4 million for a Somerville technical college, \$900 000 for a new Hastings jetty, \$275 000 for a new pedestrian crossing in Bittern, a home for the *Otama* submarine and \$81 million for a major upgrade of the Frankston Hospital. At the time of last year's election the coalition had also committed \$1 million to bring the *Otama* submarine ashore and \$2 million to reopen the Langwarrin railway station and establish a large park and ride.

State Emergency Service Bellarine unit

Ms NEVILLE (Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water) — On Monday, 23 November, I joined the fantastic members of the Bellarine State Emergency Service (SES) unit to inspect the upgrade and extension works currently being undertaken at the SES headquarters in Grubb Road, Drysdale. The works include the construction of a new shed to house emergency vehicles, trailers and boats, together with the refurbishment of the current building to increase and improve training facilities. These important works are the result of a fulfilled \$100 000 election commitment of the Andrews government, although with the assistance of the Minister for Emergency Services, I have also been able secure an additional \$50 000 to ensure the needs of the SES are met.

This is the busiest SES unit in our region, and this new facility will enable our volunteers to have decent facilities, particularly when they are responding to particular incidents. The upgrade will benefit not only the SES but also the wider community with the improved training facility being able to be expanded to provide broader community resilience training. This vital training allows the SES to equip individuals and community organisations with important skills with which to confront an emergency situation. In addition, the training room doubles as the emergency control room centre in the event of an emergency. Importantly what it will provide is a lounge area, a new kitchen and air conditioning, which the unit has never had before. This will enhance the support we provide to these very busy volunteers. Our thanks to them for the great work they do each and every day in our region.

Rotary Club of Knox mental health forum

Mr WAKELING (Ferntree Gully) — I personally thank the Rotary Club of Knox for hosting its third annual mental health forum, which I had the pleasure of chairing, and which was well attended. Congratulations to Bill Neale from the club. I also congratulate the staff from the Knox Social and Community Health Service who participated in this very important forum.

Wantirna South Primary School

Mr WAKELING — Congratulations to principal Wayne Macdonald, staff, students, Parents and Friends Association members, school council members and everyone involved in organising the annual school fete. It was a huge success, with lots of fun had by the hundreds of families in the Wantirna South community. It was a great event.

Country Fire Authority Ferntree Gully brigade

Mr WAKELING — I was pleased to join the captain of the Ferntree Gully Country Fire Authority brigade, Seamus Smith, and volunteers to sign the volunteer fire brigades Victorian pledge to support the call that any presumptive legislation will allow equal access for all firefighters. I am pleased to support the work of our volunteers in Knox, who do wonderful work in the Country Fire Authority.

Parliament House bowls tournament

Mr WAKELING — I was pleased to host the annual Sir George Knox Trophy bowls tournament here at Parliament House. Representatives from Ferntree Gully Bowling Club, Waverley Bowling Club and Boronia Bowls Club participated. I am pleased to see that the Ferntree Gully Bowling Club won the trophy for the first time in the event's history.

St Joseph's College, Ferntree Gully

Mr WAKELING — Congratulations to the St Joseph's College, Ferntree Gully 2015 graduating class. I was privileged to present the Ferntree Gully Endeavour Award. Congratulations to acting principal John Fazzino, his staff and all the students on another great year at this very important local school.

Brunswick Secondary College

Ms GARRETT (Minister for Emergency Services) — I rise today to acknowledge and celebrate the transformative contribution of \$10 million this government is investing in Brunswick Secondary College. I am proud to be part of a government that stands for education and delivering for all Victorians and gets things done. This overdue investment was promised by the Brumby government but cruelly denied by the Baillieu and Napthine governments, like so much in that era. It was then reinstated, as promised, in the Andrews government's first budget. These funds are being invested in upgrading the gymnasium, food technology, science and art rooms, and will improve the access of children in Brunswick to high-quality public education.

Brunswick Secondary College is a fast-growing inner city school providing excellent academic and extracurricular opportunities for its diverse student body, and it desperately needs these improved facilities and infrastructure to accommodate its expanding population. The \$10 million is an important part of this government's commitment to upgrade, rebuild and improve public schools across the state and realise its

vision to ensure that Victoria becomes the education state and kids across our state get a first-rate start in life. One of those young Victorians, I am proud to say, is doing work experience in my electorate office this week. His name is Patrick Butler. He is a fine example from our public school system.

I am really proud to have delivered such an important commitment to the people of Brunswick in our first year, and I congratulate my constituents, the Minister for Education and the Premier for making it possible.

Baddaginnie community defibrillator

Ms RYAN (Euroa) — I rise today to highlight gaps in the government's defibrillators for sporting clubs and facilities program. To apply, clubs must be non-government, not for profit and participating in an organised sport recognised by Sport and Recreation Victoria or the Australian Sports Commission. That means that communities such as Baddaginnie, which has a fantastic, active not-for-profit organisation, Baddaginnie Community Inc., as well as a Country Fire Authority brigade, but no sporting club, cannot apply for funding. I urge the government to re-examine the program's guidelines to ensure that small communities like Baddaginnie are not disadvantaged.

Young farmers scholarship program

Ms RYAN — My congratulations go to Sally and Ryan Malloy of Euroa, Daniel Hoch of Girgarre and Sara Safstrom of Mount Camel, who were among 13 winners of the first round of the young farmers scholarships program and have received a \$10 000 grant. I was very pleased to be able to attend the awards ceremony here in Parliament House. Sally and Ryan Malloy own and run Seven Creeks Grass Fed beef in Euroa and plan to use the grant towards developing and launching a high-fat, grass-fed, free-range meat product. Daniel plans to install a soil moisture probe at his 50 hectare agistment and hay farm and will complete a course in soil hydraulics with Irrigation Australia. Sara will be buying a drone to help monitor her lambs and will be seeking further education in sheep breeding and nutrition.

I wish to recognise their passion and effort as young farmers in the Euroa electorate and the example they are setting for young farmers Victoria-wide.

Preston electorate government achievements

Mr SCOTT (Minister for Finance) — Almost a year ago I was given the great honour of being re-elected as the member for Preston, and during that

time the Labor government has been busy — after four years of neglect — in ensuring that services and infrastructure are improved within my electorate. That is no more evident than in the area of education, where \$10 million has been allocated to the William Ruthven Secondary College redevelopment, which is now at the masterplan stage. I expect work to start in the new year. Incidentally, William Ruthven has had a remarkable turnaround, with 81 per cent of year 12 students receiving university offers last year.

There was also funding in the last budget for a feasibility study into a new high school for Preston. There has been much-needed funding for school maintenance and for school breakfast clubs to ensure that no student starts the day hungry.

As of August this year, private car park operators can no longer gain access to the VicRoads database of owners names and addresses. With two major private car parks in my electorate, plus more in surrounding suburbs, this measure will bring much-needed relief from threats of legal action for hundreds of my constituents.

Finally, the Preston ambulance station, constructed in the 1960s, which has represented an occupational health and safety issue, will be rebuilt as part of a \$20 million investment to modernise and upgrade ambulance facilities across Victoria. It has been a long year of hard work. The community I represent is a fabulous group of people who deserve to have the opportunities in life afforded to other residents across Victoria, and the Victorian Labor government is committed to governing for all Victorians.

Minister for Industry comments

Ms ASHER (Brighton) — It was a source of great shock to me to read a press release from the Minister for Industry dated 18 November. On opening the new Costco store at Moorabbin, the minister said:

The Andrews Labor government provided support for Costco to get the necessary federal government planning approval for the new store to be built at Moorabbin Airport.

Clearly I was dreaming when I thought I discussed this project with the managers of Costco when I was a minister. Clearly I was hallucinating when I clearly recalled the former Premier, Denis Napthine, turning the first sod at the Moorabbin site on 24 October 2014 — after the planning approvals were gained. Clearly I was on another planet to have recalled a letter sent to me on 24 February 2014 from Moorabbin Airport outlining the Costco timetable.

My advice to the Minister for Industry is that it does her no credit to just accept what her media advisers give her. In this instance she has claimed credit for something that was chronologically impossible for her to have claimed credit for. Whilst I respect that she was sent out by the government to open the store, in future she might like to ask the question of her spin doctors, 'Is this accurate?', and use her common sense rather than parrot nonsense given to her by her media advisers.

Government achievements

Ms KAIROUZ (Kororoit) — I am proud of what this Andrews Labor government has achieved in its first year of government. We have listened to the Victorian people, and we have delivered on hundreds of the commitments we made to the electorate at the 2014 election. Under the coalition government, funding was cut from our vital transport projects, and our roads were congested. That government was waging a war on paramedics; and money was slashed from health, transport and education, including TAFE; and we had the highest unemployment rate in 13 years. Since winning the election in 2014 the Andrews government has been getting on with it by getting Victorians back to work, ending the war with the paramedics and making sure that our public transport system is working, through projects like the Melbourne Metro and the removal of the 50 worst level crossings.

In the western suburbs it has been staggering how much we have been able to achieve in such a short time. We are building the Caroline Springs station, a project with the famous road to nowhere, which sat dormant for four years. We have started removing the St Albans level crossings, including Main Road East–Main Road West.

As well as creating jobs and saving motorists time, the removal of these level crossings will ensure that people in the west can get home safely. We have committed \$6.1 million to upgrade the roundabout at Taylors Road and Kings Road in Delahey. The upgrade will see the installation of traffic lights at one of Melbourne's most congested intersections.

The Andrews Labor government is delivering for Melbourne's west. It is investing \$200 million in the Western Women's and Children's Hospital in Sunshine to ensure that people can access services closer to home. We have committed \$150 million to the next stage of the M80 upgrade to widen the road and improve traffic management from Sunshine Avenue to the E. J. Whitten Bridge as well as \$273 million to widen CityLink and the Tullamarine Freeway from the Burnley Tunnel to Melbourne Airport, which will save

businesses and motorists travel time. This is a good government that is investing in the future of our state. We are getting on with it, and we have already delivered so much in our first year.

Hazelwood power station

Ms SANDELL (Melbourne) — Today I rise to speak on behalf of more than 12 000 people who are calling on the Labor government to replace the Hazelwood coal-fired power station with clean energy. Victorians believe in a brighter future, free of pollution and powered by the sun and the wind, but the government's continued support of Hazelwood, which is Australia's dirtiest power station, stands in the way of this clean, healthy future.

More than 12 000 people have signed a petition to replace Hazelwood, which we printed out this morning and delivered to the Minister for Energy and Resources. These people want us to cast off the shackles of the old, polluting energy sector and bring jobs to our state in the wind, solar, wave and geothermal energy sectors. They know we can make sure that nobody is left behind as we undergo this transformation, with proper transition plans for coal communities like the Latrobe Valley. Victorians are ready to embrace new energy, but we need the government to show political courage and to stop backing the polluting industries of the past.

Tomorrow tens of thousands of people will descend on central Melbourne to tell our governments we want stronger action on climate change. I will join them, along with many of the 12 000 people who signed the petition I presented today. Our message to Labor is clear: do not let Victoria lag behind. Help us become a clean energy powerhouse. Let us replace Hazelwood with clean energy.

Dandenong electorate government achievements

Ms WILLIAMS (Dandenong) — I rise to talk about the many achievements of the Andrews Labor government in its first year, with a focus on those that impact on my electorate of Dandenong. Areas like Dandenong never do well under conservative governments because ultimately conservative governments do not understand and have no empathy with the issues that affect everyday working people.

The manufacturing industry is the lifeblood of Dandenong, and I will start by highlighting how much this government has done to support this important industry in the south-east. We have invested \$274 million in 20 new E-class trams and 21 V/Locity

train carriages to be built by Bombardier in Dandenong, securing hundreds of jobs. The Liberals did not order a single tram in its four years. We introduced local content rules and a rolling stock strategy to prioritise local workers and give certainty to businesses to enable them to plan for the future. Recently we also announced \$6.5 million in funding to two Dandenong businesses to expand their high-value operations, again creating jobs and opportunities into the future. This government actively supports innovation; I am not even sure those opposite can spell it.

Children and families in Dandenong have also benefited from the government with Lyndale Secondary College receiving \$7 million for stage 1 of its rebuild and Dandenong High School receiving \$3 million for its next stage of works. Local schools also shared in \$4.8 million of state education funding. This is the single biggest injection of funding in the history of Victorian education.

Thanks to the Andrews Labor government the people of Dandenong will also enjoy an upgraded Cranbourne-Pakenham train line, and Dandenong commuters will also benefit from the \$400 million Monash Freeway upgrade, which will reduce the time spent in traffic and make road travel safer. We have funded new coronary care inpatient points of care at Dandenong Hospital. I have run out of time because there is too much to speak about.

Regional and rural infrastructure funding

Ms KEALY (Lowan) — Monday marks one long year of drought for rural and regional Victoria. I am not referring to local weather conditions but the funding drought imposed on country Victorians by the city-centric Andrews Labor government. Instead of rebuilding and renovating local schools, growing our future generations and providing them with the best possible educational environment, we are wondering which relocatable building will be ripped out of our schoolyards next week.

Would it not be great if we were now turning the first sod for a grains centre of excellence in Horsham, cementing our position as world leaders in grain research. Instead 50-year-old glasshouses are neglected, and the plans for growth are wilting under a Labor government that cannot see the benefit of investing in our region's key economic driver of agriculture. We are not continuing the coalition's firm commitment to get our roads management program back on track after years of Labor neglect. Instead our roads are being ground to dry dirt and rubble after a fatal 17 per cent cut to the road asset management budget and the

scrapping of the coalition's \$160 million country roads and bridges program.

All the good people of country Victoria are asking for is their fair share of public money, and this is something that has never happened and will never happen under a Labor government. Twenty-five per cent of Victoria's population live in country Victoria, but Labor has only allocated us a paltry 2.9 per cent of major infrastructure funding. Even worse, Labor's proposed port of Melbourne sale is a dud deal for regional Victoria, with Labor sending a mind-blowing 97 per cent of the proceeds of the sale back to Melbourne, setting aside a miniscule 3 per cent of the funds raised back to country Victoria to support the primary producers and manufacturers who work hard to ensure that we have product to export through the port. I certainly will be doing all I can to ensure that we break the funding drought imposed by the Andrews Labor government in 2018, and will continue the fight — —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Thomson) — Order! The member's time has expired.

Family violence

Ms GRALEY (Narre Warren South) — We know that men are the most likely perpetrators of family violence, yet there are many who commit to change and many who are willing to face up to what they have done and declare they will never do so again.

Many seek help through the Men's Referral Service in Abbotsford, which I visited last week with the Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence. This service has been working with men to end family violence for the past 22 years. Men choose when they use violence, and this is why men's behaviour change programs can give a man the skills and ability to not choose violence against their partner, ex-partner and children. The Men's Referral Service offers anonymous and confidential telephone counselling, information and referrals to help men stop using violent and controlling behaviour.

Many of its clients go on to take part in behaviour change programs, which feature in the outstanding documentary *Call Me Dad*. I had the opportunity, thanks to Shine Lawyers, to attend a screening of this movie, which tells a unique story about men who have perpetrated or who are at risk of perpetrating family violence. Over several months we follow their journeys as they attempt to change and heal their relationships with loved ones. Special thanks to the exceptional counsellors, David Nugent and Jacque Seamark, and production team Sophie Wiesner, Madeleine Hetheron,

Marden Dean and Rebecca Barry for telling such an important story.

We need men to stand up and say no to family violence. AFL players, including star Bulldog Marcus Bontempelli, joined The Line, a national violence prevention campaign, as ambassadors. In a great video Marcus reflects on how he expects his sisters and mother to be treated and hopes that other men are doing the same, because violence against women is not just a women's issue. The Dogs versus Cats next year will be a White Ribbon event. Go the Dogs!

Men can lead the way on this issue. To finish I would like to make special mention of yet another remarkable man, Kim Stowe, chief executive officer of WAYSS. He has seen family violence far too often and has helped many others to deal with it. I thank him for all that he has done.

Mount Waverley electorate Neighbourhood Watch

Mr GIDLEY (Mount Waverley) — Today in the Parliament I recognise all Neighbourhood Watch volunteers in MON 011 and MON 024 for their tremendous service to improving public safety. Like so many others, this Neighbourhood Watch area could not achieve all that it has without the dedicated support of its volunteers.

Today in the Parliament I pay special tribute to the following residents, who have recently been awarded certificates for 30 years of service to MON 11: Rita Brown, John Allen, Joan Rodd, Peter Dunbar, Charles Lewis, Rita Reed and Neil Thomas. Thirty years of service is remarkable, and I thank these residents for their service. I also thank and acknowledge area manager Colin McKinnon for his leadership in the area.

South East Volunteers

Mr GIDLEY — I also rise in the Parliament to acknowledge 30 years of outstanding community service by South East Volunteers, formerly the Monash Volunteers Resource Centre. South East Volunteers has been supporting the community of Monash since 1985 by connecting volunteers with opportunities in community organisations. Each year more than 1600 volunteers are placed in over 400 community service organisations. As a consequence of that volunteer service so many people's lives have been improved immeasurably. Today I provide a heartfelt thanks to all the volunteers of the last 30 years. I thank them for their service and also thank the South East Volunteers organisation.

Indian Senior Citizens Association of Victoria

Mr GIDLEY — Today in the Parliament I recognise the Indian Senior Citizens Association of Victoria. The association has a long history of providing social and education opportunities for local residents in the Mount Waverley district. I was pleased to attend the association's Diwali celebrations last weekend. Thanks to the association's committee, volunteers and all involved for organising such a fine and worthy celebration.

Pascoe Vale electorate government achievements

Ms BLANDTHORN (Pascoe Vale) — Ninety seconds is really not enough time. There is a lot to do and we are getting on with doing it. As was said by the member for Dandenong, areas like ours were forgotten under the Liberal government. There was no investment where it was needed most. In suburbs like Glenroy and Hadfield not very much was done.

As a result of four years of inaction too many kids were learning in run-down and unsafe classrooms. We cannot make up for four lost years in only one, but we are getting on with it. We delivered the single biggest education budget in Victorian history — \$780 million of capital into schools and kinders, which was the biggest ever capital budget. In my electorate of Pascoe Vale in particular we have invested \$5 million in the Westbreen Primary School to rebuild it. It should have been rebuilt in 2011. Struggling parents are getting help to pay for uniforms, camps and excursions, and we are also investing in breakfast clubs. Again in my electorate of Pascoe Vale this means that at Westbreen Primary School and Glenroy Central Primary School, where the kids need it most, they are getting a good breakfast of a morning.

We also legislated for Catholic school funding and capital for the first time ever in Catholic schools, and I look forward to taking the director of Catholic Education, Mr Stephen Elder, and the Deputy Premier to visit St Oliver Plunkett Primary School in Pascoe Vale in the coming weeks.

In relation to jobs, Victoria had the highest unemployment rate in 13 years. In Pascoe Vale youth unemployment was around 18 per cent. Economic growth had slowed, but as we have seen in the last few weeks, and as has been widely reported, economic indicators are up and Victoria's unemployment rate is down.

Brian Stevenson

Ms McLEISH (Eildon) — I wish to acknowledge the recent passing of Brian Stevenson of Alexandra. Brian was an active community member, and his large funeral was reflective of his strong presence and high standing in a number of communities and community groups. Meticulous in every way, Brian was a true gentleman and dear friend, and his caring presence will be greatly missed. I trust there was a red MG ready to escort Brian through the pearly gates. My thoughts are with Noel and their family.

Millgrove Residents Action Group

Ms McLEISH — I want to recognise the wonderful work of the Millgrove Residents Action Group (MRAG), particularly over the last 12 months. Convened 10 years ago, MRAG has dedicated much time and energy to bettering its community and has had some great results. Despite these positive results, to date MRAG does not intend to rest on its laurels. Instead it is driven to ramp-up the work it can do. In just 12 months the time and effort to put together the Millgrove community plan, which is now out for feedback, has been impressive. It has conducted workshops and consulted widely to develop a list of potential projects in priority order, which I note include a river walk and pathways through the town. The group worked out ways to engage the younger people in the community and has visited the local primary and secondary schools to get the input of students. Considerable work was undertaken to collate and categorise the ideas for incorporation into the plan. With the vision of working to create a welcoming, safe and vibrant place by being inclusive, caring and positive I am sure MRAG is well on its way.

I commend the work of the president, Maureen Halit, supported by Bob Lillie, Nancy Watson, Kate Baselier, Robert Hendy, Bert Saunders, Kerry Slater, Brenda Morgan, Lynn Turbitt, Mick Corrie, Barry and Frances Haywood, Arthur Saunders, Shelia Goodwin and Louise McNamara. Kate Baselier did a great job of putting it together. I also commend the work of Chris Riseley from Yarra Ranges Shire Council.

Bendigo West electorate government achievements

Ms EDWARDS (Bendigo West) — It gives me enormous pleasure to rise today to inform the house, especially those opposite, of what has been achieved in my electorate of Bendigo West after just one year of the Andrews Labor government. I can advise the house that

every single promise made to the electorate has been delivered or is in the process of being delivered

Education continues to be a major focus of this government after four years of neglect by the previous Liberal-Nationals government, especially in regional Victoria. Eight million dollars has been delivered for stage 2 of the new Castlemaine Secondary College, and I was pleased recently to turn the first sod and see work commence. There has been \$1 million delivered for the planning work now underway for the rebuild of Kalianna School Bendigo, not the second-rate patch-up job that the Liberals in Bendigo wanted but a brand-new school. There has been \$6 million for the Bendigo Senior Secondary College to remove old portables and create new social space. The new Bendigo tech school and the Bendigo innovation technology experience are well underway with the site announcement to be made soon. Seven kindergartens across Bendigo are set to commence capital work improvements. Planning for the new farm studies centre at Bendigo TAFE is also underway, which is a \$7.8 million project.

Other promises delivered include \$5 million towards the Bendigo Stadium upgrade; \$1 million towards the Harcourt mountain bike path, with planning also well progressed; and \$0.45 million for the fantastic Career Horizons and Passions and Pathways programs to help young people into jobs. The Renewable Newstead project is progressing thanks to our \$200 000 investment, and the Bendigo metro rail project is well on target to be delivered as promised with our \$2 million investment.

South-West Coast electorate roads

Ms BRITNELL (South-West Coast) — As I travelled around South-West Coast electorate during the recent by-election campaign, I listened to local constituents, business operators, farmers, councillors and communities, and they told me very clearly that the no. 1 local concern was roads, roads and roads. Roads are the lifeline of country Victoria. Our roads take our produce to local and export markets, our children to school and our families to the shops, to the doctor and to sporting and social events. There are few, if any, public transport services. This is why my constituents across South-West Coast are extremely disappointed that in the first budget of the city-centric Andrews government it has abolished the \$160 million country roads and bridges program and cut the road asset management program by a massive 17.3 per cent.

VicRoads data confirms that we have the worst roads in Victoria. The further west you go, the poorer they get.

Our roads are vital infrastructure in regional Victoria. They need increased funding to be fixed, maintained and upgraded, and not Labor government cuts.

Thomastown electorate government achievements

Ms HALFPENNY (Thomastown) — Residents of the electorate of Thomastown have told me they are so pleased to have an Andrews Labor government looking after our state. During the dismal four years of the coalition state government, residents of Thomastown were punished for no other reason than where they lived. Not one new dollar was spent on a road, a school, a community building or any other necessary infrastructure.

Already, in just one year, residents of the area have seen millions of dollars being put into the Thomastown electorate. We have got the Interface Growth Fund spending money from the government to upgrade Barry Road Community Centre, including new toilets and a kindergarten refurbishment. Millions of dollars have been provided to refurbish and facilitate crucial maintenance to primary and secondary schools. Extra Gonski funds have been committed to support learning and students in need. Breakfast clubs, camps and uniforms for children in need are all being supported by the state government.

Lots of big jobs need to be fixed, such as the Northern Hospital, which the government is looking at doing. There is also the business case that is nearly finished to ensure that the O'Herns Road project to fix congestion in the area will well and truly get underway. We have also got rail and major building projects that are going to provide local jobs in the area in terms of manufacturing, such as the structural steel and steel fabrication industries. Millions are being spent in supporting Whittlesea Community Connections and having a family violence duty lawyer and other projects to support the community.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Thomson) — Order! The member's time has expired.

Polwarth electorate community events

Mr RIORDAN (Polwarth) — Over recent weeks I have had the good fortune to visit and be a special guest at some of the many wonderful agricultural shows and events across the Polwarth electorate. Strong, proud and vibrant rural communities are at the heart of Polwarth. I acknowledge people such as Ray Thomas in Colac, Amanda Manifold in Camperdown and John Pekin at Noorat, who, with their hardworking volunteer

committees, have conducted very successful and important 2015 shows.

The CopRice Cobden Spring Festival has also been held recently, and I wish to place on the record that an amazing community spirit was on show during a long weekend when every facet of a strong country community was put on display. Cobden indeed has much to be proud of.

I also bring to the attention of the house the fine work of Barry Roycroft and his team, who are working hard to bring their international Lakes and Craters Three Day Event to the magnificent venue they have on the banks of Lake Gnotuk near Camperdown. This three-day event will be a great boost to the local community over the weekend of 3 to 6 December as competitors and judges come from around the world.

Family violence

Ms COUZENS (Geelong) — I will be conducting my second family violence forum in Geelong. I am pleased that the Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence will be attending.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Thomson) — Order! The time for members statements has expired.

Sitting suspended 10.30 a.m. until 10.39 a.m.

Business interrupted in accordance with resolution of house.

FAMILY VIOLENCE

Honourable members of both houses met in Assembly chamber at 10.39 a.m. for a special sitting of Parliament to hear an address by Ms Rosie Batty.

The SPEAKER — Order! The President of the Legislative Council and I would like to acknowledge the land of the tribes and nations of the Aboriginal people of Victoria. We pay our respects to them, to their culture and to their elders, past and present.

The President of the Legislative Council, the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition, members of the Legislative Council and members of the Legislative Assembly, honoured guests and members of the public: this week the Victorian Parliament has joined the United Nations and cities across the globe to shine a light on violence against women.

Victoria Against Violence is about raising awareness and educating the community on family violence and calling on all Victorians to unite and change. Two

nights ago we lit up Parliament House in an orange glow, the United Nations colour for the elimination of gendered violence. These lights will shine on our Parliament for 16 days to show our support for ending family violence.

Our Parliament joins other buildings around our city in this campaign — buildings such as the Arts Centre Melbourne spire, the Royal Exhibition Building, Federation Square, the State Library of Victoria, National Gallery Victoria, the Melbourne Star Observation Wheel, the AGL building and AAMI Park, all contributing to this important cause. This is an important gesture from our city and our state, but we know there is much more to be done, because violence against women has rightly been identified as a national emergency, and its consequences are devastating.

That is why today the Victorian Parliament will be doing something it has never done before. Members of both houses of the Victorian Parliament, here with us now, will be hearing a special address from the Australian of the Year, Rosie Batty. Legislative Assembly members will then hear from six other leaders, experts and advocates, and the rest of the parliamentary day will be dedicated to debate on family violence. This is a historic moment and one which demonstrates our commitment as Victorians to making a change and ending the violence. We want a Victoria that is equal, a Victoria that is safe. That is our human right.

I now invite the Premier and then the Leader of the Opposition to address the house.

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — Thank you, Speaker. On this unique occasion let me also offer an acknowledgement to the traditional owners of the land on which we meet and pay my respects to their elders, past and present.

Firstly, I want to thank everybody who has been involved in organising this very special and unique event. It is a rare opportunity for us to come together, put aside the day-to-day political contest and instead focus on an issue that is of critical importance to every single Victorian. To all of those who have been involved in organising this event I am truly grateful, and I am sure that all members of this place share in that sentiment.

Yesterday I was proud to stand on the steps of this building — this centre and pinnacle of our parliamentary democracy and of the values we hold dear — with every other member of this place. It was a

powerful statement and one that I think does this institution and our community great credit.

I am also proud today to welcome into this chamber someone whose words moved an entire nation and whose leadership is without question, and six other men and women who are making a very real difference because they, too, are very real leaders. And of course I am proud to lead a state that is taking giant steps to address one of the biggest crises of this young century. As we speak, the royal commission is deliberating, the funding is flowing and the inaugural 16-day Victoria Against Violence campaign is underway.

Something else is underway too, and that is, of course, the start of the holiday season. Our three little kids have already been reminding Cath and me that Christmas Day is now less than a month away. I am sure that I speak for every member when I say that I used to absolutely love and cherish this time of the year when I was a boy. The decorations were going up, and there was excitement in the air — it was the very definition of family. These are the core memories that shape and colour our entire life, whether we realise it, whether we appreciate it or not.

Every kid deserves the warm and safe embrace of the family room in December. Every kid needs it, so all of us today should think of the kids who will be denied it every night of this coming month. We should all think of the children out there who fear Christmas because it means dad is not at work. He is drinking with his mates, and he is about to come home. That is not a healthy childhood; that is horror. And that is how you damage a life forever.

We have said so much in recent times about terrorism and mass tragedy — and rightly so. We have said it with one voice, and we are stronger for that. But on this day, and indeed on all days, we cannot forget that a very private type of terrorism still lives unabated in our homes, and it knows no holiday season; it knows no rest. Over Christmas it will continue, and in many ways it will worsen.

This is not an isolated problem. It is a social problem, it is an economic problem, it is everyone's problem and all of us must admit that we have let this get away from us. Violence against women and children is the oldest weapon of fear the world has ever known. It has a rigid ideology too: privilege and entitlement, power and control. We still do not have all the answers, and it is important that we admit that too.

I have had the honour of serving as the leader of my party for five years, and that has brought a few special

moments. One, and perhaps the most profound, of those special moments, was the chance I had to call Rosie Batty in April last year just a few moments before I was about to go on stage and announce our plan to establish Australia's first Royal Commission into Family Violence. It was a short conversation, but it was unforgettable. I, like every member of this place, have heard many speeches. Certainly in my 13 years I have heard many speeches in this place, but today is very special indeed.

Rosie, as you know better than anyone, the coroner's report into Luke's death was recently released. You have shown great resolve, unimaginable strength of character and real courage throughout this whole process. I do not just admire it; I thank you for it on behalf of all Victorians. I thank you for it because you have changed the way a generation of lawmakers comprehend family violence. You have changed the way a woman in danger might react to it, and hopefully together we can all change the way that certain men in our community live their lives, because it is not the woman who needs to change.

The coroner has made recommendations, and we are implementing all of them. What is more, I have formally referred the coroner's findings to the Royal Commission into Family Violence. The royal commission, along with the coroner's report, will change everything. We in this Parliament are not just wearing a ribbon; today we are wearing our values. Fear does not belong in any family, and I know that every member of this Parliament commits to its eradication because we know it is our responsibility and our problem.

Rosie Batty, I thank you for joining us today. Today all of us are in your debt for your courage and the courage, conviction, passion and service that every police officer, support worker, expert and advocate demonstrates as they save lives every single day. We thank them for their service and commit to honour their service and the loss of people like Rosie by taking real action on what is our national emergency and our national shame.

The place that ought to be a sanctuary and the safest place is in fact the place where the biggest law and order challenge in our nation is unfolding, and that is family homes in every neighbourhood, in every community and in every part of our state and nation. This is our national emergency, and we are going to do something about it.

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) — Violence begins with disrespect, particularly men's disrespect

towards women, but also to children, to other men, to those in same-sex relationships and to those from a multicultural background and Indigenous communities. Sadly, it is principally disrespect leading to violence against women. All of us here today will learn and hear more sobering facts.

While we sit proudly as one of the wealthiest nations in the world, self-satisfied at our level of economic and indeed social success as a society, there is a family violence call to Victoria Police once every 8 minutes, 187 times a day, 1307 times every week. Nearly a quarter of all calls to the Safe Steps family violence helpline are from women of a non-English-speaking background. Other figures show that Indigenous women are 34 times more likely to suffer family violence than non-Indigenous women and 11 times more likely to die at the hands of their partners.

In our whole community, intimate partner violence is the leading contributor to ill health and premature death in women under 45, and that is staggering. Family violence, violence against women, takes a number of forms. It is not just physical. Mental abuse, financial abuse, standover tactics — these are commonplace, and they must be confronted. If there is one positive that every Australian can draw on, it is the fact that we are here today confronting this issue as a Parliament. It has come to our nation's attention through tragedy, and it is depressing and horrific that it has had to do so.

To Rosie Batty I say: your story has touched our nation. As you have said, you are not alone. There are thousands of women who went through or are still going through the experience that you went through and what you endured for so long. But you and your son, Luke, and his tragic death and the foundation in his name are going to change this nation.

I am proud to see the federal Parliament, the federal government, recognising that this issue is not just a local one or a state one. It is, as the Premier said, a national emergency. I commend the state government for the organisation of today. I offer my commendation for the appointment of Minister Richardson in her role. I place on the record and reaffirm the work by the Napthine government in doubling spending to address family violence to record levels to confront this issue. I acknowledge and commend the Municipal Association of Victoria for taking a leadership role with local governments to bring them all on board to the national move to end family violence.

Only as one will we defeat this scourge. Only as a national move from all parliamentarians, from industry, from business, from community groups and from all

quarters of our society coming together will we finally get the message out there that family violence is utterly unacceptable in any form.

I was proud to see the Prime Minister taking personal national leadership in this space through the extension of the 1800RESPECT contact service. Our nation's leaders, whatever their political colour and whoever they are, are acknowledging that still far too often we blame women for staying in abusive relationships. We excuse the severity of the abuse and almost seek to find ways to excuse the man involved. Our national leadership is acknowledging these flaws and seeking to find ways to combat such disrespect, and it is acknowledging the great need for attitude change in this space, and that will be a lasting legacy for our nation and for all of us when we succeed.

I am the father of three sons. They are young, they are boisterous and, surprisingly, they are quite loud! My wife and I know that it is always hard to teach boys of this age to practise respect, not just hear about it. But it is so important for us all to do so. It is not just for our generation that we are changing attitudes and confronting family violence; it is particularly for theirs.

I conclude by again stating that I am proud to see this Parliament, our federal Parliament, federal parliamentarians and many, many local councils, businesses, community groups and individuals rise up against the scourge that is affecting so many. If you love someone, you do not harm them mentally, financially or physically. If you love someone, you respect them. Sadly in our community there are many people who do harm those they claim to love — children, men, people in same-sex relationships, Indigenous families, multicultural families and of course, most of all, our women.

Finally our nation is standing up and saying what needs to be said. Family violence is wrong. Violence against women is wrong. Once and for all it must end.

The SPEAKER — I thank the Leader of the Opposition. It is my great pleasure to introduce the Australian of the Year, Rosie Batty. Rosie has truly awoken the nation with her strength, resilience and determination in the face of so much adversity. We all remember that morning when she faced the media after the tragic death of her son, Luke, and shook us all to our core with her words. Rosie's story jolted Australia into recognising that family violence can happen to anyone. She has put family violence on the national agenda and has been uncompromising in her resolve to bring this issue out into the open and demand a change to how we do things.

Rosie's incredible strength and selfless efforts are an inspiration to many other victims of family violence. In the short time she has been Australian of the Year, Rosie has driven a huge amount of public awareness on this issue and brought it all the way to the very top of government. The President of the Legislative Council and I commend Rosie for her courage and welcome her to the floor.

Ms BATTY — Speaker, the President of the Legislative Council, the Premier of Victoria, the Leader of the Opposition, members of the Legislative Assembly and members of the Legislative Council, I am truly honoured to be here today addressing both houses of Parliament. That is the last I am going to read of my notes. I think the reason people have listened to me is because I speak authentically; I speak from the heart; I speak, as I see it, the truth. People want to hear the truth. People want to hear feelings.

The reason Luke's story had an impact is because it touched the heart of the Premier, who has a son of similar age to Luke. It touched your hearts, as fathers, as grandfathers, as uncles, as aunties and as mothers, because no-one loves our children more than we do. We would do anything to protect them. That was Greg. That was Luke's father. Yet he was able to murder his son, the son he loved, in spite of how much he loved him. It is something I cannot quite understand. It is something I do not think any of us will truly get. The need for power and control at any cost is beyond our comprehension. But that is how women are living right now, today.

I am really privileged to have been given the opportunity to be Australian of the Year. I have had great support from the state government, the support that has been able to help me speak at approximately 250 events and reach 70 000 people — and that does not include important meetings with influential people, and it does not include media announcements and media interviews.

I have spoken far and wide, and I have spoken to many professions, many community organisations and many family violence forums, and what I have done every single time is try to get people to understand that this issue actually happens to people like us. It does not just happen in those rough neighbourhoods, it does not just happen to those other people. In fact when we say one in three women is affected by violence in their lifetime, I know that is one in three women wherever I am, and here today will be the same. While we are talking about victims of violence, I know there are perpetrators of violence here also, who think, 'I would never hit a

woman, so it can't possibly mean me'. Well, there are many forms of violence.

A lot of people still do not see this as a gendered issue. They still cannot quite grasp how it could be a gendered issue. Surely it is because of drug and alcohol problems, surely it is those people with mental illness, surely it is not because of people like us and our attitudes. You are the leaders of the country, you have huge power and influence, and it is every bit people like you, me and everybody who contribute to this situation.

It is really confronting. But not as confronting as being one of those women who have been murdered this year. Up to two women a week are being murdered. If you do not see that as a gendered issue, I have no idea what we have to do to convince you. Because right now I do not hear of two men a week being murdered at the hands of their partners. I do not know of one in three men who are violated and physically assaulted by their partners, unless indeed it is another man.

So yes, women are also violent and also not perfect. But the statistics are clear and the police business is clear, and if you were to go out with the police on any given day, you would be attending call-outs where women were being bashed, beaten, humiliated, violated and unsafe. One in four of their children will be a witness to the trauma and permanently affected. They will grow up always having their choices compromised. The quality of their relationships will always be flawed, and some, but not all, will perpetrate violence and continue to be perpetrators.

I am thrilled with a lot of the changes and investment that we are now making in Victoria. It is about time. We are not fortunate. We have been working in this sector for decades and decades to get recognition for the safety of women. It has fallen on deaf ears. We have struggled to get funding, we have struggled to be resourced, we have struggled to be supported and heard, but I am thrilled that finally it is starting to penetrate.

We now have leadership from the political parties that we have been looking for for so long. We cannot afford to let the momentum that we are now starting to gain fall off. We all have to individually be committed to challenge our thinking, challenge our attitudes, challenge our behaviours and look at how we can within our circles of influence change and be open and honest with each other. It is the least we can do.

I work with some amazing people who have helped and supported me on my journey. I have learnt a lot, and I will continue to learn an awful lot more. I learn a lot

from kids. They grow up with such wisdom and insight. If we can just continue to nurture that so that they do not go into our systems and organisations and have it squeezed out of them. We need to stand by and indeed see what respect looks like. What does it look like?

I commend Victoria Police for having the courage to actually review its own organisation and to look at how it treats women within its own organisation. Those results will be confronting, but they are a brave team of committed people on our front line who are working hard to change their culture, who are not afraid to talk about gender inequality and call it as it is — a gendered issue — and who are leading by example, because if they cannot get their own internal organisation right, then what chance have they got to impose it on others? That is the kind of insight we need in every organisation and every corporation.

We must have a true and honest look at our culture, at our attitudes, and at how we need to shift and change them, because the more gender equal societies have less violence. But we cannot change this without changing attitudes, and the attitudes that we need to change start with our own. I thank you for this opportunity today to speak bluntly, to speak from the heart, about an issue that we all have to take responsibility for within our own communities, in our own suburbs and in our own homes.

I am appalled and horrified about what has recently been happening in international terrorism. But I want us to really understand this: when we think of terrorism, we think of how awful it would be to have a gun to our head, to actually be beaten or to actually be murdered. When we see it on the streets in the most barbaric of ways we are horrified and do not ever want that to happen to us. But that is happening now in people's homes behind closed doors. Women are being stabbed, beaten, having their brains blown out, terrorised. Some women will never ever have true safety again. This is about power and control. It is a choice. It is not about anger management. It is a choice. It is about power and control.

So when you do call 000, when you do take those first steps, do we confidently have the infrastructure to support these victims and keep them safe? Currently we do not. With all of the awareness that we are raising, all of the added insight and rage about this issue, we have a moral and a human rights responsibility to make sure that we have the structures in place to support their journey.

I meet women wherever I go — some wearing wigs, some wearing false glasses — who will come to me

quietly and secretly and say, 'I've just been moved across to Perth', or, 'I'm in hiding in Bankstown', or 'I'm in Broadmeadows', or 'I'm in Brisbane'. They say, 'My family is here but I'm there. I can't be photographed. I can't be caught on camera. I have to use a false name. In fact I don't know who I am anymore because I can't be me. This is my way of living because I have no other choice; I have no other choice because the perpetrator will never stop hounding me and looking for me, and he will kill me when he finds me'.

I know women who have an alarm strapped to them 24/7, who can never go out in public without the fear that somehow someone may just attack them. I know other women who will never go out again for fear about what may happen when they do. I know women who have got CCTV cameras all over their homes. This is the reality of how our victims are having to live. I want us to think about that, not just the prevention and the long-term investment that we need to stop and change behaviours before the violence starts. I want us to think about and understand exactly what people are enduring right now, every day, and who possibly have not got hope.

When we consider how courageous it is to ring 000 and go to court and do all the things that they need to do, I want us to also consider that it is no less courageous to be enduring the violence and to be surviving the violence. They are some of the choices that people are having to make.

What I would like to see is no more of the question, 'Why doesn't she just leave?'. I think we already know, or we should be starting to determine, that that is the very great risk. That is when a woman is likely to and possibly will be killed. But I want us to be asking the question, 'Why doesn't he stop being violent?', and indeed, 'Why doesn't he leave?'. As we switch from victim blaming to perpetrator accountability, I look forward to our systems and processes and our organisations working collaboratively together to make men accountable, to offer them the support and direction and opportunity for change, because without us working collaboratively together we will never achieve what we can. Thank you.

Honourable members stood and applauded.

The SPEAKER — The President of the Legislative Council and I, the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition and all members thank you, Rosie. Council members will now leave the house. Following that, we will continue with more speakers.

Members of the Legislative Council withdrew from chamber.

The SPEAKER — Order! I would now like to introduce Kristy McKellar. Kristy is a courageous anti-violence advocate who has worked with the Attorney-General's department, the Royal Commission into Family Violence and Victoria Police to help formulate family violence policy. A survivor of family violence herself, Kristy has a deep understanding of the family violence system and the challenges victims confront when seeking assistance. I welcome Ms McKellar to the floor.

Ms McKELLAR — I wish to acknowledge the Speaker, the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition and the members of both houses joining here today. What an incredible honour it is to have been invited to stand before you to share my intimate knowledge of this global human rights violation. Survivors demonstrate immense courage. When silence is so very inviting, they step forward to share their truth so others know they are not alone and so they can influence change. Today I am privileged to be a voice on behalf of many who, despite experiencing the most confronting times, are able to piece by piece bravely take their lives back.

Seventy-eight per cent of Australians still cannot understand why a woman would not leave an abusive relationship. 'Why didn't you just leave?' is one of the most painful questions you could ever pose to a victim. It is incredibly dangerous to leave an abuser. The final step in the pattern can be an escalation in assault or even death. For us as a community to still tolerate these attitudes is incredibly dangerous and supports significant consequences. Knowing the devastating impacts of family violence, it is disappointing that violence against women is still being accepted, justified or excused. You are surrounded by individuals who are affected, and some will be in this very room today.

The family violence I suffered destroyed my life. I had never known violence could exist in a man before this experience. I was confident, secure and successful, but still I was not immune to this encounter. I became a victim of unspeakable cruelty, suffering extreme and unrelenting forms of violence, intimidation, control and abuse, spanning from physical, verbal, psychological and financial to sexual. Being tormented behind closed doors and having it disguised as love was inhumane. To hold a secret of this kind was soul destroying. I could see no way out, and I thought that this would be my life. There are repeated promises for reform, but these promises are always empty.

The abuse escalated through my high-risk pregnancy, when I was being treated with chemotherapy. It deeply saddens me that my daughter's family violence experience commenced in utero. The abuse continued after my daughter's birth — holding my newborn tightly in my arms while being kicked forcefully in my shin. The impact was so great it broke the plaster wall behind me. The assaults I endured were intentional. They were planned and calculated. My mobile phone was often hidden, placed on silent or broken before attacks. At times my perpetrator smiled during the attacks; seeing me terrified made him feel powerful.

The first time I attempted to hold my perpetrator to account, it resulted in requiring physiotherapy on three separate occasions to rectify my injuries, also leaving me with a fractured vertebra behind my ribs.

Animal abuse was evident in our family home. I witnessed the perpetrator throw one of our pet dogs off a handrail, down our decking and a flight of six stairs and onto brick-paved ground.

On the final assault my perpetrator dissolved my chemotherapy medication in water so I was not able to take my critical treatment. The perpetrator placed his hands around my throat and began to choke me. All I could do was to look at him in the eyes and beg him with mine to allow me to live. As tears streamed down my face, he showed no emotion at all. By the time my perpetrator made a choice to allow me to breathe, I had almost been rendered unconscious. Immediately I was then struck to the head. The impact was so significant I lost hearing in my right ear. Gradually my hearing returned across the following day. I had my body exposed intentionally and inappropriately viewed and was then indecently assaulted. This more than hour-long attack occurred while my 20-week-old daughter lay distressed in her cot in the next room, with our attacker then raising a glass vase lid above both of us. The perpetrator's final words to me as he left were, 'I will hunt you down'. And I believed him.

I suffered multiple injuries. These injuries later formed 21 confronting photographs to be submitted as evidence in a criminal court. After this attack, sadly, due to the shock and trauma my body was subjected to, my breastmilk deteriorated, and I lost the ability to feed my daughter. This intimate bond and attachment I had been sharing with her was stripped away from me.

After almost four years of living a life that no-one should have to endure, I was finally able to break my silence and gain police protection. I was taught a lesson that I am not sure I could ever have imagined learning in the entirety of my lifetime. I learnt that love from a

man should not leave you bruised and lying on a floor, that love should not leave you choked and out of breath, with tears in your eyes. Love should not leave you to beg, 'Please stop'. I learnt that love should never be cruel and that no love from a man should make you wish you would want to die.

Upon pressing charges, I was informed by police that my perpetrator had a prior criminal history. I was married to a man I did not know at all. After I pressed charges, within two days the perpetrator commenced financial abuse, transferring money out of our joint bank account. Eight days later he moved his entire salary to a new account, leaving my daughter and me with no financial support whatsoever — and I was on unpaid maternity leave. It only took seven weeks before my perpetrator commenced breaching the intervention order. He breached it on six occasions.

I then became a victim of the justice system. After a confronting two-day hearing in a Magistrates Court, despite the perpetrator pleading not guilty, he was found guilty of the crime and the breaches committed. He was sentenced to 14 months imprisonment. The sentencing outcome was immediately appealed. My offender was released on bail and was free to walk out alongside me back into the community.

Eight months later I was then re-traumatized in a three-day hearing in the County Court. I had to relive the ordeal once again. The County Court judge reduced sections of my victim impact statement before allowing me to read it, which effectively sent me a message that I must again remain silent. My daughter may not have had the language skills to articulate her story in the court as I did, but this did not mean she was not affected by her early exposure to family violence. The perpetrator continued to plead not guilty in this court. Again he was found guilty; however, his sentence was severely reduced to simply a two-year community correction order to serve nearly 250 community hours.

When the sentencing outcome was handed down, my whole world was turned upside down. The system failed to protect us. It left us unseen and unheard, as if we were nothing at all. I felt utterly powerless, vulnerable, overwhelmed and defeated. I did not know how I would keep us safe. I was required to move house twice and change my vehicle once to remain undisclosed and safe. I received a lifetime sentence — a life whereby I am alarmed 24 hours a day and have CCTV cameras installed at my home.

What type of a justice system re-assaults victims and leaves them fearing for their lives? What kind of system is so traumatic and gruelling that it contributes to

devastating health consequences for victims that go unseen, a system that sadly is so extremely confronting that my chemotherapy treatment began to fail as my body was shutting down, resulting in me being placed on organ transplant treatment? The failings and gaps within our family violence system can no longer be ignored or have disproportionate attention.

Moving forward, I hope to see a commitment to ensure that victims are respected, allowing them to bare their souls to the law and letting them have confidence that their rights will be given a reality in their everyday practice. I hope to see recommendations endorsed that will lead to the implementation of much-needed various policy and reform improvements. I see the shaping and changing of the future system consistently having a strong focus and a commitment to better protecting victims of violent crimes and holding perpetrators to account.

It is encouraging to see Victoria leading the way, setting a standard and engaging multiple experts in the field to influence the creation of a system that works as a whole, both reliably and consistently; one that supports victims in overcoming the unrelenting obstacles courageously. Both power and obligation sit with all of us to construct a system that provides victims with justice, validates their violent experience, prioritises their safety and wellbeing; a system that leads in advocacy, prevention, intervention, education and information sharing, providing well-resourced, sustainable, targeted quality services to address the need across the wider spectrum of family violence.

I see great potential for system enhancements that contribute to restoring confidence to survivors, ensuring that we are all accountable for measuring progress and that we continue to move in the right direction to have a bold Victorian system that sends a message that we can still do the impossible after we have been through the unimaginable. We should never underestimate the important role that each of us plays in changing lives, enabling individuals to live the lives they had imagined but just never thought possible. Together we have the power to create change and rebuild lives. Thank you.

Honourable members applauded.

The SPEAKER — We thank you, Kristy.

Our next speaker is Joumanah El Matrah, a journalist, a fearless community advocate and executive director of the Islamic Women's Welfare Council of Victoria. Trained as a psychologist, Joumanah has been active in the community welfare sector for over a decade. She has published a number of works on Muslim women in

Australia and has a deep understanding of the intersection between domestic violence, race relations, religion and sexism. I welcome Ms El Matrah to the floor.

Ms EL MATRAH — Thank you. Let me begin by acknowledging the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition and all of you here today.

I have been asked to reflect from a personal perspective as much as possible on my almost 20 years of working against violence. Fifteen of those years have been dedicated specifically to working against violence which targets immigrant and Muslim women. I am very nervous, not only because I am standing in Parliament — and I am a girl from the public housing estates — but because I want to do justice to women's experience of abuse and their amazing courage and integrity, which I hope to honour meaningfully in this presentation.

Like many of you here today, I chose my profession to make a meaningful contribution to society. I wanted to make my life mean something by helping others, and while I do not any more work with women one to one, the work that I did with women, accompanying them as they sought to escape violence, really changed me, and it made me understand that improving women's lives improved society for everyone.

When I first came into the sector, like many others I had a naive innocence; I just wanted to help people, and that did not necessarily, I think, reflect a commitment to society. But that changed. Really what I think has changed me — and profoundly — is not only the severity of the physical injuries that I saw women carry, it is not only the gravity of the psychological or emotional harm inflicted, it is not only the sheer devastation that is wrought on the lives of women, some of whom will be traumatised for the rest of their lives, and it is not only about the children affected or the absolute unfairness of young lives forever changed and robbed of their potential before they have even started. It is not only the shock that we as workers continue to feel in the system that we work in and that we support when we see that system repeatedly fail women in need and fail to protect them at the most vulnerable points of their lives.

It is not only these things that change us as workers, and it is not only that we fail as a society to protect women in need; it is that at times we in fact make them vulnerable to violence in the first place. For example, we have all known for a long time that women who arrive in Australia on a spousal visa by necessity are completely dependent on their spouses. When that

spouse is violent, a woman becomes a prisoner of that violence. In that scenario a woman's vulnerability is, structurally speaking, a position that we have created, and the repercussions for this are irreversible for some women.

One of my very first clients when I started working in this area, Ranya, arrived in Australia to a husband who beat and tormented her on a regular basis. She wanted to go back home, but her country had fallen into civil war. She decided to bide her time and wait for her citizenship, but by that time she had endured years of physical violence, which at times involved injuries that meant she could no longer carry her own children. She had had her head flushed down the toilet so many times that she had just stopped counting. She had been locked in her house for weeks on end. She had been deprived of friends and family, and of course there was all the denigration that comes with that. She had received the constant repetition that she was worthless and that she was a burden to all those around her and she was both responsible for and deserving of the violence that was perpetrated against her. By the time her citizenship arrives, or the possibility of citizenship arrives, she believes she is nothing and she is deserving of nothing. After all those years she had been indoctrinated in her own lack of value as a human being. Citizenship is all about the possibility of a better life in Australia and she did not believe that she deserved a better life.

It is not just that women are held captive in the time that they are on their spousal visa. I worked with women who had been citizens for 10 years and they still think that their husbands can have them deported and take their children from them in the process. All of us in this chamber who are immigrants or children of immigrants know that the challenges for immigrant women are sometimes easily double those of ordinary women.

What I have found most difficult in working on violence and what haunts me still and what I hear a lot about still is the constant blame that we continue to find ways to articulate. 'She spoke back', 'She provoked him', 'She doesn't know her place' and 'She's a bad mother'. For immigrant and migrant women we find yet more ways to blame them. 'The problem is that in that culture they're too passive', 'In that culture they're too fiery' and 'They're too domineering'. For Muslim women there is the additional layer of blame: that this is their role in their religion. 'Those Muslims are all a backward lot anyway', 'In their religion it's normal to treat women like that' and 'That religion has a propensity for violence anyway'.

Blaming women, blaming culture, blaming religion is of course not without its purpose. But blaming culture and religion is not only about the denigration of the culture or religion at hand. I have also come to understand after all these years that it is actually another way to blame women. If we do not blame them, we seem to render them complicit in their own abuse, violence and suffering. All of this helps us, I believe, to create a space between 'us' and 'them'. 'Those women are not like us' and 'Those men are not like us'. Even though we live in the same place at the same time in the same nation, we are not part of the same society, or we behave as if we are not part of the same society.

The moments of despair that I have had in doing this work — and they have been just moments — are when as a society we have not pushed back against that instinct to distance ourselves and believe that there is nothing we can do. It has been heartbreaking at times to hear people repeatedly say, 'It's not really my portfolio' or 'It's not really my area of expertise' or 'I'm working on a different area'. Everything connects back to what happens in the home.

All of us have been privy to the work of the Royal Commission into Family Violence and we have all heard about the hardship, the pain and the devastation wrought by violence in the home. We know a lot, and we now know enough to be responsible for our failure to act and our failure to see what violence against women in our society actually means.

My first full-time job was working with homeless men, some of whom had spent all of their adolescent and adult lives in some way or another without a home. While I do not want to generalise or simplify what is really a very complex phenomena of homelessness, I cannot recall in the seven years that I worked with homeless men one person whose early life or formative years was not marred by violence in the home. It seemed to me back then and it seems to me now that those men were really dispossessed and displaced, they were completely lost to us as a society and that these were men who might have wanted a different life for themselves, one of work, one of home, one of children, one of love, one of care, one of routine, and they did not get any of this; and that we as a society lost whatever they might have been able to contribute to us had their upbringing been different.

It is profoundly naive of us to assume that violence in the home does not lead to other forms of violence in our society. It is naive to assume that it does not affect us all and it does not cost us all and that our failure to act does not say something about us as a society. When we talk about violence against women we know that

families and societies are also devastated by that violence, so however you decide to proceed as a Parliament, you know that on this issue we are all relying on you. Thank you.

Honourable members applauded.

The SPEAKER — We thank you, Joumanah.

I would now like to introduce Adjunct Professor Muriel Bamblett, who is the chief executive officer of the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA), one of the oldest Aboriginal community-controlled organisations in Victoria. She brings a unique insight into the impact of family violence, not just on Aboriginal communities but on Aboriginal children. It is important that we hear about their experience too, and I now welcome Ms Bamblett to the floor.

Ms BAMBLETT — Good morning everybody. I am a very proud, strong Yorta Yorta and Dja Dja Wurrung woman, and I am deeply committed to and advocate for the rights of my people. Today I would like to begin by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land, the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation and the Bunurong people. I would like to pay my respects to their elders past and present and to all Aboriginal people here in the room and listening.

Today it is important to acknowledge and thank the Presiding Officer, the Speaker, and the Premier of Victoria, the Honourable Daniel Andrews, for the invitation. I acknowledge the opposition leader, the Honourable Matthew Guy, the Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, the Honourable Fiona Richardson, the shadow minister, Georgie Crozier, and all honourable members here today.

Yesterday we know was International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and today I want to ask you to reflect on violence perpetrated against our Aboriginal women here in Victoria. I work for the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA), and what drives me and what drives all of our staff, our carers and volunteers is the desire that all Aboriginal children are safe — that they are safe physically, emotionally and culturally.

From this perspective I would like to acknowledge Rosie Batty, an amazing woman, and acknowledge her especially for her story this morning. It was amazing to hear it — and tragic. Rosie is a survivor of family violence; sadly Luke Batty did not survive. We must never forget children in any of our approaches to family violence. I would like to thank Rosie for her active role as Australian of the Year.

I would also like to thank other campaigners and organisations such as Our Watch, White Ribbon and Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety, or ANROWS, just to name a few.

I would like to acknowledge the government for announcing a royal commission and for the first time having a Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence. All this has led to an increased awareness and understanding within the community of the extent and impact of family violence in Australia.

I would like to acknowledge and thank the members of Indigenous family violence regional action groups, who are our Aboriginal people who work on the ground to look at and address family violence. I also extend thanks to Aboriginal Affairs Victoria and to the Department of Health and Human Services, which has done a lot of work on addressing Indigenous family violence.

Family violence impacts Aboriginal people at vastly disproportionate rates to the rest of the population and has devastating impacts. Aboriginal women are 30 times more likely to be hospitalised from family violence and almost 11 times more likely to be killed as a result of a violent assault. Family violence has significant, far-reaching and multiple impacts on Aboriginal people, especially women and children. We know that 80 per cent of Aboriginal children in care go into care because of family violence — 80 per cent! In our services we see the multigenerational impacts of family violence, especially the link between family violence and child protection.

Family violence is a leading contributor to women's homelessness, poverty, criminalisation, incarceration, mental health and physical ill health and drug and alcohol abuse. We therefore cannot think of family violence in isolation. Our work at VACCA in supporting survivors of institutional child sexual abuse is a stark reminder of this. Among the survivors we have supported almost all men who have been sexually abused have gone on to perpetrate family violence and almost all women who have been sexually abused have acknowledged being victims of family violence. This leads us to ask the question why? Why today, in 2015, are Aboriginal women so much more likely to experience family violence than non-Aboriginal women?

I would contend that the cause of family violence in Aboriginal communities has much of its origins in the treatment of Aboriginal people — in the treatment of our people through the process of colonisation of this country. The ongoing impact of racism, discrimination,

bullying and stereotyping that Aboriginal people experience on a daily basis also contributes to family violence. In the face of these daily experiences Aboriginal people often feel ashamed, humiliated, fearful — and they experience a sense of powerlessness and hopelessness. In the Aboriginal community, family violence, as well as being understood as a feature of gender and structural power and inequality between the genders, is also seen as a result of the impact of colonisation. The loss of traditional male role models, forcible removal, relocation and separation of families, loss of cultural identity and the dominant cultural impositions that have been placed on Aboriginal people all contribute to the situation we have today.

These factors have led to the myriad social and economic problems that the Aboriginal community faces and that this government deals with every day. The current pervasiveness of loss and grief within Aboriginal communities and their impact on children and families creates an environment where there is a high degree of trauma and trauma is the norm. For a minority — but a significant number — of Aboriginal women and children this has resulted in family violence. Aboriginal communities play a pivotal role in holding perpetrators accountable, and now our communities and our leaders are standing up to family violence. We have given voice to the fact that family violence is unacceptable and not a cultural norm.

To ensure the safety of all Aboriginal women and children, however, we need mainstream services to be culturally relevant and to engage with our people, not to let our people have short, episodic contacts with the system. We need investment and the resourcing of Aboriginal organisations to provide culturally relevant services to Aboriginal women, children and men and to provide healing for our communities impacted by family violence. We need integrated, holistic and intergenerational responses. We need culturally relevant services that are strength based and trauma informed.

A major gap in policy and advocacy is the absence of our own statewide Aboriginal women's advocacy, policy and service hub; a place where Aboriginal women can get access to culturally appropriate resources. It is important that we work earlier with Aboriginal women to provide relationship counselling, education and support, and we provide the awareness and strength to be able to ensure that our Aboriginal culture is part of the way we go forward. We emphasise the important role that Aboriginal women play in our communities. But to achieve real change we need to start by addressing poverty, and this includes poverty of money, poverty of access, poverty of power and

poverty of relationships. When you do not have these you are more at risk of violence.

Any reform agenda must include improving access to a responsive service ensuring equity and integration. We also need to address the culture of violence against women. There is still acceptance of violence in our Australian community and our culture that contributes to violence in the family. Still too many Australians think: hit your wife, and this is seen as private, that it is their business and therefore acceptable; hit a stranger, and now this is a danger to society and we call the police, and now we have much harsher penalties before the courts.

Ever since television has found its way into our living rooms the great powers that be who choose what is played and what is not played, whether deliberately or not, have portrayed Aboriginal people negatively. The dominant ideology of this powerful minority has shaped the public's perception of Aboriginal people in many harmful and deliberate ways. It is important that we challenge this ideology that creates negative and derogatory images, particularly of Aboriginal women, when it impacts on our women's capacity to live safely in this country. We need to reverse this. We need positive imagery of Aboriginal people on our TV screens and elsewhere.

Today I personally, as CEO of VACCA, would like to commend the Andrews government on its commitment to implementing all recommendations made by the royal commission. In announcing this royal commission the Premier stated there will be a big price tag around the implementation of these recommendations, but Victoria's women and children are worth every cent. I would like to see that Aboriginal women and children are included in this sentiment to build on this commitment to Aboriginal people and Aboriginal self-determination.

I would like to thank Minister Richardson for the opportunity to address Parliament today. I see this as symbolic of the strong emphasis you place on the place of Aboriginal people and Aboriginal family violence.

I want to thank the Victorian government and the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, the Honourable Natalie Hutchins, for putting to the government and taking up the flying of the Aboriginal flag; how sacred this is for Aboriginal people now. We know genuinely that this is our place.

In conclusion I would like to highlight that Aboriginal women are the hope of our future, the hope of our culture. It is Aboriginal women who are going to be the

child rearers of our future generations. Aboriginal women are making visible efforts to renew traditions and to improve education through self-rule and by healing from within our culture. It is important to ensure that Aboriginal girls are strengthened and empowered to make good decisions into the future, that they see themselves as positive contributors to the directions their lives take. We need to strengthen our approach to family violence against Aboriginal women with the focus on prevention, protection and power.

I thank you for the opportunity to present here today. It has been an absolute honour, but leaving here today I implore you and I implore the government to bring about real change for Aboriginal women, now and into the future.

Honourable members applauded.

The SPEAKER — We thank you, Muriel.

It is my great pleasure to introduce Chief Commissioner Graham Ashton, Victoria's 22nd Chief Commissioner of Victoria Police. Commissioner Ashton first joined Victoria Police in 2009 and has had a number of different roles in the force, including as deputy commissioner, specialist operations. During that time Commissioner Ashton led a victim-focused approach, resulting in changes to the handling of child sexual abuse cases. In his current role Commissioner Ashton has commenced a groundbreaking review of gender equity in Victoria Police and has been a tireless advocate on behalf of victims of family violence. I welcome Commissioner Ashton to the floor.

Chief Commissioner ASHTON — Speaker, Premier, Leader of the Opposition, ministers, other members of Parliament, my fellow guest speakers, and Rosie — lovely to see you today. May I firstly acknowledge the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation as the traditional owners of the land upon which we meet. I would also like to pay my respect to their elders, past, present and emerging, and the elders from other communities who may be here today — Auntie Muriel.

There have been literally a couple of occasions in the past 163 years when the commissioner of police has had the privilege to address Parliament, and I thank you for the opportunity to do so today. There are few topics that have sparked as much public conversation over the past few years as family violence. It has been discussed in every media outlet, every community and increasingly in our homes. There is a growing tide of support and understanding for victims who have experienced violence and a growing intolerance for the behaviours of those who have inflicted it.

Overwhelmingly the victims of family violence are women, and whilst we know that family violence occurs in a range of relationships, this is clearly a gendered issue; as Rosie and others have pointed out today.

More than ever family violence is in the public consciousness and there is a strong momentum to change the attitudes and beliefs that allow it to continue. I can only say: it is about time. Traditionally when questions are asked about family violence they have been directed at the victim. Why do they stay? Why don't they just leave? People have looked for some sort of trigger for the violence. They assume there must be a reason and the victim, usually a woman, must have contributed in some way.

People try to make sense of the violence by examining the victim's credibility. As I said earlier, this is overwhelmingly a gendered issue, and it appeared for a long time that in order to be believed a woman had to be the 'ideal' victim and anything less than that would make her complicit in her own victimisation. I am pleased to say that that is changing; there is a growing focus on men who use violence and the cultural conditions that allow that to flourish.

Importantly, we are increasingly seeing conversations about the links between gender inequality and violence. The conversation is turning to ingrained beliefs about gender and their role in shaping the way women in particular are perceived and treated, and importantly those conversations are happening all around us. There is a significant change and also a symbolic one. It is still early days, but it has the potential to end victim-blaming and refocus our attention where it should be — on supporting victims and holding offenders to account.

Of course just as the community conversations have evolved, Victoria Police has been on its own journey of change. We have come a long way in how we have responded to family violence. Earlier this year we launched a dedicated family violence command, and we have been consolidating our expertise in that area. I acknowledge Assistant Commissioner Dean McWhirter in the gallery today.

Victoria Police is the first police force in Australia to have a dedicated command and an assistant commissioner for family violence. We are proud of that achievement. In the past couple of years we have increased the number of family violence units — dedicated teams focusing on family violence. We now have 32 of those across the state. We are continuing to engage with our partners to refer victims to support. We

are continuing to issue safety notices and also seek intervention orders in record numbers. But the sheer scale of this is epidemic. The incidents police are responding to are a shame on human dignity. We are seeing extensive injuries to victims, children who are scarred and intimidated and men who seem to have no concept that it is unacceptable.

Recently at the police academy I presented an award for courage to a police member who had confronted a man armed with an axe at a family violence incident. This police member prevented injury to a terrified woman and her children, who had barricaded themselves in the bedroom. In fact, if we talk about the number of incidents, just since Tuesday of this week, police have responded to more than 420 family violence calls across the state — Tuesday to Thursday. They happen in every suburb, in every community and in every cultural group. The number of victims who are living in fear is simply unacceptable. Nobody should have to live on eggshells, and no child should have an upbringing characterised by violence. Everyone should feel safe and respected and be able to live safely in their home.

I know that police members are staggered by some of the behaviours they witness every day. We know the impact on victims is shattering. The challenge for us, not only in a law enforcement sense but also more broadly, is to start turning around the attitudes that underpin this behaviour. But of course this does not just involve police. The system is the safety net for vulnerable victims, and it is essential that it is victim focused and works collaboratively across the police, courts and corrections as well as support services and child protection. This system should be interwoven, integrated and victim focused; it should ensure that victims are supported and not be the source of further harm. We have not got it all right, and we certainly have not always got it right. It is important we learn from past tragedies and work collaboratively and seamlessly together.

As I said previously, we know that family violence affects people from all walks of life, and we see family violence among siblings, in same-sex relationships and against the elderly, just to name a few. The common link is power and control. We see that in many forms: verbal abuse, physical assaults, withholding access to family and friends, limiting access to money, sexual abuse, threats and intimidation. These are behaviours that victims experience every day, and it is relentless. For many of these groups we know that violence continues to be under-reported, and we need to do more to encourage people to seek help. But ultimately of course we need to stop the behaviour occurring in the first place.

As I said earlier, we know this is a significantly gendered issue, and we need to do a lot more to change attitudes towards women. I saw recently a report on young Australian attitudes towards violence against women, which gave a sense of what we are facing. More than half of young people surveyed believe that the main cause for violence against women is men being unable to manage their anger; 26 per cent of young people agreed that partner violence can be excused if the perpetrator regrets it. These are concerning figures to me. They show how much more work we still have to do. It is critical we set a strong foundation for the next generation and that we make the most of the current momentum to set good standards, model good behaviour and build self-respect and esteem.

As you would appreciate, this is not an issue police can manage alone. We need events like yesterday, we need positive community activism and we need social and cultural change to enable the conditions for gender equity to become a reality rather than an aspiration. We need collective action on this issue to influence the next generation and make sure that this cycle does not repeat itself. It is critical we maintain the momentum that we are now starting to build. We all await the findings of the royal commission early next year, but that must be just the starting point, not the finish.

It is essential that we do not stop talking there. This is an ongoing challenge, and it is not going to be resolved overnight. This will take intergenerational, sustained change and plenty more difficult conversations before we actually start to impact on this enormous issue.

If I can leave you with one point: this does not have to be part of our future. We have the capacity to change our culture for the better, to make incidents like the ones we have heard about today a thing of the past. Family violence is 100 per cent preventable, and it is within our grasp to make sure that our sons and daughters know what respect means and how to look after one another. That would be a future we could be proud of and one that we can all start working towards today. Thank you.

Honourable members applauded.

The SPEAKER — I thank Chief Commissioner Ashton.

Our next speaker today is Annette Gillespie, CEO of Safe Steps, which is Victoria's statewide and 24/7 family violence response centre. Safe Steps provides immediate response to women and children living with violence, particularly women with disabilities, women

with high and complex needs and women who are further disadvantaged because they do not have permanent residency status.

Annette is a family violence specialist who is leading community change to end the violence against women and their children. Her work is grounded in clinical experience, particularly as a child trauma therapist working with children, young people and their mothers living with the effects of family violence. I welcome Ms Gillespie.

Ms GILLESPIE — I begin by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which we meet, the Kulin nation, and pay my respects to their elders both past and present and any elders in the room with us today. I acknowledge the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition, and I give special acknowledgement to two ministers. the Honourable Fiona Richardson, Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence; and the Honourable Martin Foley, Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Equality and Minister for Creative Industries, both of whom, along with Premier Andrews, spent time at Safe Steps learning about the effects on the front line. I also acknowledge Georgie Crozier, shadow Minister for Women and shadow Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence.

I want to acknowledge the women, children and men who are lost to us because of the family violence that plagues our communities, as well as the survivors whose courage and resilience inspires us in all that we do, and I give special acknowledgement to Kristy and Rosie today.

Thank you for welcoming me to speak on this historic occasion. I would like to begin by sharing a story. It is the story of one in three women and one in four children in this country — women and children of all ages, from all cultural and social groups, postcodes, demographics and abilities, who share the awful common lived experience of surviving family violence; the women who behind closed doors have been slapped, kicked, punched, strangled, sexually assaulted, terrorised, tormented, threatened, demeaned or deprived by a person who is meant to love and care for them.

I acknowledge the women and children who are further disadvantaged because of exclusion, discrimination and prejudice, especially Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children, women and children who have disability, women from culturally and linguistically diverse communities or LGBTI communities and of course the hundreds of women and

children who over the years have been murdered through horrific acts of family violence.

It is on behalf these women and children that I stand before you today to share their collective experience, to talk about what drives the violence that has robbed women and children of their lives and human potential for generation after generation in this country and throughout the world. I address you today to advocate for long-term, sustainable change, but in order to achieve this change, violence against women and children must be seen as the result of gender inequality.

The World Health Organisation in its landmark multicountry study in 2005, and corroborated in multiple studies since, demonstrated that the variation in the rate of violence is best explained by gender inequality. What does that mean for our community? It means that family violence is perpetrated overwhelmingly by men against women, children and other men. It means when a male abuser chooses to behave violently to get what he wants and to gain control, his behaviour usually comes from a sense of entitlement which is born from longstanding and continuing traditions and systems which value men over women. This power is handed to them, couched in terms such as the protector of the family, provider, king of the castle and head of the household — terms which, combined with rigid rules defining masculinity, mean that men are taught from a very young age that they are responsible for and therefore have authority over the lives of women and children. Our entire society is structured to support this belief.

So often we hear the question, ‘Why doesn’t she leave?’, when talking about women living in an abusive relationship. What we do not hear is the more pertinent question, ‘Why doesn’t he stop using violence to intimidate and control his partner and family?’. Women tell us they do not leave because they are fearful, they do not have anywhere to go, they have little support and no money, and they tell us that their confidence has been so eroded that they believe his story that they will not be able to live without him. Evidence tells us that women are right to be afraid. Women and children are more likely to be killed or seriously injured if the perpetrator suspects they will leave the relationship.

Because of what I see and hear leading a front-line service every day I make no apology if what I say today makes anyone in this house feel uncomfortable. Victorians need to know the grave consequences of gender inequality and how it causes family violence. We simply cannot tolerate the destruction of women and children’s lives any longer.

Family violence is corroding the very fabric of Australian society. Since receiving the invitation to speak to you a couple of days ago, Safe Steps 24-hour, seven-day-a-week first-response line has received over 600 calls from women desperately looking to escape the violent consequences of gender inequality. One of the most distressing calls was from a woman calling about her daughter, who was trapped in a house with her violent partner, totally isolated and unable to seek help. Right now, as I speak to you, back in the office at Safe Steps our specialist family violence workers are working with a woman who arrived at the local Magistrates Court with her three children, after being assaulted, begging for help because she did not know where to turn.

At the same time as I speak to you Safe Steps emergency accommodation is full to capacity, providing a safe haven for more than 40 women and children. One, a woman in her 60s, called us from her home in a regional part of Victoria after she found her husband of many years had, as well as physically and emotionally abusing her, been filming her at home without her knowledge and following her when she left the house. We have helped her to safety. It is to these women and the hundreds of thousands more with similar stories, that an apology is owed. Safe Steps has been responding to women and children at risk for over 40 years. What started as an information referral phone line with just a handful of staff has grown to become one of Victoria's leading family violence agencies, delivering critical and immediate responses to women and children escaping abuse.

What our recent data reveals is both instructive and frightening. It shows that women are reporting greater frequency and severity of violent incidents than we have ever recorded before. In 2014–15 Safe Steps assisted 7636 women and children who needed help to escape immediate risk of serious injury and possible death. We have fielded more than 55 000 calls — a 58 per cent increase in the two years since 2013. Each year we receive calls from an average of 13 women from each suburb in Melbourne needing urgent assistance to get themselves and their children to a place of safety to escape potential serious harm. In 2014, 33 per cent of those we helped were born outside Australia; 11 per cent did not have permanent residency and faced additional layers of isolation and lack of resources. It is against this backdrop that Safe Steps has experienced a 130 per cent increase in demand for crisis accommodation.

We now provide over 16 000 beds each year for women and children who need assistance to escape immediate risk. Eight per cent of women and children

we accommodated were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, and importantly, over 50 per cent of people placed in safe accommodation in Victoria by Safe Steps are children who we all know are the future of this great state.

Safe Steps is but one service operating in a service system that is buckling under demand. Refuges, outreach services, homelessness services, youth and mental health services as well as statutory services — child protection, courts and police — are all struggling to cope. As I stand here this morning it appals me to say the spread of family violence we are currently witnessing is greater than I personally have seen in the 20 years I have been working with women and children experiencing abuse, and yet we know that violence against women is both predictable and preventable.

With greater violence than has ever been recorded before, including more deaths of women, children and men, we have an urgent duty to respond. We need a guaranteed capacity to provide the best response every time to every woman who seeks support. First and foremost we need to make sure that whenever women and children come forward, they are believed and supported. We need to ensure that the right to safety for all is fulfilled throughout society by responding to women and children at risk, regardless of their circumstances and whatever their needs. This is particularly important because 60 per cent of the women in our state at highest risk have had no contact with police at the time they seek help from our crisis line. Furthermore, public safety surveys show that the majority of women who experience violence never contact support services. Our systems are not equipped to meet the needs of women and children subjected to abuse, as most of them were never designed to do that. Too often this means that women and children are placed at greater risk because of the system.

Our justice system in particular needs to keep perpetrators of violence in view and keep the safety of women and children at the centre. Women often say that their priority is stopping the violence, not ending the relationship. We need to better value these women's choices and create the infrastructure to keep them safe. We must address the needs of children affected by family violence in their own right. Parallel services for children that protect the mother and child bond are essential. We need to build responses that support children to heal, recover and flourish. We can no longer accept systems that contradict each other, work at cross-purposes or treat children as an add-on. Children have the potential to bring about a more equal future, but that will only be possible if we provide the right support to them now. If we educate them, value girls

and boys equally and equip them to refuse violence, we can realise this vision.

A more equal society benefits all of us — women, children and men. We must continue to promote equality between men and women despite the risks and obstacles to this approach. But let us not confuse the pursuit of equality with the desire for sameness. True equality for women and men will mean a new way of organising our society, a fair and just way that will benefit each of us, but more importantly it will benefit our children, grandchildren and generations to come. The challenge is that the driver of family violence is gender inequality, and gender inequality is everywhere. So the systems we have built to address family violence so far are struggling with the scale and breadth of the problem.

Because family violence is so widespread we need all parts of our community to come together to make change. Every school, every hospital, every public library, every health and emergency response service, every courtroom, every family member, every friend, every bystander and every neighbour needs to be able to understand the risks to women and children and respond to family violence by holding perpetrators of family violence accountable for the harm they cause. Parliamentarians of all political persuasions, government agencies at all levels, organisations, businesses and services in all fields need to do their part to respond to violence against women and children. Everyone has a right to be safe. It is within our means and capacity to make sure they are.

The leadership of parliamentarians needs to ensure that gender equality is at the forefront of all aspects of public life. Victoria has already demonstrated leadership in this country and internationally — when this government appointed the first ever Royal Commission into Family Violence to evaluate our current systems and recommend solutions. We have led the nation in primary prevention and promoting gender equality. With the assistance of many leaders and champions across our community, we can address this challenge. We have this opportunity to work together to forge a new path with a set of comprehensive measures to prevent, respond to and hold perpetrators accountable for violence. Together we could build a world-leading approach in Victoria and work towards eliminating violence against women and children.

We must aim to prevent violence from occurring in the first place. The solution is within our reach if we show an unwavering fortitude to forge a new path. We can no longer rely on an exhausted and overloaded system that is not fit for purpose to be the blueprint for future ways

to eliminate family violence. It will take a bipartisan investment into frontline responses, early intervention and prevention strategies in equal measure, a centralised statewide governance and operational framework and a change in community attitudes to and beliefs about the place of women in our society.

Ultimately it will take a disruption of traditional gender roles that currently predetermine the likelihood and risk of experiencing violence in an intimate partner or family relationship based on whether you are born female. But most of all it will take a commitment, as none of it will be possible without the courage, foresight and resilience of all members of this chamber and of every future Victorian Parliament. The power to eliminate violence against women and children lies within all of us. Thank you.

Honourable members applauded.

The SPEAKER — Thank you, Annette.

We are now going to shift focus slightly as we hear from our last speaker, Rodney Vlais, from No To Violence and the Men's Referral Service. No To Violence is an organisation working to ensure that men stay part of the conversation when it comes to family violence and that male perpetrators have avenues to step up, acknowledge their behaviour and take steps to transform it. Rodney has worked with hundreds of men who have used violence against women. He has a deep understanding of the drivers of male violence and the impact that men's behaviour change programs can have. I welcome Mr Vlais to the floor.

Mr VLAIS — Speaker, Premier of Victoria, Leader of the Opposition, all members of the Legislative Assembly, Rosie, Kristy and all other victim survivors here, I both personally and as a representative of No To Violence and the Men's Referral Service feel deep appreciation for the opportunity to be here today in Parliament and on Wurundjeri land — Wurundjeri traditional and sovereign land as part of the Kulin nation.

I am aware that I could only be here because of the incredibly brave and courageous efforts of so many women over decades to fight for safety, for dignity, for themselves, their families and for others. These include women who went to extraordinary efforts to establish the first safe houses and refuges against a firmly entrenched patriarchal orthodoxy and sometimes at great risk and personal cost to themselves. The methods that these women used, while non-violent in the face of so much hostility against them, were not always quiet,

polite or genial. They had no choice. Women were not listened to. Women were not believed.

Parliaments like this across the world are always coming to grips with community constituents pushing for their experiences of discrimination, marginalisation and injustice to be heard. For many the stakes are high. Even when it is not a matter of life and death, which of course it is for so many women and children experiencing family violence, it can be a matter of lifelong suffering or freedom from that suffering — a psychological, physical, economic and spiritual straitjacket over their lives or the freedom to think, grow, be, connect and indeed to fall in love with this precious life of ours. This is what family violence does. It is not just about the hitting or the name calling. It is a systematic, intentional, patterned use of a range of coercive, controlling tactics to limit family members' lives and to limit freedom. It is one of the most potent and widespread constraints on our freedom in our time.

This Parliament is taking an amazing step today to come to grips with this huge and very grave issue. With your colleagues in the Legislative Council, you have heard from Kristy and you have heard from Rosie Batty. Rosie is a woman, a mother, a person who has endured and continues to endure an almost unimaginable loss. We hear the fear of so many victim survivors who my colleagues have talked about today, that ongoing fear and the way it touches so many aspects of their lives. To Rosie, the depths of your love for Luke, of your unstoppable determination for Luke not to have died in vain, creates a massive possibility, a massive space for hope, a space where we together over the coming generations can end the tyranny and terror of family violence. Rosie, Kristy and others deserve not just to be heard. Like the hundreds of thousands of other Victorian women, children and men experiencing family violence — and it is hundreds of thousands at this point in time — they need to be deeply listened to, a listening with the heart and the head, a listening with self-awareness and a listening that we know is deep because it feels uncomfortable.

According to Our Watch, the evidence demonstrates that 95 per cent of all family violence is committed by males. Most of this violence committed by men targets women and children — the vast majority of it — but we do know that men can be victims too, often from other male family members. This perpetration of family violence is a choice. It is a series of choices, a series of decisions to physically, emotionally, psychologically, socially and spiritually control and shut down someone else's life. These are dark choices that men are making. The work of men's behaviour change programs and other perpetrator interventions is to try to help men

make different choices about how to think and how to behave towards family members. But as a friend of mine implores us to consider, through his upcoming production *World of Men*: who and what creates the places where men choose to hurt their families? This is an uncomfortable question but one that needs to be asked.

Men's behaviour change program providers, who are part of No To Violence, the organisation I work for, or members of that organisation, have worked with tens of thousands of perpetrators over the last 20-plus years. Our men's referral service has taken over 50 000 calls, mostly from men who are perpetrating violence. Across the enormously varying circumstances of these men perpetrating violence we find a pattern of thinking where men feel justified to dehumanise, disrespect, ignore, dismiss and make invisible their current or former partner and sometimes also their children. They feel entitled to patrol and entitled to punish. It would be convenient for us to think that this sense of entitlement is just the product of warped individuals, but there are just too many otherwise decent, well-functioning, respected men who use violence for this to be so.

Many men choose not to use violence against family members. However, I believe all men contribute to the dark places in which some men choose to do so. When I instantaneously judge a woman who I have met for the first time by her looks or physical appearance — not just in noticing, but judging her — I am contributing to a culture of sexism and objectification of women, to the idea that women are not as competent as men. When I leave most of the emotional heavy lifting in my relationship to my partner, I am contributing to both an un-negotiated burden of responsibility that she bears and also to our very narrow definition of what it means to be a man.

When only 2 per cent of employees in the early learning and childcare industry are male, we send a potent message that the primary role of a 'real man' is not one of caring for children. When our boys and young men receive so many messages from so many sources that being a real man means being tough, superior, in control, not feminine and not gay, the seeds are sown for some of these men to perform these expectations super well, by being the violent and coercive top dog in their family. When we turn a blind eye to the mainstreaming of patriarchal and violent pornography, we contribute to a rape culture that some men who use violence draw from in how they view and objectify women and make women invisible. This is what helps to create the dark places through which some men choose to use violence, and I believe that all of us men are complicit in this. We are all shaped by

and in turn help to shape the cultures, media, expectations and institutions that dominate the story of what it means to be a real man. We shape a culture of entitlement. We shape the thinking, the justifications, the excuses that perpetrators draw upon to control and hurt family members.

This is not about making us men feel guilty or ashamed. It is about becoming aware. As another friend of mine describes it, it is about tuning our gender antenna. It is about noticing how as men we use our gendered power, the spaces we take, and the spaces we take over and the spaces we limit for others. It is about the invisible and un-negotiated burdens of responsibility we place on women, and it is about our lives as men as well — the opportunity for us to fall in love with this precious life by becoming much more than the narrow ‘real man’. It is our opportunity to get to really and deeply know our children, their friendships and what matters to them. It is our opportunity to feel okay about being vulnerable, to care and allow ourselves to be cared for and to feel it is the ‘we’ not just the ‘I’ that needs to achieve or conquer, thereby changing the story of what it means to be a real man, listening deeply to the experiences of women and trying to undermine cultures of male entitlement.

This will not end family violence in a decade. It is an intergenerational struggle, and, as vital as all of that is, in the meantime we do need to develop, as we have heard today, much stronger webs of accountability for perpetrators. Child protection workers, health sector practitioners, police, courts, corrections, specialist women’s family violence services, men’s behaviour change programs — we all need to work much more closely together to engage perpetrators and to assess and manage risk in an ongoing way. This is about information sharing. It is about joined-up data systems. It is about clearly defined and articulated and agreed upon roles and responsibilities at the local, regional and statewide whole-of-government levels. It is about working together to keep the perpetrator within view. It is about respectful and persistent engagement with these men and finding the right balance and interplay between justice system and community sector responses.

Today is a landmark event, just as yesterday was. It is a watershed for all of us as individuals, for the Parliament and for all of our collective efforts to prevent and respond to family violence. Let us use this as an opportunity to deepen our understanding of what it means to be allies in this struggle for freedom. Thank you.

Honourable members applauded.

The SPEAKER — On behalf of the President of the Legislative Council, the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition, I take this opportunity to thank Rosie, Kristy, Joumanah, Muriel, Chief Commissioner Ashton, Annette and Rodney for coming in today to speak to us about their journey and their tireless efforts in bringing about change regarding family violence. I encourage members to reflect on these contributions and join Rosie and the community in fighting family violence. Thank you.

Honourable members applauded.

Sitting suspended 12.37 p.m. until 1.38 p.m.

Ms RICHARDSON (Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence) — I move:

That this house takes note of the addresses regarding the prevention of family violence, led by Ms Rosie Batty, on 26 November 2015.

In moving this motion today, I want to take the opportunity of thanking all members for allowing today’s parliamentary business to be suspended to allow us to have this very important event. With respect to those who spoke, I want to put on the record my thanks for their participation. To Rosie in particular I say that none of us will forget when she first spoke to the nation. Her determination in fact shamed us, and her love for her son shone a very bright light in some very dark corners of our society. She has indeed woken a nation, and now she is changing outcomes.

To Kristy, Joumanah and Muriel, I say thank you for sharing your perspectives on family violence from your own experiences and on behalf of your communities. Every day I learn something new about family violence, and today was no exception. We appreciate the candour with which the participants spoke today. To Commissioner Ashton, Annette and Rodney, your services are at the front line of the family violence crisis. Your workers are the first responders: the ones who take phone calls from people who are in fear of their lives, calls from people who are looking for quick, safe solutions to complex problems involving love and hate, and calls from people trying to change behaviour and stop the downward spiral of their family life. Thanks to the preparedness of people like our speakers today, across Victoria we now understand family violence, its causes and its prevalence much better.

As members know, for many years family or domestic violence was a shame that we did not dare speak of, although families across our state, the country and the world were suffering at the hands of violent crimes within their homes. We knew family violence went on

behind closed doors across our state. We could see it. We could hear its consequences and see it on our neighbours' faces. Although it made us uncomfortable, we were conditioned not to get involved. We were conditioned to ignore the bruising and the belittling of women in the spaces where they should have been safest. We were conditioned to regard violence between a husband and wife as regrettable but a private matter. Worse still we were conditioned to call into question her behaviour rather than call into question his. Our social conditioning meant that as a Parliament, it took us a long time to make laws protecting people from the harm and even longer to allocate budgets. Thanks to people like Rosie and Kristy and to the work of so many tremendous family violence advocates, we can no longer look away.

Over the last two nights, like thousands of people across the country, I tuned into Sarah Ferguson's ABC documentary *Hitting Home*. If you missed it, have a look at it on ABC iview. The documentary should be compulsory viewing for anyone seeking to understand the deep and lasting consequences of family violence on individuals, families and communities. No matter how many times I hear stories, such as those shared so bravely today and on *Hitting Home*, I am moved by what I hear. It pained me to see the bruising, the skull fractures and the need for forensic photographers to document the scars of women and children. It is 2015, not 1515. We should not be having an enormous spike in family violence in Victoria — over 70 000 incidents in the last 12 months. We should not be counting the toll of women's lives lost to violence — 78 at the last count and rising. Forty per cent of Victoria's police work should not be related to family violence. Violence in the home, however, goes on.

Family violence has indeed been a social problem for a very, very long time, but for a significant part of our history, women and children could not look for comfort from our lawmakers or our judges — far from it. According to Blackstone's codification of the common law a husband had the right to physically chastise an errant wife, providing that the diameter of the stick was no bigger than his thumb. Once, a husband could not be found guilty of rape.

Family violence is not a recent construct or development in our state's history. Poor responses to family violence are not new either. In Dr Clare Wright's award-winning book documenting the role of women during the Victorian gold rush, *The Forgotten Rebels of Eureka*, she documents cases of violence that took place between spouses on the digs. She recounts the testimony of Mary-Ann Clay, who on 22 March 1856, charged her husband, Elijah, with assault. The

gold rush and the Eureka Rebellion are iconic parts of our state's history, and while those public events were taking place, there was a whole other story taking place in the tents.

One hundred and sixty years later there are echoes of the same problems in intervention order cases heard before the Melbourne Magistrates Court: the same desire to control and command shared finances, the verbal arguments over dinner that become physical assaults, the denial of the male perpetrator and the second chances given by female survivors to keep the peace.

Family violence has always been a part of our society and a part of our history. Over the years there have been very many family violence advocates and people who have worked to support victims of family violence. They work on the smell of an oily rag and get very little recognition for the work they do. We do need to acknowledge those bold, gutsy women of the women's movement who broke the silence on domestic violence. It cannot have been an easy thing to do. In Victoria, just like around the world, it was women supporting women, first through the Women's Liberation Switchboard, a crisis and information hotline, which allowed them to talk to each other about the issues that mattered to them most. As the calls about domestic violence flooded in, women searched for solutions, creating the first refuges here in Victoria in the 1970s.

If you will indulge me for a moment, I need to put on the record my own very personal thanks to these women of the domestic violence and refuge movements. I do not imagine there are very many parliamentarians who can speak with direct experience about what it means to live in a refuge, but I happen to be one who can. As a nine-year-old child I spent time in refuges in Sydney and in Melbourne when my mother made the decision to leave my father. This experience is very personal to me, to my brothers and to my mum, but taking the cue from other brave people today, I wanted to express my thanks to the women who helped us be safe.

That same women's movement that helped my family has had a number of significant successes, including funded services and programs, better housing options for women and children, and awareness campaigns that have challenged the way we think about violence and its consequences, but still the problem of family violence persisted. During the 1990s we pursued law reform to try to address family violence. After Heather Osland's trial attempts were made to try to come to terms with what it meant to be a battered woman with little choice but to take justice into her own hands. We

created intervention orders to empower victims of family violence to gain protection from the police and the courts. But the problem of family violence persisted.

We have come a long way from the ‘rule of thumb’ and from the tents of Eureka, but the problem of family violence persists. Despite thousands of dedicated workers and volunteers, dozens of important services and the shared work they do to make things better, the family violence system is still failing. These failings have been highlighted in much of what we have heard today and in submissions to the Royal Commission into Family Violence, and particularly by family violence advocates like Rosie and Kristy.

Moved by Rosie’s story, our then opposition leader, who would become Premier, committed to something that had never been done before — Australia’s first Royal Commission into Family Violence. But more than that, we have a leader prepared to accept the fact that the system is broken and that he does not have all the answers. Everyone I speak to in the family violence sector understands that this is a significant turning point and an opportunity not to be missed. And because the task we are undertaking is nothing less than generational change, the fact that the opposition leader has dealt with this issue in an entirely bipartisan way has given tremendous hope that the reforms we make will be enduring.

Part of the benefit of conducting a royal commission is the process of lots of people reflecting on what they do and imagining how they could do it better. This is certainly what we did in preparing our whole-of-government submission to the royal commission. Those of you who have read it will know that our submission is not a shy document. We identified 10 gaps in the system, including poor measurability, lack of prevention programs, underinvestment in our responses and a lack of appreciation for different experiences of family violence — for example, how women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, women with disabilities and women within our Aboriginal communities experience family violence is different and means that our responses must be more sophisticated.

We know that women are particularly vulnerable when they are pregnant or have recently given birth, and our strategies for prevention need to better respond to this high-risk moment in their lives. We also know that for too long children have been lost from view, even though the harm that they experience is often lifelong. We know we need to do more to address elder abuse

and that LGBTI relationships are not immune from intimate partner violence. But throughout the submission, and consistent with all the research, we continue to highlight the fact that you are most at risk of family violence, first and foremost, if you are a woman. Our crime statistics, applications for intervention orders and the number of intimate partner deaths all testify to the uncomfortable truth that family violence is a gendered crime. Knowing this, and if we want to prevent family violence, it will not be enough to throw money at short-term crisis services and expect the underlying problems to go away. We will need to deal with gender inequality and the attitudes and behaviours that deliver poor outcomes for women, and we will need to deal with the culture of violence that is practiced too often by men.

These are not problems that will be solved overnight or in one budget cycle. We will need a behavioural and attitudinal change strategy. Half a century ago we were riding around in cars without seatbelts, drinking behind the wheel and smoking wherever it suited us. Thanks to long-term education, prevention initiatives, law reform and other innovations that took a holistic view, these dangerous behaviours are increasingly a thing of the past. It is worth noting that it took innovative governance and funding structures to have these objectives realised. In Victoria we have proven ourselves capable of this kind of change and it is certainly not beyond us to do it again.

The Victoria Against Violence campaign is the kind of measure we need to ensure long-term change. But we know much, much more is also needed. We know we need not only to support existing services but also to overhaul our crisis response. We know we need to do more to prevent family violence in the first place and for prevention to happen everywhere. Our prevention initiatives will need to address the core drivers of family violence — gender inequality and attitudes towards women. This is not just about ensuring that our daughters enjoy the same opportunities as our sons; this is about keeping our daughters safe from harm.

Moreover, victims’ choices need to drive our decision-making, not the other way round. We will need to see the family as a whole and respond in a way that keeps children within view at all times. Most importantly we need to put child safety ahead of parental rights. Viewing the family holistically will also ensure that breaches of intervention orders will be regarded as a serious matter worthy of immediate sanction. We will also need to strengthen our response to perpetrators in the knowledge that some perpetrators will never change while concentrating on those who will.

We will need innovative justice solutions that work in partnership with a range of other services that take us beyond the adversarial system. We will need to give families an opportunity to end violent behaviour earlier, because this is what they want — they want the violence to stop. This means not only relying on police and courts at the crisis end of our response but using other universal settings — our schools and medical services — to engage earlier in promoting healthy relationships and acting where there is evidence of harm. That is why from 2016 we have put respectful relationships into the Victorian curriculum from prep through to year 10, and I want to acknowledge the Minister for Education's leadership in this space. We need to properly measure all that we do. That is why we are already working on a world-first family violence index.

Finally, we need to recognise that everyone has a role to play. Indeed community leaders, business leaders and politicians have an even greater responsibility, knowing what we do and what we need to achieve. As politicians we have a responsibility to ensure that no child anywhere in Victoria has a fear of meeting the same fate as Luke and that no woman fears for her safety when she is near the person who is meant to love her.

Thank you again to all our speakers today, to our service providers and to all Victorians who are uniting against family violence. To all victim survivors of family violence, you would understand that the memory of being a scared, skinny kid in that refuge has never left me. I promise to use that experience to do all that I can to realise our vision for a state free from family violence.

Ms VICTORIA (Bayswater) — Family violence, also known as domestic violence, is defined in the Family Law Act 1975 to mean:

violent, threatening or other behaviour by a person that coerces or controls a member of the person's family ... or causes the family member to be fearful.

As Rosie Batty said to us earlier today, it is about the need for power and control at any cost.

Today we pause from our parliamentary duties to discuss the effect family violence is having on Victorians and indeed on all Australians. It is hoped that this discussion will not end at the conclusion of this day but instead will continue over the coming months to create future outcomes and responses to tackle this issue that so desperately needs our attention.

As Professor Bamblett also reminded us today, many people are outraged when violence occurs on the streets — we see it on the news every night — but we turn a blind eye when it is behind the privacy of the doors at home. The instances of family violence that are occurring in Victoria are increasing at an alarming rate. Others have outlined those statistics, but they are certainly worth restating: 68 134 incidents of family violence were reported in 2014. That is 1307 per week, 187 every day and 8 every hour — an 8 per cent increase from the previous year.

As the Chief Commissioner of Police said earlier, since Tuesday there have been 420 family violence calls in Victoria alone — in just two days. These of course are only the reported instances. So far we have lost 78 women to family violence this year in Australia, and on average we lose 115 men and women to family violence each year.

My electorate of Bayswater is not immune to family violence. In the area of Maroondah there were nearly 900 reported family incidents in the last financial year compared to just over 550 in 2010–11. In the area of Knox we have seen a staggering increase in family violence incidents, from 643 reported incidents in 2010–11 to 1044 reported incidents last financial year. That is a 10 per cent increase.

There is of course lots of good work being done. We have some fantastic local men's groups, which I have attended to listen to some of the work that other men are doing to support men who are coming to the realisation that their actions are no longer acceptable. We also have wonderful women's referral centres, many of which I have visited.

Of those family violence incidents reported in Victoria last financial year, 17 353 were male victims and 53 307 were female. This undoubtedly demonstrates the overrepresentation of women in family violence statistics as the main victims of family violence. However, we should also acknowledge and discuss all those who are affected by family violence, including the LGBTI community, those with disabilities, Aboriginal Victorians and especially children, who are all too commonly exposed to family violence and who are sometimes forgotten in the discussions surrounding the topic. Last financial year 24 436 children were present during family violence incidents. Children often bear the brunt of family violence and are too small and innocent to protect themselves and the ones they love. The power imbalance is obvious and outrageously unfair.

Our children deserve love and nurturing and are sometimes subject to horrendous outcomes that are almost unfathomable to comprehend. In Victoria 5 per cent of reported victims are children aged between 0 and 14 years, and 7.5 per cent are aged between 15 and 19 years. However, as these are only the reported statistics, we can be assured that in reality the figures are much higher. There are of course the headline-grabbing extreme cases. Every week the media seems to expose yet another horrifying story describing how innocent children are subjected to despicable acts of family violence — from being chained to their beds to being left under boiling hot showers, or even being held captive and repeatedly violated, sometimes for years on end.

Sometimes the abuse is far more subtle, but sustained. It may be physical but it may also be psychological. The perpetrator has no concern for their victim at the time so how can we expect them to think about the long-term, often lifelong effects that they will have on the child? Kristy McKellar reminded us today that this is a global human rights violation, and I want to personally thank her for helping to open my eyes even further and for her courage. But we need to ask: when will it all stop?

Whilst at times children are not the direct victims of family violence, they are still indirectly affected by being subjected to witnessing horrific and appalling displays of violence that will remain with them for the rest of their lives. The emotional trauma these experiences can have on children is often unreported and cannot be explained in any statistic. These children are left feeling scared of a family member they must live and interact with every day. How much of a profound effect is that having on our future generations?

The majority of children who are killed due to family violence are killed by a parent or a parent's intimate partner. The NSW Domestic Violence Death Review Team reported that between 2000 and 2012, 60 children were killed by a relative in a family violence context. Of those 60, 58 were killed by a parent, 36 were killed by a man acting alone, 18 by a female parent acting alone and 4 were killed by both parents. While these statistics are very confronting, they are also the reality of the society we live in. These horrors must stop; these lives must be protected. How many children's lives could we save going forward if we all worked together to put a stop to family violence?

Another horrific example of the current family violence situation in Victoria is demonstrated by Victorian Aboriginal family violence. I want to thank

Professor Muriel Bamblett, the CEO of the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency, for coming into the chamber today. I appreciate her words on this important topic. As shadow Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, I am very keen to understand how we can further assist Aboriginal Victorians in this area and how we can stop them from experiencing family violence.

As we have heard, Aboriginal communities experience a staggering over-representation in the family violence data. Nationally Aboriginal people are between two and five times more likely to experience family violence, either as a victim or an offender, and Aboriginal women nationally are 34 times more likely to be hospitalised from family violence and 11 times more likely to be killed in a violent assault when compared with other Australian women. In Victoria, police reports of family violence against Aboriginal people have tripled in recent years. Police data from 2013–14 demonstrates that Aboriginal people represent 3.4 per cent of family violence victims and 3.8 per cent of all perpetrators. This is very concerning to me, given Aboriginal people make up 0.9 per cent of the Victorian population.

Family violence is also the leading cause of child protection intervention in Aboriginal communities. The work of the commissioner for Aboriginal children and young people recently revealed that men's violence against women is a driving force in up to 95 per cent of Aboriginal children being removed from their families. The number of Indigenous children in care rose by 42 per cent in just the year from 30 June 2013. In addition Aboriginal women living in rural and remote areas are 45 times more likely to experience domestic violence compared to their non-Indigenous peers. Yesterday we commemorated White Ribbon Day, which is Australia's only national male-led campaign to end men's violence against women. I acknowledge the Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention Legal Service's ochre ribbon campaign, which takes a stand against Aboriginal family violence and which was launched in May this year.

A number of national and international studies have suggested that intimate partner sexual violence occurs at a similar rate in GLBTIQ relationships in comparison to heterosexual relationships. Roughly one in three couples experience family violence. Nearly 26 per cent of respondents reported experiencing sexual abuse within a same-sex relationship in a Victorian-based study. Lesbian women are more likely to report having been in an abusive relationship compared to other women and men, although from the study the reason for this is unclear. Almost 33 per cent of participants in the Private Lives study reported experiencing intimate

partner violence. In all these instances family violence is unacceptable and, quite frankly, something we should all condemn. It should never be tolerated, and we must all stand up and denounce those perpetrators who seek to victimise their loved ones.

All our future work should focus on the need to prevent family violence, protect those who are currently experiencing it and hold those perpetrating it accountable for their actions. We are all eagerly awaiting the outcomes of the Royal Commission into Family Violence in February next year and the recommendations it makes. As is so often said, we need to know what has happened in the past to learn what is necessary for the future. We know the statistics of 20 years ago, 10 years ago and even a year ago. We know that some of the increases in the statistics are due to a greater inclination for family, friends and co-workers to become involved with reporting, and for that I am grateful. Thank goodness that for most the days are passing us by when people did not want to get involved, when they believed the issue was a private one and only the business of the couple involved.

I respectfully acknowledge the current attitude of Victoria Police members, who are confronted by these situations every day and who treat victims with compassion and take them seriously, which is a major step forward from the past. They are often the first step in a long journey of upheaval and, hopefully, a permanent solution.

Government has also played a major role in changing policies and attitudes, both in Victoria and more recently across Australia. I was proud to serve as the Minister for Women's Affairs in the last government. During that time we focused on empowerment and independence. We provided pathways and opportunities in education and business and strategies for the advancement of all women. I am incredibly proud of our achievements and know that lives were changed as a result of the programs we put in place.

The Victorian coalition government committed a record investment of more than \$200 million to family violence. This included providing wideranging measures to address prevention, safety and accountability — all the things I have been talking about. We established a coordinated approach across multiple portfolios, and in a Victorian first established a ministerial council for family violence, led by the Premier and supported by all key ministers, to drive our commitment to end family violence.

Victoria's Action Plan to Address Violence against Women and Children was released in 2012 and

identified that the response to family violence needed to address four key areas: prevention, safety, accountability and driving change; developing statewide behaviour change campaigns. We released *Ending Violence against Women and Children — Further Initiatives for Victoria's Action Plan to Address Violence against Women and Children — Everyone has a Responsibility to Act 2012–2015*, which was built on and extended the work of the 2012 strategy. We worked strategically in partnership with the police, the courts and the community sector, which was recognised as vital in tackling family violence.

We recognised the need to work with the commonwealth and initiated and subsequently partnered with it to establish a dedicated foundation, the Foundation to Prevent Violence against Women and their Children, which has now been renamed Our Watch. Programs from Our Watch include The Line, a primary prevention youth social marketing campaign focused on changing attitudes and behaviours that condone, justify and excuse violence against women, and the national framework for prevention of violence against women and their children. No country in the world has a national, evidence-based road map to prevent violence against women and their children in a coordinated way. Our Watch is partnering with VicHealth and Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety, or ANROWS, to create one.

National media engagement projects were a key. We were engaging the media to increase quality reporting and build awareness of the impacts of gender stereotyping and inequality, and of course we heard Rodney, one of our speakers this morning, on that. There is also the pathway of respectful relationships education in schools, working with secondary schools to help young people build healthy relationship skills.

Then there were the law reform initiatives. We were reminded this morning while listening to Kristy of just how much this is needed. We heard about the inadequate sentencing of her perpetrator and the inadequate response of the court system. The Victorian coalition government introduced a wide range of stronger and more effective sentences to better protect the community and ensure that jail means jail, including introducing sentences of up to five years jail for serious or repeated breaches of family violence orders. In Kristy's case I believe she said that her perpetrator had breached his orders more than six times.

We also made other key reforms to strengthen criminal law and safeguards, including extending the power of police to issue family violence safety notices so they

can issue notices 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; extending the duration of police family violence safety notices from 72 hours, or the next working day, to five working days; and giving family violence victims the right to make their story public when a perpetrator is charged with or convicted of breaching a family violence order.

In addition to the reforms introduced between 2010 and 2014, a wide range of further reforms were announced and underway at the time of the 2014 election, or were announced during the election campaign as commitments to be implemented by a re-elected coalition government. These included initiatives like trialling a GPS monitoring system for high-risk family violence perpetrators that allows victims to be warned when a perpetrator comes near. That initiative was announced and funding was given for that. We were piloting data sharing between police, corrections and courts using advanced software technology to allow identification of high-risk family violence perpetrators. We also had four-year statutory minimum jail terms for those who attack and cause serious injury to their victims in breach of a family violence order. That is something that I hope will receive bipartisan support after our hearing the stories this morning.

At a federal level, the coalition government is taking decisive action on the prevention of family violence. In September Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull introduced the Women's Safety Package to Stop the Violence, a \$100 million package of measures to provide a safety net for women and children at high risk of experiencing violence. This package is set to improve frontline support and services, leveraging innovative technologies to keep women safe and provide education resources to help change community attitudes to violence and abuse. The package also includes \$21 million for specific measures to help Indigenous women and communities. The package is in addition to the Australian government's \$100 million investment in the second action plan of the national plan and a \$30 million national campaign to reduce violence against women and their children, jointly funded with the states and territories. It is fantastic to see that sort of collaboration.

There are a couple of areas where I would personally like to see improvements. One is an increase in sworn frontline police men and women. They are a vital piece in this complex jigsaw puzzle, and I know that locally, as I said before, they are under-resourced.

The second is that I would dearly like the state government to reconsider its stance on violent sport. I say 'sport' with advisement. In my mind, and in the

minds of the majority of Victorians, certainly the ones I have spoken to locally, seeing two people intentionally going out not just to hurt each other but to deliberately try to render their opponent unconscious is nothing short of barbarism. If you look up that word in the dictionary, you will find a very clear definition. It refers to extreme cruelty or brutality and an absence of culture and civilisation. The fans may have turned out, but fans turn out to watch things like cockfighting and dogfighting too, both of which, happily, are illegal in Australia and both of which, as compassionate human beings, most if not all members of this Parliament would find abhorrent.

Why is it that some people believe it is okay to do the same thing to another human? Even worse, why is it that some people believe it is okay for children to view this violence? It is interesting that watching cage fighting on TV, DVD and video games is restricted to an M or MA 15+ rating, defined as being unsuitable for persons under 15, and they are mediums that we can switch off or walk away from very quickly. That is not so when the action is in your face, live and the crowd is being worked into a frenzy.

Not long ago an advertisement campaign ran on our TVs. Members may recall that it showed a boy getting a beer from the family fridge and then giving it to his father. That happened again and again. Then the ad flashed forward to a time when the boy had grown up and was repeating exactly the same behaviour in his household with his son. The ad reminds us that we are creatures of habit and we learn by observation. Our parents showed us how to hold a pencil or a fork, they showed us how to display good manners in public, and they guided us towards becoming honest, law-abiding, hardworking citizens, and in turn that is our role with our children too, and to help guide and nurture.

Our messaging must be clear and definite on so many issues, and the acceptance of violence under the guise of being called sport is sending mixed messages to the community. I look forward to the day in the not-too-distant future when our children shake their heads in disbelief that blood sports such as cockfighting, dogfighting or cage fighting were ever deemed acceptable. There is a lot more work to be done in this space. As I stated earlier, it is imperative that this discussion continues after today and that it leads to new programs and initiatives to help stamp out family violence in Victoria, so that every man, woman and child can live without fear.

Mr MERLINO (Minister for Education) — I am proud to rise to contribute to debate on the motion of the Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence. I do

so with conflicting emotions, being desperately disheartened and also hopeful. I was disheartened to hear so starkly from our speakers earlier today about the reality of our society — the epidemic, as the Chief Commissioner of Police called it — and disheartened to comprehend the horrifying statistics. My own community in the Yarra Ranges has the second highest rate of reported family violence in the eastern metropolitan region. Last year in the area 1372 family violence incidents were reported to police. Children were present in 35 per cent of cases, 27 per cent of the incidents involved both parents and children, and children were the direct victims in 12 per cent of cases.

It was disheartening to hear the harrowing accounts of both Rosie and Kristy. I cannot put into words the courage of both Rosie and Kristy in particular. This will be a day none of us will forget. Kristy's address particularly struck me to the core. When she finished I could not help but think of my own kids; I have two girls and a boy. In the blink of an eye Sophie has gone from being a baby to being eight years old, and in another blink of an eye — —

Ms McLeish — She will be 16.

Mr MERLINO — Indeed! Sophie and Emma will be young women; and they will be, hopefully, as Kristy described herself before her ordeal, young, confident, strong and successful. I cannot accept a world in which my daughters have a one-in-three chance of experiencing some form of violence in their lives. This is insanity. We all cannot accept that among our daughters, granddaughters, sisters and female friends, one-in-three Australian women has experienced some form of violence since the age of 15. But I am also hopeful because we all have a real sense that change is afoot, that it is happening across our nation and that it is no longer a silent issue. I am hopeful and confident that we will all remember this day when we are back in this chamber deliberating on the findings and recommendations of the Royal Commission into Family Violence. I am hopeful because action is being taken now and we can all be part of that change.

I want to spend a few minutes talking about the change that can happen in our youngest people, in our schools. A good education is more than achieving academically. A good education gives students the lessons and knowledge that they need to understand the world around them, to help them grow and be the best in both their working and personal lives. A good education teaches students how to be resilient, how to respect others, and how to build healthy and respectful relationships.

There is strong evidence that respectful relationships education plays an important role in equipping students with the knowledge and the skills to form and to build healthy relationships from a young age. As Ken Lay said yesterday, the research indicates that the abuse of women is supported at an early age. It confirms that adults are harmfully shaping children's destinies because of unchallenged and unfair assumptions about gender. He went on to say that the state's power is mostly executed at the very end, when the ideas and values adopted as children have grown destructively. We collectively need to change that. We need to make sure that we are aiming resources at prevention and education, alongside the desperately needed improvements to support victims now.

The commonwealth report on reducing violence against women and their children confirmed for us again that beyond family members, teachers have the highest level of influence on young people between the ages of 10 and 14. That is why we are introducing respectful relationships education in the school curriculum from next year. This will support students to learn how to build healthy relationships, to understand global cultures, ethics and traditions and to help prevent family violence.

Respectful relationships education will be included in the curriculum from prep to year 12 from the start of 2016. It will focus on challenging negative attitudes, such as prejudice, discrimination and harassment, that can lead to violence, often against women. We are also helping with the new Victorian curriculum, including respectful relationship and providing support for principals and teachers in terms of their own professional development.

Over and above the curriculum material, planning is also underway to expand our existing resources to ensure that age-appropriate respectful relationships education materials are available online for all our kids in all Victorian schools. The new respectful relationship components of the new Victorian curriculum will help students build healthy relationships and challenge negative attitudes that can lead to unacceptable behaviour and family violence.

This is the long game, but I absolutely believe that it will lead to profound change in our society. If we start teaching our kids about respectful relationships in a focused way, from their very first day of school right through to senior secondary, we will see that benefit in our society in 5 years time, 10 years time, 15 years and 20 years.

I will finish with some of the responses we received when we made the announcement of the rollout of respectful relationships across our schools. These are from individuals in our society in Victoria, many of whom have been the unfortunate victims of family violence. Tegan wrote to me and said:

I wish I had a program like the one suggested when I was in high school. The first serious relationship I was in ended in an emotionally violent and manipulative way. I didn't know at the time that this was not normal. I wish I did. I wish my abusive partner did ... We can't go on as we have — family violence must be stopped before it starts. Please don't let this happen to other people like me. Let's educate our young people on respectful relationships.

Danielle said:

I caught my nephew telling his grandfather not to help to do the dishes because this should be his grandmother's job. He is eight. This is the gender inequality that he grew up with, that women are not entitled to help and support, and just like the violence and abuse he grew up with, he is starting to believe that this is normal. I don't want to see others go through what my family has endured and continues to endure.

And Honnie wrote:

With three young daughters of my own I am grateful they will be educated on what constitutes a respectful relationship, and how to recognise and act on what is unacceptable.

These messages show that we are on the way to doing the right things. They represent the human side of the decisions that we make, right here, to try to make a positive difference in people's lives.

Can I, in closing, acknowledge and thank the leadership of the Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence and everyone who has been a part of today. This has been the most special day in my 13 years as a member of this place, and as I said, when we receive the recommendations of the royal commission and debate it in this chamber I will remember the story of Kristy and fight for a better world for my girls and every young girl and young woman in this state.

Mr WALSH (Murray Plains) — As the Leader of The Nationals I rise to make a contribution on the take-note motion. As everyone would well know in this place, family violence has no geographical boundaries and family violence crosses all parts of society and crosses all income levels in society.

I would like to personally thank Rosie Batty for her contribution today, but more importantly thank her for her commitment to make a difference, particularly to ensure that her son Luke's tragic death was not in vain. I do not think any of us could even understand the courage that it takes to do what Rosie is doing at the

moment. I would also like to thank the other speakers, who had a very powerful message for us. I believe they certainly added value to the day, and like the *Betrayal of Trust* debate in the last Parliament, I think days like today are when Parliament is at its best. It is the way people expect us to go about our role representing them here in this state.

I would also like to particularly thank the minister for accepting the suggestions to include those other speakers, and I acknowledge the initiative of the member for Bayswater and Georgie Crozier, a member for Southern Metropolitan Region in the other place, in putting forward the suggestions to expand the speaker list beyond Rosie Batty. I think Rosie made an outstanding contribution, but I think the other speakers added value to the day. As I have said, it was an extremely powerful message that came through to me.

The thing that I could not help thinking about while sitting there was what a blessed childhood I had with my family — with my grandparents and my extended family. None of these sorts of things appeared at all in our family. We were so lucky compared to other families, and I give thanks to my parents and my grandparents for the upbringing I had compared to what other people have obviously gone through.

A lot of people say family violence is not a gendered issue. The message that was reinforced today is that family violence is a gendered issue. It is about men wanting power over women and particularly their lack of respect for women. Anyone who says this is not a gendered issue is wrong; it is very much so. As it was pointed out today, family violence can be physical, psychological, sexual or financial abuse. All those things were mentioned today, and they all have far-reaching impacts on families. The fact sheet on the ourwatch.org.au website, almost half of the women who experience violence by an ex-partner say that children had seen or heard that violence. That is just tragic for those children, let alone the partner who has been the victim.

A woman dies at the hands of a current or former partner almost every week in Australia, and some research suggests the rate is actually much higher. One woman in three has experienced physical violence since the age of 15; one woman in five has experienced sexual violence; and one woman in four has experienced emotional abuse by a current or former partner. Women in Australia are three times more likely than men to experience violence at the hands of a partner. There is growing evidence that women with disabilities are more likely to experience violence. For example, 90 per cent of women with an intellectual

disability have been subjected to sexual abuse. Indigenous women experience disproportionately high levels of family violence, and intimate partner violence is the leading contributor to ill health and premature death in women under 45, more than any other known risk, including high blood pressure, obesity and smoking. Those sorts of statistics are a real damnation of society and something that we all need to make a contribution to stamping out.

One of the things I find interesting when constituents who have been confronted with these types of issues come to see me, and something I believe we need to find a solution to, is that it is usually the victim who has to leave the family home. It is usually the victim in the family who has to leave the school they are going to, and it is the victim who has to leave their wider family and friendship networks to get away from the perpetrator. Somehow we need to find a way to address this issue so that the victim is not further victimised by having to leave the family home and network while the perpetrator stays.

The Premier mentioned that we are coming up to Christmas, which is a high-stress time for a lot of families for various reasons, so it is something to be very aware of at this time of the year. I think whatever difference we make will happen across successive parliaments. It is something that cannot be owned by one Parliament; it has to be owned by successive parliaments and governments. We know the current government's royal commission will be reporting in the New Year, and one of the challenges with any royal commission is making sure that there is a commitment to implement its recommendations over successive governments, because issues like this will not be solved in one place. I put on the record the work that Mary Wooldridge, now a member for Eastern Metropolitan Region in the other place, did as the responsible minister in the previous Parliament to increase funding and programs in this area. She did an outstanding job as minister at that time, as the current minister is doing and as we would expect ministers and parliaments to do in the future.

One of the things that was not mentioned today but that I think should be mentioned is the issue of men, in particular, speaking up and standing up. In my view, those who are aware of a family violence issue and do not speak up and report it are as guilty as the perpetrator. If someone is aware of an issue in their extended family, their neighbourhood or their network of friends, they have a responsibility to report it to the appropriate authorities to make sure that something is done. Silence is no longer acceptable. It is no longer acceptable to sweep the problem under the carpet and

think someone else will do something about it or that, 'It's their business; it's not my business'. There are appropriate channels now; there are more than enough places for people to report those situations so something can be done about them and the victims are no longer victims. It is very important for men to speak up. Staying silent makes them as guilty as the perpetrator.

The other thing that has been touched on by some speakers and has been mentioned in this place in the past is the role of the courts and the judiciary in these issues. I hope that out of the royal commission and as part of the way forward there will be changes in the role of the courts so that the victim has more rights and is not considered, almost, to be guilty until proven innocent. I believe there needs to be a change of attitude by the courts, particularly around sentencing, as in other cases where sentences better reflect community standards.

Perpetrators need to be significantly punished so that we send a message not only to them but to the wider community that these sorts of actions are no longer acceptable. There should be a clear message to the courts to change their sentencing standards and the way victims are treated during the court process. We heard today about what it is like to go through an appeal process to a higher court. The trauma created for the victim is just unfair, and there needs to be a better way.

Lastly I want to touch on some of the things happening today that are normalising violence in society. As we have all been saying, family violence is absolutely unacceptable, but I have a real concern about the standard of video games being watched by children in particular. The issue of cage fighting was also touched on. These are just an extension of, in some ways, the normalisation of violence in society. If children watch and play video games in which victims are not physically hurt but just bounce back again because the video game restarts, they get a false impression of the ramifications of violence. We need to be mindful of the laws we make in this place to make sure that we do not normalise violence in society.

In finishing I want to say that family violence is absolutely and totally unacceptable. Silence from people who know it is occurring is also unacceptable. My personal view and that of The Nationals is that we look forward to doing whatever we can in this place to make a contribution to stamping out family violence in this state.

Ms HENNESSY (Minister for Health) — I am absolutely honoured and privileged to stand in the house and make a contribution on the motion. Like the

Deputy Premier, I think today is a spectacularly important day. There is much activity that occurs in this chamber, and on many a day I sit in my seat feeling I am stuck at the crossroads of political existentialism while we see some great debates take place, while we endure a lot of drudgery and while we see a lot of faux conflict and ego-fuelled assertiveness and aggression. But on days like today we are reminded of the power and possibility of using Parliament to anchor incredibly important issues within the domain of public debate and within the hearts and minds of those who make the laws, set the public policy and make decisions.

I acknowledge the Parliament as well as both the government and the opposition for their cooperation in bringing today together. I pay tribute in particular to the Minister for Women, who is also the Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, for her leadership in bringing today's activities on. But the real stars of today have been the speakers that the Parliament was honoured to hear this morning, and I also wish to pay tribute to them. It was a privilege to be in their presence and to be the beneficiary of their contributions, their experiences, their wisdom and their urgings — and it is my great hope that we will take those seriously and use them to anchor meaningful and real change as we go forward.

Today is obviously not the first day that the scourge of family violence has come to the attention of the Victorian public or this Parliament. I acknowledge that for decades and decades women — in particular women's health organisations, those who have run women's refuges and legal activists — have been campaigning on this very issue. In the short period of time that I have been a parliamentarian I have had the privilege of working with many of those groups, and just today I was reflecting upon how it was only four short years ago that when I would discuss the issue of family violence with those groups, they would express a degree of frustration that some law and order issues made it to the front page of the newspaper but the issue of one to two women being murdered per week was not considered a mainstream law and order, community safety, or public health crisis. I think we are slowly making progress on that front, but I hope we acknowledge those who have campaigned for decades on this issue. I am also delighted that this is starting to move from being an advocate's issue into a very mainstream policy issue, and today is an important day in marking that.

I have had a great deal of exposure to the issue of family violence, both in my peer group and among friends, and I think there is probably not a person in this house who has not either been a victim or does not

know a victim of family violence. I am always conscious when we debate these issues that we tend to separate ourselves from them. It reminds me of that fish in a fishbowl who swims around and says, 'What is this water everyone is talking about?'. This issue is endemic in our society and one that many and probably all of us have either experienced or been exposed to.

I was also very exposed to the issue of family violence when I worked as a lawyer, having acted for many victims in that time. I am very au fait with the great challenges in the justice system and the incredible price that victims pay if the justice system is relied upon for their protection. Therefore, I am very pleased to see not just the work being done by the Royal Commission into Family Violence but also how gradually we are accepting that this is not just a civil matter, that violence against women is an act against all of us. In terms of the criminal law, when someone is assaulted on a street it is not a civil matter; it is a criminal matter because that act of violence is an offence against all in our community. An assault behind a closed door is not a civil matter; it is an assault against all of us, therefore we all have a very strong interest, if not a moral obligation, to ensure that those issues are responded to.

We have seen, in the evolution of public policy, how the issue of children's rights has moved from one that was seen as a private matter into the domain of being a legitimate matter of public policy. It is the obligation of all of us to address those issues, and I am delighted to see that violence against women, particularly within the strain of family violence, is making its way as well. It is not before time, and it has come at the extraordinary expense of too many women's lives and sense of safety, and the brutality and the traumatism that so many children have been exposed to is a stain on the history of our state that we had an obligation to extinguish.

Having made those reasonably assertive comments about it being way past time to start addressing those issues, I want to share some reflections on my exposure or insights since becoming Minister for Health in respect of family violence. Paramedics are often involved and exposed to the issue of family violence, and will always anecdotally talk about the horror of going into houses and having to witness women who have 'walked into a door' in terms of their response. Within the health system there is not an emergency department doctor or nurse who will not tell you about the return clients who are constantly being brutalised at home. So the health system is often there to assist them, but we have a lack of integration between the health system and the criminal justice system.

If you go down to the Royal Women's Hospital, where beautiful babies are born, you will find that 28 per cent of women who are pregnant have been the victims of family violence whilst they are pregnant. So pregnancy is another attribute that increases the risk of being exposed to family violence. I spend a lot of time in dental clinics, and in every one I enter, the issue of family violence is raised because women who have had their teeth smashed out require access to care. Dentists are another terrific point from which people can be referred on to other services, but for too long all of these services have not connected, and I am hopeful that some of the recommendations of the royal commission will help us start to address those issues.

However, we cannot even start to address these issues until we start to acknowledge the intractability of addressing the issue of gender inequality, and I am delighted to see, again from a very mainstream perspective, people talking about the issue of gender inequality. It is like saying that we cannot cure lung cancer unless we stop people smoking. We can deal with the health impacts of those things but unless we get to the root cause, we will never get a breakthrough around primary prevention. So we have a big hill to climb when it comes to gender inequality, and I have heard many terrific contributions to that end, but we must do much more than put on a white ribbon and an orange scarf once a year. We absolutely have to remain committed to this cause, and it is the obligation of this generation to circuit-break the intractability of gender inequality and the failure in respect of women and children who have been victims of family violence.

We need to not just feel moved and compelled by the incredibly incisive contributions that have been heard in the Parliament today; we need to be changed and motivated by them. They did us a great service, and many people have spoken about their children too, and as the mother of two glorious daughters, the thought that they will move into a generation where there has been no change on this issue is one that is too unbearable to contemplate. The incredible contribution by Rosie Batty today, when she shared her observations and her ambitions for change in the context of the unbearable pain of losing a child is something we should not ignore. It is something that we need to feel not just moved or emotional about; it is something that we need to be motivated by and committed to. This has been a very important day, I hope, in the history of lawmaking in this place. May women be safer and may gender inequality be eradicated.

Ms SANDELL (Melbourne) — Of course it is a privilege and an honour to contribute on behalf of the Victorian Greens to this important discussion on family

violence today. All of us today stand in Parliament, which is a place where laws are made and where laws are changed. But changing the law is one thing; it is another thing entirely to change the culture.

As legislators we change laws, and we hope to influence our culture by doing so. But real and sustained cultural change often requires an incredible confluence of factors. It depends on many, many hours of difficult behind the scenes work by dedicated and coordinated activists, often a minority of activists, over years or even over decades. Then sometimes you get a tipping point, a single event that galvanises everyone's attention, and on a very few occasions an extraordinary leader emerges at a crucial moment.

Today in the Victorian Parliament we have been privileged to hear from one of those extraordinary leaders. For years Rosie Batty endured circumstances that are all too common for far too many women around Australia and the world and that have remained hidden from view for far too long. The family violence that Rosie Batty endured ended in the most unimaginable way in April 2013. Her words in the aftermath of her son Luke's death broke the silence that had blanketed the issue of family violence for too many people. 'Family violence happens to everybody', Rosie Batty told us. 'No matter how nice your house is, how intelligent you are. It can happen to anyone, and everyone'. Today Rosie and the other speakers have challenged us not just to change laws but to actually attempt to change culture.

I want to thank the other speakers we heard from today, who have given us valuable insights and moving stories and have worked hard on this issue for years, if not decades. I know, as many other speakers have said, probably everyone in this place has a personal experience of violence or knows someone who has experienced family violence. I myself have been incredibly lucky to grow up in a loving family without the threat or experience of violence, and many of my friends grew up in similar circumstances. Family violence seemed like something that just happened to other people, that did not happen to people like us. But, as we know, it can happen to anyone.

A couple of years ago one of my very best friends left a five-year-long abusive relationship. She is, like so many other survivors, intelligent, educated, strong, confident, with a professional job and a loving family, and she had a stable upbringing. But still it happened to her. The emotional and financial abuse was devastating. It took years for her to escape it. Her partner, like I am sure many others, tried all the tricks in the book. He isolated her from her friends and family, including

moving her to a small town far away from us. He eroded her confidence. He made her feel worthless, like she did not deserve any better. He made them financially dependent on each other, so that it was even more difficult for her to leave the situation. He made her worried that he would harm himself if she ever left. He even used their dog as a way to keep control over her when she finally did manage to leave.

Seeing her go through it, trying to help but not knowing how to help, was pretty harrowing for myself and for my friends. While she is now clear of the relationship, the scars stay with her in so many ways. But of course she is just one story of so many stories. Throughout my last year as a member of Parliament I have met many women — and, yes, predominantly it is women — who have experienced similar violence firsthand. I want to thank them for sharing their stories with me, particularly the women I have met through McAuley House in my electorate.

I have been also very fortunate, as many others in this place have been, to meet people campaigning for an end to family and gendered violence, some of them for decades. Thank you for your courage, your resilience over years when you did not get the support or attention that you deserved. These campaigners, these service providers and people escaping family violence have carried the burden of dealing with the violence for far too long. As they have found, far too often it is those experiencing the violence who are the ones forced to take action. They are the ones who have to change their circumstances or move away. They are the ones who have to suffer financially. They are the ones who have to leave, even though the simple act of trying to leave is often when they are at the most risk of being seriously hurt or worse by their partners.

But now hopefully with this event in Parliament we can send a signal to these people that it will not just be up to them to act, that we as legislators and as a broader society will take responsibility for doing everything we can to lift the burden, because we recognise that this is not an isolated problem that just happens to a few people or a few suburbs or a few groups in society. It is a society-wide systemic problem, and therefore it has systemic causes that we must address. As Rosie Batty has challenged us, we must be committed to cultural change, to moving away from just a crisis response to something deeper, sustained, and something that will fix the root cause.

Given this is a society-wide problem and has systemic causes, the solutions will be just as complex as the problem. There are broadly three areas where we need to act. Firstly, of course we must focus on the needs of

those experiencing family violence — the need to feel safe and secure, to have options. We need to expand the funding for crisis shelters and services to meet actual demand, which we know at the moment is rising. About a quarter of calls to Australia's national domestic violence hotline still go completely unanswered. It means making sure Victoria Police and our courts are properly trained and resourced to deal with this problem, so that people experiencing family violence are not belittled or not believed or blamed or kept in dangerous situations. It means making sure that those experiencing family violence are not forced to confront their assailants in court when they need to apply for an intervention order.

Secondly, we need of course to address the rates of offending, and to do this we need to look at what actually works in dealing with perpetrators and offenders. It means making perpetrators properly accountable for their behaviour, introducing behavioural change programs, voluntary and mandatory referrals and peer counselling. It means providing real housing alternatives for perpetrators so they do not end up back in the houses of the people they have abused because they simply have nowhere else to go, not allowing them to hide inside the walls of houses and apartments away from the scrutiny of the law, and introducing a national domestic intervention order system that would allow intervention orders to travel with perpetrators around the country, across state and territory borders.

It means properly looking at the justice system, recognising that in some circumstances perpetrators may never change and prison might be the only option. Perpetrators must absolutely be held accountable for their actions, but in some cases prison can be a violent and authoritarian place that actually increases the likelihood of someone reoffending. We need to look at where the justice system is failing not only the victims and those experiencing family violence but where it is actually failing in preventing future family violence as well.

Thirdly — and we have heard a lot about this today, pleasingly — we need to look at prevention and we need to look at early intervention. This includes things like gender and respectfulness education, not just in schools but across the board — in sporting clubs, workplaces, even here in Parliament; and we need well-resourced public education campaigns, and I was pleased to see one launched today.

It means digging deep and looking at our culture, especially the way women are perceived and treated, because we know that not all sexism and disrespect

towards women ends up in violence, but we know that all violence starts with disrespect towards women and sexism. Society currently tells our daughters that they are worth less than our sons through those subtle signals like paying men more for the same work as women, paying our sportsmen more than our sportswomen, appointing more men than women as CEOs or to boards or to parliaments. These actions send signals to women that they are worth less than men. If our society tells women they are worth less than men, is it any wonder that they feel like they are worth less than men and that that can result in violence and the sense of entitlement by men.

We know that in over 95 per cent of cases of intimate partner terrorism the women are the ones who are being attacked by their male partners or ex-partners, and it is unacceptable that two women die in this country every week at the hands of their partner or their ex-partner. We are struggling here in Australia and around the world with the recognition that there are ways of being a man in our society that involve too much of a sense of entitlement and that often resort to physical or other violence as an option. The culture must change.

What really struck me about the seven speeches we heard this morning is the real focus on the fact that this violence is so gendered and that changing culture comes down to every one of us in our everyday lives, not just here in Parliament. Here in Parliament we as politicians often think of our role as being about legislating, but we are so much more than that. Our role and leadership in society is more than just our vote. We are seen as leaders in our local communities, in our workplaces, in our societies and also in our political parties. Today I heard a real challenge from these speakers, challenging us not just as parliamentarians but as individuals, asking us to look at what we are doing that is part of the problem and what we are doing that is part of the solution.

I want to ask: are we preselecting in our political parties an equal number of women and men? Are we employing an equal number of men and women as our chiefs of staff? Are we employing an equal number of women and men as our secretaries and administration staff? Are we actually speaking up when we see sexism in community groups or at community events that we go to? Importantly, are we selecting an equal number of women and men in leadership positions in our political parties — as leaders, as deputies, as whips or in key portfolio positions?

Are we treating each other respectfully in this place? If we are not, then we are part of the problem, and we are part of the problem that sends those subtle signals to

women in society that they are worth less and that they are capable of less. But we can choose to fix it and send the opposite message, that women are worth just as much as men and are capable of just as much, if not more than men. If we are not willing to do this in our political parties or in our lives or in our communities, how can we expect the broader culture to change?

We know that cultural change is hard. We know that the government cannot choose between a crisis response or early intervention and prevention. We must in fact do both. In fact we must do many, many things at once, acknowledging that violence does not just come in one form. It can be physical, sexual, emotional, financial — there are many forms of family violence. Although it is most often men's violence against women, there are women and men in same-sex relationships who experience violence, men who experience violence at the hands of their partners, children who experience violence at the hands of parents or relatives, parents and grandparents who experience violence at the hands of their children or grandchildren. As Rosie told us, family violence can happen to anyone: rich people and poor people, people of all religions and people of no religion, people in all suburbs, all cultures and all professions.

There is no doubt that dealing with this issue is complex. We cannot do just what sounds good; we must do what works. The good news is that here in Victoria we will soon have an extensive evidence base out of the proceedings and reports of the Royal Commission into Family Violence. We will be able to look at what is working and what is not working, and I hope the government will use this information to develop comprehensive plans to tackle the issue on all the fronts where we need it. In the short term I know there are some frustrations associated with the sense that beyond reinstating some of the funding for family violence services that has been cut in recent years, the Victorian government has tended to respond to additional calls for reform with a blanket, 'Wait for the outcome of the royal commission'.

I know it is a difficult one. On the one hand a good government wants to do what works, and what works depends on a good evidence base that the government may not have yet and it will want to wait for the results of the royal commission to achieve that evidence base. On the other hand we know how under-resourced the sector is and existing services are, let alone the initiatives aimed at real prevention. Many of these groups have decades of evidence that shows what works, so let us resource those.

We in the Greens absolutely welcome the Andrews government's pioneering decision to call a royal commission and to instate a specialised ministerial portfolio for the prevention of family violence. It is a welcome reform. It is also welcome that the government has committed to respectfulness education in schools. We also welcome the government's decision to lead the nation in ensuring public sector employees will be entitled to family violence leave under new enterprise agreements.

We in the Greens would have liked to have seen even greater support in the government's first year for already stretched services that are now experiencing even greater demand and for some frontline services like McAuley House in my electorate that have missed out entirely. Anyone who complains that it would cost too much to properly resource family violence services must confront the stark reality that family violence currently costs the Australian economy \$14 billion every single year. Of course the lives that are lost and the lives that are destroyed are priceless.

We are pleased that the government has committed to implementing the royal commission's recommendations in full, and the Greens are here to hold the government to that promise. But of course there is more to be done, and Rosie Batty and the other speakers have told us that today. I hope we all heed her words, especially the government, because nothing can bring back the people who have lost their lives to family violence. Nothing can bring back the years that my friend lost. Nothing can restore the childhoods of those who have endured family violence as they were growing up.

As legislators and as policymakers, and simply as human beings, we should have acted much sooner. But we can no longer ignore the imperative to act now. All the survivors and those who did not survive make it impossible for us to ignore that imperative. Rosie Batty makes it impossible to ignore that imperative — Rosie and the memory of her son, Luke.

Mr BROOKS (Bundoora) — Today has been probably the most special and memorable day of my entire time in this place. To have had the privilege of hearing from the range of people we had in this place this morning has given every member a much clearer understanding of the impact of family violence and the challenges that we face as a community in reducing its incidence. If there was one central message from all the speakers this morning, who were from a wide variety of backgrounds and perspectives, it was that gender inequality is the central driving cause of family violence. There is not just the evidence we have heard

this morning from people who experienced family violence, people who work in the family violence sector and people who enforce our laws, but also submissions to the Royal Commission into Family Violence have also highlighted with solid evidence that gender inequality is the predominant factor driving family violence.

I was impressed with the submission from VicHealth to the royal commission. It indicates that very clearly, if I can quote it without including the references:

Taken together the studies indicate a strong relationship between the various markers of gender inequality and VAW —

Violence Against Women. It continues:

For example, at the societal and community levels, the risks of VAW have been found to be higher when resources such as education and income are distributed unequally between men and women ... when women's economic, social and political rights are poorly protected ... and/or when there are more rigid distinctions between the roles of men and women and between masculine and feminine identities ...

That was a theme that was spoken about at some length by a number of the speakers we had in this chamber this morning. Of course there are factors that we also need to consider and I am sure that the royal commission will consider them. It is important to remember there are minority groups that are impacted by family violence in particular ways — the LGBTI community, people with a disability, older people who might suffer elder abuse — but it does not take away from that predominant issue of gender inequality driving this crisis.

I want to also highlight the work of the La Trobe University Violence Against Women Network. It has submitted to the royal commission and highlighted the very high incidence of substantial alcohol and substance abuse in around 50 per cent of family violence incidents. Again, this is a contributing factor but not an underlying cause of or an excuse for family violence.

I want to place on the record my thanks to those speakers this morning. Rosie Batty, who shows amazing courage and strength in the work that she has continued to do since the tragic loss of her son, asked us this morning to change the community's perception of family violence so that we do not ask the question, in her words, 'Why doesn't she just leave?' but rather the question, 'Why doesn't he stop being violent?'.

I also want to place on the record my thanks to Kristy McKellar. What a great experience it was to have her with us this morning talking about her personal

experience of family violence. It was just incredible, particularly her poignant remarks around how the justice system can — I am sure unintentionally — retraumatise victims. It is something that I am sure we all took into account and will act on.

I also thank Joumanah El Matrah for her 20 years of working with victims of family violence, predominantly migrant and Muslim women and children. She raised issues around spousal visas and how they can place women in even more vulnerable positions when they are living in Australia. She also made a really interesting point about how we create a space, in her words, between those of us who do not experience family violence in the first instance and those people we think of who do, and the reason that can be seen to be a mechanism, if you like, to distance ourselves from the problem.

I thank Muriel Bamblett for her contribution on the Aboriginal community, particularly Aboriginal children's welfare. She cited how Aboriginal women were 45 times more likely to experience family violence and that 80 per cent of children in care have experienced family violence. They are shocking statistics that cannot be ignored and must be responded to. She talked about the importance of culturally relevant services and addressing poverty and challenges for the Aboriginal community.

Graham Ashton spoke about gender inequality, but also highlighted the 420 incidents that have been reported to Victoria Police since Tuesday in relation to family violence.

Annette Gillespie from Safe Steps pointed out the impact of family violence and gender inequality and cited that 50 per cent of people in safe accommodation because of family violence were children.

Rodney Vlasis from No To Violence talked about the need to reconsider what it means to be a man, a very important point those of us who are parents of young boys and how we raise them, how we teach them to respect women but also how we teach them to view relevant gender roles. He spoke about the dark places that obviously are created for men, sometimes seemingly normal, well-functioning men, to do unspeakable and evil things and what happens to create that dark space.

I have spoken before in this place about an incident in my electorate where two young girls, Savannah and Indianna, were murdered by their father at Easter time two years ago. It is a very sad case, and one that will

drive me on to do all I can to reduce the incidence of family violence.

Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) — It is my pleasure today to rise to make some comments about what is one of the most important issues that we talk about increasingly often in this Parliament — that is, family violence against women and children. We have heard today some stories that I am sure will live with many of us for a very long time. It has been quite a historic day today to have people from outside the Parliament who are either family violence victims or who deal directly with this issue come and appear before the Parliament, including Rosie Batty and Kristy McKellar, and to also have been addressed by the Chief Commissioner of Police, Graham Ashton, and Joumanah El Matrah, who I will make some comments about relating to ethnic issues in multicultural communities and family violence.

The key thing for me in all of this is about respect. My phone went off during one of the speeches today, and ironically enough I had received three love hearts from my wife, who was about to travel with the kids to go interstate for a family function. That really just hit home for me in terms of the importance of having that connection with one another and really valuing one another and valuing your family unit. We on all sides of the house should never take for granted the importance of the lives we live and how lucky we are because unfortunately there are many people who are not so lucky. There are many situations in which families do not have the good fortunes that we do and instead experience horrific situations — and this is so for no group more than children. There are so many instances where young people are being brought up in unfortunate circumstances. We know that young people are like sponges. They absolutely absorb everything that happens in the household. My child reminded me of that only a few weeks ago. I had heard him say a word he should not say. He said to me, 'But I heard you say that at one time, Dad'.

Ms Thomson — What was the word?

Mr SOUTHWICK — I will not mention the word. We have to remember that it is the time when we think the kids are not looking at us that they are probably absorbing things the most. My thought on much of the situation in which we live is that we need to educate young people, particularly boys, to understand and respect women and to treat women properly. That is absolutely crucial. If there is anything we can change about education and what we are doing, that is what we should do. That should be our legacy — to make sure that there is that respect and that women are treated the

way they deserve to be treated and are not put into the sorts of situations we have heard of today and that we hear of all too often.

Family violence can take a whole range of different forms. We know that it is physical in many instances. It can be mental and can include that manipulation, that control and that power struggle — and I will talk about that later in my contribution, because I think it is really important — which can include financial control over the other person and the power tactics used as part of that. That is absolutely something we need to address.

Rosie Batty talked today about her experiences. I had the good fortune of hosting Rosie at a family violence forum in Caulfield along with the former Chief Commissioner of Police. We had 400-odd people there — unfortunately not enough men; it was mainly women — talking about this issue. It was one of the first forums Rosie had done, so it feels quite special to know that the message is well advanced relative to when we first ran that forum. We heard Kristy McKellar today say that 70 per cent of the community still say, ‘Why hasn’t the woman left?’, and I think that really sums it up in terms of people not really understanding the issues and the complexity of this particular problem and the pressure many women are put under.

I turn my attention to the fact that 25 per cent of people who ring call centres are from non-English-speaking backgrounds. We have heard today from Joumanah El Matrah, the chief executive officer of the Australian Muslim Women’s Centre for Human Rights, which works for ‘equality without exception’. She talks a lot about some of the issues many Muslim women have experienced. I spoke to her after today’s session, and it is probably the best thing I have got out of today, because we are going to have a further conversation about some of the issues Muslim women have, which are the same issues that many Jewish women have. In religious marriages, when a situation arises where there is an intention to divorce, the divorce is not granted by many of those Muslim men and many of those Jewish orthodox men. Joumanah tells me she has been working for 10 years trying to change that situation of power and control. In religious terms Muslim men can have up to four women to whom they can be attached, yet they can still not grant that allowance for that woman to be able to get on with her life, and I think that is absolutely appalling.

The same applies in terms of the Jewish community. We have had a submission to the Royal Commission into Family Violence, which was from a group called the Unchain My Heart committee, which was endorsed

by the National Council of Jewish Women of Australia, Victorian section, headed by Shirley Glance; the Jewish Community Council of Victoria; the Executive Council of Australian Jewry; and the Rabbinical Council of Victoria, including the rabbinical body. These organisations have been working with Susie Ivany, Ann Wollner and Talya Faigenbaum to come up with a set of regulations and ways in which we can change the regulatory environment to ensure we can get something done. We need to address this. We need to ensure that women of Jewish backgrounds are granted a divorce. We have had situations where women have not been given a divorce, or, as it is called in the Jewish religion, a *gett*, as a result of a refusal by the man for 37 years.

That means that that woman cannot move on with her life for up to 37 years. She cannot find another partner and she cannot be married according to religious law. That power struggle is held over her head. This is something we need to change, certainly in my community. I would be happy to work with the Muslim community and with other ethnic communities to see that we get this changed. Today is an important day. It does not stop here. We have to continue the work and do what we can to ensure that there is true equality and respect in this world.

Ms THOMSON (Footscray) — I will try to keep to 5 minutes, not because this issue is not important to me — it is a very important issue to me — but to allow the maximum number of people to get to their feet and speak on it because I know there are a lot of members who would like to have that opportunity.

We all have heroes in our lives, and my heroes are the women who have been the victims of family violence, who are now the survivors of family violence and who speak out, because they are incredibly brave women. Today we heard from two of those. I have spent quite a lot of time with victims of family violence, trying to assist them as they moved from being a victim to being a survivor, and I thought I had gotten to the point where I could no longer be touched emotionally by those stories — but today I was. I say to Kristy in particular, your story touched me incredibly emotionally. To see you being so strong as to stand up and be able to tell your story as a survivor is a great tribute to you and to the supports that you have utilised to get you to this point, and I want to pay special tribute to you.

I pay tribute to Rosie Batty, who has helped make this the national agenda item it needs to be, because this has been the disease that has been hidden in households for generations in the untold stories of women and children who have been battered not just physically but also emotionally. You can see the bruises on someone who

has been battered physically, but the toll on the emotions of those women and children stays with them forever. We know that studies have been undertaken into the effect of violence in the family on children who might not actually have been hit but who have heard the arguments, seen the outcome on their mother and have had to suffer as a consequence. We know it affects their educational capabilities. We know it affects their ability to socialise and fit into society. We know a lot of work has to be committed and dedicated to those children to give them back those opportunities this violence takes from them.

We as a Parliament today have had an amazing opportunity to hear from experts, to hear from those who have been the victims of family violence and to take hold of those words and turn them into something meaningful for the families to come. I hope that we will all do that with incredible seriousness, and I think we will.

I pay tribute to the Premier. We can play around with legislation around family violence — we can do this for the police, we can add to the numbers, we can decide to change the laws and tinker with the laws around family violence, and we can maybe go and work on how women approach the courts. But if we do that all as one office in isolation, we will never tackle the issue of family violence. To have a royal commission that finally says we need everyone involved who has a view, who has an opinion or who has a way that enables us to move forward and tackle this problem in its complexity and as a whole and then to say we will take that on board and we will implement the recommendations of the royal commission takes great courage, and I commend the Premier for that.

I also pay tribute to the Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence and her staff and all of those who helped make possible today and our 16 days of activism on family violence, from the clothesline yesterday to every measure that will be undertaken over the 16 days, because every day we talk about this, every day that we keep this on the agenda, is one day closer to finding and making sure we implement the solutions. I want to congratulate the minister and her staff. I also want to congratulate the opposition, and I single out Georgie Crozier, a member for Southern Metropolitan Region in the Legislative Council, who I know has been very supportive of the work that has been done by the Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence.

It takes all of us to do this, and let us hope this is the one issue where we do not play politics but play for solutions. I commend the work that was done to make this happen today. I am privileged to have been able to

sit here and hear from our speakers, and I look forward to implementing the recommendations of the royal commission.

Ms RYAN (Euroa) — It is with great pleasure that I join the debate on this take-note motion today on the issue of family violence. Today all members of this house have been challenged. We have been challenged to take a stand, to challenge cultural norms and, as community leaders, to lead attitudinal change. We have been challenged not to look away from what is not just a state problem and not just a national emergency but a global emergency. I want to thank those who came here today to share their stories with us, because they represent countless others: the survivors, the social workers and our emergency services. But the responsibility does not just lie with those people; it lies with all of us.

Early last year the federal member for McMillan, Russell Broadbent, raised this issue in federal Parliament, and his words have stuck with me ever since. It is a sentiment that was echoed by the Leader of The Nationals. Russell said:

Violence is a considered act. It is not something that just springs out of nowhere, because I think the males that I know do not resort to violence. I have been tempted plenty of times in my life, but not in regards to women. I have been angry, but that is not where my guilt lies. My guilt lies with every other male in Australia who at some point has remained silent. At some point on that sliding scale that I talked about — of sexism, racism and other remarks — he has remained silent instead of pulling the person up and saying: ‘Not on my watch, not in my area, not in my football club and not in my family. We do not do that. We do not do it. Not in our community; that is not our way.’

I am ashamed that judged by that sliding scale I too have been complicit in remaining silent, for not wanting to cause a scene or not wanting to cause a fuss.

I believe family violence is a gendered issue. The statistics are horrific. Globally, one in three women experience partner violence. One woman is being killed nearly every week in Australia as a result of family violence. Children are present in one out of every three family violence cases reported to police. Women and girls with disabilities are twice as likely to experience violence as those without.

I would like to take this opportunity that today presents to mention a very dear friend of mine, Katie Dunlop. Katie has worked with women fleeing abusive relationships in every job she has had — in hospitals, early parenting and child protection intervention, sexual health work and housing services. These are her experiences: late-night calls; always concerned about security; not always an ideal environment for children;

women and children displaced from their communities, arriving with nothing; volunteers and workers on low wages scrabbling to make it all work on minimal budgets; passionate and brave staff; safe havens of hope; women feeling like they do not know where to begin and workers helping them to breathe and work that out; difficulty moving from a refuge to a home; no housing and so many waiting lists. Katie's last piece of advice to me was, 'Don't forget the children. The impact on children is profound'.

I mention Katie not because she is exceptional — although she is certainly exceptional to me — but because she is not. Her experiences, like those of Rosie and Kristy and the support and emergency workers we have heard from today, are the same as thousands of others.

We know this issue is not tied to one level of society or one socio-economic group. It happens behind closed doors no matter your age, race, religion, wealth or indeed your gender, even though the statistics show that the overwhelming majority of family violence is at the hands of male perpetrators.

In rural and regional communities the toll is particularly high. Those living in regional Victoria are more likely to experience family violence than those living in Melbourne. There are many statistics from my own local area which I do not have time to go into today, but in my own electorate the statistics are higher than in many other parts of Victoria. They are depressing and in many cases it feels overwhelming.

However, there is also an amazing amount of work going on locally to address those statistics. I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the efforts of organisations such as the Benalla Family Violence Prevention Network, which is led by Benalla Health and the Rural City of Benalla. Yesterday the network held its sixth annual march against family violence to coincide with White Ribbon Day. It also runs a White Ribbon Day supporters program, to which 18 agencies and businesses have signed up. There are other agencies too, like Berry Street and Family Care, that are working with limited resources and limited budgets to tackle this issue.

As the Chief Commissioner of Police reiterated to this house today, the Royal Commission into Family Violence is only the beginning. The former coalition government made a record investment of more than \$200 million to address family violence, and I would particularly like to acknowledge the efforts of both former Premier Ted Baillieu and a former minister in this place, Mary Wooldridge, who led those reforms. I

also acknowledge the current government, its Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence and the Premier for their initiatives in tackling this very complex problem.

This is not just a government problem or a policing problem. As a community we must reinforce the message around our sporting clubs, community groups and in our own homes that gender inequality, inappropriate jokes and sexist remarks are not okay. They are, in fact, part of a continuum that leads to bruises, broken bones and sometimes death. My commitment today is to join those voices who are speaking out and taking a stand against such behaviour. As other speakers in this house have pointed out today, if we improve the lives of women, we improve society as a whole.

Mr NOONAN (Minister for Police) — I rise in support of the motion before the house and reflect that this is when we see Parliament at its best. I would also like to thank and acknowledge each of the guest speakers for their very moving contributions today. It is pleasing to see Kristy back in the house. I also acknowledge Rosie. Through their courage and their contribution we all gain great strength. I also acknowledge the Chief Commissioner of Police, Graham Ashton, Assistant Commissioner Dean McWhirter and their members who are at the front line of this crisis. They never waver in their commitment. Each of those speakers has enriched our understanding of this deeply troubling issue.

I also acknowledge the Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence for her commitment and leadership. I know she has worked very hard with her staff to organise this unique and momentous day in Parliament. This day is about acknowledging the violence that is committed against women and children in this country. In doing so we remind ourselves that most men are not violent. But the survivors do not lie. Nor do their doctors, their counsellors, the police who attend 70 000 family violence cases a year or the courts.

Violence towards women and children happens in our community every hour of every day. I cannot come to terms with the fact that women and their children die in Australia at the hands of a partner or former partner. We have heard so many terrifying stories of extreme physical violence towards women and children — the bashings, the bloodied eyes, the bruised limbs and the deaths. They demand our attention.

Violence also takes less obvious forms that still terrorises. It can be the psychological menace that corrupts a home and makes a child too anxious to invite

a friend home from school. It can mean financial enslavement, where the family is held captive to the male wage and can never access the money to leave. It can mean locking a girlfriend in the house while he goes out clubbing because he is the 'jealous type'.

Sadly, through my role as Minister for Corrections, I have met many family violence victims at the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre and Tarrengower Prison. As one general manager told me, prison for some of those women is a refuge, a place of safety from the men that would harm them, a place away from an environment of male aggression and male disrespect. This situation forces us to rethink our approach.

For the first time, male prisoners and remand inmates with a history of family violence are now being offered a men's behaviour change program specifically about family violence. We are also reducing the current backlog for behaviour change programs for men on corrections orders by expanding access to family violence programs to perpetrators, many of whom have been waiting between 3 and 12 months for a place. The programs will challenge behaviours related to family violence and promote non-abusive interactions. A support program is also offered to current and previous family members.

Some prisoners may not want to admit that they need to change their attitudes to women. In fact many perpetrators may have been victims themselves as children. But many are now parents, and we need to do what we can to get them to a position where they can say, 'The cycle of violence needs to stop'.

Unfortunately our prisons are full of both perpetrators and victims of family violence. On many occasions after I have left the walls of a prison, I reflect on my own life, as other members have done today. I too have been very fortunate. I have parents who have nurtured and encouraged me. I am married to a truly wonderful and caring woman, with whom I share two beautiful sons. The generational change required to reduce this problem must come from men. It is up to me and to all the men in this Parliament and the community.

I realise the most important job I have is to teach my two sons to respect the young girls around them, and at ages 8 and 10 they are never too young to learn. I know, as all members do, that we carry a responsibility to help deliver change. As individuals the magnitude of that change can sometimes seem very daunting, but we must unite across this chamber, across the Parliament, to achieve long-awaited change. We owe it very much to the countless victims.

Ms STALEY (Ripon) — Other speakers, particularly our guests this morning, have eloquently brought home the lived experience and statistics of family violence. I see Kristy McKellar is in the gallery and I personally thank her again for her powerful words.

The incidence of family violence is high in the country. Special money, special programs and special leadership will be needed in country communities because work, the pub, sporting clubs and even barbecues are all deeply gendered in the country.

Sexist language, tolerance of even quite public family violence and pockets of deep poverty create a quite a problematic feel within some country towns. In my communities I have two areas that have particular issues with family violence: the Shire of Central Goldfields, which includes Maryborough; and Ararat Rural City. Central Goldfields rates number two and Ararat number 11. In both of these places there are innovative community programs by which people are trying to get on top of this terrible issue. I single out Say No to Family Violence, which is run by the Maryborough Rotary Club. I have talked about the program before. It is great to see groups of, basically, older blokes talking about family violence and trying to change attitudes within the Maryborough community. Similarly the White Ribbon Committee of Ararat does a huge amount of work in the community.

A final one I would like to mention in Ripon is the White Ribbon Shield, which is a football match held between the Clunes and Learmonth football and netball clubs in memory of Sharon Siermans. She played netball for both clubs and was murdered by her partner. Every year the clubs hold a football game and they go through the cultural change program with their players. It is great to see.

The former government created a really innovative program, Act@Work, in Ballarat and Ararat. It was launched by the former Minister for Community Services, Mary Wooldridge, and the former Chief Commissioner of Police, Ken Lay. The program no longer has funding. We are waiting for the royal commission to finish. I would really like to see the program refunded, but after the end of December it will no longer exist.

In my final 2 minutes — because I understand we should keep our contributions brief — there is one other issue I want to talk about, and that is, access for family violence victims to the courts in Ripon. I have a number of courts that have buildings that are over 100 years old, and I have talked about this in other circumstances.

They do not have meeting rooms, and they have only a single door for both victims and perpetrators to go through. There are repeated incidents of apprehended violence orders being breached outside the courts because there is nowhere for victims to go. The answers we are getting from the court system are that people can have videoconferencing, or they can travel to Bendigo or Ballarat. That puts insurmountable barriers in front of the women in Maryborough, Ararat, St Arnaud and Stawell who need to be able to access the Magistrates Court in a timely way that is local to them. I believe the money has to be found to upgrade the courthouses so women can continue to seek justice in their communities.

The final thing I want to say in relation to the courts is that I remain deeply concerned at the capricious nature of quite a lot of the justice being served in this area by magistrates. It really comes down to which one you get on what day as to what happens to a perpetrator, and we need to fix that. It is not good enough that women who have finally stood up and said, 'Enough is enough', then have to go through quite a random experience as to whether they are believed, what will happen to them and what will happen to their partner. I believe that is an area that is not about funding but is about change, and it does require legislation.

Ms COUZENS (Geelong) — It is a real honour to rise to speak on this matter of great importance on the day that Rosie Batty addressed a joint sitting of both houses. I congratulate Rosie and Kristy McKellar for their courage and determination to raise the issue of family violence and to make changes in all areas of government and the community. I note in media reports that today is described as a rare privilege for Rosie to address us in this place; I see it as our privilege to have the opportunity to be a part of this significant event today. I thank Rosie and Kristy and the other speakers for sharing their stories and experiences with us and, just as importantly, with the broader community.

We all know of the horrors of family violence and the consequences that come from it. That is why the Andrews Labor government has made a significant commitment to addressing the issue of family violence and has provided \$81.3 million to support Australia's first Royal Commission into Family Violence. I want to focus on what I can do in my own electorate of Geelong. Geelong is a great city, but what happens behind closed doors is of great concern. The Minister for Women, who is also the Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, has worked tirelessly on this issue. Her commitment to addressing this issue has seen visits to many electorates, including my own in Geelong.

In June this year the Labor members of Parliament held a community forum to generate discussion about family violence in my electorate. The forum was very well attended and clearly indicated that the people of Geelong want to be a part of the solution. They listened to the minister outline the details of the royal commission. The minister also made it clear that family violence is a whole-of-community problem that will need a whole-of-community approach. We heard from speakers such as Pauline Wright, the CEO of Minerva Community Services, who spoke about the support that her team offers to women and children. These dedicated workers provide support for housing, court and legal matters, counselling, basic necessities and a lot more. They are exceptional workers in our community.

Kevin Godfrey from the Geelong police family violence unit gave a comprehensive overview of the work his team is doing and its innovative approach to addressing family violence. Of note is the three by three by three model, in which after a callout police make contact after three days, after three weeks and after three months, but they also do surprise visits. The commitment by Kevin and his team is to be commended. The collaborative approach of Geelong police and the relevant services is of great benefit to the Geelong community. It shows clearly that these important services are working and growing together. Since the forum in June other organisations have held a variety of forums and events to highlight the issues of family violence and to discuss solutions.

I am pleased that the minister has agreed to come to Geelong for a follow-up forum next week to provide an update on the royal commission and to discuss how best to address the key aims of the Victoria Against Violence campaign. As the Member for Geelong I am proud to be a member of the Andrews Labor government, which will give me the opportunity to work with my community to address these family violence issues.

The statistics on the incidence of family violence are frightening. In the Geelong area police statistics show that in 2011 there were 1585 reported incidents and in 2014 there were 3085. I have spoken to many women who are experiencing or have experienced family violence, and their stories are tragic and full of despair, but many are rebuilding their lives with the support of services. One of the key messages from many of the women I have spoken to is the need to change the culture. The belief that women have somehow asked for it is just disturbing.

Violence against women and children is never acceptable. The women being killed and injured due to family violence is a national disaster. When we came to the conclusion years ago that seatbelts save lives we took action to ensure that a campaign was up and running to educate the community. Now the first thing people do when they get into a car is put on their seatbelt. We can change community cultures, and that is what we should do now. Having worked at a youth refuge for many years, I often heard young people talking about their experience of family violence. Unfortunately a lot of them talked about how they thought it was okay — not just the males but the females as well, the victims.

When I get out of bed in the morning and I turn on the news I find it more and more disturbing that almost every day I hear that a woman or child has been killed or seriously assaulted by a male family member. We must deal with family violence now. We need a range of solutions. This will not happen overnight, but we must start now.

I am proud of the Geelong community for its strong commitment to being part of the solution by taking up the issue of family violence and supporting the Victoria Against Violence campaign. I thank the Premier and the Minister for Women, who is also the Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, for their work on this issue. It is our responsibility to keep the issue of family violence on the agenda and to start coming up with solutions.

Mr BURGESS (Hastings) — It is an interesting opportunity to stand and speak today, far from being an enjoyable one, but it is one that I think we all need to express ourselves on and be heard in our communities and across the broader state and across the country because, as was indicated by several speakers today, we do face what can only be described as an epidemic and an epidemic of the worst kind, which is taking up to two women from our community every week.

On 12 February last year I was at a sporting ground when word began to trickle through late in the afternoon that there had been some sort of incident at the Tyabb cricket and football ground. It was only later on that evening that it became apparent what had actually happened. The angst the community felt was just extraordinary — and the only word is extraordinary. People were in shock, so we can only imagine what it must have been like for the people who were there on the day, and we cannot possibly imagine what it was like for Rosie Batty.

The next day I also attended the candlelit vigil for Luke, and it is something that communities must do. Luke's friends were there, out of many hundreds of people. It was a very important thing that they were there and able to express themselves. Many of them stood around feeling really uncomfortable, and you could see that they did not really know what to do or where to go. I encouraged each of them to stand on the park bench that we were using to make our speeches, and as they stood, one after another, they were able to get in touch with their feelings and they each burst into tears. It was such a moving thing to happen, but also it was a good thing to happen for those children because they were able to express themselves. One thing we know very clearly is that children do not really understand why this sort of violence takes place, because we are struggling to understand it. To give them the opportunity to be able to express themselves was very important.

Out of all that tragedy came one shining light, and that shining light was the way that the local community of Tyabb came together, and that shining light has spread across the state. We are seeing the culmination of that in this house today. It has been an incredibly important journey, and we have been led by a lady who has got more courage than I have ever seen before in anybody, and that is Rosie Batty. To listen to Rosie today, she clearly puts everyone else in front of herself and everyone else's needs in front of her own. She is spending her life making sure that other people do not have to suffer in the way that she has suffered and that other people do not have to lose a child in the way that she has. That is a really important goal to dedicate your life to, and we should be so thankful for what Rosie has done for our community.

I was in attendance at a function at which Rosie spoke one night at the Hastings Football Netball Club. There were a lot of young men — young adolescent boys really — in attendance, and as anyone would know, they struggle to sit still, they struggle to pay attention and focus, but on this night, listening to Rosie, it was very clear that they were transfixed. They just sat and stared, and listened. When she had finished, I have no doubt that at least temporarily those young men's lives were changed. If we are able to continue to repeat the message and live that message, we will be able to teach these young men and other young men to understand what it is to be a man, what is expected by the community and how they are expected to act, to behave and to respect those around them, particularly the women in their lives. I am very grateful for that.

I would like to put on the record my thanks to the Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence. I think her leadership in this area has

been outstanding, and I think that she has done a great job.

I would also like to say a couple of words about Kristy, from whom we heard this morning and who was in the gallery earlier today. She is a very impressive young woman, and we can only imagine how much courage it took to stand up and speak in this chamber, which is daunting for anybody really, under these circumstances when the chamber is full of people she does not know. Being able to stand up and say what is on her mind is a really important thing. She is a very brave young woman.

I have two other very quick things to say. I think courts need to find a way to be much harsher on breaches. Every breach that goes unpunished in a substantial way is a message to women that we cannot protect them. We need to pay far more attention to that. The other thing I would like to mention before I finish — because other people are waiting to speak — is that I do not think we need to wait until the findings from the royal commission come down to understand that we really need to give women somewhere safe to go now, not some time in the future and not just some place they can go where there are other women. We need to give them confidence that they can leave now and take their children and that they cannot be touched by these perpetrators. The sooner we do that, the sooner we will start to save women's and children's lives.

Mr WYNNE (Minister for Planning) — I rise to lend my voice to this motion to take note of the address on family violence in our community in the joint sitting. Along with every other member of this house, I was honoured to listen to the powerful stories of Rosie Batty about the unspeakable journey she has taken but the immense courage that she has shown to be an advocate in such a clear way to address the question of family violence in a systemic way.

The appalling violence that was wreaked upon her and the loss of her much-loved son is hard to grasp — it is incalculable. You cannot get your mind around how this has happened, but to have sat so close to her today and to have listened to her speech was truly a special moment for me, as was hearing Kristy. Her commentary today, in its shocking and brutal reality, spoke to us of the life that she had led, the life that her young baby had led and the crucial need that she had to escape this violence to save herself and to save her child.

It brings into harsh reality for us that family violence knows no social, economic or geographical boundaries. It is a national epidemic. That is why I commend the

response of the Parliament and indeed the response of the Premier in establishing the Minister for Women and the first Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence — the first in any state in Australia. It really is a hallmark of how this Parliament, reaching across the chamber, seeks to address this question in a bipartisan way.

Ultimately the issue of family violence is an issue of men. It is an issue of men, power, control and gender. Until we as a community and we as a Parliament understand that dynamic and understand that has to change fundamentally, we will always be trying to catch up to address these issues. One in three women and one in four children are what I would call prisoners of domestic violence, and this is utterly unacceptable in our society. The royal commission is an important piece of work. It is important that we shine this light, that we hear from all of the experts in the family violence area and that we seek the counsel and advice of the royal commission.

I remember when the Premier, then the Leader of the Opposition, announced the idea of the royal commission at our state conference. It is a pretty robust event, where there is lots of hubbub, and action certainly goes on at our conference. I have never heard a political speech like it in my career. The place was dead silent; you could hear a pin drop. There were 500 people there in the room, and our now Premier got up and said, 'This is the social issue for this state and this country, and we will have a royal commission'. I looked around to the back of me — I was up the front — and there were big, burly builders labourers, and they were crying. They were crying in the back of the room, because they understood just how important this announcement was to not only the women of the state but to Victoria more generally.

A leadership role has been played by the Premier. I thank members who have acknowledged the work of my colleague the Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, who has taken a leadership role in this. This is the most important social issue that we as a Parliament can together work upon to achieve a much better outcome for the women of this state. For me, today is a day when we see this Parliament working in its best sense, where members reach across, where we as a Parliament speak with one voice, where we as a Parliament say that violence against women is completely unacceptable, that men and women should live alongside each other in mutual respect and strive for gender equality.

Mr WELLS (Rowville) — It is always difficult to talk about family violence. The coalition government

treated family violence as a scourge on our society, and it is good to see today that the Parliament takes that attitude — that this is a scourge on our community. The mere fact that a boyfriend or a husband or a son could lift the hand to a girlfriend, a partner, a wife or a mother must sicken everyone.

Living in a house where family violence takes place can scar a child for life. They watch their parents argue, and when alcohol is added violence always follows. The form of violence might be a knife, a fist, an open hand or sometimes a gun. Sometimes these young children grow up, they become teenagers and young men who become involved in that violence. Sometimes young people have to step in to protect others, and let me tell you there is nothing more frightening as a 15-year-old than to say to your drunken father, 'Enough is enough. No more', because the retaliation is a barrage of fists.

This leads to family breakdowns, insecurities, fears and mistrust that can never, ever be repaired. It is always that promise you receive that 'It will never, ever happen again' and 'I am very, very sorry', and of course the next time the drinking starts the fists start flying as well. Even many years later when the children move out and start their own families, it is still very hard to forgive. But, and more importantly, the family values and respect for women in that second generation, the next generation, are absolutely paramount, and there should be no exceptions. I know that on New Year's Eve, especially New Year's Eve, which should be a great time to celebrate and commit to a new future, for many people there is incredible unease and it is a time that is not really celebrated.

In the early 2000s in my role as shadow police minister I used to visit a lot of police stations and a lot of women's groups because of my interest in family violence. Protection of victims, especially women and children, in those days was very slow and very bureaucratic, and it was the fault not of Victoria Police but of the legal system. A family violence situation would take place at 2 o'clock in the morning. The police would then have to drive back to the police station and fax off a request for an intervention order to a court registrar or a magistrate, who would accept or reject it.

It was a ridiculous situation that left victims in limbo, so Wendy Lovell, a member for Northern Victoria Region in the other house, and I wrote a policy about an interim intervention order. That meant that police officers could issue the interim intervention order there and then, and that would speed up the paperwork. Instead of being a court decision, it could be a police decision. That worked, and I am grateful to the

Attorney-General at the time, Rob Hulls, who picked up the policy and implemented it with Victoria Police.

However, we need to go further — a lot further — because at the moment the perpetrator still has to be taken back to the police station to be issued with the intervention order. Police Association Victoria has made a submission to the royal commission which makes a lot more sense and accords with what we intended should happen when we wrote that policy. It is that the interim intervention order could be issued by a senior sergeant or a sergeant at the actual scene. It can be written out, the perpetrator gets a copy, the victims get a copy and it can be dealt with there and then.

I hope this is one of the recommendations that is pushed forward very strongly by Parliament because we need to make sure that the interim intervention order is issued at the time of the family violence situation. The perpetrator then has to be removed, which is the way it should be, so that the women and children are protected in the home. That should be a priority where it is possible, rather than moving the women and children out of the family home.

Victoria Police has done a great job over the years, and great credit is due to assistant commissioner Reg Baker, former chief commissioner Christine Nixon and former chief commissioner Ken Lay for prioritising action on family violence. When you think about family violence it is worth noting that 42 per cent of all assaults take place in the family home. That is a hard fact to accept. More importantly, Ken Lay worked towards making sure that when there was a breach of an intervention order — and we heard from Kristy today the effects on her when there was a breach of the intervention order — women and kids could feel safe in their own home. I thank Ken Lay for the amount of work he did in pushing very strongly for action on breaches of intervention orders.

No longer will we accept that family violence is just a family problem. This is a community problem, and everyone in our community has a responsibility to stamp it out.

Mr EREN (Minister for Tourism and Major Events) — I, too, want to make a contribution to the debate on the motion before the house. I wish I did not have to because it is a very sad issue, but it is not a perfect world and unfortunately family violence is an issue that now affects many people in our society. Governments need to act and act swiftly.

At the outset I thank all the wonderful speakers who attended this chamber today: Rosie Batty, Chief

Commissioner of Police Graham Ashton, Kristy McKellar, Rodney Vlasis, Annette Gillespie, Joumanah El Matrah and Muriel Bamblett. They all made very moving speeches, and when you think about some of the powerful words that were used by people who were affected by this hideous disease, if I can call it that, in our community, you know it is really a shameful indictment of our history that we are in this situation.

Collectively, as a community, we all need to act now, and there are a number of different areas where we can take action. It all begins out there in the community. It is about an education program, it is about social and cultural change, it is about all of the social services that are provided, it is about the law enforcement agencies and of course it is about the justice system itself and beyond. We need to get all of those synergies working together. A number of speakers indicated earlier that this is not going to happen overnight, and I am really proud to be part of a government that has led the way nationally in terms of having a royal commission into this hideous disease. It is only through those processes that we will make some inroads into this devastating issue.

In my portfolio of sport there is a lot to be done, and a number of speakers have picked up on that. That is why I am really proud that an inquiry is almost complete into women and girls in sport and recreation and what more we can do to not only encourage women to participate further in sport but also make it female and family-friendly. That is why we are providing a fair bit of money to make sure that we upgrade sporting clubs that do not at the moment cater for or have an environment that is friendly to women and families. Clearly I am very proud of all of those achievements. It is very much about changing the culture and behaviour in what are sometimes very male dominated areas, particularly when it comes to sport.

When you go through some of the statistics you find that women are 52.8 per cent more likely to be victims of crimes against the person than men. In 2014 one woman was killed every week by a current or former partner, and earlier this year two women were dying from family violence-related incidents every week. A Crime Statistics Agency Victoria report found that in 2014, 68 134 family violence incidents were recorded by Victoria Police. This is an increase of 82 per cent since 2013 and 70.3 per cent — a phenomenal number — since 2010.

In my home town of Geelong family violence is a serious problem, and the statistics are very concerning. In 2010 there were some 1351 family incidents recorded by police in the region. In 2014 that number

had more than doubled to 2841. According to an article in the *Geelong Advertiser* of 22 December 2014:

Data shows there was an 89 per cent rise in family violence reports between 2009–10 and 2013–14 in the Geelong police service area.

Of the 1250 cases investigated, almost half saw charges laid — a 354 per cent rise compared with five years earlier.

In 2013–14, police investigated 398 family violence reports where children were present, with 148 intervention orders granted.

One of the scary factors in this is that we know family violence is an under-reported crime. The then Acting Chief Commissioner of Police, Tim Cartwright, estimated there are 35 000 incidents of family violence not reported per year, which is one in three. So whilst more people feel more confident to come forward and report family violence incidents, there are still many more suffering in silence, and clearly we need to do something about that.

There is some really good work going on in Geelong, and one collective of social service providers is the Barwon Area Integrated Family Violence Committee. It comprises a broad representation of organisations and services that work with those affected by family violence. The Department of Health and Human Services participates on the committee. Other core partner agencies are the Barwon Centre Against Sexual Assault, the Barwon Community Legal Service, Bethany Community Support, Colac Area Health, the Department of Health and Human Services, Minerva Community Services, Time for Youth, SalvoConnect, Victoria Police and the Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative.

The Barwon Area Integrated Family Violence Committee works collaboratively to identify issues and potential improvements in the Barwon area's response to women and children experiencing family violence. We wish it more strength in doing its work, as this is a very important area. More needs to be done and more will be done.

I love the fact that there is such bipartisan support today. It is a key day with a shift in the culture, if you can call it that, of the chamber, and I am so proud to be a part of it. Having a family of my own — having five children — I know it is so important to make sure that we bring our own children up and that they bring their children up in an appropriate manner which respects humanity and women and children. This is the day when things are going to change. It is not going to happen overnight, but with some of the great work that is going on and with the bipartisan and collaborative

approach not only in this state but nationally, we will see this issue hopefully minimised considerably over the next few years.

Mr PAYNTER (Bass) — Thank you for the opportunity to speak on this motion and to take a stand against family violence in this Parliament, particularly with such a bipartisan approach occurring in relation to this serious issue which impacts on all of our lives, I also note my role as a White Ribbon Ambassador and, equally importantly, as a husband and father of three daughters.

I am also particularly proud to be speaking on a day when Rosie Batty has addressed our Parliament. Rosie Batty has shown enormous resilience and great courage by speaking publicly about family violence despite her own personal tragedy. I admire her greatly and thank her for sharing her thoughts, advice and wisdom with us today. The terms commonly used in our media and in our community are family violence or domestic violence, but after listening to Rosie now for a second time, I will direct my comments to what I believe is the core of the issue, and that is men's violence against women and the desire for some men to exert a sense of power and control over a woman.

Jill Meagher was not in a family or domestic relationship with her attacker when she was stalked and brutally murdered in the streets of Brunswick in 2012. Masa Vukotic was not in a family or domestic relationship with her attacker when she was violently murdered whilst walking innocently through a park in Doncaster in March this year. My beautiful friend Kylie Blackwood was not in a family or domestic relationship with her attacker when she was stabbed to death in her own home in August 2013. The 14-year old girl who was allegedly abducted and raped by four men in Geelong earlier this month was not in a family or domestic relationship with her attackers. Sadly, examples like these are all too common in our communities.

Men's violence against women needs to stop, but for that to happen we need to tackle the culture of male dominance. The report commissioned by the federal Department of Social Services, which was released last week, shows that boys and girls as young as 10 believed there were circumstances where it was okay for a boy to hit a girl. More disturbingly, girls believed that they deserved it. Some of our men learn disrespect for women from their fathers, their brothers, while at school, while at the football club, while at work or from their mates at the pub. Where they learn their disrespect is irrelevant. It leads fundamentally to some men

finding an inherent endorsement for them to hit, bash and abuse women.

Today we are still talking about why a young woman was walking on her own through a park, or whether it is safe for a woman to take a jog on her own, or why she was wearing headphones and not remaining alert, or why a woman does not leave a violent relationship. I am not aware of any fathers having similar conversations with their sons to those I have with my daughters. Sadly our judiciary does not always set a great example. A Bendigo taxidriver was jailed in 2014 for raping a woman passenger and then telling her, 'Call me if you ever need a taxi'. He later appealed his sentence, claiming he had a strong work history, family support and had participated in community activities. The presiding judges upheld his appeal and reduced his sentence by two years, claiming they 'should give appropriate weight to the mitigatory factors'. I ask: what mitigatory factors can be taken into account when a man rapes a woman?

More recently a judge suggested the offender should 'put it behind you' and 'go back to your parents, go back to your family and get some work. That will fix you up and you will be right. Stay away from the drugs'. And then to add further insult the judge added, 'Good luck'. This thug had held a gun to the woman's temple whilst holding her by the neck and threatening to kill her. The woman was so traumatised that she has moved interstate to start afresh. Tell her to get over it! In the words of Ken Lay, who is a beacon in the area of men's violence against women, schoolyard banter can later devolve into sexist jokes and catcalls, and sink further to where it becomes sexual assault and domestic violence. He said:

I place family violence in a wider culture where vulgar and violent attitudes to women are common. Our culture is filled with men who hold an indecent sense of entitlement towards women. Our culture is heavy with warped and misspent masculinity, and every single day the casual groping and lewd comments that go unchallenged erode our standards. And if none of us are saying anything, then this feral atmosphere gets worse, until it becomes an endorsement of violence against women.

But fundamental to all of this is how to change the way many men in Australia relate to women. To paraphrase one commentator, the standard we walk past is the standard we condone.

We cannot continue to walk past men's violence against women. So what can we do? The federal and state governments must take a leadership role. Recently our Prime Minister announced a \$100 million package of measures to provide a safety net for women and children at high risk of experiencing violence. On a

state level the coalition welcomes the Royal Commission into Family Violence but its findings and recommendations will not be released until the end of February 2016.

The coalition government had directed record investment of more than \$200 million in funding into four key areas. They are: one, prevention — stopping violence against women and children; two, safety — protecting women and children; three, accountability — holding perpetrators to account; and four, driving change — developing statewide behaviour change programs. One such program driving change was the Challenge Family Violence program run by the local councils of Casey, Cardinia and Greater Dandenong and their partnering networks. I was one of approximately 70 participants who took part in this somewhat confronting and attitude-changing program. The 70 participants have now been empowered to engage with their own networks and drive cultural change within these groups.

We cannot tackle family violence without tackling the issue of men's violence against women. It starts with changing the culture of male dominance, power and control that permeates our society. To promote a healthy, safe and happy environment for all, we need to take steps to change this culture now — today. For the sake of our current and future generations, I hope we get on with the job.

Ms THOMAS (Macedon) — I commend the member for Bass for his fine contribution. My own contribution will pick up on similar themes. May I start by telling you a story. Only a few weeks ago I was at a service club dinner in my electorate. The evening kicked off, as they often do, with some joke telling. Many of the jokes were from the Benny Hill school of comedy, and I know that the women in this house will know full well and understand that awkward feeling of wanting to be polite, to be good, to not make others feel uncomfortable, to not appear humourless; of letting it slide and thinking, 'Well, these blokes are harmless enough. These attitudes are dying out'.

But then a joke was told, the gist of which was if only women would shut up, their partners would stop hitting them. I was appalled and I was shocked. 'What little respect must these men have for me', I thought, their guest that evening, 'that they thought it would okay to tell such a joke in my company?'. But worse than that, I was ashamed of my own incapacity to act there and then, to take a stand and to call out this behaviour for what it was — behaviour that gives licence to violence against women.

I am an elected member of Parliament. I am the Parliamentary Secretary for Health. I am an accomplished and confident woman in my 50s. I have power — or so I thought. Right there and then, in a pub in my electorate, I felt utterly powerless. I punished myself. I had a sleepless night. Why am I in Parliament if not to stand up and speak out against this behaviour? What did I fear from speaking out? Why could I not speak out? I could not let this behaviour go unchecked, and for the first time in a long time I was at a complete loss. So, after talking to my colleagues, I resolved to write a letter, which I did, explaining why I found the joke so offensive and offering to organise a speaker for the group on family violence.

I know that there were men in that room who will be wearing white ribbons this week. They are leaders in our community after all. Yet that evening no-one called that behaviour out. I have thought about this incident a lot over the last few weeks and I have resolved that I did what I could. It was not really my role in that place and at that time, in a room full of men, to be the one with the courage to stand up and speak out. That was the job of the men in that room. You cannot wear a white ribbon and sit by while women are humiliated and disrespected. You cannot wear a white ribbon and allow that behaviour to continue. You cannot wear a white ribbon and not understand that sexist jokes contribute to a culture that gives licence to disrespect and encourages violence against women, which the member for Bass also commented on in his contribution.

I say to the men in this chamber: every time you belittle a woman and her experience, and every time you let disrespectful behaviour occur in your presence, you are contributing to that culture that gives licence to violence against women. We, each and every one of us in this chamber, hold positions of power and responsibility, and it is our responsibility to speak out. Again, though, I throw that challenge out to the men. In sporting clubs and in service clubs, still dominated by men, you have an extra responsibility to lead.

As we have heard put so powerfully today, family violence is a gendered issue, and sexism and gender inequality are deeply ingrained in our society. While we must as a priority improve the services to keep women and children safe, we must also tackle the root cause of family violence. That means addressing the gender pay gap, which is growing and which threatens the aspirations of so many women who are seeking to achieve economic independence. It means ensuring that women are better represented in our courts and in our parliaments — two areas I am pleased to say the Labor Party and this government have taken action on. It

means, as the Minister for Sport reminded us, ensuring that girls are encouraged to participate and grow strong through sport. That means ensuring they have got the facilities in which to do so. It means thinking deeply about the subtle and not so subtle messages we pass on to children about the behaviours we expect from them, the roles they will assume and the dreams they can dream.

I want to acknowledge our speakers today, and in particular the bravery and the courage of Rosie and Kristy. Today we were reminded that right now women and children in this state, in each of our electorates, are living in terror. I congratulate the Premier and the Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence for their resolute leadership on this issue. We have much work to do, and so we must harness the momentum and the bipartisan commitment that we have seen today to end family violence in this state.

Mr T. BULL (Gippsland East) — It is a pleasure to rise to make a contribution on this motion relating to the prevention of family violence. We have many debates and discussions in this chamber, and often vehement opposing views across the chamber, but this is one situation where clearly there is very strong unity and belief within the Legislative Assembly. I join previous speakers in thanking those who addressed the Legislative Assembly today for sharing their stories and views.

Today we have heard a hell of a lot of statistics that highlight the severity and the commonness of family violence. However, my first realisation about this issue did not come from statistics; it came from a situation I encountered in my previous employment. I was lucky enough to grow up as the youngest of seven kids in a family that was very, very close. We had a very stable family. Being the youngest of seven, I was able to have and to maintain very strong relationships with my siblings. It was what you might call a pretty average, traditional family.

However, my perception of family violence changed a bit over 10 years ago, when I was in the employment of the Australian Sports Commission. I was involved in a program in primary schools that promoted healthy and active lifestyles to children. This program involved getting kids active after school and also feeding them a healthy meal. It was often fruit or something of that kind.

On this particular day we took out the fruit and we had a child who was ravenously eating as much as he could. I moved over to this young lad and suggested that it might be a good idea if he took his time and let

everybody have a bit of fruit. This boy, who was in year 3, looked up at me and said, 'Tim, I haven't had anything to eat today'. At that stage it was 4.00 p.m. I took him aside and started asking him a few questions. He told me — when the story came out — that he had got home from school the night before and had not been able to get into the house. His father had been drinking, which was standard practice most days, and was asleep in a chair. The little boy could not get into the house, so he slept in the garden that night. He did not have any dinner, breakfast or lunch, and so at 4.00 pm that day he was ravenously eating the fruit.

I probably broke a law because without the parent's consent I took this young fellow down the street and bought him a meal at the local takeaway place before he went home. I was talking to him about why he had not woken his father up to let him into the house the night before. The little boy pulled up his shirt, exposing bruises right across his chest, and said, 'Because Dad would belt me again'. Following on from this, in what was quite a long and complex situation that involved, obviously, the school, the Department of Human Services as it was then, and family friends, we were able to get some help for this family that greatly improved the situation. The father became involved in better parenting courses, initially reluctantly but later on he embraced it. The little boy's life changed somewhat. He recently attended my son's 16th birthday party, and he is quite a different kid, although there are certainly still some challenges.

That little incident hit home to me — everybody has a story like that; everyone has a situation they have come across that is unacceptable — but it pushed Tim Bull into the real world of what is going on in a lot of families. It stressed to me the importance of speaking out and doing something. We have too many people in our community who turn a blind eye, as you, Acting Speaker, just highlighted in your contribution. As I have heard from other speakers earlier today, it is not about us getting up and wearing a white ribbon once a year. It is not about us saying the right things when we are challenged in a public forum. It is about us actually doing something. When we see these things going on, it is about us making sure — although it may not be popular at the time and it may cost you a few friends — we actually do something. For me, that is the very clear message that came out of the contributions made today by our guests and the contributions from members in the chamber.

Before I finish, I briefly want to touch on two areas. As shadow minister for disability I think it is deplorable and a blight on our society that those with disabilities are twice as likely to experience violence. Also, in

relation to the Indigenous community, having been the previous Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, the statistic that Aboriginal women are 35 times more likely to experience domestic violence — 35 times! — is a staggering statistic. It is something we should be ashamed of, and something where clearly we need to work together as a Parliament and with parliaments in all jurisdictions to ensure that we offer more supports.

I think community awareness has changed enormously. That is a positive. I think it will continue to change as more people speak out and fewer people turn a blind eye. We certainly need to continue this trend. It goes without saying that family violence is not acceptable in any way, shape or form. The more action we take as individuals, the better our communities will be for it. I strongly commend this motion to the house.

Ms KILKENNY (Carrum) — It was an honour to listen to our special guest speakers earlier today in this place. Rosie Batty is an inspiration. It is fair to say that because of Rosie Batty we are now having a national conversation about family violence and violence against women. I also acknowledge the other guest speakers, in particular Kristy McKellar, whose message today was strong and powerful and whose bravery is extraordinary. Because these women are speaking up, they are creating a space for other women to come forward and speak about their experiences as well.

Recently I, together with the member for Mordialloc, held a forum in Carrum on family violence, attended by the Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, Fiona Richardson. We had a number of compelling speakers. One woman in particular — I will call her Anne — stood up. She was clearly angry and frustrated, but spoke beautifully about her four children. We listened to her as she spoke about issues with the justice system, with child support, with custody battles. Two days later I received an email from Anne, and I will read out a part of it. She wrote:

Thank you for running this forum on Tuesday night. I certainly hadn't expected to be saying anything at all, but found myself oddly safe in the space and, when I found my voice, felt it somewhat empowering to be able to have an opinion and not be judged according to my 'emotional outburst'. I think I have finally found hope that someone is actually listening, trying to understand and powerful enough to make some real changes that will positively impact the lives of so many women and children who have been impacted by family violence.

For me, that was an absolute turning moment. I thought if we can change one woman's life to that extent, then this is well worth it. But I know we are doing so much more, and I feel we have hit a turning point. We have

taken some very positive steps, and we now have a path we can follow.

Ten years ago late one night I heard what sounded like someone bouncing a ball against a wall. It woke me up, and I realised it was actually the sound of a fist hitting someone's body. I remember jumping up out of bed and running to the front door, and I grabbed the first thing that I could, which was a broom.

I ran out screaming into the front yard, making as much noise as I possibly could to try to attract some sort of attention. I ran towards the house next door, and as I ran across other people came out and then the police car came down. The police went inside. I stood outside in disbelief, wondering what had happened. Next an ambulance pulled up. Then the paramedics wheeled out my next door neighbour, and she was completely unrecognisable. I remember just looking at her and shaking my head, thinking, 'What are we going to do? What can I possibly do to change any of this?'. Now we know.

We know that if we are going to stop violence against women, we must address gender inequality. It is a point the World Health Organisation has been making for over a decade. It is everywhere; it seeps into and corrodes every part of our society. I see it played out in this place. I see it in the different ways we talk to our boys and our girls, and the different expectations we have of them. Statistics show us that in countries where there is more equality across key indicators like pay, representation and leadership positions, and less adherence to rigid gender roles, there is also less violence. Yet in Australia right now the gender pay gap has reached 18 per cent, the highest level in 10 years. This is why it is important to have more women in Parliament, not just on the Labor Party side. We need more women on company and public boards. We need more women in leadership roles in community and sporting organisations. We need women's achievements recognised. We need women's sports broadcast on television. And yes, we certainly need more female prime ministers.

The very sobering point that Rosie Batty so eloquently makes is that attitudes which continually see women underrepresented in key leadership roles and continually see women paid less than men for the same work are the same broad societal attitudes that allow a man to somehow justify his abhorrent violent actions towards his female partner. Thank you, Rosie Batty. Thank you, Kristy. Thank you for taking a stand. Your voices and the voices of so many women like you are highlighting this despicable crisis in our community — this national emergency.

There is momentum, and I am sensing a groundswell caused by the seismic disturbance that is family violence. It is up to all of us now to surge forward to challenge gender stereotypes, to call out gender inequality and to put an end to violence against women. I commend the motion.

Mrs FYFFE (Evelyn) — Thank you, Acting Speaker. Like you, I was also at a function last Friday night where the jokes were against women. It was a mixed audience, and most people were uncomfortable. The conversation gathered pace and the comedian eventually gave up, but the young women who were there were pretty upset. I did make my opinion known, but perhaps we have to have the courage to speak out in front of these groups when the jokes are tasteless.

Today has been a day of great emotion for all of us here. I do not know if everyone else feels it, but I feel totally exhausted by what we heard. We heard the Premier talk about the Victoria Against Violence campaign. He spoke about Christmas, and that conjured up the image of those children who would not enjoy the kind of Christmas that many of us would fondly remember. Every child deserves safety and warmth at Christmas, and he talked about the extra funding, which is terrific. The Leader of the Opposition said disrespect begets violence, and he spoke about the number of calls to police — 1 call every 8 minutes, 187 a day, 1307 a week. He said that if you love someone, you do not hurt them — physically or mentally.

The Napthine government doubled spending on the prevention of domestic violence. The federal government has increased spending and, as I mentioned, this government has announced funding for it. Across all parties and all governments there is a desire to do what can be done to prevent this escalating increase.

Rosemary Batty talked about the power and control that the perpetrators seem to want over the women under them and how one in three women are affected. If you take up those statistics, that means that in this chamber one in three of us is affected by domestic violence. It is a bit hard to believe, isn't it? She also said that perpetrators of domestic violence would, on statistics, be in this chamber. I hope to God that is not true. If it is true and someone is suffering — a victim or a perpetrator — I hope that they seek help from any of us in this place.

The statistics are pretty horrible. Two women per week are murdered. Women are bashed, beaten and violated — they are unsafe. We heard how they have to move and take on new identities. Some women always

carry an alarm because they do not feel safe anywhere. We heard about how the system fails our migrant women and the issues around the spousal visas. We heard from Chief Commissioner Ashton about how they had more than 400 callers from Tuesday to Thursday on family violence. But the one who really got to me was Kristy. I looked at Kristy and thought about my two daughters and my three daughters-in-law. I thought, 'How would her parents feel, and the rest of her family, knowing that she has been through this?'. I do not know how you would handle it as a parent. It was a very emotional time.

There are some shining lights, and I have one in my electorate. Animal Aid now has a program to take animals from women who are experiencing family violence, because research indicates 40 per cent delay their escape for fear of the safety of their pets, so Animal Aid at Coldstream has a terrific program going. But in the Yarra Ranges in the electorate of Evelyn we have had a 64 per cent increase in the past five years of reported incidents. We had 840 in the 2010–11 year and 1374 in the 2014–15 year. But it is still underreported. When I talk to my local police they say it is still underreported. The Eastern Domestic Violence Service last year had 8000 referrals, and that is causing quite a strain on the service, on resources and on the support that is needed for prevention.

I realise there are others who want to speak, but I want to add that it does go back to respect. I look at the kinders that I go to now where three of the most important things the children learn are to listen, to share and to show respect to each other. That is what we are teaching at three-year-old and four-year-old kinder.

We are doing all those things. We have the money that has been released to spend, but it is almost as though the solutions that we come up with — the things that we think will prevent family violence — seem to be working on just a few, because the increase in numbers in my lifetime has been huge. Yes, family violence was happening and has always been happening. History records that. Our definition of family violence has changed also. Mental violence is something that was probably disregarded a long time ago, probably in the same way that physical violence was, but that is now also taken into account. Whether it is the use of drugs or whether it is the prevalence of insecurity, anxiety and depression, I do not have an answer. I think today has drawn our attention to the problem. We have some influence, and we must use everything we have to try to reduce the prevalence of family violence.

Mr RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) — It gives me great pleasure to rise to speak in support of the

take-note motion for the speech to this Parliament today by Rosie Batty. What a significant time for our Parliament. What a significant time to be a member of the 58th Parliament, where we came together today and saw from the contributions of our colleagues the best part of ourselves and the best intentions to do what is absolutely necessary. I commend the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition and the Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence for putting on today's event. I think it was something of great significance and great importance to our community.

I sat here today not knowing what to expect. I have listened to Rosie Batty speak a number of times but felt a sense of being overwhelmed by the occasion. No matter how many times you hear Rosie speak, you just think how her work came about through such significant tragedy, such significant horror. She has such courage and fortitude and is dedicated to the cause. Drawing a line in the sand and saying, 'Enough is enough. We must change and we must reform', is an act of great courage and strength. To hear her again today was a real privilege.

To hear Kristy tell her story just blew me away. For someone going through her own horrors of an illness and treatment, to confront that — it just blew me away, and I felt a sense of helplessness and a sense of just empathy towards her. I think that just really touched everyone today. She is a wonderful person and a very special individual. Her story was remarkable. What an incredible person and an incredible mother she is. That really touched everyone today.

It leads us to an opportunity where we need to look at breaking generational issues that have existed over many decades and centuries; we need to break them through change. For us to have that opportunity as a nation, with all parliaments moving together in the same cause, is an opportunity that cannot be lost. When the royal commission hands down its findings and recommendations in 2016 we need to seize that opportunity and audit and make sure each and every year that we self-assess, that we are addressing some of the challenges these families face, that we are not letting up and that the 59th and 60th parliaments have the same aggression around solving this issue and the same enthusiasm. We need that to continue. As the years go on we need to make sure we are addressing this problem and dedicating the resourcing and that there is never a change in those circumstances.

We have also heard a lot said about gender equality, and I think it is absolutely the fundamental issue here. People who have had a lot more experience in the area than I have acknowledged that, but I want to put that on

the record. This is about changing stereotypes. This is about changing attitudes such that when children are very young it is not acceptable to have these attitudes, and it is also about pushing equality forward in every single facet. I think the member for Carrum summed that up absolutely perfectly — and has done so before: it is on every facet that we must work towards promoting equality and, when it is not present, never accepting that as okay.

I wanted to very quickly touch on the story of a constituent of mine by the name of Emma. Emma has had a profound impact on me as a newly elected member of Parliament. She is a survivor of family violence and also a mother, like so many. She, however, is a mother of a child with special needs. The difficulties that women face in being in that circumstance and having a child with special needs are absolutely profound, particularly where, as with Emma's daughter, the child is not understanding and not able to cope and not able to move at all, because the education of a child and their stability, faced with these circumstances, is profoundly impacted when a family has to move around. There is not an ability to understand. Emma's story and that understanding is something I hope the royal commission focuses on as well, because the impact on children with special needs — across the disabilities — is very profound, and supporting those mothers to care for their children as well is something that requires an additional element of resourcing and support. As I said, I hope that is something that the royal commission also factors into its consideration.

In conclusion, I think that it is time we seized the moment. We should not let this momentum and enthusiasm for legislative and policy change go. We must take those opportunities. I commend the motion.

Ms SHEED (Shepparton) — The speeches today and everything that has been spoken about today just leave me angry. I guess we all bring our own experiences to Parliament, and my experience of many years as a family lawyer and as an independent children's lawyer, during which I heard the stories so many times, always made me angry, and I still feel angry.

This week, the week of the much-publicised White Ribbon Day, began for me with Monday morning's news bulletin reporting horrific injuries to a 10-month-old baby in western Sydney and a knife attack on a five-year old girl in Ballarat. While neither perpetrator was a relative, both were 23-year-old men, and one cannot help but feel a sense of despair at living in a society where young men, no matter what their

personal or mental circumstances, would set out to harm children. Then today we heard from the commissioner of police that 400 reports of family violence were made in Victoria between Tuesday and today. Rosie Batty, however, by her inspiring words today and through her deeds since she was thrust into the limelight in such tragic circumstances, has shown us all that we have to translate the despair we feel at these circumstances into working for positive change.

The Goulburn Valley is recognised as having a tolerant, multicultural society, but unfortunately family violence also knows no ethnic boundaries. The coordinator of Marian Community family violence services in Shepparton wrote in VincentCare Victoria's last annual report:

Clients at our family violence services come from all socioeconomic backgrounds and represent 40 different language groups.

Statistics show that in the five years from 2010 to 2014 family incidents increased from 592 to 1386 in Greater Shepparton, a rise above that of the state average. The specialist family violence liaison officers at Shepparton police station describe their beat as a very busy one that ties up a great deal of police time.

I would like to commend our local newspaper for the campaign it ran last week heightening the awareness around family violence, and the interviews Emily Woods conducted during that campaign. She interviewed a young woman who said at the end of the interview:

You have a chance at freedom, you have a chance of waking up every morning and being happy, like I do —

a plea to women to leave.

I recall taking instructions from a woman in a family law matter who described her years of abuse and violence. I asked her when she had first been hit. She said it was six weeks before her wedding. The wedding arrangements were all in place. He promised that he would never do it again, and they married, but of course it continued, for many years, until she had the strength to leave him.

Over my years as a family law practitioner I always asked women whether they had experienced family violence, and so many of them had. Some would downplay the violence. They would say things like, 'It was only the occasional backhand'. Others spoke of threats being made to kill the family pet or to kill them. Overwhelmingly, however, the fear — their personal fear and their fear for their children — was great. They carried significant guilt, because their children had to

witness the family violence. They felt that in some way that was their fault.

To most of us it is incomprehensible that a father could murder his own children just to punish the mother. Many women live in fear of this happening, and it does happen. There can be no greater punishment for a woman than to have her child killed.

There have been so many examples of this over the years, and we know of many of them. It highlights one of the extraordinary differences between men and women in our society — the fact that perpetrators can exercise this ultimate power. Domestic violence, as it used to be described, has always been prevalent. My father was a man who was very respectful of women and deplored their ill-treatment. I recall him telling me a story from many years ago of a woman in a little country town who was being abused by her husband. It was widely known. The local policeman confronted the perpetrator, gave him a good beating and let him know that if he did it again, he would get more of the same. This was simple justice dispensed in a way that we no longer consider appropriate.

Over the years I have seen many community responses, and things are changing. We have moved from a time of the police not attending call-outs because it was 'just a domestic', to a situation where we now have family violence units in our police stations. We have reporting of family violence. People are much more willing to report family violence. I have many times telephoned the police when I have heard women being abused in the street or in houses near where I have lived. The legal system will always have a role to play in this area. There are times when court orders are essential. More importantly, however, there must be consequences for breaches of these court orders, and I think women have been failed many times in this area.

There has also been a reluctance to charge perpetrators with assault in circumstances where, if the victim were not an intimate partner, they would certainly have been charged. Enforcement of our laws is an important part of changing behaviours. It is not good enough to pass laws, hoping that these will bring about social change and a change in attitudes. That has not worked. Enforcement and an understanding that there are consequences to breaking the law is what we need.

Human relationships are complex, but we now understand gender to be a really important issue in this area. If we as a community are to address the sickening behaviour that exists in familial relationships that form the basis of our society, significant action must be taken. There are so many paradoxical things in our

society. Women are denigrated and exploited in a wide range of ways: in games, films, media and other sources. Violence is promoted as a sport. We have so many mixed messages out there when consistency is what we really require.

I telephoned my 92-year-old mother quite late last night. She was watching *Q&A* after having watched the second part of *Hitting Home*. She had been shocked by some of the stories. She said to me, 'I could never have imagined your dad doing something like that to me'. There are many men who would not dream of behaving in a such a way towards women. However, in my opinion, there are a group of men who are at war with women. They are dangerous and their relationships are based on ownership and anger. For most of them anger management courses and behavioural change courses are of questionable value. Anger, hatred and a desire to control is strong and in some cases knows no boundaries. That is why 78 women have died so far this year. We have to stop making excuses for them.

We do not have to criminalise family violence; it is already a crime. There are two fundamental things which need to change. The first is that women should not have to leave their homes; the perpetrator should leave the home. The second is that we need to enforce the law. Assault is a serious offence. There is no other area in the law we say 'Don't do that again or else' — not in situations like this. An intervention order is just that: it is a warning not to do it again. We have to charge people.

I am sorry I have gone for so long, but I feel very passionate about this. I am about to finish. I have to stress that at this time social change and all of these respect courses are really important, but in the meantime — today, tomorrow or next week — women will be killed if we do not take steps to enforce the laws that we already have.

Ms EDWARDS (Bendigo West) — Today has indeed been a day of mixed emotions. I agree with the member for Shepparton. I have indeed been quite angry today at some of the things I have heard. I just want to say that despite the anger I think there is a sense of hope and a sense that we are heading in the right direction, that we are raising awareness for a reason — and that reason is that the future generations of the state, the future women of this state, will not have to endure family violence at any level.

I would like to acknowledge the contributions of other members today. It has been quite extraordinary to hear some of the contributions today. I also acknowledge

Kristy and the wonderful Rosie Batty for speaking to the house today.

I also want to acknowledge a young woman who some people in the house may have met before or may know of. Her name is Ange Barker. Ange is a quadriplegic. In 2002 she was assaulted and bashed by her then boyfriend in the local school ground in Benalla. When she was assaulted, her head was swollen and she was covered in blood. She was bashed against a steel bench multiple times. She had been strangled and kicked, her face had been stomped on and smashed and her jaw was fractured. She was so severely injured that her mother could not recognise her. Despite all of that, Ange is about to turn 30 this year. She is a remarkable young woman, and for many years she has been a voice for family violence victims across the state and internationally. She is quite funny as well. Despite everything she has been through, she has a great sense of humour.

I mention Ange for a reason. As the chair of the Family and Community Development Committee I heard a lot about the abuse of women with disabilities. It is not an area that is discussed very often, but the fact is that women with disabilities are 40 per cent more likely to suffer violence, particularly partner violence, than other women. This is partly because obviously they are more dependent and more vulnerable. They are also in many circumstances unable to communicate and therefore the abuse is not acknowledged. In relation to Ange's injuries, there has been research done about traumatic brain injury that is often overlooked as a consequence of assault. If a woman is assaulted and thrown against a wall or her brain is injured in any way, research has proven — and I have been looking at this — that it can actually impair a woman's ability to make decisions in some cases. Therefore those women who are assaulted and who may have suffered brain injury cannot make decisions about leaving, about finances and about a whole range of things. It actually has an impact on their future and their ability to deal with family violence situations.

I just wanted to put that on the record because I think the abuse that women with disabilities suffer is quite unique in comparison to what other women might suffer in family violence situations. It is often difficult to recognise. It can be as subtle as removing the wheelchair so the woman cannot use it; it can be as bad as leaving a woman lying in her faeces for long periods of time. It is often partner violence, but it is also the violence and abuse which occurs across the disability sector that we are hearing about in our committee. I wanted to put that on the record.

I will just relay some personal information. White Ribbon Day has been about standing up and speaking out. I have struggled as to whether or not to say this today. I would like to acknowledge and pay tribute to my mother. My mother was a victim of family violence probably all her life, first by her father and then by my father. Nevertheless she was a wonderful and very strong woman who protected her five children like a mother hen. I just wanted to pay tribute to her today because I think what we are doing today will make a real difference to our children, particularly our daughters.

Ms KEALY (Lowan) — I would like to acknowledge all the speakers in the house today, particularly the guest speakers, Rosie and Kristy. They are extremely brave and courageous women who have lived through family violence. In my opinion they should never be defined as victims; they should be defined as survivors.

To describe anybody as a victim of family violence implies that ongoing control is given to that perpetrator and there is a consistent messaging that that woman is a weaker or lesser person. I do not believe that is the case; I do not believe that violence against women ever defines the woman who has been beaten or who has had money held back from them or who has been publicly or privately humiliated. It is not their actions that are defined; it is the actions of the perpetrator that are defined in those circumstances.

If I have one message for any woman out there who has suffered or who is currently suffering from family violence and for the children who witness these violent relationships and who are watching and learning from adults that this is what they do, it is that we must break down the awful cycle of violence within family units. It is just appalling to see, and we must break it down. We must give women the strength to have pathways where they can leave a relationship. We must give messages to men such as, 'You are weak if you think that raising a hand to a woman is an okay way to control somebody. If you think that you have to be stronger and bigger than somebody by inflicting your physical or mental power over them, then you are an entirely weak human being and, quite frankly, I question whether you deserve to be in any relationship at all. You should be punished'.

As has been mentioned earlier today, we need to have a strong judicial system that will appropriately manage people who have those intentions. We also need to make sure that we have support services out there for those men who recognise that they have a problem and who need some help to get through that and, hopefully,

be able to access the pathways they need to become wholesome and respectful human beings. We also need to see increased funding, particularly in regional and rural Victoria. There are not many support services for women in my local area. There are no local women's shelters, so if a woman makes that decision and commitment to leave a violent relationship, whether she is risking her life is not the only thing she has to consider. I note Kristy's comments here. You question whether you should believe the person who says, 'You won't have a life outside this relationship'. Then you might have to pick up the kids and family and go to a different town, which means the kids are taken out of school and lose all their mates and you lose your social support network.

I am very proud to be part of this Parliament today. Many people have made outstanding contributions. I certainly will be one of the many individuals and leaders in our community who will always take a stand to eliminate family violence.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The time set down for consideration of items on the government business program has expired, and I am required to interrupt business.

ROAD LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2015

Second reading

Debate resumed from 25 November; motion of Mr DONNELLAN (Minister for Roads and Road Safety).

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

DRUGS, POISONS AND CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES AMENDMENT BILL 2015

Second reading

Debate resumed from 25 November; motion of Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General).

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The question is:

That the bill be now read a second time and a third time.

House divided on question:*Ayes, 83*

Allan, Ms	McGuire, Mr
Andrews, Mr	McLeish, Ms
Angus, Mr	Merlino, Mr
Asher, Ms	Morris, Mr
Battin, Mr	Nardella, Mr
Blackwood, Mr	Neville, Ms
Blandthorn, Ms	Noonan, Mr
Britnell, Ms	Northe, Mr
Brooks, Mr	O'Brien, Mr D.
Bull, Mr J.	O'Brien, Mr M.
Bull, Mr T.	Pallas, Mr
Burgess, Mr	Paynter, Mr
Carbines, Mr	Pearson, Mr
Carroll, Mr	Perera, Mr
Clark, Mr	Pesutto, Mr
Couzens, Ms	Richardson, Mr
Crisp, Mr	Richardson, Ms
D'Ambrosio, Ms	Riordan, Mr
Dimopoulos, Mr	Ryall, Ms
Dixon, Mr	Ryan, Ms
Donnellan, Mr	Scott, Mr
Edbrooke, Mr	Sheed, Ms
Edwards, Ms	Smith, Mr R.
Eren, Mr	Smith, Mr T.
Foley, Mr	Southwick, Mr
Fyffe, Mrs	Spence, Ms
Garrett, Ms	Staikos, Mr
Gidley, Mr	Staley, Ms
Grale, Ms	Suleyman, Ms
Green, Ms	Thomas, Ms
Guy, Mr	Thompson, Mr
Halfpenny, Ms	Thomson, Ms
Hennessy, Ms	Tilley, Mr
Hodgett, Mr	Victoria, Ms
Howard, Mr	Wakeling, Mr
Hutchins, Ms	Walsh, Mr
Kairouz, Ms	Ward, Ms
Katos, Mr	Watt, Mr
Kealy, Ms	Wells, Mr
Kilkenny, Ms	Williams, Ms
Lim, Mr	Wynne, Mr
McCurdy, Mr S	

Noes, 2

Hibbins, Mr Sandell, Ms S

Question agreed to.**Read second time.***Third reading***Motion agreed to.****Read third time.****JUSTICE LEGISLATION FURTHER
AMENDMENT BILL 2015***Second reading***Debate resumed from 25 November; motion of
Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General).****Motion agreed to.****Read second time.***Third reading***The SPEAKER** — Order! I advise the house that I am of the opinion that the third reading of this bill must be passed by an absolute majority.**Motion agreed to by absolute majority.****Read third time.****EDUCATION LEGISLATION
AMENDMENT (TAFE AND UNIVERSITY
GOVERNANCE REFORM) BILL 2015***Second reading***Debate resumed from 24 November; motion of
Ms NEVILLE (Minister for Environment, Climate
Change and Water).****The SPEAKER** — Order! The question is:

That this bill be now read a second time and a third time.

House divided on question:*Ayes, 47*

Allan, Ms	Kilkenny, Ms
Andrews, Mr	Lim, Mr
Blandthorn, Ms	McGuire, Mr
Brooks, Mr	Merlino, Mr
Bull, Mr J.	Nardella, Mr
Carbines, Mr	Neville, Ms
Carroll, Mr	Noonan, Mr
Couzens, Ms	Pallas, Mr
D'Ambrosio, Ms	Pearson, Mr
Dimopoulos, Mr	Perera, Mr
Donnellan, Mr	Richardson, Mr
Edbrooke, Mr	Richardson, Ms
Edwards, Ms	Sandell, Ms
Eren, Mr	Scott, Mr
Foley, Mr	Sheed, Ms
Garrett, Ms	Spence, Ms
Grale, Ms	Staikos, Mr
Green, Ms	Suleyman, Ms
Halfpenny, Ms	Thomas, Ms
Hennessy, Ms	Thomson, Ms
Hibbins, Mr	Ward, Ms
Howard, Mr	Williams, Ms
Hutchins, Ms	Wynne, Mr
Kairouz, Ms	

Noes, 37

Angus, Mr	O'Brien, Mr D.
Asher, Ms	O'Brien, Mr M.
Battin, Mr	Paynter, Mr
Blackwood, Mr	Pesutto, Mr
Britnell, Ms	Riordan, Mr
Bull, Mr T.	Ryall, Ms
Burgess, Mr	Ryan, Ms
Clark, Mr	Smith, Mr R.
Crisp, Mr	Smith, Mr T.
Dixon, Mr	Southwick, Mr
Fyffe, Mrs	Staley, Ms
Gidley, Mr	Thompson, Mr

Guy, Mr
Hodgett, Mr
Katos, Mr
Kealy, Ms
McLeish, Ms
Morris, Mr
Northe, Mr

Tilley, Mr
Victoria, Ms
Wakeling, Mr
Walsh, Mr
Watt, Mr
Wells, Mr

coalition government the development of the port of Hastings meant thousands of jobs for our state, greater opportunities for our businesses, improved services, infrastructure for our community and respect and protection for our environment.

Question agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

**TRANSPORT ACCIDENT AMENDMENT
BILL 2015**

Second reading

**Debate resumed from 24 November; motion of
Mr SCOTT (Minister for Finance).**

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

ADJOURNMENT

The SPEAKER — Order! The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

Mr T. Bull — On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, I draw your attention to an adjournment matter I raised on 31 October for the attention of the Minister for Roads and Road Safety relating to rural and regional road conditions, particularly in East Gippsland, that has not yet been responded to. I would appreciate that being taken up with the minister.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! I will have the matter followed up for the honourable member.

Port of Hastings

Mr BURGESS (Hastings) — I raise a matter for the Minister for Ports. The action I seek is for the minister to reverse Labor's policy position and commit to building a second container port at Hastings. Under a

Careful planning and thorough community consultation that would ensure development of the port of Hastings would be a great thing for the people, families and businesses of the Western Port area. One of Victoria's major economic advantages as the nation's freight and logistics leader is at great risk because Labor failed to plan for the fact that the port of Melbourne will soon be completely out of space and that larger container ships are already unable to fit into Port Philip Bay. Sydney and Brisbane are currently deepening their ports so they can accept any trade we lose. Loss of our competitive advantage will cost the Victorian economy many thousands of jobs and billions of dollars each year.

Regardless of the propaganda that has been spread, every study conducted since the 1950s has confirmed that the port of Hastings is a natural deepwater port with channels already capable of accepting even the largest container ships. Any dredging required would be confined to the berthing and swing basin. As an operating port, and before Labor cancelled this development, Hastings was also the only Victorian port that could accept containers before the port of Melbourne runs out of space. The Western Port community has been promised the jobs, services and infrastructure that development of the port of Hastings would bring for more than 50 years and it has been disappointed time and time again. Businesses that have moved into the Western Port area and invested on the basis of the enormous economic opportunities an international port would bring have again been devastated by Labor.

However, the people I am most concerned about are our local children and their families. We know from information provided by the Department of Education and Training that children on the Western Port side of the Mornington Peninsula often start from a very long way back when compared to their counterparts across our state. Development of the port of Hastings is not the only answer, as unemployment is not the only problem; however, the prosperity that development of our port would bring to these families and businesses is an important part of the solution that must not be ignored. Many families from around the Western Port area are doing it tough and some have not had a member in employment for more than 20 years.

The port of Hastings is truly a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to make a real difference for these families

and importantly for the future of our children. Through massive investment in the development of the port of Hastings our community would have an unprecedented chance to prosper and to ensure that our local people have available to them meaningful and rewarding jobs and our children, who hold the key to the future, receive the opportunities they deserve.

I have the pleasure of speaking to people from the Western Port area every day, and they tell me that they love and value their environment and say it is one of the major reasons they live there. These people also tell me that they are happy for the port to go ahead as long as the proper studies are carried out. To our local community, development of the port of Hastings means many thousands of jobs for our people, better incomes for our families, increased opportunities for our businesses and vastly improved services and infrastructure.

This project, which is so critical to so many, has now been placed in great jeopardy by this Socialist Left and antibusiness Premier, and at worst an opportunity for our state to take its rightful place as the national leader has been curbed. This pivotal space has been lost forever by a group of people with a history of vandalising Victoria's economy. The coalition government was already well advanced in planning and preparation works for a second container port at Hastings, with funding of \$110 million already invested, prior to the Labor Party claiming that it wanted a Bay West location for Victoria's second container port.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The honourable member's time has expired.

Level crossings

Ms KILKENNY (Carrum) — My adjournment matter is for the attention of the Minister for Public Transport. It follows the recent tremendous announcement and fulfilment of yet another election commitment that construction on the removal of eight more dangerous and congested level crossings on the Frankston line by the Andrews Labor government will commence this term. The action I seek is for the minister to come along to Carrum to meet with people in my community, to listen to them and to hear their views as part of the extensive community consultation strategy that is planned for the Frankston line level crossing removals.

Carrum and other communities along the Frankston line have been living with these dangerous and congested crossings for too long. Finally we have a

government — the Andrews Labor government — that will get rid of them. My community and I look forward to another visit by this hardworking and dedicated minister as part of the community consultation strategy for the Frankston line level crossing removals and as part of this much-needed and long-awaited and transformative infrastructure project for communities along the Frankston line.

Glen Eira College

Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. It concerns the pedestrian crossing on Booran Road, Caulfield East, outside Glen Eira College, where there was yet another near fatal incident recently. The action I seek from the minister is to meet Sheereen Kindler principal of Glen Eira College, the school council president, me and VicRoads representatives to discuss what action can be taken to improve the safety of the level crossing. Ms Kindler wrote to me recently detailing an incident which nearly saw multiple students injured or killed when a vehicle sped through a red light as the green walking man signal started. I understand the incident has been reported to Victoria Police and that they are investigating the matter.

Regrettably this incident is not the first of its kind but one of many. Glen Eira College staff are greatly concerned about the likelihood of similar incidents in the future and believe students who use the Booran Road crossing are at risk. It is my understanding that there have been communications between the Glen Eira school council and VicRoads regarding the crossing. VicRoads has identified that a possible reason for vehicles not observing the red light at the Booran Road pedestrian crossing is that the vision of motorists who are driving south-east on Booran Road may be drawn past the pedestrian-operated signals to the LED lanterns at the Booran Road–Neerim Road intersection. I have since been told that VicRoads has suggested possible solutions, including a signals-ahead warning on the north-western approach on a larger sign. In addition it is proposed to upgrade the pedestrian-operated signal lanterns at the crossing to LED lanterns and upgrade the existing warning signs as well.

While I appreciate VicRoads's efforts in determining possible solutions, no action has yet been taken. Given that the safety of students and staff of Glen Eira College is being jeopardised, I believe immediate action is in order. I ask the minister to meet with the principal and school council president of Glen Eira College, and in addition representatives of VicRoads should he wish, to

discuss making the Booran Road pedestrian crossing outside Glen Eira College safer.

Family violence

Ms WILLIAMS (Dandenong) — My adjournment matter is for the attention of the Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence. The action I seek from the minister is that she join me in hosting a public forum on family violence in my electorate to give the people of Dandenong an opportunity to have their say on this appalling issue that impacts so seriously on our community. Family and gendered violence are serious blights on our community. As we have heard this week, one in three women and girls will experience violence in their lifetime. In Greater Dandenong last year 2123 family incidents were reported, and these are only the incidents that have been brought to police attention. We know that family violence is widely under-reported. The problem is real, and I am pleased to see the Andrews Labor government being a strong voice against family violence and taking action to eliminate its prevalence in our society.

Often the best way to challenge the attitudes that perpetuate this problem is through raising awareness, by educating and by changing the culture that allows it to occur. However, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to ending violence, and Dandenong is a true reflection of this. Dandenong is the multicultural capital of Victoria, with approximately 60 per cent of residents born overseas. Our community originates from over 156 different countries, with 55 per cent from non-English-speaking backgrounds. This is Dandenong's greatest asset, but it also poses challenges in how we ensure that our discussions about this important issue and our support reach all communities.

Dandenong is already taking action to raise awareness and change attitudes towards family violence. Only two days ago the City of Greater Dandenong held another successful walk against family violence, in which community leaders and residents came together in large numbers to oppose family violence against women and children and stand in support of those who have experienced such violence.

If we are going to generate real change, it is crucial that members of our community have an opportunity to engage firsthand with their political representatives on this issue. I am proud to be part of the first Victorian government to have a minister dedicated to the prevention of family violence. It would be of great encouragement and a boost to the cause for the people of Dandenong to have the minister visit them and listen to their perspective on this problem. On that note I

again call on the minister to join me in hosting a public forum on family and gender violence in Dandenong.

Balee Koolin Bubup Bush Playgroup

Ms VICTORIA (Bayswater) — Today I rise to ask the Minister for Education to give immediate certainty of funding to the Balee Koolin Bubup Bush Playgroup. This highly respected bush playgroup is teaching young Aboriginal children from birth to four years of age and their families about their cultural identity through connection to country. This takes place on country in the Royal Botanic Gardens, Cranbourne.

These children are able to participate in traditional activities and ceremonies and hear stories about their culture from Boon Wurrung elders, including Aunty Fay Stewart-Muir. Currently the program receives \$10 000 per annum from the City of Casey Best Start Supported Playgroup initiative, which receives funding through the Department of Education and Training. This funding allows for the Royal Botanic Gardens, Cranbourne to employ an Indigenous early childhood officer, Janine 'Jaffa' Richardson, who is a wonderful facilitator who teaches the children the Boon Wurrung traditional language.

This bush playgroup takes place in conjunction with the Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages, the Casey-Cardinia Library Corporation's Library has Legs project and the Royal Botanic Gardens, Cranbourne. The shared partnership goal is literacy, supporting emergent literacy development as well as plant literacy and cultural and traditional language development of children, carers and their families. This program has been told it will no longer receive government funding and is set to finish up this year. It will be a tremendous shame if such a fantastic and successful program can no longer operate. Of course in this house today we heard how important the connection to country is and that programs and services for Aboriginal people that are culturally relevant are vital.

The government has put the protection of Aboriginal heritage and culture at the forefront in this parliamentary sitting. It is coming up in the next week with the introduction of the Aboriginal Heritage Amendment Bill 2015. It would seem counterintuitive to disband a program that is solely focused on that particularly intangible heritage, such as language, dance and song. I urge the minister to investigate the funding situation surrounding this program and seek to secure the small amount of funding it requires so that the great work of Jaffa, Aunty Fay and the other dedicated people can continue.

Living Libraries Infrastructure program

Ms BLANDTHORN (Pascoe Vale) — My adjournment matter is for the attention of the Minister for Local Government, and the action I seek is that the minister provide me with an update on the progress of grant applications to the Living Libraries Infrastructure program. I am particularly keen to know of the progress in relation to the application made by Moreland City Council for Glenroy Library and Coburg Library.

Glenroy Library was built in 1971, and whilst there have been some minor infrastructure and maintenance works done to the library, its exterior remains almost the same, if not the same, as it was in 1971. The foyer is extremely dated, receives little natural light and lacks a welcoming feel for users of the library. It is a very crowded library, in which lots of students who live in share houses and lots of school students who perhaps live in houses with very big families and little space use the library for their homework and whatnot. There is a very limited amount of seating; you can walk into the library and find students sitting all over the floor at exam times. There need to be improvements made to wi-fi access, and there needs to be more natural light in the toilets.

In relation to Coburg Library, it has a fabulous local history collection, but at the moment it is not accessible to the public; it is only accessible through a staff area. The library is seeking to make some improvements that would mean the collection can be housed in an accessible area so that the public can learn about the fabulous history of Coburg. I ask the minister for an update on these applications.

Sandringham electorate graffiti

Mr THOMPSON (Sandringham) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Police. The action I seek is for the minister or his representative to visit the Sandringham electorate to have a look at a number of crime spots in the area, including graffiti sites; to visit local police stations, including the Sandringham police station and the Cheltenham police station; and to provide an update, with the assistance of the senior officers at those stations, regarding local crime hotspots and issues. Of particular interest is the level of graffiti that is occurring in the Sandringham electorate.

In that context I point out the outstanding work that has been undertaken by the Friends of Mentone Station and Gardens over the last decade in combating graffiti within the precinct of the Mentone railway station. Efforts have been coordinated with the various

stakeholders, including Metro Trains Melbourne and Victoria Police, and there has been a significant diminution in the incidence of graffiti in the local area, thanks to the driving leadership of Gary Spencer and also Dorothy Booth, who have served as the presidents of the Friends of Mentone Station and Gardens since its inception.

The other aspect concerns the incidence of graffiti along main transport routes on public infrastructure — postal and telecommunications infrastructure and the walls of buildings. It had been noted a number of years ago that graffiti is an offence that hurts the soul of the community. People spend a lot of time removing it, only to see it recur. I seek to ascertain whether the great work of the Friends of Mentone Station and Gardens can be replicated with an applied approach to work out the timing of the occurrence of graffiti with the use of cameras — security cameras can be installed on a temporary basis near hotspots — and whether there is a program with the police and local schools that can identify other tags that are utilised.

There are significant costs to the community and to private property owners, and I note that recently the local All Souls Opportunity Shop was significantly graffitied. The organisation arranged for it to be cleaned up, and within 36 hours of it being cleaned up graffiti damage had recurred; the building had been graffitied again. I seek the support of the minister on these — —

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The member's time has expired.

Bulla Road, Essendon

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. The action I seek is for the minister to meet with Essendon Fields representatives and me to discuss the construction of a diverging diamond interchange (DDI) at Bulla Road, Essendon. I hear members cry, 'What is a diverging diamond interchange?'.

Mr Richardson — What is it?

Mr PEARSON — A diverging diamond interchange, for the member for Mordialloc, is a recently designed traffic engineering solution for the reorganising of traffic at existing major intersections that increases intersection capacity by up to 100 per cent. The DDI idea has been adopted rapidly in Europe and the USA with great success. About six years ago there were only a handful of these interchanges and now there are over 150 around the world.

I would welcome the opportunity for a meeting with the minister and Essendon Fields to discuss this idea at the earliest opportunity.

Murchison and Pyalong primary schools

Ms RYAN (Euroa) — The adjournment matter I raise this evening is for the Minister for Education. The action I seek is that he take note of the two petitions I tabled earlier today, bearing hundreds of signatures from the residents of the communities of Murchison and Pyalong, and reverse his decision to strip those schools of their portable buildings.

We know that students in regional Victoria do not fare as well as their city counterparts on a whole range of measures, including year 12 attainment rates. We also know that a child's early years are absolutely critical to their development and to their future success. These portable buildings enable both Pyalong and Murchison primary schools to run early childhood programs. At Pyalong the building is not just used for music, sport and art programs, it is also a very valuable asset which enables the school to run a playgroup and before and after school care.

These services are vitally important to the community. Without before and after school care, particularly in Pyalong, many parents would have no choice but to take their students out of that primary school and enrol them elsewhere. That is particularly exacerbated by the fact that employment options are very limited in Pyalong and parents need to travel for work.

I am further concerned by the fact that the Department of Education and Training undertook its assessment of Pyalong Primary School at a time when the school's permanent staff were not present due to the fact that the inspection coincided with the funeral of the principal's husband and most of the permanent staff were obviously attending that funeral. As a result, the school feels that it has not had sufficient opportunity to put its case to the department. Its requests for a re-evaluation have been rejected.

At Murchison the portable gives the school enough space to run its Mother Goose program as well as provide a wonderful library that is accessed not just by the school students but also by parents with young children and the wider community. More than half of Murchison's population signed the petition I tabled this morning, which I think demonstrates just how important this issue is to the wider community. If this building is removed, students will be forced back into the original school building, which was built in 1906. It was where I started prep some 23 years ago. That

classroom was deemed unsuitable for that purpose some 15 years ago now.

I am very concerned that this government is prioritising the needs of city students over those in the country. If Victoria is truly to become the education state, we need to stop viewing education in a siloed way that sees early childhood centres, primary schools and secondary schools treated separately from each other. Just because these facilities give these small schools the scope to deliver early childhood services does not mean they are over-allocated.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The honourable member's time has expired.

Ormond railway station

Mr STAIKOS (Bentleigh) — My adjournment matter is for the attention of the Minister for Public Transport. The action I seek is that the minister ensure that a second entrance is provided at Ormond railway station as part of the level crossing removal works.

Last year the Premier and I promised to remove level crossings at Centre Road, McKinnon Road and North Road, and less than a year into the term of this government we have already commenced that work. But what this project has also meant is that we have engaged in very extensive community consultation by establishing the Level Crossing Removal Authority and the stakeholder liaison group, with a number of different stakeholder groups represented. We have also had many community consultation sessions, including a very large meeting at McKinnon Secondary College with 500 people in attendance — which gave the member for Caulfield a complete and utter breakdown, I might add.

But what was clear at that meeting was that local residents were keen to ensure that as part of the new station design we have an access point from the southern side of North Road. A third of the users of Ormond station access North Road from the southern side, that being in my electorate. At the moment they have to cross three lanes of traffic in order to get to the station. It makes absolute sense that we would establish a second entrance for better accessibility, better connectivity and better disability access, and I ask the minister to ensure that that happens.

Responses

Ms RICHARDSON (Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence) — I am very pleased to respond to the member for Dandenong's call for a community forum in her electorate. The member for Dandenong

knows that today was a significant day in the life of the Parliament and for the issue of family violence. She also knows that while we are engaging in 16 days of activism with respect to Victoria Against Violence, in truth it is a 365-day activity we have to engage in in terms of tackling the harm that is family violence. Therefore I am very pleased to see another community leader, the member for Dandenong, step up and engage with her community directly. I would be very proud and pleased to stand shoulder to shoulder with her to talk about the issue of family violence and how we can do more to tackle gender inequality and poor attitudes towards women, which are of course the drivers of family violence rates in her community and right across the state of Victoria.

I welcome the member for Dandenong's leadership and I very much look forward to attending the community forum with her, and I very much look forward to seeing the rates of family violence going down in her community, along with other communities across Victoria.

Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport) — I am delighted to respond to the request and indeed the action sought by the member for Carrum regarding coming to her community to kick off the community consultation on the recent announcement that we will remove all eight level crossings on the southern end of the Frankston line and put that out to market as one package, with work to have started prior to the end of 2018. A couple of weekends ago I was very pleased to join the Premier and the members for Carrum, Mordialloc and Frankston to make this announcement to the community. I see that the member for Frankston is having a bit to say up there in his seat, and I note that these three are passionate, powerful advocates for their communities.

I appreciate enormously the enthusiasm displayed by the member for Carrum for the level crossing removal program. It is an enthusiasm displayed by many members of this house who are strongly supportive of this program. It has been interesting to watch even a few members opposite join in with their support, even though the government is the one getting on with completing these programs. I will very much look forward to arranging a time in the near future to go down to Carrum and start that community consultation, which is yet another step in removing the 50 most dangerous and congested level crossings across Melbourne.

This brings me to the member for Bentleigh, who is also a good, enthusiastic, hardworking, powerful and passionate advocate for his community. He is so

powerful and passionate that 3 of the level crossing removals that are part of the first 10, in respect of which contracts have been awarded and announced, are happening in his electorate, so there is a lot happening in Bentleigh — and he is certainly getting on with it. The action sought by the member for Bentleigh is that a southern entrance be added to the new Ormond railway station, and of course we could only be talking about a new station at Ormond because we are removing the level crossing there, which is why this opportunity has come about.

I am pleased to inform the member for Bentleigh that the action he is seeking has been agreed to and that a second station entrance will be added to the new Ormond station as part of the removal of the North Road level crossing. I acknowledge the member for Bentleigh for his hard work in making a strong case on behalf of his community to ensure that those who access the station from the south side of North Road, which is about a third of passengers who use the station, will have easy and more efficient access via a second station entrance. That will be incorporated into the design. I look forward to continuing to work with the member for Bentleigh on the removal of those level crossings in his electorate.

Seven other members raised matters for various ministers, and they will be referred to those ministers for their action and response.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The house is now adjourned.

House adjourned 5.40 p.m. until Tuesday, 8 December.

WRITTEN RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Responses are incorporated in the form provided to Hansard

Water policy

Question asked by: Mr Walsh
Directed to: Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water
Asked on: 24 November 2015

RESPONSE TO SUBSTANTIVE QUESTION:

As I have stated I have asked for a business case on the cost benefits of reversing the north-south pipeline. We are looking at how we ensure water security for all Victorians .

RESPONSE TO SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:

There is no logical basis for the \$5000 per megalitre - this seems to be a figure made up by the opposition.

As indicated we are currently formulating a business case which will weigh up to cost benefits and this will inform a conversation with the Victorian community about how to best manage our water in drought.

