

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FIFTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

Tuesday, 24 February 2015

(Extract from book 3)

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Deputy Speaker:

Mr D. A. NARDELLA

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Ms Kilkenny, Mr McCurdy, Ms McLeish, Mr Pearson, Ms Ryall, Ms Thomas,
Mr Thompson, Ms Thomson, Ms Ward and Mr Watt.

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The Hon. M. J. GUY

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

Parliamentary Services — Secretary: Mr P. Lochert

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FIFTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT — FIRST SESSION

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Andrews, Mr Daniel Michael	Mulgrave	ALP	McLeish, Ms Lucinda Gaye	Eildon	LP
Angus, Mr Neil Andrew Warwick	Forest Hill	LP	Merlino, Mr James Anthony	Monbulk	ALP
Asher, Ms Louise	Brighton	LP	Morris, Mr David Charles	Mornington	LP
Battin, Mr Bradley William	Gembrook	LP	Mulder, Mr Terence Wynn	Polwarth	LP
Blackwood, Mr Gary John	Narracan	LP	Naphthine, Dr Denis Vincent	South-West Coast	LP
Blandthorn, Ms Elizabeth Anne	Pascoe Vale	ALP	Nardella, Mr Donato Antonio	Melton	ALP
Brooks, Mr Colin William	Bundoora	ALP	Neville, Ms Lisa Mary	Bellarine	ALP
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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

¹ Resigned 2 February 2015

PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

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

Joint committees

Environment and Natural Resources Committee — (*Assembly*): Mr Battin, Ms Halfpenny, Mr McCurdy, Mr Richardson and Ms Ward. (*Council*): Mr Ramsay and Ms Symes.

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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Tuesday, 24 February 2015

The SPEAKER (Hon. Telmo Languiller) took the chair at 12.04 p.m. and read the prayer.

SWEARING IN OF MEMBERS

Member for Richmond

The SPEAKER announced the election of Mr Richard Wynne as member for the electoral district of Richmond, pursuant to writ issued on 4 November 2014.

Mr Wynne introduced and affirmed.

GIPPSLAND SOUTH BY-ELECTION

The SPEAKER — Order! I advise the house that on 17 February 2015 I issued a writ for a by-election for the electoral district of Gippsland South to be held on 14 March 2015.

CONDOLENCES

Hon. Evan Herbert Walker, AO

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — I move:

That this house expresses its sincere sorrow at the death of the Honourable Evan Herbert Walker, AO, MLC, and places on the record its acknowledgement of the valuable services rendered by him to the Parliament and the people of Victoria as a member of the Legislative Council for the electoral province of Melbourne from 1979 to 1992; Minister for Conservation and Minister for Planning from 1982 to 1983; Minister of Public Works from 1983 to 1985; Minister for Planning and Environment from 1983 to 1986; Minister for Agriculture and Rural Affairs from 1985 to 1988; Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources from 1988 to 1989; and Minister for Major Projects, Minister for the Arts and Minister responsible for Post-Secondary Education from 1989 to 1990.

Our city was not always the world's most livable. In my lifetime you could have heard the wreckers tearing down some of our finest buildings and uprooting some of our proudest trees. You could have seen the young faces of urban poverty and despair, peering out from streets and lanes in the dense inner suburbs. And over on the other side of a lonely river that carved through the heart of our city, you could smell the smoke and the sludge of 100 factories.

On its southern bank, too, were the cheap flickering carnival lights of circuses, skating rinks and nightclubs, where today one of the world's finest performing arts and cultural centres now stands; where today some of the country's tallest buildings, biggest attractions and

best restaurants greet international tourists by the million; and where just last weekend thousands of families lined up along the riverbanks to watch the fireworks and take in the atmosphere of the White Night festival, enjoying the sights and the sounds of a city at its best.

Two kinds of people got us here. Two kinds of people during the 1970s and 1980s helped us build a new city and forge a new identity — architects, designers and planners who conceived of it, and leaders in business and politics who believed in it — and Evan Walker was both. Of course there was more to this man than 1.7 square kilometres on the other side of the Yarra — indeed so much more to his contribution to our capital city and to our state. Let us consider Southbank a snapshot of Walker's will and Walker's way as a young person, as a private citizen, as a minister and as one of Melbourne's leading thinkers, planners and doers.

According to an interview conducted for an *Age* article later in his life, Evan Walker 'learnt a lot about the river and its relationship to the city by living on its poor side'. The YMCA on the corner of City Road and Sturt Street was his home for a year while he worked as a junior draftsman at the Australian Paper Mills plant on the Yarra bank. The article says:

Walker was constantly dismayed by the transition from the sublime to the grime — the way the Yarra on the east side of Princes Bridge was fit for private school chaps to row on but became a horrid drain within a few metres of the west side of the bridge.

Every day ... he could see the flotsam caught in blackberry bushes that lined both embankments. He got an overwhelming sense that the city had 'turned its back' on the Yarra.

'The river was a drain', he says. Factories disgorged their waste directly into the river, described at the time as being 'too thick to swim in, too thin to plough'.

A few decades later, as the Minister for Planning in the newly elected Cain government, Evan Walker changed everything with a single bold stroke of a pen, pulling the precinct under his remit and declaring it open for business. In his four transformational years as the Minister for Planning and Environment and later as the Minister for Industry and the Minister responsible for Post-Secondary Education, Walker helped solve many of the problems he identified in his first contribution in the other place in 1979, such as our fading reputation as 'one of the world's most beautiful 19th-century cities' with 'buildings of great elegance' that were 'under threat' and our 'worst examples of social dislocation, of human degradation and economic injustice.' He went on to say:

Amidst the symbols of wealth and privilege which surround us are areas of grinding poverty, of real housing shortage, of derelict school facilities, of high levels of pollution ...

In the years he spent as Victoria's Minister for Agriculture and Rural Affairs we saw that Evan Walker's efforts extended not merely to Melbourne but to the borders of our state. He had a reputation as an honest broker who got things done for farmers and growers. He saw his goals as more than simply economic. In a 1985 interview with the Warrnambool *Standard* he noted that productivity of the land was very important but that the wellbeing of the families in rural communities was just as important.

For a time he worked on farms, helping milk some 80 cows in Corryong and working on the wheat harvest in the Mallee, but he was better known as an architect. Walker studied at RMIT and the University of Melbourne, where he topped his final year in 1959. A scholarship took him to Canada, where he studied, worked, wed, built a successful firm and even campaigned for Pierre Trudeau.

On Walker's ultimate return to Melbourne in 1969 his politics came with him. Ten years later he was elected to the Victorian Parliament, representing Melbourne Province, but he was sworn in as Labor's deputy leader in the Legislative Council before he had even taken his seat. His biography is not typical of the movement — our movement — at that time. As always, his presence, his promotion and his achievements heralded the forces of change, whether simply in our party or in our society at large.

Very few of us in this place, having lived a public life, can hope to depart it with universal acclaim, but the tributes we have heard over the last week from all sides of politics tell us that Evan Walker was among the exceptions. He died after a long illness that robbed him of his mobility but never his dignity. I know his former colleagues will remember fondly the quote that he was an architect in Parliament, not a politician, as he often said in his first years as a minister.

I know the people of Melbourne acknowledge the author of our modern livable city; the leader who protected our past and planned for our future. I know that Evan's wife and partner Judith, and their children Chris, Ben and Rebecca and their families will treasure the years they spent with this decent and honest man: an abundant life, a profound legacy, style and substance, a shaper and quite simply a policy giant. On behalf of the Victorian Labor Party and the Victorian government I offer his family and his friends my condolences, and on behalf of all Victorians I offer him my thanks.

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) — I rise to acknowledge on behalf of the coalition parties, the Liberals and The Nationals, the life of Evan Walker. Many of us end up being known for what we have achieved in this place, but Evan Walker was someone who, despite becoming a politician — and a successful one at that — always kept a strong interest in his pre-political career and eventually headed back to that field after his political life, where he made further contributions. Evan Walker began an architectural firm with his friend Daryl Jackson in 1963, and together they made a lasting impact upon our city. In the late 1960s he travelled to Canada, where he met his wife, Judith, and volunteered in the political campaign of the Canadian Liberal leader Pierre Trudeau.

Becoming politically active here in Victoria, Mr Walker was one of the people who contemporised his own party, the Labor Party, and eventually gained election to the Legislative Council in the 1970s. He was a member for Melbourne Province from 1979 until 1992, and he became not just the Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Council but also the Leader of the Government for seven years from 1983 to 1990. As has been said by the Premier about his ministerial career, it was vast, including the following portfolios: agriculture and rural affairs; industry, technology and resources; major projects; arts; post-secondary education; conservation; and of course planning.

Speaker, the house might indulge me a little if I concentrate my remarks on Mr Walker's career as planning minister — a planning minister from the Legislative Council — because there have been a few of us in that job: Alan Hunt, Evan Walker, Justin Madden, me and almost Mr Brian Tee. There have been a number of us who have come from that chamber having held that position.

While I was looking at a range of newspaper clippings about the life and activities of Evan Walker, I noticed a series of articles that could not escape my attention. They are from the *Age*, and they are about planning. They report on a series of rolling discussions with the then new planning minister. When he was appointed in 1982, the headline said of the new and enthusiastic minister that he was going to keep a low profile on planning. They discussed protection, conservation and heritage, all of which were the new minister's priorities. By 1982, a few months later, the headlines screamed:

The job's harder than I thought, says Mr Walker.

Evan Walker also said:

I'm a bit stunned by the sheer volume of work.

Twenty-eight years later I would entirely agree with that second round of headlines — and no doubt none of the other 13 former planning ministers of this state would disagree with Mr Walker saying that the job of planning minister and the planning portfolio itself since the 1970s has not been the easiest gig in a government. But Evan Walker did great things in the planning portfolio. Some have called him the father of urban renewal in our city, and I believe it is a title he does deserve.

Melbourne of the early 1980s was the doughnut city: a city with heavily populated growing outer suburbs and a CBD core that was desolate after dark. Nothing really happened in our downtown area. The south bank of the Yarra was occupied by sheds and factories, and the Docklands is where the smaller ships, avoiding the costs of the big port, unloaded goods in between the rail hump yards. It was Evan Walker's vision for Southbank that began the change of our inner city. As a boy of the early 1980s I remember the road with the deep grass nature strip leading down to the south bank of the Yarra. It was the only open space on the southern side of the river because the factories of industrialised south Melbourne, whether it was Allen's Sweets, the skipping girl lights or a range of newly opened car yards, filled up the rest of the space. All that began to change under Evan Walker's policy reign. As this house may know, I am a bit of a fan of Southbank. It inspired me in my time as planning minister and particularly with regard to what can be achieved with urban renewal.

For those who would pillory urban renewal — and Evan Walker as well had his detractors — I say, look at Southbank in 1985 and at what it has become today. This massive change was facilitated by: the Lower Yarra River development plan of 1985; the Southbank promenade, designed by leading architects Denton Corker Marshall and opened back in 1990, facilitated by Evan Walker; the pedestrian footbridge, which the current Lord Mayor believes, quite rightly, could be named in his honour; and buying up many long-term Crown leases which were able to be facilitated as Southbank urban renewal.

It was Evan Walker's vision to change this area, to turn what was a poorly maintained, dirty old factory area into modern, attractive and welcoming urban spaces. When the then Department of Main Roads occupied the first commercial building and the Southgate complex opened, Southbank began the unstoppable urban renewal that is still happening in our city today. It became a place for people, not a place for factories and machines. Importantly, Melbourne found the Yarra.

At that stage it was a river much maligned by those from interstate. Public policy began to shift our city towards it, and opportunities for focusing on and meeting those spaces were designed towards the river. This drive to upgrade our inner urban landscapes, focusing on the Yarra, saw thousands of people return to the city and to the core of our town, which has come to characterise a contemporary metropolis here in Melbourne, far in excess of any other in this nation.

As Southbank began to fill, subsequent governments saw Docklands, Docklands North and even Fishermans Bend as places that can and should change to see our city change into a contemporary, modern metropolis which has a heart of people, not empty office spaces and windswept, vacant streets. That was Evan Walker's vision for our city. It has been a strong, lasting and successful one.

But his vision of a modern Melbourne was not just for the central city area; it was also for our suburbs. Planning policy under Evan Walker endorsed and actively focused on the key Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works planning strategy for 14 key growth centres around the city to be built up. Those growth centres are the core of what we now call activities areas and build upon the 1956 metropolitan plan for Melbourne. Our city planners began to think in policy terms that we could no longer be focused on one style of growth — we had to achieve that mix of inner city urban renewal, density in defined suburban locations and the cottage housing industry mix that was still happening in the outskirts of the city.

Evan Walker started his tenure as planning minister being described as a conservationist, and if you look back, you see that within a few years he was falling foul of those same claims that are set against every planning minister — that he was 'too overdevelopment'.

Irrespective, as planning minister Evan Walker has left a marvellous legacy for our city. For those who recently contemporised his strongest piece of legislative work, the Planning and Environment Act 1987, or took inspiration from his belief that our city's greatest strength was that of its people centred around a vibrant, active city core, he was a person of vision and one not without opinions. After leaving Parliament, Evan Walker continued his interest in planning public policy and headed up the architecture faculty at Melbourne University. He once said that he joined politics because 'I wanted to be at the front end of the decision-making process' — and that he most certainly was.

He was a man who passionately supported the abolition of the Legislative Council, who, along with Alan Hunt,

is seen as a leader in the planning ministerial tree and who left a vision, a legacy, that many others have sought to add to or emulate. Can I say that our city is richer for his tenure and will be deeply appreciative for the planning policy settings that he began.

Mr MERLINO (Minister for Education) — It is an honour to join with the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition in paying tribute to Evan Walker. Evan was one of the few people who can be said to have fundamentally changed the face of Melbourne for the better. Evan Walker will be remembered for his incredible foresight and innovative planning and for being instrumental in some of our most iconic precincts. Born on 11 October 1935, he attended Box Hill Grammar School and then Melbourne High School. He graduated with a bachelor of architecture from the University of Melbourne. He established architecture firm Daryl Jackson Evan Walker — still influencing the evolution of our city today as Jackson Architecture.

Evan Walker spent time in Canada during the 1960s, including while achieving his masters of architecture, but ultimately he returned to Australia, joining the Australian Labor Party in 1969. He was elected to the Victorian Legislative Council for Melbourne Province in 1979, and following Labor's victory in 1982 he became Minister for Conservation and Minister for Planning. We have heard about the many other portfolios that Evan had during his parliamentary career.

Evan Walker retired from politics in 1992, but nearly a quarter of a century later his legacy is felt each and every day in our city. Evan Walker understood the profound benefits — social, economic and environmental — of world-leading urban design and landscape architecture. We have him to thank for starting Southbank, one of the most significant initiatives to revitalise Melbourne's CBD and help turn the city towards the Yarra. Meagan and I were at Southbank a couple of weeks ago enjoying a meal at one of its great restaurants. It was a beautiful night, and as we enjoyed our meal we watched elite cyclists speed down the straight as part of the prologue for the Herald Sun Tour. It was an amazing spectacle.

It was a beautiful night, we were looking at the great vista of our city and seeing a major event in the heart of it, and we marvelled at what a magnificent precinct Southbank is. It is a triumph and celebration of all that is great about Melbourne. These moments of happiness and joy that give people a sense of community in our city and in our state are the legacy that Evan Walker has left for all of us.

Evan is also credited with the development of Melbourne's sporting precinct and the design and installation of the MCG lights. Back in those days the installation of those lights was an incredibly controversial project, and it was steered through successfully thanks to the statesmanship of Evan Walker. What a great outcome it was for our state.

We are all custodians of the Melbourne and Olympic parks precinct and all that it means to Victorians. Whenever in government, we on both sides of the chamber are responsible for ensuring that we enhance, not detract from, what is acknowledged as being one of the best sporting and cultural precincts anywhere in the world.

Evan Walker's influence remains strong. I recall that when previous Labor government members were discussing the design of a new rectangular stadium, we were seriously contemplating either a bog-standard ground and grandstand design or an award-winning architecturally beautiful stadium. We did not want to let down people like Evan Walker and other pioneers of the Melbourne and Olympic parks precinct. We did not want to fail to meet the high expectations of our community. Whenever we do something in this precinct — such as the work the former Kennett government did with Hisense Arena — every generation has a responsibility to ensure that the foundations laid by the likes of Evan Walker are enhanced. That is what we all endeavour to do.

Evan Walker also worked with former Liberal planning minister Alan Hunt on the heritage protection of Collins Street and other parts of our city.

'Visionary' is a word too often thrown around, but as the Premier said in his remarks, there is no better testament to Evan Walker's great vision for our city than the hundreds of thousands of people who thronged the banks of the Yarra for White Night last weekend.

I offer my sincere condolences to Evan's wife, Judith, and their children, Chris, Ben and Rebecca. Evan Walker's contribution in this Parliament has given us so much to be thankful for. We give him thanks today.

Mr WALSH (Murray Plains) — On behalf of The Nationals I join the Leader of the Opposition in speaking on the condolence motion moved by the Premier for Evan Herbert Walker, AO, MLC.

Evan Walker was born on 11 October 1935 and was educated at a number of schools, including Box Hill Grammar, Melbourne High School, RMIT, University of Melbourne, University of Toronto and Victoria University of Technology. What is interesting is that at

14 Evan left school for a period of time and went to Corryong to work on a dairy farm and milk dairy cows because he had a long-held ambition to become a farmer.

As the story would later be told, his father wrote to him asking how it was all going, and he realised at that stage that maybe his career was not in milking cows and that he should perhaps apply himself more at school. He went back and studied architecture, and the previous speakers have clearly set out what he achieved as an architect. I am sure he was motivated to study by the thought every morning of whether he should get up to milk cows or go to university and get on with the career that he in fact chose, and I am sure that he would have thought that he made the right choice.

He had the opportunity to study in both Australia and Canada. He started an architecture firm with Daryl Jackson here in Melbourne in 1963, but he also practised and lectured in architecture in Toronto. Having read Evan Walker's CV, it is obvious that he worked with many and varied communities in a range of professional roles before entering Parliament. That is the perfect career for a parliamentarian — to have had varied roles in both community and professional organisations. When he came to the Parliament Evan Walker was very well qualified to be a politician and to manage the portfolios he took on during his political career. He was elected an MLC for Melbourne Province in 1979 and served until 2 October 1992. Reports at the time said he represented the new Labor breed, a man who was quite tall and handsome and considered to be urbane. I do not know what that says about that generation of Labor politicians, but he was held in high regard.

Others have focused on his political career as the planning minister. As an ex-minister for agriculture, I will touch briefly on some of his work in that portfolio. I notice from his CV that for a period of 12 months he was the Minister for Planning and Environment at the same time as he was Minister for Agriculture and Rural Affairs, which no doubt brought some challenges with the different groups he would have had coming to talk to him.

It is always the way that maiden speeches are read by the most people when a condolence motion is being prepared. It is interesting to read about the aspirations people have when they come into this Parliament. In his maiden speech Evan Walker started off very well by congratulating the President of the time — but he then quickly added that he would probably be the last ever President, because at the time the Labor Party supported the abolition of the upper house. I am not

sure whether there is still on the other side of the chamber a will to abolish the upper house. He spoke about the fact that except for a Mr Robert Hamilton, who had represented the electorate of Toorak for a short a period of time, he was the first architect to be elected to the Victorian Parliament. We have now had a Premier who was also an architect and very committed to the future of Melbourne as one of the world's most livable cities.

Evan Walker spoke about the way a lot of professional people, such as those in the fields of law and medicine, help people when they are in trouble, whereas architects plan for the future and help people achieve their aspirations. The way he himself did that has been well articulated by the previous speakers. He talked about Messrs Knight and Kerr, who designed Parliament House. It is interesting to note that they built these chambers in 11 months; if that was able to be done, there was obviously not the red tape then that we have in this state now.

He talked about his personal commitment to the radical redistribution of wealth and power in society, both from an ideological and a practical point of view. That is something he practised throughout his time in politics. Another thing that stands out is that at the time he made his maiden speech Melbourne Province was home to no fewer than 8 of the 12 Victorian Football League clubs, so he struggled to decide which club to barrack for. The AFL has now spread right across Australia. It has changed substantially since that maiden speech in 1979.

Evan Walker made a major contribution to this state. In June 1985, as Minister for Agriculture and Rural Affairs, he faced a demonstration of 35 000 farmers. I can inform the house that I was one of those 35 000 farmers who were not happy about the agricultural situation here in Victoria. My impression of Evan Walker at that time was that while many farmers may not have agreed with him, they believed he was someone who listened, who would talk with them and who did care. That is something he said in his maiden speech — he cared about building a fair and just society.

Evan faced issues with the dairy industry when some farmers faced cost price pressures because the returns for milk were not equal to the prices. If my memory serves me correctly, there was a dairy blockade at the time and during that blockade dairy farmers poured their milk out onto the ground. Evan had to invoke the Essential Services Act 2005 to ensure that milk was sent to the dairy companies which made it available in Melbourne.

Evan would have had a varied life as a minister. In the portfolios he held, particularly the agriculture, conservation and planning portfolios, he would have had some contentious issues to deal with, but, as I said, my recollection is that people saw him as someone who listened to, engaged with and cared about people.

To Judy, to Mr Walker's children and to his extended family I offer the sincere condolences of The Nationals. Vale Evan Herbert Walker, AO.

The SPEAKER — Order! I call on the tall Minister for Planning, who is looking well. Welcome!

Mr WYNNE (Minister for Planning) — Thank you, Speaker. With your indulgence, I congratulate you on this magnificent achievement of yours. I know it is a matter of great pride for you and your family. You have come a very long way from the public housing towers of Racecourse Road in Flemington. Your new position here as Speaker of the house is a fantastic achievement. I am sure Evan Walker would have been immensely proud to see that the opportunity to be a representative of the Labor Party in this Parliament has been provided to you and to all members on this side, and in your case he would have been proud to see that you have been provided the opportunity to hold the high office of Speaker of the Legislative Assembly.

It is a measure of the respect and standing of Evan Walker that no less than seven former premiers from across the political divide attended his funeral yesterday. Former Premier John Cain, Evan's children, Chris, Ben and Rebecca, professional colleague and friend Daryl Jackson, and former staff member Michael Henry spoke beautifully about his life and achievements. The notices of condolence that were published in our daily newspapers last week spoke to the deep affection many had for Evan and the respect with which he was regarded. All of these tributes agreed on one point — that Evan was the greatest planning minister this state has seen. That is certainly my view.

Evan was a man of vision. He had professional training as an architect, and he had a political career that taught him how to get things done and how to stay focused on the long-term goal of making Victoria a better place to live. Evan's role as deputy leader in the Cain government placed him at a critical point in history — a turning point. After 27 years of Liberal governments, Victoria turned to Labor, which at the time was led by John Cain. Evan's appointment as Minister for Planning and Environment gave him the platform to execute a sweeping set of reforms that transformed not only Melbourne but also regional Victoria.

Evan came to office 10 years after that other great visionary who also very recently passed, Tom Uren, and he delivered a second generation of reforms following up on Uren's urban development initiatives. Whitlam gave the suburbs sewerage, transport, schools and hospitals, and Evan Walker injected design, lifestyle and that often abused term, livability, to the city.

Melbourne today is a welcoming, exciting and dynamic city. It leads the way in major sporting events, and its streets are adorned with the best Victorian, art deco and modern architecture. It boasts Australia's best restaurants, bars and cafes. It is a city with Australia's finest network of parks, bike paths and rivers. It is a city of art and culture, business and innovation, design, fashion and of course festivals.

These things were dying in 1970s and were revitalised by a welter of reforms that can be traced back to the Cain and successive governments, and the seminal influence that Evan Walker had on modernising Victoria's outlook. Evan is often credited as the man who created Southbank, but he did so much more than that. Melbourne today is a city that proudly embraces the Yarra River, but in the early 1980s the Yarra was politely described by some as a utilitarian space. Those who were brutally honest referred to it as a post-industrial sewer. There is no doubt that much of the riverside in the centre of our city was abandoned and redundant. Today it has been transformed, and Evan's much-loved analogy of a four-poster bed was that Flinders Street station and the arts precinct were at one end and a convention centre and the Docklands were at the other. Of course, this has come to fruition, and now many Melburnians cannot conceive of our city without this beating heart.

The principal architect of this turnaround — and I use the term 'architect' in both the professional and the general sense — were Evan Walker and of course the Secretary for Planning at the time, David Yencken. There is a memorial to them on the banks of the Yarra River near the *Polly Woodside*, which features a picture looking back at the city of the 1970s. All you can see are ships unloading, factories, trains and wasteland. I invite everyone here today to visit the memorial and look back along the river to see the vibrant spaces that have been created and the active life that has been returned to the river and its precincts, largely due to the efforts of one man — Evan Walker.

This was by no means his only achievement. He introduced effective heritage controls and applied urban conservation zones and the first-ever planning controls of the inner city. In addition, rural land was protected

through the reports of the Land Conservation Council, and the Leader of The Nationals spoke about Evan's very strong interest in rural Victoria. As Minister for Planning and Environment he produced Australia's first greenhouse gas strategy in 1988, appointed David Scott as the first environment commissioner, and produced the state's conservation strategy. Perhaps his greatest achievement was transforming how environment and planning decisions were taken, ensuring that every cabinet submission had to detail the environmental issues around a proposed policy.

When I was preparing for today's debate, a number of Evan's former colleagues provided me with their own personal insights. Caroline Hogg, a former minister and member of the Legislative Council, spoke of his calm leadership and the respect that he earned from the then opposition, as well as the important collaboration he had with the President of the upper house at that time, Alan Hunt, in the management of the Legislative Council. We should not forget that for almost the entire period of the Cain government, except for six weeks, Labor did not control the Legislative Council.

Caroline also observed that she never saw Evan happier than when on country trips. As Minister for Agriculture and Rural Affairs, he would take the cabinet subcommittee for overnight trips to the regions, meeting councils, community groups and farmers, addressing major public forums and finishing the day in the local pub, meeting Labor Party stalwarts. Such was Evan's easy going and accessible manner that rural communities were naturally drawn to him.

After his parliamentary career ended Evan lectured at Melbourne University and recommenced his love of art and painting as one of the Elgin painters group — a loose association of former MPs, academics and other professional colleagues. Evan painted with the group and exhibited at their annual shows each year, and I attended a number of those openings. Barry Pullen, another former minister and member of the Legislative Council, and one of the Elgin studio participants, described his work as perhaps the finest of the group, and all of his works sold well at exhibition.

My last conversation with Evan was a couple of years ago, where in the company of Judy, his loving and devoted wife, he came to my electorate office to canvass his concerns about what he saw as an encroachment by a large residential development on the banks of the river and its potential impact on public access along the riverbank and bicycle path. These issues were ultimately resolved. Typically, Evan's interest was in the public realm. As we bid farewell to this great parliamentarian, we also must acknowledge

the extraordinary love and devotion of his wife Judy and children, particularly as the ravages of Parkinson's disease took away his mobility and function. If I can be half the Minister for Planning that Evan Walker was, I will have done my public duty. Vale Evan Walker.

Ms SANDELL (Melbourne) — I rise to contribute to debate on the condolence motion for the Honourable Evan Walker. I do this as the member for Melbourne because much of my electorate now covers much of his old province, but I also do it on behalf of the Victorian Greens.

I never met Evan Walker, but I dearly wish I had, because walking around my electorate there is so much that is the product of his vision and his work. As we know, it was his architectural talent and vision that was responsible for not only the development of the Southbank precinct but also the protection of the beautiful heritage buildings on Collins Street, just a stone's throw from where we stand today. He was perhaps ahead of his time when he campaigned for city streets to be car free and for the development of green space in the city to allow pedestrians to take in the beautiful Melbourne streetscape. His environmental credentials have been well outlined by the member for Richmond.

As a Tigers fan, I owe Evan Walker particular thanks for the MCG lights, although they do not seem to have improved the Tigers' fortunes since the 1980s. I am also proud of the way he embraced the Greek and Italian communities, who had recently made Melbourne their home, paving the way for a proud multicultural city that is made stronger by the diversity of its residents. I am sure that he would be proud of and excited by the fact that recently migrants have been coming to Melbourne from as far afield as Africa.

I am particularly proud of his advocacy for gender equality in Parliament. Reading through his address-in-reply speech, I note this quote:

I am proud to be a member of a team that, for the first time, includes a woman. The representation of women in this house has long been overdue ... I look forward to the day when there is a reasonable representation of women in this chamber.

I am sure he would have been proud that the last three members for Melbourne have been women.

I was honoured to attend his funeral yesterday and meet his wife, Judith. Having buried my own father less than a year ago, I send particular condolences to his children; I am sure they will miss him terribly. Personally, and on behalf of the Greens, I say thank you to Evan Walker. May he rest in peace.

Mr FOLEY (Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing) — I rise to support the condolence motion for the late Evan Walker. I wish to pay tribute to Evan’s years of service to the Victorian Parliament, to the people of Victoria, and as Minister for Creative Industries I pay tribute in particular to his support for our arts, cultural and creative industries. I also pay my respects as the member for Albert Park, recognising that the development of the south bank of the Yarra is one of his enduring contributions.

The member for Richmond and the Premier referred to how moving Evan Walker’s funeral yesterday was. I was also moved, in particular by the powerful reflections on how his faith drove both his public and private commitment to the people of Victoria, his family and his portfolios. I was particularly taken by the contribution in the service of the reading from Revelation 21:2:

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. And I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God ...

Evan Walker’s life was a testament to building that new Jerusalem in reality in this state. He built it in bricks and mortar but also in moral and practical ways through his own life. His city of God was in the city of man, and we in this town and this state see the monuments to his vision and his efforts all around us. There can be no greater enduring monument to a person’s public and political life.

I want to briefly address Evan’s contributions to the fields of arts and creativity, which were part of his bringing together the city of God and the city of man in the form of the politics he brought to this Parliament. As Minister for Planning from 1982 to 1986, as many have outlined, he championed the development of today’s Southbank. In particular, he laid the foundations for the vibrant arts precinct we have there today. He had a vision for that area of Melbourne and for the role of arts and culture in our lives. He saw past the warehouses that lined the Yarra River at the time and imagined an integrated cultural village. It has been relayed to me that soon after the Rialto opened in October 1986, Evan, who was then Minister for Planning, and Race Mathews, who was then Minister for the Arts, were at a function in the new building, which was then Melbourne’s tallest. Looking out of the window, Evan pointed to Southbank below and said, ‘That is sufficient legacy for us — if we are remembered for nothing else and begin to get that right.’ He did indeed get things right. Southbank was transformed from an industrial wasteland into a precinct for the arts, leisure and tourism, and for housing.

Evan was passionate about the role of public art in our civic infrastructure. He was instrumental in introducing a public art allocation for all building and construction projects and he was especially proud of ensuring that public art was factored into the redevelopment of the MCG. As we learnt yesterday, his direct personal intervention influenced the design of those now monumental light towers at the MCG. He was also passionate about arts training and the importance of getting children involved in the arts from an early age. After leaving politics Evan continued to work in this area as a member of the Victorian College of the Arts Council, serving as its president from 1995 to 1999. As we have also heard, after leaving politics Evan returned to architecture and academia as the dean of the faculty of architecture and planning at the University of Melbourne. His contribution continued well past his time in this Parliament, and it endures.

Our thoughts are with Evan’s wife, Judy, and his family at this difficult time. His legacy endures through his vision, his efforts and the many monuments of his life’s work. Vale Evan Walker. We are poorer for his passing and enduringly richer for his efforts.

Mr THOMPSON (Sandringham) — Later this year Melbourne will celebrate its 180th anniversary, and the question might be asked: what have been the guiding influences which have seen the development of the city of Melbourne? Last year’s Melburnian of the year, Brendan Nottle, narrated the story of a fellow by the name of Henry Reed, not known to many in popular terms in this state, who arguably made a contribution that was as significant as that of Batman, Pascoe Fawcner and Henty in the settlement of Melbourne. Arguably, he was the first person to have a significant commercial influence on operations in what we now know as Victoria from Western Port Bay to Portland. It was Henry Reed who financed the expedition of John Batman into Melbourne.

Reed, who lived in Tasmania, was understood to have a vision for and a view on engaging people in the commercial life of the community, protecting the vulnerable and addressing the concerns and social issues which created victims. He was also driven by a spiritual goal and in the 1820s he attended a jail in Tasmania where seven condemned men were due to die shortly. In what a historian described as ‘wrestling for their souls’ he won the reprieve of one person. Reed’s legacy lives on in Melbourne today as well through his grandchildren. One of them founded Qantas, another was responsible for what became the Heide gallery and another formed part of the China Inland Mission in yesteryear.

Melbourne built upon that legacy of Henry Reed in terms of commerce and a values framework, and it is a framework that was carried forward. People refer to the stature of planning ministers, and stature is measured not so much by physical height as by vision for the city. A number of people have had a vision for the city of Melbourne.

In an article published in the *Sunday Age* of 16 September 1990 entitled 'God, politics and being ordinary', Doug Aiton described Evan Walker's upbringing within a Methodist context, his father having been the principal of Box Hill Grammar for 36 years. Doug Aiton explained that a speech to the Wesley Mission entitled 'Keeping society honest' was a theological dissertation about the nature of honesty, religion and state written and delivered by Evan Walker, Christian and politician. I might note in passing that it is my understanding that Evan's wife, Judy, is the daughter of medical missionaries who served in Asia in yesteryear.

The question might be asked, 'How do we make the world a better place?'. For Evan Walker the answer was to build a fair and just society. A number of contributions have been made today, and the member for Richmond alluded to the service for Evan yesterday. Warren Clarnette, Evan's parish minister at the Auburn Uniting Church, suggested that there were two cities that defined Evan Walker's life: the city of man and the city of God. He said:

Few have done more than Evan in building the city of man, as we have been reminded this morning. He spent his life in service to others across many fields of endeavour. His memorials appear on the Melbourne skyline.

He continued:

Evan lived by a different hope and a different courage, which led him to believe that our life's work is never wasted; it is recognised, treasured and stored. That is the meaning of the holy city. For reasons beyond our comprehension, there would be irreparable loss if humanity and its works were unrecognised, wiped out or forgotten. That is why we may say that nothing we have ever done is lost.

In addition to the work of Henry Reed in funding the early settlement of Melbourne, there is the work of Governor La Trobe, a person who had a vision for the city of Melbourne as well as a value framework and an ethos. La Trobe himself was the son of a Moravian minister. The Moravian Church was a Protestant grouping that had made its way to England as a result of some of the trials and tribulations in France and Europe in the 18th century or thereabouts. La Trobe's family made a strong contribution to ending slavery in the West Indies. His father and a group of people who had gone out there had a commitment to bringing about

just outcomes. They worked with William Wilberforce in 1807. La Trobe's uncle, Benjamin Latrobe, was an architect who helped design and was a major architect in the development of the White House and the Capitol building in Washington, D.C., and a number of other public buildings in the United States.

Charles La Trobe visited Washington in the 1820s or 1830s or thereabouts and made some notes of his travels, which were published and are probably available in the parliamentary library. The man who landed in the Port Phillip District in 1839 at about the age of 39 had a vision of architecture that existed in Washington and through his travels throughout Europe, which were recorded. He also had a mission to protect the Indigenous population in Victoria at the time. La Trobe made an invaluable contribution in the realm of the State Library, the University of Melbourne, our parks and precincts. Evan Walker shared his vision, which was a faith-guided focus to make our community and our city a better place. The legacies of Henry Reed, Charles La Trobe and Evan Walker have dual parallels.

I will make a couple more brief comments. Evan Walker had a vision of this place becoming a unicameral Parliament, and I am yet to see that being taken up by the government today. We on this side will not take up that particular cause.

He also commented on the difference in the future prospects of 10-year-old migrant students who attended the former Victoria Park Primary School as opposed to those of students who attended Melbourne Grammar School in that precinct. I note for the record that my wife attended Abbotsford Primary School as a 10-year-old migrant, but she was never deterred or fazed by the horizons of those who went to Melbourne Grammar.

Mr Walker criticised the Melbourne underground rail loop, our bridges and the arts centre. He was a person of independent vision. He contributed to the building of education facilities in this state, which was founded upon his focused approach and expertise in university architecture and accommodation. In his retirement years he established a dialogue with Swinburne University of Technology lecturers. He also established a discussion group at his local church. I understand he was such a charismatic figure that the daughter of a former Liberal Premier in this house joined his Hawthorn branch of the Labor Party in 1977.

In closing, I will make a couple of final remarks. My nephew's wife is the great-niece of Evan Walker. I happened to hear her speak at a 21st birthday party, and she gave an outstanding speech on that occasion. It may

be a legacy that goes back to the early days of the 1840s, of Henry Reed, Charles La Trobe and the first Walker, who arrived in the Port Phillip District in 1840. Evan Walker had a forebear who served in the other place.

In conclusion, a parishioner at Auburn Uniting Church commented to me that he once congratulated the church caretaker on the great job he had done within the church precinct, and he replied, 'If you need a pair of hands to help, I've got them'. Evan Walker contributed to the development of the city of Melbourne, and I convey my condolences to his family.

Mr McGUIRE (Broadmeadows) — Evan Walker was a towering figure who still casts a long shadow across his beloved Melbourne. From the urban renewal of Southbank, to helping return the Yarra River to the people, to designing the MCG lights, Evan Walker could not only see the big picture but harnessed the intellectual curiosity, creativity and the parliamentary acumen to see it built, no matter the opposition. Fittingly, a T-square adorned the coffin of the architect widely regarded, in tandem with the late Alan Hunt, as Victoria's finest Minister for Planning.

'As long as the stories are told, the spirit lives on', his daughter, Rebecca, told mourners commemorating Evan Walker's enlightened view and urbane style. They not only filled Auburn Uniting Church for yesterday's state funeral but caused it to overflow 10 rows into the garden. The Premier read Evan Walker's favourite poem from Tennyson. It included a line that aptly described Walker's life and times in Victorian politics: 'The old order changeth, yielding place to new'.

Victoria's longest serving Labor Premier and Evan Walker's leader, John Cain, set the political scene: the architect entered politics recalling how tough the times were for the ALP to win power in this state, even after a generation in the political wilderness. Gough Whitlam led a federal intervention, paving the way for an end to the sectarian bitterness of the great split. Evan Walker took the risk of entering Parliament in 1979 in the upper house as a member for Melbourne Province, which according to John Cain led to a first-class study in public life and a distinguished ministerial career. Cain and Walker were children of the Depression who savoured the privilege of education and intuitively understood the dignity of work.

Evan Walker employed a laid-back style with a dash of Pierre Trudeau's cool. An anecdote was told by his former adviser, Mike Henry. He said Evan used to always explain that he needed to casually slip a golf

game into his schedule just in case he had to host visiting dignitaries. That was until he turned up at the flag on the ninth hole one day where he found a message that said, 'Ring the Premier'. As a former political reporter, I remember ringing him at home one time just after 7.00 a.m. regarding an article, and the response from his wife was that he could not comment because he was in the bath. We at the *Herald* actually thought we should consider publishing that, but then we thought it might encourage other ministers of the day to take a dive, so we let that one go.

Evan Walker's ethos was echoed by former Labor Premiers Steve Bracks and John Brumby, who attended the service, and the breadth of regard for him was displayed by the attendance of former Liberal Premiers Jeff Kennett and the architect who rose to become Victoria's leader, Ted Baillieu.

The order of proceedings bestowed a gospel reading on the Honourable Barry Jones, but no-one who knows Barry believed that would suffice. Accordingly, Barry ad-libbed an introduction and fittingly acknowledged his friend's tact and courage, noting how his memorials stand on the Melbourne skyline.

Evan Walker understood the civilising influence of government and how it can play a role to help foster economic development without sacrificing the human factor. He was a Minister for Planning and for the long term, not simply a Minister for Property Developers and for the short term. This is an issue that we have to address today as we look at how Melbourne evolves as a metropolis, without shredding the fabric that has made us the world's most livable city.

At the service the quip was made that when a group of property developers turned up at Evan Walker's office he said, after he heard their approach, 'You might be better off doing business in New South Wales'.

Too often Australia has been guilty of showing a casual disregard for beauty. 'It is taken for granted that Australia is ugly', Anthony Trollope quipped. This is an issue that we need to address, because good architecture is a symbol of our creative sense and our sense of ourselves. It is taken up by communities as an emblem of pride. Every time we disregard the human factor, we diminish communities. In the end, it is false economics. Good architecture will ultimately cost less than ugliness.

This is not simply an issue for Melbourne as a metropolis or for our suburban sprawl. The choice between ugliness and beauty is deeply significant. Tim

Winton aptly described it for rural and regional people when he said:

Through my stories and novels I have long considered the way in which people cope with physical and social isolation, and because I enjoy small town life I remain curious about the effects of environments that are carelessly designed, quickly built and unattractive, since this is the reality that confronts me where I live.

In regional Australia depression, suicide, addiction and domestic violence are major blights, with origins many and complex.

Public discussions of the causes generally include factors of isolation and landscape as well as limits to education, healthcare and romance, but nobody mentions built ugliness as even a minor contributor.

I love the sense of sanctuary small towns provide, the possibility of intimacy they retain, the way you can keep an entire population in mind as a distinct group of faces and traits and characters rather than an abstraction. Living in a tiny community in a rugged landscape requires a form of hardiness I admire. My hope is that soon the hardy will not fear beauty but expect it.

In my own lifetime the culture has transformed itself in so many other ways. It is no longer a class sin, for instance, to aspire to something other than what you were born to. Perhaps the range of our aspirations will expand so that Australians beyond the cities will insist upon beautiful buildings and streetscapes that reflect a love of the continent that sustains them.

To Evan Walker's family and friends, and to those who appreciate his sensibility, we all hope for an enlightened view — like his — for the future, where our ministers for planning and our architects give the benefit of the doubt to beauty over ugliness, because I think that would be a fitting tribute to Victoria and especially to Evan Walker.

The SPEAKER — Order! I wish to pay tribute to Evan Walker, who had an impressive political career. He began his parliamentary career in 1979 as a member for Melbourne Province in the other house. I did not know Evan personally, but I have heard so much about him from my colleagues, especially about Evan's contribution during his eight years as a minister in the Cain government. I would like to acknowledge Evan's contribution and dedication to the state of Victoria in planning, the environment, arts, education and community organisations. I particularly wish to acknowledge his work with the Victorian Community Council Against Violence, of which he was chair from 1997 until 2001.

To Judith, Chris, Ben, Rebecca and all other members of Evan's family, along with his friends, I offer my heartfelt condolences. He was a good man. We will all miss him.

I ask members to signify their assent to the motion by standing in their places in silence.

Motion agreed to in silence, honourable members showing unanimous agreement by standing in their places.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — I move:

That, as a further mark of respect to the memory of the late Honourable Evan Herbert Walker, AO, MLC, the house now adjourns until 2.15 p.m. this day.

Motion agreed to.

House adjourned 1.11 p.m.

The SPEAKER took the chair at 2.17 p.m.

RULINGS BY THE CHAIR

Question time

The SPEAKER — Order! Before calling for questions I wish to make a ruling about the new procedures. The house has agreed to new sessional orders and given the Speaker the power to implement them. The community has an expectation that question time procedures will be improved and that sessional orders will be complied with. The Chair will enforce the sessional orders.

Ministers statements must focus on government business. They may briefly mention actions of previous governments, but statements must not concentrate on this area. Constituency questions must relate to constituency issues and not encompass broader policy issues, which are the purview of questions without notice.

The new sessional orders have been brought in by the government, and it is the Chair's expectation that ministers will comply with the time limits set down for providing written answers. If a minister has not answered a constituency question within the 30-day time limit, the member who asked the question should make a point of order at the beginning of constituency questions drawing this to my attention and asking that I write to the minister requesting an explanation as to why the minister has not answered.

I will provide a copy of that letter, and the minister's response to it, to the member. If a response to my letter is not provided within a reasonable time, the member who asked the question may make a point of order at the beginning of constituency questions drawing this to

my attention. The minister will be given an opportunity to explain the late response in the house immediately or, if they are not in the chamber at the time, at the next available opportunity. The minister must still provide a written answer to the original question, as required by sessional orders.

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Speaker, in relation to the new procedures under sessional orders and the ruling that you have given, I wish to also raise with you the issue of how this new period is to be recorded and described in documents, including *Votes and Proceedings* and *Hansard*, relating to the Legislative Assembly daily program.

As you will be aware, there are now multiple components of what was previously referred to as ‘question time’. There are questions themselves, there are ministers statements and there are constituency questions. I submit that, either now or on notice, it would be worthwhile to have guidance as to how this period is to be recorded and described. Is it to continue to be referred to as ‘question time’ or, as I would submit, will it be referred to as ‘question and statement time’? Alternatively, will we record a change of business from question to ministers statement, back to question and back to ministers statement as proceedings unfold? Will we have a separate record of constituency questions? These are all matters of procedure, but I submit that we are best off clarifying them early on so everybody knows where they stand.

The SPEAKER — Order! I thank the manager of opposition business for raising this matter. There will be clarification in relation to ministers statements and constituent questions, and that will be done accordingly.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE and MINISTERS STATEMENTS

VicRoads relocation

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) — My question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. Is it government policy to relocate the VicRoads headquarters to Ballarat — yes or no?

Mr DONNELLAN (Minister for Roads and Road Safety) — I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question, and I note that the announcement by the previous government was simply done as a press release. We have searched far and wide in the office and throughout the department for anything more than a

press release — a small thought bubble — about when the former Premier went to Ballarat and decided he had a very desperate idea to say that he would suddenly start moving 500 or more staff out of VicRoads without a proper assessment of what was required. Nothing was actually done.

Mr R. Smith — On a point of order, Speaker, the question was very narrow. It had to do with what the government’s policy is. This regurgitation of what the — —

The SPEAKER — Order! There is no point of order. The member for Warrandyte will not enter into debate or repeat the question.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr DONNELLAN — Well, the office was clean. There was nothing there, mate — nothing there at all.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Minister for Roads and Road Safety!

Mr DONNELLAN — I will ignore interjections. Any move of VicRoads will be undertaken properly and with due prudence. We will consult with staff. We will not go up to Ballarat with a thought bubble, suddenly get up there and make an announcement that puts many of the staff at VicRoads ill at ease. This will not be done in a sudden rush up the Western Highway: as we head up there, desperate to win the seat, we will say we will do anything to get your vote. That is not what we will do. We will make a proper assessment of VicRoads’ requirements, and we will consult with staff accordingly. We will not insult them by just making policy on the run.

Supplementary question

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) — Given that the minister will not say if it is still government policy to relocate 600 jobs to Ballarat, I wonder if he could inform the house of how many times the members for either Buninyong or Wendouree bothered to lobby him to get those 600 jobs up to Ballarat.

Mr DONNELLAN (Minister for Roads and Road Safety) — I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his follow-up question. Both members are very much strong advocates for their electorates, and I congratulate them on that. That is the reason they won at the last election — because they were strong advocates and because they did not go up there with thought bubbles and carry on like a pack of pork chops. They actually did their assessment correctly.

Ministers statements: Royal Commission into Family Violence

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — I rise to make a statement and to update the house in relation to our government’s strong action to make sure that the no. 1 cause of death and disability among women under the age of 45, the no. 1 law and order challenge in our state today — the national emergency that is family violence — is finally given the attention that it deserves.

I was very pleased and proud on Sunday to attend the Governor with Australia’s first Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence to sign the letters patent, the final legal instrument in the establishment of Australia’s first Royal Commission into Family Violence. This is an article of faith. This is a commitment which I gave on behalf of my party and which we are delivering on behalf of every Victorian who values the safety of our women and children and a civilised and decent society.

The place that ought to be sanctuary, the place that ought to be the safest — the home — is where all too often women and children are at their most vulnerable. We cannot settle for that. We must better punish the guilty. We must better protect the vulnerable. We must have just a semblance of the courage that Rosie Batty and others have displayed and admit that we, all of us, do not have all the answers, that this system is broken and that women and their children are being betrayed by all of us and our indecision over such a long period of time. We must do more. We must do better. That is what this royal commission is all about: the answers we need to make sure that we have the system that Victorian women and their children most definitely deserve.

West Gate distributor

Mr R. SMITH (Warranty) — My question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. I refer to the far-from-shovel-ready West Gate distributor project, and I ask: will the minister immediately release the business case for this project?

Mr DONNELLAN (Minister for Roads and Road Safety) — I thank the shadow minister for roads and infrastructure for his question. What a marvellous project it is. As the shadow minister would be well aware, we have put out the first stage of that project for expressions of interest. That stage is about strengthening Shepherd Bridge; it is about putting in better access for bicycles and the like. It is very interesting that for some reason — —

Mr Guy interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Leader of the Opposition will come to order.

Mr DONNELLAN — We are trying to deal with what are serious issues over in the west in terms of congestion and in terms of trucks travelling through the inner city. I know that the local community is incredibly supportive of this project. It is very much a pity that the opposition, including its federal leadership, is not prepared to come on board and say — —

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Speaker, the minister is debating the question and is not responding to it.

The SPEAKER — Order! There is no point of order.

Mr DONNELLAN — It is very obvious that opposition members have no interest in taking trucks off the roads in the inner city, which is tragic. It is tragic because, more than anything else, it took some time to get on with the job. We are getting on with the job. We understand there is an urgent need in this state to deliver jobs because the last lot sat still for four years, and everything went into the deep freeze. We make no apologies about getting on with the West Gate distributor. We took it to the election, the public supported the proposition and we make no apologies for getting on with the job.

Honourable members interjecting.

Supplementary question

Mr R. SMITH (Warranty) — Will the minister inform the house whether his reluctance to release this business case is because it just does not exist?

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! Government and opposition members will come to order. The minister is entitled to be heard in silence.

Mr DONNELLAN (Minister for Roads and Road Safety) — I thank the shadow minister for his supplementary question. I note that business cases are very important in relation to major investments. I note the last business case we saw was one for a dud road project.

Ms Ryall — On a point of order, Speaker, the minister is offending against section 58 of the standing orders and also debating the question. His job is not to attack the opposition but to answer the question.

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister will come back to answering the question.

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Speaker, I draw your attention to sessional order 11(2) in relation to your power to determine that an answer to an oral question without notice or supplementary oral question is not responsive to the question. I submit to you that the minister's answers to both the substantive question and the supplementary question were not responsive to the questions. Both the principal question and the supplementary question were very narrow and specific questions that related to the business case for the West Gate distributor project and, in terms of the supplementary, whether that business case exists. In response to neither question did the minister address those issues, so I submit, Speaker, that you should invoke and apply your powers under the new sessional order in accordance with the guidance you gave to the house at the beginning of this session.

Ms Allan — On the point of order, Speaker, I am delighted to see opposition members utilising the sessional orders we have introduced to make this Parliament more accountable and more responsive. It is great to see them on board with the sessional orders that they opposed. Putting that aside, I put it to you, Speaker — —

An honourable member interjected.

Ms Allan — Someone's got to. I put it to you, Speaker — and I am sure you will come to your own conclusions, notwithstanding the advice of the manager of opposition business — that the minister did directly address the substance of the question, which went to the West Gate distributor project, a very important project for the west of Melbourne. I would suggest that despite the counsel of the manager of opposition business you let the answer stand.

Mr Watt — Speaker, I rise to support the point of order raised by the manager of opposition business, given that the minister did not mention 'business case' in his initial answer and that in his supplementary answer the only time he mentioned 'business case' was in — —

The SPEAKER — Order! The member will not repeat the question and will not enter into debate.

Mr Watt — I rise to support the point of order of the manager of opposition business.

The SPEAKER — Order! I believe that the minister was unresponsive to the supplementary

question. I therefore ask the minister to provide a response in writing.

Ministers statements: Royal Commission into Family Violence

Ms RICHARDSON (Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence) — I rise to update the house on a significant challenge facing the Royal Commission into Family Violence, our community and the Parliament itself. Today the Premier provided an update on the establishment of the royal commission — a \$40 million commitment, a truly historic moment for Victoria and an opportunity for reform like no other. The Premier's determination, his leadership and indeed his willingness to say and do what needs to be done are a very welcome and significant change in approach here in Victoria.

I say in particular that having men speak out about family violence is critically important as well. This is not simply a women's issue to be dealt with by women simply because women bear the largest burden of family violence. This is a whole-of-government, whole-of-society crisis that demands that each and every one of us respond accordingly.

Politics is often described as a contact sport. The temptation is always there, no matter what the issue, to respond in the same old adversarial way as we have always done, but the issue of family violence requires so much more of us. In fact it demands so much more of us. While I welcomed the Leader of the Opposition's statement today that our reforms to tackle family violence will enjoy a base level of support — and I know he wants to see significant reform — I was somewhat disappointed that he then went on and applied the same kind of adversarial approach to the rest of his remarks.

Moreover, his comments, like the comments of the member for Hawthorn, were simply without foundation. I am certain he did not wish to upset anyone by what he said, least of all victims of family violence, who want to see tougher penalties for perpetrators, but we owe it to them and to our communities to tackle this issue differently. That is what our Premier and our government are determined to do, and I feel confident that members opposite will want to do the same.

West Gate distributor

Mr R. SMITH (Warrandyte) — My question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. I refer to Labor's claimed 'shovel-ready' West Gate distributor

project, and I ask: will the Hobsons Bay and Maribyrnong councils be the project's planning authorities or will the minister ask VicRoads to override them?

Mr DONNELLAN (Minister for Roads and Road Safety) — I thank the shadow minister for his question. What a marvellous project it is, as I have said many times. As members would be aware, the first component of the project is out there in the street giving confidence to the community that we are actually getting on with the job — that we are not sitting still, that we made a commitment at the last election and that we are getting on with the job. In terms of planning and the like, we will do the appropriate things with all the current legislation and abide by all the appropriate environmental and legislative requirements that we need to meet.

Supplementary question

Mr R. SMITH (Warrandyte) — I note that the West Gate distributor project is no longer shovel ready but is marvellous. Given that the Hobsons Bay and Maribyrnong councils have not commenced any planning scheme amendments for the project, how can the minister still stand by his ridiculous claim that this project is shovel ready?

Mr DONNELLAN (Minister for Roads and Road Safety) — The shadow minister is completely wrong. The first stage of the project is in Maribyrnong, and in due course all councils will be consulted on this project. The first stage of the project is all in Maribyrnong. It is not in other — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister is entitled to be heard in silence. I remind the house that members of the public want to hear questions and answers, as does the Chair.

Mr DONNELLAN — It is a pity the shadow minister does not get out there and visit the project to actually understand what the first component of the project requires, and that is engaging with Maribyrnong City Council. Let us be very clear: the shovels went away for four years under the previous government. We are getting on with the job. We are not sitting still. We are not — —

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister's time has expired.

Ministers statements: transport

Mr PALLAS (Treasurer) — I rise to report to the house about the investment the state is making in bringing forward our transport plans and also making sure that we are growing the Victorian economy. The Andrews government is getting on with the job. The previous government squandered the opportunities of this state, and those opposite gifted Victoria with four years of lazy and 5 minutes of crazy. We have brought forward investment to get the Victorian economy back on track. No longer the insidiousness and — —

Mr R. Smith — On a point of order, Speaker, members of the house would take offence at the Treasurer's callous disregard for those with mental illness in using the term 'crazy'.

The SPEAKER — Order! There is no point of order.

Mr PALLAS — We have brought forward investment in our transport infrastructure, including such things as \$100 million for the early works on our level crossings; \$30 million for the Murray Basin rail project, stage 1; \$35 million to strengthen 48 bridges in regional Victoria; \$50 million for regional roads, making sure that level crossings in regional Victoria are dealt with; \$3 million for planning and suburban roads; \$100 million for the Flinders Street station — a real do-over, not the nonsense those opposite were doing Victorians over with — and \$40 million to establish an authority to get Melbourne Metro going.

We saw what the previous government's recipe was for this state. We saw public infrastructure spending cut by 5 per cent on its watch. We saw construction jobs lower when those opposite left government compared to today. After only three months in office we are giving the Victorian economy the adrenaline shot it so dearly requires — market-led proposals that will ensure that Victorians get value for money and that there is transparency. Ultimately, unlike those opposite, who wasted the last four years, we will not waste a minute. We are getting on with it.

Food safety

Ms SHEED (Shepparton) — My question is to the Minister for Health. Given the recent hepatitis A outbreak linked to imported Chinese berries and SPC's call last week for more comprehensive testing after heavy metal contamination was found in imported canned peaches, are any steps being taken by the government to introduce more thorough testing of imported produce being sold to Victorians?

Ms HENNESSY (Minister for Health) — I thank the member for her question and congratulate her on her recent election and continuing advocacy for our local community. Similar to the member, I too share concerns about ensuring that the food that is imported, sold and consumed is safe, not just for all Victorians but also for the industries that are affected by the importation of food.

Responsibility for the regulation of food safety is dependent upon three separate tiers of government. In respect of imported foods, which goes to the heart of the member's question, a significant onus is on the commonwealth Department of Agriculture. It runs the imported food inspection scheme. That scheme is responsible for inspecting foods as they enter the country. It applies a risk-based approach that then determines the level of inspection, or the percentage of inspection, of a particular food category.

I read today with much interest a statement by commonwealth ministers that berries would now be considered a medium risk. They were previously categorised as 'surveillance', which meant that 5 in 100 packages were inspected. They have now been reclassified as a medium risk, and 100 per cent screening will be provided of those frozen berries that are linked to factories in China that have an association with the hepatitis A that has been diagnosed.

While it has taken almost a week, certainly on behalf the Victorian government I welcome those additional inspections. I also make the point that it was in fact the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services that led to national notification of this issue through its robust processes. More broadly, I am keen to explore this with my colleagues who will also sit on the ministerial council of what is called FSANZ — Food Standards Australia New Zealand. We would like to consider and reflect upon whether or not the surveillance standards in that code adequately reflect the risks of the particular items that are now being imported.

The Victorian government has a responsibility, in conjunction with local government that goes to surveillance at the point of sale as opposed to the point of importation, and we will continue to work on that end. This whole discussion has also incited a discussion about country-of-origin food labelling. On this I have directed my department to work with other departments and the Municipal Association of Victoria to identify the extent and impact of non-compliance with current country-of-origin requirements. I look forward to working with the commonwealth and other levels of

government to ensure that our food supply is as safe as it can be.

Supplementary question

Ms SHEED (Shepparton) — My question is again to the Minister for Health. Given that there clearly are risks associated with food being imported into Australia, I ask the government: will it commit to buying locally grown and manufactured food for government procurement policies in relation to food that it is providing to Victorians?

Ms HENNESSY (Minister for Health) — I thank the member for her supplementary question. Obviously, given the region she represents, she has a very strong commitment to and interest in the local food manufacturers. I can assure her that the Victorian Labor government supports Victorian food manufacturers. We are very strong supporters of growing local agriculture. We have committed \$200 million in our Future Industries Fund. We have identified food and fibre as one of the six most important growth industries for this state. Prior to the last election Victorian Labor also committed to a Victorian industry participation program.

The purpose of that policy is all about supporting local procurement where possible. I am sure the Minister for Agriculture and the Minister for Industry will take a passion to locally produced fruit, like they do to locally produced steel.

Ministers statements: Flinders Street station

Mr WYNNE (Minister for Planning) — I am pleased to inform the house of a really important initiative — the renovation of Flinders Street station.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr WYNNE — It is marvellous. I thank the member for his contribution. Flinders Street station is a major transport hub in Melbourne. At one point it was the busiest railway station in the world. Flinders Street station, as we know, is at the heart of the cultural precinct here in the city. It is on one of the busiest intersections — the corner where people have met for decades under the Flinders Street clocks. The station is one of Melbourne's iconic Victorian era buildings and recently, just last weekend, it was a focal point for the fabulous White Night festival.

However, the station's decline has seen this important precinct really fall into decay. Over the past 20 years state governments have considered many proposals to redevelop the station and the surrounding area. These

have varied in scope, ambition and cost. Yet despite public concern about the decline of the station's buildings and the deterioration of the beautiful ballroom in particular, a project has yet to proceed. In the meantime, one of Melbourne's most beloved icons was literally falling apart and becoming a danger to the public. It should have been the pride of our city, but it was becoming an embarrassment.

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Speaker, we are on new ground with these ministers statements, but I refer to the guidance that you gave to the house at the commencement of this sitting, in which you indicated that ministers could make passing reference to the context in which they were making their announcement but that the bulk of their announcement needed to relate to the new initiative.

The minister has had considerable latitude to set the scene for what he might inform the house about in relation to this new initiative. I submit that he is going beyond passing reference in setting the scene and is dwelling unnecessarily extensively on the past, whereas the purpose of these statements, as we understand it, is to inform the house of new government initiatives, projects and achievements. I ask you to bring him back to that.

The SPEAKER — Order! I accept the point of order, but the minister was being relevant in referring in passing to the former government's position. I do, however, remind the minister of my ruling. He should only refer to the previous government's management in passing.

Mr WYNNE — Labor has a realistic plan for Flinders Street station. A \$100 million project will commence this year. It will create jobs, boost the surrounding cultural district and make the station a pleasant place to be for tourists and commuters alike. We are getting on with the job of refurbishing Flinders Street station.

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister's time has expired.

East-west link

Mr O'BRIEN (Malvern) — My question is to the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer rule out legislating to limit or annul compensation provisions in the east-west link contracts — the contracts on which the Premier said no compensation would be payable?

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I remind members that the Chair needs to hear the question in order to make a ruling should that be required. I also remind them that members of the public want to hear the question and the answer.

Mr PALLAS (Treasurer) — I absolutely and unreservedly assure those opposite and the Victorian people that this government will unreservedly give a guarantee that it will not sell out the interests of the state like those opposite did.

Ms Ryall — On a point of order, Speaker, the minister is entering into debate, and he is also using this as an opportunity to attack the opposition. I suggest — —

The SPEAKER — Order! The member will resume her seat. There is no point of order.

Mr PALLAS — This government, the Andrews Labor government, has a mandate — a mandate endorsed by no higher authority than the Prime Minister of this country. He told the people of Victoria they had a referendum on this project, and they robustly embraced that right. We will do whatever is necessary to protect the public interest. Be assured that when those opposite signed contracts — or what were purported to be contracts — without effectively insuring the interests of the taxpayer, squandering 55 cents in every dollar invested and threatening to toll every freeway in inner city Melbourne, we know what motivated them. It was their own political hides and not the welfare of the Victorian people.

Supplementary question

Mr O'BRIEN (Malvern) — My supplementary question is to the Treasurer. Has the government given any direction to prepare legislation to limit or annul compensation provisions in the east-west link contract — yes or no?

Mr PALLAS (Treasurer) — I thank the former Treasurer for his supplementary question. Let me be clear that this government stands ready to protect the Victorian taxpayer and people's interests, and we will deal with the consortium in as responsible a way as possible. Responsibility will be the keynote of our actions.

Ms Ryall — On a point of order, Speaker, the question asked was very specific, and we have not heard a response at all at this point in time. Under standing orders 58 and 110, the response is irrelevant. I ask you to direct the minister back to answering the question.

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister will continue answering the question. There is no point of order.

Mr PALLAS — The protection of the state's interests might be a new and novel concept to those opposite, but it is not for those on this side of the chamber. Let me be very clear that we will leave these options available to the state, and we will advise those opposite and the Parliament in due — —

Mr O'Brien — Speaker, my point of order is on relevance. The supplementary question was a narrow question about when a direction was given to prepare legislation. That was the limit of the question, and it requires a yes or no answer. I ask you to bring the Treasurer back to answering and being responsive to the supplementary question.

The SPEAKER — Order! I call on the minister to come back to answering the question in a responsive way.

Mr PALLAS — In accordance with the statements we made before the last election, we stand ready to use any and all methods available to the state to protect its interests.

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Speaker, I again draw your attention to sessional order 11(2) and your ruling on the point of order just momentarily before the Treasurer concluded his answer. I submit that in accordance with your ruling the Treasurer was not being responsive to the question, and I ask you to determine accordingly.

The SPEAKER — Order! There are two things to be said on this matter. On the point of order, I ruled that the minister was in order. I will take into account the comments made by the member, but the minister was in order.

Ministers statements: transport and employment

Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport) — Last week the Andrews Labor government demonstrated just how serious it is about getting on with delivering the sort of public transport that Victorians need and deserve. We have not seen so many public transport and indeed transport projects announced in one short week for well over four years.

We started the week on a Sunday, as we always do, and on that Sunday we announced the 50 level crossing removal project, establishing the authority and an initial

injection of \$100 million to get on with this project straightaway. On Monday it was the Melbourne Metro rail project, a project that sat on the shelf for four long years. We are getting on with that project immediately with \$40 million being fast-tracked. On Tuesday it was Mildura and the Murray Basin rail freight project, with \$30 million to spend on immediate works and a commitment to a significant project that underpins that initial program. On Wednesday we announced \$100 million for Flinders Street station. On Thursday we announced funding to fix regional roads and level crossings. These are not only transport projects; they are vital job-creating projects in a state that for four years was left languishing without a jobs plan.

We will create 4500 jobs on the level crossing removals, 3500 jobs on the Melbourne Metro rail project during peak construction, 250 jobs at Flinders Street station, 54 jobs on safety and maintenance works for the Mildura line and 110 jobs on the Stronger Country Bridges program.

Mr Pesutto interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Hawthorn will come to order.

Ms ALLAN — From the comments of those opposite it is certainly clear that they still have not worked out that for every dollar spent on a transport program, you should be looking at how you can create jobs here in Victoria — not overseas, not somewhere else, but right here in Victoria. That is exactly what we will do with our transport and jobs program.

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister's time has expired.

CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS

Warrandyte electorate

Mr R. SMITH (Warrandyte) — (Question 56) I raise a very important issue for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety with regard to traffic congestion and bushfire safety in my electorate. The former government committed to a multi-agency review of how roads in Warrandyte, and particularly Warrandyte Bridge, would cope in the event of an emergency evacuation. In addition there was a commitment for VicRoads to investigate longer term solutions to issues, including access to water supply for local fire brigades, bridge widening to improve traffic capacity and additional Yarra River crossings. Emergency management commissioner Craig Lapsley wrote to me about this issue:

The emergency management dimensions of this issue are significant and have significant potential in terms of life loss during a bushfire emergency ...

The challenge of providing a solution must be addressed as a whole of government, and directly involve a range of departments and agencies.

The coalition government in partnership with the emergency management commissioner, local councils and the government agency, VicRoads, had begun significant work to address these serious congestion and safety issues. When will this completed work, with realistic and planned solutions, be made available to my community?

Yan Yean electorate

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) — (Question 57) My constituency question to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. Yan Yean Road is an important link in the outer northern suburbs servicing a corridor of increasing residential development, but the current windy two-lane unsubdivided road is dangerous and congested. Residents in the north deserve safe and reliable roads to get them to work and get them home in one piece. I refer the minister to the government's commitment to duplicate the road at a cost of \$95 million and the proposed state declaration of this road, instigated by Labor in 2010, that was deferred indefinitely by the Liberal-Nationals government. Can the minister advise when he will reinstate the proposed state declaration of Yan Yean Road, north of Kurrak Road, so that the much-needed future planning upgrade between Kurrak Road and Bridge Inn Road can be scoped, planned and designed in readiness for funding and a future upgrade?

South-West Coast electorate

Dr NAPHTHINE (South-West Coast) — (Question 58) My constituency question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and I ask: when will the government install electronic flashing 40 kilometre-an-hour school speed zone signs on Commercial Road, Koroit, to better protect students, their families and staff at the Koroit and District Primary School?

Ivanhoe electorate

Mr CARBINES (Ivanhoe) — (Question 59) My question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. I ask the minister to visit the East Ivanhoe shopping village to discuss with locals, both traders and residents, the Andrews Labor government election commitment to introduce a 40 kilometre-an-hour speed zone limit in the shopping strip. In particular, in East Ivanhoe — —

Ms McLeish — On a point of order, Speaker — —

The SPEAKER — Order! Given that I need to make a judgement in relation to constituency questions, I would rather take points of order on constituency questions after the question is put to the chamber. I ask the member to raise the point of order after the member finishes raising his constituency question.

Mr CARBINES — I know the East Ivanhoe shopping village is bookended by Mother of God Primary School, Ivanhoe East Primary School and Ivanhoe Grammar School. It is a very successful shopping strip, and the Labor government made a commitment to deliver a 40 kilometre-an-hour speed zone in that area.

It was ignored by the previous government, a government that chose to deliver ad hoc 40-kilometre-per-hour speed zones across Victoria, but ignored Labor electorates and ignored the criteria set down by VicRoads. I look forward to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety visiting the electorate to discuss these matters with the local school community, residents and traders and to follow up on the petition that was supported by residents in my electorate to ensure that a 40-kilometre-per-hour zone is instituted in East Ivanhoe, a great part of the Ivanhoe electorate.

South Barwon electorate

Mr KATOS (South Barwon) — (Question 60) My constituency question is to Minister for Roads and Road Safety. When will the minister commit to matching the coalition's 2014 election commitment to fund the signalisation of the intersection of Beach Road and Surf Coast Highway, Torquay?

Broadmeadows electorate

Mr McGUIRE (Broadmeadows) — (Question 61) My constituency question is to the Treasurer. I invite the Treasurer to come to an economic and cultural development summit in Broadmeadows to look at how we can have a coordinated strategy for jobs and growth, given that the former coalition government in this state and also the federal government have allowed the unemployment rate to reach 26.4 per cent. That unemployment rate is higher than that of Spain and equal to that of Greece. I also note that the Prime Minister is now talking about a new strategy for national security. In the community that I represent, we have the highest number of Muslim families, twice the number of any other electoral district. We also have Christian refugees from Iraq and Syria living side by side, who want to have hope. They need jobs, and we

need a strategy that coordinates this. I hope the Treasurer will agree to come out to help our coordinated strategy, which has already been supported by the City of Hume. This issue is above politics.

Ringwood electorate

Ms RYALL (Ringwood) — (Question 62) My constituency question is to the Premier. Given the Premier has ordered work to stop on the east–west link project, what is his response to the tradies, independent contractors and small and medium business owners in Ringwood, who ask: now that the work has been stopped, how do you expect us to survive and put food on the family table?

Kororoit electorate

Ms KAIROUZ (Kororoit) — (Question 63) My constituency question is to the Minister for Public Transport. My question relates to the \$220 million commitment made in 2009 by the Brumby government to fund four new railway stations, including Caroline Springs station. In 2011 the previous government redirected funds away from Caroline Springs, in an area where 30 per cent of households in the city of Melton do not live within 400 metres of public transport. Despite Caroline Springs being located in a major growth corridor, the former government neglected the people of the west and provided no promise of funding for the Caroline Springs station.

The only trace of the Caroline Springs railway station is the famous ‘road to nowhere’, which leads to unkempt scrubland. The halt in the construction of the Caroline Springs station has had adverse effects on the local community in Caroline Springs. They are becoming socially isolated and disconnected from the networks of metropolitan Melbourne. Can the minister commit to building the Caroline Springs railway station and outline the time line for the project’s completion?

Kew electorate

Mr T. SMITH (Kew) — (Question 64) My question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety regarding the promised upgrade to the Chandler Highway bridge. Given Labor’s 16 June 2014 press release that said works would start immediately upon it coming to government, why has work not started already on the Chandler Highway bridge?

Essendon electorate

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) — (Question 65) My constituency question is to the Minister for Police. I ask the minister to provide me with an update on current

policing activities on the Flemington housing estate. The Flemington housing estate has a very large culturally and linguistically diverse community. In the past there has been some tension between officers at the Flemington police station and some residents of the estate. In more recent times there has been some improvement, but the residents are keen to explore how this relationship can be strengthened. Therefore I ask that the minister consider coming to Flemington to meet with the sworn officers at Flemington police station as well as with representatives of the community.

RULINGS BY THE CHAIR

Sessional orders

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Box Hill raised a point of order about the way new question procedures will be recorded in various parliamentary documents.

I advise that *Votes and Proceedings* will now have a heading ‘Questions and ministers statements (Under sessional orders)’, whereas the previous heading was ‘Questions (Under SO 55)’. There will be a separate heading ‘Constituency questions (Under sessional order 9)’. Hansard will adopt a similar approach. Answers to constituency questions will be published in the weekly *Hansard* immediately before answers to questions on notice for the day on which they are received.

The Clerk’s daily running sheet, the informal summary document printed on green paper and circulated in the chamber each day, will continue to refer to ‘Question time’, which covers questions without notice and supplementary questions, ministers statements and constituency questions.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING REFORM AMENDMENT (CHILD SAFE SCHOOLS) BILL 2015

Introduction and first reading

Mr MERLINO (Minister for Education) — I move:

That I have leave to bring in a bill for an act to amend the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 to establish a framework to require registered schools to take appropriate actions to manage the risk of child abuse and to further strengthen the regulation of schools by enhancing the functions and powers of the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority and for other purposes.

Mr CLARK (Box Hill) — I ask the minister to provide a brief explanation of the bill, additional to the long title.

Mr MERLINO (Minister for Education) — This bill implements two of the recommendations that came out of the Betrayal of Trust inquiry conducted by this Parliament, specifically related to education. They are recommendations 12.1 and 16.1.

Motion agreed to.

Read first time.

LIMITATION OF ACTIONS AMENDMENT (CHILD ABUSE) BILL 2015

Introduction and first reading

Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General) — I move:

That I have leave to bring in a bill for an act to amend the Limitation of Actions Act 1958 to remove limitation periods that apply to actions in respect of causes of action that relate to death or personal injury resulting from child abuse and for other purposes.

Mr CLARK (Box Hill) — I ask the Attorney-General to provide a brief explanation of the bill and in particular to explain whether there are any departures from the exposure draft bill released under the previous government.

Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General) — The bill implements another of the recommendations of the Betrayal of Trust inquiry, in regards to limitation of actions. It is a slightly different bill to the one that was in the exposure draft that went out.

Motion agreed to.

Read first time.

PUBLIC HEALTH AND WELLBEING AMENDMENT (HAIRDRESSING REGISTRATION) BILL 2015

Introduction and first reading

Ms HENNESSY (Minister for Health) — I move:

That I have leave to bring in a bill for an act to amend the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 to make provision in relation to the registration of premises in which certain businesses are conducted and for other purposes.

Mr CLARK (Box Hill) — I ask the minister to provide a brief explanation of the bill to the house.

Ms HENNESSY (Minister for Health) — The purpose of the bill is to amend the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 to provide for registration on an ongoing basis, as opposed to a periodic basis, of

premises in which certain businesses are conducted. For the main part, this bill relates to the provision of hairdressing and make-up services.

Motion agreed to.

Read first time.

LEGAL PROFESSION UNIFORM LAW APPLICATION AMENDMENT BILL 2015

Introduction and first reading

Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General) — I move:

That I have leave to bring in a bill for an act to amend the Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Act 2014 and for other purposes.

Mr CLARK (Box Hill) — I ask the minister to provide a brief explanation of the bill.

Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General) — I am happy to provide a brief explanation, given the keen interest that I know the member for Box Hill has in this particular area of legislation. The bill will make further amendments to the overarching national legal profession legislative framework, in which both the Victorian and New South Wales governments are integrally involved, particularly in regards to this bill. It primarily goes to the question of the nature of costs disclosure.

Motion agreed to.

Read first time.

VETERANS AND OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT BILL 2015

Introduction and first reading

Ms GARRETT (Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation) — I move:

That I have leave to bring in a bill for an act to amend the Veterans Act 2005, the Sale of Land Act 1962, the Australian Consumer Law and Fair Trading Act 2012, the Residential Tenancies Act 1997, the Motor Car Traders Act 1986, the Co-operatives National Law Application Act 2013, the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012 and other Consumer Acts and for other purposes.

Mr CLARK (Box Hill) — I ask the minister to provide a brief explanation of the bill.

Ms GARRETT (Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation) — This bill makes a range of amendments to a number of acts, varying in degrees of import. Of most note are amendments to the

Veterans Act 2005 regarding the management and accessibility of patriotic funds and also updating trust deed arrangements. These are being done, as the opposition knows, in close consultation with the veterans community and the RSL. There is a range of minor amendments to the other pieces of legislation. There are provisions in the Residential Tenancies Act 1997 relating to record keeping of rooming houses in terms of gas and electrical inspections, which will be welcomed by those who rely on that form of housing.

Motion agreed to.

Read first time.

SCRUTINY OF ACTS AND REGULATIONS COMMITTEE

Statute Law Revision Bill 2014

Ms BLANDTHORN (Pascoe Vale) presented report, together with appendix.

Tabled.

Ordered to be published.

Alert Digest No. 1

Ms BLANDTHORN (Pascoe Vale) presented *Alert Digest No. 1* of 2015 on:

- Back to Work Bill 2014**
- Cemeteries and Crematoria Amendment (Veterans Reform) Bill 2015**
- Education and Training Reform Amendment (Funding of Non-Government Schools) Bill 2014**
- Interpretation of Legislation Amendment Bill 2015**
- Parliamentary Committees and Inquiries Acts Amendment Bill 2015**
- Statute Law Repeals Bill 2014**
- Statute Law Revision Bill 2014**
- Summary Offences Amendment (Move-on Laws) Bill 2015**
- Wrongs Amendment (Asbestos Related Claims) Bill 2014**

together with appendices.

Tabled.

Ordered to be published.

DOCUMENTS

Tabled by Clerk:

Interpretation of Legislation Act 1984 — Notice under s 32(4)(a)(iii) in relation to Waste Management Policy (Ships' Ballast Water) 2004 and Statutory Rule 69/2006 (*Gazette G5, 5 February 2015*)

Planning and Environment Act 1987 — Notices of approval of amendments to the following Planning Schemes:

- Ballarat — C187
- Bayside — C112
- Boroondara — C207
- Colac Otway — C74
- Corangamite — C37
- Surf Coast — C102

Statutory Rule under the *Building Act 1993* — SR 8

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994:

Documents under s 15 in relation to Statutory Rule 8

Documents under s 16B in relation to:

Gambling Regulation Act 2003 — Victorian Pre-commitment Player Account Equipment Technical Standard

Public Holidays Act 1993 — Easter Sunday 2015 Public Holiday

Road Safety Act 1986 — Guidelines for assessing fitness to drive under s 27.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Program

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

That, under standing order 94(2), the orders of the day, government business, relating to the following bills be considered and completed by 5.00 p.m. on Thursday, 26 February 2015:

Cemeteries and Crematoria Amendment (Veterans Reform) Bill 2015

Interpretation of Legislation Amendment Bill 2015

Parliamentary Committees and Inquiries Acts Amendment Bill 2015

Summary Offences Amendment (Move-on Laws) Bill 2015.

I would like to make a couple of remarks on these bills and on the program being proposed for the week ahead. Following the hopefully successful passage of the

government business program that we have put to the house this afternoon, we propose that the house deal firstly with item 2 on the notice paper, which is the proposed amendment to the *Upper Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges Regional Strategy Plan*, moved in the name of the member for Preston. This has been on the notice paper since the previous Parliament, and executing it is part of the government's requirements under the planning arrangements.

Hopefully that will move through expeditiously to allow us to return to the address-in-reply to the Governor's speech, enabling the five remaining new members of the Parliament to make their inaugural speeches, which will be a great occasion for them in this place. It will be very useful for them to get up and have their say on behalf of their communities. It will be an important part of their political life.

Following that, time permitting later today, we will return to the second-reading debate on the Cemeteries and Crematoria Amendment (Veterans Reform) Bill 2015, but that will depend on the time available to us for the rest of the afternoon. During the rest of the week we will work through the remaining bills. I make the observation that we will be doing so under the new sessional orders. That is why the guillotine is being set for 5 o'clock on Thursday; it is in line with the new sitting hours that we have introduced to make the Parliament — we are not losing any debating time — a much more human-friendly place without those late-night sittings. That means we can all get home safely, and we will not need to have those late-night finishes. I think that will be good for the Parliament and its staff, and it will hopefully see a lift in members' performance and the quality of debate as well.

We understand that in operating under the new sessional orders members will take a little while to get used to the new arrangements, particularly on Wednesdays and Thursdays, when question time will be at 11.00 a.m., which is quite a departure from the previous arrangements. Some other parts of the day will also be reordered. I expect there might be a few bumps and lumps, but I am sure members will adapt to it pretty quickly. It will be an improvement overall.

As we have seen during question time today, the abolition of Dorothy Dixers has already meant that the Parliament runs much more smoothly. It is quite remarkable to note that those opposite continue to oppose the sessional orders that actually improve things for them. We are giving opposition members more tools than they ever gave, when they were in government, to the former opposition. They are clearly

continuing to be the chaotic, lazy outfit that they were in government.

They are not interested in doing the hard work. Even though we want them to and we are offering assistance to them to do so, they are clearly rejecting that assistance. Notwithstanding that, I am very pleased to see that so far under the new sessional orders things have gone smoothly. We will work through those issues over the rest of the week, and I hope that the opposition will find its way to supporting the government business program as put to the house.

Mr CLARK (Box Hill) — As the Leader of the House says, we are operating under the new sessional orders. They have not got off to a good start. We have seen, if anything, even more grandstanding from government ministers than we saw under the standing orders.

Mr Donnellan interjected.

Mr CLARK — That was to the point where the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, who is getting very agitated, had to be instructed to actually answer the question in accordance with what was promised in this house and in the government's pre-election policies. Whereas those opposite promised that we would have a longer question time, more questions and less grandstanding, in fact we have a shorter time for questions, fewer questions and more grandstanding. The Leader of the House's commendation of the sessional orders is something like the 13th chime of the clock — it casts in doubt everything else that the Leader of the House has had to say.

There are four bills on the government business program. It is probably fair to say that of those bills two will be the subject of substantial debate; one is simply giving effect to measures that were put in train under the previous government and probably will not take up a great deal of time; and the fourth of the bills is one about which one has to ask oneself whether the Attorney-General has run out of things he can do, so he has brought this bill to the house. One has to question his sense of priorities, given the long list of other legislative options that were available to the Attorney-General as work in progress that was left for him by the previous government. The opposition does not oppose the government business program, given those considerations, but there are two specific matters to which I wish to refer.

First, I put on the record another of the now government's pre-election commitments — namely, to make consideration in detail a standard part of the

deliberations on bills in the Legislative Assembly — and indicate to the Leader of the House that the opposition is proceeding on the assumption that the government will be honouring its election commitment and that accordingly non-consideration of a bill in detail will be the exception rather than the norm. No doubt the Leader of the House will raise with the opposition whether she thinks in a particular case there is good reason not to consider a bill in detail.

Ms Allan interjected.

Mr CLARK — Again, it has not been an auspicious start to the Parliament where the Leader of the House was not able to comply with the government's pre-election policy in relation to any one of the bills that went through the house in the last sitting week. The Leader of the House interjects that she thinks that providing information about whether or not the government wants to depart from its election commitments is part of my job rather than hers. If it makes it easier for the Leader of the House, let us proceed on the assumption that each and every bill will be considered in detail, since the Leader of the House does not want to come across the chamber and raise with me when she wants to depart from that commitment. Certainly we expect that the government will honour its commitment that consideration in detail will be a standard part of every bill, and the record will tell whether or not the government is honouring that commitment, having got a zero on the record in the last sitting week.

The other matter I raise is the perplexing issue of what is intended to happen with lunchbreaks under the new sessional orders. This is a matter on which the government's position has changed from time to time. At the initial briefing the opposition was given it was indicated that it was intended that there would not be lunchbreaks, then we were told that there would in fact be lunchbreaks and then we were told again that there would not be lunchbreaks. Certainly the entire debate on sessional orders last sitting week proceeded on that basis.

I indicated that the opposition thought it was worthwhile that there not be lunchbreaks, but of course, as a number of my colleagues raised, if there were not going to be lunchbreaks on Tuesdays, Wednesdays or Thursdays, then it was important that the needs of staff be taken into account. A number of members — the Leader of the House through interjection and you, Deputy Speaker, in your role as a member of this house — made remarks on that. The entire debate last sitting week was on the assumption that the house would sit through what would otherwise have been the

lunchbreaks on Tuesdays, Wednesdays or Thursdays. As I understand it, it still remains to be resolved. However, I hope the government stands by that position.

Mr DONNELLAN (Minister for Roads and Road Safety) — This is a new dawn. This is very much serious reform of sessional orders. That is very much the purview of the Labor Party, as members would be aware through the history of this house and that of the upper house. Reform to make this house more democratic is very much the purview of the Labor Party, and again it has very much led the charge. I have always thought that realistically lunch and dinner were for wimps, in a sense, and that we should be working through and looking at delivering family-friendly hours so that members could head home after 8 o'clock. I think that is important because you would hope that a party that puts itself forward as having family values would support that proposition. I think it is a better proposition that we finish at 8 o'clock.

The removal by sessional orders of Dorothy Dixers is a benefit to the opposition and also to this house. It means we will have a better quality of questioning and that we will not have the ongoing grandstanding, which, as the member for Box Hill has indicated, used to occur under the previous government — I think he was about to say 'under the previous government' and then corrected himself at the last minute and decided it was under this government.

At the end of the day it is not our job necessarily to always assist the opposition, but I think the reforms we have made to sessional orders have made it easier. We have made a commitment to provide for consideration in detail of bills. That was not something the previous government offered very often to the then opposition. I love these crocodile tears, implying that we are suddenly meant to provide more consideration in detail. I think that under the previous government there were — what? — two or three bills that were considered in detail. We are going to be offering consideration in detail of more bills, and I would really have thought that would be welcomed by the opposition. For many years that was a real rarity.

We have made these commitments, and we will stick by them. At the end of the day we are very much the great reformers of this house. We are providing a new dawn. We are not here to shut down this house, as the previous government did, using its capacities to do so. We have opened up the house to further questioning and so forth. I do not think that if we have to sit through lunch and dinner anyone will die in the house, to be

honest. I think most of us will survive the trauma of not having a tucker —

Mr Foley — A bloke's got to have doughnuts.

Mr DONNELLAN — Okay, doughnuts. We will provide the member for Albert Park with a happy doughnut, maybe a Krispy Kreme, every week. For those of us who can do without a Krispy Kreme and get on with the job, I think it is appropriate that we sit through the day and finish at 8 o'clock, a family-friendly hour.

We have got the address-in-reply debate coming up, and I know many new members will want to get on with talking about what we have brought forward in terms of their electorates and the like — the infrastructure program we have for their electorates, the job opportunities we are providing to their communities and what we are doing to deal with congestion across the state. I therefore think this is a reasonable government business program. I note that the manager of opposition business has indicated the opposition will support the program. I disagree with the member for Box Hill's assertion that this is not a better house now that we have introduced these new sessional orders. I think they make the house more open, transparent and democratic. Removing Dorothy Dixers and getting people home at a reasonable hour are appropriate measures in the circumstances. I therefore welcome this week's government business program. I think it is a good business program, and I am very much looking forward to the address-in-reply debate, when some of our youngies, as we would say, who are coming on board will want to talk about the marvellous infrastructure program we will be delivering for the community of Victoria.

Mr KATOS (South Barwon) — I rise to make a contribution with regard to the government business program. As other speakers have said, four bills are up this week, and I note that when we were in government if we had put up four bills we would have been called a lazy government that did not work, particularly by the now Leader of the House.

In terms of the four bills, I note that the Cemeteries and Crematoria Amendment (Veterans Reform) Bill 2015 is a very good piece of legislation. In fact virtually the same bill was introduced by the coalition in the upper house during the previous Parliament. That is very good legislation in terms of remembering our war veterans. The Interpretation of Legislation Amendment Bill 2015 is a very standard bill. As the manager of opposition business said, the Parliamentary Committees and Inquiries Acts Amendment Bill 2015 and the Summary

Offences Amendment (Move-on Laws) Bill 2015 will probably be the subject of quite vigorous debate, particularly the summary offences bill. We are starting to see the repayment of favours to the unions commencing with the move-on laws. The manager of opposition business referred to the 16 October press release put out by Labor headed 'Labor to clean up Parliament with "honesty reforms"'. The release says:

The 'consideration-in-detail' stage will be introduced as a standard feature to enhance scrutiny.

We want to see that introduced. That is the commitment the government has made, but last sitting week no bills went into the consideration-in-detail stage, which represents an immediately broken promise. While the manager of opposition business said we would not be opposing the government business program at this stage, if that were to continue — if no consideration in detail were to be given to bills, so that that scrutiny was not occurring — then obviously that position will change in the future.

With regard to Dorothy Dixers, which have been mentioned a few times here in relation to the sessional orders, as far as the reform goes, the Dorothy Dixers have just been replaced by ministerial statements. There is no difference; it is just that there is no government backbencher asking the question. With those few words, I conclude. As I said, the opposition will not be opposing this program.

Mr BROOKS (Bundoora) — It is a pleasure to join the debate on this important business program. It is a very good business program that follows on from last week's program, which demonstrated the way in which this government is able to manage the business of this house and get legislation through the house in a very stable and orderly way.

Under the new sessional orders, with the earlier start of the sitting day, we have already seen today the house able to get through some important business. The first item of business today was the swearing in of the member for Richmond, and it was great — I think all members would agree — to see him back here in full health and sworn in. There was then a very important condolence motion. All of that occurred well before what would have been the start in a usual sitting week previously. We were therefore able to get underway earlier and get work done, and we had some great contributions today from both sides of the house on the condolence motion for the late Evan Walker. I think they caused members here to reflect on the importance of making a lasting contribution to the state. It was a great and inspirational debate to listen to.

Under this business program that has been put forward by the government there are of course four important pieces of legislation. The Cemeteries and Crematoria Amendment (Veterans Reform) Bill 2015 is an important bill aimed at protecting the ashes of veterans. There is also the Interpretation of Legislation Amendment Bill 2015.

The Parliamentary Committees and Inquiries Acts Amendment Bill 2015 is an important piece of legislation. Committee work is some of the most valuable work, and probably the most underrated work, that members of Parliament perform across both sides of the house. Parliamentary committee work provides an opportunity for members to work together, often without the partisan nature of this place, to come up with answers to complex and difficult challenges for our society and to come back to this place with recommendations and potential solutions. Parliamentary committees do great work. How they are structured and operate in this Parliament is an important question, so it is important to debate the bill. I am sure it will be keenly debated across the chamber, which is a good thing.

Regarding the Summary Offences Amendment (Move-on Laws) Bill 2015, clearly there is an ideological difference between the ways in which we see these issues. No doubt we will have that debate this week, and this business program allows for that. This business program provides the ability to consider a range of issues, including legislation, and we have debated a great condolence motion today. This all fits within the new sessional orders, which seem to be working quite well.

As I think was picked up by the Leader of the House in her contribution, it is not up to the government to identify which bills the opposition wants to consider in detail. It is up to the opposition to nominate the bills it wants to take into a consideration-in-detail stage and seek that from the government. We will wait and see what the opposition wants to do.

I am also concerned that opposition members are so worried about their lunch break. Of all the challenges we face, what they raised was the time for lunch — whether we would have time to rush out and get a sandwich. As most members know, the normal operation of this place allows members to move in and out of the chamber during different parts of the day, and I am pretty sure that members opposite will be able to find the time to sneak out and grab a sandwich from the cafeteria or call out for a pizza, as the case may be, to satisfy their hunger and still be able to perform their duties in this house. Importantly the sessional orders

allow for members to leave this place after the adjournment debate, which commences at 7.00 p.m., and either spend a little more time with their families or, importantly, attend community or stakeholder engagements to ensure that they remain connected with the community.

The new sessional orders make good changes, which should have been made a long time ago. It is good that this government has introduced these changes and helped to modernise the Parliament. This is a good business program. It takes us forward, and I commend it to the house.

Mr HIBBINS (Pahran) — It appears on paper that this is a reasonable government business program. The Greens believe that the legislative guillotine that is the government business program should be used sparingly and certainly not when there are proposed amendments before this house, as there were last week. This week we do not have amendments that require to be considered in detail. We will be seeking further consideration of the changes to parliamentary committees, and I will be happy to circulate our reasoned amendment to that effect, but we do expect that when there are proposed amendments to legislation the government will make good on its promise to make a consideration-in-detail stage a standard feature for the passage of bills in the Legislative Assembly. If we do not believe that there is adequate time for this to occur, we will vote accordingly.

The Greens suggest that given the make-up of the upper house, it is in the best interests of the government's legislative program to have bills and amendments fully debated in this house.

Ms Allan interjected.

Mr HIBBINS — The Leader of the House has many opportunities to contribute in this house, and she certainly does take them, so I would ask — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms McLeish) — Order! The member will be afforded some quiet to allow him to be heard.

Mr HIBBINS — If we rush through them, we will simply see bills ending up back here after being amended in the other place, re-treading old ground. With that said, we will happily not oppose the government business program.

Motion agreed to.

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

Newmarket Phoenix Soccer Club

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) — I was delighted to recently attend the open day for the Newmarket Phoenix Soccer Club. The club is a new creation as the result of the merger of the Parkville Panthers Football Club, the Flemington Eagles Soccer Club, the North Lions Soccer Club and the Oromo All Stars. It will field numerous under-age teams as well as a couple of senior sides.

The open day event, which was held at Debneys Park and the Flemington Community Centre, was a huge success. It is worth pointing out that if the east–west link project had proceeded the Flemington Community Centre would have been demolished and open space around the oval would have been permanently lost. The day itself was terrific. There was a jumping castle for the kids as well as face painting, and it was clear to me that it truly was a terrific day for the representatives of the Flemington estate who attended.

I acknowledge the fact that Flemington Rotary members gave up their Sunday afternoon to run a sausage sizzle to raise valuable funds for the community. I also acknowledge the great role the Flemington branch of Bendigo Bank has played in getting behind and sponsoring Newmarket Phoenix. Sport, and soccer in particular, is incredibly important to this community, and it is wonderful to see so many local businesses and organisations, such as Rotary and Bendigo Bank, donating their time and money to support this worthwhile initiative. What also became apparent during the course of the day was that by working together we can improve the quality of life for those people who live on the estate. Staying active, living healthy lives and developing links and contacts that go beyond your family and your community are just so important, and I compliment the Newmarket Phoenix and wish it all the best in the upcoming season.

Lady April Hamer

Ms ASHER (Brighton) — I convey my condolences to the family of Lady April Hamer, who sadly passed away on Wednesday, 7 January. Lady April Hamer was the wife of Dick Hamer, who in my opinion was one of the outstanding Liberal Premiers of the state of Victoria. Dick passed away in 2004.

Those members of this house who have read Tim Colebatch's excellent biography of Sir Rupert Hamer will have seen references to Lady April, and I commend Tim Colebatch for writing a wonderful

obituary about Lady April. She was not a natural party person, and she found herself married to a long-term Premier. Mr Colebatch references her absolute fear of public speaking, but she nevertheless did it to conform with the role of what was expected, in those days anyway, of a Premier's wife.

She joined the Canterbury women's section, and she was a particularly supportive spouse to Sir Rupert Hamer. She was well known for her passion for preserving the environment and Melbourne's green wedge parkland areas. Like her husband, she was not afraid to make controversial statements on matters about which she felt very strongly.

I pass on my condolences to Christopher, Julia, Sarah, Alastair and their families. Both the Hamers made outstanding contributions in their very different ways to the state of Victoria. Lady April will be sadly missed.

Greater Dandenong State Emergency Service unit

Ms WILLIAMS (Dandenong) — I would like to congratulate the Greater Dandenong State Emergency Service (SES) for the tremendous and unrelenting work it undertakes across my electorate of Dandenong. I had the pleasure of visiting the premises of my local SES in Mills Road, Dandenong, last week, where I met with the unit controller, Paul Daniel, and members of his tight-knit team of volunteers. With a growing base of 35 volunteers and a committed and active core, the unit is made up of a unique group of men and women with diverse skills and backgrounds who perform an invaluable function as part of the SES network across Victoria.

In times of flood and storm these are the first responders — the people we call and rely on for help, often in times of desperate need. Outside of responding to emergency calls these volunteers are involved at a number of different levels across the community. Through education and awareness programs, continued fundraising and community engagement the unit ensures that the SES can continue to function at its optimum.

Being amongst this group of committed people brought home to me the great spirit of volunteerism that exists across Victoria. As Parliamentary Secretary for Carers and Volunteers I am honoured to represent and advocate on behalf of Victorians like those at the Greater Dandenong SES unit. The Greater Dandenong SES unit is a credit to my electorate and a credit to Victoria. Long may its great work continue to serve us in times of emergency.

Alan Stuart

Mr T. BULL (Gippsland East) — I wish to put on public record the outstanding efforts of a great Australian from my electorate of Gippsland East, Mr Alan Stuart. Alan was recently awarded an Order of Australia medal and was named East Gippsland Shire Council's Citizen of the Year and Lindenow Citizen of the Year at the East Gippsland Australia Day celebrations.

Alan has been an active member of the Mount Taylor Country Fire Authority brigade, near Bairnsdale, for almost 60 years. Joining as a 15-year-old, he went on to serve as captain for over a decade. He was a founding member of the Bairnsdale racecourse committee of management, serving for 34 years, and was awarded a life membership of the polocrosse club. He also served on the Mount Taylor hall and campdraft club committees.

In more recent times Alan has dedicated countless hours to fire recovery efforts throughout Gippsland. In 2003 he coordinated a volunteer effort to clean up burnt fencing and sheds and then erect new fencing in the areas of the high country affected by bushfire. He organised 33 volunteers and their families into groups, working over 11 weekends on properties in Gelantipy, Black Mountain, Bindi, Benambra and Suggan Buggan. Following the Black Saturday fires in 2009 he coordinated another volunteer clean-up and fencing venture in Callignee, Currajung and Traralgon South for 35 weekends, spread over 18 months.

More Alan Stuart-coordinated volunteer clean-ups then occurred following fires in 2011 in Tostaree, and his latest efforts have concentrated on the Glenaladale, Buchan and Bonang-Tubbut communities. Alan is a very humble man and a great East Gippslander.

Kim Thien Troung

Ms HUTCHINS (Minister for Local Government) — I rise today to honour and congratulate an outstanding member of my local community, Kim Thien Troung, Brimbank City Council's Citizen of the Year for 2015.

In 1980 Kim Thien Troung came to Australia as a refugee. Kim's journey from Vietnam was incredibly arduous, as she battled to overcome hunger, sickness and storms on an overcrowded vessel before being confronted by pirates and shipwrecked on an island off Malaysia's coast. She eventually made her way to Australia, where she married and had three young children. Unfortunately she was widowed not long

afterwards. Kim tirelessly worked to support her elderly mother and her young family.

Despite her great hardships, which would force many of us to look inwards, she looked outwards and looked at a way of giving back to the community. In 2009 Kim established Kim's Foundation of Hope, which raises funding to transport, house and treat sick, disabled or orphaned Vietnamese children. To date this foundation has raised over \$330 000 and has saved numerous children's lives, both here and in Vietnam. I sincerely wish to congratulate Kim on being Brimbank's Citizen of the Year for 2015, an award truly earned through amazing acts of kindness. It is people like her who make me proud to live in the western suburbs of Melbourne.

Koroit & District Primary School

Dr NAPTHINE (South-West Coast) — I call on the government to follow through with the actions that had already been undertaken by the previous government to install solar-powered electronic flashing 40-kilometre-per-hour school zone speed limit signs on Commercial Road, Koroit, outside the Koroit & District Primary School. The installation of electronic flashing 40-kilometre-per-hour school zone speed limit signs will significantly improve safety for the schoolchildren, their families and the wider school community.

Koroit is a great township, built on the wonderful Irish history of growing potatoes, dairying and raising families, situated on the rich volcanic soil adjacent to the magnificent Tower Hill Wildlife Reserve and overlooking the Southern Ocean. Today Koroit is a vibrant, diverse and growing community of over 2000 people. The local primary school is located on the eastern side of the town, on the very busy Commercial Road, which is the main thoroughfare through the town for trucks, commercial traffic, tourists and locals. The school is also next door to the very large, active and growing Devondale Murray Goulburn milk processing plant, which means that hundreds of milk tankers travel past the school each and every week.

In August last year, year 6 student Samuel Sutcliffe collected 500 signatures on a petition requesting flashing 40-kilometre-per-hour school zone speed limit signs at Koroit primary school. The school supervisor, Susan Hand, said the current crossing was 'scary'. She said that they had a lot of visitors and a lot of trucks. I urge the government to get on with the job started by the previous government and install safer electronic flashing school zone speed limit signs at Koroit.

Wallan

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) — I rise to commend the Mitchell Shire Council on the work it is doing to make the township of Wallan a truly iconic country town which plans and looks to its future, values its history and looks to ensure that its local economy is improved and that there are jobs for the people who are moving to this community.

Wallan is situated just north of metropolitan Melbourne's northern suburbs and truly straddles city and country. The revitalisation of Wallan's town centre and the building of a rail trail from Seymour to Wandong are very important. The Andrews Labor government has committed \$1.5 million to support Mitchell shire's equal contribution to revitalise the Wallan town centre. The government has also supported planning funding for the rail trail down to Wandong.

Last week I had the privilege of meeting with the Wallan community liaison group, led by Rob Eldridge, and the Mitchell shire to discuss the group's long-term vision for Wallan and its surrounds. There are certainly opportunities to continue the trails from Wallan all the way to Melbourne, eventually connecting to the Merri Creek trail. This is an important project for the Mitchell shire and for Wallan. More and more people are taking up cycling for fun, and it is important that this growing community get the health and tourism benefits that these trails can bring.

Murray Basin rail project

Mr CRISP (Mildura) — Reliable and economic rail transport of produce and minerals from north-western Victoria has been a priority for some time. The coalition committed \$220 million towards this in the 2014 budget, and the project got underway in spring 2014 with the upgrade of the Hopetoun line. The next phase of stage 1 was the undertaking of pre-standardisation maintenance on the Mildura line.

A project as significant as this has many fathers, and I pay tribute to those who have walked this journey with us — the Rail Freight Alliance, the Mildura Rural City Council, the users, including Ken Wakefield of Wakefield Transport, GrainCorp and Iluka Resources, and of course my Nationals colleagues — for their support to find the funds to commit to this project. The community has also provided valuable support to this project. This is a project that is vital to my electorate and significant to Victoria. The time has come, and I urge the government to get on with the project.

Robinvale gas supply

Mr CRISP — Regional gas is another significant project in my electorate. The supply of natural gas to Robinvale has been well received. Supplying natural gas to smaller rural communities, particularly those on the Murray, has been a huge challenge, and it was the coalition government that came up with the plan to deliver this. The innovative engineering and supply contracts to do this have been let, and the community is very much looking forward to the contractors getting on with this project.

River safety

Mr CRISP — Finally, I thank Life Saving Victoria and the Mildura Life Saving Club for presenting their river awareness program to the 400 year 8 students in my region, giving them and those who care for them confidence in river safety.

Epping Cricket Club

Ms HALFPENNY (Thomastown) — On 8 February I had the great honour of attending the Epping Cricket Club's family fun day and past players celebration. This was a particularly special event, with the launch of the just-published Epping Cricket Club history and the celebration of 137 years of continuous active operation — an achievement that I am sure puts the Epping Cricket Club in a small but elite group of longstanding cricket clubs in Victoria. This achievement is a credit to the club's members, past and present, whose dedication and commitment to the club and its place in the community has ensured its longevity. It is a legacy to be proud of.

The past players celebration was the perfect opportunity to launch the Epping Cricket Club's history, written and researched by Geoff Rose, a member of the Epping Cricket Club, a past player and the son of one of the best cricketers to come from the area. We are lucky that Geoff's interest in family history became an interest in the Epping Cricket Club's history. The book includes commentary, photos and newspaper articles, and it is a fascinating and enjoyable read. It has stories of people, humour, fun and generosity, and it describes a club that raised money for charity, built facilities and advocated for the community. It is littered with funny stories about great characters from the cricketing community.

I thank the organisers and hosts, David Fitzpatrick, president, and Kerry Fitzpatrick, secretary; Geoff Rose; Mick Reid; and the many others who organised the day. Also it was a pleasant surprise to see Neil O'Keefe, former player and former federal Labor member for

Burke, and his wife, Rhonda. It was a great day filled with lots of laughs and great discussion on great ideas for the future.

Rotary Club of Prahran

Mr HIBBINS (Prahran) — On 5 February I attended a homelessness forum hosted by the Rotary Club of Prahran at the Prahran RSL. The panel members — Jo Swift, CEO of Kids Under Cover; Rob Ellis from the Salvation Army; Linda Bradley from the Sacred Heart Mission; Tracey Swadling from Prahran Mission; and Senior Sergeant Dagmar Andersen from Victoria Police — gave attendees a greater understanding of what constitutes homelessness; the causes of homelessness, such as family violence, mental illness and substance abuse; what we can do to reduce homelessness, such as early intervention and providing assistance for young people to enter the private rental market; and the importance of the continuation of the Council of Australian Governments national partnership agreement on homelessness.

I applaud Prahran Rotary for shining a light on the critical issue of homelessness and thank Susie Cole and Prahran Rotary president, Graeme Newton, for organising the event. I commend the panel members, their organisations and their colleagues for the work they do for our community.

Pound–Shrives roads, Hampton Park

Ms GRALEY (Narre Warren South) — Just last week I had the great pleasure of announcing that the Andrews Labor government has provided \$5.2 million to upgrade the notoriously dangerous and congested intersection of Pound and Shrives roads in Hampton Park. As part of the Safe System Road Infrastructure Program the intersection will be converted into a two-lane roundabout.

This was the culmination of years of hard work by so many within our local community. We were sick and tired of the ever-worsening congestion and constant accidents that plagued this intersection. Yet in four years did the previous conservative government take action? Did it heed the calls of local residents? Did it even lift a finger? No. It did absolutely nothing, despite the community's concerns and despite my efforts to get it to pay attention. I raised the matter in Parliament, I wrote to both the former Minister for Roads and Ports and the former Treasurer, and I collected signatures for several petitions that were all presented to this very chamber. We were ignored.

Throughout this time I regularly spoke to our then shadow Minister for Roads, and we both agreed that action must be taken. Within only 70 days of being sworn in we are starting work. We are getting on with the job of upgrading this intersection and making our roads safer.

Many people were involved in our campaign, including local resident Kylie Christmas, who spent years collecting countless signatures; Tony O'Hara and Warren Calder from the Hampton Park roads committee; Derek Gardner, another local resident and fierce advocate, who I believe has written to me more often than any other; Michele Halsall and Simon Difilippo, who were always fighting with me; and finally Vanessa Gerdes and Erica Maliki, tireless advocates for everything that is Hampton Park. Thank you to everyone who joined our campaign. We did it! It is a great illustration of how the Andrews Labor government is getting on with it.

Esther Park, Mooroolbark

Mrs FYFFE (Evelyn) — Prior to the 2014 election \$250 000 was committed by the former Napthine government in recognition of the need to modernise the Esther Park pavilion, home of the Mooroolbark 'Barkers' Soccer Club, to keep pace with rival soccer clubs. The Barkers have a rich history and a strong following, with five senior men's teams and two senior women's teams competing in both the Football Federation Victoria provisional and state leagues and the Bayside Football Association leagues.

It was with extreme disappointment that I was advised this week by the Minister for Sport that the Andrews government will not be providing the much-needed sport and recreational facilities funding for the Esther Park sports pavilion. This will negatively impact on community health and have adverse effects on youth engagement. It is clear that the Andrews government's concern for the people of Mooroolbark, especially young people and families, is only skin deep.

Many families are deeply involved in the club, with parents taking on roles such as training, fundraising and team management. What has made the minister's response even more disappointing is his lack of recognition of the work the club is doing in reaching out to our new citizens, such as the Chin community.

Gender equality

Mrs FYFFE — Sunday, 8 March, is International Women's Day. In a report by the Workplace Gender Equality Agency it was found that women in

management often get paid as much as 45 per cent less than their male peers. It is my fear that this will dampen the motivation of our potential female leaders. Even in the generously paid public service, women and men are not paid equally. In my role as a member and as Speaker of the Legislative Assembly I came across many wonderful women who ran rings around their male counterparts.

Islamic State

Ms KAIROUZ (Kororoit) — Members in this place would be aware of the recent barbaric murder of 21 Coptic Christians on a Libyan beach. While news reports describe these killings as executions, I will not use that term. That term implies some state sanction, and the cruel and brutal organisation that calls itself Islamic State, formerly known as ISIS, or the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, can never be a state. These deaths are further grave examples of the depths to which this inhumane and vicious band of criminals is capable of descending, following on from the many recent atrocities committed by them, allegedly in the name of Allah.

As much as I seek to avoid the most graphic coverage of these callous acts, I cannot help but conjure a mental image from the many press reports. I have been filled with horror and revulsion by thoughts of the terror which must have been faced by these poor young men, whose only crime was to be Christian. The shocking reality of these crimes is so sickening that it is hard to rationalise its occurrence in the 21st century. I have been most affected by images of relatives, their eyes filled with tears and faces expressing disbelief, racked with grief and pain. I cannot imagine their pain, their broken hearts and how they will manage to make any sense of this crime.

I am sure the sadness I feel is shared by all members in this place and that we will be united in our condemnation of an evil which has no limits. I know that free-thinking and peace-loving people of all nations and religions in the world, including Muslims, resist this vile beast with every fibre of their being. I am sure too that all our hearts go out to members of the Coptic church here in Australia and indeed around the world.

Mornington electorate intersections

Mr MORRIS (Mornington) — As the towns in my electorate have grown, so too have the pressures on local roads. In particular, the volume of cars on arterial roads has put pressure on many intersections of such roads with lower order roads. The Nepean Highway has a number of intersections that now require urgent

attention — in Mount Eliza at the intersections with Volitans Avenue and with Tower Road and in Mount Martha at the intersections with Uralla Road and with Forest Drive.

The intersection at Forest Drive has been the subject of discussion with VicRoads, and a number of actions have occurred over the past 12 months, in part as a result of varied traffic patterns following the opening of Peninsula Link. Many more vehicles now turn right from Forest Drive to head south from that intersection and to access the northbound lanes of the Mornington Peninsula Freeway. This was originally a section of highway with a 100-kilometre-an-hour speed limit, but it was reduced to 80 kilometres an hour after discussions between me and the then regional manager of VicRoads.

The former Minister for Roads took a keen interest in the process and further developments were under discussion, but unfortunately the state election intervened. Throughout this process VicRoads has been most helpful, but the reality is that a major and expensive improvement is required at this intersection. The government needs to find the funds and find them urgently. In December 2014 I gave a notice of motion raising this matter. That motion remains on the notice paper undebated. The Minister for Roads seems to be having trouble finding shovel-ready projects; perhaps he could move this one to the top of the list before another fatality occurs.

Aspendale Primary School

Mr RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) — I recently had the opportunity to attend the Aspendale Primary School student leadership ceremony, which was a wonderful event. I pay tribute to Tom and Lauren, the student leaders. In my conversation with Karen, Tom's mum, and his grandmother, Evie, they expressed utter pride and happiness. I congratulate Tom and Lauren. Aspendale Primary School has a unique leadership program where it puts forward all students as leaders, whether it be in environmental roles, a role in the community with local council or a local government role. This is a wonderful opportunity to build resilience in our community and teach students accountability. It was great to pay tribute to all those students.

Parktone Primary School

Mr RICHARDSON — I would like to reflect on my visit to Parktone Primary School in Parkdale and pay tribute to principal George Danson and the students and teachers. Not long ago this school was on its knees, with just 120 students. The student population is now

500 strong. It is thriving. It has a wonderful program based on Stephen Covey's book *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, customised to teach students how to perform in leadership roles. I pay tribute to George Danson and his team. I look forward to working with the school into the future to help meet its growing needs.

Ben Currie

Mr NORTHE (Morwell) — I recently attended a fundraising event for local lad Ben Currie, who at age 19 is currently racing in the British Superbikes Pirelli National Superstock 600 Championship. Ben's next goal is to race in the 2015 Superbike World Championship, and our local community is getting right behind Ben in his future racing endeavours.

Reverend Sathia Anthony

Mr NORTHE — Last week I had the pleasure of attending the Anglican Diocese of Gippsland induction ceremony for Reverend Sathia Anthony. I wish to pass on my best wishes and a big welcome to Sathia and his wife, Sandra, and we look forward to his ministry in the Moe, Newborough and Yallourn North areas.

Boolarra Folk Festival

Mr NORTHE — This weekend the 13th Boolarra Folk Festival takes place, with a day and evening of free entertainment on offer. In addition to the quality entertainment there will be a wide array of stalls, arts and crafts and food available for the many hundreds of visitors who are expected to attend. I congratulate Ray Stewart and his committee, which does such a marvellous job of hosting this terrific local event.

Latrobe community fun run and walk

Mr NORTHE — On Sunday the DFP Recruitment Latrobe City Community Fun Run and Walk will take place, with funds raised to be donated to Gippsland Rotary Centenary House. I am sure the day will be a great success. I congratulate the Traralgon Harriers, in particular president Will Hanrahan and his committee, for its amazing effort in coordinating this event.

Morwell multicultural celebrations

Mr NORTHE — On Sunday Soula Kanellopoulos and her band of volunteers will host International Women's Group Harmony Day and multicultural celebrations in Morwell. This is always a wonderful day to celebrate the diversity of our local community, with plenty of entertainment complemented by good food and fellowship. Well done to Soula and her team.

Essendon Maribyrnong Park Ladies Cricket Club

Mr CARROLL (Niddrie) — I rise to acknowledge an important pillar of my community, the Essendon Maribyrnong Park Ladies Cricket Club — the oldest continuing women's cricket club in the world. It formed as the Essendon Ladies Cricket Club in 1905 and merged with the Maribyrnong Park Women's Cricket Club in 1981. The Essendon Maribyrnong Park Ladies Cricket Club had a fantastic result this year, beating Box Hill in the Twenty20 final. I would specifically like to congratulate Molly Strano on being player of the match, having made 44 runs from 46 balls. The team's coach is former Australian captain Karen Rolton, who holds the test batting world record of 209 not out with an average of 60.68.

The club has a proud history and has fielded eight Australian players, including captains Raelee Thompson and Margaret Jennings, as well as current Australian squad spin bowler Kristen Beams. The club has also produced numerous junior and senior Victorian players — too many to mention here today. Well done to all club members on a successful season and best wishes for the season to come.

Moonee Valley Festival

Mr CARROLL — Last Sunday, 22 February, I joined the thousands of people who once again converged on Queens Park, Moonee Ponds, to enjoy the 38th annual Moonee Valley Festival, Moonee Valley's largest free community celebration. A fun summer day full of excitement was had by all, with market and food stalls, roaming performers, entertainment stages, business expo sites and community activities and displays showing what is happening in the city. It was a pleasure to attend the champagne breakfast prior to the festival commencing.

This event is a fantastic example of community spirit, with individuals and families, young and old, from all walks of life taking part. I congratulate everyone involved in the 2015 Moonee Valley Festival, especially the City of Moonee Valley, the staff, the volunteers, the generous sponsors and of course the vibrant local community.

Shannan Griffiths

Mr GIDLEY (Mount Waverley) — I rise in the Parliament to congratulate Shannan Griffiths from Huntingtower School on being awarded a Premier's Spirit of Anzac Prize for 2014–15. Shannan was one of just 12 students selected from across the state for her

moving essay on the spirit of Anzac. It was a pleasure to join Shannan and her family at Parliament House and to see her receive the award, and I wish her well for her visit to World War I battlefields later this year.

Shashira Wijesuriya

Mr GIDLEY — Today in the Parliament I congratulate Shashira Wijesuriya from Glen Waverley Secondary College on being awarded a Premier's Spirit of Anzac Prize for 2014–15. Shashira was one of just 12 students selected from across the state for her exceptional essay on the spirit of Anzac. It was a pleasure to join Shashira and her family at Parliament House as she received the award, and I wish her well for her visit to the World War I battlefields later this year.

Essex Heights Primary School

Mr GIDLEY — I take this opportunity in the Parliament to acknowledge and congratulate the 2015 school leaders of Essex Heights Primary School and wish them well in their leadership positions, particularly school captains Andre Aiuto, Mitha Mallichetty, Petro Pirozek and Tiffany Xia; music captains Victoria Yu, Zoe Guymmer and Jeremy Lau; library captains Inga Griffiths-Hunt, Kailly Shi, Callum Gribbin and Ashika Ranasinghe; art captains Kristen Molloy, Sapir Triffon, Lynne Zhang and Anna Lin; sustainability captains Hugh Chen, Cindy Li, Hayeon Choi and Sho Takayanagi; Indonesian captains Jane Kim and Aaliyah Mohammad Akshir; and sports captains Sienna Spencer, Tom Prior, Lauren Taylor, Victoria Porfyrus, Leo Yu, Ashley Chung, Megan Cornell and Kye Bongiorno. I also wish the principal, Mr Crossett, staff and school council well for the school year ahead.

Tet festival

Mr DONNELLAN (Minister for Roads and Road Safety) — Last Saturday I was a guest at the Vietnamese Community in Australia's Tet festival at Sandown. Well done to Bong Nguyen and the volunteers on a wonderful event. The festival was very well attended. The Premier was welcomed by the community, as were the federal Leader of the Opposition; the federal member for Gellibrand, Tim Watts; Nam Quach, mayor of the City of Maribyrnong; Sean O'Reilly, mayor of the City of Dandenong; Bishop Vincent Long Van Nguyen, the first Vietnamese-Australian bishop in Australia; Professor Tien Kieu from VNTV; Cr Loi Van Tung, whose daughter was the master of ceremonies; and Kim Thien Truong, Citizen of the Year for the City of Brimbank, who was mentioned in an earlier members

statement. She has done a marvellous job of helping children from Vietnam with severe medical needs.

The festival was a marvellous celebration of academic achievement, not only of those involved in the Tet festival but of young Vietnamese. Above all, it celebrated the bravery of those in the Vietnamese community who left their country by hopping on a boat and coming to Australia 40 years ago. What a contribution they have made to this country.

Roads

Mr DONNELLAN — I also want to mention a recent announcement in my local area, in the city of Casey, in relation to the intersection of Pound and Shrives roads, Narre Warren South, which was very dangerous, but the Andrews government is getting on with the job and providing immediate funding to fix that corner by putting in a roundabout. I also mention that the government is bringing forward works on the \$175 million project at Thompsons Road, Cranbourne, and getting on with the job.

Diamond Valley Special Developmental School

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) — I rise to commend Diamond Valley Special Developmental School, which the member for Eltham and I had the privilege of visiting last week. The school has been a longstanding innovator in the provision of schooling for kids with special needs. I am really proud of the leadership of principal Brendan White and assistant principal Pennie Moffatt, who have been involved in longstanding curriculum development to ensure that mainstream educators get a better understanding of what the curriculum needs are and how children with disabilities can be fully integrated into our education system, which I know this government and the Minister for Education, who is in the house at the moment, are very passionate about.

Those involved in the school will leave a longstanding legacy, particularly Brendan White, who has been principal for 12 years. In that time he has established a number of base rooms at other schools in the district including Apollo Parkways, Montmorency and Briar Hill primary schools and Greensborough College. It was a privilege to sit down with Brendan last week and look at the future requirements of kids with special needs who live in the growth corridors so that they do not have to travel too much.

The school particularly wants to set up a base room in Whittlesea, and I look forward to working with the Diamond Valley Special Developmental School towards a Whittlesea base room.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Proclamations

Ms HENNESSY (Minister for Health) — I move:

That this house authorises and requires the Clerk to table copies of proclamations of the Governor in Council fixing dates for the coming into operation of acts, as published in the *Government Gazette* from time to time.

Motion agreed to.

UPPER YARRA VALLEY AND DANDENONG RANGES REGIONAL STRATEGY PLAN

Mr WYNNE (Minister for Planning) — I move:

That under section 46D(1)(c) of the Planning and Environment Act 1987, amendment no. 121 to the *Upper Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges Regional Strategy Plan* be approved.

Mr WYNNE (Minister for Planning) — As we know, all planning scheme amendments sit before the houses for a period of 10 days. This planning scheme amendment was introduced by the previous government, and although the Parliament was prorogued the rule about the 10 sitting days still applies. Today is the last day for this matter to be dealt with by the Parliament in both houses, and my understanding is that this matter will also be addressed in the upper house as a matter of urgency so that this issue can be resolved. The amendment is required to enable the premises at 261 Mount Dandenong Tourist Road in Ferny Creek to be used and developed as a restaurant and caretaker's residence.

The shadow Minister for Planning is at the table — we have reversed roles. In relation to planning scheme amendments it is important that the process has been properly instituted, the local government authority and the community have been consulted and, where possible, agreement has been forthcoming from the council before these matters are presented to the Parliament for further scrutiny and debate. I am pleased to say that the proposal has been through a full public consultation process and considered by an independent panel, which has supported the amendment to the Yarra Valley planning scheme.

The proposal also has broad support from the community within that area. It would be fair to categorise this particular amendment as a relatively localised and quite minor amendment, but it is required to come before the house because the Planning and Environment Act 1987 requires approval of any

amendment to the strategy plan to be ratified by both houses. It is a very straightforward matter. It is a matter that was introduced by the previous minister, it does have the support of the local council and it has been through an independent panel process. I commend it to the house.

Mr CLARK (Box Hill) — The opposition supports this motion. As the minister indicated, it was a process that was put in train under the previous government, and the explanatory report prepared in relation to it indicates, as the minister said, that it applies to the premises at 261 Mount Dandenong Tourist Road, Ferny Creek. My understanding is that the premises are a restaurant together with a caretaker's house. It has been operating for some years, but it has come to light that there is a planning anomaly, as it were, which raises some issues as to whether all legislative and procedural requirements in relation to planning permits and other matters have been met, and this amendment is intended to resolve that. It is an amendment to the *Upper Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges Regional Strategy Plan* under section 20(4) of the Planning and Environment Act 1987 to allow an amendment to be made for the site.

In essence this is an amendment that will allow a small business in the area that has been operating successfully without any difficulties for some time to continue to operate. As the minister indicated, it is important that the appropriate process be followed, and as the house would expect, under the previous minister the proper process was followed, and this motion before the house is the result. The opposition is pleased to support the motion so that this matter can be resolved and this small business can focus on delivering services and adding value to the Victorian economy.

Motion agreed to.

GOVERNOR'S SPEECH

Address-in-reply

Debate resumed from 12 February; motion of Mr RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) for adoption of address-in-reply.

Mr MORRIS (Mornington) — I am pleased to rise to respond to the address from the Governor. His Excellency laid out the program of this government in the Legislative Council chamber on 23 December last year. I was not present to hear that speech; indeed I am glad I did not waste my time, because quite frankly the address was entirely substance free. In saying that, I certainly do not intend to reflect on the Governor. This

is a speech written by the government, not by the Governor. Had it been his own speech, I have no doubt it would have been a speech of substance, but sadly it was not. I note that this new Labor government was so lacking in confidence in its product that the document was never printed. Instead we received advice from the Clerk that an electronic copy was available. That certainly makes it so much simpler. There are no pesky hard copies hanging around — just hit the delete button, and it is gone. The ephemeral physical form of the address was entirely appropriate given that this is a lightweight agenda from a lightweight government.

This speech provides no long-term vision for the state. It totally ignores the pressures of population growth and it totally ignores the need to invest in job-creating infrastructure. It clearly says that the Premier has forgotten his words of 2011 that Labor simply 'couldn't keep up'. With this plan the state will certainly not keep up; it will simply sink further and further behind. It demonstrates a complete lack of vision and a complete lack of a coherent plan, but perhaps that is unsurprising, because Labor owes this win neither to its political skills nor to any capacity to capture the imagination of the Victorian community. Labor has absolutely no imagination at all.

Mr Foley interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Ryall) — Order! The member for Albert Park will desist.

Mr MORRIS — I will have more to say about that to the member in a minute. The election was simply a triumph of narrow self-interest over public benefit — the narrow self-interest of Labor seeking to grasp and wield political power — and nothing more than that. The election was a triumph of the narrow self-interest of Labor and its mates, the public sector unions, and of course those unions are now desperate to claim their reward for getting Labor into office.

In the space of a few short weeks we have already seen the government roll over to the Ambulance Employees Australia of Victoria. We have seen the United Firefighters Union of Australia knocking on the door with its hands firmly held out. We have seen the Health Services Union run its colours up the mast — a 20 per cent increase if you do not mind! The support of the union movement for this government did not come cheap, and the Victorian taxpayer is about to find out just how large Labor's debt to them has become.

This was a campaign built on Labor lies. If there was ever any doubt about this, it was clearly confirmed on election day. We had bogus firefighters in bogus

uniforms, we had hospital beds outside the polling booths, we had unionists from Trades Hall and from electorate offices around the state masquerading as emergency services workers, or worse, as concerned independent individuals. Those of us who were on the ground could smell a rat if one was around, and there were plenty of rats around on 29 November.

Mr Foley interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Ryall) — Order! The member for Albert Park! If I call for order, then as the Acting Speaker I expect respect.

Mr MORRIS — There were plenty of rats on the ground on 29 November, and if members of the general public or indeed the house had any doubt, all they had to do was read the *Age* of 12 December.

Mr Foley interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Ryall) — Order! The member for Albert Park knows how to raise a point of order, and so I would expect him to raise a point of order instead of yelling from the sidelines when he has been called to order on many occasions. I ask him to desist.

Mr Foley — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I ask the member whether he believes his calling working people 'rats' is a parliamentary term.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Ryall) — Order! What is the point of order?

An honourable member interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Ryall) — Order! It is not a point of order.

Mr MORRIS — I would have thought the member for Albert Park, or indeed the Minister for Housing, has been in the house long enough to understand that a point of order is not taken in order to ask a question. But as we saw in Shane Green's feature on Luke Hilakari, the fingerprints of Trades Hall are all over this election victory. That is more than we can say for a number of the members opposite, because they were conspicuous by their absence from their own campaigns. That tactic certainly raised a few eyebrows in the community. But having seen their performance in the opening weeks of this Parliament, I am no longer surprised. They will soon learn that as sitting MPs they cannot be so self-effacing, particularly if they want to be re-elected. They will be trying to defend the antics of Dodgy Dan and his mad gang. They will be trying to defend —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Ryall) — Order! The member for Mornington will refer to members in this house by their correct title.

Mr MORRIS — Certainly, Acting Speaker. But they will find themselves in the firing line. They will not be able to hide behind the union movement.

I believe the Napthine government was a very good government. Certainly the first rule of any administration should be to leave the state in a better place than it found it in, and that is what the Napthine government did.

I have some matters that I would have liked to canvass about activities in the local government sphere. Unfortunately the number of interjections and points of order will not make that possible. But I will say very briefly that I was very proud of the work undertaken by the Ministerial Advisory Council on Public Libraries. I had the privilege of chairing that committee. We produced a landmark review of public libraries and concluded that a new model of service provision was necessary — a collaborative model that recognises the reality of the 21st century when it comes to libraries. I particularly want to recognise the valuable work that was undertaken on that committee by my deputy, Joanne Duncan, the former member for Macedon. We produced a truly bipartisan report. I look forward to its implementation.

There are also issues around cost shifting, which the former government not only slowed down but actually reversed, increasing substantially the amount of money going to local government from the state government — by 35 per cent over the four years. However, I am particularly interested in the proposal to cap rates in line with CPI, and I will certainly be watching that initiative closely. Yes, local government rate increases have been excessive, and they have been excessive over an extended period. The rate of increase declined substantially over the last four years, but it is still too high. It declined because in the 57th Parliament the government worked with local government. What Labor apparently fails to understand is that the rate of increase above CPI is driven mostly by labour costs — nothing more, nothing less. Hopefully the Minister for Local Government, given that she is also the Minister for Industrial Relations, will quickly come to terms with that fact.

If rates are capped and labour costs increase, then councils will be left with only two options. They can sack staff or they can cut back on capital works. I do not think the Community and Public Sector Union and associated unions will allow staff numbers to be cut. I

cannot see that happening. That means there is only one inevitable outcome from this rate capping, and that is that spending on capital works will plummet, the infrastructure gap will widen and once again the next generation will be called upon to pay for another Labor folly.

Yes, we need to fix the problem of rate increases, but we need a much more nuanced approach than we have seen coming out of this government. Councils need to have the capacity to provide the services and facilities required in the municipal districts. We now have a new coalition government — a coalition of Trades Hall, the Greens and the parliamentary Labor Party. Anyone who witnessed the vitriol directed from the government benches towards the members for Prahran and Melbourne in the last sitting week would think that the Labor Party and the Greens were sworn enemies. Indeed I heard the word 'quisling' emanate from a person who most needed the support of the Greens to get back into this house.

The suggestion that the two groups are sworn enemies, or at least that the Greens are an anathema to the Australian Labor Party, is clearly a tale of fiction. If we look at the evidence from the polling place, we can see that lie is exposed. This was no sweeping Labor victory; Labor simply fell over the line with a few seats. If it was a victory, it was a victory that was based on lies — the TAFE lie, the education lie, the health lie and, perhaps worst of all, the east-west link lie — lies that we have heard time and again. As we heard from the member for Warrandyte, lies and intimidation were hallmarks of the Labor campaign. In the end, what did it achieve? Certainly it achieved government. We cannot argue with that. But it did not achieve widespread support in the Victorian community. Labor has no sweeping mandate from this election victory.

Overall, Labor received 38.1 per cent of the vote, well behind the Liberal-National coalition vote of 41.99 per cent. In nine seats the Liberal candidate received a greater number of votes than the final ALP victor. In the case of nine Labor members, their personal support was less than 40 per cent, including three ministers and the Deputy Premier. Fewer than 4 in 10 voters supported the Deputy Premier, so how can he claim to have the support of this state?

And it gets worse. Three government members were elected with the support of less than 35 per cent of the vote. The Minister for Housing took the prize for the lowest personal vote of 32.33 per cent, more than 9 per cent behind his Liberal opponent, but he is back! The Minister for Consumer Affairs, while finishing behind the Greens on primary votes, got up on the back of

Liberal preferences. The member for Frankston, with just under 35 per cent, benefited greatly from the support of the former member, Mr Shaw. The Minister for Planning — not unusually — survived a very tight tussle.

This is not a government with wide public support. It is a government which took a seat-by-seat, populist approach. It had only one goal: to garner enough seats to form government — no more, no less. Absolutely no commitment was given without an expectation of gaining seats — and some commitments were given regardless of the damage their implementation could do to the state. It was cynical, manipulative politics at its absolute worst.

As others have remarked in this debate, it is indeed a privilege to sit in this place. For me, it is a privilege to represent the beautiful Mornington Peninsula — indeed, since the redivision, a much larger slice of the Peninsula. The contrast between the 56th Parliament and the 57th Parliament could not have been greater. There is a long list of investments made in my electorate in the 57th Parliament, and almost none in the 56th. None of us would have the opportunity to sit on these benches without the help of our political supporters, our friends and our family. The Mornington electorate is exceedingly well served by a good group of people, including Greg Dixon, Alex Screen, Terry Leech, Reagan Barry and Peter Angelico. I thank them all for their input into this most recent campaign. I also wish to thank my electorate staff, including Robbie Phillips, who has now retired, and particularly my office manager, Raeleigh Speedie. She is absolutely critical in ensuring the smooth running of the well-oiled machine that is the Mornington electorate office.

Finally, and most importantly, I wish to thank my strongest supporter, my wife, Linda. Without her energy, enthusiasm and consistent hard work, it would be so much harder to undertake the job that I do and to do it in an effective manner, if at all. To Linda, I say: 'Thank you, Darling, for all your help and support over what is now quite a long period'.

In conclusion, I wish to congratulate both the member for Tarneit, the Speaker, and the member for Melton, the Deputy Speaker, on their election to high office. I believe both are men of integrity, and while I am sure we will have a divergence of opinion from time to time, I know both will serve the Parliament exceptionally well. While I certainly do not in any way endorse the content of the Governor's speech, I do commend the motion to the house.

Debate interrupted.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER — Order! Before calling the member for Geelong, I wish to acknowledge in the gallery the former member for Geelong, Ian Trezise, and the former member for Yuroke, Liz Beattie.

GOVERNOR'S SPEECH

Address-in-reply

Debate resumed.

Ms COUZENS (Geelong) — Thank you and congratulations, Speaker, on your appointment. I was impressed by your story about your journey to this place. I also wish to congratulate the Deputy Speaker.

I acknowledge the original custodians of the land on which we meet and pay my respects to their ancestors past, present and future. I also acknowledge the Wathawurung people, the traditional custodians of the land within the Geelong electorate.

I am so proud and honoured to have been elected by the people of Geelong and feel privileged to represent my community and the Australian Labor Party. I thank the people of Geelong for putting their confidence in me to represent them in this place. Geelong has a proud working-class history, and it is well known for its union strength. There is a great history of workers taking on many struggles, some of which were won, some lost. Fanny Brownbill, a past member for Geelong, was the first woman to hold a seat for Labor in the Victorian Parliament. From 1938 to 1948 she represented the people of Geelong and had a particular interest in the welfare of women, children and the aged. I had the pleasure of meeting her son, who told me many great stories about his mother. There are two stories that I will always remember. One is that she sat in the Parliament knitting warm clothing for the poor children in the winter months, and the second is that she cooked a roast lunch for the poor every Sunday in Geelong. Fanny Brownbill's stories and achievements should be celebrated.

Born in Geelong, I grew up in Corio with my parents, Doug and Liz; my brothers, David and George; and my sisters, Lyn, Jenny and Beth. I went to Corio Primary School and then on to Corio Technical School. Proudly growing up in Corio, I saw and felt the impacts on life of being a low-income family. As kids we did not have much materially, but we were blessed with loving and supportive parents. I entered the workforce at 15 in a local cake factory. Having had instilled in me at an early age the values of social justice and supporting

others in need, I decided that working in a cake factory would only be a temporary job. As with many great plans, life events dictate our future, and I remained at the cake factory until I met and married Allan Couzens.

The Couzens family moved to Geelong in the late 1960s from Framlingham, near Warrnambool. The Framlingham mission was established in 1861 by the Anglican Church. The family made the decision to move to Geelong because there was still a fear that Aboriginal children may be removed from their families. They moved to Corio, where they settled with their seven children. Allan's father, Uncle Stan Couzens, was a Victorian Indigenous artist. Uncle Stan's works were included in the 'Couzens Family Exhibition: I come from ...' at the Melbourne Museum in 2008. Sadly, Allan never got to see his father recognised for his artwork. Whilst playing football for Corio in a preliminary final at Bannockburn, just outside Geelong, he collapsed during the game. I travelled in a car behind him, with the ambulance sirens and lights going, on the way to Geelong Hospital. About halfway there the siren and lights were turned off, and I knew then he was gone.

We had three very young children, Leah, Andrew and Mark. The shock and grief that reverberated throughout both our families was something I would not want to see anyone experience. The days following were a painful blur. The kids and I were staying at my parents' home in Corio. My father took a phone call, then he came into me and said, 'Nipper Trezise, the member of Parliament for Geelong North, just called, and he wants to know if he can help or if you need anything'. My initial reaction was to wonder why a member of Parliament was calling me. Later I realised that he was calling me because he cared about the people in his electorate, and although I cannot say this was the catalyst for my interest in politics it was certainly the start of my interest in my community, and it gave me a sense of how important it is for people to know that someone cares.

I learnt how your life as you know it can change within seconds. The support from my close friends, Cathy Walker, my family, the Corio football club and the Geelong community was fantastic — something I will never forget.

I strongly believe we are all defined by our past and our actions, and I know that I am a person who has committed my life to making our community a fairer place for all — that is, a community where everyone, no matter their circumstances in life, is given a real opportunity to succeed and, when needed, a helping hand.

A few years later I had the pleasure of working on a number of community issues in Corio and Norlane with Nipper Trezise, under the Cain government. Nipper was a great member of Parliament and a great role model.

I met my partner, Paul, who took on Leah, Andrew and Mark as their father. Later we had another son, PJ. My partner, Paul, has been a great father to all four children and a great support to me. His encouragement has enabled me to get where I am today.

I quickly established a career in my chosen field of community development and started working in the areas of housing, disadvantage and homeless youth. After a few years working in the community sector the move was on for community sector workers to have qualifications. I came to appreciate the importance of an education. I decided it was time to get some qualifications and completed a bachelor of arts in social science whilst still working full-time.

Throughout my life I have seen the importance of government providing quality services to our community. I have always actively done things about issues of concern to me and have not just sat back. This is why I joined the Australian Labor Party. I have held various roles within the ALP, including secretary of the Geelong West branch.

During the Kennett government years the housing service I worked for lost its funding, and I took up a position in consumer law until I was employed by the then state member for Geelong, Ian Trezise, in 1999, when he won the seat of Geelong by 16 votes. I have been privileged to work for Ian Trezise for 15 years, alongside electorate officer, Justin Mills, and Jeannette Johanson. Together we have seen births, deaths and marriages and worked hard for the Geelong electorate. Ian was one of the most admired and respected members of Parliament I know. He worked hard for every one of his constituents who needed help and advocated for and on behalf of the Geelong electorate. Ian always took the time to listen to constituents and local groups about the issues that mattered to them. Whether he could solve their problem or not, they held a great deal of respect for him because he took the time to listen.

Ian strongly advocated for education, health and jobs in our electorate, and of course supported his union comrades throughout his 15 years of service to the people of Geelong. Ian has been my greatest mentor. I want to thank Ian, my dear friend, for all he has done on my campaign and for me and my family. I miss seeing

him every day, but I also know he is with us all the way.

I also volunteer my time with the Barwon South West Redisupport Team which sets up relief centres in times of emergency, such as bushfires and floods. In January I worked with the Ararat team of volunteers at their relief centre during the bushfire crisis. They were doing an amazing job but needed a break. I was pleased to hear in conversation that they had just heard the Premier on the radio and how impressed they were that he had thanked the volunteers in relief centres across Victoria.

It is with real sadness that I leave the Geelong Trades Hall Council executive and delegates, and of course the Women Unionists Network, in an official capacity after more than 20 years. My time at Geelong Trades Hall has been a great learning experience and an opportunity to support workers in Geelong. I want to thank them all.

I particularly want to thank comrade secretary Tim Gooden for his support. Over the years we have worked closely together in my role as president and vice-president. Together we took on many campaigns and struggles, and I truly valued Tim's hard work on behalf of unions and their members.

Just as importantly I want to thank Anne Morrison, the office manager of Geelong Trades Hall. I have worked closely with Anne on many trade union matters, in particular the Women Unionists Network. I have valued Anne's friendship for many years and have greatly appreciated her unquestioned support. We have supported each other during difficult times. Anne's husband, Bill, was also a great support to me, and it is important to me that I acknowledge that support because Bill passed away a few years ago. I know he would be so chuffed that I am now here in this place.

I also want to acknowledge the passing of Mel Dwyer in December 2014. Mel was the local organiser for the Australian Nursing & Midwifery Federation. Mel and I had a cheeky relationship, and I was shattered at his sudden death.

I thank EMILY's List and of course my mentor, Helen Creed. I also want to thank Kosmos and Kareem at the ALP state office, who provided great assistance during my campaign, even though they did not have to.

I want to sincerely thank my campaign team and members of the Geelong West branch and the Belmont branch of the ALP for their hard work and commitment. These dedicated volunteers ran a great campaign with very little resources. Headed up by campaign manager Michael Tate, our campaign was

focused on talking to the community about the issues most affecting them. I want to thank Michael for his tireless work and energy to ensure the campaign met its objectives. Michael was extraordinary as campaign manager and I cannot thank him enough. I also want to thank Justin Mills, who has supported me for the past 15 years and provided valuable assistance to me during the campaign, and Jeannette Johanson, a great friend who was also a significant volunteer during the election and provided assistance whenever I needed it — even though neither of them had to do so.

I want to thank my campaign team for their tireless work — there are hundreds of names and I do not have time to name them all — but also the ALP members and supporters who worked hard on election day and throughout the campaign. I know I will have forgotten someone out of all the great people who helped me over a long campaign — my apologies. I thank you all.

I also want to acknowledge my dear friends Phil and Noelene Flaherty. They have worked on every Labor campaign in Geelong for the past 50 years. Due to Phil's ill health they missed this one and cannot be here today.

I thank my family for their great effort on election day: my sister, Beth Macpherson, and her husband, Macca; my brother, George O'Dwyer, and his partner, Amanda Pugh; my children, my daughter, Leah, and her partner, Garry, and my grandchildren, Acacia, Djilyan, Eli and Rhanni; my son, Andrew, and his partner, Shannon, and my grandchildren, Jayde, Aarion and Kodah; my son, Mark, and his wife, Lisa, and my grandchildren, Sarah, Matilda, Jude and Rue; and my son, PJ, and his partner, Vicki, and my grandchildren, Pauly, Isla and Ava.

I acknowledge the hard work that was done in the South Barwon campaign and the candidate, Andy Richards. Andy was not successful, but we thank him for his hard work for the ALP and we all wish him well. I want to thank Richard Marles, the federal member for Corio, and his partner, Rachel Schutze, for their amazing support and assistance throughout my campaign. I am grateful for their support and have appreciated the time and effort they gave to me personally and to the campaign. I want to thank the member for Lara, John Eren, and Geraldine Eren for their support and assistance throughout my journey. They always made sure I was front and centre.

I also want to thank the member for Bellarine and a member for Western Victoria. I appreciated their support and guidance. I thank federal members Tanya Plibersek and Kate Ellis, and former Victorian premiers

John Cain, Jr, and Steve Bracks for their support during my campaign. I want to thank Marsha Thomson, the member for Footscray, and Janice Munt for their spit and polish. I also wish to thank our leader, now the Premier, for his support and his commitment to the people of Geelong.

Running a campaign on limited resources is a difficult task. We made it through thanks to the many individual donations from ALP members and supporters, and I thank them all very much. I want to acknowledge the support of a number of unions. Firstly, I want to thank Dallas Gill, the United Firefighters Union of Australia representative in Geelong, and his comrades for their support and assistance. We will now see our firefighters treated with respect and dealt with in a fair and reasonable environment. I wish to thank Jake and Glenn from the plumbers union; the Textile Clothing & Footwear Union of Australia; and the Australian Services Union Victorian and Tasmanian authorities and services branch — and a special thanks to Lisa Darmanin. I want to thank the Maritime Union of Australia, and Ray and Cindy from the postal workers.

I want to acknowledge the many local groups who have helped me in my journey here — in particular, Diversitat, the Women in Community Life Advisory Committee, the Geelong residents action groups, the Geelong Sustainability Group and the many sporting groups in Geelong.

As politicians we must provide opportunities, real opportunities that mean something to the lives of those we represent. It is our responsibility to give hope and to care about the health and wellbeing of our constituents. This is why I am so pleased that we will begin to address Geelong's unemployment rate. The urgency in Geelong to create jobs quickly was acknowledged and supported by our Labor leader and our election commitments focused on jobs and education. Labor's commitment to jobs in Geelong is unprecedented. We have also committed to rebuild Whittington Primary School and Geelong High School. I particularly want to mention the work being done by the principal, teachers and parents at Whittington Primary School.

Geelong is a great place in which to live, but I definitely do see that with the right priorities and vision for our city it can become an even greater place to call home. I believe that to be a politician you have to listen and you have to care about those who have no power, because it is our responsibility to represent all people, in particular those most vulnerable in our community.

I have not come from a privileged background but I am privileged to have had opportunities either offered or

that I have taken to be able to stand in this place today. I sit in this place and think, 'Who would have thought?'.

Mr McCURDY (Ovens Valley) — I am delighted to rise to deliver my address-in-reply. Before I begin, I congratulate you, Speaker, on your appointment. It is a terrific appointment for you and one that you must be very proud of.

Here begins the next phase of the journey of the MP. My first four years were in government; the next four will be in opposition. I take this opportunity to point out to the former member for Murray Valley, who would constantly remind me that he was the longest serving member for Murray Valley, that currently I am the longest serving member for Ovens Valley.

I am very proud of the achievements of the government during my first four years in this place. One that I want to touch on is the Numurkah hospital, which was a special achievement after it was wiped out by floods. But for the support of the then coalition government, including Wendy Lovell, a member for Northern Victoria Region in the other place, David Davis as the then Minister for Health and myself, the hospital would be nothing more than a parking lot now. It is really important that the Numurkah hospital is restored. We got \$18 million-plus for that hospital to go ahead. That is a great commitment to that community. People in other governments would have said, 'Shepparton is close enough for people to go to and you can just do without a hospital', so Numurkah was a terrific win.

It is certainly sad to have lost Numurkah, Katunga, Strathmerton, Rutherglen and Wahgunyah from the electorate, but before that we got a shiny new kindergarten at Rutherglen, which was well funded and supported.

I want to comment quickly about Wahgunyah. The coalition had made a commitment to redoing the football clubrooms at Wahgunyah. As it turned out, that was three days after last year's AFL Grand Final. Without dwelling on that grand final, in the late stages of the game a young fellow by the name of Taylor Duryea came on for Hawthorn, played on the big stage and won a premiership medal. It was fitting and important that that commitment was made then, as Taylor Duryea grew up in Wahgunyah and made his name playing junior football and started his senior career there. Three days after the AFL Grand Final, we announced more funds for an upgrade of the Wahgunyah football clubrooms. It just shows that people who play on the big stage can start in small communities like Wahgunyah. We on this side are proud that we supported that funding for Wahgunyah

from the Regional Growth Fund. Other places such as Katamatite, Greta and Whorouly were also successful in getting upgrades through the Regional Growth Fund.

Of course, larger communities did not go without, either. Bruck Textiles in Wangaratta was a beneficiary of many of the projects that the coalition government delivered, as was the Ovens Riverside precinct, which turned the whole perspective of Wangaratta around. Now that end of town is a focal point, with the Ovens River being a feature of the town rather than being basically a creek running through the middle of town. The coalition also supported the jazz festival, and I hope that continues under this government. As well as that, \$4.7 million went to the second stage of Wangaratta High School. There is more to be done there and I will certainly be lobbying to ensure that we get funding for the third stage of Wangaratta High School.

Many other projects were achieved. I am very proud that the high school at Yarrowonga got the first stage of its building going. The school had been in very poor repair and we fought hard and got \$7.6 million for that project. We also provided copious quantities of Country Fire Authority trucks, big fills, new fire sheds and extensions to existing fire sheds. Our communities were truly blessed by the support they got, and I hope that support continues under the Andrews government.

I have picked up the King Valley; it has come into the Ovens Valley electorate. I have overcome my emotions at losing the great wine industry of Rutherglen in knowing we have the King Valley in the electorate. That has made up for that loss, although I will miss the people of Rutherglen. Up in the King Valley there is Whitfield, Moyhu, Myrree and Edi, which are very small but wholesome communities. They are basically farming communities I have picked up there, with very down-to-earth country people.

Further up the Ovens Valley are Myrtleford, Bright, Porepunkah, Harrietville and Mount Hotham, which is one of the bookends of the electorate, as are Cobram and the Murray River at the other end. Myrtleford is rich in Italian culture. It still faces challenges in the changes involved in the transition from having been a tobacco growing region. Bright, of course, is the tourism mecca of north-east Victoria or, as some say, of all of Victoria. Bright is a very exciting town, and I get excited every time I get the opportunity to go up there. I am not the only one who gets up there, however, because obviously tourists from Melbourne go up there just about every weekend. That is particularly so with the splash park that we committed to, which has really put a major feature in the main part of town. The

aged-care facility is still a high priority in Bright. I will be fighting hard to make sure that we will continue to get the benefits for that community.

Porepunkah and Harrietville are two very vibrant communities that are proactive. You can feel their enthusiasm when you are amongst the people of those very exciting communities, which are also, as I say, proactive. Not a lot needs to be said about Mount Hotham. We know it is a very important part of our winter culture, and in relation to summertime things have come a long way. That area is a hive of activity right throughout the year. Right from Mount Hotham across to Craig's Hut and across to, as I said, the electorate's other bookend up at the Murray River, the electorate has a lot to offer. It has plenty of resources, initiative and progressive people and that can-do attitude.

The true heroes of our region are the carers, the nurses, the small business people, the farmers, the teachers and the mums and dads. They are the movers and shakers. They are the can-do people in the Ovens Valley, and they are the people I look to represent. There are the reliable community members, the ones who attend every Carols by Candlelight, every Remembrance Day ceremony and every Australian Day celebration; they continue to turn up and to make their communities vibrant and active. This is exemplified by the Milawa amphitheatre, which brings a small town together, and the King River Cafe in Oxley, which is a great meeting place for people to come together and which has great coffee and food.

I was at the Peechelba community centre just prior to Christmas when nearly 150 people squeezed in for a fire briefing as the fires were moving through Lake Rowan and Boweya. The people needed an update, and the centre was bulging at the sides. There is no doubt about that. It is just terrific to have those community centres. We see how important they are in good times and in bad and tough times too. It was great to have that community centre — and that community, whose members all banded together.

In the last term of government we had floods, we had fires and we even had a tornado, so who knows what is next in the seat of Ovens Valley. I do know, however, that the resilience and teamwork of our community equal success. This community will tackle head-on anything that comes.

High priorities for me, certainly over the next four years, are education and health. The education provided in our country schools really represents the heartbeat of our community. Whether it is kindergarten, primary,

secondary or tertiary education or vocational training, it is important that our regional communities not be the bridesmaids of metropolitan education. We need to make sure that our communities get the same offerings as do communities in metropolitan Melbourne.

In many situations — not all, but many — we lose some of our most gifted people to the cities. Maybe those people have a higher Australian tertiary admission rank score and they want to become doctors or lawyers or whatever they might want to be, but we lose a certain percentage of those gifted people to metropolitan Melbourne and beyond, and some of them will never return. It is therefore vital that those who remain and stay within our communities have that great opportunity of education and the future prospects it brings and that they do not end up with that poor cousin syndrome but have the same opportunities everyone else has. I will therefore continue to stay on the government's case to make sure we get those opportunities. My communities tell me that funding cuts made by this government will certainly not be tolerated. If it is going to be the education state, it needs to be so in the regions as well, not just in metropolitan Melbourne.

Health is another priority for me and for all of regional Victoria. Sometimes for those living on the Victoria-New South Wales border there is a grey area affecting the community's needs, which are put second behind cross-border squabbles about where best you can get health services from. Whether you live in New South Wales but have access to Victorian hospitals or the situation is vice versa, it is really important that we do not let those cross-border anomalies get in the way of being able to provide suitable facilities for our community.

The Yarrowonga bridge is a perfect example. The new Minister for Roads and Road Safety has an opportunity to support both the Yarrowonga and the Mulwala communities, whose members clearly have said the green route is the way they want to go. That was a discussion held during the term of the last government, and we certainly hope the minister facilitates that over the next few weeks or months. The Corowa Shire Council has defied ratepayers in suggesting the grey route. We all know the green route is about getting traffic out of Belmore Street in Yarrowonga and making a 50-year plan for the bridge rather than a 5-year or 10-year short-term fix. The Ovens Valley and particularly Yarrowonga will find out early whether this new government cares and considers communities' opinions or whether the 10 000 signatures are just irrelevant. I hope the community opinion is a priority.

This decision is not about dollars; it is about what the community wants.

I want to take the opportunity to thank my family for their ongoing support — my wife, Glenys, and our four kids, Danielle, Tom, Brooke and Malcolm — for their support over the four years I have been the local member. Without that support you really cannot do this job effectively. It is a team effort, and I certainly thank them for that.

My mum and dad are probably my greatest supporters, and I thank them for what they do as well. We all know that as local MPs we sometimes become a rock for many individuals within the communities we work with, and every once in a while we need our own rocks, and my immediate family members do that very well.

Thanks to my staff at the Wangaratta office. Jacinta is very professional and efficient and, most of all, is happy and pleasant and makes the workplace a great place to be, as does Martine, who juggles two beautiful young children with her work commitments. She brings excellent feedback and value to our office and is also a very happy and energetic face, which I am grateful for. Marty Corboy has been a shining light, an inspiration and a great friend to me as a campaign manager and supporter over the last few years, and I hope that continues. Other significant supporters know who they are, and I thank them for their support and guidance.

In closing, it is of paramount importance that our communities are not forgotten. When regional Victoria does well, everybody does well. I am proud of our achievements as a coalition government, and I hope we have similar achievements in the next four years. SPC is a first-class example of a Liberal-Nationals coalition achievement. We gave \$22 million to Shepparton, when the federal government refused to give money. It was well out of reach of local government, but the coalition state government came through with \$22 million. Great credit is due to Peter Ryan, the now member for Murray Plains and the then local member for Shepparton, Jeanette Powell. They masterminded and delivered that for the community of Shepparton, and the benefits will flow for decades to come. The people of Shepparton have chosen an Independent to be their saviour, and I will be interested to see how that transpires over the next three or four years with regard to the Shepparton bypass and the train network. We will see whether the government of the day will support Shepparton as the coalition did.

We must not be forgotten. Regional Victoria supports a strong, vibrant, livable city in Melbourne, and we need the same to happen in return — that Melbourne

supports regional Victoria to the same degree. We put our faith in Premier Andrews to make sure that regional Victoria is well looked after.

Ovens Valley has a rich blend of people, land and water. It is a dynamic, energetic community of people who are all community minded. I will continue to push for stage 3 of the Wangaratta High School, which is important to that community. The school services a large area, and I will be pushing hard for that. The Bright hospital redevelopment has swapped between the frontburner and the backburner for many years, and I was up there again last week to continue to push for a successful outcome for Bright. A flood study for Myrtleford, which is a community that sees its fair share of rain, is something I will push for during this term of government, along with a fair go for all of my community. I look forward to representing all of those within the new electorate of Ovens Valley.

Ms SPENCE (Yuroke) — Thank you, Speaker, and congratulations to both you and the Deputy Speaker for your roles in this 58th Parliament of Victoria.

I acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet, the people of the Kulin nation, and I pay respect to elders past and present. I also acknowledge and pay respect to the traditional owners of the land in the district of Yuroke, the Gunung-Willam-Balluk people.

Most importantly I would like to thank the people of Yuroke, who have given me the great privilege of representing our community in this Parliament.

To my family — my husband, Kosmos; my son, Adam; my parents, Nola and David; my sister, Veronica; and my good friend Lorena — thank you for your ongoing support, for putting up with my far too often absences and for encouraging me to pursue my goals.

To my Labor family and friends, in particular the members of the Gladstone Meadows and the Craigieburn ALP branches, thank you for all the support and assistance you have given to me over many years, culminating in handing out how-to-vote material on 29 November and, in many cases, getting the first dose of sunburn for the season.

The number of people who spent hours at pre-poll places, assisted at street stalls, hosted pictures on their properties and helped out on election day is very humbling, and I greatly appreciate every minute they each put into my campaign.

I would like to acknowledge the ALP state secretary, Noah Carroll, and all the staff at ALP state office. They

are a great team at Docklands, who have all worked to achieve this election victory, and I thank them for all that they do.

As a proud unionist I acknowledge and thank the union movement and the team at Victorian Trades Hall for their outstanding campaign efforts.

And of course a heartfelt thankyou to those who worked closest on my campaign. To my campaign manager, Paul Caruso, and to Jamie Byron and Casey Nunn, thank you also for your ongoing friendship and support.

Those who were involved in my campaign will also know that there are two others that must be acknowledged — the stars of the show — Marvin and Minx, my two black cats. These two taught me more about social media than you will find in any article or book — that is, no matter how witty or profound you may think your last post was, a picture of a cat in a box or, better still, two cats in a box will always get more likes.

To the new member for Sunbury, my friend and quiz buddy, thank you for making me laugh along the way. I am glad that we have shared this journey together, and I am so proud of you.

I am particularly pleased that of the 14 new government members in this Legislative Assembly, eight are women, bringing the number of female members of the government in this place to over 44 per cent. I am also thrilled to see the appointment of nine great women to the cabinet. This is a terrific outcome, and I acknowledge the important role that EMILY's List has played in promoting, supporting and encouraging more women to participate in our political processes.

I also congratulate all the members who have been re-elected. You set the standard for those of us who have been elected for the first time, and I know that we will be looking to you for guidance and support and to learn from you so that we can do our best in our new roles.

For me, one person who has given me much guidance and support is my predecessor, Liz Beattie, who I thank very much. Liz was the first member for Yuroke and served as a member of this place from 1999. Liz has been a great source of support for me both prior to and throughout the election campaign, and she continues to be my sounding board and a great source of knowledge, and I appreciate her sound advice.

During her valedictory statement Liz very generously said that the now member for Sunbury, Cr Casey Nunn,

and I were her greatest achievements. As her former staff, we are all aware of the many, many achievements that Liz is too modest to mention, and we know how well respected Liz is both in this place and in our communities.

I know that we consider Liz our valued mentor and friend and someone who has encouraged us to pursue our goals. I also know that we will all strive to build on the work that she has done over the past 15 years, and for me personally I am acutely aware of how high she has set the bar.

To all the newly elected members, I congratulate all of you, and no doubt we all share the same mix of excitement, anxiousness and a burning desire to do our best for our wonderful state. Whilst as new members we will all embark on this journey together, we differ greatly as individuals as to the path that led us to this place. And it is not always a straightforward path that we have taken.

For me, like the Leader of the Opposition, I grew up in an average suburban home in Montmorency, but I am sure that our life events leading here are strikingly different. Growing up in Montmorency was great. We lived in a court surrounded by other families and where the sound of a basketball being bounced outside signalled that all the kids should head out for a game or to muck around until dinner at six. I was very fortunate. We lived in a modest three-bedroom house, where Dad made sure that we did not go without.

I went to a terrific school in Eltham High School, where I was encouraged to learn as an individual. I know that this school is in good hands with my friend the new member for Eltham. I thank and acknowledge my year 12 politics teacher, Brendan Monigatti, who no doubt planted the seeds for a lifelong interest in politics and in the importance of participating in our political processes.

But like so many, I also know what it is like to struggle with adversity. As a single parent I faced the daily struggle of being a low-income earner, and I understand the pressures that many families experience constantly. I know too well about the flow-on effects to the household when all the utility bills arrive within days of each other and there is simply no way to pay them all by the due dates. I know too well about the struggle to provide a school uniform and the effect that the loss of a jumper can have on an already strained budget. And I know too well about the frustration of wanting to provide every opportunity for my child but living a reality where simply providing the basics is a constant challenge.

I also knew that the best way to improve my future prospects was through education, so what started as an arts degree quickly became a law degree. With that came a whole range of additional pressures, and so many times I questioned if I would be able to see it through.

During this time, through my experiences and the experiences of others whom I came to meet, the extent of disadvantage in society became apparent. Be it our youth, unemployed, homeless, disabled, aged or members of the LGBTI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex) community, the barriers faced by far too many became a motivating factor for me to achieve change. It became obvious to me that the provision of access does not necessarily provide equality or equity. For instance, an issue I constantly faced was that although I could access a university degree, I could not afford the books, and although there was a great range of subjects that were on offer there was no child care available at corresponding times. And although rental assistance was provided, affordable housing was simply not available in many areas. The list of such examples is far too long, and we should be mindful of this and always make decisions which seek to provide equitable outcomes.

During these years I was immensely grateful for the support given to me from my family and friends, and I was very fortunate in that I had both. However, many people in similar circumstances do not, and in those cases there is a great network of volunteers at a variety of organisations that do what they can to assist people in need. I have seen firsthand the difference these volunteers make to people's lives, and they should never be taken for granted.

It was through my experiences and struggles that a desire within me grew to provide a helping hand and a voice to those in need and to do what I could to provide a fair go to those who were doing it tough. That is what I have sought to do. I found that working as an electorate officer was a great way to be of practical assistance to those in need. I thank all those MPs who gave me the opportunity to work for them and to learn from them, including Sue Mackay, Graeme Sturges and Michelle O'Byrne in Tasmania, and later, Maria Vamvakinou, Steve Herbert and of course Liz Beattie. Working for these members of Parliament reinforced to me the value of standing up for those in need and seeking change in society whereby people's lives are improved and those who need our assistance are not left behind.

When I was finally admitted as a lawyer in the Supreme Court I signed up as a volunteer solicitor at the

Broadmeadows Community Legal Service so I could provide my time to help those who could not otherwise access legal advice. As any volunteer will tell you, this was extremely rewarding. I was then elected in 2008 as a councillor with Hume City Council, representing the Aitken ward, which had very similar boundaries to the electorate of Yuroke. During this term on council I served as deputy mayor and then as mayor. I was proud to be elected to represent my community in local government, and I am now honoured to represent my community in state Parliament.

I am so proud to be a member of a Labor government whose values first and foremost are to provide a fair go to all and to represent and provide opportunities for all, regardless of their income level, their age or their place of birth. It is with this great pride that I acknowledge and congratulate the Premier on his historic victory, and I look forward to working with him to fulfil the Andrews Labor government's vision for the future of Victoria. I am particularly thrilled and excited about the education initiatives of this government. For these I thank and congratulate the Minister for Education, both because of my personal passion for education and because, based on my personal experience, I know that these initiatives will greatly benefit the residents of Yuroke.

Yuroke is a very young community, with the second-highest proportion of children aged 5 to 14. The schools are currently under pressure, with very high enrolment numbers for prep classes. I am very pleased that this Labor government has committed to an additional school in north-west Craigieburn to alleviate some of this pressure, and I look forward to the full suite of education initiatives being rolled out. I know that these initiatives will provide a welcome relief for many families — the establishment of breakfast clubs so that students do not have to get by on an empty stomach; health care for secondary school students; assistance with the costs of camps, sports and excursions; funding of scholarships for mentors for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds; assistance with uniforms and glasses; and, of course, rescuing TAFE so students of all ages have options for further education.

I know that many families in Yuroke will appreciate assistance with the cost of education, and I am proud to be a member of a Labor government that is committed to providing the kind of support that seeks to achieve equity for students to be able to participate fully rather than just providing access to an education where you are then left on your own to try and get by.

I look forward to working with the community to implement the vision of this government, as well as fulfilling my vision for the future of Yuroke. As it is a growth area, I want to see Yuroke continue to develop as a community where, no matter where you come from or what you come with, there is a place for you — a community where there are housing choices, be it for first-home buyers, second or third-home buyers, renters, retirees or those who need emergency or ongoing housing assistance; a community where families have a choice of quality education, be it government or private, with pathways to university or TAFE; and a community where employment opportunities are real and not a rarity.

I want Yuroke to continue to be a community of choice for new families, for them to identify our community as a preferred place to live. There is no doubt that this is already true for many of our longstanding and newly arrived community members. Yuroke is home to over 63 000 people from over 160 countries speaking over 120 languages. Regardless of where these families have come from or what they came with, they were welcomed, and for those whose journey here has been one of trauma, they are supported in a place they can now call home.

The path that led me here has provided me with inspiration, resilience, knowledge, empathy, courage and determination. These traits I will use to improve people's lives across our great state, in particular the people of Yuroke. I am very happy to be backed up in that role by the very capable Ryan Moore and Justin Barbour as my electorate officers and by Shannon Farley as the whip's assistant. As I said earlier, I am acutely aware of how high the first member for Yuroke has set the bar by which I will be judged. I look forward to the challenges ahead and to serving as the second member for Yuroke.

Debate interrupted.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER — Order! Before calling the member for Gembrook I wish to acknowledge in the gallery Lee Tarlamis, a former member of the Legislative Council.

GOVERNOR'S SPEECH

Address-in-reply

Debate resumed.

Mr BATTIN (Gembrook) — I start by congratulating you, Speaker, on the wonderful honour of attaining the high office of Speaker of this house. It was amazing to sit here on your first day in the role and hear about the history of where you have come from and where you are now. I congratulate you wholeheartedly. You thoroughly deserve it. I also congratulate our Deputy Speaker, the member for Melton, although I will greatly miss some of our banter across the table and his famous use of the word 'wrong' every time we spoke! But I wish him well. He is another person for whom I have a lot of respect outside the chamber as well as inside it.

I pass on my regards to the other candidates who ran for the seat of Gembrook: Colin Ross of the Labor Party — and I wish him all the best in his role on the local council in the area — and Michael Schilling, who was the Greens candidate for Gembrook. I probably would not say this too often, particularly in relation to the Greens — and I did not give him a big wrap-up during the campaign — but Michael is a wonderful young man with a big and bright future ahead of him. That future is probably not in politics — and we have had a good chat about that — but whatever he does, I wish him all the best because he is a person who genuinely cares about his community.

I have the greatest pleasure in working alongside some fantastic people in this Parliament, particularly the Leader of the Opposition. To work alongside him and to watch someone of his calibre stand up and talk about the history of politics with the passion he has for his community leads me to believe well and truly that he is the right person to lead the Liberal Party over the next four years. I hope we can hold the government to account as we go forward, but more importantly we want to try to put ourselves forward as genuine contestants leading up to the 2018 state election.

The people of Gembrook have given me the greatest privilege in allowing me to represent them for a second term. To have a small swing to the Liberals in Gembrook as we did in the last election, during trying times, is something of which we are very proud in our area. It does not happen because of one person; therefore I will thank all of those in the Gembrook electorate who gave me the privilege of standing up for them. I assure them I will do my best for them again in the next four years.

The Gembrook community comprises people who are very passionate about standing up for the Liberal Party. One of those people is my chairman, Phil Macreadie. Phil and his wife, Lorraine, did an amazing job during the last campaign, and I thank them both. In addition, Joy Bishop and her husband, George, continue to do an amazing job along with Andrew and Deb McNabb, who do an awesome job. I would also like to thank the federal member for Latrobe, Jason Wood, and his wife, Judy, along with Garry and Sue Runge, who have given me five years of support — not just during the current campaign. I also thank Julie Hughes, who has done a wonderful job, along with the entire committee.

More importantly, in the upper house I thank Edward O'Donohue, who, along with his wife, Jen, has been a great support. Not only did they support my campaign but a fantastic friendship with them has developed over the last five years. I also wish another upper house member, Andrew Ronalds, all the best. I am sad not to see him back in the upper house on this occasion because he is another gentleman with a fantastic background, and we would like to see him back on board in the future. I also thank Neil and Margaret Lucas, who have always been fantastic, as well as Brian Paynter, our new member for Bass, and his wife, Liz, who have done a wonderful job so far. They have been very supportive of me over the last few years.

I also thank the Berwick Ranges 500 Club and all of my branch presidents. I particularly thank Brian and Pauline Hetherington, who have at all times been honest with me. That is something we do not always get in politics, particularly in terms of feedback. They tell me when I do things right and wrong, and that is very important. Finally I thank the Clematis Country Fire Authority and its captain, Jarryd Miller. They did a wonderful job in the electorate. I would like him to pass on my thanks to his brigade, which I have become involved in, because their involvement and the concerns they have raised are something the whole of Victoria should be aware of.

Finally, I thank my staff, including Jade Glen and her husband, Jamie. They have a newborn baby, Lucy, so Jade could not help us through the election as she was on maternity leave, but I thank her very much. I also thank Sid Wynen; Di Sumner and her husband, Darren; Sam and Darren; and Monica, who worked with me for the first couple of years. I also thank my family: my sister, my mother and my father, along with my mother-in-law and father-in-law — acknowledging that people do not say that too often — because they have been a fantastic support to me. Most importantly, I thank Jo and our kids, Mikaela and Chloe.

I have made a point of the thankyou's this time because I forgot someone last time and that got me into a lot of trouble in my electorate, so I wanted to make sure that that was all done. However, I will say that to stand up for your electorate is to stand up for everybody in your electorate. It is not just to stand up for the groups that have supported you in getting here or for people who have financially supported you; it is to stand up for people who cannot speak up for themselves. I have had the absolute greatest privilege in being able to do that for the last four years for Gembrook.

One of the things we delivered in the last four years which I will never forget and of which I will be forever proud is the Officer Specialist School. That school is exactly what our government was all about. When we were in government we looked at projects and ensured that the ones we supported were chosen on a needs basis, and the Officer Specialist School was definitely supported on that basis.

Prior to the last election there was a big call from the local community to get a special school in Officer. Children were travelling for up to 2 hours one way — 4 hours a day — to get to and from school. Children with special needs do not need to sit on a bus for 4 hours every day just to get the education they thoroughly deserve. Building the Officer Specialist School is something I will forever be proud of. If you go down and look at the school you will see that it is a state-of-the-art, leading school in Victoria. I think people around the world will look at the school and say, 'This is how we should build special schools for the future'. I have spoken to the Minister for Education and invited him down. He needs to come through and understand exactly what the school does and what it delivers. Under the guidance of Sue, its principal, the structure of the staff and the ability of the parents association to be involved in bringing in the whole community is outstanding.

To add to that, the former government built the Officer Secondary College, which opened in January this year. The first lot of year 7 students are coming through. This is an opportunity to have a mainstream school and a special needs school co-located so there can be a crossover of students going from one to the other. As important as students with special needs integrating into the community and going into and looking at a mainstream school is students in a mainstream school totally understanding what is happening in the special school next door, and understanding that there are people in the community of all abilities who need assistance but who just want to be part of a community. Like you and me, they just want to get out there and be individuals and understand exactly how they can be

involved and give back to their community. So many of them can give back to the community in many ways.

We have Outlook down our way. Outlook does an amazing job in working with people with special needs. Currently people with special needs down there work in facilities, whether it is for gardening or recycling. There are some wonderful recycling plants. I was proud when the member for Warrandyte, while he was the Minister for Environment and Climate Change, put \$500 000 towards the upgrade of a facility down there so 20 to 30 people with special needs, increasing to 120 people with special needs in the future, could be employed in a recycling plant. It provides an opportunity for these people not only to receive assistance for their individual needs but also for them to give back to the community, which is exactly what they are after, so they can be involved in the community as best they can.

Another issue in the Gembrook electorate is public transport, and the coalition members campaigned hard on it. After the 2010 election we delivered many changes. There are 1000-plus new services across the entire network. We also committed to a \$2 billion to \$2.5 billion upgrade of the Pakenham railway line, which included parking for more cars, grade separations, and an improvement in the signalling. I am sad to say that it is a shame the new government has not taken that initiative on board. It has not come forward and said it is willing to sign up for that \$2 billion to \$2.5 billion program that would affect people in my electorate who travel on the Pakenham and Cranbourne line, where 10 per cent of the entire rail network travel from. They have to travel to the city on trains that in the past have been supercrowded. That situation has got better over the last few years, but it needs to be improved as the growth happens.

In Officer there will be 30 000 more people and 10 000 new houses in the next 15 years. The station there is already starting to fill up with people, even with the new services. It needs the upgrade so that extra services can come through. It is a shame that this government has not taken that on board so that the services can be delivered there.

I refer to other areas down there, particularly around our emergency services. I spoke before about the Clematis Country Fire Authority station. A new station and a new truck are needed there. The coalition committed to that project before the election, and I am sad to say that the current government has not come forward with that commitment. It has not looked at the station and does not understand the impact out there, as it is a high fire danger area. The station needs rebuilding, and the officers cannot be given new trucks

until they have a new station. It is very important the government gets on board. The coalition government delivered the station with a new light tanker, which hopefully it should get very shortly. That funding is already there for them. However, they need a new station and a new tanker to better protect the community in the Dandenong Ranges.

Anyone who has lived in the Dandenong Ranges will understand 100 per cent that in 1983 some of the worst fires in history went through there — through Cockatoo, Emerald, all the way through Nangana and Gembrook. The fires were devastating. They had devastating effects in our community. Now we need to make sure we have the equipment there to protect the community. I call on the government to ensure that that equipment is made available.

Talking about that, we need to understand that these stations are manned by volunteers and they have had the ability to provide a mass response to the campaign fires we have seen in the past. We want to thank those volunteers for the work they do for our community. It is amazing how many times they get called out.

Another station is the Emerald State Emergency Service (SES) station. The coalition government committed to get a rebuild of that station. Speaker, you will not believe that last year Emerald SES had more than 1000 callouts. I am talking about a group up there of 35 to 40 volunteers who go out and protect my electorate and the electorate of Monbulk as well. They cover the area all the way down through Monbulk and the shire of Yarra Ranges.

Mr Merlino interjected.

Mr BATTIN — The Emerald SES. They cover that whole area. I know the member for Monbulk has gone and met with them and had a good discussion. I hope that in the future there is a commitment to ensure that they get the new station going forward. That is something they thoroughly deserve because of the extra work they have down there.

Another area down there — —

An honourable member interjected.

Mr BATTIN — I might take back some of the comments I made earlier in my speech.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr BATTIN — I will change the tone on this a bit. The other area I will talk about is youth suicide. There is nobody in this house on any side who would ever

want to talk about youth suicide from a negative point of view. Tragically during the last four years in the Gembrook, Narre Warren North and Bass electorates we had some of the highest rates of youth suicide in the state. They were close to the highest rates of youth suicide in the country. There was a community effort to deal with that situation. There was some government input there. I will not take all the credit on that one.

There was effort by the government, the council, the local community and the school community. *Four Corners* ran a program. I am not sure if anyone has seen it. If you have not, please go out of your way to see it. It is called *There is No 3G in Heaven*. That comes from a very simple message after one of the young girls down there took her life. Her friends kept texting her and saying, 'We wish you all the best. You have gone to the other side'. Eventually her mum replied to all of the friends with a very simple message: 'There is no 3G in heaven'. Once you have crossed that line, you are not coming back. You cannot get a text message. That was a change to the way we spoke out in the Gembrook electorate and through the schools there. All of a sudden there was a message to the young people out there, 'Hey, when you eventually make this decision, it is a final decision. You are not making a decision you can change tomorrow. After you make that decision it is the end of the road and you cannot go any further'.

I am very proud of the work we did down there. I am very proud of the community. It was one of those times during my time in Parliament when I was exceptionally excited to work with my community. We saw young people come out and do the walk against suicide. We had groups down there who started campaigning and counselling. There were so many offers of help from the community. You could not be any more attached to a particular issue than we saw out there.

Coming up to the election we came forward with another commitment. I am not going to say that it should have been implemented before then or anything like that. For the first time we had a genuine discussion around this issue and about positive change going forward, and I will bring it up with the Minister for Education. It was in relation to Berwick Secondary College, which is looking to build its first health and wellbeing centre for mental health. It will aim to help not just students currently attending the school but also ex-students, who will be able to come back in their first 12 months after leaving. It might not give them a full counselling service, but it will give them a referral service. Kids in their first year after leaving school are most at risk, and they will have an opportunity to come back into the education facility — a place where they

are comfortable and where they know people — for help. While this is already done at Berwick Secondary College, this would increase its scale. All politics aside, whether it starts at Berwick — which is obviously my goal — or elsewhere, I will work to see the Department of Education and Training implement something along those lines to give young people the chance to speak to somebody as they move from school life into the future.

With the redistribution I lost a fair bit of my electorate — around 1600 of 2000 square kilometres. The member for Monbulk got some of that, as did the then member for Seymour, now the member for Eildon. I am sad to lose those parts of my electorate, particularly the areas up through the Yarra Ranges. They are not traditionally the strongest Liberal areas of my electorate, but they were some of the best communities to work in and get involved with. Places such as Yarra Junction and Warburton are communities with that real community feel. I wish them all the best with their new members. With that I say thank you very much, and I wish you all the best in the future.

Mr J. BULL (Sunbury) — First may I join with other members of the house in congratulating you on your election to Speaker of the house, and in doing so acknowledge what an incredible feat you have achieved. In your opening remarks to the house in December 2014 you spoke of being passionate about this Parliament. You spoke of your passion for democracy, for the rule of law and for human rights — things that we all value highly but that you yourself hold in especially high regard after experiencing the loss of them in Uruguay in 1973. Speaker, your appointment is an achievement to be proud of after many years of dedication and hard work. In addition to this, I believe it also sends a powerful message — to the wider community, across the state and beyond our shores — that Victoria and Australia are places of opportunity, hope and fairness.

Just 237 years ago Captain James Cook arrived on the shores of Botany Bay, beginning the first European settlement. However, not until 1851, when gold was first discovered in Victoria, did our state suddenly boom in one of the largest gold rushes the world has ever seen. The gold rush, whilst bringing prosperity to many, also led to cramped fields, terrible working conditions and an outbreak of disease. In 1854 tempers flared with the rebellion of goldminers at Ballarat, and the battle of the Eureka Stockade took place between miners and colonial forces. Although the miners were defeated, there was mass public support for them and widespread criticism of the handling of the situation by colonial forces, giving rise to the Electoral Act 1856. The act gave white males the vote in elections to the

lower house of this place, the Victorian Parliament, and here the seeds of democracy were sown.

However, as we all know, the Australian story is much longer and greater than this short period of time. Australia is home to one of the longest continuous cultures in the world. It is the land of the Indigenous Aborigines, who have inhabited this place for 50 000 years. They have a deep and diverse culture, rich with art, tradition and language. I wish to pay my respects to the traditional owners of the land, both past and present, and acknowledge that rich culture which has existed for so long across this great country.

It is a great honour to speak today for the first time as the inaugural member for Sunbury. The electorate of Sunbury is made up of a number of diverse communities, and today I wish to thank and acknowledge the great people of Gladstone Park, Gowanbrae, Tullamarine, Westmeadows, Bulla, Diggers Rest and Sunbury for electing me as their first member for Sunbury and for electing an Andrews Labor government. We will not let you down.

Sunbury is my home town. It is a place very close to my heart and an area steeped in history. Three pioneers — George Evans and brothers Samuel and William Jackson — founded the town of Sunbury in 1836, after setting out from Melbourne, 40 kilometres away. It is thought by most that the Jackson brothers named the township after Sunbury on the Thames in England. For sporting fans, Sunbury is a special place indeed — it is the birthplace of the Ashes, following a social game of cricket between Australia and England at Rupertswood mansion.

The electorate of Sunbury is also home to Melbourne's gateway, and one of the largest employers in the state — Melbourne Airport. I am thrilled to have Melbourne Airport in my electorate, and I look forward to working closely with the CEO, the stakeholders and of course the many residents who work at Tulla every day, putting in the hard yards.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate all members in the house, and those in the other place, for being part of the 58th Victorian Parliament. In doing so I acknowledge the family, friends and great support networks we all have and that helped to get us here. To my parliamentary colleagues on this side of the house, I would like to congratulate you for an outstanding campaign that showed true discipline, determination and a real vision. In particular, I would like to congratulate my great friend, and the Government Whip, the member for Yuroke. She will make a great

whip and be a tremendous representative for her local area.

I would like to acknowledge the outstanding effort by the Premier and reiterate the sentiments of many members on this side of the house who have reflected on his efforts not only in 2014 but over the course of opposition since 2010. The Premier has already shown that his vision, determination and commitment to put people first will once again make Victoria the place to be.

Being the first member for Sunbury is a great honour; however, the area has been extremely well represented by my predecessors, Liz Beattie and Jo Duncan. Indeed, it was Liz and her late husband, Chris, who 15 years ago invited me along to a meeting of the Sunbury branch of the Labor Party. The invitation came about after I had decided that doing work experience with my local member of Parliament would be a great opportunity. I had no idea what it was going to be about. Little did I know where it would lead me and that one day I would have the opportunity to represent the area that I love so much. In so many ways though this is the story of the Labor Party: the opportunity to go from work experience kid to MP. I thank Liz for her contribution to this great state and for her hand in developing this young man's passion for fairness, equality and democracy.

In politics very little is achieved by an individual. You need great friends and a strong support network behind you to make it happen. I wish to thank the outstanding team at Victorian Labor headquarters who assisted my campaign in every way possible and did an outstanding job throughout 2014. These dedicated and passionate staff worked hard to ensure that a great Labor victory was possible. In particular I wish to thank state secretary Noah Carroll and assistant state secretaries Stephen Donnelly and Kosmos Samaras for their tireless work. Kosmos has been a great friend for many years and his political guidance and wisdom is unmatched.

I also wish to thank former mayor of Hume, Casey Nunn, and close mate Paul Caruso. They have been there for me since day one, and I would like to acknowledge their great friendship and terrific contribution to my campaign and to the Labor movement in the north. I would also like to thank my colleague and federal member for McEwen, Rob Mitchell, MP, for his strong representation in the area.

In truth, I wish I could be standing here alongside my extraordinary campaign team who have given me so much support. To my campaign manager, Peter

Hendrickson, a former school principal at Melton, Viewbank and Sunbury colleges. whom I pulled out of a peaceful retirement, I say thank you for your experience, wisdom and friendship. I would also like to thank my campaign field organiser, Renee Pope-Munro, whom the member for Macedon recently described as 'a wrangler of volunteers'. I thank Renee for her outstanding work. Her passion and dedication are unmatched. I also wish to thank Jarrod, Michaela and Adam in the electorate office for their outstanding efforts. Thank you to the Sunbury and Gladstone Meadows branch members and countless volunteers. Each phone call, doorknock and chat on a street corner took us one step closer to winning the seat of Sunbury.

I would like to thank my parents, Ian and Lesley Bull, my brother David, sister Kirstin and extended family. From an early age my parents taught us the value of hard work, of being involved in your community and the importance of a fair go. They worked hard to provide us with the best opportunities and always reminded us of how fortunate we were to live in such a great country.

Finally, I would like to thank my best friend, and as of last Sunday my fiancée, Jasmine. She came into my life three years ago and has been an inspiration and given me strength ever since. I cannot thank Jasmine enough for everything she has done for me. Thanks also to Jasmine's grandfather, William, who taught her from the moment that she could think about the Labor cause, instilling in her an unshakable sense of fairness and equality.

Before entering Parliament I began my working life at 14 as a grocery boy, a duty manager at Woolworths and then an environmental educator at the Gould League, before going on finish my studies and become a science and maths teacher. I chose a career in teaching because I believe education to be paramount in providing opportunity. There is no reason why each and every child in Victoria should not have high aspirations, regardless of their back story or perceived future. We as a community are charged with helping our youth to be the best they can be, and we need to be the hand-up they need when they fall, because this is the Labor way. It was the great Nelson Mandela who once said, 'Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.'

Throughout my life, I have developed a strong passion for the improvement of disability services. My mother worked as an integration aide for over 12 years, and I have some very clever and wonderful friends who also have a serious disability. I am committed to seeing disability services improved for all Victorians, and I

urge the federal government to fully fund the national disability insurance scheme. As is so often said, the mark of a good government is how it treats its most vulnerable citizens.

I look forward to delivering on Labor's commitments in Sunbury, and it was great to join the Premier in August last year at my former high school, Sunbury College, to announce \$3 million dollars to build a much-needed new science wing. I also look forward to working with the Minister for Roads and Road Safety to build noise barriers for Gowanbrae as part of our \$10 million commitment, and with the Minister for Public Transport on improving bus services across the electorate. Sunbury residents will also greatly benefit from the Melbourne Metro rail plan. This vital project will revolutionise our train network and ensure that our world-class city has a world-class public transport system.

One thing in particular that I am determined to work on in Sunbury is youth mental health. Our community has recently been tragically touched by a number of youth suicides. An Andrews Labor government is already addressing the issue, and we are building a world-class mental health research facility in Parkville. As the local member I will be doing everything I can to support and assist the young people in our community, from establishing a youth advisory council to working alongside mental health professionals and investigating the rising use of ice.

In closing, I look forward to working closely with all members of the house over many years for the betterment of Sunbury and for the betterment of Victoria. I commit myself to representing the views of my constituency to the best of my ability, and I am humbled, honoured and above all privileged to be serving as part of an Andrews Labor government.

Mr KATOS (South Barwon) — I would like to begin by congratulating you, Speaker, on your election as Speaker. I know the background you came from; my parents left war-torn Greece back in the late 1940s and 1950s to seek a better place in Australia. I also congratulate the member for Melton on his election as Deputy Speaker — well done. You are both well-respected members of this house.

I certainly thank the 44 738 electors of the South Barwon electorate for putting their faith in me to be their representative. I particularly thank my wife, Vicki. We have four sons — Zachary, Evann, Christian and Jack, ranging in age from 11 to 4 — so Vicki has her hands full. Today Christian was elected as a junior

school council representative at Belmont Primary School, and I am very proud of him for achieving that.

I also thank my electorate staff: Yogi, Stephen and Ellana. I thank the other Liberal candidates in the Geelong region, Paula Kontelj, Ron Nelson and Tony McManus. They put up a good fight. I thank my electorate chairman, Angelo Kakouros, along with Stretch Kontelj and Dot Lea, who was the secretary of the South Barwon electorate conference. I particularly thank Jeremy Underwood and Ray Page, who were my two main helpers when we doorknocked over 10 000 homes in the South Barwon electorate. We were not faceless people sitting behind desks pretending to be someone we were not; it was face-to-face contact with real people, and I thank them for their assistance.

South Barwon is a growing electorate, with high-growth areas in Highton and Torquay. It also has the state's second-largest growth area in Armstrong Creek, and this is a suburb I now proudly call home. Given the pace of the growth occurring in South Barwon, I will take a quick look at what Labor committed to my electorate over its term in office, what we committed to do and what we did for the electorate in the past four years. In the South Barwon electorate the net election commitments from the Andrews Labor government total \$10.35 million over four years. That figure is in complete contrast to what was delivered by the coalition in the last four years and what we had committed to deliver over the next four years.

With regard to transport and roads, there were no commitments whatsoever from Labor for any transport or road projects in the South Barwon electorate. We committed to fund the intersection of Surf Coast Highway and Beach Road in Torquay. It is a very accident-prone intersection. If you live in Torquay, it is probably the intersection you dread the most because it is so hard to get across the highway, but it is a very strategic point that connects areas of the township.

Consider what the coalition did for transport and roads in South Barwon over four years: the new Waurin Ponds railway station, complete repavement works and safety upgrades on the Surf Coast Highway and stage 1 of Pioneer Road. In the 2014–15 state budget \$12.9 million was promised to complete the second stage of Pioneer Road and to provide signals for the intersection at Meadowvale Drive, Grovedale. If you live in the Grovedale and Waurin Ponds area, you would know that people pull their hair out each morning trying to get in and out of that intersection. We also put in \$3 million to build noise barriers on the Geelong Ring Road at Wandana Heights. That was something the previous Labor government failed to do,

and indeed the previous member got into some very interesting arguments with the residents of Wandana Heights with regard to the absence of noise barriers.

I will move on to education, something I hold dear to my heart. I am the product of public education. Those on the other side of the house probably think of a stereotype of a Liberal member: someone with a silver spoon in their mouth who went through a grammar school or college and was privately educated at a cost of tens of thousands of dollars. I am not like that. I went to Belmont Primary School and Belmont High School and then onto Deakin University, so my education was entirely in the public system.

The commitments we made to the South Barwon electorate were more fulsome than the commitments Labor made: \$3 million for the upgrade of Moriac Primary School, which is at least \$1.1 million short of what is required; \$6.25 million to acquire land in Armstrong Creek West for a primary school; and \$1.6 million for a children's services hub in Highton. They are all good commitments, and I thank the government for making them. However, when we were in government, our election commitments included \$6.3 million to upgrade Belmont High School. Although that school is in the Geelong electorate, half of its students come from Highton in the South Barwon electorate. It is in need of an urgent upgrade. The next commitment was to Grovedale College.

It is interesting to note that Labor has committed to buying land in Armstrong Creek which will be needed in the future. However, at the moment no-one is living there. Anyone who is coming into Armstrong Creek — and I know this; I live there and I see it — with a child of secondary school age has only one option, and that is Grovedale College. It is the only zoned public school the child can attend. My understanding is that Grovedale College has record enrolments at the moment; it is bursting at the seams, so it is in desperate need of an upgrade. We committed \$6.4 million to upgrade the college. Although the land in Armstrong Creek will be needed in the future, it makes sense to upgrade the college first, because the pressure is on that school.

We committed just under \$4 million to upgrade Bellaire Primary School in Highton, which is in desperate need of an upgrade. It is the only school in Highton that can accommodate any growth. All the other schools are full. We committed \$1.135 million to upgrade Highton Primary School, which again is bursting at the seams and in need of urgent works. We also committed \$600 000 to relocate the Grovedale East Kindergarten following the closure of that site at the Grovedale

Uniting Church due to the sale by the church of some property. With the closure of that kindergarten there is now no kindergarten on the east side of the Surf Coast Highway in Grovedale, so that community is in real need of a kindergarten.

Probably one of my proudest achievements while we were in office, from an education perspective, was the Surf Coast Secondary College, which opened at the start of last year — \$37.5 million for full secondary education in Torquay. Incidentally, Labor opposed that school; it did not want to build a secondary college in Torquay. But it is a fantastic, state-of-the-art school and is going very nicely.

We also spent \$4.8 million in this year's budget to upgrade Montpellier Primary School, again in Highton. Highton has grown enormously and has also gone through a generational change, which has seen families with primary school-age children coming in.

When in government the coalition acquired land for a primary school, a special school and a secondary college in Armstrong Creek. In that \$223 million public-private partnership package, which the Minister for Education has been very quick to take up as his own, there was a primary school, a special school for Armstrong Creek and a primary school for Torquay North, which is desperately needed. I want to ensure that that package is followed through and those schools are built. That was land that was purchased by a coalition government which funded those brand-new schools.

As far as kindergartens go, a grant of \$1.6 million was given to the Surf Coast Shire for the Torquay children's services hub. The shire now needs to get on with the job of building the hub. It cannot sit and wait for a federal commitment through the election cycle. The need is now and the shire must build that children's services hub. The shire has the \$1.6 million, and it needs to get on with the job. The coalition government also funded the extension of the Torquay and Jan Juc kindergartens, and committed \$2 million to the newly opened Grovedale children's services hub, which opened this year.

In regard to emergency services, we have a brand-new police station in Waurn Ponds. It is a fantastic station, which has 24-hour police coverage. It is open for 16 hours a day, and for the remaining 8 hours the police are out on patrol from that station. It also incorporates the South Barwon State Emergency Service (SES) office, which was in Belmont. The Belmont office was too small and it was becoming difficult for the brigade to keep up its response times, so it was a good move to

put it in there. There was also a \$300 000 upgrade of the Torquay Surf Life Saving Club, a new Torquay SES base and a new Bellbrae Country Fire Authority station built by the former coalition government.

Interestingly, Labor has made no commitments as far as law and order or emergency services go in the South Barwon electorate. We committed \$1 million for a new Jan Juc Surf Life Saving Club house. That club is in desperate need of new clubrooms. It has one of the most dangerous beaches in this state, and it needs those new clubrooms. We made a commitment of \$1 million to that project, and I urge the government to follow suit and put money into that very worthy project.

In terms of sport and recreation, Labor's commitment to the Bob Pettit Reserve in Jan Juc has cost the council money. It was public open space for 30 years and was owned by the education department. Labor has made a commitment to rezone it to public park and recreation and sell it to the Surf Coast shire for \$500 000. We had a different approach. We were going to convert the title from a freehold title to Crown land and appoint the Surf Coast shire as the committee of management, which effectively meant that the shire got control of that land at no cost to ratepayers. It was to have been the shire's in perpetuity and for it to preserve it as public open space.

Not one sporting club in the South Barwon electorate was given a commitment by the Labor Party. There was nothing whatsoever. The coalition government made commitments to the Torquay Football Netball Club for a new pavilion, the Grovedale Football Netball Club for further upgrades, the Barwon Soccer Club for further upgrades, and an upgrade to the Grovedale Tennis Club, which is in desperate need of extension, as it is one of the biggest clubs in Geelong.

Although it is not in sport and recreation, we did make a commitment of \$30 000 for a new metalwork room at the Torquay men's shed. But this is on top of the other commitments we made when in government. For example, we made commitments to the South Barwon Football Club for a pavilion upgrade, to the Grovedale Football Club for a pavilion upgrade, to the Highton Tennis Club for a new pavilion, and \$400 000 to the Barwon Soccer Club for a new pavilion. We also committed \$1.5 million for the redevelopment of the Torquay Bowls Club, and \$650 000 for the Mount Moriac Reserve for the Modewarre Football and Netball Club for a major redevelopment of the pavilion. We were very active in this space with regard to upgrading local sporting clubs and getting people out there in the community. I know what it is like to have a

young family and how important the local sporting clubs are to young families and communities.

I will just touch on a couple of other things. Planning is a policy-free zone for Labor. I do not think the government has a planning policy. There is a curious commitment around the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT), where if enough people complain their voice will be heard. A developer, and they do not need to be a big-time developer, can follow the state policy framework, do everything by the book and have everything correct, yet if enough people complain the Labor government is saying it will overturn the state policy framework — 'That is the law of the land, but if we get enough people whingeing about it or complaining about it, even though the developer has done everything right, we will overturn the decision'. That is a crazy situation to have.

With that, I am very pleased to have been re-elected as the member for South Barwon. I look forward to representing the people of South Barwon to the best of my ability. I will ensure that the infrastructure the community needs is committed to and built by the Andrews Labor government.

Ms WARD (Eltham) — I acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we stand, the Wurundjeri, and I pay my respects to elders past and present. Speaker, I congratulate you on your elevation. My next-door neighbour, Alex, also left Uruguay in similar circumstances to you and he could not be prouder of you, as we all are.

Politics is important to my family. We come from a working-class background, and issues around fairness, policy rights and wrongs, the importance of unions and the rights of workers dominate many kitchen table discussions. I come from a long line of Labor voters. This is not to say I joined, supported and worked for this party blindly; I have joined, and now represent, this party because of what it stands for.

Like my family and my party, I believe in fairness, I believe in equality and I believe in opportunity. I believe government has a vital role to play in working to achieve fairness in our country and in our state. I believe that governments should work to achieve true equality and ensure that opportunity is available to all who live here. I believe that people have the right to make choices about their lives. As a feminist, the right to choose the course of one's life is central to my beliefs. Where there is inequality, there is a lack of choice, a lack of opportunity and potential is not fulfilled. Inequality — whether in relation to access to work, education or marriage — should not be tolerated.

Sometimes when walking down the front steps of this building I am reminded of my family and where we came from: I only have to look over to the Hotel Windsor. My great-grandfather met my great-grandmother while working at the Windsor. He was a porter and doorman; she was a chambermaid. I am sure my great-grandfather opened doors for many politicians from this place, and I thank the Labor Party and the Premier for opening this door for me.

My great-grandfather was a strong Catholic, Labor man who resisted the split in 1955 and raged with fury against the Democratic Labor Party and Bob Santamaria for weakening the political voice of working men and women. We know this history — this history of men fighting, of men arguing, of men writing our laws. History has traditionally been written by men, for men. In modern times we see history of women slowly emerging. There is still much of women's history, however, which remains unwritten and sadly may never be fully acknowledged.

Only a few weeks ago, my much-loved Nanna passed away after a long fight with Parkinson's disease and associated dementia. I will use this opportunity today to record the history of my nan, June Prendergast, the daughter of the doorman and the chambermaid, for her story is entwined with my own, and her story puts a fire in my belly and forms part of the journey that brought me to the Labor Party. June's story is also one of the reasons I stand here today as the Labor member for Eltham.

A shy girl, my nan met my pop at a servicemen's dance organised by my great-grandfather, who regularly hosted such events. My pop was a charming man, with a lovely singing voice, great dance moves and sparkly blue eyes. June fell in love with Vincent and married a man who would turn out to be a dreamer who could never make his dreams reality. Before many years passed, they found themselves with three girls under five and no permanent income or home. In Jane Austen's words, my grandfather had 'no prospects'. With what I regard as considerable courage, June gave Vincent an ultimatum: sort yourself out or leave. He left.

With heartbreaking determination, June enrolled her two eldest daughters, three and five, into boarding school. The baby lived with June's parents, and June set off to work, her family broken into pieces. Once June learnt that as a deserted wife she was eligible for the widows pension and public housing, she was able to bring her girls home. Through the safety net created by the state, June was reunited permanently with her girls and could raise them together in safety in her care, not

the care of strangers. Without the support of the government, my mum and her sisters could have spent years without the direct care of their mother. As you would expect, money was tight with only a pension and supplementary income from casual jobs on a woman's wage. My nan was poor, but not because she was a leaner; she was poor because she was a woman bringing up children on her own.

My mum and her sisters were born too early to benefit from the reforms of the Whitlam government and could not afford to finish high school or go to university. John Howard has said that Whitlam was not the first Prime Minister to provide free university education, using the example of Howard's own commonwealth scholarship, which provided him with access to a free university degree. It is misguided for this former Prime Minister to make that claim. On the outskirts of Melbourne, in places like Fawkner where my mum grew up, very few people knew how to find the money to finish high school, let alone knew that university scholarships even existed.

Thanks to Whitlam, all Australians were given the opportunity to go to university if they had the desire and the ability. What adds to the fire in my belly are the attempts to erode this legacy by the unfair policies proposed by the Abbott government. Like the Labor Party, my mum and dad value education and training and the opportunities they bring. They worked very hard to give these opportunities to my brother and me. Thanks to the reforms of the Whitlam, Hawke and Keating governments, I have benefited from affordable higher education and health care, and my parents' hard work has been rewarded through their participation in superannuation — benefits that many of the hardworking, working-class people before them were never able to enjoy.

In the Labor Party we know that life is not an equal playing field. We know the state needs to assist in creating equality of choice and opportunity. Your ethnicity, gender, religion, sexuality, income and identity should not be used to deny you opportunity. I believe we do not have the right to be bigots. We cannot encourage the haters; we must aspire to be better than that. We do not have the right to hurt people. As citizens, as law-makers, as humans we have the responsibility to promote respect, tolerance and acceptance. We have the responsibility to ensure that people do not get left behind.

The Liberal Party has lionised Robert Menzies, our longest serving Prime Minister, who nurtured and embraced his forgotten people, the middle class. For Menzies, the rich had their money, the working class

had their unions. He believed it was the middle class who were forgotten and ignored by government; these were the people he looked to represent. With the Abbott government reducing educational opportunities, the state Liberal Party decimation of TAFE, the proposed increased costs to health care and the cuts to family support and the aged pension, it would seem that most of us have been forgotten. I will not forget the people I represent — the hardworking people of the seat of Eltham, who care about community, who want a fair choice when it comes to education and training opportunities and who want support for small business. They are people who want a sound economy that does not leave anyone behind. Having lived in the seat of Eltham for most of my life, I understand what is important to those I am fortunate enough to represent.

The Eltham electorate is filled with amazing people: those who have written our history in books, illustrated it in paintings, built the buildings that have become our history and even created history through the invention of the bionic ear. This electorate has blessed this state with some remarkable politicians. David McKenzie, who served under the Whitlam government and who helped remove the stigma from abortion; the remarkable Pauline Toner, who was our first state female minister; and Sherryl Garbutt, another fantastic minister. Wayne Phillips's passion for basketball has been felt throughout the area.

Of course we have also been represented by the exceptional Steve Herbert, who achieved a great deal for our community over the last 12 years — not a school, sportsground or major road has remained untouched by improvement thanks to Steve's hard work. Steve's dedication has created new bushlands, a new bridge across our Yarra, modernised our train line and rehoused Eltham's Country Fire Authority. He has given me large shoes to fill, which I plan to, as he has taught me well. I know unreservedly that as the Minister for Training and Skills, Steve will do an exceptional job in restoring our decimated TAFE system.

We have Jenny Macklin, who has given us the national disability insurance scheme, who co-created the apology to the stolen generations and who gave our forgotten children the recognition they deserved. With her determination, vision, compassion and hard work, Jenny has well shown how good policy can transform lives for the better. It does not stop there. Here in this place, my friends the member for Yuroke, the member for Ivanhoe, the member for Williamstown and the member for Bulleen all spent some, if not all, of their childhood in this community. It is truly a special electorate to represent.

I understand this community, and I know it well. I understand their aspirations and I understand their challenges: the small business owners who are doing their best but struggle with paperwork and red tape; the teenager living with his nan who has found a safe haven at the Diamond Valley Learning Centre; and the family confronting the challenges of an adult son now confined to a wheelchair. These are just a few examples of the stories I heard last year, just a few of the challenges that people in my community face — challenges that we as lawmakers have to rise to meet. Not all of the things that happen in our lives happen through our choices or actions. Poverty took away some choices from my grandmother. Accidents can take away some of the choices available to people, such as this young man in a wheelchair. When things go wrong, we must step up and help people. We must lean in and support, not step aside and let people fall over.

I am proud to say that in my community we do step up. This can be seen in so many ways. It can be seen in those who donate to and help out at the Diamond Valley Food Share; those who give so much to CAVE — Community and Volunteers of Eltham; the terrific volunteers at our RSLs and the DViets, who always look out for their mates; those in our local Amnesty International group, who care about the plight of refugees and political prisoners; those who stand up for reconciliation with the Nillumbik Reconciliation Group; those who offer assistance through Diamond Valley Community Support; and those who help out at Nillumbik Community Health Service and at Banyule Community Health. It can be seen in our vibrant sports clubs and in our hardworking service clubs, like Eltham Rotary with its fantastic Eltham festival. We see it with the exceptional volunteers and staff at Araluen and in the magic that happens at Eltham Little Theatre. It can be seen in all of our community groups that focus on protecting our environment.

In my electorate we live among gum trees, foliaged hills, copper butterflies, creeks, wallabies and the Yarra River. Our people are passionate about protecting our green wedge — something Victorian Labor well understands, which is why it will legislate to protect these extraordinarily important natural assets. I thank Rupert Hamer for his decision in recognising early the importance of these breathing, living lungs that radiate out of our city.

I understand how important access to education and training is to my community, which is why so many locals were bitterly disappointed, in fact shocked, at the closure of Greensborough TAFE. Thanks to the strong campaign by many MPs, including the members for Bundoora, Ivanhoe and Yan Yean, the former member

for Eltham and myself, Labor will reopen Greensborough TAFE and expand the opportunities for local kids and those needing retraining. I thank the Premier for responding to our concerns. It is why Labor will rebuild Montmorency Secondary College and begin the process of rebuilding Greensborough Secondary College. It is why we will build a sporting precinct across the Eltham North Reserve and St Helena Secondary College. I understand local residents' frustration with transport, which is why Labor will increase peak-hour services on the Hurstbridge line and upgrade Bolton Street.

My community wants to feel safe, which is why we will rebuild the Country Fire Authority station at Plenty and issue the CFA at Research with a new pumper tanker. It is why the Andrews government will hold the Royal Commission into Family Violence.

My community understands that we need to work together as a community if we are to succeed. I will quote US Democrat Senator Elizabeth Warren, who said:

There is nobody in this country who got rich on their own ... You built a factory out there — good for you ... You moved your goods to market on roads the rest of us paid for. You hired workers the rest of us paid to educate. You were safe in your factory because of police forces and fire forces that the rest of us paid for ... You built a factory and it turned into something terrific or a great idea — God bless! But part of the underlying social contract is you take a hunk of that and pay forward for the next kid who comes along.

Like Elizabeth Warren, I believe in paying it forward; so does the Labor Party, through investing in the future by building the things that matter. We build roads and train lines, we build schools and hospitals, we build fairer communities. You get fairer communities through investing in people, regardless of where they come from or who they are. You get fairness by continuing to pay it forward. You work to cut greenhouse gas emissions, you work to help kids access education and training opportunities and you work to ensure a fair and affordable access to health care.

I stand here now, ready to pay it forward, and in the process of paying it forward I need to acknowledge all those who have supported me. I want to thank my parents, Sue and Bruce, who have been an amazing support to me, for which I am more than grateful. I thank my grandmothers for all that they gave me, which I could never pay back. I thank my brother for his love and companionship, and I thank him and his wife, Bianca, for the amazing work they put in raising my beautiful nephew, Cooper Jess, who faces his own challenges of living with Fragile X syndrome and autism. I thank my friend and mentor Steve Herbert,

who has always shown such faith in me; my friend and mentor Jenny Macklin, who has shown me what hard work and patience can achieve. I want to thank our local branch members, who have worked so hard over so many years. I am grateful for all the work local ambos and fireys have put into protecting our community, and I thank them for the new friendships I made last year and for the ongoing kindness and good humour they displayed throughout the campaign.

I want to thank my union, the Community and Public Sector Union, for its support. My parents have always been members of a union, and I happily follow their example, for my parents, like ambos and fireys, are not thugs.

I thank my friend Kosmos and all at the state office for their fantastic campaign. I thank Trades Hall and union members who fought street by street to give our state a better deal and a better government. I want to thank all the volunteers for their hours and hours of work last year. I thank Nicole for her courage in stepping up and absorbing a huge workload with good humour, determination and exceptional organisation. I thank Clare for her perseverance, enthusiasm and fierce commitment. I thank the La Trobe Labor Club for its support of Clare and myself and their exceptional work ethic. I thank Jennie Juchnevicius for decades of hard work and her loyal and long-lasting friendship and support. I thank Joe Battanta for being able to do pretty much everything. I thank my friends Adele, Caz, Dani, Geoff, Greg, Jenny, Olaf and Paul for all they have done for me and my family.

I thank Ann, Antony, Lachlan and Emily for their amazing friendship, loyalty and belief in me. I thank Jason, Janine, Alistair and Catherine for their great support. I thank my neighbouring MPs for their support over the last 12 months as well.

I am blessed to have a wonderful family. I have a family who recognises that, with support, women and mothers can achieve amazing things. I thank my loyal, loving and patient partner, Mark, and our gorgeous and clever girls, Ella and Molly. I love the three of them with all my heart.

I stand here grateful for all that these people have given me, and I promise I will keep paying it forward. Thank you.

Debate interrupted.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER — Order! I would like to acknowledge and welcome to the Parliament of Victoria Mr Upul Pushpakumara, the Consul General for Sri Lanka; Captain Angelo Mathews; world-renowned veteran cricketers who I understand will be retiring after this world cup, Kumar Sangakkara and Mahela Jayawardene; veteran cricketers Tillakaratne Dilshan and Lasith Malinga; and the entire Sri Lankan cricket team.

I welcome also my good friend Liz Beattie, who has contributed tremendously to the Sri Lankan community in Victoria and the relationship between Victoria and Sri Lanka. Welcome to Melbourne as we host the International Cricket Council Cricket World Cup 2015.

Consul-General, I am happy to see the team and the community here as we celebrate the achievement of the Sri Lankan cricket team, to cheer them on and wish them good luck.

The Minister for Sport and Minister for Tourism and Major Events is fully aware of the inappropriateness of wearing a cap in the chamber. It is unparliamentary, and therefore I will confiscate his cap. It will become part of the Speaker's memorabilia collection and later will be presented to the cricket team. Further, the member for Footscray's cap will be confiscated and later will be presented to the Sri Lankan cricket team.

Again, we welcome you to the Parliament.

GOVERNOR'S SPEECH

Address-in-reply

Debate resumed.

Ms VICTORIA (Bayswater) — I acknowledge the Sri Lankan cricket team and wish them all the best of luck — unless they are playing the Australian team.

In commencing my address-in-reply, I wish to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet and pay my respects to their elders both past and present. I also pay my respects to you in your elevation to your high office, Speaker, and to the Deputy Speaker. I also congratulate the new ministers and shadow ministers and welcome all the newly elected members.

I am very humbled to have been re-elected to my position as the member for Bayswater district for a third term, and I look forward to working hard to guarantee that my constituents and all Victorians are provided for

by the current government. My commitment to the people of Bayswater district is that I will gladly be their voice within these walls once again and will fight to ensure that the current government keeps its word on all its election commitments. In the past four years the coalition government achieved a great deal for this wonderful state, and I urge the current government to stay true to its word and to continue to grow and develop Victoria for future generations.

Over the past four years in Bayswater district we have celebrated many achievements, from the widening and duplication of Stud Road at a cost of more than \$12.7 million to the establishment of the Birch Street Children and Family Centre at Bayswater Primary School. We put protective services officers at the Ringwood, Bayswater and Boronia railway stations. They were a welcome advancement on commuter safety, and their presence was the primary driver of dramatically lower crime rates. Significant infrastructure improvements included \$1.3 million for a signalised intersection at Tormore Road, a right-turn arrow at Coleman Road, a signalised pedestrian crossing near Waldreas Retirement Village and a major upgrade of signal work at Canterbury and Colchester roads.

Education is the key to future generations, and the \$16 million for the combined Boronia K-12 College, \$2.34 million for upgrades at Bayswater North Primary School and \$849 000 for stage 1 of the redevelopment of Boronia Heights Primary School were milestone achievements. There were also significant contributions to major local projects, including \$66 million towards the Ringwood railway station upgrade; \$3 million towards Aquanation, which will be a great asset within our community; and \$1.5 million for a new ambulance station in Wantirna. Add to all of these the local community grants which helped fund everything from kindergarten equipment, computers, festivals, sports club hall and grounds upgrades, arts and languages in schools programs and so much more, and you realise that the Bayswater electorate's needs have been heard and also acted upon.

The past few years have been an especially great privilege for me, firstly, in the role of Parliamentary Secretary for the Arts and then as Minister for the Arts, a role I cherished and loved. I would like to thank the former Premier, the member for South-West Coast, for his trust in my knowledge and love of this sector by appointing me as the Minister for the Arts, where I was fortunate to have met so many wonderful arts practitioners, professionals and administrators.

In Victoria, the arts contribute over \$11.4 billion each year to our gross state product and deliver the equivalent of 110 000 full-time jobs across the state. This can only occur in an environment where the economy is strong and Victorians have the means to experience and support the arts. In the last Parliament, the coalition government created nearly 79 000 new jobs and delivered economic security to people across the state. When people are employed, they have higher discretionary spending and have greater choices as to how those funds are spent. This provides new prospects and new audiences for Victorian artists, whether they perform and create in our world-renowned buildings, regional theatres, warehouses or laneways.

Some of our finest achievements in the arts portfolio over the past four years have been the \$24 million given to the Victorian College of the Arts to secure its future; a very substantial \$4 million investment in the creation of a contemporary arts precinct in Collingwood; educational programs at Museum Victoria for kindergarten-age students to high school students and of course the wonderful new exhibits there; more than half a million attendees at White Night Melbourne last year, about 300 000 the year before and of course this year it was also a booming success — a legacy of the Baillieu and Napthine governments; and \$4.5 million given to the National Gallery of Victoria to introduce a new summer season of major exhibitions and programs, with a focus on contemporary art and design, including the amazing Melbourne Now exhibition, which attracted some 758 000 people and of course the very beautiful Jean Paul Gaultier exhibition, which has just ended. Some quarter of a million people attended that.

Arts Victoria's new Organisations Investment Program provides multiyear operational support to non-profit, non-government arts organisations, providing many artists and arts organisations right across the state access to funding for the very first time in their history.

There is also the Small Town Transformations program, which supported large-scale creative projects that would inspire, transform and create a lasting legacy in Victorian towns with populations of 1500 people or fewer. There have been an abundance of Broadway musicals and other theatre productions, including many new local works, which has ensured that there have been opportunities for our amazing local talent to practise their craft professionally.

Victoria is and will remain the cultural capital of Australia. It is home to the strongest and most prolific artistic community in the country as well as to Australia's pre-eminent collecting, creating and

performing arts institutions. There is never a day or night when those wishing to participate in or observe an arts event could be disappointed. From world-class theatrical performances and visiting art exhibitions to hundreds upon hundreds of opera, jazz, blues, classical and contemporary performances, there is always something to see and do, cementing Victoria's place on the world's cultural and artistic map. I wish to place on the record my thanks to all at Arts Victoria and those in the industry who worked alongside me to create opportunities and growth in this important sector.

In the women's affairs portfolio, we provided countless opportunities for women to grow, become employed, be inspired and excel.

In consumer affairs so much work was done in protecting Victorians against unscrupulous operators by educating them and, most importantly, running proactive prevention programs. To the staff of both departments, I acknowledge your hard work and say thank you.

I also thank my outstanding team of ministerial staff — Judy, CJ, Clementine, Will, Suzie, Melina, Catherine and Alex, who were unwavering in their dedication, support and wisdom. You were my collective rock, and I miss you all dreadfully. I also want to thank my driver, Dennis Kalokathis, for his good humour and for sharing our parallel love of such a diverse variety of music. No matter how tired I was, he could always find a Bee Gees song for us to have blaring in the car to sing along to.

Now we need to look to the present and future. There are many local issues to rectify for the people of Bayswater district over the next four years — issues I am passionate about. The removal of level crossings at Mountain Highway and Scoresby Road is a high priority to ensure safety for motorists and pedestrians. Although the ALP candidate made much noise about the Labor Party's promises to remove them, the crossings do not appear on the Andrews government's priority list. This is despite the millions of dollars already spent under the coalition government on the undertaking of community consultation, design works and preparation of the sites. At every opportunity I will push for the early fulfilment of this promise.

We need a new scout hall for the 1st Bayswater scouts. The present facility, which is crumbling and dangerous, must be replaced. A new and modern Country Fire Authority station for Bayswater is also an urgent requirement for community and occupational health and safety to ensure that our dedicated volunteers can carry out the work asked of them. They are dedicated,

they are hardworking, they are tireless and we need to respect the work they do.

Upgrades to Boronia Heights Primary School and The Basin Primary School were promised during the election campaign, and these will ensure that students of the Bayswater district can access a high standard of education in appropriate surroundings. Pedestrian crossings, road improvements and funding for health services, including the cancer centre at Maroondah Hospital, are also all high priorities for my electorate, and I will pursue these vigorously to ensure that they are delivered.

I thank all those who have given me the opportunity to serve the electorate of Bayswater for a third term. My sincerest gratitude goes to those who had enough faith in my capabilities to vote for me. I am truly humbled by this honour and once again commit to working diligently to bring about positive change in our area.

In my shadow ministerial roles, there is much to pursue. In the arts it is imperative that the contemporary arts precinct I spoke about before, the project in Johnston Street, Collingwood, go ahead. This will provide a solid and secure base for contemporary artists and organisations, regardless of medium, and ensure that they are given every chance to establish themselves in a sustainable way. Part of this will be the provision of unique opportunities for collaboration which will be available in this incubator-like environment. There is also the furthering of projects in the Southbank arts precinct. The blueprint commissioned by the former coalition government gives us the opportunity to progress this area following on from initiatives we began, such as the handing over of the old police horse stables to the Victorian College of the Arts for creative spaces — a feat that had been attempted for some 40 years and that was achieved under the coalition government.

In tourism there are many areas where further development is possible, and I will work with the industry to better understand its priorities. Melbourne is the major events capital of Australia, and I will continue to push the government to ensure that we do not lose that title.

In Aboriginal affairs the community members I have already met with have given me ideas as to the direction in which some of their issues need to head, so I will be working with them to ensure that they have a strong voice in the Victorian parliament.

To finish up, I thank my colleagues, the administrative arm of the Victorian Liberal Party and some of my

strongest supporters: Alan and Val Jenkins, Charles and Bernice Hogarth, Max and Janet Williams, Aldo Gianchino, Michael Gilmour, Andrew Murphy, John Croft, my entire campaign team and the 100-plus tireless volunteers who believe as passionately as I do in the Liberal Party philosophy and its ability to govern in an economically and socially responsible way. To my electorate staff, Heather Uebergang and Elisa Miller, who keep the home fires burning and show compassion and patience on a daily basis: thanks, ladies!

Lastly, I want to take the time to thank my family. I thank my beautiful daughter, Charlotte, for tolerating the hours I spend at work and loving me unconditionally anyway, for making me laugh and for always having a huge hug and endless kisses available. I love you, sweetheart. And to my supportive and loving partner, Angelo: without you, this campaign would have been so very different. Your positive attitude, marketing advice and steady, gentle nature helped me more than you will ever know. You are amazing, and I love you very much. To everybody else who helped out and made this possible, I say thank you.

Ms KILKENNY (Carrum) — In the Speaker's absence, I take the opportunity to congratulate him on his appointment to the high office of Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. His journey in coming to that role as a former asylum seeker and refugee from Uruguay is inspiring, but it also demonstrates the opportunities and possibilities that are available in this country and shows us the benefits of a multicultural society.

I congratulate the Premier, the Honourable Daniel Andrews, on forming government.

And I congratulate each and every member in this house and in the other place on their election to the 58th Parliament.

As this is my first speech in Parliament, I wish to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land where Parliament now stands, the Kulin nation. I pay my respects to their elders past and present. Australia's first peoples have looked after this land for thousands of years. I hope that we can learn what they have known for so long — that we must live with and respect our natural environment.

Being elected to represent Carrum is a great honour. I thank the people of Carrum for electing me. I acknowledge the trust they have placed in me, and I embrace the responsibilities that come with this new role. I undertake to all my constituents to represent

them equally and impartially and to advocate strongly on their behalf.

I acknowledge the former member for Carrum, Donna Bauer, for her contribution to the electorate of Carrum. And I acknowledge another former member for Carrum and my friend Jenny Lindell, who so ably served the people of Carrum for three terms, from 1999 to 2010.

I am here because of the hard work and support of so many others. I am humbled by the sheer dedication, commitment and selflessness shown by the team of volunteers who worked so tirelessly on the Carrum campaign to help elect me and an Andrews Labor government, some of whom are in the gallery today. I make special mention of Jackson Hitchcock and my youngest volunteers, Brendan Price and Caitlyn Wright.

I express my sincere gratitude to Lee Tarlamis, a former member for South Eastern Metropolitan Region in the Council, for his support, encouragement and friendship — he will be back — and to Alan Griffin, the federal member for Bruce, and Jude Perera, the member for Cranbourne, for their support in my preselection. Thanks also to Mark Dreyfus, the federal member for Isaacs, and to many of my current parliamentary colleagues, including Jill Hennessy, the member for Altona, and Natalie Hutchins, the member for Sydenham.

I thank the Victorian branch of the Australian Labor Party and members of the Frankston and Chelsea branches of the ALP.

I acknowledge the committed and focused women at EMILY's List, in particular my mentor Hutch Hussein and, of course, Joan Kirner, an incredible role model for so many Victorian women.

And there are the people I have been privileged to work with over the years, including my team at ANZ and my former colleagues at Freehills.

I thank those close to me — my good friend Jane Anstee-Wedderburn; my parents, Rae and John; and my two rocks, Judd and Raff — for their patience and good humour but also their strategic and philosophical advice.

I also pay tribute to our extraordinary firefighters, paramedics, teachers, emergency services personnel and police. These men and women are selfless, dedicated and caring members of our community. I am grateful for the outstanding contributions they make every day.

And thanks to Luke Hilakari and the Trades Hall We Are Union movement.

Finally, please allow me to express my enormous delight in being surrounded by so many Labor women in this chamber and the record number of women in the Victorian cabinet. This movement towards more women in Parliament is a cause for celebration. I hope it inspires many younger women to seek out preselection and run as candidates, not just in the Labor Party but in all parties.

I too wish to see a similar shift in the representation of women on corporate boards and in senior management positions. If any incentive is needed, one need only look at studies in America which found that, as a group, Fortune 500 companies with women CEOs outperformed the overall market and that companies with the greatest number of women on their boards performed significantly better financially than companies with fewer female board members.

As we near International Women's Day, on 8 March, it is worth reflecting on recent statistics which show that the pay gap between men and women in Australia has widened to a 10-year high. Women are now earning 18.2 per cent less than their male counterparts for the same work, and women are falling behind in superannuation and retirement savings.

In the 1960s and 1970s my mother and others of her generation fought hard for equal rights for women. Nearly half a century later it seems we are still facing the same issues and the same discrimination. We must continue to fight for equal rights for women.

We must also acknowledge the epidemic which is family violence. Whilst our Australian of the Year, Rosie Batty, is an inspiration, the circumstances of her appointment are just so utterly tragic and awful. That she is able to transform some of that grief into a crusade to end family violence is remarkable, but she cannot do it alone. Our communities, including our men, also need to stand up and take responsibility for this social problem.

I am proud that an Andrews Labor government has established Australia's first Royal Commission into Family Violence to consider ways to prevent family violence and to support survivors of it. I spoke recently with a woman who lived through family violence, and she explained to me that she is a survivor of family violence, not a victim. Not only will I advocate for the rights of women; I also believe there are many others who need a voice in Parliament.

I was on the board of a unique and very talented theatre group, Back to Back Theatre. This contemporary theatre company is created by actors, each one of whom has an intellectual disability. Their work is confronting. It challenged me to think again about the value of individual lives and of the need to recognise potential in everyone, particularly those who are marginalised.

I was certainly proud to see a federal Labor government introduce legislation for the establishment of a national disability insurance scheme.

I will also be a strong advocate for the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people.

I was proud to march alongside our Premier in this year's Pride March, and I pay tribute to the first appointment by any Australian Parliament of a minister with responsibility for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex issues.

I would like to turn now to my electorate of Carrum. 'Look at moy'! Kath and Kim, that infamous mother-daughter duo, live not in Fountain Lakes but in Patterson Lakes. This iconic and extremely successful Australian television series was filmed right in the heart of the Carrum electorate. I should add, having worked with the Australian Children's Television Foundation and Screenrights, that I believe Australian film and television programs are crucial in helping us recognise and celebrate our own cultural and national identity.

Perhaps someone could make a film about the Carrum Cowboys, a tag given by police to a group of teenagers who, in the 1950s and 1960s, rode their horses too fast along the footpaths and foreshore of Carrum. These Carrum Cowboys on horseback were often chased through the streets by local police on foot. The local football team is now named after them.

The electorate of Carrum is virtually a new electorate following the recent redistribution. It falls within the two federal electorates of Dunkley and Isaacs and stretches across three local government areas: Frankston, Kingston and Dandenong. It takes in the seaside suburbs of Bonbeach, Carrum and Seaford and extends east to Patterson Lakes, Carrum Downs, Bangholme, Sandhurst, Skye and parts of Dandenong South.

It boasts 15 kilometres of the best and most pristine white sandy beaches in Melbourne, patrolled in summer by our dedicated volunteer lifeguards from Life Saving Victoria at surf clubs at Seaford, Carrum and Bonbeach and by the Carrum Coast Guard, who are also all volunteers. One of the busiest and most popular boat launching facilities is located on Patterson River.

And we have the Ramsar listed Edithvale-Seaford wetlands, a site of significance up there with Kakadu. It is a resting place for over 100 different species of birds, including migratory birds, most of which are protected by international treaties.

We also have such exquisitely named natural features as Boggy Creek, Carrum Carrum Swamp and Eel Race Drain.

Carrum is a diverse area of residential development, a number of small rural holdings as well as small business and some large areas of commercial and light industry and manufacturing.

A number of businesses are likely to be affected by the withdrawal of the automotive industry. I will work with them to seek to minimise that impact. In the same way, I will work with small business across Carrum to boost local employment opportunities, particularly for our young people.

Whilst generally the electorate caters to a range of housing choices and income levels, demand for affordable and low-income housing is on the rise. This need is being met to some extent by caravan and cabin parks and a number of boarding houses, and there is the beach. However, as rental affordability decreases, new and improved models of housing solutions will be needed. I will be working hard in this area.

There is the Frankston railway line, with four stations in the electorate and nine level crossings, four of which are slated for removal. Away from the coast the area is serviced by a network of buses. Cross-connections — for example, linking Carrum Downs and Sandhurst to train stations in the electorate — are an area to be examined. There are 14 primary schools and 2 secondary schools in my electorate. Education will be a major focus of my work.

In preparing this speech I have reflected on two aspects of my life that have shaped my values and underpin what I want to achieve during my time in Parliament. The first is my family and growing up overseas. The second is my work as a lawyer. My mother, Rae, is a strong feminist and someone whose drive for social justice and equitable outcomes often saw no boundaries. By school age my sister and I had attended many public meetings on homelessness, education, women's rights and child care. We campaigned for Gough Whitlam. Campaigning continued when my family and I moved to America in the 1980s, hosting Democrat meetings at our home and campaigning for Walter Mondale and Geraldine Ferraro. I should add that even back then I was filled with a strong sense of

pride, knowing I was helping the campaign of America's first female vice-presidential candidate.

My father, John, has always recognised the value of education and the opportunities that come with it. With his work my family and I relocated to different parts of the world. For my sister and me this meant growing up in Sydney, Boston, Hong Kong and Indonesia. Through our moves I learnt about difference and tolerance. I saw how education could open up opportunities for the children of low-income families, and I saw how families became trapped in cycles of intergenerational poverty where their governments and society did not value education.

I also witnessed inequality — where the wealthy always seemed to have greater rights and greater access to services, information, education, jobs and opportunities. All of this seemed so inherently unfair to me and was part of the reason I chose to study law. I have worked as a lawyer for nearly 20 years. For a large part of that time I have worked in commercial litigation and in corporate legal roles; however, for a few years I worked at the Kimberley Land Council in Broome.

On a visit to Fitzroy Crossing, a town 400 kilometres east of Broome, I met an Aboriginal elder during a native title claim hearing. This woman taught me about her people's Dreaming and songlines, and she also told me that until a Japanese warplane flew overhead during World War II she did not know that Europeans had settled in Australia. She had literally walked out of the desert. Seventy years later she was a lead claimant in a native title claim, having to prove her connection to the land.

It is now just over 7 years since the national apology and 50 years since the Freedom Ride, yet the latest *Closing the Gap* report finds only small gains in Indigenous life expectancy, no progress in halving the gap in Indigenous employment and a failure to meet early childhood school enrolment targets. We must renew our focus on and commitment to closing the gap.

Whilst I may not have worked in government before, as a lawyer I understand the rule of law, the value of democracy and the need for public institutions to uphold the highest standards of integrity, discipline, accountability and transparency. People in public office are in positions of trust. It is incumbent upon each and every elected representative in this Parliament to put the public interest of Victorians above all else — even politics.

As a lawyer I know that laws should reflect our community values. For me, this means there is no place for laws that make bigotry or racial intolerance acceptable. There is no place for laws that deny basic health care to people who cannot afford it or laws that deny a person the opportunity to lead a decent and fulfilling life, and there is no place for laws that take away a woman's right to choose.

However, there is a place for laws that permit anyone, no matter their sexual preference, to marry the person they love. There is a place for laws that recognise the urgent and pressing need to protect our environment, and there is a place for laws that protect workers rights. There is a place for laws that understand the role of education in helping give our young people the ability to lead fulfilling lives, and I believe there is a place for laws that give someone the ability to end their life peacefully at a time of their choosing.

I stand here today as a proud member of the Australian Labor Party in an Andrews Labor government — a government with a policy agenda that is progressive, inclusive and fair, one that will help individuals realise their full potential and one that will make Victoria's economy strong.

My great-aunt Mary passed away just before the election. She would have been proud today. She used to say to me, 'Always remember your Labor values, and exercise humility'. She also used to say that the Irish in me helps make me strong, loyal, passionate, witty, bright and optimistic in the face of devastating reality — and I think it was Voltaire who said, 'A witty saying proves nothing'.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

ADJOURNMENT

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

Colac police station

Mr MULDER (Polwarth) — I call on the Minister for Police to commit to a new police station in Colac. The coalition government committed to providing Colac police officers and the community with a new station should the coalition be re-elected. Colac is one of the few remaining stations in the region that has not been fully rebuilt, and the situation is becoming dire for the officers who use the facilities.

The station had a modest upgrade in the 1970s, which did not include the criminal investigation or highway

patrol sections. Detectives and highway patrol officers are still working out of the old section of the building. Portables dot the fence line, the old bluestone cells are being used as storage and officers are crammed into other sections of the building. With an estimated 65 officers expected to be working out of the building in the not-too-distant future, it is important for the morale of members of the existing workforce that they see some light at the end of the tunnel and get a commitment to a new station.

The conditions at Colac are so bad that the cells are incapable of holding prisoners overnight, resulting in prisoners being transferred to either Warrnambool or Geelong and then being transferred back to Colac for court appearances. This practice is both time consuming and expensive. There are significant operational and security issues that I am not prepared to air due to the fact that such admissions could compromise the safety of officers at Colac and potentially impact on police officers being able to discharge their duties in the best interests of the public.

Modern facilities would enable Colac police to better protect families from crime and antisocial behaviour and would enhance emergency response capabilities for our region. The current site is restrictive, with limited parking, and it was the intention of the coalition to identify a new site for the building. I acknowledge that the new station was a coalition commitment not matched by the incoming Labor government; however, the morale of our police force should not be governed by electoral boundaries. Police move in and out of Colac from around the state, and it is widely recognised that these facilities are substandard. I am also advised that the Police Association supports the Colac officers in their quest for modern, state-of-the-art policing facilities.

I suggest that perhaps the minister could ask his department to start to identify where the new police station could be built in Colac. There are several parcels of land — some held by local government and some held by state government — which could be suitable for a new police station, and as an interim measure the minister could identify a site and at least give the local police some encouragement that the current government is interested in the morale of local police and interested in providing good facilities for the community. Then when funding becomes available, the government will be in a position to commit to a new station.

Glen Eira College

Mr DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Deputy Premier and Minister for Education. The action I seek is confirmation of the government's commitment to Glen Eira College to provide \$9.5 million to build new library, art, science, sport and technology classrooms. I also ask that the minister visit Glen Eira College at his earliest convenience to discuss with staff, students and parents the future needs of this terrific school. Philip Dalidakis, a member for Southern Metropolitan Region in the other place, would also be happy to join us on that occasion, as he has expressed extraordinary support for the school, as would the member for Bentleigh.

Glen Eira College is a growing school just outside the borders of the Oakleigh electorate. It is home to more than 600 students from over 50 ethnic groups, providing wonderful cultural diversity. Glen Eira College has become a true success story in recent years. Over 90 per cent of student graduates progress to the university or TAFE course of their choice. The college provides a fantastic language program, including Hebrew and French as well as extensive classes in English as a second language. There are vocational education and training programs for senior students, strong extracurricular activities and, I am told, a keen debating program that in the past has seen Glen Eira College students taking part in debates in this very chamber.

Glen Eira College makes active contributions to the community as well as raising funds for charity. It is a school that genuinely gives back. An example is its involvement in the Mother's Day Classic and the local Relay for Life, where last October in Murrumbeena I saw firsthand the many students, staff and parents walking late into the night to support cancer research.

Last year I had the privilege of paying a visit to the school to discuss its future with the principal, Sheereen Kinder. I was very pleased to talk about Labor's commitment to the redevelopment of this wonderful school. I was also very impressed with the enthusiasm, energy and great community spirit that was clearly evident at the college. I know that a commitment of funds to this school will provide the state-of-the-art facilities required by the school and its community. I look forward to the opportunity to work with the minister and Glen Eira College teachers, the principal and the school community to create an even brighter future for this wonderful school.

Gaming licences

Mr R. SMITH (Warrandyte) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation. I request that the minister engage with the Tatts Group with regard to increasing flexibility in its franchise agreements. The Victorian government has awarded Tattersall's with the licence to sell lottery products in Victoria. In doing so, it is important that the government stand up for the newsagents and lottery product sellers in our communities. Franchise agreements stipulate designated areas for lottery products to be sold. These are often not in ideal places in the stores, in the context of ensuring that service areas provide good access for customers and that entrances remain clear.

Retailers claim they will do their best to comply with these agreement conditions. Of course they do — they are in the business of ensuring that they make as many sales as they can. In many instances, however, the layout of the store will not accommodate the stringent conditions set out by Tatts, who should recognise that a franchisee will know their customer movements and requirements much better than Tatts itself. In the broader scheme of things, Labor's record in the gaming space has been fraught with disaster. Delays in issuing gaming licences in 2006 by then Minister for Gaming, the member for Mulgrave and current Premier, meant Tattersall's faced uncertainty as its then current licences were due to expire.

In 2007 the same gaming minister, the member for Mulgrave, made a complete debacle of the dual licensing agreement as he brought Intralot into the Victorian gaming market. Small businesses and newsagents right across the state were left in limbo as they were left without computer systems, software training or even scratchie tickets due to the bungling of the member for Mulgrave. In October last year the *Herald Sun* reported:

The Intralot contract was a disaster and a disaster of Labor's making ...

It is a skeleton that is emerging out of Mr Andrews' closet.

With the loss of \$63 million following the disastrous deal, Intralot has launched a multimillion-dollar law suit against the state to reclaim those losses. It seems that, once again, the Victorian taxpayer will have to cough up for the Premier's mistake. It is, however, a paltry amount compared to the \$540 million payout that the state was forced to make to Tattersall's because of a compensation claim that was made due to the Premier's ill-informed decision to rip up their licensing

agreements, a decision which he said would not incur compensation claims. Does that sound familiar?

It is within the power of this gaming minister to take one small step forward after the bungled and expensive record of her predecessor, the member for Mulgrave. In doing so, she will be supporting small business owners and the heart of many of our communities, which is the local newsagent. I again ask the minister to ask Tattersall's to show some leniency and common sense to its franchisees and engage in more meaningful discussions around the location of dedicated areas and lottery terminals.

Mernda rail extension

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) — My adjournment matter is for the attention of the Minister for Public Transport. I seek further advice regarding the timing of construction of the rail extension to Mernda. Over the last four years on many occasions I have spoken about the need for a rail line extension to Mernda. Those on the other side might listen, because in 2011 the postcode area of Mernda and Doreen had 19 000 people, and by 2014 that had doubled — under the watch of those across there — but there was no appearance, no understanding and no compassion from them for the needs of Mernda and Doreen. The many times I raised the issue of the rail extension for Mernda — or roads, or buses, or anything — in this chamber, my pleas on behalf of that community, which included petitions bearing over 5000 signatures, were regularly greeted with laughter and derision by the then Minister for Public Transport.

I was then compelled to raise these matters for the attention of the former Minister for Planning, who was then in the other place and is now the member for Bulleen in this chamber, asking him — particularly as he represented the Northern Metropolitan Region — but he was too busy talking about casino link. He talked about the need for a train at Fishermans Bend, but I think it was somewhere near the casino, because he said that in 15 years the population there would be the size of that of Shepparton. 'Earth to the now member for Bulleen', who has done a bit of a safari around electorates and chambers.

Honourable members interjecting.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order!

Ms GREEN — I am pleased to say I defeated him in 2002; the Yan Yean electorate escaped him then. He was not interested at all in the public transport and roads needs of my community. It is now incumbent on

Labor, which delivered the South Morang rail extension and made sure that the design of that project was definitely ready for extension to Mernda in the future to deliver an extension. The previous government's timetable was 2032, but when Yan Yean became notionally a Liberal seat, on the eve of the election it discovered it and miraculously threw money at the show. But the community did not believe the previous government. After all, it went to the last election promising four rail lines but delivered none. I ask the Minister for Public Transport to assist my community — —

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

Swifts Creek Recreation Reserve

Mr T. BULL (Gippsland East) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Sport, and the action I seek is for the upgrading of the facilities at the Swifts Creek Recreation Reserve to be funded. I am advised by members of the community that the East Gippsland Shire Council currently has an application lodged with the Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure under the country football and netball funding program for this very worthwhile project.

Swifts Creek is a small community in my electorate which has a very active football and netball club. As we see with a lot of country communities like Swifts Creek, the football and netball club has become very much the backbone of the local community. The more kids from these rural townships that we can get into playing sport, certainly the better for their lifestyle and their growth as individuals. These facilities are extremely important.

The Swifts Creek Recreation Reserve committee of management and the East Gippsland Shire Council have both identified that the current playing surface of the netball courts in particular is in need of significant repair. The project proposes major drainage works to reduce the impact of water on the courts as well as patching and resurfacing and line marking. The existing surface is currently problematic for netballers, especially in wet weather, so this upgrade will bring significant benefits to players of all ages.

Prior to the November 2014 election the then coalition government committed to this very project for the Swifts Creek community. The then Minister for Sport and Recreation came to Swifts Creek and looked at the facilities and made a significant commitment to funding this worthwhile project. The club now has \$14 500 to contribute to the project, which is a significant

contribution from a small rural and regional community. The shire and the Swifts Creek Recreation Reserve committee of management would appreciate this project being given strong consideration — and I see the Minister for Sport coming into the chamber — under the country football and netball program. Now that he has come into the chamber, the minister should also be aware that I would be more than happy to host a visit up there by him to come to look at the facility. I might even buy the minister one of the famous Swifts Creek pies if he is prepared to come and look to make sure the project is funded.

The facility upgrade would mean a great deal to the people of Swifts Creek, and the wider community benefits would be absolutely enormous. I call on the minister to ensure these important works are funded.

Thomastown electorate schools

Ms HALFPENNY (Thomastown) — I raise a matter with the Minister for Education. The action I seek is for the minister to visit a number of previously neglected schools attended by many children in the electorate of Thomastown. I request that the Minister for Education attend a Thomastown education day involving a visit to the William Ruthven Secondary College and the Thomastown West and Lalor Gardens primary schools with me and other local MPs to look at the great work these schools have done in the face of extreme adversity.

During the four miserable years of the state Liberal-Nationals government, schools attended by children in the Thomastown electorate were neglected and ignored. There has been no money spent on infrastructure or facilities in four years.

The minister knows these schools well. He visited them when in opposition and saw firsthand the woeful state they are in. The two primary schools had beautiful new buildings built by the Brumby Labor government, but they were left unfinished and half done when the Liberal government was elected. In the case of Lalor Gardens Primary School, students were forced to wear gumboots to school because outside areas were left as abandoned building sites, as no money was provided for remediation or landscaping.

The school was forced to cut educational programs in order to be able to purchase crushed rock so that it could at least make safe what should have been play spaces. Some puddles were so deep that they were deemed drowning hazards. There were no outside play facilities — an aspect of schooling that is so important in this age of concern around child inactivity and

obesity. The minister attended this school and met with parents, teachers and the principal to help them as well as he could.

In the case of Thomastown West Primary School, no money was allocated to fund the second building of classrooms, and it was left as a concrete slab and exposed girders. It took a lot of argument and bad publicity to get the job finished. There was no money to make play equipment safe or for outside areas.

Then there is William Ruthven Secondary College, left to languish and fall apart before our very eyes, with leaky roofs, broken walls and spaces difficult enough to teach in, let alone learn. But that school has done amazing things. Data shows that 80 per cent of students achieved Victorian certificate of education scores that allowed them to go on to university studies. The Minister for Education knows all this because he has visited this school as well. He pledged during our very successful exhibition in Queen's Hall to rebuild it if Labor were elected.

I ask the minister to revisit these schools so he can see the impressive work they have done in these tough times — during the four difficult years of a cold and heartless Liberal government.

Ferntree Gully–Henderson roads, Knoxfield

Mr WELLS (Rowville) — I would like to raise a matter of concern for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. The action I seek is an upgrade of the intersection of Ferntree Gully Road and Henderson Road in Knoxfield. This intersection has a significant amount of traffic turning right from Ferntree Gully Road into Henderson Road — particularly large truck traffic, including a large number of B-doubles involved in food distribution.

Whilst this intersection was appropriate for the 1990s, larger trucks, the area having become more built up, more businesses moving to the area and a greater population around Knoxfield mean that this intersection is now chaotic. The main problem is that the right-hand turning lane is too narrow and much too short. At peak times trucks line up in the turning lane, but because there are so many of them they spread out down the main road. This means traffic banks up behind the trucks that are trying to turn right. On Ferntree Gully Road traffic comes to a standstill until the trucks can turn right and free up the lane, which sometimes takes a significant amount of time.

VicRoads is aware of this problem. It has been raised by Knox City Council and I have raised it directly with

VicRoads on a number of occasions, so VicRoads understands that this problem has to be fixed. The right-hand lane needs to be extended and widened to allow large trucks to turn safely into Henderson Road. The right-hand signal needs to be adjusted to ensure that the line of trucks can turn. At the same time, a left-hand signal needs to be adjusted for trucks and cars coming out of Henderson Road into Ferntree Gully Road.

When we made inquiries about this early last year, VicRoads assured us it was in the capital works program for the 2015–16 financial year. I ask the minister to investigate this issue and ensure that action is taken to upgrade this intersection.

Coburg North Primary School

Ms BLANDTHORN (Pascoe Vale) — I appreciate the opportunity to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Education. The action I seek is that the minister meet with the principal of Coburg North Primary School and representatives from the community to discuss the ever-increasing demand for places at the school and to consider sustainable solutions to accommodate growth. The need for this discussion has arisen as a result of the unforeseen and unprecedented growth in enrolments that is occurring at Coburg North Primary School. Since 2007 the school's student population has increased by a staggering 147 per cent. In addition, the school council forecasts that the rapid surge in enrolments will continue well into the future as the population of the school's neighbouring suburbs is projected to rise.

The growth in the student population over recent years has placed increasing strain on Coburg North Primary School's facilities. To date the school has accommodated the increase in enrolment numbers by arranging for three double portable classrooms to be placed on the site. However, the continued placement of portable classrooms to meet the demand is not a feasible solution in the long term as further portable classrooms will encroach on the students' valuable outdoor space — namely, the school oval and the playground.

Coburg North primary is a vibrant school with an active and dedicated parent community that is consistently implementing innovative ideas and generating funds to upgrade the school's facilities. A great example of this has been the school's decision to allow the Coburg farmers market to operate from the premises. This beneficial collaboration raises much-needed revenue, which has allowed for improvements to the school kitchen and playground.

It has been pleasing to see that the students have also been included in the process of planning for the future needs of the school. Recently some students were assigned the task of creating designs for the school's future layout. They took to this task with great gusto and enthusiasm, and it is wonderful to see that the school is cultivating such creative and imaginative minds. This was evidenced by one design that included a swimming pool. Although admittedly ambitious at this stage, it is nevertheless a worthy dream for the future.

The school was forgotten by the coalition government in the previous four years. It would be greatly appreciated if the Minister for Education could tour this school and meet with the wonderful Coburg North Primary School community, to hear their ideas and to discuss sustainable and enduring solutions to address the rapid increase in student enrolments at Coburg North.

Wonthaggi education precinct

Mr PAYNTER (Bass) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Education. I ask that the minister commit funds to build the new education precinct at Wonthaggi in the upcoming budget. During the 2014 election campaign the coalition government committed \$21 million for the new education precinct, which would be the home of Wonthaggi Secondary College. In 2010 the school was included in cycle 5, stage 2 of the Building Futures program under the then Labor government, with a physical presentation to take place a week after the election. With the change of government, the meeting did not proceed — hence the renewed commitment by the coalition in November 2014. You can understand the school's frustration when a further change in government again put the project in jeopardy.

The development of the education precinct is not just about the construction of modern buildings to match the quality of education that is currently provided at the school. It is about lifting the hopes and aspirations of current and future students and those seeking post-compulsory education in the region. The new precinct will have the potential to house not only the new secondary school but also a university and TAFE, providing a level of education not previously available in the area. Currently attendance and retention rates are well below the state average and university entrance rates are less than half the level that should be expected.

The new education precinct will address all of these issues. The Shire of Bass Coast stated:

Our vision is to co-locate a number of education services and facilities to a common site and with our partners on board to help with the planning I'm sure we can make this vision a reality.

The Department of Education and Training said:

The Bass Coast community is in the enviable position of having a fantastic opportunity at their disposal.

I am asking the Minister for Education to deliver on the Labor government's election promise to make Victoria the education state, starting with an immediate commitment to commence the Wonthaggi education precinct. I invite the minister to visit the existing school site with me to meet with the principal of Wonthaggi Secondary School, Mr Garry Dennis, and his team. I thank the Minister for Education for agreeing to meet with me tomorrow to discuss this very important issue.

Southland railway station

Mr STAIKOS (Bentleigh) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Public Transport and concerns the planned Southland railway station. The action I seek is for the minister to ensure that community consultation begins on the draft design. It is fair to say that Southland station has a long history. Since the Southland shopping centre was constructed in the late 1960s the community and indeed the owners of the shopping centre have been talking about one day having a new train station at Southland, given that the shopping centre is located right on the Frankston line. After the former Brumby Labor government committed to build the station in 2010, the Baillieu opposition announced that it would build a premium station for \$13 million. This promise turned out to be undercosted by more than \$30 million, and like many other things, Southland station fell victim to the inertia that the Baillieu and Napthine governments were famous for.

The former member for Bentleigh, who in 2010 promised a premium station with all of the bells and whistles one would expect with such a station, ended up very late in the term of the previous government announcing, in her words, a 'no frills' station. What was announced was a station without the usual amenities that the community would expect of a new station — not even toilets. Community members I have spoken to say that it is not a big ask for a new station at a major hub of activity like Southland shopping centre to include toilets. While the former government dithered on building the station, the Andrews government will get on with the job and build it.

I know as much as anyone just how important it is that Southland shopping centre has its own station. I worked at Southland for a number of years while I was at

university and remember taking the train from university in the city to get to work at Southland. My train would just zip by Southland and drop me off at Cheltenham station. The building of the station will make life easier for many people, including the thousands of young workers at Southland. Southland station will service a major hub for business, employment and consumers. It will improve access to public transport for the community and provide an alternative to Highett and Cheltenham stations. It will be one of the busiest stations on the Frankston line with an estimated 4400 passengers each day, many of whom currently travel by car on the already congested Nepean Highway.

Consultation on the draft design needs to begin, given the plans to commence construction later this year. We need to obtain feedback from local residents and key stakeholders on the design and I ask that —

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

Responses

Mr MERLINO (Minister for Education) — The members for Oakleigh, Thomastown, Pascoe Vale and Bass all raised matters regarding their local schools, and I thank them for raising those matters with me tonight. To begin with, I thank the member for Oakleigh for being such a great advocate for his community, especially in education. In the five inaugural speeches today and in previous inaugural speeches we have heard about the value members on this side of the house collectively place on education, and our commitment to our local schools is fantastic to witness.

As the member for Oakleigh outlined in his contribution, Labor made a commitment of \$9.5 million to build a new library and art, science, sport and technology classrooms to ensure that the students of Glen Eira College get the world-class school they deserve. I want to take this opportunity to reconfirm that commitment. We are committed to delivering in full on all of the promises we made in the lead-up to the last election. Furthermore, we would be very pleased to go back to the school, along with not only the member for Oakleigh but also with the member for Bentleigh and Philip Dalidakis, a member for Southern Metropolitan Region in the Council. This is a fantastic school which is delivering great outcomes, and I look forward to delivering for Glen Eira College on the important commitment we have made.

I also want to thank the member for Thomastown for raising not only the important project at William

Ruthven Secondary College but also the needs of many other schools in her electorate, including Thomastown West Primary School and Lalor Gardens Primary School. I remember going to Lalor Gardens Primary School and seeing the work site. The poor kids were in their beautiful brand-new facilities but they had to get to their classrooms by walking over planks or wearing gumboots because there were not enough funds to complete that important project at the school.

William Ruthven Secondary College is close to my heart, not only because of a visit I made with the member for Thomastown but also because of a very special occasion here at Queen's Hall, when we had a wonderful presentation, a celebration of the educational opportunities at William Ruthven. The member for Thomastown and I took the opportunity at that event to commit Labor to delivering \$10 million for a new year 7–9 building, a year 10–12 building and administration facilities at the college. This is a very important project for our community. The college is one of the schools I highlighted in my time as shadow Minister for Education as an example of the neglect of the former government. We have to get in and repair that damage, and I look forward to doing that. I also look forward very much to visiting the schools in the electorate of the member for Thomastown. Going back to those schools would be a great opportunity.

I thank the member for Pascoe Vale for her hard work in her community and thank her again for her focus on education in her electorate. I enjoyed engaging with the Westbreen Primary School community with the new member for Pascoe Vale and the former member for Pascoe Vale, and I note the commitment we made to that great school community. I thank the member for raising with me the issue of the needs at Coburg North Primary School. It sounds as if the school community at Coburg North is dedicated to ensuring that the students get the best outcomes and the infrastructure they need. Years of neglect mean our government schools are bursting at the seams, and we will be working hard to rectify this. I would be delighted to visit the school with the member for Pascoe Vale and see firsthand the dedication of the principal, the teachers and the school community.

Finally, the member for Bass raised with me the needs of the Wonthaggi community, and specifically the education precinct proposal, which includes a new secondary school — a \$21 million project. I do not want to spend too much time talking about the past, but when we talk about education capital, we need to spend a moment clarifying the issue. My response is similar to the comments I made to the member for Benambra during the last adjournment debate. This is not a

criticism of the current member for Bass. The member for Bass talked about Wonthaggi Secondary College being part of the Building Futures program in 2010 and about having a hard look at the education needs of the students and the needs of the community and working on what that means in terms of capital improvement.

Here we are in 2015, so a question has to be asked about the four-year period between 2010 and 2014. The current member for Bass should speak to the former member for Bass, a former Speaker, and ask him what happened to the needs of Wonthaggi following the 2010 election. If the former member for Bass is honest, he will inform the current member that the capital programs in the 2011–12, 2012–13 and 2013–14 budgets were cut by more than half. The capital program dived from an average of \$467 million per year to just over \$200 million per year. That meant many school communities that had done the hard work in 2009 and 2010 to deliver on the needs of those school communities found that their work was put on the shelf. The needs of Wonthaggi were put on the shelf for four years. I acknowledge a commitment was made in the lead-up to the election, but there was a four-year period when nothing happened, and that is because the former Liberal government cut the capital program in half.

I am with the new member for Bass: we need to think about the future and what we are going to do. I note the comments from the Bass Coast Shire Council about the benefits of co-locating facilities, whether they are educational facilities or other services such as maternal and child health services and other council services. Co-location provides great opportunities when we talk about a major redevelopment of a precinct. I am more than happy to discuss these issues further with the member for Bass, and we will be catching up tomorrow. I am happy to visit the school and engage with the school community about its needs into the future.

Mr NOONAN (Minister for Police) — I thank the member for Polwarth for raising a matter with me. I appreciate feedback from members, regardless of where they sit in this place, about matters concerning Victoria Police, and in particular community safety aspects in their electorates. The member for Polwarth raised with me the prospect of rebuilding the Colac police station, and in doing that he acknowledged it was not an election commitment made by Labor. In fact Labor did make a commitment to build a police station in the rapidly growing Mernda-Doreen area, and it committed \$15 million.

Ms Green — Hear, hear!

Mr NOONAN — I note the presence of the member for Yan Yean in the chamber and her enthusiasm for that project. That is an important project and it sits very firmly within Labor's election commitments. It is a matter of priority not just for the member for Yan Yean but for the government. As such, that is where Labor's priorities will be in terms of capital funding for police stations. It would be of value to the member for Polwarth and to police in his area to understand another commitment Labor made in the lead-up to the election last year, which I think will have a significant impact on police safety, and that is a commitment to move the police radio network from an analogue to a digital network. I note that the former Minister for Police and Emergency Services, now the member for Rowville, is in the chamber. He would appreciate the importance of that project for police generally, and based on the feedback I have had from police in country Victoria I am sure that that commitment will be well received when Labor implements it as part of its election commitments.

There are 329 police stations across the state, and they play a significant role in the work done by police. There has been some commentary about the future of police stations, so I am pleased to place on the record that Labor has a clear commitment not to see any of those stations forcibly closed. That is important. That being said, we do not have a commitment to build a police station in Colac, but I am happy to receive feedback from Victoria Police and the department about their future priorities for station upgrades, and within that context, that will include Colac. I provide that advice to the member for Polwarth, and no doubt he will pass it on to those hardworking men and women based in Colac and within that police service area. I thank him for raising that matter with me this evening.

Ms RICHARDSON (Minister for Women) — I will refer the remaining matters to the relevant ministers and they will respond accordingly.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The house is now adjourned until 9.30 a.m. tomorrow.

House adjourned 7.37 p.m.

