

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

FIFTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

Wednesday, 5 September 2018

(Extract from book 13)

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By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

The Governor

The Honourable LINDA DESSAU, AC

The Lieutenant-Governor

The Honourable KEN LAY, AO, APM

The ministry

(from 16 October 2017)

Premier	The Hon. D. M. Andrews, MP
Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Minister for Emergency Services	The Hon. J. A. Merlino, MP
Treasurer and Minister for Resources	The Hon. T. H. Pallas, MP
Minister for Public Transport and Minister for Major Projects	The Hon. J. Allan, MP
Minister for Industry and Employment	The Hon. B. A. Carroll, MP
Minister for Trade and Investment, Minister for Innovation and the Digital Economy, and Minister for Small Business	The Hon. P. Dalidakis, MLC
Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, and Minister for Suburban Development	The Hon. L. D' Ambrosio, MP
Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and Minister for Ports	The Hon. L. A. Donnellan, MP
Minister for Tourism and Major Events, Minister for Sport and Minister for Veterans	The Hon. J. H. Eren, MP
Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Equality and Minister for Creative Industries	The Hon. M. P. Foley, MP
Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services	The Hon. J. Hennessy, MP
Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Minister for Industrial Relations, Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence	The Hon. N. M. Hutchins, MP
Special Minister of State	The Hon. G. Jennings, MLC
Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, and Minister for Local Government	The Hon. M. Kairouz, MP
Minister for Families and Children, Minister for Early Childhood Education and Minister for Youth Affairs	The Hon. J. Mikakos, MLC
Minister for Police and Minister for Water	The Hon. L. M. Neville, MP
Attorney-General and Minister for Racing	The Hon. M. P. Pakula, MP
Minister for Agriculture and Minister for Regional Development	The Hon. J. L. Pulford, MLC
Minister for Finance and Minister for Multicultural Affairs	The Hon. R. D. Scott, MP
Minister for Training and Skills, and Minister for Corrections	The Hon. G. A. Tierney, MLC
Minister for Planning	The Hon. R. W. Wynne, MP
Cabinet Secretary	Ms M. Thomas, MP

Legislative Council committees

Privileges Committee — Mr Dalidakis, Mr Mulino, Mr O’Sullivan, Mr Purcell, Mr Rich-Phillips, Ms Springle, Ms Symes and Ms Wooldridge.

Procedure Committee — The President, Dr Carling-Jenkins, Mr Davis, Mr Jennings, Ms Pennicuik, Ms Pulford, Ms Tierney and Ms Wooldridge.

Legislative Council standing committees

Standing Committee on the Economy and Infrastructure — Mr Bourman, #Mr Davis, Ms Dunn, Mr Eideh, Mr Finn, Mr Gepp, Mr Leane, #Mr Melhem, Mr Ondarchie, Mr O’Sullivan and #Mr Rich-Phillips.

Standing Committee on the Environment and Planning — Ms Bath, #Mr Bourman, Mr Dalla-Riva, Mr Davis, #Ms Dunn, Mr Elasmarr, Mr Melhem, Mr Mulino, #Mr Purcell, #Mr Ramsay, #Dr Ratnam, #Ms Symes, Ms Truong and Mr Young.

Standing Committee on Legal and Social Issues — #Ms Crozier, #Mr Elasmarr, Ms Fitzherbert, Mr Morris, Ms Patten, Mrs Peulich, #Dr Ratnam, #Mr Rich-Phillips, Ms Shing, Mr Somyurek, Ms Springle and Ms Symes.

participating members

Legislative Council select committees

Port of Melbourne Select Committee — Mr Mulino, Mr Ondarchie, Mr Purcell, Mr Rich-Phillips, Ms Shing and Ms Tierney.

Fire Services Bill Select Committee — Ms Lovell, Mr Melhem, Mr Mulino, Mr O’Sullivan, Mr Rich Phillips, Ms Shing and Mr Young.

Joint committees

Accountability and Oversight Committee — (*Council*): Mr O’Sullivan, Mr Purcell and Ms Symes. (*Assembly*): Mr Angus, Mr Gidley, Mr Noonan and Ms Thomson.

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

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

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

Environment, Natural Resources and Regional Development Committee — (*Council*): Mr O’Sullivan, Mr Ramsay and Mr Young. (*Assembly*): Mr J. Bull, Ms Halfpenny, Mr Richardson and Mr Riordan.

Family and Community Development Committee — (*Council*): Dr Carling-Jenkins and Mr Finn. (*Assembly*): Ms Britnell, Ms Couzens, Mr Edbrooke, Ms Edwards and Ms McLeish.

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

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

Law Reform, Road and Community Safety Committee — (*Council*): Dr Carling-Jenkins and Mr Gepp. (*Assembly*): Mr Dixon, Mr Howard, Ms Suleyman, Mr Thompson and Mr Tilley.

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

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

Heads of parliamentary departments

Assembly — Acting Clerk of the Legislative Assembly: Ms Bridget Noonan

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

Parliamentary Services — Secretary: Mr P. Lochert

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

President:

The Hon. B. N. ATKINSON

Deputy President:

Mr N. ELASMAR

Acting Presidents:

Ms Dunn, Mr Gepp, Mr Melhem, Mr Morris, Ms Patten, Mr Purcell, Mr Ramsay

Leader of the Government:

The Hon. G. JENNINGS

Deputy Leader of the Government:

The Hon. J. L. PULFORD

Leader of the Opposition:

The Hon. M. WOOLDRIDGE

Deputy Leader of the Opposition:

The Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS

Leader of The Nationals:

Mr L. B. O’SULLIVAN

Leader of the Greens:

Dr S. RATNAM

Member	Region	Party	Member	Region	Party
Atkinson, Mr Bruce Norman	Eastern Metropolitan	LP	Mikakos, Ms Jenny	Northern Metropolitan	ALP
Barber, Mr Gregory John ¹	Northern Metropolitan	Greens	Morris, Mr Joshua	Western Victoria	LP
Bath, Ms Melina ²	Eastern Victoria	Nats	Mulino, Mr Daniel	Eastern Victoria	ALP
Bourman, Mr Jeffrey	Eastern Victoria	SFFP	O’Brien, Mr Daniel David ⁸	Eastern Victoria	Nats
Carling-Jenkins, Dr Rachel ³	Western Metropolitan	Ind	O’Donohue, Mr Edward John	Eastern Victoria	LP
Crozier, Ms Georgina Mary	Southern Metropolitan	LP	Ondarchie, Mr Craig Philip	Northern Metropolitan	LP
Dalidakis, Mr Philip	Southern Metropolitan	ALP	O’Sullivan, Mr Luke Bartholomew ⁹	Northern Victoria	Nats
Dalla-Riva, Mr Richard Alex Gordon	Eastern Metropolitan	LP	Patten, Ms Fiona ¹⁰	Northern Metropolitan	FPRP
Davis, Mr David McLean	Southern Metropolitan	LP	Pennicuik, Ms Susan Margaret	Southern Metropolitan	Greens
Drum, Mr Damian Kevin ⁴	Northern Victoria	Nats	Peulich, Mrs Inga	South Eastern Metropolitan	LP
Dunn, Ms Samantha	Eastern Metropolitan	Greens	Pulford, Ms Jaala Lee	Western Victoria	ALP
Eideh, Mr Khalil M.	Western Metropolitan	ALP	Purcell, Mr James	Western Victoria	VILJ
Elasmar, Mr Nazih	Northern Metropolitan	ALP	Ramsay, Mr Simon	Western Victoria	LP
Finn, Mr Bernard Thomas C.	Western Metropolitan	LP	Ratnam, Dr Samantha Shantini ¹¹	Northern Metropolitan	Greens
Fitzherbert, Ms Margaret	Southern Metropolitan	LP	Rich-Phillips, Mr Gordon Kenneth	South Eastern Metropolitan	LP
Gepp, Mr Mark ⁵	Northern Victoria	ALP	Shing, Ms Harriet	Eastern Victoria	ALP
Hartland, Ms Colleen Mildred ⁶	Western Metropolitan	Greens	Somyurek, Mr Adem	South Eastern Metropolitan	ALP
Herbert, Mr Steven Ralph ⁷	Northern Victoria	ALP	Springle, Ms Nina	South Eastern Metropolitan	Greens
Jennings, Mr Gavin Wayne	South Eastern Metropolitan	ALP	Symes, Ms Jaclyn	Northern Victoria	ALP
Leane, Mr Shaun Leo	Eastern Metropolitan	ALP	Tierney, Ms Gayle Anne	Western Victoria	ALP
Lovell, Ms Wendy Ann	Northern Victoria	LP	Truong, Ms Huong ¹²	Western Metropolitan	Greens
Melhem, Mr Cesar	Western Metropolitan	ALP	Wooldridge, Ms Mary Louise Newling	Eastern Metropolitan	LP
			Young, Mr Daniel	Northern Victoria	SFFP

¹ Resigned 28 September 2017

² Appointed 15 April 2015

³ DLP until 26 June 2017;
AC until 3 August 2018

⁴ Resigned 27 May 2016

⁵ Appointed 7 June 2017

⁶ Resigned 9 February 2018

⁷ Resigned 6 April 2017

⁸ Resigned 25 February 2015

⁹ Appointed 12 October 2016

¹⁰ ASP until 16 January 2018;
RV until 14 August 2018

¹¹ Appointed 18 October 2017

¹² Appointed 21 February 2018

PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

AC — Australian Conservatives; ALP — Labor Party; ASP — Australian Sex Party; DLP — Democratic Labour Party;
FPRP — Fiona Patten’s Reason Party; Greens — Australian Greens; Ind — Independent; LP — Liberal Party;
Nats — The Nationals; RV — Reason Victoria; SFFP — Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party; VILJ — Vote 1 Local Jobs

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Wednesday, 5 September 2018

The PRESIDENT (Hon. B. N. Atkinson) took the chair at 9.35 a.m. and read the prayer.

PETITIONS

Following petition presented to house:

Keilor Park Primary School site

To the Honourable the President and members of the Legislative Council assembled in Parliament:

We, the undersigned residents of Victoria, call on the Legislative Council of Victoria to note Premier Daniel Andrews' and planning minister Richard Wynne's arrogant and high-handed plans to force densification and inappropriate overdevelopment on the site of the Keilor Park Primary School at 46 Eliza Street, Keilor Park.

We call upon the Andrews Labor government to stop its plans to achieve super profits from the inappropriate overdevelopment of the site and instead listen and respond to the legitimate needs and aspirations of the local community for the site.

**By Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
(304 signatures).**

Laid on table.

Ordered to be considered next day on motion of Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan).

INDEPENDENT BROAD-BASED ANTI-CORRUPTION COMMISSION COMMITTEE

The Work of the IBAC Committee of the 58th Parliament: A Reflection

Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria) presented report, including appendices.

Laid on table.

Ordered to be published.

Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria) (09:37) — I move:

That the Council take note of the report.

In doing so, I would like to make some remarks in respect of the report. I am pleased to present the seventh and final report of the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Committee in the 58th Parliament. It provides an overview of the committee's work under the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003 in monitoring and reviewing the performance

of the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission and the Victorian Inspectorate (VI).

Effective performance measurement and reporting systems are an essential component of transparent and accountable government. This is no less true for IBAC and the VI than for any other public institution, especially given IBAC's robust investigative powers. From the outset the committee has appreciated the significant role it plays on behalf of the people of Victoria in providing robust oversight of IBAC and the VI to ensure they fulfil their legislated functions and use their powers lawfully and appropriately.

The committee has worked conscientiously to undertake a comprehensive, transparent and ambitious program of oversight. The committee has sought not only to carry out effective oversight during its term but to lay the foundations for rigorous and systematic oversight of IBAC and the VI into the future based on best practice. This report provides an overview of the committee's oversight work, which included reviewing IBAC's and the VI's annual and other published reports, addressing performance matters brought to the committee's attention, and developing a framework for the ongoing systematic monitoring of the performance of IBAC itself.

With the assistance of Professor A. J. Brown of Griffith University, the committee developed a framework, and in November 2017 tabled a report entitled *A Framework for Monitoring the Performance of the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission*. This was a first for a parliamentary oversight committee in Australia.

The committee self-referenced three inquiries during the term, which resulted in three reports being tabled. They were, one, *Strengthening Victoria's Key Anti-corruption Agencies?*; two, *Improving Victoria's Whistleblowing Regime: A Review of the Protected Disclosure Act 2012 (Vic)*; and three, *Inquiry into the External Oversight of Police Corruption and Misconduct in Victoria*. In each report the committee made important recommendations to improve specific aspects of anti-corruption systems. The committee also identified a number of areas that it recommends the committee responsible for the oversight of IBAC and VI in the 59th Parliament should consider.

The committee further fulfilled its function under the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003 to consider any proposed appointment of an IBAC Commissioner or a Victorian Inspector. Since the terms of Mr Stephen O'Bryan, QC, IBAC Commissioner, and Mr Robin Brett, Victorian Inspector, expired on 31 December 2017 the committee has systematically considered and

supported the government's recommended candidates for the positions. I would like to acknowledge both the former IBAC Commissioner, Mr Stephen O'Bryan, QC, and the former Inspector, Mr Robin Brett, QC, for their important work in establishing their organisations as essential parts of Victoria's anti-corruption integrity system. I would also like to thank the Honourable Robert Redlich, QC, IBAC Commissioner, and Mr Eamonn Moran, PSM, QC, Victorian Inspector, for their ongoing cooperation and assistance.

The committee is most appreciative of the valuable contributions a broad range of individuals and organisations have made, particularly the complainants, who had the courage to provide important insights into problems in the system. I would also like to thank my committee colleagues for their ongoing cooperative and bipartisan approach to the committee's inquiries and oversight during the work of the Parliament: Assembly members the Honourable Kim Wells as chair, the Honourable Marsha Thomson as deputy chair, Mr Sam Hibbins, Mr Danny O'Brien and Mr Tim Richardson; and Ms Jaclyn Symes, MLC.

Finally, I would also like to thank the secretariat for their hard work: Ms Sandy Cook, executive officer; Dr Stephen James, research officer; and Ms Justine Donohue, administrative officer. Before I commend this report to the Parliament — I did rush; I never thought I would get through it all — in my 49 seconds left I would dearly like to thank the secretariat. A lot of work went through in this term of Parliament in respect of this committee, and I think that the work has been particularly valuable and will make an important contribution to the next Parliament. I very much congratulate the staff for their very fine work in this committee's work. I commend this report to Parliament.

Ms SYMES (Northern Victoria) (09:41) — I too would like to commend the report to the house. It rounds out as the final report that I will be speaking on out of, I think, the five committees I have been on during this term. This committee has been particularly productive. I have enjoyed the work we have done. I think it is important work, and I concur with Mr Ramsay's comments about the recommendations we made to improve the integrity system. In particular the staff have been just fantastic to work with. The work that Stephen, Sandy and Justine have done is a testament to the Parliament, so thank you for your efforts. I would also like to say that Kim Wells in the Assembly was a very good and efficient chair, and all members worked very collegiately together on the important topics that this committee looked at.

Motion agreed to.

PAPERS

Laid on table by Clerk:

Auditor-General's Reports on —

Crime Data, September 2018 (*Ordered to be published*).

Follow Up of Oversight and Accountability of Committees of Management, September 2018 (*Ordered to be published*).

Police Management of Property and Exhibits, September 2018 (*Ordered to be published*).

PARLIAMENTARY PRIVILEGE

Right of reply: Mary Faraone

The PRESIDENT (09:44) — I make a statement in regard to a right of reply from Ms Mary Faraone, chief executive, Holmesglen Institute.

Pursuant to the standing orders of the Legislative Council, I present a right of reply from Ms Faraone, chief executive, Holmesglen Institute, relating to comments made by Ms Melina Bath, MLC, during questions without notice on 27 July 2018.

During my consideration of the application for the right of reply I gave notice of the submission in writing to Ms Bath and also consulted with her prior to the right of reply being presented to the Council.

Having considered the application and determined that the right of reply should be incorporated into the parliamentary record, I remind the house that the standing order requires me when considering a submission under the order to not consider or judge the truth of any statements made in the Council or the submission.

In accordance with the standing orders, the right of reply is hereby ordered to be published and incorporated into *Hansard*.

Reply as follows:

On Friday, 27 July, Ms Melina Bath, member for Eastern Victoria, made the following statement in the Legislative Council as part of her questions to the Minister for Training and Skills:

Last week the chief executive of Holmesglen and the chair of TAFE Directors Australia, Mary Faraone, told the VET Policy Forum that your free TAFE policy was policy on the run in an election year. The Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET), the peak body for private providers, has said that they were not consulted about free TAFE. Adult and Community Education Victoria (ACEVic), the peak body for community education providers, was not

consulted, and now the chair of TAFE Directors Australia says that it is policy on the run.

The statement made by Ms Melina Bath is incorrect. A member of the audience at the end of my presentation made a comment that the free TAFE policy is policy on the run and went on to elaborate that it had been tried before and TAFEs did not benefit greatly. In response I said I understood her position but speaking from a TAFE perspective that I was appreciative of the policy. At no time did I say that the free TAFE policy is policy on the run. In addition my comments about the impact of the free TAFE policy on potential midyear enrolments was made in the context of unintended consequences of policy.

As stated I have a recording of the event which clearly supports my position. I formally request a right of reply and the opportunity to incorporate the following as an appropriate response in the parliament record.

Mary Faraone, chief executive of Holmesglen Institute and chair of TAFE Directors Australia did not say that the free TAFE policy is policy on the run. In fact Ms Faraone stated that from a TAFE perspective she was appreciative of the policy.

The misquoting by Ms Melina Bath, MLC, has impacted on my reputation as the chief executive of a large TAFE institute and as chair of TDA. The Victorian TAFE Association of which Holmesglen is a member and the TAFE Directors Australia support policies that promote participation in vocational education, and which support TAFE.

Mary Faraone
Chief Executive
Holmesglen Institute

Laid on table.

Ordered to be published.

NOTICES OF MOTION

Notice of motion given.

STATEMENTS ON REPORTS AND PAPERS

Notices

Notice given.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS

Early childhood education

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Early Childhood Education) (09:49) — I am very pleased to rise on Early Childhood Educators Day to make an announcement to the house. The Andrews Labor government will be providing \$8 million towards more than 400 scholarships to help more people pursue a rewarding career as an early childhood teacher. Early Childhood Australia Victoria will deliver the early

childhood scholarships program, with eligible recipients receiving up to \$26 250 towards a bachelor qualification and up to \$16 000 towards a postgraduate qualification, which will include existing teachers wanting to upskill. This funding will help students starting studies in 2019 with course fees, study materials and course-related expenses.

Our government is supporting the demand for qualified early childhood teachers in regional areas while providing an additional payment for those who find work in regional and rural locations. Also, more Aboriginal Victorians will be given the opportunity to become early childhood educators and teachers, with available scholarships to support certificate III through to postgraduate levels. Increasing the number of Aboriginal Victorians working in the early childhood profession supports our 10-year *Marrung Aboriginal Education Plan*. School leavers, people wishing to change careers, bilingual speakers and those already working in early childhood are invited to apply. These scholarships will continue to build a highly skilled early childhood teaching workforce to meet growing enrolments in the kindergarten program in Victoria.

Given that it is Early Childhood Educator Day, I do want to give a special shout-out to our wonderful early childhood educators and kindergarten teachers here in Victoria for the important work that they do. They are giving children right across our state the best start to their education and the best start to their life. As a government, we are very proud of our support for them and for their sector. I certainly would encourage them to take up the opportunity to pursue these new scholarship opportunities to further enhance their qualifications.

Geelong city deal

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Regional Development) (09:51) — I rise to update the house on the progress towards delivering a city deal for Geelong and the Great Ocean Road. As members are aware, the Geelong city deal is focused on the many strengths and opportunities in the Greater Geelong region's economy. It is expected to inject an additional \$1.1 billion annually into the local economy and deliver nearly 1000 Victorian jobs.

The Acting Premier, James Merlino, and the former Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, signed a memorandum of understanding, committing to a partnership on Victoria's first city deal back in January of this year. The 2018–19 Victorian state budget allocated \$153.2 million towards the Geelong city deal, with funds going towards building a new convention

centre for Geelong, progressing the Shipwreck Coast master plan and advancing the strategy to revitalise the city centre. Four months and one Prime Minister later we are still yet to see the federal government's share of the funding, yet media reports on the weekend stated that the money has already been approved by the federal government's expenditure review committee and is in the federal budget. It seems that it has been sat on for political benefit. The *Herald Sun* reported that within a \$7.6 billion infrastructure package, included in the federal budget under the dubious heading 'Decisions taken but not yet announced', is \$150 million for the Geelong city deal, yet Geelong has not seen it.

While Victoria is set to get less than 2 per cent of this rescue package for Liberal Party MPs, the very least the federal government could do is declare the funds available to the Geelong community so that we can get on with delivering these projects for Geelong and the Great Ocean Road. Our government is focused on delivering for all Victorians and getting things done, and we would very much like the federal government to get out of the way.

FReeZA

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Youth Affairs) (09:53) — I rise today to update the house on how the Andrews Labor government is helping young Victorians to build their confidence and explore creative careers. FReeZA is an innovative youth program providing opportunities for young Victorians aged 12 to 25 to enjoy gigs, dance parties and other cultural, recreational and artistic events that are drug, alcohol and smoke free. Importantly these grants support young people to put on hundreds of free events in their local communities, ensuring a variety of activities across our state specifically designed for young people.

Seventy-seven local government and community organisations from Victoria will receive funding which formed part of a recent announcement that I made. As part of the \$7.2 million FReeZA program that will be delivered over the next three years a number of existing and new organisations will now benefit from this funding. New organisations that provide a range of new activities to young people include YouthFest in Stawell, which develops the leadership and event management skills of local young people while celebrating youth culture through live music, art, skate and dance; Fluke, across Greater Geelong, which allows like-minded young people to work collaboratively on projects and learning and sharing skills such as marketing, promotions, event and activity planning, risk

management and evaluation; and FReeZA 'Big Upz', which helps showcase and elevate central Victorian hip-hop culture by enabling young people from marginalised or vulnerable backgrounds and young hip-hop artists to plan, deliver and perform in live youth-friendly hip-hop events.

More than 150 000 young people from a diverse range of backgrounds across Victoria typically attend more than 400 FReeZA events every year. We are putting young Victorians at the centre of our policy and decision-making, giving them a voice and the skills that they need to create the best events led by young people for young people. We are very proud as a government to be supporting young people through these FReeZA grants to now have more opportunities to build their confidence and explore creative careers in the future.

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

Brendan Dover

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) (09:55) — Last week I was really honoured to meet returned veteran Brendan Dover, who was deployed in Afghanistan. Unfortunately during that active duty Mr Dover stood on an explosive device, which caused him to lose his leg and sustain really bad damage to his left arm as well, which meant that he had to undergo many surgeries until eventually he was well enough to be discharged from the army.

After leaving the army unfortunately Brendan struggled to get employment in Melbourne, which led him to move to Queensland to find employment, which he did not particularly want to do as it involved uprooting his family. Some of the comrades he worked with in Afghanistan actually gained work on the sky rail project via the priority list of workers that the Victorian government has implemented on infrastructure projects. They alerted the main contractors on that project that Brendan was actually looking for work. Brendan was qualified as a contract manager, and that company looked at his resume and offered him a job straightaway due to his qualities and qualifications, so Brendan was delighted to come back and work with a major contractor in Melbourne on one of the major infrastructure projects that are going ahead as we speak.

He is an amazing man, it is an amazing show of resilience and I am really happy that he is working on one of the Victorian government's projects. I am sure he will be an asset for a number of years.

Dargo Landcare venison workshop

Mr BOURMAN (Eastern Victoria) (09:57) — On 26 August I went out to the Dargo Landcare group's venison expo, unsurprisingly out in Dargo, along with Ricky Muir. I had never been to a venison expo, to be honest, but it was a workshop on what to do with the deer after it has been killed, and it included very interesting ways of how to butcher it, what to do, how to make the sausages and this sort of thing. It was a lot bigger than last year's apparently; about 300 people attended. Along with attendees such as me there were also the Australian Deer Association and the Game Management Authority, and I just want to give them a well done on, A, having such a good expo, and B, bringing a lot of people into the area.

Justin Trotter

Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria) (09:58) — I attended the Bethany 2018 Geelong Father of the Year breakfast last Friday, and Jelena Dokic was the guest speaker at the event. It was interesting to hear of her struggles and highlights on the tennis court, but more important was the story of her life as a refugee dealing with poverty, bullying, discrimination, injury, depression and the abuse she suffered over 20 years at the hands of her father and coach.

In total contrast was the winner of the Geelong Father of the Year, Justin Trotter, a widower father whose 10-year-old son wrote in his nomination:

Our Dad is more than just a dad, he's a hero!

He looks after us three boys and he does a very great job. He looks after us on his own after our mother passed away in June 2015.

He encourages us to play sports and does his best to get us to training three nights a week and matches on weekends. He also takes the time to kick the footy with us after work and always makes sure there is a yummy meal on the table.

He makes us happy when we all have a loving wrestle in the lounge room.

He is very thoughtful of others and helps out friends and family whenever they call.

...

He never has the chance to sit down and relax because he's always cleaning and looking after us boys.

We think he deserves this award because he always puts others before himself and we'd like him to know how much we love him.

Will Crozier

Mr RAMSAY — Today a memorial service for Will Crozier will be held at the Geelong Grammar School chapel. My thoughts and best wishes go out to Digby, Annabel, John, Georgie, Sara, Charlie and Tom. Finally Will will be laid to rest after many years of struggling with poor health. I thank the government for allowing the family to be together at this time.

West Footscray factory fire

Ms TRUONG (Western Metropolitan) (09:59) — Last Thursday morning we in the west woke up to plumes of black smoke billowing over West Footscray and stretching for kilometres. Over the radio and across our social media feeds we learned that neighbours had been hearing explosions from just before 6.00 a.m. The air was filled with the chemical smell of acetone, and we were horrified to be told that huge amounts of asbestos was being burned up in this ferocious fire. My first thoughts were for the residents living near the burning factory and in surrounding suburbs. I worried for my family and friends and for my staff heading into our Seddon office that morning.

Chemicals used in controlling the blaze ended up devastating our Stony Creek, with eels, birds and fish washing up dead as far as Albert Park. We do not know how the fire got so out of hand. We still do not know what we have been breathing in. What happens to asbestos when it is burnt at those temperatures? How airborne and dangerous are those fibres? Are we still at risk? Is it even possible to clean up this mess? Will the landowners be found and held accountable? Where are our local representatives on this? Where is the crisis hotline for us to get answers? Many of us in the west live next to industrial areas storing who knows what. We have seen complacency and neglect cost us many times before. These questions were raised at a community meeting last night in West Footscray. Stop dumping on us in the west and give us answers now.

Theresa Jacobs

Mr GEPP (Northern Victoria) (10:01) — I rise today to congratulate Theresa Jacobs, who has been short-listed for the 2018 Premier's Volunteer Champions Award and who will be celebrated along with other nominees at the awards ceremony at Government House this weekend. Theresa is a lifelong resident of Echuca and has been a member and leader of many volunteer organisations over the past 40 years. Her commitment to the people of Echuca, to cancer research and to the Echuca Regional Health oncology

unit has been an inspiration, and I thank her sincerely for her dedication and strong sense of community.

Private Robert Mactier, VC

Mr GEPP — I was delighted to be invited to attend the 100th anniversary plaque unveiling ceremony for Private Robert Mactier, VC, in Tatura on the weekend. The exploits of Private Mactier are well-known throughout the community. As a runner in France, when his unit was under attack he was sent out by his commanding officer and single-handedly took on the responsibility of taking out three machine-gun garrisons. Unfortunately he was killed by the fourth one, but his acts of bravery certainly paved the way for many other lives to be preserved. It was a great honour to meet members of the Mactier family, including his great-nephew Andrew, as well as Jack and Hamish, along with the great Keith Payne, VC, AM, from Queensland.

Field & Game Australia

Mr YOUNG (Northern Victoria) (10:02) — Today I would like to congratulate Field & Game Australia for another very successful politician clay target shooting event. The event took place last Friday at Field & Game's facility at Willowmavin, nestled among rolling hills and calming scenery. While the weather looked dreary to begin with as people were huddled under cover, the excitement to have some fun shooting quickly outweighed the fear of getting wet. After all, it was good duck weather. Members of Parliament, councillors, staff and friends were able to have a crack regardless of previous experience and a good time was had by all. The addition of gourmet foods such as wild boar and camel created another level of interest, thanks to chef Riccardo Momesso. I am often encouraged at these events when seeing someone new to shooting having a go, as hands-on experience is essential to anyone in this place when understanding firearms use.

I would like to congratulate the team from Mitchell Shire Council for their win on the day and say well done to everyone who participated in the competition. Further, I thank Winchester Australia for supplying ammunition, targets and a couple of good-looking blokes to help out, and also the Shooting Industry Foundation of Australia for their sponsorship of the day. These days would not happen without an enormous amount of work. I would really like to say a sincere thankyou to Daryl Snowdon in particular for the effort that he puts in — he does a lot of hard work, and I have seen that firsthand — as well as all of the board members and volunteers who were there to help out on

the day. Your contribution is enormous — except for Nigel, and he will know why.

Federal government ministry

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) (10:04) — I just wish to congratulate the new Prime Minister, Scott Morrison, as well as Victorian federal members of Parliament on their promotions to senior cabinet positions, including Josh Frydenberg, Dan Tehan and Alan Tudge. Victorians are going to be well represented in the new cabinet.

Hampton Park Progress Association

Mrs PEULICH — I would also like to give a shout-out to the Hampton Park Progress Association on their very successful gala dinner the other night and in particular mention Vanessa Gerdes and Erika Maliki, who did a phenomenal amount of work, along with their teams, to make it a successful night.

Taxi and hire car industry

Mrs PEULICH — In addition to that I would also like to congratulate the taxi licence families and hire car families for a wonderful turnout on Father's Day to be addressed by Jeff Kennett, who will hopefully lead us through the quagmire that this government's policy has made of those taxi licence owner families' lives and the enormous number of financial and health and mental wellbeing problems that have been caused. I want to commend all of those who attended on Father's Day for doing so because they wanted to stick by their families.

I also want to make special mention of Assembly candidates Maree Davenport, candidate for Mulgrave; Geoff Gledhill, candidate for Mordialloc; Asher Judah, candidate for Bentleigh; and Andrew Edmonds, candidate for Oakleigh, who attended, and a number of other candidates who were regrettably apologies due to either work or family commitments. Across the south-east this particular issue touches many families, and we are certainly right behind a better solution and a fairer solution for all of them.

Mirka Mora

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan) (10:05) — Mirka Mora has left us aged 90. She is survived by her partner, Ross; her three sons, Philippe, William and Tiriël; eight grandchildren; three great-grandchildren; and her sisters, Marcelle and Salomé. I extend my condolences to them and to her many dear friends.

Mirka changed the cultural life of Melbourne, from the salon and soirees she established with her husband, Georges, in the 1950s to Mirka Café, The Balzac and Tolarno in St Kilda.

She was a world-renowned artist whose work is unique and accessible, and she inspired so many other artists and lovers of art, but she was much more than an artist. Mirka touched everyone who was lucky to meet her or to know her, and it was always a pleasure to spend time with her. Mirka's son, Philippe, described her as a humanitarian who made it a thing in her life to help anyone who needed help. She was famous for her *joie de vivre*, and he said that was not a cliché with regard to her but that she also had a serious side. He said her art was based on the study of archetypes and medieval art, from which she derived the iconic mythical creatures that featured in much of her work. Her library is an encyclopaedia of art and philosophy. Mirka's dear friend Serge Thomann described Mirka as like his 'other mum'. He said she opened his eyes and taught him about art, life, love and beauty, and that meeting her changed him.

Mirka loved Melbourne, and we loved her. She will remain amongst us for many years to come, especially in St Kilda, where she lived most of her life and where her art is everywhere. *Au revoir, Mirka, et merci pour tout.*

Euroa Health

Ms SYMES (Northern Victoria) (10:07) — I wish to use my members statement today to congratulate the CEO, board, staff and volunteers at Euroa Health, as well as the Euroa community, who were ecstatic to learn on Monday that the Andrews Labor government are providing the private Euroa hospital with ongoing access to public beds. This follows a successful trial between Goulburn Valley Health and Euroa Health that facilitated public —

Mr Davis — That was our policy in 2014.

Ms SYMES — Well, you did not deliver it as Minister for Health, Mr Davis. In fact I sat there talking to the Euroa Health board about what you guys did in your four years of government — nothing. You came on the eve of an election and promised them something you were going to do —

Mr Davis interjected.

The PRESIDENT (10:08) — Mr Davis, 15 minutes.

Mr Davis withdrew from chamber.

Ms SYMES — There was no process set up for Euroa Health. I had to sit down with them and learn that nothing had been started under your government. We had to set up a trial. They successfully passed the trial in terms of safety and competency, and we are now able to fund ongoing beds. In fact when I said to them, 'Hey, you've done very well with your trial; let's go about getting your permanent funding', what the board said to me was, 'How do you do that?', and I said, 'Well, I go and ask the minister'. They said, 'We're used to politicians standing out the front for photo opportunities to get what they want'. I said, 'No, actually, I just go and get it done for you', and that is what I did.

Vietnam Veterans Day

Ms LOVELL (Northern Victoria) (10:08) — It was an honour to recently attend the Shepparton Vietnam veterans commemorations held at the Shepparton cenotaph memorial. The ceremony was organised by the Goulburn Valley Vietnam Veterans Association, a wonderful local organisation that looks after the welfare of and supports local Vietnam vets and their families. I was joined at the ceremony by the mayor of Greater Shepparton, Kim O'Keefe; the former federal member for Murray, the Honourable Sharman Stone, the patron of the Goulburn Valley Vietnam Veterans Association; as well as the member for Shepparton, Suzanna Sheed.

Vietnam Veterans Day is held annually on the anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan, and this year's marked 52 years since that horrible battle. This year's celebration also recognised the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Coral-Balmoral, which became one of the most famous battles fought by the Australian Army during the Vietnam War. The Battle of Coral-Balmoral involved the 1st Australian Task Force, which was tasked with obstructing the withdrawal of the North Vietnamese 7th division and the Viet Cong forces from the capital of Saigon. The battle raged for 26 days, and the Australian troops were successful in repelling the repeated attacks of the enemy.

The guest speaker at the Shepparton commemoration was Brian McInney, a highly respected RSL board member and Vietnam veteran. Brian spoke of his time in battle and described the actions of the Australian soldiers in the Battle of Coral-Balmoral as follows:

Not only did these diggers display and reform the Anzac spirit, they also wrote their own chapter, which is now added to Australia's military history.

Victorian Protecting Children Awards

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) (10:10) — On Monday night I had the privilege of speaking at this year's Victorian Protecting Children Awards. The awards recognise and celebrate the achievements of our child and family services sector, our child protection workers and our foster and kinship carers, who do so much amazing work.

Thirteen awards were handed out, including the Robin Clark Making a Difference Award, which went to Bendigo and District Aboriginal Cooperative (BDAC) for their work on the section 18 As If pilot. The pilot saw up to 15 children on Children's Court protection orders successfully managed by BDAC, acting in the legal capacity of the secretary of my department. Section 18 is an Australian-first initiative, formally called Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care, which gives Aboriginal community-controlled organisations greater responsibility for the case management of children subject to protection orders, and it is now being implemented in other parts of Victoria.

The Carer Award of the night went to foster parents Leonie and Doug Tate. This amazing couple have opened their home to children for as little as one night and as long as nine years over the past three decades. Leonie and Doug's first foster child is now 43, and they still consider her a daughter. They work incredibly hard, and their support is indispensable. I cannot thank them and all other carers enough.

The Minister's Award for Innovation in Protecting Children was won by the Gatehouse Centre at the Royal Children's Hospital for the work that they do supporting children who have experienced sexual abuse. The Gatehouse Centre's Our Space initiative is a resource designed to build resilience in young women and girls. The success of the pilot has led to the development of a resource kit comprising education and training modules.

There were many other award winners that evening, and time does not permit me to mention each one of them, but I want to take this opportunity to congratulate each and every one of the award winners again. I would like to also mention our dedicated child protection workers. I am extremely proud of all the award recipients. There can be no greater responsibility and no greater calling than to create better, happier and more productive lives for vulnerable children in Victoria. We are very fortunate to have such dedicated and committed individuals who dedicate their time to this task every day.

Labor Party election candidates

Mr O'SULLIVAN (Northern Victoria) (10:12) — With just 80 days to go until the election and just 55 days to go until caretaker mode commences, the arrogance of the Labor Party in regional Victoria is extraordinary. Most of the seats in regional Victoria still do not have Labor candidates so close to the election. In the Assembly, Mildura does not have a Labor candidate. Lowan does not have a Labor candidate. Murray Plains, Shepparton, Euroa, Ovens Valley, Narracan, Gippsland South and Polwarth still do not have Labor candidates so close to the election.

This government absolutely ignores regional Victoria at every opportunity. Daniel Andrews and the Labor Party are city-centric. They only care about what happens inside the tramlines. They do not care about what happens outside in regional Victoria. There is the cost of living, they are soft on crime, regional transport is ignored and country roads are an absolute disgrace through underinvestment by this government. They are trying to rip up the Country Fire Authority (CFA) and disrespect volunteers in the CFA. The great forest national park, which they certainly want to instigate with the Greens —

Honourable members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Mr O'Sullivan from the top.

Mr O'SULLIVAN — With pleasure. With just 80 days to go until the election and just 55 days to go until caretaker mode commences, the arrogance of this Labor government is absolutely extraordinary when it comes to regional Victoria.

Honourable members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Mr O'Sullivan from the top.

Mr O'SULLIVAN — With much pleasure. With just 80 days to go until the state election and just 55 days to go until caretaker mode commences, the absolute arrogance of this Labor government when it comes to regional Victoria is absolutely unbelievable. Most of the regional seats in country Victoria do not have Labor candidates. The seat of Mildura does not have a Labor candidate. Lowan does not have a Labor candidate. Murray Plains, Shepparton, Euroa, Ovens Valley, Narracan, Gippsland South and Polwarth still do not have Labor candidates endorsed by the party.

This government absolutely ignores regional Victoria in every sense. They are a city-centric government. Daniel Andrews is a —

Mr Gepp interjected.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Mr Gepp, there is a reason why I asked for the member to start from the top a couple of times. I do not want interjections during 90-second statements, as I have said on a number of occasions and as you are aware. It is just unnecessary to make those remarks. And one of the remarks I heard I was not particularly happy about either, but I have let it go.

Mr O’SULLIVAN — Even when Labor does finally get a candidate in regional Victoria, they get one from Brunswick. Jane Garrett, the current member for Brunswick, has been preselected by the Labor Party to go into Eastern Victoria Region down in Gippsland, which is an absolute disgrace. Brunswick is about 1 kilometre from the CBD, yet she is going to be installed as a regional member of Parliament by this government.

Daniel Andrews does not care about regional Victoria; he only cares about what happens in Melbourne. Everything he does ignores regional Victoria, particularly when it comes to what they are going to do next, which is kill off the native timber industry, which will kill thousands of jobs.

CORRECTIONS AMENDMENT (ADULT PAROLE BOARD) BILL 2018

Statement of compatibility

Mr O’DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) tabled following statement in accordance with Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006:

In accordance with section 28 of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (‘charter act’), I make this statement of compatibility with respect to the Corrections Amendment (Adult Parole Board) bill 2018 (‘the bill’).

In my opinion, the bill, as introduced to the Legislative Council, is compatible with human rights as set out in the charter act. I base my opinion on the reasons outlined in this statement.

Overview of the bill

The bill strengthens the parole system in Victoria by reasonably requiring that a division of the Adult Parole Board consists of at least 4 members, of whom at least one must be a Judge, retired Judge, Associate Judge, Magistrate or retired Magistrate and at least one member must be a victim of crime or who represent the interests of all victims of crime. The bill

thereby ensures victims have a voice in relation to Adult Parole Board decision making.

Charter rights that are potentially relevant to the bill

Section 8 — Recognition and equality before the law

Section 8(1) of the charter act provides that every person has the right to recognition as a person before the law.

Section 8(2) provides that every person has the right to enjoy his or her human rights without discrimination.

Section 8(3) every person is equal before the law and is entitled to the equal protection of the law without discrimination and has the right to equal and effective protection against discrimination.

Section 8(4) Measures taken for the purpose of assisting or advancing persons or groups of persons disadvantaged because of discrimination do not constitute discrimination.

Victims should have the right to ensure their views are taken into account at all levels of the justice system including decisions on parole. The bill will help address any real or perceived imbalance between the rights of victims compared to offenders and prisoners by ensuring victims are represented on the Adult Parole Board. This is a measure taken to positively advance the human rights of victims.

Section 21 — Right to liberty

Section 21(1) of the charter act provides that every person has the right to liberty. Section 21(2) provides that a person must not be subject to arbitrary detention. Section 21(3) provides that a person must not be deprived of his or her liberty except on grounds and in accordance with procedures established by law.

It is well established that the right to liberty of the person in section 21 is reasonably and justifiably limited where the person is deprived of their liberty under sentence of imprisonment after conviction for a criminal offence by an independent court after a fair hearing. The bill does not increase in any way, that limitation caused by the court’s sentence.

Further, this bill does not alter the head sentences of imprisonment imposed by the Court under which these offenders are detained.

The bill does not in any way impinge on the rights of prisoners to apply for parole or to receive a fair hearing.

I therefore conclude that the bill is compatible with the rights set out in the charter act.

I consider that if there are any limitations of charter rights, those limitations would be reasonable and demonstrably justified pursuant to section 7(2) of the charter act.

Hon. E. J. O’Donohue
Member for Eastern Victoria Region.

Second reading

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) (10:17) — I move:

That the bill be now read a second time.

The Victorian justice system needs to be reoriented so that the views and perspectives of victims of crime are considered at every available opportunity.

The purpose of the Corrections Amendment (Adult Parole Board) Bill 2018 is to ensure that the perspective of victims is considered every time a decision is made to grant a parole order by the Adult Parole Board of Victoria.

The bill does this by amending the Corrections Act 1986 to: (a) provide for the appointment of members of the adult parole board who are victims of crime or who represent the interests of all victims of crime; and (b) further provide for the constitution of a division of the adult parole board.

The bill increases the number of adult parole board division members from three to four, with at least one being a community member who must be a victim of crime or who represent the interests of all victims of crime. Further, meetings of a division of the adult parole board must be attended by at least three members, up from two currently. In doing so, the bill allows for victims or those who represent the interests of all victims, to bring their unique, often difficult and traumatic experiences and perspectives of the justice system, to widen the specific skills and experience base of the pool of board members and thereby assist the decision-making processes of the adult parole board.

Wideranging reforms to strengthen Victoria's parole system were implemented under the previous coalition government to ensure community safety would be the paramount consideration in all parole decisions, and to implement the 23 recommendations made by former High Court judge, Mr Ian Callinan, AC, in his report, *Review of the Parole System in Victoria*, otherwise known as the Callinan review. This was supported by more than \$84 million of additional funding by the former Napthine government to strengthen the operation of the parole system here in Victoria.

Mr Callinan in his review recognised the importance of considering the views of victims of crime. Mr Callinan said at page 81 of his report:

... something does need to be done to ensure that victims' voices are heard and taken into account.

While the reforms to the parole system have strengthened and improved it, whether there is a victims voice depends on appointments to the adult parole board made by the Governor in Council.

Until recently, Ms Carmel Arthur, the widow of Senior Constable Rodney Miller who was tragically murdered, along with his colleague, Sergeant Gary Silk, 20 years ago, served with distinction as a community member on the adult parole board until the statutory maximum term of nine years was reached.

This bill will remove the uncertainty of whether the voices of victims are heard and enshrine it in legislation that they must be heard.

When it comes to parole and the justice system, as a community and as a Parliament, it is time that the interests of victims be appropriately and permanently represented at the heart of parole decision-making processes.

I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned on motion of Ms PULFORD (Minister for Agriculture).

Debate adjourned until Wednesday, 12 September.

RULINGS BY THE CHAIR**Questions on notice**

The PRESIDENT (10:22) — I will just take this opportunity at this time to indicate that Mr Rich-Phillips has written to me in respect of a number of questions that he does not believe were satisfactorily answered and he has requested reinstatement of them. In respect of those questions, I and the clerks have had a look at them and we are of the view that the answers do not respond adequately to the questions that were asked by Mr Rich-Phillips. Therefore I reinstate the following questions: 11 478, 11 479, 11 482, 11 500, 11 501, 11 504, 11 523, 11 524, 11 527, 11 545, 11 546, 11 549, 11 567, 11 568, 11 571, 12 723, 12 724, 12 727, 12 728, 12 735, 12 736, 12 740, 12 741, 12 745, 12 747, 12 748, 12 765 and 12 766.

Mr Rich-Phillips has also requested the reinstatement of questions to the Treasurer relating to human resources issues and other matters in the Department of Treasury and Finance and the State Revenue Office. These also have not been answered adequately in my view in terms of responsiveness to the questions, and therefore I reinstate the following questions: 12 814, 12 817, 12 820, 12 822, 12 823, 12 824 and 12 825.

CRIMES AND SENTENCING AMENDMENT (BUS DRIVERS) BILL 2018

Statement of compatibility

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) tabled following statement in accordance with Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006:

In accordance with section 28 of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (the 'charter act'), I make this statement of compatibility with respect to the Crimes and Sentencing Amendment (Bus Drivers) Bill 2018 (the bill).

In my opinion, the bill, as introduced to the Legislative Council, is compatible with human rights as set out in the charter act.

The proposed amendments introduce appropriate sentences to effectively protect, punish and deter violence against bus drivers performing their professional duties and do not unreasonably limit charter act rights.

The bill balances the rights of individuals with the right to maintain the safety of bus drivers and the community.

The bill amends the Sentencing Act to introduce statutory minimum sentences for offenders who murder, cause injury or serious injury to bus drivers in the course of performing their duties. Specifically, the bill requires a term of imprisonment to be imposed and the following minimum non-parole periods to be fixed by a court:

thirty years for the murder of a bus driver;

five years for the offences of intentionally or recklessly causing serious injury in circumstances of gross violence;

three years for the offence of intentionally causing serious injury;

two years for the offence of recklessly causing serious injury.

The bill also introduces a six-month sentence of imprisonment for the offences of intentionally or recklessly causing injury.

These amendments are clearly confined by law to apply to offenders convicted of the violent offences specified in the bill and only in respect of a clearly defined class of victims, namely, bus drivers on duty.

I consider that the bill does not limit or does not unreasonably limit key sections of the charter act: section 24 — right to a fair trial; section 10 — human rights; section 21 — deprivation of liberty, except on grounds and in accordance with procedures established by law; and section 27 — prohibition or retrospective criminal penalties.

Given the significant impact of increased violence on bus drivers and the risks to community safety of violent actions and threats on buses, I believe the bill strikes a fair balance between the rights of the individual and the protection of a class of at risk employees undertaking duties on behalf of the public.

David Davis, MP
Member for Southern Metropolitan Region

Second reading

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) (10:26) — I move:

That the bill be now read a second time.

The Crimes and Sentencing Amendment (Bus Drivers) Bill 2018 amends the Crimes Act 1958, the Sentencing Act 1991 and the Summary Offences Act 1966 in relation to offences committed against bus drivers and for other purposes.

The main purposes of the bill are to:

amend the Crimes Act 1958 to fix baseline sentences for the murder of a bus driver;

amend the Crimes Act 1958 and the Sentencing Act 1991 to provide a custodial sentence for certain offences committed against bus drivers; and

amend the Crimes Act 1958 and the Summary Offences Act 1966 to expand certain existing assault offences to include bus drivers.

These reforms recognise the very special role played by Victoria's bus drivers, and the need to ensure they receive the full protection of the law when providing services essential to the welfare of the Victorian public, often at the risk of personal harm and thereby harm to the travelling public.

The bill defines 'bus drivers' as bus drivers who are on duty at the time of the commission of an offence, to ensure higher sentences apply to offenders who perpetrate violence against bus drivers in operational settings where both bus drivers, their passengers and other road users are at heightened risk.

By contrast, trains and trams operate on rails and not the open road. Their drivers perform their duties from the relative security and safety of enclosed cabins, making the likelihood of an assault that endangers their passengers much more remote than unprotected bus drivers. One can only imagine the potential for catastrophe in terms of injury to the travelling public were a bus driver to be assaulted and lose control of a bus moving at speed.

This bill sends a clear message to perpetrators of these acts that violence against bus drivers will not be tolerated and will be met with strong penalties.

Since Daniel Andrews has been Premier, total crime including assaults and other violent offences are up 9.5 per cent. In the nearly four years of the Andrews government, attempted murder and manslaughter is up

42 per cent and assaults are up 17.2 per cent. This increased violence in the community is spilling over onto our public transport system.

BusVic's June 2017 *An Investigation into Abuse and Assault of Route Bus Drivers: Statistics, Triggers, Risk Reduction, Training, and Opportunities* reviews:

... the extent of verbal abuse and physical assault of Victorian route bus drivers, which increased significantly over the past three years. It explains why the official data dramatically understates the extent of aggression, essentially because it was never set up to capture it, and provides a sound basis to realistically estimate the extent of aggression to drivers. This shows that physical assault is some 20 times, and verbal abuse some 4000 times, higher than TSV data suggest.

One of the great successes of the previous period of government was the installation of protective services officers on all suburban railway stations and key regional stations from dark until the last train.

Our plan for PSO squads on trains is a further sign of our commitment to the safety of the public transport workforce and the travelling public.

Bus drivers who have been victims and those who continue to serve the community deserve our support, and it is important to send the strongest and clearest signal to those who would commit offences on our buses.

Bus drivers provide an essential service to the Victorian public at considerable risk to their person. They are exposed directly to threats and in some cases violence as the upswing of violent crime across the Victorian community spills over onto our buses.

This bill increases penalties for those who assault bus drivers and does so unashamedly, imposing mandatory custodial terms.

I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned on motion of Ms PULFORD (Minister for Agriculture).

Debate adjourned until Wednesday, 12 September.

GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

Ms WOOLDRIDGE (Eastern Metropolitan) (10:30) — I am pleased today, although I must say I do it with a touch of sadness, to move:

That this house notes that after four long years Victoria is beset with problems caused by Premier Daniel Andrews and his Labor government and Victorians are now faced with:

- (1) the highest crimes against the person offence numbers in Victoria's history;
- (2) sentences and a bail system that do not meet community expectations;
- (3) a youth justice system in crisis;
- (4) rising electricity prices due to Labor's forced closure of Hazelwood power station;
- (5) increasing traffic congestion on our freeways and in our suburbs;
- (6) a \$1.3 billion bill for not building the east-west link;
- (7) the betrayal of 60 000 Country Fire Authority volunteers and their communities;
- (8) six ministers and six Labor members whose actions are under police investigation;
- (9) 74 cancer beds axed at a cost to taxpayers of \$100 million;
- (10) a broken education system and a vocational education and training system with ongoing cuts and reduced enrolments;
- (11) watered down planning protections;
- (12) sporting organisations and community clubs forced to take out loans;
- (13) farmers and regional communities being ignored and funding cuts for local country roads;
- (14) an ice injecting room;
- (15) blowouts in public housing waiting lists and dental waiting lists;
- (16) 14 straight negative Sensis small business index results;
- (17) no plan to manage Victoria's population;

and further notes that Premier Daniel Andrews has presided over a dysfunctional, rorting and morally corrupt government plagued by infighting, mismanagement, favouritism and crisis focused only on itself and not on Victorians.

This motion goes to catalogue the very extensive list of failures of Daniel Andrews and the Labor government over the last four years. It is fair to say, in thinking about how to characterise this government, that it has been absolutely plagued by infighting, rorting, misusing money and favouritism. For many who I talk to, and I talk to a lot of people across a lot of walks of life, Daniel Andrews is a disgrace and this government is an absolute disappointment. It is failing the people of Victoria and it has failed to live up to the rhetoric and the promises that it made back in 2014.

I went through an exercise of talking to people and just saying, 'How would you characterise the work of the

government over the last four years — the work of Daniel Andrews, his ever-changing ministerial team and the Labor Party as a whole?'. There were five key themes that kept coming up in terms of what everyone said, and I want to spend some time in my contribution today talking through those five themes.

The number one thing that people said in relation to Daniel Andrews is that he has a 'whatever it takes' attitude. He will do anything to win the election. He will stop at nothing, he is lacking in morals and he is prepared to push the boundaries — to go beyond the boundaries. He is untrustworthy, and this 'do anything to win the election' attitude and culture within the government pervades everything. While I think this has probably been in place and inherent for many years, there is no doubt that this started in 2014 with what we now call, and call widely, the red shirts rorts. That was the basis, begun in 2013, which was concocted by the then Leader of the Opposition in this place, John Lenders, but absolutely with no doubt the full imprimatur and support of Daniel Andrews to rort the taxpayers of taxpayer money to fund Labor's efforts to get elected.

We have seen the extraordinary efforts over the last four years of the Labor Party to do anything they could to hide what happened through using taxpayer money to fund staff to run the Labor election campaign and grassroots efforts. Once it was referred, sensibly by this house, to the Ombudsman — the appropriate person to undertake the investigation — we saw legal challenges. We saw the Ombudsman challenged in terms of her authority to undertake that investigation. We saw it challenged in the courts. We saw it appealed in the courts. We even saw the Labor Party and Daniel Andrews go so far as to try and stop the Ombudsman undertaking this inquiry into their rorting of taxpayers money by going all the way to the High Court. Sensibly the High Court threw that out. The High Court saw through the efforts of this government to try and stop the truth being told. When the Ombudsman was able to undertake the inquiry, what she found was that the scheme was an artifice.

The scheme had been purposefully developed so as to hide from the Parliament and the Department of Parliamentary Services that the money was being used — in her estimation, \$388 000, but I suspect and there is evidence to say that it could be even more than that, nearly \$400 000 of taxpayers money — to fund Labor campaign field organisers to try and help Labor win the election.

The Ombudsman very clearly found that that was false and was a concocted scheme. Clearly there was rorting

and dishonesty that was perpetuated in that time and since to try and hide that Daniel Andrews was prepared to go to any lengths, including using taxpayer money to fund Labor Party staff to try and win the election. To say that there was no benefit, though, to the members of the Labor Party is absolutely wrong. There were hundreds of thousands of dollars of benefit to those who became ministers and those who became parliamentary secretaries. There were the appointments to committees and just the benefit of being in government and being able to make the decisions in that position. There was clearly a personal benefit to the individuals as well as to the party as a whole of being in government.

So 2014 set the scene for how far the Labor Party and Daniel Andrews were prepared to go in terms of the win-at-all-costs attitude that he has. It has taken four years for that artifice to come to light because of Daniel Andrews's repeated attempts to keep that hidden from Victorians. It is a good thing that that light has been shone through a very detailed Ombudsman investigation. Of course what we know now is that ministers and members of the Labor government are under active police investigation by the fraud and extortion squad. The research was done; the police did not rush into this. They made a sensible decision that it was worth the fraud and extortion squad undertaking further work to identify the fraud that has potentially been committed by ministers and members of this Labor government.

This win-at-any-cost attitude pervades in so many ways. What we keep seeing is policy for preferences, this so-called — and to potentially be formalised if Labor has the opportunity at the next election — coalition between the Labor Party and the Greens. Once again we have seen this, whether it was the Animal Justice Party in Northcote and the preference arrangements and the policies that were put in place in order to attract those votes or, more importantly and more significantly, things like the closure of Hazelwood. It is a very dramatic impact that that closure has had on our electricity prices, and there are ramifications for all Victorians as we see our electricity bills go up and up and up. Labor tripled the coal excise tax, which forced this premature closure of the Hazelwood power station, and as we know, power bills have skyrocketed since.

Of course we have the 40 per cent renewable energy target stifling investment in our remaining baseload power generation and threatening the ongoing viability of key power stations, such as at Yallourn. Labor is not happy to stop at just making sure that Hazelwood closed. This attitude not to pursue coal and sensible,

reliable baseload power sources for Green preferences in inner-city seats, to the detriment, in many cases, of regional communities and Victorian communities as a whole, particularly vulnerable Victorians who are paying the higher power bills as a result, is once again part of this 'do anything to win an election' and 'policy for preferences' attitude that this government has.

We have seen this in so many other ways. Just consider the leaks on the weekend in relation to the impact on our native timber industry and that this Labor government is potentially looking to close that down within the next 10 years, once again to satisfy a small number of inner-city seats where Green voters are expressing an interest in changing the members of those seats. They have already done it twice, and there are two more seats to go. This government will stop at nothing to get those preferences, get those votes and hold those seats, to the detriment of hundreds, and in some cases thousands, of jobs across regional Victoria, with ramifications for the whole of the state as a result. It is incredibly concerning.

What we are seeing time and time again is that Daniel Andrews claims to put people first, but what is clearly happening each and every time is the people he is putting first are himself, his cabinet and the Labor government. He prioritises their survival over anything else. We see it time and time again with the attitudes and the approach that he has. Just in these last few days the fact that Daniel Andrews ordered his Secretary of the Department of Premier and Cabinet to breach constitutional conventions in order to pay back his political opponents with 80 000 pages of documents just shows how far this Premier is prepared to go.

Let us not forget that back in 2015 when there was a former government cabinet-in-confidence document, this process was followed: the then Leader of the Opposition was asked for permission to release it, and that was not given. Well, that was not an option in this case. Chris Eccles, the secretary of the department, said he was ordered by the Premier to release these documents, defying constitutional conventions that are long held in terms of cabinet in confidence. The coalition has never sought to overturn cabinet-in-confidence requirements. We have been consistent for many, many years in relation to that. This government is prepared to go wherever they need to go to win the vote to try and keep themselves in government. They will stop at nothing. They will turn away from any convention or requirement. They will push any boundary — not only push it but step well over it in terms of this whatever-it-takes attitude. The fact is that Victorians know it; this is the number one

piece of feedback I have in relation to the performance of this government.

The second thing that comes up very clearly time and time again when you talk to Victorians in relation to this government is that it is absolutely soft on crime. Through the policies, the legislation and the approaches that they have had, they have been so soft on crime that we have seen crime spiral significantly. It is not just regular crime, which as a whole has gone up 9.5 per cent over the four years; it is the very significant crimes against the person where we see the massive increases: attempted murder and manslaughter are up by 42 per cent, burglary and break and enter are up by 33 per cent and assaults are up by 17 per cent. The Crime Statistics Agency tells us that in the last 12 months of data the largest age cohort for alleged offenders committing crimes against the person is 15 to 19-year-olds.

Some may say, 'This is just where things are happening', but the fact is these things are not happening in other states; this is specific to Victoria in terms of these massive increases — a very significant, scary and worrying trend in crimes against the person. We have seen this under Daniel Andrews in so many different ways. It is not just the statistics, it is actually the people behind the statistics. It is —

Mr Gepp — On a point of order, Acting President, on a number of occasions Ms Wooldridge has referred to the Premier by name and without title. There have been plenty of rulings in this place that it is appropriate to refer to members by their title. He has earned that as the Premier of this state.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Melhem) — Thank you, Mr Gepp. Ms Wooldridge, I think it is a fair point. If you could please refer to the Premier, Mr Andrews, by his title — the Premier.

Ms WOOLDRIDGE — Thank you, Acting President. I know that the other side might want to worry about the formalities of whether I say Daniel Andrews or Mr Andrews, but what I am talking about here is victims of crime — people who have actually suffered violent assaults and crimes against them and who are suffering as a result. The consequences are significant, whether it is the teenage girl who was dragged from her car and beaten by thugs in Frankston in January this year, whether it is the woman in February who was carjacked by a man who was armed with a crowbar and wearing a dish cloth over his face in my community in Donvale, whether it is the woman in July who had a gun put to her head and was pistol-whipped in a carjacking in Narre Warren South — and the list goes on.

I actually think in politics we argue a lot about the facts and figures and the details, but you know something is really having an impact when people change their behaviour. So many times people tell me that they are actually nervous, they are concerned, they are locking their houses in a way that they have never done before — they are checking that their windows and their back doors are locked every night when they get home — they are locking their cars when they drive and they are scared to go out on their own and now go out in groups in the evenings. People have changed their behaviour because they are now nervous about the crime wave that has hit our city and our state. People are advised, ‘If someone bumps your car, don’t get out and swap licence numbers, keep driving; lock your doors and drive on’. That is because of the extent of the carjackings that are happening in this state. There is a lawlessness that we have never seen before and that other states are not seeing across the country in relation to crime.

And why is it? Certainly the advice I have had is that it is because the police are advised to hold back. We saw even in something as extreme as the Bourke Street tragedy that police had multiple opportunities and asked multiple times to be able to apprehend the driver and they were told, ‘No’. The police are no longer given the confidence from their leadership to take action when they see circumstances happening in front of them. I do nothing but commend the police for their work, but their oversight and direction from this government is meaning that the police hesitate where normally they would not. Even recently in riots in the western suburbs, where masses of gangs were fighting, the fact that they stood there and said ‘You can’t touch us’ to the police is a reflection of the attitude of the community to the policies and the laws of this government and how those who are seeking to defy them are acting in the face of police. We need stronger laws; we need to reinforce and empower our police to make decisions and take action. We have seen consistently, again and again, from this government an absolute failure in the laws that have been put in place and in the support for police, and that has translated to people fundamentally changing their behaviour and how they feel about their safety in their homes and their community. That is a very dramatic impact.

The third area that people consistently speak of in relation to this government is the fact that it wastes money. This ties in to the first point in terms of doing anything to win the election. They are prepared to throw money at anything in terms of trying to create an impression and to get the outcome that they want. Sometimes that is ideologically based, and nothing is more stark on that front than the \$1.3 billion spent not

to build a road. The east–west link, according to every agency and every adviser, is clearly an absolutely critical part of our road infrastructure that is needed for this state, for those of us who travel in on the Eastern Freeway every morning and for everyone who feels the ramifications of it. We see the traffic slowing; we see it banked up further. The recent RACV survey said it is the number one bottleneck in this city. It cost us \$1.3 billion — and let us not forget that this happened under a Premier who said this was not going to cost a cent because it was not worth the paper it was written on — to not build a road that actually must be built, will be built and certainly will be built under a Liberal-National government. I believe it will be built at some time in the future by any government, because it is a critical part of the infrastructure. That this government thinks they can build a north-east link without the east–west link is just a joke. It is absolutely ridiculous to think that we can channel 100 000 cars onto the Eastern Freeway and just leave the Eastern Freeway with the bottlenecks that it has got.

In terms of spending money this government is prepared to say one thing, make up a number and then wing it afterwards, and that is exactly what we have seen on many fronts. In my area of health the Premier proudly said he was going to build Victoria’s first heart hospital. It was going to cost about \$300 million and the government was going to put in \$150 million. He even knew at the time he was making the promise in 2014 that it would never be that amount. He clearly knew that he was not telling the truth, even on the day he promised it. And what have we seen? We have seen a massive blowout. It is a \$540 million hospital now, with \$470 million coming from the state government. We have gone from \$150 million to \$470 million. My advice is that even that is tight. It is probably going to need even more money. It is like it is someone else’s money — well, it is someone else’s money; it is taxpayers money — and this government does not care, because they just keep making up the figures and then catching up afterwards.

The West Gate tunnel was promised for \$500 million. What have we got now? We have a \$6.7 billion tunnel. The Metro Tunnel was promised for \$9 billion. Now it is \$11.07 billion, an over \$2 billion blowout for the tunnel — and they are just the figures we know so far. For level crossing removals \$5 billion was the promise. Now it is \$8.3 billion, according to the Auditor-General earlier this year — a \$3.3 billion blowout. Then of course I have to come back to this statement again: ‘Zero dollars; it’s going to cost us nothing to cancel the east–west link contract’, and here we are, \$1.3 billion later.

The list goes on. It includes the Hoddle Street upgrade, the Seaford stabling project, the Casey Hospital extension, the Ballarat line upgrade, the Yan Yean road upgrade, the Frankston station upgrade, V/Line fleet maintenance and so on. This government wastes money — an exorbitant amount of money — sometimes for zero outcome. They are prepared to say anything and do anything.

One of mine, once again in my shadow portfolio area, is the cancelling of Peter Mac Private at the top of the Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre. There have been a lot of bad decisions made by this government. I have to say that from my perspective this is one of the worst decisions. Peter Mac has got 96 beds. There were going to be an additional 42 beds and four operating theatres on the 13th floor of the Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre. The Premier, showing his true colours about how he feels about the private sector and particularly private hospitals, said, 'There will be no greedy profit-making at the Peter Mac'. These were absolutely outrageous comments. Those 42 beds and the outpatients clinics would have provided treatment, each and every year, for somewhere in the order of 10 000 Victorians who have cancer.

We know Peter Mac is now full. We know that about one-third of all patients are private patients. A good proportion of these private patients could have gone into those private beds on the 13th floor, freeing up more public beds for public patients. Instead the Premier said, 'No greedy profit-making at the Peter Mac'. The fact is that it has cost the government somewhere in the order of \$100 million, both in expenses and in lost income opportunities, to cancel those 42 beds. Not only are 10 000 patients missing out each and every year, but \$100 million has been lost in the ideological cancellation of something which would have really expanded access to world-class cancer treatment for so many Victorians. It is an atrocious decision, and one that we still live with today.

The hypocrisy of it all is that I understand the only way that the heart hospital, the Premier's pet project, can stack up is if they have somewhere in the order of 60 or 70 private beds in the hospital. So it is okay to try to make the Premier's pet project stack up — and I understand the figures are still not even close to matching — but it is not okay for Victorians with cancer to get access to the world-class treatment of the Peter Mac through Peter Mac Private at the Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre.

Of course not only does this government waste money but they also break their promises in relation to money. The night before the last election the Premier said,

'There will be no new taxes and charges under my government'. Well, what have we seen? We have seen quite the opposite. Let me go through the list of the additional state taxes, which have increased by \$7.9 billion under this Labor government. The Premier said, 'I make that promise to every single Victorian'. There is a new city access tax for the West Gate tunnel; the tripling of brown coal royalties; the introduction of Uber and taxi fare taxes; increased stamp duty on new cars; new stamp duty on off-the-plan purchases; a new so-called 'vacant home' tax; new annual property valuations to increase land tax; new stamp duty on property transfers between spouses; a new point-of-consumption gambling tax; a new land tax surcharge, which has subsequently been tripled, for absentee owners; a new stamp duty surcharge, which has been subsequently increased, for foreign purchasers; and the increased fire services property levy. This list does not even include the changes to the growth areas infrastructure contribution levy, the \$140 million increase in property transfer fees and a host of other fee gouges that we have seen under Labor.

The third area is so common and people understand it — this government wastes money. They treat taxpayers money as their own to play with. They break their promises when it comes to money in relation to the taxes and the increased charges that have been introduced under this government, in direct contrast to the promise that Daniel Andrews made to each and every Victorian.

The fourth area that sends a very clear message to Victorians and that Victorians know about is in relation to the dominance of the union movement and how this government is union controlled, particularly by Peter Marshall. Who could have imagined that? This government pretended to support the volunteers in the Country Fire Authority (CFA). Frankly, every Premier in my living memory has supported the amazing work that our CFA volunteers do — 60 000 of them who put their lives on the line for their community and for their fellow citizens. This government has done everything it possibly can to destroy the CFA, and all at the bidding of Peter Marshall.

There are serious questions, and it is really so hard to understand why this Premier has gone to the extent he has to undermine the former minister, to undermine all the senior management of our fire services and to undermine 60 000 CFA volunteers. What is it that Peter Marshall has got on him? What is it that he feels he owes Peter Marshall to such an extent? It is actually unfathomable. It is impossible to understand why the Premier would want to do what he has done. This dispute has now been running for 2000 days. It was

actually back in June 2016 that Daniel Andrews claimed:

This dispute had to come to an end, and I ended it.

Well, it is not. It is now September 2018 and we are on the brink of another fire season, which, with limited rain in many parts of Victoria, could be quite dramatic. We still do not have settled fire services that have clear, unequivocal leadership, given the loss of decades of fire experience through the leaders that have been sacked and have left because of the work of this Labor government and what has happened. There have been allegations of bullying and sexual harassment, obviously so many senior personnel have resigned and there was a Senate committee inquiry. Even the commonwealth have had to amend the Fair Work Act 2009 to try to moderate the very dramatic and devastating impact on the CFA and the volunteers that this government was trying to achieve. There has also been civil litigation in the Supreme Court challenging the enterprise bargaining agreement.

The CFA volunteers that I meet at fire stations just cannot understand the motivations of this Premier. They cannot understand why this Premier would go to such lengths to try to undermine what is one of our most respected and proud institutions in this state — the volunteers of the CFA.

Ms Shing — What a joke!

Ms WOOLDRIDGE — Ms Shing might call the CFA volunteers a joke, and I think that is very disappointing. They are not a joke.

Honourable members interjecting.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Melhem) — Order! Are we done?

Ms Shing — On a point of order, Acting President, Ms Wooldridge has verbally me in saying, ‘Ms Shing might call the CFA volunteers a joke’, and I take offence. I would ask that that be withdrawn.

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms Shing — I was indicating that Ms Wooldridge’s comments and the coalition were a joke. I ask her to withdraw.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Melhem) — I could not hear a thing. There is too much noise. Ms Shing, do you want to repeat your point of order?

Ms Shing — Yes, thank you. Ms Wooldridge has made the assertion that Ms Shing might claim that

volunteers are a joke, and I take offence to that because that is in fact absolutely not what I have claimed. She has misrepresented me, and I ask that she withdraw.

Mr Finn — On the point of order, Acting President, you would only have to be in here 5 minutes to know that that is not a point of order. That is a debating point, and if Ms Shing wishes to get the call at some stage, she can reply to Ms Wooldridge, but it is certainly not a point of order.

Ms Shing — Further on the point of order, Acting President, verballing is unparliamentary. I have taken offence at the way Ms Wooldridge has sought to mischaracterise what I said, and I ask that she withdraw.

Honourable members interjecting.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Melhem) — The clock is still running, so do you want me to rule on the point of order or do you want to keep talking?

I think there is a fair point made by Ms Shing in relation to the verballing about misrepresenting her view. She has made her point clear that that is not her position. Ms Wooldridge, can I ask you to perhaps withdraw that and you can continue your contribution.

Ms WOOLDRIDGE — I withdraw. What we do know, though, is that the entire Labor Party think the CFA are a joke or they would not undermine them in the way that they have done. They would not have sacked the minister who stood up for the CFA. They would not have sacked Lucinda Nolan, the very competent, capable CEO. They would not have sacked the board because the board would not do what this Labor government wanted them to do. It is clear that every single member of the Labor Party and this Labor government thinks that the CFA are a joke, or others would have stood up, like Jane Garrett did, to the Premier in relation to what has happened to our CFA.

You can play all the games you like in here. The fact is every single CFA volunteer knows that every Labor Party member has undermined them, has sought to destroy the fantastic institution that exists in relation to the CFA and that their objective is to have Peter Marshall run the entire fire services rather than uphold the wonderful institution that has saved so many lives and protected so much property and livestock over decades. The CFA volunteers and the rural communities know exactly what this Labor Party and Labor government think of the CFA and what they have sought to do consistently over 2000 days in relation to the CFA.

People know it. People actually know what has gone on, and they know that this government is completely controlled by the unions that they owe. Not only did they rot taxpayers money in relation to getting elected, but they owe the union movement in many ways for those hours spent doorknocking, those actions on the polling booths and the fake uniforms that they put on. Now this is all payback. This is payback for this government getting elected. That is what people know and people see through it, and they can see through the hypocrisy and the attitudes of this government.

The final area that is so very clear is that this government has been absolutely dysfunctional within as well. It has been an absolutely dysfunctional government from within. They are untrustworthy, they are lacking in morals — as I said at the beginning — and their dysfunction has translated into what we have seen in terms of the constantly revolving doors in relation to ministerial and leadership positions within the Parliament appointed by the Labor Party.

It started with then minister Adem Somyurek in relation to alleged bullying charges. Of course once again the public was not allowed to hear the details of those. Certainly the financial settlements that have been made to those staff that were allegedly bullied by the then minister amount to very significant amounts, and of course they have never been made public either. He was the first minister to go.

We then had an issue with a second minister in this house, Steve Herbert, the then minister for TAFE and corrections, in relation to ferrying his dogs between his Melbourne residence and his country residence. This is once again an example of this government enjoying the spoils of office and going to extremes, which are well beyond public expectations of the actions and behaviours of a minister. Then he had to go as well because of it. That was two ministers down.

We had Jane Garrett sacked by the Premier because she dared to stand up to him. A strong woman with the convictions of her beliefs and representing her portfolio was sacked for daring to defy this Premier. She was the third minister to go. That was another significant change and a reflection not only of what the Premier thinks about people who stand up to him but also of what this Premier thinks in relation to women. Ms Garrett is just one of many casualties of women who have fallen by the wayside of this Premier, who tries to talk up a good game but whose practice has been quite the opposite.

We then saw the performance in relation to the former Speaker and Deputy Speaker in the other place, rotting

very significantly their allowances to the tune of \$130 000, saying they were living within their electorates when in fact they were living miles away at different locations. We know Labor Party members do not like to live within their electorates, and this was an absolute manifestation of that. So the former Speaker and Deputy Speaker in the other place had to go. That is more Labor appointments and more reflection on rotting and misappropriation of funds in relation to those members.

Then of course unfortunately in this house we had the former Deputy President having to stand down because of an investigation by IBAC in relation to printing, and I understand his electorate office is still closed and still unavailable to his constituents for this extended period of time. So there have been three Labor appointments to three out of the four presiding officer positions in this house and the other chamber in this Parliament, and all three have had to stand down because of serious questions about their behaviour and rotting.

This is a reflection of this government being dysfunctional. They are extreme in terms of the extent that they will go to to take advantage of taxpayers money for their own personal benefit, and we have seen the result of that. It is no wonder that so many Victorians think that they are untrustworthy in relation to their behaviour.

We see time and time again how two-faced this government is. There is this consistent message that they promise one thing and then absolutely deliver something else. We have seen it in so many ways, some of which I have already touched on. We have seen it in relation to the Country Fire Authority. They say, 'Yes, we support our volunteers', but when it comes to it they do everything they possibly can to undermine those volunteers and the work that they do. They make promises of, 'Yes, we're really very concerned about the drug epidemic, the ice epidemic and what is happening there', and the biggest solution to that has been the opening of an ice injecting facility in Richmond. The view it puts is, 'We are so supportive of women. Yes, we promote women', but as soon as women stand up to the Premier, those women are sacked, moved aside and moved on. They say, 'Yes, there'll be no new taxes for this state', but what have we seen? Tax after tax, charge after charge and more impost on Victorians.

What do we see? 'Yes, we'll support rural and regional Victoria' — except if it comes at the cost of Greens preferences. 'No, we're going to close Hazelwood', with a massive tax put on. 'No, we're going to undermine our native forest industry'. It is very

significant undermining from a government and a minister, who have completely focused on metropolitan Melbourne to the detriment of regional Victorians. The fact is that they do know it; they experience it.

The fact is that this government does not have a plan for the future of this state. There is no doubt that population is the most pressing issue. How do we think beyond? This Premier thinks over the next 80 days. He thinks about how to get himself re-elected. That is the focus for this state from this Labor Premier. What we are putting forward is that we actually need to think about 30 or 40 years ahead for this state. How do we actually manage the population that we —

Ms Shing interjected.

Ms WOOLDRIDGE — It does not matter how many times you yell across the chamber. The fact is that Victorians know very clearly that there is not a plan for the future of this state. There is not a plan to deal —

Honourable members interjecting.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Melhem) — Ms Shing, I believe your name is on the list, so can I ask you to stop your interjecting. And Mr O'Sullivan, the same comment applies to you.

Ms WOOLDRIDGE — This state is growing significantly and proudly. People want to come to live in Victoria. Melbourne used to be the most livable city in the world, and we know regional Victoria is a wonderful place to live as well, but there is no plan. Last year Victoria grew by 143 000 people, and we do know that Melbourne is going to overtake Sydney in the next four or five years in relation to being the largest city in this country, so we need a plan for how we manage that population. We need a plan for how we grow this state. And it is the whole state; it is not just Melbourne. It is about not just trying to bring more people to Melbourne but how we grow this state as a whole, and we have not seen that in any way, shape or form from this Labor government. Victoria is taking disproportionately more of the population growth that Australia is having, and we need to be able to manage that. Once again what we see from this government is a plan for 80 days, not a plan for 30 or 40 years for this state.

The motion I moved today lays out the full range, and I have covered a number of them. There are many more to add to them — the challenges, the disappointment and the disgrace that we have seen from this Labor government — whether it is the highest crimes against the person offence numbers in Victoria's history, and I have talked about the crime wave that we are facing

and this government's repeated soft-on-crime approach, or whether it is our sentencing and bail systems, which do not meet community expectations.

I met with a very significant victim of crime just last week, and their feedback on the murder of their son was that the perpetrator had been sentenced to just six years. This is a story told by victims of crime again and again and again — that the ability to enforce expectations in terms of sentences for very serious and significant crimes is not being upheld by our justice system and that we are setting expectations in terms of things like bail where people, especially young people, know that they can commit crimes and they will be back out again in no time at all. Our youth justice system is in crisis. The number of riots that we have seen in our youth justice system is just a reflection on this broader crime issue as well, and the inability to get that under control, to actually deal with the issues, is an absolute failure of this government.

We have seen rising electricity prices due to Labor's forced closure of Hazelwood power station — and further ramifications for rural communities — with that translating into bills each and every quarter in relation to it. Agency after agency has made it very clear that undermining our baseload power and taking Hazelwood, which supplied somewhere in the order of 20 per cent of the power to Victoria, out of the system has had absolute ramifications in terms of the increasing of the electricity prices that we are seeing across the board.

I have talked about the betrayal of the CFA volunteers. There are six ministers and six Labor members whose actions are under active police investigation by the fraud and extortion squad. Cancer beds have been axed. And it is not just at Peter Mac Private; it is the further 32 beds that were part of the Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre that have now been taken for a stroke unit. We need stroke units — we need that work — but this is 32 of the 160 beds for the Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre that are gone, so in total 74 cancer beds have been axed by this government.

We have an education system that has not got the focus on the core elements of reading, writing and arithmetic — the core fundamental elements that young people need in terms of being able to complete their schooling and be equipped for the workforce for the future. There is a focus on so many areas other than those core principles. And of course we have seen thousands upon thousands deserting the vocational education and training system in relation to the training that is being provided under this government.

There are planning protections — and this has been very significant in Eltham in my electorate — where this government is seeking to intensify and increase height limits and put more dwellings on single blocks. This is something which the community is very unhappy about and is pushing back on significantly, and that is happening across the board.

Sporting organisations and community clubs have been forced to take out loans. There was \$225 million for Australia's richest sporting organisation, the AFL. Small community clubs run by volunteers, equipping our young people with the skills of teamwork, sporting expertise, fitness and health and wellbeing, are required to take out loans while there is this windfall gain of \$225 million for the AFL.

Farmers and regional communities are being ignored. There have been funding cuts for local roads. The wonderful program of country roads and bridges has been used for bridges in Mulgrave, the Premier's electorate. That was a reflection, I suppose, on how this government really feels about investing in our country roads and bridges.

There have been blowouts in public housing waiting lists — those numbers are ever-increasing — and dental waiting lists. There are tens of thousands of Victorians on the dental waiting list waiting to get the most basic of dental care reflected under this government.

Small businesses have walked away from this government, and nothing has characterised that more than the public holiday for the grand final. The Friday the day before a football match was made a public holiday, and that has been found to be a billion-dollar cost to the state. There have been 14 straight negative Sensis small business index results. It is very clear that small businesses know that this government have not had their best interests at heart and have not acted for them and the work that they do as the backbone of our economy. In fact they say that the government being very beholden to the unions and this extra public holiday are the two things that have had a dramatic impact on the effectiveness and the ability of their business.

And of course there is no plan to manage Victoria's population into the future. So this government is a disgrace. They are a disappointment, and this is very clearly reflected by the dysfunction that we have seen day in, day out, in relation to the ministry, in relation to the members of the government, in relation to those they have appointed to leadership positions, in relation to the rotting and the moral corruptness that we have seen right from day one with the red shirts rorts and all

their behaviours since and in relation to the favouritism they have for the unions and people who agree with them.

This is a government that picks winners and losers. If you are one of the winners, then that is great, but if you are not, you are excluded, you are sacked and you are removed from any sort of support. That is seen time and time again, portfolio across portfolio, by the favouritism that this government shows each and every day and the crises that it has had to deal with.

There is no doubt, as James Campbell said yesterday, that this is a government that has the equivalent of a Ventnor every six months. It was a characterisation of the crises that this government has on a regular basis. Whether it is ministers having to resign or being sacked because of inappropriate behaviour, whether it is the roting of taxpayers money or whether it is police investigations into the behaviour of some of the most senior members of this government, time and time again this government has been crisis-wracked and has had to defend the positions that it has taken or has tried to duck and weave to avoid scrutiny. This is a government that promised to be transparent and in fact has been the opposite. Time and time again it has said that it wants to shine a light on what is going on, but what we have consistently seen time and time again is the hiding of key information and the avoidance of transparency. It is another example of where this government has consistently said one thing and done quite the opposite.

Victorians will have a clear choice in just 80 days. They can choose a government which has been shown to be prepared to push any boundaries, step over any line and do whatever it can to further itself and its own interests rather than acting in the interests of all Victorians. They can choose a government that has been completely soft on crime to the extent that people have changed their behaviour and no longer in many cases feel safe in their homes and in their communities, and that has wasted tens of billions of dollars and at the same time taken billions more in taxes, despite promising to do otherwise. This is a government that is controlled by the unions as payback for the political benefit that it has delivered to them, and it has been completely dysfunctional and untrustworthy in terms of its behaviour.

I have got to say that in contrast I think there is a very clear choice of a team that has been quite the opposite — a team that has been absolutely united and working to express and communicate a clear vision for this state, not just for the next 80 days but for the next 20, 30 and 40 years. Whether it be in health, in

education, in crime or in population growth particularly, there has been a very clear articulation of the contrast between this disgraceful government and an alternative Liberal-Nationals Matthew Guy-led government. I think Victorians know that this government has not been acting in their interests. I think they know this is a government that acts in its own interests first and in the interests of Victorians well down the track. On that, I commend this motion to the house, reflecting on a disgraceful and disappointing four years of the Andrews Labor government.

Mr GEPP (Northern Victoria) (11:23) — I have got to say that sometimes you just wake up and you think, ‘I’ve been kissed on the forehead by an angel’. I have cleaned that up a bit. Generally Wednesday is a wasted day where you do not get the chance, really, in this place — certainly in my experience in the last 12 months —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr GEPP — It is going to be longer if the first 6 seconds gets that sort of response. Smoke them if you have got them. Kick back, because there is a bit more to come. It has been my experience in the 14 months I have been in this place that Wednesday has really been in this place probably the greatest wasted day of taxpayers money, because what we hear from the mob over there is nothing more than, ‘We want more documents; we want this; we want that’. You cannot believe some of the things that come out of their mouths.

I thought today finally we were going to get the chance to have a bit of an economic debate. I thought we were going to hear from those opposite about some of the things they would do if Victoria had the misfortune of them being in government again following the election on 24 November. But of course what did we get? We did not get any of that. We got the usual whingeing, whining, carping bucket of mess that we normally get from this mob when they jump to their feet.

Can you believe that they actually lead with their chin? Ms Wooldridge’s opening gambit was about the misuse of public funds. Can you believe it, given what we have learned in the last few days about the so-called alternative Premier in this state, the Leader of the Opposition, who against the advice of his own department and lawyers spent \$3.5 million of Victorian taxpayers money — he ordered the release of that money, and public servants were running around because they could not quite work out what head of power they actually had to strike that cheque — that they come in here and they want to talk about the

misuse of public funds. My goodness! I wonder whether he did it just after his lunch with the mobster — just after he had washed the lobster down with the Grange. I just cannot believe that they come in here and lead with their chin.

It is really interesting when you go through Ms Wooldridge’s list of 17 things — and I will not get to the 17, because I am going to leave some fun for my friends over here. I should not be the only one who gets to enjoy the opportunity to smash some of these things out of the park. I will touch on a few of them during the course of my contribution, but I will leave plenty of room for my friends to take aim and fire at the bucket of mess that we have been presented with today. What does strike me, though, in terms of Ms Wooldridge’s contribution is that it certainly fits with what I have observed in the last 14 months. When you are up in the electorate what you hear from those opposite is completely different to what you hear from them here, and vice versa. So it is either a lie here or it is a lie there, but in any case it is a lie. What they tend to do is make things up. They like to just make things up. They are good at fabricating things. Anyone would think that they were in manufacturing the way they manufacture things.

Ms Wooldridge talked about conventions. She came in here and actually talked about conventions.

Mr Mulino interjected.

Mr GEPP — Can you believe the irony, Mr Mulino. And then she started on the firefighters. Perhaps we need to jog the memory of those opposite about what took place on Good Friday in this very chamber, where we had two people who sought a pair from this government. Two people from the opposition benches sought a pair so that they did not have to sit here on Good Friday. What did they do? They were given a pair, and what did they do? They skulked in the back door. It would be interesting for those opposite who actually knew what was about to take place to put their hands up and admit who knew. Who was aware of the ruse? Who was aware of the convention that was about to be trashed by those opposite? And yet Ms Wooldridge wanders in here and starts to give a lecture about conventions and about ethics — and where is she? She is gone. This is like the 1950s: get down low and go, go, go. That is what they do. They come in here and just throw mud, and then they run out of the chamber. She has left her phone, so I am tipping she will be back very, very soon.

And then she wants to talk about regional Victoria. I am going to go through a few things that they have done. I

will go through a few things that they have talked about in terms of regional Victoria. They want to talk about regional Victoria. Can I remind the house of one of the first acts that the coalition did, not long after I came into this place. What do you think they did with the regional development portfolio in the shadow ministry? They axed it. They got rid of it. It was only after about three weeks of shaming them in this place and publicly that they suddenly thought, 'Oh, gee. We've forgotten about regional Victoria. We'd better reinstate it into the shadow ministry'. Yet they run up there and talk about what a city-centric government et cetera we are. I will go through a few things that they did when they had their hands on the wheel from 2010 to 2014.

Ms Wooldridge is absolutely right: the Victorian people will get to make a decision on 24 November, and when they consider the facts I am very confident about which way they will come down in terms of the election. Of course Ms Wooldridge also talked about energy prices. I will tell you what, you have got to give it to them. They have just necked a Prime Minister because they could not land on an energy policy. They have just destroyed a federal government because they did not have a coherent energy policy. They have necked a Prime Minister elected by the Australian people. They took it into their own hands in the stealth of night to neck a Prime Minister. Of course we learned overnight, apparently, that that same Prime Minister was willing to do a deal with the bloke who was coming after him. He was actually going to neck his own deputy. What a bizarre mob they are. It is macabre.

Of course the coup de grace in terms of this contribution from Ms Wooldridge was about women. If you are a middle-aged white bloke with the name of David, you are more likely to get a seat under the Liberal and National parties than you are if you are a woman. That is just a fact. Of course we had last week the opportunity where the federal Liberal-National parties could have actually elected the second woman Prime Minister in this country. What did they do? They necked her. They tossed her out to the back bench — 'Off you go. Anybody but!'

Mr Mulino interjected.

Mr GEPP — Sometimes you just wake up, Mr Mulino, and you cannot believe this mob. You think you have seen most things come from this mob opposite, and then they just give you a gift. So it is no longer a wasted day; it is now gift Wednesday. I thought that finally after 14 months we were actually going to get to have a bit of economic debate in this place — that they were going to put forward —

Ms Wooldridge interjected.

Mr GEPP — Oh, you're back. You forgot your phone, so you're back. That's right; you remembered that.

I thought we were going to get the chance to do a bit of economic debate. Finally we were going to have some economic debate, but no, none of that. We have got no ideas coming from the other side of the chamber — no ideas whatsoever. Instead what they do is resort to type. Let me remind those opposite about some of the things that the Andrews Labor government has done over the last four years and will continue to do when it is re-elected on 24 November.

Ms Shing — Do we start with regional Victoria?

Mr GEPP — Well, we should start in regional Victoria, but let's start from the top. Let's not spoil the fun.

After four years of a Liberal-National government what we saw was just year after year of cuts — cuts to investment, cuts to services and cuts to programs. And when we came to government —

Mr O'Donohue — Lies!

Mr GEPP — No, it's not lies, Mr O'Donohue; it's fact. And that is why the Victorian people turfed you out, because you did nothing but cut. All you did was cut. All you ever do is cut.

Mr O'Sullivan interjected.

Mr GEPP — That is of course when you forget to include regional development in your own shadow ministry. So you either forget things or you cut them. That is very clear.

When we came to office the state was clearly falling into disarray because when those opposite had their hands on the economic levers of this state they drove it into the ground. Today of course things could not be more different. And they do not like it, because we have had a positive plan for this state that we outlined to the Victorian people prior to the election and then in our first 100 days. We set out the plan. We talked about jobs, we talked about health, we talked about education, we talked about infrastructure and we talked about getting this state back on the map and moving again — and we have done it. We have achieved it and we have achieved it in spades.

Not even your scriptwriters, those at the *Herald Sun*, from where you get all your questions every day for

question time or where you read out the editorial — Ms Wooldridge quoted Mr Campbell before — agree with you in terms of your characterisation of this government. Even they, begrudgingly, say, ‘Oh, gee, it’s a government that gets things done. They actually do things. They don’t just talk about them; they get things done’.

Mr O’Sullivan — Not in regional Victoria.

Mr GEPP — We’ll come to regional Victoria, Mr O’Sullivan. We’ll come to your neck of the woods, don’t worry, and we will continue to tell regional Victoria about the charade that is the National Party today and the ruse that you pull on the Victorian people in regional Victoria. Don’t worry about that.

Our investment in infrastructure this year will peak at \$13.7 billion. Contrast that with the expenditure of those opposite when they were last in government. That is almost double the long-term average before this government came to power. For example, all those opposite were about were cuts, cuts, cuts.

Mr Ramsay — What did we cut?

Mr GEPP — Good question. What did you cut? Oh, my goodness. The gift just keeps on giving today.

Mr Ramsay interjected.

Mr GEPP — Mr Ramsay, I am going to let you keep going because you have got only a handful of days left in this place, as we all know. One billion dollars out of TAFE —

Mr Ramsay interjected.

Mr GEPP — You can protest all you like, but of course what gives you away is the budget papers. The budget papers actually give you away. When we go back and have a look at the expenditure and the cuts by the previous government, they are there in black and white.

Mr Ramsay interjected.

Mr GEPP — You can protest all you like, but the reality is that all you did was you got out the machete and you went bang, bang — \$1 billion to TAFE. You closed 22 campuses. What have we done in contrast? Good question.

Mr Mulino — Lilydale.

Mr GEPP — Lilydale. We have reopened TAFEs. We have announced 30 new free TAFE courses.

Mr Ramsay — They come at a cost.

Mr GEPP — Oh, ‘They come at a cost’. So there it is. They say, ‘We’re going to grow TAFE’, but when we grow TAFE they say, ‘Oh, yeah, but it comes at a cost’. Yes, it does, Mr Ramsay. Very elementary of you. It is a shame that in your last couple of weeks as a member of this place you suddenly realise that these things do cost. That is right. I am not sure why it has taken you so long to reach that conclusion, but I am glad that you have arrived at it nonetheless. It is an important thing that you will be able to take with you when you leave this place in a little while.

I want to talk about schools. Not only did you just gut education in terms of TAFE; you also had a crack at schools as well, didn’t you? You could not help yourselves in education. You stand up in this place — and earlier in my contribution I talked about how you say one thing here and do another thing out there or vice versa — or you run out there and tell the world that you are the champions of education, but it is not backed up by your actions, because all you do is impose cuts. You close things, you cut services and you cut programs, and that is the experience that Victorians had under the government of those opposite when they were in power in 2010 to 2014.

However, what have we done? What has the Andrews Labor government done? We have invested more than \$3.8 billion to build 70 new schools and upgrade 1300 schools across the state since coming to office in 2014. That means that thousands of kids, just like the kids in the gallery here today, now go to school every day and learn in new classrooms with better technology and better facilities like new gyms and science labs.

But what else have we done? We have also created in excess of 5000 construction jobs for Victorians right around the state. So we do not just talk about it; we do it. We have created in excess of 5000 construction industry jobs through our infrastructure programs. Of course when you look at our performance over the last four years in terms of job creation, we have created 234 000 full-time jobs. Let us contrast that with what happened when they were in power. What did they create? When they were in office they created 38 000 jobs — four years, 38 000 jobs.

Where is the state’s unemployment rate today? The state’s unemployment rate is 5 per cent. It is the lowest rate in Victoria in more than six years. What was it when they were in office? How does it compare? Well, when they were there, when they had their hands on the economic levers, unemployment was at 6.7 per cent and going up. It was not coming down; it was going up.

Why was it going up? It was going up because they could not create jobs. They did not have a plan. They were a sit-on-their-hands government who did nothing except cut programs and cut services. Of course they want to talk about regional Victoria.

Mr Elasmr — That's foolish.

Mr GEPP — It is very foolish. The regional unemployment rate in Victoria today is 4.9 per cent, and the youth unemployment rate of 12.5 per cent is the second lowest in the country, and they say, 'What are you doing for regional Victoria?'. Can you believe it? I was up in Shepparton last weekend, and prior to that I was in Inglewood on the Friday. I was talking to locals about the unemployment rate, and they were marvelling that in regional Victoria there is a 4 in front of the unemployment rate. Their response was, 'Well done, government. Well done. You've got the place jumping. You've got the place topping. You've got the place moving. The best thing that you can do for our kids, as well as giving them good hospitals and good health care and education, is create jobs'. And guess what? That is what we are doing, and they were very, very appreciative.

Mr Eideh interjected.

Mr GEPP — Of course there are other things we have done for regional Victoria. Thanks for asking, Mr Eideh. We have cut payroll tax — not once, but twice — providing local regional businesses with the lowest payroll tax in the whole country, and that is leading to record investment. These are policies that those over there can only dream of.

The National Party call themselves the party of regional Victoria, but where are their economic policies that back this up? Of course they have not got any. They fall back on the same arguments again and again and again, but none of them actually generate any jobs, and people in regional Victoria are starting to wake up to this mob. They are starting to wake up to this mob, particularly the National Party. They are a wake-up to them. They are a wake-up to the fact that they say a lot but do nothing. What they do is run around now, as an election is nearing, and they make all these false promises to try and tie in their mates at the federal level, because they know that their mates at the federal level cannot deliver because they will not be in office either following the next election. The people of regional Victoria are a wake-up to them.

Mr O'Sullivan interjected.

Mr GEPP — They are a wake-up to you, Mr O'Sullivan. They call you 'Carnie Luke' out there.

Every time there is a sideshow from the Nats, Carnie Luke gets wheeled out. That is what they do — 'Let's wheel out Carnie Luke'. He is the bloke who is given the job. You see Peter Crisp in the Assembly seat of Mildura; he does not move unless Carnie Luke is standing next to him. Then Carnie Luke bobs up somewhere else — in Shepparton. He just runs around the place. Wherever there is a National Party sideshow, Carnie Luke is there.

Mr Ramsay — On a point of order, Acting President, I know Mr Gepp thinks he is very funny. I am not sure who Mr Gepp is referring to in respect to 'Carnie Luke', but I suspect it may well be the member Mr Luke O'Sullivan. That is not his proper name, Acting President. In fact it is Mr Gepp trying to be funny but actually being very rude and disrespectful. I ask you to ask the member to call the member by his proper name.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Ms Dunn) — There is no point of order, but I remind the member that we should use members' names in the chamber if we are referring to them.

Mr GEPP — I want to turn now if I can to our health system, where this government has invested more than \$2.1 billion. We have delivered an additional 86 000 hospital admissions, 49 000 emergency treatments and record low elective surgery wait lists. That is so important. It is so important when you talk about health that you actually deliver, and we deliver in spades on this very, very important service to the Victorian community. I recently announced some additional money for Goulburn Valley Health. The funding for Goulburn Valley Health this year is more than 20 per cent more than those opposite funded this hospital in regional Victoria. Goulburn Valley Health, one of the biggest hospitals, received more than 20 per cent more than they tipped into that hospital, and yet they say, 'What're you doing for regional Victoria?'. Other than that, you are right — we do not do anything! You are right; you are spot-on! You have caught us out!

And of course we ended the war on paramedics. We all remember those very sad days when you would follow an ambulance around and on the back would be all the stuff from the ambos — those people who go out and perform an extraordinary service for the Victorian people and who should be appreciated by absolutely every one of us in this place, but alas that was not the case for those opposite. They went to war with the paramedics. They did not want our paramedics in this state to have good pay and conditions. Well, we brought that to an end. We brought that to an end because we engaged with those people and we worked

closely with them. Go and talk to a paramedic now and see what they think about their pay and conditions. Go and talk to them and ask them about their conditions and how they now view themselves and the service that they provide to the community.

I was going to start on the level crossings, but I am going to leave that for somebody else because of course that should be done by somebody who has got an electorate where there have been those level crossing removals. We have got some work going on in northern Victoria on the Shepparton line, but we have got nothing like the work that is going on here in Melbourne, so I will leave that to others.

Ms Wooldridge also said, 'They've got no plan for the future' — wow! — except of course suburban rail. Again I will leave that to somebody else to come off the long run.

Mr O'Sullivan interjected.

Mr GEPP — Well, Mr O'Sullivan, I will take up your interjection because you were not here when your lead speaker talked about how you need to have a vision for the next 30 to 40 years.

Ms Shing — Not the next 80 days.

Mr GEPP — The next 30 to 40 years — I think they were her exact words — not just the next 80 days. What have we got? We have got a policy that actually fits that brief to a tee. In addition to that of course we have also announced that we have committed \$5 million to begin construction on the airport rail link and pave the way for fast rail to Geelong and Ballarat — regional Victoria, Mr O'Sullivan. We are building a world-class metro network, as we know, with the construction of the \$11 billion Metro Tunnel, and that alone will create over 7000 jobs and give hundreds of apprentices a head start, and we are sourcing 90 per cent of that material locally. That is an important point to note. Not only do we put investment into these big infrastructure projects but we also have a policy which we enact which requires the purchase of those materials locally. We keep the money in our local economy. We do not have it shipped off elsewhere to the cheapest — we actually make sure that that money is —

Mr Ramsay interjected.

Mr GEPP — I am glad you mentioned Mr Mulino, Mr Ramsay, because I do not think there has been a finer performer in this government than Mr Mulino. The work that he has done in terms of the development of these projects, on infrastructure, with an array of

ministers has been magnificent. I tell you what: he is going to do an even better job in a Shorten federal government. I can promise you that.

I just want to go quickly if I can to a couple of key points. We talked about crime. Ms Wooldridge wanted to go there. I do not why she wanted to stray into the area of police and protective services officers (PSOs), but she did. Of course that paves the way for us to talk about the biggest ever investment in law and order in this state's history that the Andrews Labor government has made: 3135 additional police. The Victoria Police Academy is full, and it will be for years. We are growing the police force by 20 per cent, and that means for the first time —

Mr O'Donohue interjected.

Mr GEPP — Mr Ed is in the house, is he? 'A horse is a horse, of course, of course'. Let us talk about police and the contrast again with what those opposite did —

An honourable member interjected.

Mr GEPP — That is right; they did not fund any. They cut \$100 million from the Victoria Police force and they sacked 350 support staff, including forensic officers. They walk in here and they will run out there again, and they will say one thing out there and another thing in here to suit their argument, but the stats and the facts do not back it up. The big Achilles heel that they have got is the budget papers that reveal all of the disgusting and despicable cuts and the ruse that they pulled on the Victorian people when they were in government. You should be ashamed of yourselves. But we will fix your mistakes; we have been and we will continue to do it.

Mr O'Donohue interjected.

Mr GEPP — Yes, that is right. I want to come to rising energy prices. On rising energy prices, what did they do? They just necked their own Prime Minister because they could not find an energy policy that they could land on. They ruined their own government from within, not from outside. So you want to walk in here and criticise electricity prices. Well, you and your mates in Canberra are culpable. Victorians know it, the Australian people know it, and not only will you pay that price on 24 November, but whenever your unelected Prime Minister actually calls the next election he will feel the wrath of the Victorian people and the Australian community as well.

What are their friends doing? I think they are on their fourth attempt at an energy policy. Who would know? But what are they doing compared to us? Not much.

What have we done? We have created over 2000 jobs, with six new wind farms worth \$656 million. There are currently nine new wind farms under construction worth \$2.6 billion, and our government continues to actively pursue all options to help Victorians struggling with their power bills, thanks to the catastrophic policy failures of the coalition at the state and federal levels.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr GEPP — If you have got the answers, you had better ring your mates in Canberra and tell them, because they are bereft of ideas and they are cannibalising themselves and each other from within. It is actually distressing to see what government members that actually distrust each other, loathe each other and are bereft of ideas will do to each other. It is actually quite sad, and it is distressing. No-one wants to see any government rip itself apart.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr GEPP — You do. I hope that they get themselves together both at the federal and state levels so that after the elections, when the Andrews Labor government is returned and we have a Shorten government at the federal level, we actually have strong oppositions, because that is what our system relies upon. Right now we have got a bit of a rabble opposite at the state level, and goodness knows what we have got in terms of a government at the federal level, but it is distressing to see. From this side of the house we all hope that the coalition at the state and federal levels get their acts together so that the people in this country and this state actually have better policy debates, certainly better than the rubbish that we have been dished up week after week after week on a Wednesday.

It has not been Wednesday the sitting day, it has been Wasted Day, because all we have had is Mr Davis getting up and saying, ‘I want this motion. I want this document. I want that document’. Not once in the 14 months I have been in here have we had on a Wednesday a decent economic or policy debate — not once. I thought today when I woke up, ‘We’re going to have it’. That is what I thought, ‘We’re going to have it today’. Finally, after 14 months, we are going to have it. But what did we get? We got the gift that is this motion, because they wander in here and they want to talk about all of the wonderful things that the Andrews Labor government has been doing — and there are far too many of them for us to mention in the 60 minutes that I have got available. But do not worry; we have got a number of speakers lined up, and between us we are going to get to cover them all. It will only be highlights. We cannot delve into detail, because if we were going

into detail, we would have to extend this session until Sunday — because we get things done. We do not just talk about them; we get them done.

That is why Victoria is the economic engine room of this nation. Small business is thriving, construction is thriving — and infrastructure in general. We have got kids yearning for apprenticeships, and we are pumping them in. We have got a TAFE system that is now world-class thanks to the extraordinary efforts of the Minister for Training and Skills, Ms Tierney, and the work that she has done following the decimation of that sector by those opposite. They destroyed the TAFE sector. But fear not; we have come to the rescue. We have reopened TAFEs. We have pumped billions of dollars in, and we are making sure that the TAFE sector delivers not only for young Victorians but also for older Victorians and, importantly, for industry. We are now in a deep partnership with industry, particularly in regional Victoria.

Business interrupted pursuant to sessional orders.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Public land use

Mr YOUNG (Northern Victoria) (12:00) — My question today is for the Leader of the Government, representing the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change. Minister, on 31 August the government released a statement in relation to the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC) central west investigation, which noted recommendations from VEAC. In relation to the Wombat, Wellsford, Mount Cole and Pyrenees Range forests under investigation, the government said that:

These forests and reserves have been loved over many years for walking, camping, and other recreational pursuits, and under a re-elected Labor government they’ll continue to remain open for future generations to enjoy.

Minister, will the government guarantee that no recreational pursuit currently taking place will be banned as a result of the recommendations in this report?

Mr JENNINGS (Special Minister of State) (12:01) — I thank Mr Young for his question. I know that he has actually taken some encouragement from what is clearly the government position’s in relation to consideration of the VEAC report, and I will not pre-empt the responsible minister or the government determining their position in relation to this. But one of the important things for all members of the Victorian community to understand is that VEAC, and before it

the Land Conservation Council in Victoria, has had a very important role for decades under both Labor governments and coalition governments in relation to trying to ensure that there is an appropriate balance between the use of public land, access to public land, protection of environmental values, the sustainability of the public land estate and access for Victorians. It is a challenging task and sometimes leads to disputed views about recreational pursuits and productive pursuits in relation to economic activity across Victoria, but it has done it for decades. Many of the benefits of that work, in terms of applying environmental scientific analysis and community input, impact upon the economy and opportunities for people who want to pursue an economic livelihood in regional Victoria or pursue recreational opportunities.

Despite the conflicts that come up when there is consideration of those reports and with the recommendations that come to the government of the day, there has been a remarkable success of ultimately achieving a balance, which has seen great access by the public to public land estates over decades. So the inbuilt assumption that every time VEAC looks at something there may be an adverse result some people may argue for, but overwhelmingly the community continues to benefit from the scrutiny that they have applied and the government response to it. Our great challenge is in fact to get the public policy settings right to maintain the integrity of access and opportunity for our citizens to participate in public land values.

It would be wise for VEAC to conclude its work and for the government to respond to it, and I would be unwise to pre-empt it, so I will get my colleague to provide you with an additional response if she can add to what I have already said.

Supplementary question

Mr YOUNG (Northern Victoria) (12:04) — I thank the minister for his answer. Yes, understandably it is a very difficult task trying to grasp that balance, but the fact remains that every time a national park is created recreational activities suffer. That is just a fact. So how can the government claim to support recreational use of public land and the creation of new national parks?

Mr Jennings — That was a statement, I think.

The PRESIDENT — Yes, Mr Young, where was the question?

Mr YOUNG — The question, President, is: how can the government claim to support recreational activity and the creation of national parks?

Mr JENNINGS (Special Minister of State) (12:04) — I think my substantive answer actually demonstrated that I do understand and appreciate those issues. Even in its ancient history the coalition has supported national parks. Even in its ancient history the coalition has stepped up to be able to support the process of the Land Conservation Council, now the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council, and the consideration of government establishing the —

Mr Young — But two wrongs don't make a right.

Mr JENNINGS — In fact if two wrongs do not make a right, I will let you and Ms Dunn sort it out. The government will take some responsibility to try to get that balance right.

Victorian Energy Compare

Mr PURCELL (Western Victoria) (12:05) — My question is for the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, represented by Minister Jennings. The Victorian government has established the Energy Compare website for Victorians to compare energy prices and obtain the best deal. While I commend the government on this initiative, I have been approached by many who have had trouble accessing the website to obtain the \$50 power saving bonus. Many people in rural areas do not have access to or have difficulty using the internet. I note constituents are able to visit their local MPs, but this may not be possible in rural and remote areas. Therefore my question to the minister is: what other options do people have to access the website and obtain the \$50 bonus without using the internet or visiting their local MP's office?

Mr JENNINGS (Special Minister of State) (12:06) — I thank Mr Purcell for his question, and I do thank him for recognising the value of this program that the government announced in the budget earlier this year, which has proved very popular.

Mr Leane interjected.

Mr JENNINGS — As Mr Leane has actually said, it is very popular. Indeed I am mindful that somewhere in the order of 420 000 Victorian households have accessed the site to make a claim for their \$50 reimbursement for this, so in fact it has been widely used and has created a great opportunity for people across Victoria in relation to checking out energy prices. Not only do they get the \$50 bonus but seven out of 10 of those people who have visited the website have been able to find a better deal for themselves in relation to energy use, leading them to have a savings on average of about \$330 a year. So it is well worth

your while, because in fact there is potential for you to get the \$50 by just going to the website and you are likely to get information that is likely to save you \$330 a year just by exploring your options in relation to a better energy deal. That has been very popular.

I do understand that Mr Purcell is concerned for people who do not have internet access or a computer at home, and that is at the heart of his question, and the government has to be mindful of that in terms of trying to make sure that we grow that program even further. So in the first instance I am aware that a number of his constituents and other people in communities across the state could access their library, they could access their local neighbourhood house or they may have friends or family who may be able to assist them in this matter. But the government, whilst we can rely on people being a little bit creative about that or being able to access either their neighbourhood house or their library, may have some additional work that we need to do to try to have an outreach program to encourage people about how they can exercise their opportunities.

I am certain my colleague the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change will be very receptive to the need for outreach to actually achieve that outcome and to support your constituents or other constituents across Victoria in relation to getting access to this Victorian Energy Compare website and program but most importantly how they can empower themselves with the knowledge that the website gives you about changing your electricity plan and receiving a financial return to your household. We will take on notice from Mr Purcell's question the importance of trying to create that outreach opportunity.

Aboriginal child removal

Ms SPRINGLE (South Eastern Metropolitan) (12:09) — My question is for the Minister for Families and Children. Yesterday I stood on the steps of Parliament and listened to members of the stolen generation tell deeply saddening stories about the trauma of what they endured and the loneliness and abuse they suffered when, as innocent babies and children, they were stolen from their parents and put in orphanages and foster homes. It is outrageous that 21 years on from the *Bringing Them Home* report and 10 years on from the apology, Victoria is the only state in Australia that has not provided some kind of redress scheme to survivors of the stolen generation. My question for the minister is: will the Andrews government, after years of ignoring this incredibly important issue of justice, finally step up and provide compensation and restitution for Victorian members of the stolen generation and their families?

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) (12:10) — I thank Ms Springle for her question. Of course the matter that she has raised is in fact a matter for Minister Hutchins as the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. Nevertheless, I do want to acknowledge that the impact of past policies and practices — the forcible removal of Aboriginal children from their family, land, language and culture — is a very profound one, and the Andrews Labor government acknowledges that members of the stolen generations have in fact been profoundly impacted by these practices.

In its 2002 response to the *Bringing Them Home* report the then Bracks government supported a nationally coordinated stolen generations redress scheme in line with the report's recommendations, and our government supports this approach. I note that the federal opposition has in fact said it will implement a national redress scheme if elected, and we certainly look forward to working with it on this issue. I also point out that in the budget this year our government has provided \$2.6 million over four years to support the work of the Koorie Heritage Trust and the Koorie Family History Service, which helps Aboriginal people, including members of the stolen generations, trace their family history.

Just recently Minister Hutchins announced funding of \$975 000 for Connecting Home Ltd to deliver a range of services for stolen generations survivors. This funding increase will enable Connecting Home Ltd to deliver case management services, family reunion and counselling services and coordination of support groups.

Our government is committed to self-determination as the guiding principle in Aboriginal affairs, and as a government we will continue to listen to and be guided by the Victorian Aboriginal community on this important issue.

Supplementary question

Ms SPRINGLE (South Eastern Metropolitan) (12:12) — I thank the minister for her answer. At the time of the apology the Rudd government said that members of the stolen generation should subject themselves to the substantial trauma of a time-consuming court case in order to get compensation. From your answer to the substantive question I am wondering where the Andrews government sits with that in terms of support for a national redress scheme over and above court action as a response.

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) (12:12) — As the member would be well aware in relation to the redress scheme that our government has signed up to for those who have experienced institutional child abuse, that is in fact designed to exactly address the concern the member has raised — that is, avoiding people having to go through a lengthy court process. As I indicated in my answer to the substantive question, the Bracks government in response to the *Bringing Them Home* report supported a nationally coordinated stolen generations redress scheme in line with the report's recommendation. As I indicated, our government supports this approach, and we look forward to working with a Shorten Labor government to implement it.

Crown Casino

Dr RATNAM (Northern Metropolitan) (12:13) — My question is for the minister representing the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation. It was reported over the weekend that Crown Casino and possibly others in the gambling industry are applying for licences for so-called skills-based gaming machines. Apparently Crown and others are looking for new ways to get people hooked on gambling and are turning their sights on the new generation of young people who find computer games more interesting than repeatedly pressing a button, although we have discovered that you do not even have to do that at Crown. Can the government confirm, as was reported, that the Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation is working secretly with Crown to trial the new video-game-style gambling machines at Crown Casino in Melbourne?

Mr DALIDAKIS (Minister for Trade and Investment) (12:14) — I thank Dr Ratnam for her question. I do not agree with the premise that somehow this is some kind of secret collusion between the state government and Crown, nor do I accept the premise of her question that somehow Crown is engaged in some behaviour that is contrary to the legislation under which it operates. Nonetheless, I will accept the question on behalf of the minister in the other place and seek a response within the allocated time line under standing orders.

Supplementary question

Dr RATNAM (Northern Metropolitan) (12:15) — Minister, given what we know about gambling and the harm and destruction it causes our community, what we know about the gambling industry and its predatory nature and what we know about video games and their addictive qualities too, will the government finally

stand up to Crown Casino, stand up for the community and particularly stand up for young people who will be targeted and rule out any introduction of these so-called skills-based gaming machines in Victoria?

Mr DALIDAKIS (Minister for Trade and Investment) (12:15) — I thank Dr Ratnam for her further supplementary question. Again, it gives me no pleasure to refuse to accept the premise of her question. She has attacked gamers; she has attacked people who choose to undertake legally provided opportunities to gamble in the state of Victoria. I appreciate and understand that there are people with addictive natures and personalities out there. It is not left alone to gaming of course. People can suffer from substance abuse and a range of issues that we as a government need to support and provide assistance to to ensure that they do not suffer in an egregious way. That does not necessarily lend itself to the construct of Dr Ratnam's question, but again I will ask the minister in the other place to respond accordingly.

Production of documents

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS (South Eastern Metropolitan) (12:16) — My question is to the Leader of the Government. The Secretary of the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC) wrote to the Leader of the Opposition advising that he was required to ignore constitutional conventions regarding the documents of a former government because, and I quote:

I was directed by the Premier in accordance with my employment contract to produce to him all relevant documents.

Did the secretary of DPC express any concerns regarding the documents being produced in contravention of the constitutional conventions?

Mr JENNINGS (Special Minister of State) (12:17) — I thank Mr Rich-Phillips for his question and for his potential concern in relation to this matter. The Secretary of the Department of Premier and Cabinet did discuss this matter with me. He acknowledged his obligation under the Public Administration Act 2004 in relation to a direction being issued to him by the Premier as part of his responsibilities. He did not take that opportunity to express a view about the appropriateness of the particular information that was distributed. We did discuss the nature of the release of information in circumstances involving the usual recourse that was available under circumstances where a Parliament had asked for documentation from a previous administration. It had involved a release being provided by the leader of the party who then would be in opposition.

So in the circumstances that I have just described, earlier this term the Secretary of the Department of Premier and Cabinet — the head of the public service — when asked by the Legislative Assembly for the release of documents and indeed in circumstances where this chamber had asked for a release of documentation that related to the previous administration, wrote to the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Guy, who not only refused access to the information but indicated that he thought the request was impertinent and inappropriate. In those circumstances the secretary recognised the futility of embarking upon that course again and acted in accordance with the direction that was provided by the Premier.

If the Leader of the Opposition has the slightest interest in the appropriateness or inappropriateness of the release of information that relates to this term of office or the previous term of office, I think it would have been wise for him to express a view and to recognise his obligations or his responsibilities in relation to information. He missed that opportunity. I think he may regret that he missed the opportunity to recognise his role in the release of information that you sought of me and then punished me for not releasing, when the Leader of the Opposition could have released that information and chose not to.

Supplementary question

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS (South Eastern Metropolitan) (12:20) — I thank the minister for his answer, but I note the minister did not mention the fact that on a third occasion where the Secretary of the Department of Premier and Cabinet sought the approval of Mr Guy to release documents of the previous government that approval was given. So there is a precedent, as was reflected in the letter from the Attorney-General to the Clerk in response to a previous documents motion. So there have been instances where both outcomes have been the consequence of a letter from the Secretary of the Department of Premier and Cabinet to the Leader of the Opposition.

In this instance the letter from Mr Eccles to Mr Guy very clearly indicates that he was acting under the direction of the Premier, and that was the reason he sidestepped the constitutional conventions. Given that the nature of your conversation with Mr Eccles related to his obligations under the code, what are the ramifications for the secretary of DPC in not complying with the Premier's direction given that appears to be the basis on which he has avoided the constitutional conventions?

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr JENNINGS (Special Minister of State) (12:21) — Look, it is not a bad question. Just because I do not accept the premise of it does not mean it is a bad question. The issue is, as I did indicate in my substantive answer, that the secretary of the department did act in accordance with the direction, and that was the action he took in relation to that. I gave additional context in relation to the history of certain matters, and Mr Rich-Phillips has responded by talking about other aspects of the history of these matters that did not immediately come to my mind.

Honourable members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT — Thank you!

Mr JENNINGS — But in fact I do not revert or backtrack from the confirmation that the secretary acted in accordance with the direction. That was made very clear to the Leader of the Opposition, and it was made very clear to the Leader of the Opposition months ago. The Leader of the Opposition took no action in accordance with what was actually telegraphed to him many months ago.

Suburban Rail Loop

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) (12:22) — My question is to the Special Minister of State. Minister, on 18 October 2017 you issued a media release that contained in part the statement that, and I quote:

Infrastructure Victoria was established to take the politics out of infrastructure and give our state the long-term pipeline of projects we need. The 30-year infrastructure strategy was the result of a year-long consultation and research process.

Minister, why has the government once again sought to politicise infrastructure by announcing a Suburban Rail Loop proposal that is not part of Infrastructure Victoria's 30-year infrastructure strategy and that, frankly, would make the producers of *Utopia* blush?

Honourable members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Thank you, Mr Davis. I had some trouble hearing that because of interjections. Please, from the top.

Mr DAVIS — My question is to the Special Minister of State. Minister, on 18 October 2017 you issued a media release that contained in part the statement that, and I quote:

Infrastructure Victoria was established to take the politics out of infrastructure and give our state the long-term pipeline of projects we need. The 30-year infrastructure strategy was the result of a year-long consultation and research process.

Minister, why has the government once again sought to politicise infrastructure by announcing a Suburban Rail Loop proposal that is not part of Infrastructure Victoria's 30-year infrastructure strategy and that, frankly, might make the producers of *Utopia* blush?

Mr JENNINGS (Special Minister of State) (12:24) — In fact, funnily enough, with a very, very poor ending, it was not a bad question. Given the ambition and the intention of Infrastructure Victoria in terms of acquitting its responsibilities in terms of the 30-year strategy, it is a good question: why didn't this project appear in the 30-year strategy? Indeed when I met the head of Infrastructure Victoria in the days following the announcement of the Suburban Rail Loop I started off our meeting by volunteering that the best thing perhaps in relation to the response that had occurred in the last 24 hours had been that the Liberal Party had suggested that it should have been referred to Infrastructure Victoria, which is the first time they had ever given Infrastructure Victoria any credence.

In fact it was the first time that you relied on their advice, so I thought that that was a red-letter day. I thought that was a red-letter day, and I shared that in the circumstances. If you believe that Infrastructure Victoria has that standing and should have that standing in the future, then that is a red-letter day for Victoria, because at every turn up until that point in time you had not accepted the legitimacy of the establishment of Infrastructure Victoria and the quality of its advice. In fact you misinterpret or misrepresent its advice time and time again. In relation to the conversation that I had with Infrastructure Victoria —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr JENNINGS — Funnily enough this is an interesting matter for the public to actually hear about — the connection between Infrastructure Victoria, their advice and the relationship with government — and funnily enough I am sharing it with you.

Honourable members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT — Thank you! Now, the minister I expect to listen to without this barrage of interjections. It is not on. This is a very serious issue and a serious question that is being posed by Mr Davis, and the minister is providing a response to it. I think all of the house is interested in that response, and I do not think that we need to have all that interjection on the matters that he is canvassing.

Mr JENNINGS — Thank you, President. What I was actually about to go on and volunteer is that in fact

I talked through with Infrastructure Victoria why this project had been developed within government and why this had not been shared with them. I expressed some degree of disappointment that in fact they may have been blindsided by this project, given the quality of their work.

The reason why I expressed that to them, in fact in terms of the 30-year strategy, is that the brief they received in relation to their 30-year strategy was based upon the configuration of land use, the prevailing conditions in *Plan Melbourne*, other considerations about the existing infrastructure and the demand pressures, and whilst they had a very, very extensive brief, they worked for a year within those parameters. They had not appreciated or taken or afforded themselves the opportunity to actually have a look at what might be the nature of a public transport investment that changes the nature of the city. It will fundamentally change the nature of the city.

Not only is the value of this project to connect every radial train line — and in fact it has already been demonstrated through the considerations that there may actually be as many as 400 000 passengers that would use this line — to connect rail systems across the city, but it will create opportunities for precinct development; for linking our institutions, whether they be shopping centres or whether they be university sectors; and for providing access from the south-eastern suburbs to the airport or from the western suburbs to the airport. This is an opportunity which is beyond the aspiration and the parameters that Infrastructure Victoria believed that they were operating in. Now they will be very excited about this project.

Supplementary question

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) (12:29) — A very weak response, but Minister, I therefore ask a very simple question: what age will you be when Victorians will travel from Cheltenham via the Suburban Rail Loop to Tullamarine in 45 minutes?

Mr JENNINGS (Special Minister of State) (12:30) — Thank you, Mr Davis. Some people look at me and they think that I am very old. In fact when you get to my stage of life and somebody that you are travelling with on a train who is older than you by about 20 years offers you a seat, you have a sense of your own mortality. That has occurred to me. That has actually happened in my life — I just want you to know — in Melbourne. I did not realise people were that polite, but apparently they are. They are polite, and they were concerned about my wellbeing.

But in this situation I look forward to a longevity that will enable me to complete that trip. I am optimistic that I will be able to complete that trip. In fact I think citizens across Victoria, regardless of how old they are, are pretty excited about the potential for this connection and for this once-in-a-generation, if not beyond, transformational project in Victoria.

Suburban Rail Loop

Ms WOOLDRIDGE (Eastern Metropolitan) (12:31) — My question is to the Leader of the Government. Minister, the Premier detailed that Development Victoria worked up the Suburban Rail Loop project. Why does the government consider it appropriate for public servants to work on Labor's election promises?

Mr JENNINGS (Special Minister of State) (12:31) — The construction that Ms Wooldridge has put on this question is completely wrong. This project has been identified by the government as a priority.

Ms Wooldridge interjected.

Mr JENNINGS — Ms Wooldridge, I think you actually said that in next year's budget there will be a budget allocation for the business case and the planning development in relation to this.

Ms Wooldridge — If you're re-elected.

Mr JENNINGS — Well, clearly, or we wouldn't be able to do next year's budget. In fact this is actually a fairly pathetic entry to the story. In relation to these matters, have a look —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr JENNINGS — Do you believe that the federal government earlier this year agreed to support \$5 billion of investment in the metropolitan link between the city and the airport? Do you believe that that occurred? How many dollars appear in the federal budget from May? How many dollars were allocated in the federal budget towards the \$5 billion commitment to supporting the airport rail link in Melbourne? How much appeared in the forward estimates in the federal budget? Nothing like \$5 billion. Nothing like \$1 billion. It is something in the order of \$180 million, from memory, for a \$5 billion announcement by the federal government.

So what we are actually saying is that the government of Victoria is committed to this project to acquit a responsibility, to get the business case away and to do the planning away. When we were in opposition we announced a similar funding envelope to do the

business case and the preparation for the work of the new metropolitan rail loop, the metro link. We announced that. In fact during the course of our first and second years in government we started allocating additional money for that project. That project is now away and is running one year ahead of its scheduled construction time frame.

So in terms of what is the history of announcements in the lead-up to an election, our ability to fund them in a budget and our ability to get those projects away, we have a track record. We announced 50 level crossing removals over two terms. We said we were going to do 20 in one term. We are going to do 29 by the end of this term. We have actually got the metro link rail loop away, where we only allocated \$300 million in our election commitments to get that acquitted.

In terms of government agencies working on this matter, my answer to Ms Wooldridge regarding Development Victoria relates to my answer to Mr Davis in terms of the way in which the city will change comprehensively through the nature of precinct and civic development across the metropolitan landscape in relation to opportunities for economic activity, housing opportunities and linking institutions across the state — commercial, academic, business and housing opportunities. That is the reason why Development Victoria was the agency that looked at this matter. It brought together the policy mix of the reasons why this project will be transformational, because not only is it a public transport connection between every rail line in the metropolitan rail system — with the exception of Alamein; every other rail line — but it will change the nature of this city forever.

Supplementary question

Ms WOOLDRIDGE (Eastern Metropolitan) (12:35) — Minister, along with Development Victoria, the Premier also detailed that PwC worked on this election commitment, and there were clearly advertising agencies to do the promotional material. So I ask: what is the total cost to date to the taxpayer of external agencies engaged to work on the Suburban Rail Loop policy and to create and publish the promotional material?

Mr JENNINGS (Special Minister of State) (12:36) — I do not know the answer to that question, because in fact that is not part of my responsibility. However, I am happy to take some advice on that subject if I can ascertain it. But what I totally refute is that it is an election commitment as distinct from a government announcement.

North Richmond supervised injecting facility

Ms FITZHERBERT (Southern Metropolitan) (12:36) — My question is to the Minister for Families and Children, representing the Minister for Mental Health. Minister, the government’s media release states that staff at the Richmond medically supervised injecting room have responded to 140 overdoses. Noting that clients may have had multiple overdoses since the centre has been operating, how many — in terms of unique individual clients — do those 140 overdoses relate to?

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) (12:36) — I thank Ms Fitzherbert for her question. As she has indicated in her question, it is in fact a question that relates to Minister Foley’s portfolio. What I can say to her is that the medically supervised injecting room in Richmond, which members will be aware opened on 30 June, is seeing positive early results. We know that every single death due to drugs is a terrible tragedy for the families and friends affected and for the wider community.

The advice that I have is that in the two months that the medically supervised injecting room has been operating over 140 overdoses have been safely managed by the medical team there. There have been more than 8000 visits, and this is 8000 instances of drug use that would have occurred in an unsupervised environment, with no medical assistance available. Those 140 overdoses that have been carefully managed would otherwise have resulted in people losing their lives and obviously family and friends being affected by the loss of their loved one.

In terms of the specific data that the member has asked about, obviously that is not information that I have available to me, but I can seek further advice from the responsible minister and provide further information to her if that information is in fact available.

Supplementary question

Ms FITZHERBERT (Southern Metropolitan) (12:38) — Minister, noting that only a handful of clients have received drug counselling or rehab services since the centre began operating, as revealed on 3AW on Sunday, can you detail: of the unique clients identified in the substantive question who have had an overdose, how many are currently in drug rehab services, or is this pathway and service not tracked by the centre?

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) (12:38) — Again, I thank the member for her supplementary question in relation to this matter. This is not information that I have readily at hand, but I will seek some further advice from the responsible minister and see if that is information that is able to be provided.

Child beauty pageants

Ms LOVELL (Northern Victoria) (12:39) — My question is for the Minister for Families and Children. Minister, in this house on 17 August 2011 in reference to child beauty pageants you said:

We —

Labor —

believe it is necessary to regulate these types of ... pageants.

You went on to say:

It would be appropriate to see a code of conduct developed ...

On 31 July 2011 you also told the ABC that competitive pageants for children should be regulated. You have now been the minister for almost four years — a full term — and I ask: given that in opposition you called for regulation and a code of conduct for child beauty pageants, why have you not acted to implement any regulation of child beauty pageants during your term as minister?

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) (12:40) — I want to thank the member for her question. I think it is a demonstration of how the opposition is really scraping at the bottom of the barrel that they have sought to raise an issue that came to light in the first year that in fact Wendy Lovell was the responsible minister. I recall that at the time there was some community concern directly in response to some beauty pageants that had occurred at that time. I have not had advice that this is in fact a current issue, but if in fact there are such beauty pageants that are occurring at this time that are causing concern to the community and to parents then I would be happy to look at this issue further.

What I can say to the member is that I as minister over the past four years have been undertaking wide, sweeping reforms to keep children happy, healthy and safe, ensuring that we have had unprecedented investment in expanding our child protection workforce, funding and implementing the biggest ever expansion of our child protection workforce. We have seen significant reforms in our out-of-home care system. We have seen record investment in early

childhood education — something that the member actually failed to deliver during her time as minister.

Ms Lovell interjected.

Ms MIKAKOS — Ms Lovell, you delivered nothing in early childhood education. You were launching documents just a month out from the election I seem to recall. There was no substantive plan for reform. This is why early childhood educators are excited by my announcement with the Premier just this morning that we are going to ensure that every maternal child health nurse in Victoria gets trained in early detection of autism and make sure that we can support children and families across this state.

The other thing I announced today on Early Childhood Educators Day was that we are providing \$8 million in scholarships for early childhood educators to upgrade their qualifications. We are doing a range of things to ensure that children are happy, healthy and safe in this state, and I am very proud of our record. Our record stands in huge contrast to your failure, Ms Lovell, and Ms Wooldridge's failures as the responsible ministers to actually put in place significant investment and significant reform in this space. In fact you even acknowledged as much last night during the committee stage of the Long Service Benefits Portability Bill 2018, when you acknowledged that I have done pretty well in delivering to the child and family services system —

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms MIKAKOS — absolutely — a 69 per cent increase in funding in child and family services compared to your time as minister, Ms Wooldridge.

Supplementary question

Ms LOVELL (Northern Victoria) (12:44) — Minister, clearly you have done nothing, yet in Shepparton today a competition based on beauty will be held for children up to the age of seven. The same company will hold 12 more competitions throughout Victoria before the end of October, and a Follow Your Dreams pageant was held in Victoria on 27 May this year. Also, an article from the *Sydney Morning Herald* which talked about pageants claimed that pageants held in Victoria are not advertised to the public, nor can you find details on the internet. Minister, clearly you have dropped the ball and are oblivious of the fact that pageants and beauty contests are still occurring under your watch. I ask: what actions have you taken to ensure all people involved in both advertised and clandestine pageants comply with Victoria's working with children laws?

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) (12:45) — First of all, the working with children checks actually sit with the Attorney-General, not with me, but the point that I would make to the member is that if she actually looked at the context in which these issues came to light in 2011, they were actually in the context of pageants that were portraying very young children in a sexualised way. It was not about beauty pageants per se; it was about very young children being portrayed in a particular manner. I am very happy to have a look at the example that the member has referred to, but she certainly has not suggested that that is the case in relation to this particular instance. The member needs to be very clear when she is coming in here and raising this that she is not seeking to misrepresent what I actually did say seven years ago.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Answers

Mr JENNINGS (Special Minister of State) (12:46) — There are four written responses to questions on notice: 12 742, 12 754–5, 12 767.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Written responses

The PRESIDENT (12:46) — Order! In respect of today's questions, Mr Young's questions on environmental matters, the substantive and supplementary questions, were to a minister in another place, so I seek a written response in two days; Ms Springle's question to Ms Mikakos, the substantive question, two days; Dr Ratnam's questions to Mr Dalidakis, both the substantive and supplementary questions, two days; Mr Rich-Phillips's question to Mr Jennings, just the supplementary question, one day; Ms Wooldridge's question to Mr Jennings, the supplementary question, two days; and Ms Fitzherbert's questions to Ms Mikakos, the substantive and supplementary questions, two days.

CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS

Eastern Victoria Region

Ms BATH (Eastern Victoria) (12:47) — My question is to the Minister for Agriculture. Farmers in East Gippsland and parts of central Gippsland are suffering from chronic drought conditions and are struggling to feed their stock and keep their breeding stock in good condition. Supporting our farmers certainly requires a multi-agency, multigovernment

approach. My colleague the Honourable Tim Bull in the Assembly recently raised the need to expedite permits to control on-farm wildlife. I am hearing that the farm household allowance (FHA) scheme and interest-free loan applications are taking up to 6 hours to complete. I have raised the issue —

Honourable members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT — Order! There is way too much hubbub, and I cannot hear Ms Bath. If there are conversations to be had, please take them outside the chamber. Ms Bath, you must start again because, frankly, I did not hear any of it.

Ms BATH — My constituency question is to the Minister for Agriculture. Farmers in East Gippsland and parts of central Gippsland are suffering chronic drought conditions and are struggling to feed their stock and keep their breeding stock in good condition. Supporting our farmers requires a multi-agency and multigovernment approach. My colleague the Honourable Tim Bull in the Assembly has recently raised the need to expedite permits to control on-farm wildlife. I am hearing that the farm household allowance scheme and interest-free loan applications are taking up to 6 hours to complete. I have raised the issue with my local federal minister, and I ask that on behalf of my constituents the Minister for Agriculture contact her federal counterpart and raise the urgency of faster processing of FHA and interest-free loan applications and offer any state government assistance possible.

Northern Victoria Region

Mr GEPP (Northern Victoria) (12:49) — My constituency question is to the Honourable Martin Foley, the Minister for Mental Health in the other place, and it is about the expansion of the hospital outreach post-suicidal engagement (HOPE) initiative. In August this year the minister announced that the HOPE program will be rolled out to six new hospitals and health service sites, including Bendigo Health, which will extend to Mildura. The initiative provides practical support and follow-up for people leaving hospital after a suicide attempt. Assertive outreach workers also work with families, friends and carers so they can better support their loved ones during this critical time. More than 500 people have been assessed and supported through this great initiative so far. Some \$18.7 million has been allocated in the 2018–19 budget to expand the program to new sites.

I have been asked about the progress of this roll-out. Can the minister inform my constituents about how it is

progressing and what it will mean particularly for my constituents in Mildura?

An honourable member interjected.

The PRESIDENT — I know it was, and I am not sure it should have been, frankly, because essentially what you have now asked about is new sites, and then you have tied it back to what it means for people in Mildura, who already have the program. The issue that you are raising in your constituency question is actually about new sites and really ought to be targeted at somewhere else that was a new site rather than a program that is already running.

Eastern Metropolitan Region

Ms DUNN (Eastern Metropolitan) (12:50) — My constituency question is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and it is in relation to correspondence between the North East Link Authority (NELA) and the Resolve Rosanna Road community group. After some time that group did receive a response from NELA; however, they highlight concerns in relation to the current safety improvement works on Rosanna Road being considered a ‘complementary project’ to the north-east link. The works on Rosanna Road were approved and funded before the north-east link even started looking at pedestrian and bike links. Resolve Rosanna Road worked hard to get these works, and now they have been labelled as a north-east link improvement project. The group highlight that they are very disappointed with the response, which fails to respond to their issues. My question is: will the minister bring NELA into line and insist they respond to the issues identified by Resolve Rosanna Road in a timely manner?

South Eastern Metropolitan Region

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) (12:51) — My constituency question is for the Minister for Planning, and it is in relation to the highly controversial attempt by developers and ISPT to rezone Kingswood golf course. Currently over 7000 objections have been received from the local Dingley Village community in which I live. All local members of Parliament, including the federal member for Isaacs, Mr Dreyfus, and Mr Pakula, who do not live in their electorates, object to this proposal and are standing shoulder to shoulder with the local community. The proponents and the Labor-dominated council are now looking to see whether they can defer the consideration until after the election to bury it during caretaker mode. I ask the minister whether he will make sure that it is actually brought forward so the decision is made within a prompt time frame?

South Eastern Metropolitan Region

Ms SPRINGLE (South Eastern Metropolitan) (12:52) — My question is for the Minister for Public Transport. The 792 bus route from Cranbourne station to Pearcedale runs through the Settlers Run Golf & Country Club estate on a narrow, winding road with multiple blind spots. The road is shared with golf carts, presenting additional safety risks. Whether or not golf carts can travel on the footpath instead of the road is completely unclear. Locals have received conflicting advice from VicRoads and Victoria Police on whether it is legal. On top of all of this the golf course is home to the endangered southern brown bandicoot, and there are two wildlife crossing corridors on the bus route. Local residents have proposed alternative routes for the 792 bus that would alleviate these problems. Minister, will you investigate the safety concerns and propose alternative options for this section of the 792 bus route, and in doing so address the safety and environmental concerns of local residents?

The PRESIDENT — I might just mention that Mr Gepp has given me the courtesy of showing me the item that he raised in his constituency question. It was in regard to an announced but yet-to-be-established program extending to Mildura. In that context the constituency question was in order and it will be advanced.

Southern Metropolitan Region

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) (12:54) — My matter in this constituency question section today relates to the activities of the Level Crossing Removal Authority (LXRA) with respect to the Mentone and other important level crossing removals that are occurring in the City of Kingston — in Cheltenham in particular. The council has advanced a proposal to see better connectivity, with parkland, more car parking and a better urban design framework around the level crossing removal, which is generally supported by people and the community, including many in the business community in that area. I ask: will the minister and the LXRA comply with the Kingston council proposals, or will the minister ride roughshod over the council and community, as she and the LXRA have on so many of these level crossing removals?

Western Victoria Region

Mr MORRIS (Western Victoria) (12:55) — My constituency question is directed to the Premier, and it relates to a matter that he has very kindly addressed for me in the past but one that I am seeking new and further information on. It relates to car parking in

Ballarat. We know that Labor made a commitment to have over 4000 free car parking spaces in the Ballarat CBD; however, I remain concerned —

Ms Pulford — That's actually not true. You know that's a lie.

Mr MORRIS — No, it is on Development Victoria's website. You can read it for yourself. I will send it to you, if you like.

What I am concerned about is that we may see that this commitment that the government gave could potentially be broken and these 4000 car parks that the government said were going to be free may indeed become paid car parks within the Ballarat CBD, which is causing great concern in the community. The question I ask of the Premier is: will the Premier reaffirm his commitment to have these 4000 free car parks?

Western Victoria Region

Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria) (12:56) — My constituency question is to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, Lily D'Ambrosio. It is on behalf of a constituent in Geelong and it is in regard to the solar homes scheme, which was announced by the government in August. My constituent's concern is in relation to those who live in rented properties. She believes they are excluded from any energy savings. My question to the minister is: has the government given consideration to providing a similar scheme to investors so renters can benefit from the lower energy costs?

The PRESIDENT — Thank you. It is not a constituency question. It is a broad issue for the state. It is a matter of state policy. The fact that you happen to mention a resident in your electorate does not make it a constituency question.

Mr Ramsay — Do you want me to name a name?

The PRESIDENT — No, I want you to be specific to the electorate. It is a policy question that you have raised.

Western Metropolitan Region

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) (12:57) — My constituency question is to the Premier. On 24 July this year I raised on the adjournment the issue of gangs in Melbourne's west. I invited the Premier to join me to meet victims of gang violence in Truganina, Tarneit, Point Cook and Werribee, although I could have easily added Caroline Springs and Taylors Hill. In his

response not only did the Premier ignore my invitation; he failed to even mention the word ‘gangs’. It is like the bad old days when Christine Nixon refused to utter what she called ‘the g-word’. The Premier’s ongoing refusal to as much as acknowledge the gang problem is a massive slap in the face to victims and residents in the western suburbs generally. What will it take for the Premier to accept Melbourne’s west has a major problem with gang violence and for him to actually do something to fix it?

The PRESIDENT — Thank you. That is also not a constituency question. These matters are better as adjournment items. It is not a constituency question.

Mr Finn — How do you work that out?

The PRESIDENT — When is he going to do something? When will he admit something? That is not a constituency question.

Mr Finn — On a point of order, President, I have raised an issue here which is a significant issue in the western suburbs of Melbourne, which is gang violence. If you would like to come with me, I will introduce you to victims in the suburbs that I have mentioned in the western suburbs of Melbourne. If this is not a constituency matter, I am not sure what a constituency matter is. This is talking about gang violence in the west of Melbourne. I represent the west of Melbourne. That is clearly, in my view, a constituency matter.

The PRESIDENT — As with Mr Ramsay’s question, you raised an issue. The issue is relevant, but your question was not a constituency question. It did not go to a point of seeking a response to that issue in a way that really addressed that issue. It was a question about: when will the Premier admit that there is a problem and do something about it? That is not related back to a constituency matter. It would be better in terms of that to be an adjournment item. I am happy to come with you to the western suburbs. I go there frequently myself. I actually meet with some of the African community there, and I am also aware of their concerns about these issues.

Northern Victoria Region

Ms LOVELL (Northern Victoria) (13:00) — My question is for the Minister for Public Transport. I recently called on the minister to ensure general —

Mr Finn interjected.

The PRESIDENT (13:00) — Order! Mr Finn, 30 minutes for reflecting on the Chair in a way that really is just not acceptable. I have issued guidelines on

constituency questions. Maybe members might read them.

Mr Finn withdrew from chamber.

Ms LOVELL — My question is for the Minister for Public Transport. I recently called on the minister to ensure general maintenance and cleaning is carried out on train carriages on the Shepparton line while they are idle during track upgrades. A Facebook post by one of my constituents on 22 August confirmed the disgusting condition of our trains. It reads:

Shepp train. Dirty, smelly carriage D. Toilet not working in carriage C. Let conductor know about D. Said he’ll pass it on ... to who I wonder. Been on about 10 trains in the last 2 days and this is the grossest, smelliest trip yet. Just a dust and a vac would make a world of difference but obviously the Shepp line mustn’t even have enough funding for a cleaner. Cheaper than driving, but really off-putting. What is that white stuff everywhere? Eeewww!

Will the minister give a commitment that the currently idle train carriages on the Shepparton line will receive a thorough cleaning and general maintenance will be carried out to improve the experience of Shepparton rail passengers travelling to and from Melbourne?

The PRESIDENT — I am happy that is a constituency question, but isn’t this a repeat of something you said the other day?

Ms Lovell — It is a different constituent raising an issue similar to one I raised the other day, yes.

The PRESIDENT — It is exactly the same question.

Ms Lovell — It is still a different constituent.

The PRESIDENT — I will let that stand, but again you have just come up and said, ‘Oh, well, another constituent has come to me’. The question has already been put to the minister, and we do not need to have a repetition.

Sitting suspended 1.02 p.m. until 2.03 p.m.

GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

Debate resumed.

Mr GEPP (Northern Victoria) (14:03) — I am trying to remember exactly where I was. I want to talk about a couple of issues. As I said prior to lunch, I will not be covering all 17 issues in Ms Wooldridge’s motion; I will leave some of the fun to others.

Mr Ramsay interjected.

Mr GEPP — On cue. Every time I get to my feet it takes Mr Ramsay 6 seconds, and true to form — I do not know what I am going to do next term when he is not here, but I am sure somebody else will take up the mantle. I wish you all the best in your new endeavours, Mr Ramsay, whatever they are. Can I perhaps suggest you go to Canberra. Your mates up there could use a hand. They are in dreadful strife. But I digress from the motion.

I want to talk a little bit about education, but before I do I will come to some planning protections.

Mr Leane interjected.

Mr GEPP — Largely an uncontroversial area, I would have thought, Mr Leane, in most instances, but it is not necessarily the case. What I can advise the house is of course that under the Andrews Labor government we have not watered down planning protections. In fact we have done the opposite, and we have strengthened them. We now have far more protections for the community in terms of better central city controls, ensuring that there are not forests of high-rise towers cheek to cheek but appropriate setbacks et cetera between buildings and better interaction for people at street level. Of course we have improved apartment design standards to ensure families live in great spaces with enough light, good ventilation and storage.

Again, you have got to contrast that with what might perhaps have occurred previously. We know, for example, that people were living in dogboxes with tiny rooms and no windows. That was the sort of apartment living that was approved under those opposite when the current Leader of the Opposition was the planning minister. We on the other hand have moved to provide greener spaces in established suburbs through our residential zone changes and ensuring that houses cannot be built to the very edge of blocks. We think that on balance we have treated all suburbs much more fairly and that planning controls do not depend on your postcode. That is very, very important.

Of course those opposite when they were in office were perhaps not as diligent with their work. When the current Leader of the Opposition, the former planning minister, had his hands on the controls he of course rezoned land overnight so that his developer mates could make a quick buck, without any planning for schools, for hospitals or for community facilities.

Mr Davis interjected.

Mr GEPP — I thought, Acting President, that one had to be in one's place rather than just meandering around the chamber taking cheap shots, but as we

know, for those opposite convention in this place is not something that particularly bothers them.

Mr Davis interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Morris) — Order! Mr Gepp, before you continue, Mr Davis, as you know, it is disorderly to interject and certainly even more disorderly to interject when you are not in your place.

Mr GEPP — One would not mind if they were decent interjections.

This government is doing proper planning for the future so that people have a choice of where to live and the array of circumstances that surround their environment.

Mr O'Sullivan asked me on many occasions prior to the lunch break about what we have done for farmers and regional communities et cetera. I hope he has got his notepad and his popcorn. He should sit there and take copious notes — not wait for *Hansard* but take copious notes — so that he copies down some of these policies and hopefully encourages his party, the National Party, to adopt these positions and indeed do something positive for the communities that the National Party say that they represent. We on this side of the house know that Victoria's regions power our state, furnish our homes and feed our families. Supporting local businesses, workers and students is the path to prosperity and the key to our future. Regional and rural communities matter. Over the last four budgets our government has invested \$13.6 billion in rural and regional Victoria.

Again, what I have been at pains to do through this contribution is contrast what we have done in the past four years with what those opposite did when they were in power in the four-year period between 2010 and 2014. When you look at what they did in terms of their investment for rural and regional Victoria, this government has almost doubled their investment: \$13.6 billion worth of investment from this side and \$7.2 billion in the previous four years from those opposite. Our regions deserve the support of a government that works hard to encourage growth and create jobs. It beggars belief that they are the people who go out there every day and say, 'We're the party for regional Victoria; we're the ones', and when they have the opportunity all they do is implement cuts. They do not actually invest; they abandon regional Victoria.

Under the Minister for Regional Development, Ms Pulford, we have established new regional partnerships, with representatives from community,

business and government to represent each area. Thousands of people are coming along on a regular basis talking to government about the priorities of their regions and the projects and issues that matter to them and working proactively with the government. Ministers turn up, staff turn up, departmental officers turn up and local members of Parliament turn up. They engage with the local community, engage with local business, engage with local industry and directly tackle the issues that matter to that local community. They have been a roaring success. Our very, very simple but very strong message in putting that program in place is that local communities are best placed to determine their priorities and best placed to advise government on how to deal with them.

More than ever before our government is working for regional communities — not for those with the loudest voices, because we all know that those with the loudest voices can attempt to drown out those that have not got a voice, but closely with the families, workers and communities that are at the heart and soul of regional Victoria.

What do the Liberals and The Nationals have? What did we have to deal with a few months ago? We have got this regional partnership plan that we put in place some years ago and it is working very well. All they want to do is have a cabinet meeting somewhere in Shepparton on 12 June 2019. That is their plan. On 12 June 2019 let us have a regional cabinet —

Mr Ramsay interjected.

Mr GEPP — The whole Parliament? Oh my goodness, it gets worse. Goodness me, I am sorry for short-changing you. As we discovered during that debate, the modus operandi behind that particular proposition was just about photo opportunities. We are not interested in those things. What we are interested in is working every day with regional communities, identifying the issues that are important to them and that are priorities to the local communities and working out the best ways for us to deal with those issues.

What we also know from regional Victoria is that regional Victorians want services that they can rely upon. Again, that is what we are doing. But what is the legacy of those opposite? Again, it is important that we contrast. What did they do when they had the opportunity? Well, we know that between 2010 and 2014 they imposed cuts to hospitals, they sacked public servants, they closed regional offices —

Ms Symes interjected.

Mr GEPP — and they imposed cuts to V/Line. Thank you, Ms Symes, absolutely. They closed country schools, and we could be here for a month of Sundays if we wanted to talk about their action on TAFEs. They decimated the TAFE sector, particularly in regional Victoria. They took a meat axe to it and then the very next day, after they got tossed out of office, they wanted to stand up and talk about job creation. How do we create jobs? Well, you do not do it by denying young people in regional and rural Victoria the opportunity to develop their skills and training through the TAFE sector. What you do is you invest heavily in that sector and you work with the local industry on the jobs and skills needs moving forward. You tailor your course provisions to those jobs and skills, ensuring that the training young people are doing in the TAFE sector in regional and rural Victoria means that when they come out of it they have a job, they stay in the local region and they build that local regional economy. We are very proud of the work we have done in that space.

We are also very, very proud of the \$941 million — and they will not like this, because they like to go out there and perpetuate the myth that there is no money being spent on roads — in the budget for better regional roads across the state. It is important that we actually itemise a few of those things: \$333 million for regional road restoration; \$26 million for road upgrades in regional Victoria; \$229 million for continuing Towards Zero, providing safety upgrades to our regional road network; \$100 million for grants to rural councils to undertake local road remediation projects; \$17.4 million to establish Regional Roads Victoria; and \$308.8 million to create, as I said earlier in terms of TAFE, an additional 30 000 training places. We have pumped in \$188.7 million for regional rail infrastructure and new regional trains, \$180.8 million to build or upgrade 60 regional schools and it goes on and on and on and on.

To answer your question from before lunch, Mr O'Sullivan, if you discount all of those things, you are right that we are not doing anything. If you actually forget about all of those things — the \$13.6 billion that we are spending on investing in regional and rural Victoria — you are right. You are spot-on in terms of your analysis.

I will not use up the remaining time. I think there is plenty left to be said by my colleagues. But as I began my contribution I talked about Wednesday normally being a wasted day because it is the day when we come in here and we hear motion after motion —

Ms Dunn — That's a bit harsh, Mr Gepp. You make a very valuable contribution.

Mr GEPP — No, I am talking about those opposite, Ms Dunn. I am not talking about you. Heaven forbid! I would never talk about the Greens in that fashion.

Mr O'Sullivan interjected.

Mr GEPP — Yes, we saw the coalition and the interaction between the Liberal and National parties. That was great work last week, Mr O'Sullivan. Didn't that go a treat? Didn't that just work a treat?

Mr Ramsay — I thought you were finishing.

Mr GEPP — I am inspired to keep going now. I have got a few more things that have just popped in.

Mr Ramsay — You talked about nothing for 55 minutes.

Mr GEPP — You might think it is nothing, Mr Ramsay, but when you are talking about \$13.6 billion of investment in regional Victoria as just one of the very small things that the Andrews government has done —

Mr Ramsay interjected.

Mr GEPP — Others will talk about the level crossing program.

Ms Symes interjected.

Mr GEPP — How many?

Ms Symes — 39 700 new jobs in regional Victoria.

Mr GEPP — Wow, 39 700 jobs and an unemployment rate in regional Victoria that has a 4 in front of it. That is something that those opposite can only dream about. You cannot conjure the policies that will even go remotely close to an unemployment rate such as that. When you left office and we inherited the mess that you left behind the unemployment rate was 6.7 per cent with a bullet. It was going up, and there was nothing in the pipeline to slow it down or indeed reverse that trend.

Whilst you might think it has been 55 minutes of nothing, I am confident the Victorian people will judge this government very much differently to the way that you have judged us. I am confident that our record will prove to the Victorian people that we do not just talk about things but actually get things done. This is the most progressive government in the history of this state. When we say we are going to attack infrastructure, when we say that we are going to outline a plan for all Victorians in our first 100 days, we get on with it and we have delivered it. We have delivered it in spades

again and again and again. We are the engine room of this nation's economy. We are growing jobs at a faster rate than anywhere else in this country. We have created more full-time jobs in our term of office than any other state in this country. We are very, very proud of our track record. We have a good story to tell. We have got an even better one to tell moving forward. We do dream big in terms of what is on offer for this state. We do have big, ambitious plans, there is no question about that. We are unashamed in our —

Mr Davis interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Morris) — Order! Mr Davis!

Mr GEPP — We have big plans for this state, big ambitions, and we are very confident that the Victorian people will see —

Mr Davis interjected.

Mr GEPP — On a point of order, Acting President, I draw to your attention that the member has been warned on two occasions, and anyone else would have been punished.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Morris) — Thank you, Mr Gepp. I do remind Mr Davis once again, for the third time now, that interjections are disorderly, and they are even more disorderly when he is not in his place.

Mr GEPP — Everyone knows he has been here longer than the furniture, and he should know better. Perhaps he should take Mr Ramsay's lead and move on.

We are very, very proud of our record. We have got a great story to tell about what we have done. We have got a great story to tell about what we are proposing to do. We are not about coming up with half-baked policies like those opposite. Those opposite are all about getting into the next photograph — seeing the next photo opportunity. We are talking about real policies for real people to keep this great state moving. I do not support the proposition from Ms Wooldridge. I think it is misguided, ill-informed and completely and utterly inaccurate.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria).

Debate adjourned until later this day.

FORESTS (WOOD PULP AGREEMENT) REPEAL BILL 2018

Second reading

Debate resumed from 22 August; motion of Ms DUNN (Eastern Metropolitan).

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) (14:21) — I am very pleased to be able to speak on Ms Dunn's bill, the Forests (Wood Pulp Agreement) Repeal Bill 2018. Because of the lack of work that may have been done in forming this bill, as far as there being a transition from the industries that will be affected by this bill being passed —

Mr Davis — Do you know what you're talking about?

Mr Gepp — On a point of order, Acting President, this is the fourth time in 25 minutes; the member keeps flouting your ruling. There is a reason for standing orders in this place. You have spoken to him on three previous occasions, and he continues to flout your ruling. I am not sure why he is still here.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Morris) — Thank you, Mr Gepp. You are quite correct. Mr Davis, please, if you are going to interject, from your place. Mr Gepp, as you well know, I do not have the power to suspend anybody from this house. I ask Mr Leane to continue.

Mr LEANE — No, that is all right. I think Mr Davis just needs to externalise every one of his thoughts, unlike most other people. Maybe he can get some help with that; I do not know.

With Ms Dunn's private members bill, I understand where Ms Dunn's aspirations are coming from. Unfortunately I think that there needs to be a lot of work done on how certain industries and certain workforces would transition over a period of time before the government might be in a position to be able to support a bill like this, as put forward by Ms Dunn. In saying that about not being in a position to support this bill I might be giving Ms Dunn exactly what she wants: a political point of difference shortly before going into an election period. As a government representative speaking on this bill I might not be able to say the government will be supporting the bill, but on behalf of the Labor government I think I can say we could be delivering Ms Dunn something that she might be after anyway, so I congratulate her on that.

I probably would not be doing Ms Dunn a favour in saying that I personally respect her passion and her

commitment. I am probably not helping Ms Dunn politically in this way, but having been on committees with her and having worked closely with her in Eastern Metropolitan Region I would never question her commitment to and her belief in what she strives for and what she tries to achieve. As I stated, with this particular bill we have concerns that there are industries that are actually reliant on forestry offcuts, particularly Australian Paper, which is one of the biggest employers in the Latrobe Valley, and the Latrobe Valley is an area where employment is a concern to everyone who lives and works in that particular region. As I said, we need to be doing a lot of work as far as what can be transitioned and what can be done into the future before a bill like this, without any safeguards and without any work done in that area, can be supported.

As a Labor government we are not shy and we are not backwards in saying that we are happy with the record that we have set for the environment this term.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr LEANE — One of the things that we have implemented — and people can find this amusing — is we actually banned fracking in the state. I know that for some people you can never do enough, but we are a government that actually —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr LEANE — No, I am actually saying that we are proud of our environmental achievements as a government in this term. I am happy if people find that amusing. As I said, we are a government that actually banned fracking against a lot of resistance from a lot of quarters, and it is something that we are actually proud we have achieved.

Mr O'Sullivan interjected.

Mr LEANE — They were granted, and then they were taken away. It has been banned. The other thing that this government did was boot the cows out of the High Country, out of the national park, which I know was a big thing close to the heart of the two squatters that are interjecting now. I know that was close to your heart, but we actually did that. We legislated to establish the Canadian Regional Park, as it was known, in Ballarat. That is something that we are proud of.

Mr O'Sullivan — What's that got to do with pulp?

Mr LEANE — If you are listening to my contribution, Mr O'Sullivan, what I am saying is in response to Ms Dunn's private members bill. In opposing this bill at this stage, as I said, I do not think

we are completely disappointing the Greens political party, because the way they framed the bill put the government in a position where it was nearly impossible for it to support it. So congratulations. All is fair in politics. Good for you.

Ms Dunn interjected.

Mr LEANE — None of the old parties are divorced from playing politics, and the Greens party has been around a long time, so good for you. As I said, I do not know if I am completely disappointing the Greens party MLCs at this point in time.

Mr Ramsay interjected.

Mr LEANE — I am responding to their interjections. I want to keep going on about our government's great environmental credentials, because there is quite a bit to go through. Our achievements include, as I mentioned, banning fracking — we do not get much credit for that; establishing the Canadian Regional National Park as the Woowookarung Regional Park — we do not get much credit for that, but I think that was a pretty good thing for us to be able to do as far as environmental concerns go; the new marine and coastal act; the reforms to the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988; investment in the biodiversity plan —

Mr Ramsay — What has this got to do with the bill?

Mr LEANE — Mr Ramsay, I am not too sure if you have actually been listening, but I am saying that the government is quite proud of its environmental record in this term. We have built on a long record of the Labor Party implementing national parks and a number of environmental initiatives that have been good for the environmental health of this state.

Ms Pennicuik — Just not with regard to the forests.

Mr LEANE — In taking up the interjection, I actually think that we have taken forestry in Victoria very seriously.

Ms Dunn interjected.

Mr LEANE — I think that is a —

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Morris) — Order! Mr Leane, just before you continue, I am concerned at the number of interjections that are occurring. I would not want you to be inviting interjections at any point, nor responding, because they are quite disorderly and you can encourage others. So I

might encourage you, Mr Leane, to make your contribution, and I encourage other members not to interject.

Mr LEANE — I am sorry, Acting President. I kind of get sucked into it in the friendly conversation that we are having over this particular bill. As I stated, I think this government stands on its record in terms of what it has done in protecting Victoria's environment and its beautiful national parks. We will have more to say around this as we get closer to the election, but I think we will keep our powder dry for that in coming weeks, rather than responding to this particular bill. I congratulate the member for bringing this bill to the house, but the government is in no position to vote for this bill because of the concerns around transitioning from the workforce. It is actually quite important to people who work in this industry as far as their livelihood is concerned. I think there needs to be a lot of work done on transition before we can support a bill like this, but I do congratulate Ms Dunn for maybe achieving what she was after.

Mr O'SULLIVAN (Northern Victoria) (14:34) — I am very pleased to be able to speak on this bill before the house today. I will start at the outset by saying that this side of the house — the Liberals and Nationals — will absolutely be opposing this bill as much as we possibly can. Of all the discussions we have had in relation to pieces of legislation as to whether we will support them or not support them, I am happy to say that with this bill it was probably the easiest decision that we have ever come to in terms of our absolute opposition.

In terms of Mr Leane's contribution, I just want to take up a couple of points in relation to that. In some ways I feel sorry for Mr Leane having to get up on behalf of the government and speak to this issue. Clearly it is not an issue that he is very familiar with, and I would suggest to Mr Leane that he keep well away from any timber industry-type debates in this place for the rest of his time in Parliament, because clearly he had no idea what he was talking about. From my point of view what he did say certainly let the cat out of the bag in a few different areas, and I will take up some of those.

It was interesting to note that Mr Leane said in his interjections — and it seems that the government will also be opposing this bill — that this would create a point of political difference between the Labor Party and the Greens. I thought that was interesting, because Mr Leane went to great lengths to say that this would be 'the one point of difference' that the Greens and the Labor Party would have in relation to their policies as they go closer to the election. Mr Leane, I tend to agree

with you that on just about every other policy initiative the Greens and Labor are very similar — very, very similar indeed. I will be interested to see, as we get closer to the election, the further convergence of the policies between the Greens and the Labor Party to the point where I do not think there will be much difference whatsoever.

One of the things that we certainly talk about on this side of the house in terms of the coalition is that we know that the relationship between the Liberals and The Nationals, in my experience in politics, has never been closer. The relationship between our leaders — Matthew Guy for the Liberal Party and Peter Walsh for the National Party, both in the other chamber — has never been closer in terms of the relationship between two leaders, and they will make a fine Premier and Deputy Premier in 81 days.

One of the things that is certainly a real concern for people as I go around regional Victoria, particularly in the northern part of regional Victoria — and I know Ms Bath has had conversations with me about eastern Victoria too in relation to some of the comments that she hears, as I know other people certainly do too, and Mr Ramsay certainly hears it down in his part of Western Victoria Region as well — is about how close the policy ideals are between the Greens and the Labor Party at this point in time. One thing is absolutely certain if the Liberals and Nationals do not form a government at this election: Labor will not have the numbers in their own right to form government, so they will need to form a coalition with the Greens party beyond the next election. That is if we do not form government on this side, which I am very confident we will do. That is absolutely horrifying. People in regional Victoria are absolutely horrified that the Labor Party may be in government beyond 2018. The only thing that scares them more than that is that it will be a coalition between the Greens and Labor. I take my hat off to the Leader of the Greens, Dr Ratnam, who has positioned herself very well to be the next Deputy Premier of this state if there is to be a coalition between the Greens and Labor.

Mr Leane also made a comment that the government would be opposing this bill at this stage. ‘At this stage’ I thought was an interesting phrase, because what that is saying is that there is every chance that the government’s position on this particular issue is likely to change due to the pressure of the Greens as those negotiations in relation to forming government occur —

Mr Davis — They’ll be demands; they won’t be negotiations.

Mr O’SULLIVAN — Mr Davis is right. They will not be negotiations in relation to forming government; they will be demands that the Greens will place upon the Labor Party to guarantee their support as a part of a coalition arrangement. No doubt the Greens will drive a pretty hard bargain. That is what scares the daylights out of anyone who lives in regional Victoria particularly, but I think that is also starting to occur in metropolitan areas as well.

Interjection from gallery.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Morris) — Order! Members of the gallery cannot interject in the proceedings of the house.

Person escorted from gallery.

Mr O’SULLIVAN — Acting President, I am sorry that outburst occurred while you were in the chair. Going back to the particular bill that we have in front of us, what the Greens are trying to do here is absolutely shut down the timber industry in Victoria. Where they are coming from in relation to this, as this bill particularly points to, is the shutting down of the wood pulp agreement as part of the repeal bill that they are pushing forward for the timber industry. That would be an absolute disaster in relation to the timber industry, jobs in regional Victoria and also jobs in the metropolitan area. Effectively Australian Paper, which has the mill at Maryvale and the current contracts in relation to the wood pulp agreement, have a huge workforce down there at their plant, as Mr Leane acknowledged. It is really essential for many, many jobs down there and the families those jobs support. The Greens are trying to completely shut down that industry, which is where we currently obtain our pulp and make it into the paper that many of us use in our everyday lives in our offices and wherever else.

The Greens will probably not be successful in their endeavour today, but the Greens are very tenacious. They will certainly be putting this option forward to the government in years to come. We know the Greens never stop; they keep chipping away, trying to get what they want.

The industry here in Victoria is very sustainable. A lot of work goes on through the government, VicForests and a whole range of other groups to ensure that we have a sustainable timber industry.

Interjections from gallery.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Morris) — Order! Members of the gallery, you cannot make any contributions or any noises that interfere with the

running of the house. It is quite clear that if you are going to be in the gallery, you need to remain silent during the debate. It is critically important that this occurs.

Mr O'SULLIVAN — What concerns me is that if this goes ahead and the industry is closed down, that will mean that timber products and paper products will have to be sourced from somewhere else, because they will not be able to be sourced here in Victoria. When we talk about having to source them from somewhere else, you have to ask, 'Where would they come from?'. In reality they would come from the rainforests in Indonesia and the rainforests in South America. As we know, those countries have an unsustainable practice. I do not think we would support in any way, shape or form sourcing timber products and paper-based products from an unsustainable system in another country. I think that is highly irresponsible and something that we should not be forcing on those other areas.

Ms Springle — Plantations?

Mr O'SULLIVAN — Ms Springle talks about plantations. Yes, there is no doubt that there is room for plantation forestry agreements and particularly products in the future. They are going to be part of a good mix, but that is not the only solution for this particular industry. The native timber industry is sustainable. We all know the biggest threat to the native timber industry in this state is bushfires. We need to make sure we do everything we can to ensure that bushfires do not occur. A lot of work goes into our native forestry. It plays a huge role not only on the environmental side but also on many other sides, in a sustainable way, through timber products and paper products, as we know.

One of the concerns I have is in relation to the great forest national park, and we have already had some discussions on this. It is something that the Greens have been very demanding about, and I am sure they have had and will continue to have many conversations as we get closer to the election in relation to the establishment of the great forest national park. We all know what that will do to the timber industry. That will be another nail in the coffin of the timber industry. Again, that would mean that we would have to go to other areas to source those particular wood products.

In terms of plantations, we know that plantations certainly can be used for a whole range of things, but for a whole range of furniture products they cannot be used. They are just not fit for purpose in terms of what we are trying to achieve in this state.

There is another thing I am concerned about with the Greens. There is an agreement in place with Australian Paper for quite a few years to come. The Greens want to rip up that contract — absolutely rip it up.

Mr Finn interjected.

Mr O'SULLIVAN — Mr Finn, that is very good. That goes to the point I am heading towards. What you cannot do is just go around ripping up government contracts whenever it suits you. We have seen what happened with the east–west link when the Premier said that it was not worth the paper it was written on and that it would not cost one cent to tear up the contract for the east–west link. We are at a point now where we are at about \$1.4 billion. That is not \$1.4 million; it cost \$1400 million to rip up that contract. What we also saw after that was that many businesses from elsewhere which were looking to invest in Australia, invest in Melbourne and invest in Victoria said, 'Oh, I don't like the look of that. A contract with that particular government is not necessarily guaranteed, so if they're not guaranteed' —

Ms Dunn — On a point of order, Acting President, this debate is about the Forests (Wood Pulp Agreement) Repeal Bill 2018. At no point does the bill reference the east–west link, and I would ask you to draw the member back to the bill.

Mr Finn — On the point of order, Acting President, in fact I was listening to Mr O'Sullivan very carefully. He was making a parallel between the east–west link contract and the contract that the Greens are proposing to rip up if they are in coalition government with the Labor Party after the November election, so it is very, very much apposite to the issue at hand.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Morris) — Thank you, Mr Finn. Thanks, Ms Dunn, for your point of order. I will certainly encourage Mr O'Sullivan to come back to the substance of the bill. I can understand the comparison that was being made there. I will not uphold the point of order, but I will encourage you, Mr O'Sullivan, to come back to the bill at hand.

Mr O'SULLIVAN — Thank you, Acting President. The point I was making — and I will go back and make it deliberately in relation to this particular bill that we have in hand — is in relation to sovereign risk about the threat of governments just tearing up contracts that have been established with the people who have invested, whether that be in the roads sector, as the east–west link was, or whether that be in the timber industry or the pulp industry, as we are talking about here today.

You cannot just go around ripping up government contracts because you do not like them. Contracts are there for a reason. They are entered into in good faith. Businesses come here and they invest their hard-earned money knowing that they can get a reasonable return on their money but also that they can do so and create jobs and create wealth for the state and pay taxes to the state, knowing that the contract that they entered into will be fulfilled and the government will play its role in holding up its end of the bargain. Surely that is not too much to ask for. If that is not the case, people will not come here and invest, and that will cost the economy billions of dollars and it will cost a lot of jobs as well, and I do not think anyone would want to see that occur, certainly not on this side of the house.

What I want to do now in relation to the timber industry is go to someone who I think has got a reasonable amount of knowledge in relation to this space: someone who has got a good understanding of the timber industry, worked in the timber industry and is probably someone who I think is worth listening to in this space on this particular occasion. That person is a member of this house, Mr Dalidakis.

Mr Dalidakis in a previous life was the CEO of the Victorian Association of Forest Industries (VAFI), so he worked in the industry and had a fairly reasonable understanding of the industry. I thought what I would do is just make reference to some of the words that Mr Dalidakis had to say, because sometimes you are better off to use someone else's words to help make your own point. So I want to do that. Mr Dalidakis on 15 November 2010, in a press release that he put his name to, said this, and I quote:

Since the party's inception, the Greens have held a range of views that are fundamentally anti-industry, anti-prosperity and anti-employment ...

I also want to go on to quote:

A Parliament in which the Greens controlled the balance of power would likely enact legislation that would endanger the 24 000 jobs in Victorian forestry, as well as the approximately 50 000 jobs indirectly supported by the industry.

I actually concur with Mr Dalidakis on that. Mr Dalidakis went on to say that:

... in particular, the Greens policy on forestry was contradictory and dangerous.

I agree with that too. He went on to say a whole range of other things about the sustainable industry that we have here in Victoria, and he mentioned something about plantations as well, but he certainly went on to say that if we do not use the products that we have got here in Victoria that are sustainable, then we will have

to have an increase in 'imports of forest products from rainforests in Sumatra and Brazil'. They are not my words; they are Mr Dalidakis's words on 15 November 2010.

There is one last sentence in the press release that I would like to also read into *Hansard* because I think it is pretty reasonable, and I quote:

The Liberal and National parties have clearly seen the true cost of the Greens ideologically driven policies and have put the needs of Victorians first ...

So I thought it was worth just mentioning Mr Dalidakis's comment. I am disappointed that he is not here to be a part of this debate. I am sure he is listening in his office, and I am sure that he would dearly love to be here to make a contribution as well. He probably will not on this occasion, although I think he will agree with most of what I am saying.

What we are seeing here is that the Greens are anti-industry, anti-jobs and anti-country Victoria, and their policies are becoming more and more extreme. When Mr Barber was here we used to see a level of reasonableness about the actions of the Greens, but what we are seeing now is that the Greens have lurched far to the left and we are seeing those policies come through in a whole range of areas. Some of the areas in which we have already seen it are where the Greens have obviously convinced the government to shut down Hazelwood, and as a result of that we have seen electricity prices go through the roof. The Greens are certainly pushing for a ban on intensive farming, which would be devastating for a whole range of industries —

Honourable members interjecting.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Morris) — Order! Thank you, members. I cannot hear Mr O'Sullivan.

Mr O'SULLIVAN — We have seen the establishment of an ice and heroin injecting room in North Richmond, and I suspect that after this election, if the Greens-Labor coalition comes to fruition, we will see some of those heroin and ice injecting rooms spread to other areas. I think the member for Geelong, if I remember correctly, let the cat out of the bag and suggested that there would be one down in Geelong.

We have certainly seen expansion of national parks, and we know that is already happening with their ideas in relation to the great forest national park. We know that duck season would certainly end. We know that any access to public land would be further restricted. We know that they would certainly want to ban any sort

of genetic modification in relation to grains. We know that they would certainly split the Country Fire Authority (CFA) and support the government; they have already done that, but they will certainly continue to do that.

One thing that I thought was rather interesting, which the Greens are now pursuing, is that they want to release dingoes into state and national parks in Victoria. I thought that was a rather interesting policy that they have come up with. I am not sure why they would want to do that, because we know the terrible impact that they have on —

Ms Springle — I think Mr O’Sullivan’s writing Greens policy on the run.

Mr O’SULLIVAN — I would be happy to source that and get back to you on that one, but that is certainly another policy that has been floating around. The problem with the Greens in terms of how extreme they are is they do not even realise some of the things that they are saying themselves and the policies they are releasing. They have a whole range of people, who may not be sitting in this chamber, who are out there making policies on their behalf and announcing policies on their behalf as well.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr O’SULLIVAN — Well, certainly they are making those statements as facts on behalf of the Greens party. Perhaps it is not the case from you guys sitting in this chamber, but certainly you have people outside this chamber who are saying those sorts of things very regularly. One of the things they say particularly — and Dr Ratnam herself has said it — is that there is no chance that the Greens would form a coalition with anyone on this side of the chamber. I think that is quite reasonable. I think we would probably have a few objectors to that on our side as well. But Dr Ratnam said that an alliance with the Labor Party would be something that they would consider if the time came, depending on what the numbers were after the next election. Hopefully that will not occur, but we will have to wait and see.

The Greens are playing a very interesting game in the lead-up to the election. They are just slowly raising the high jump bar in terms of some of the extreme policies that they want to see get up in this Parliament and in this state. They know that the government is on the nose and is probably likely to fall short of the 44 members required to form a government in its own right, so the Greens are probably playing the long waiting game. Certainly they are hoping that the Labor

Party fall short and require the Greens to form a government, which would see Dr Ratnam become the Deputy Premier of this state. I am sure she would very much like to add that title to her name.

That is certainly one of the concerns that we on this side of the house have in relation to the Greens going forward, but in relation to this particular bill, this side of the house absolutely cannot and will not support any sort of bill that would decimate the pulp industry here in Victoria, which would lead on to the broader timber industry and wood use industries in Victoria.

I was on a committee that reported earlier this year in relation to VicForests. One of the things that came through very clearly there is that the timber industry does not just stop out in the bush or out in the forests. It extends well beyond that in terms of employment. One of the things that I learned during that inquiry is that most of the timber-related jobs are actually in Melbourne, and those timber jobs are not overly visible unless you start looking for them. They are involved in the flooring that you put in houses, the framework that goes into building houses, the doors that go into houses, the doorframes and the window frames. They are the sorts of jobs that would be absolutely under threat if this sort of bill was to get up.

There are a lot of people who depend on the timber industry. One of the things we are fortunate to have here in Victoria is a sustainable industry, and we absolutely want to keep it that way. There are at least 50 000 jobs involved. Mr Dalidakis seemed to think there were more than that. I do not know how many there are exactly, but from the evidence that we received during the inquiry into VicForests, 50 000 is a number that was used, so I am happy to use that figure as the number of jobs that are relied upon. That is not just 50 000 people affected. They have all got families and so forth too, so that number starts to expand very quickly in terms of the number of people who would be impacted by a shutdown in the timber industry.

There is no doubt in my mind that the Greens will not stop until they see the timber industry closed down in Victoria. That would be a sad occasion in terms of the jobs that that would affect. I also fear to think where we would source the timber products that we need. They would have to be imported, and I do not have anywhere near as much confidence in overseas industries as I do in the Victorian industry. I fear that the wood sourced in a destructive and unsustainable manner in other countries could end up here in Victoria, and that would be a tragedy. On behalf of the Liberals and The Nationals, we absolutely will not be supporting this piece of legislation.

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) (14:59) — I am pleased to rise following the contribution of my colleague Mr O'Sullivan just to make a few very brief remarks in relation to this private members bill from the Greens and to reiterate that the opposition, the Liberal-Nationals, are opposed to this bill.

We have heard some discussion about the issue of sovereign risk, and of course this bill will introduce further sovereign risk into a jurisdiction that previously has enjoyed bipartisan support for honouring contracts and for the absence of sovereign risk. It is a very important issue. We saw the consequences of that following the tearing up of the east–west link contract and the uncertainty that that created and the cost to taxpayers of over \$1.4 billion to \$1.5 billion.

Mr Melhem interjected.

Mr O'DONOHUE — I note the interjection from Mr Melhem, who as a union official supported the east–west link. We all remember Mr Melhem's letter supporting the east–west link when he was a union official. He is a bit like Mr Dalidakis. They say one thing before they enter the Parliament and have a completely different view when they enter Parliament. The issue of sovereign risk is a very important one.

Mr O'Sullivan also talked about the jobs that are generated by this industry, an industry that is sustainable. To pick up the point Mr Finn made before, Daniel Andrews tripled the coal tax royalty and then Hazelwood closed. The sequence of events was that he tripled the coal tax royalty and Hazelwood closed, 22 per cent of the power generation in Victoria was removed and power prices went up. That is the sequence of events. We are now paying much higher power prices because Hazelwood closed because Daniel Andrews increased the coal tax royalty. He tripled it.

Mr Leane interjected.

Mr O'DONOHUE — I take up Mr Leane's interjection. Mr Leane is happy to privatise the land titles office and his colleague the Minister for Corrections is happy to exercise an option to turn on the 300 extra beds at the privately operated Ravenhall prison, but somehow privatisation in other industries is bad. They will bank the \$2 billion-plus from the privatisation of the land titles office, but other privatisations that happened 25 years ago were bad; they were very bad. I mean, consistency please.

Ms Dunn — On a point of order, Acting President, today we are debating the Forests (Wood Pulp Agreement) Repeal Bill 2018, which relates to

repealing the wood pulp agreement. There is absolutely no reference to privatisation of the port of Melbourne, to the east–west link or to any of the other matters that Mr O'Donohue has strayed into, and I ask that you direct the member back to the bill.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Ms Patten) —

Thank you. Again, it is not really a point of order, but please refer back to the bill, Mr O'Donohue.

Mr O'DONOHUE — Thank you, Acting President. One of the key consequences of this bill would be to increase sovereign risk in Victoria, and I was citing the example of the east–west link and the consequences of tearing up the east–west link contracts, not just in terms of the cost to the taxpayers and not just because a key piece of infrastructure is now not being delivered, but because of the issue of sovereign risk. If this legislation was passed, it would create further sovereign risk issues in Victoria.

I mentioned Hazelwood, and of course the Carter Holt Harvey plant in the Latrobe Valley has also closed under the Andrews government. We have seen more than 1000 direct jobs go but also several thousand direct and indirect jobs lost in the Latrobe Valley as a result of the actions or inactions of the Andrews Labor government. That takes me to the point that the industry is very important to the valley and to Maryvale, and hundreds of indirect jobs rely on Maryvale as well.

More broadly, as Mr O'Sullivan said, the industry is sustainable. A very small proportion of Victoria's native forests are able to be harvested, and they are harvested in a long cycle or long rotation. The industry is sustainable. Things can always be improved and reviewed, but in a general sense the industry is sustainable and it is very important for economic activity and jobs in Gippsland, the Latrobe Valley and the broader Gippsland region.

The final point I want to make — and again, Mr O'Sullivan sort of touched on this in his contribution — is that this bill is an example of what will come if a Labor-Greens coalition is elected to government. We have seen that Daniel Andrews is prepared to change any position, sell out any stakeholder and do anything to maintain power. We saw that during the Northcote by-election campaign, where Labor lost their first by-election since 1948 in Victoria to the Greens. A Labor-Greens coalition would see legislation like this and similar legislation that would be job destroying and particularly damaging in electorates such as mine, Eastern Victoria Region. This is a taste of what would be coming. So the Liberal-Nationals will oppose this bill. I call on

Minister Dalidakis to stay true to his previous convictions. As I say, this is a foretaste, a warning, about what may come down the line if a Labor-Greens coalition is successful at the November election.

Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria) (15:06) — I do not wish to make a long contribution in relation to this bill. In fact I would much rather cut to the chase and put it to a vote as quickly as possible, because it appears that the numbers will float on the side of those in the chamber that will oppose the bill, and my view is that there have been quite lengthy contributions on this bill already. We know the objective of the Greens in putting this bill to the chamber. Mr Leane seems to think that there is an underlying political agenda for the Greens to do so, and no doubt that will rattle itself out over the next couple of weeks. But there is no doubt, as has been said in contributions on this side of the chamber, that there is significant concern regarding the impact that this bill will have, particularly on jobs and economic value in the areas that will be affected.

The Greens bill, as I understand, seeks to repeal the Forests (Wood Pulp Agreement) Act 1996, and the effect of that repeal would be the termination of timber supply to Australian Paper's mill at Maryvale. Both of our keynote speakers talked about that and talked about it with some degree of understanding and experience, because Mr O'Sullivan is well experienced in the agricultural field and the forestry field, and of course Mr O'Donohue is a representative of the particular electorates that will be concerned. I also, through my work with the farming community, Landcare and the forestry association, have some understanding of the impacts of closing many of these native forest reserves.

I am actually equally concerned that the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council is proposing locking up 79 000 hectares of the region's state forests as parks and reserves. This proposal includes the state forests around the Pyrenees ranges, Wellsford Forest, Wombat Forest and the Macedon Ranges, which all cut into my region. This would preclude timber cutters, firewood collectors, hunters and prospectors, and this is something that the Labor Party has flagged it would do if re-elected. That would be devastating for the towns and small timber mills, not large ones, around Beaufort and Talbot, which both sit in my region, Western Victoria Region.

There is the prospect of losing 900 jobs around Maryvale if in fact this bill is passed. I note Mr Leane did his very best to massage the mover of this private members bill, but I have got no sympathy, I might add, in respect to that sort of massaging. He went on for about 35 minutes. The fact is, Labor also have got an

underlying political agenda here in locking up more of our state forests, presumably to appeal to the Greens as we move forward to the election.

I notice there is frustration up in the gallery, and perhaps to try and give them some cause for enthusiasm, what we do not have is any significant, real commitments either from the Greens or from Labor to invest in our hardworking Landcare operators, a very successful project that started between the Joan Kirner government, actually, and the Victorian Farmers Federation. Unfortunately it has always been hampered by the fact that there has been a lack of funding, particularly for coordinators in the field. It has been mainly the federal government that has actually provided funding for those coordinators, but again many of these small Landcare groups have been frustrated by a lack of funding.

Also, I have never seen a Greens policy about investment in on-farm forestry. There is a distinct lack of investment or commitment to invest on farm. Farmers are actually willing co-sharers or partners of farming land to invest in trees, not only for commercial reasons but for diversity and environmental reasons as well, yet I have yet to see a policy from either the Greens or Labor in respect to encouraging on-farm forestry. So there are plenty of opportunities for the enthusiasm which is around that far side of the chamber to be able to invest in and support some private forestry operations, which hopefully will be profitable not only for those that are providing the land but also for the environment and the communities at large.

I used Mr Google just to find out what different environmental groups are saying in relation to sustainable timber logging, and there is no doubt there is an underlying agenda to remove all logging from our sustainable native forests. If that is the agenda, I guess it is no surprise that we have a private members bill here which is quite blatant in its objective. If I take Mr Leane's thinking, this is not the real objective of the mover but an opportunity perhaps to take a political stance and then, no doubt through the travels of the next 80 days, massage it into something else.

Ms Springle — That shows more about you than it does about us.

Mr RAMSAY — Well, you did not bother actually coming to talk to me about this bill. In fact I do not know who you actually talked to, but I would be more than happy if you wanted to put a legitimate case forward in relation to what your objective is in putting this bill to the chamber, knowing that you are unlikely to get support from either the Labor or the coalition

parties. Obviously there was not any real desire to have this bill even intellectually debated, far less supported.

From my perspective, as I said, it proposes to repeal the Forests (Wood Pulp Agreement) Act 1996. It proposes that on termination of the agreement the party would retain any right, privilege, obligation or liability. It proposes that any claim of the company against the Victorian government for non-fulfilment would be void and unenforceable, so you are taking away any sort of potential redress for liabilities and loss. It suggests consequential amendments to the Sustainable Forests (Timber) Act 2004, the Victorian Plantations Corporation Act 1993 and the repeal of the Forests (Wood Pulp Agreement) Act 1974. It is a pity that Mr Dalidakis is not in the chamber, because he has had some experience in this field, and his expertise would be useful in the debate in respect of his experiences with the forestry industry as a chief executive officer.

I honestly do not know what the Greens are hoping to achieve here except maybe to placate their membership. To me it is just a blatant blowtorch to a policy position that has been long held by the environmental groups and the Greens.

Mr Dalidakis, on cue! Unfortunately you are not on the speakers list, so you might not get the opportunity to speak.

Repealing the wood pulp agreement would terminate the supply of timber to the Australian Paper mill in Maryvale. It would send a huge shock wave through the forest industries — and I know Mr Dalidakis would say the same thing — with a direct negative impact on Australian paper. We would have to start importing Australian paper from Japan, presumably, and other countries. It would affect the 900 workers —

Ms Dunn interjected.

Mr RAMSAY — I know you do not worry about the workers, Ms Dunn, and you are more interested in the health and survival of the Leadbeater's possum, which we have nauseatingly heard about in nearly every contribution you make in this place. It would also have flow-on effects to harvest and haulage contractors and others, and it would cause immeasurable harm to Victoria's ability to attract new business and investment to the state and create valid concerns about sovereign risk. Sovereign risk, to my mind, would probably be the most important aspect of the ramifications if this bill was actually allowed to go through. I am sure Mr Ondarchie, given his corporate experience, would understand that.

I suspect one of the Greens objectives is to lobby to create the great forest national park in Victoria's Central Highlands, and they have been quite open about that fact. We know the Greens have never supported Victoria's forest industries, certainly not for logging. I have given you an opportunity now to put your stake in the ground and support our Landcare groups and our private forestry operations. It is only a small amount of logging that goes on in our sustainable native forests — a very small percentage.

Mr Dalidakis — Very small.

Mr RAMSAY — A very small percentage, I have just said, bowing to the skill of Mr Dalidakis in his previous life, and on that basis we see this more as a stunt and a farce. Nice try, Ms Dunn; it is not going to work today, though. We will oppose the bill.

Ms BATH (Eastern Victoria) (15:17) — I am pleased to rise to say a few words this afternoon on the Greens private members bill in relation to the wood pulp agreement. What I found quite interesting when I was first listening to this debate in my office was in actual fact Mr Leane's contribution. I was actually quite gobsmacked, and then on reflection I was unsurprised by it. He was apologetically saying that the government would not be voting in favour of this — saying that they would be opposing it — but it was the most softly-softly contribution I have ever heard from Mr Leane, and I know that he can get very passionate. It was like he did not want to offend his new sandpit partners. He did not want to offend the fact that if Daniel Andrews cannot govern after 24 November by himself, he will go and extend a hand to the Greens and say, 'We need to get into the sandpit together. We need to govern Victoria together'.

I thought it was quite disappointing that Mr Leane did not talk about the timber jobs and that he did not talk about the CFMEU. In fact it feels to me like the Andrews government is quite prepared on a number of occasions to take the 'F' out of the CFMEU. They have already taken the 'M' out of it, because we have lost Hazelwood mine. If we continue with the Victorian renewable energy target, we are going to end up with the early closure of Yallourn and the loss of jobs there. We see this apology of 'No, we're not going to support this bill'. I am going to apologise for nothing and say that the Liberals and The Nationals will not be supporting this bill.

This bill is a stunt, and what I find quite offensive about this is that we can be pious about certain people in our state and we can be pious about the goodwill of people who care about trees, but we cannot be pious — and

that is what they would lead us to believe — about other people who live and work in the regions, in country Victoria. They harvest — they do not log; they harvest — and the reason they harvest is that it is a recyclable, regenerative, sustainable resource. Let us be truthful about this. Trees grow in the ground. A tree is a wonderful carbon capturing device. Our trees can be grown in areas that are difficult to use for other agricultural pursuits. They can be grown in infertile and inhospitable earth. It is a great way to use a resource.

Let us also have some context about the amount of native timber that is harvested annually. We have 94 per cent of our state forests locked up not to be used. Either they are unsuitable or they are locked up in national parks — our fantastic national parks — state parks, reserves, water catchments and the like. They cannot and will not be used for any logging or for any harvesting. However, we now have 6 per cent left that can be used. It is used on a rotational basis whereby approximately 0.04 per cent is harvested annually.

We have this pervading discussion from the Greens that we are totally wiping our forests of trees, and that is not accurate. Let me give you some statistics on this: 7.1 million hectares of native forests are on public land; 4 million hectares, about 56 per cent, are reserved for conservation — as I have said, national parks, reserves and regional parks —

Ms Dunn — Do you want to log them too?

Ms BATH — I will take up that interjection. I think that is just a very silly statement to make: ‘Do you want to log them too?’. I think the Greens just go on a roll. They make often ridiculous statements, and that was one of them. There are 3.1 million hectares of state forest left. Of that, 480 000 hectares is currently available and suitable for harvest, and of that 5000 hectares on average is harvested every year and replanted.

I just want to make it clear to the house that we on this side understand what happens in terms of a regenerative resource. What I found quite interesting from the government at the time was that they were apologising for voting in opposition to this.

Let us also talk about the industries that are in our regional areas. One of them is Australian Paper, which is in my electorate in central Gippsland. It has just had its 80th birthday this year, and it is Australia’s only manufacturing company that produces office and printing paper. I have had a good discussion with some of the planners and innovative managers there, and they are trending away from white paper into other

cardboard packaging. They are redesigning and reorientating their equipment to do that, which is very progressive and quite important. They are the largest industry employer in the Latrobe Valley, with approximately 900 people. Downstream they then support around 6000 jobs across Australia. Australian Paper contributes \$900 million to the Australian economy, mainly in Victoria.

When I first came into this place in 2015 it was very pleasing to see that Australian Paper had spent millions of dollars on a de-inking plant to work in recycling. They are also wanting to do amazing things in turning waste into energy and are completing a feasibility study to do that so that we do not put our waste into landfill but turn it into energy to be used in their plant. There is innovation there, and there needs to be a supply from a sustainable industry. Part of that industry would be the native timber industry. It is interesting that I have heard commentary today around the government raising the issue in relation to plantation timber and the fact that they have had \$110 million on the table to support more plantation timber. What we are not seeing is that money being spent. A press release on this came out over 12 months ago, but we are not seeing that actually coming to fruition.

The other thing that is really key to this is that there has to be a balance. I respect those fantastic farmers who plant a lot of native trees to provide shelter belts and also wildlife corridors. I think that is really important. There is potential, we know that, for those trees to be used and sold in the future. We see it happen on the western side of the state. But you cannot take a whole industry and wipe out our dairying, our beef, our sheep and our horticulture in order to plant timber. We need that highly productive area to actually feed and provide food security for our state. So there has to be this balance, and I do not believe the Greens have it.

The other point I would like to make is that I am quite concerned about the article that was in the paper on Saturday in relation to the government’s secret plan to ban native timber logging across the state. Indeed it was very reassuring to see that the Victorian Association of Forest Industries have come out with a very strong statement. Mr Tim Johnston came out with some very strong words, and I am pleased to see that because I am glad they are standing up to this. This would be a disaster for our small country towns. He said, and I quote:

I am beyond angry and disappointed if the government considers turning its back on our industry, one which generates more than \$7.3 billion in sales and service income for the state of Victoria.

It is very pleasing to see that. It is also pleasing to see that a great group of people, the Australian Forest Contractors Association, and Ms Gardiner from that group, said:

If a ban on native harvesting is forced onto forestry contracting businesses they have nowhere else to go, will be faced with serious financial burdens after years of investment and their employees will be out of work.

I find it quite frustrating that unfortunately the government seems to turn its face away from these issues. Those opposite may well be forced, as I said, to get into government with the Greens and with their agenda to shut down the native timber industry. We have heard about this agenda to cancel the wood pulp agreement before from Mr O'Sullivan and Mr O'Donohue and the problem around sovereign risk. What other country would look at our country and state and say, 'This would be a great place to invest, to put our money in and to grow jobs'. It would not, and it is a great shame. I am aware that we need to get a vote up, and The Nationals will not be supporting this bill.

Mr BOURMAN (Eastern Victoria) (15:27) — We here at the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party like real jobs not make-believe jobs, so we are not going to support this bill.

Ms DUNN (Eastern Metropolitan) (15:27) — I thank members for their contribution today. It is clear that there probably needs to be a bit of reflection on what is a stunt, what is a political agenda and what is a bill based on substance and evidence. What we saw this morning in motion 609 was a stunt. That was a stunt. The Forests (Wood Pulp Agreement) Repeal Bill 2018 is democracy in action and is actually about providing a future for our state — a future that no party is willing to see and support except for the Greens. Let me make it really clear what our political agenda is in relation to this bill. It is about transitioning the industry to plantations; it is about ending native forest logging; it is about creating the great forest national park and the Emerald link; and it is about protecting biodiversity, water and carbon.

Mr O'Sullivan — Will you put dingoes in there as well?

Ms DUNN — The bill does not go to dingoes. There was a range of contributions in relation to this bill. What became abundantly clear to me about all of those contributions is that the members who contributed know absolutely nothing about the timber industry in Victoria — absolutely nothing.

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms DUNN — It is always a good technique. I am going to first take up the contribution of Mr Leane and the reasons the government will be opposing this at this stage, because of the lack of work on a transition. I draw the government's attention to the work that my office has done on transition. In fact we have mapped out plantations and what is and is not available and how you can transition. It is quite possible to do it. The one thing that this chamber and you, members, need to take account of is that the wood is running out. There is no wood. You have got five years if there is not a bushfire. So it is time to face reality in relation to that.

The Greens want to see a timber industry in this state in the future, but we want to see one based on plantations. We certainly do not want to see one based on native forest logging. This bill is not about political difference, political pointscoring or political manoeuvring. This is about making a difference to the industry and to our forests. This bill is about removing an over 80-year-old contract, a favouritism to the mill in Maryvale and a preferential treatment that exists for only that mill and that at the moment guarantees the mill 350 000 cubic metres of our native forest every single year.

The repeal of the wood pulp agreement will not lead to the closure of the Maryvale pulp mill and job losses. The Maryvale pulp mill gets over 70 per cent of its inputs from post-consumer waste and plantation pulp. The remaining 30 per cent is from native forest logs sourced under the wood pulp agreement and a separate timber sales agreement that it has in place and which actually equates to 500 000 cubic metres of native forest that it is taking each and every year. There are entire manufacturing lines at the Maryvale pulp mill that have zero dependence on native forest logs as inputs. So those lines can continue to operate without change.

The native forest logs that it accepts are of course used for pulping. This source can be substituted with plantation supply. It could be done very easily. My office has analysed Nippon Paper Group's annual reports and has found that the Nippon Paper Group imported nearly 600 000 tonnes of woodchips from Australia to Japan, far exceeding its consumption of native forest logs at the Maryvale pulp mill. So they are currently making a business decision to export wood from Australia to Japan rather than sending it to Maryvale. Why wouldn't they? Because they have got a legislated supply agreement in place, there is no motivation for them to change their business model. This bill is about providing that motivation sooner rather than later.

It has been extraordinary to hear the doom and gloom about liabilities for the state and sovereign risk. The bill has been specifically drafted to extinguish all liabilities on the state or that the company would accrue under the wood pulp agreement. That is fit and proper, considering that the state is not capable of living up to its side of the agreement, because there is simply not sufficient sawlog volume available. The agreement itself has exit clauses which should have been triggered after the resource was so devastated in the 2009 Black Saturday bushfires and of course by the historic overlogging and mismanagement of our forests. The fact that these clauses were not enacted by successive state governments means it is up to the Parliament to act in the best interests of the people of Victoria. It is not about a political stunt; it is about actually doing something positive for this state.

The wood pulp agreement is a legal artefact. Its predecessors go back to the 1930s. There is no well-governed jurisdiction in the world that would allow a take-or-pay contract to be held over a resource that is in terminal decline. The risk to investment in native forest logging in Victoria lies in the fact that it has no social licence to operate. It is destructive of Melbourne's water catchments, is leading to the extinction of vulnerable species and is barely able to turn a profit. That is what has killed investment in the sector.

If there were enough wood in the forest area, then VicForests would have released a timber release plan showing how its commitments in the coming years would be fulfilled. It is now September. The timber release plan was meant to be released in January. The reason it has not been released is that there is a dearth of economically viable timber in the forest area and of course all of Victoria's state forests, due to bushfire and overlogging. The industry is in a crisis of its own making. The industry and the government that regulates it have been sleepwalking into a disaster. The only way that it is going to get out of this is if it transitions to sustainable plantation supply. The way to start that transition is to repeal the wood pulp agreement. It is bad for the industry that only one company in the wood and paper products industry in this state gets a legislated guarantee of supply. The group of six family-owned mills in regional Victoria are not afforded that security. No other business in the sector is given that security, only the Nippon Paper Group. A foreign conglomerate gets a legislated guarantee of supply for over 80 years. This is fundamentally unfair for Australian companies.

The Nippon Paper Group has sufficient plantation supply in Australia. It can simply redirect those resources to the Maryvale pulp mill. There is no need

for them to log native forests in Australia. They can simply truck the chips over from western Victoria. If you can get them to Japan, you can get them to Maryvale. Furthermore, the contracts are short-term. Once they have expired, the supply can be directed to the Maryvale pulp mill.

Media reports about purported exit plans must include an exit out of native forest logging. There is no point in engaging in corporate welfare with the Nippon Paper Group for the waste-to-energy facility at the Maryvale pulp mill if it is not part of a plan to exit native forest logging. This is a huge expense of taxpayers money, it does not help the state's recycling crisis and, if it is not used as leverage to get out of native forest logging, then it is a massive missed opportunity and a complete waste of taxpayers money.

What is always extraordinary in these debates that intersect with logging is to hear how many jobs the industry has in Victoria. It is extraordinary how that number has fluctuated and ebbed and flowed in the most amazing ways that no other industry sector's has. Last month a report by a team of researchers led by Jacki Schirmer at the University of Canberra was released. It is entitled *Socio-economic Impacts of the Forest Industry: Victoria*. It was commissioned and funded by Forest and Wood Products Australia and the commonwealth Department of Agriculture and Water Resources, two organisations that are certainly not known for their environmental bias. The report shows that there are 1639 jobs in the native forest industry up to and including primary processing across the state. Of those up to 1170 are in the Central Highlands region, so these are the jobs at risk if we end native forest logging. However, it is expected that a number of these people will find further employment in plantation management, harvest and haulage of plantation timber as that sector expands. It is worth noting that at least 700 jobs at a conservative level would be created by conserving the native forests in the Central Highlands in a great forest national forest.

It has been quite extraordinary to listen to some of the points made in the debate today. I want to pick up on just a couple of them. One is that the industry is reliant on forestry offcuts. The industry is not reliant on forestry offcuts. The wood pulp agreement guarantees 350 000 cubic metres of forest to the Maryvale pulp mill every single year. That cannot be classified as an offcut.

In many of the contributions it has been said that employment in the Latrobe Valley will be affected. No, employment in the Latrobe Valley will not be affected, because if you keep the Maryvale pulp mill operating at

capacity, you will not lose any jobs. They will just be using inputs from plantation and recycled materials; they will not be using native forest.

What was extraordinary was the contributions of the National Party, who clearly have absolutely no understanding of the industry whatsoever and in fact spent most of their contributions speculating about the Greens and the government, which I think is masking the fact that they really do not know anything about this industry. They rarely go out there and look at what is going on and, quite frankly, would not know a mountain ash if it poked them in the eye.

To suggest that the great forest national park would be a nail in the coffin is extraordinarily short-sighted. National parks are a wonderful part of Victoria. They not only provide refugia for wildlife; they are beautiful places for Victorians to visit. Every single one of them is a wonderful place and should be a jewel in Victoria's crown.

To suggest that plantation timber is not viable shows a complete lack of understanding of how the plantation sector works. I would just like to correct on the record Mr Ramsay's comments in relation to Landcare and the Greens.

Mr Ramsay interjected.

Ms DUNN — Well, Mr Ramsay, the Greens secured \$100 million for Landcare. Let me make it really clear: \$100 million for Landcare. If you do not think the Greens support Landcare and that is not a show of support, I do not know what is. It is extraordinary.

The amazing doom and gloom — I am trying to work out who is actually having a coalition with whom at the moment, I was so confused by some of the contributions. To suggest that people who care about the environment are pious is an extraordinary allegation. It is the Greens who are concerned about workers in this industry. We are concerned about whether it has a future; we are actually concerned about those small family mills. We are concerned that Maryvale drives native forest logging, and we have solutions to that so workers can retain their jobs. We are trying to find a way forward here, unlike the government, unlike the opposition, unlike The Nationals and unlike the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party. We are trying to do something practical for the future.

The reality is that if the Forests (Wood Pulp Agreement) Act 1996 stays in place, it will lead to species extinction, be an axe to the small mills, threaten

our water supplies, accelerate climate change and destroy some of the most amazing forests in the world. I commend the bill to the house.

House divided on motion:

Ayes, 6

Dunn, Ms
Patten, Ms
Pennicuik, Ms

Ratnam, Dr (*Teller*)
Springle, Ms
Truong, Ms (*Teller*)

Noes, 33

Atkinson, Mr
Bath, Ms
Bourman, Mr
Carling-Jenkins, Dr
Dalidakis, Mr (*Teller*)
Dalla-Riva, Mr
Davis, Mr
Eideh, Mr
Elasmar, Mr
Finn, Mr
Fitzherbert, Ms
Gepp, Mr
Jennings, Mr
Leane, Mr
Lovell, Ms
Melhem, Mr
Mikakos, Ms

Morris, Mr
Mulino, Mr
O'Donohue, Mr
Ondarchie, Mr
O'Sullivan, Mr (*Teller*)
Peulich, Mrs
Pulford, Ms
Purcell, Mr
Ramsay, Mr
Rich-Phillips, Mr
Shing, Ms
Somyurek, Mr
Symes, Ms
Tierney, Ms
Wooldridge, Ms
Young, Mr

Motion negatived.

GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

Debate resumed from earlier this day; motion of Ms WOOLDRIDGE (Eastern Metropolitan):

That this house notes that after four long years Victoria is beset with problems caused by Premier Daniel Andrews and his Labor government and Victorians are now faced with:

- (1) the highest crimes against the person offence numbers in Victoria's history;
- (2) sentences and a bail system that do not meet community expectations;
- (3) a youth justice system in crisis;
- (4) rising electricity prices due to Labor's forced closure of Hazelwood power station;
- (5) increasing traffic congestion on our freeways and in our suburbs;
- (6) a \$1.3 billion bill for not building the east-west link;
- (7) the betrayal of 60 000 Country Fire Authority volunteers and their communities;
- (8) six ministers and six Labor members whose actions are under police investigation;
- (9) 74 cancer beds axed at a cost to taxpayers of \$100 million;

- (10) a broken education system and a vocational education and training system with ongoing cuts and reduced enrolments;
- (11) watered-down planning protections;
- (12) sporting organisations and community clubs forced to take out loans;
- (13) farmers and regional communities being ignored and funding cuts for local country roads;
- (14) an ice injecting room;
- (15) blowouts in public housing waiting lists and dental waiting lists;
- (16) 14 straight negative Sensis small business index results;
- (17) no plan to manage Victoria's population;

and further notes that Premier Daniel Andrews has presided over a dysfunctional, rotting and morally corrupt government plagued by infighting, mismanagement, favouritism and crisis focused only on itself and not on Victorians.

Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria) (15:50) — I am pleased to be able to make a contribution to Ms Wooldridge's motion. Mr Gepp provided me with a challenge to raise the bar in this debate with respect to the importance of this motion, which I am happy to do. Even with the intellectual rigour that has been missing somewhat in the contributions from the other side, I am happy to try to raise the bar in that respect.

If I deal with the dot points outlined by Ms Wooldridge in her motion in respect to the four years of the Andrews government, the first one identified is in respect to the problems associated with the crime statistics. Now, despite Mr Gepp's best efforts you cannot deny the facts, and the facts are that crime is increasing in the state of Victoria. Not only is it increasing but the actual physical harm associated with these crime attacks against the person is increasing.

Some of it is fuelled by alcohol. Some of it is fuelled by illicit drugs. Some of it is fuelled by our multicultural diversity, where we have groups or gangs — whatever you want to call them — of people from other countries that are known to socialise in groups. They obviously are coming here from very different countries and find it hard to assimilate, socialise and adhere to the laws of the land in this country. Consequently we have seen a significant increase in group or gang attacks, and many have involved people from the Pacific Islands or African-Australian backgrounds. We cannot deny that, despite the very best efforts of the Minister for Police, Lisa Neville, in not being able to say the A-word. The fact is that certainly on a number of occasions we have seen that they have been quite influential in many of the gang incidents. Sadly we saw only a few days ago at

the Gasometer Hotel that there was no doubt a strong influence of gang violence in and surrounding that precinct. So we do have a problem.

I know that even in my own region of Western Victoria Region — and Mr Morris, I am sure, would substantiate this — there has been a significant increase in criminal activity around Ballarat. We know in the area that I come from — Geelong, the Bellarine and the Surf Coast — that it was unheard of before to have home invasions, sexual assaults, assault and battery, robberies, hoon driving and intimidation. In fact in Queenscliff only the other day we saw almost a gang attack at the distillery. I have to say in a seaside town like Queenscliff, as Mr Morris knows, you could shoot a gun down the main street and not hit anyone, so to actually have 20 or 30 youths running amok in the main drag was a most unusual spectacle. But unfortunately that is becoming the norm, not the unusual. I know in Barwon Heads, Ocean Grove and Drysdale — all these small seaside hamlets, where we have not seen this sort of criminal activity ever — the residents are now concerned about their own safety.

As our leader, Matthew Guy, has often said, we want to 'Make Victoria safe'. There is a reason for that slogan, because it is not safe and communities in Victoria are not feeling safe. Every day and every night we see the news. We are open to what is happening out there. We know the police are under an awful amount of pressure. We know the amount of police on leave at the moment is unprecedented, with sick leave not only for physical injury, which has dramatically increased, but also for mental stress. We know a lot of the leave now in the police force is for mental stress, and that has been caused by many of the incidents they have to deal with in relation to criminal activity, particularly around family violence and associated assaults and even murders. Obviously there is a significant impact with the frontline services they have to provide.

I also go to paramedics, who I know through previous inquiries are certainly impacted by those that are on drugs, those causing quite significant physical damage. We have seen that in the emergency departments of hospitals as well, where even the staff there feel unsafe, particularly in respect to Friday and Saturday nights, late at night, when invariably there is an increase in traffic of those impacted by alcohol and also illicit drugs. So we do have a crime problem.

Mr Gepp said, 'Yes, well, we're putting more police through the academy'. That is true, but we are also growing by 140 000 people every year, so per capita we do not actually have as many police as we did four years ago, and Mr O'Donohue has made that statement.

If the academy is full, it is because a lot of protective services officers (PSOs) are also undergoing a similar type of training through the academy. My view is, if that is the case, that the Andrews government should be looking at increasing the space or the facility — looking at an additional site — to provide that training to our police officers and PSOs, not just saying it is full. It must also be good. I will not go through all of the stats, but we know there has been a significant increase in crime and gang attacks throughout Victoria, and in most of the community's eyes it is out of control. That is why Ms Wooldridge noted that in her motion.

Regarding sentences and a bail system that do not meet community expectations, we see this every day. We know that many who engage in criminal activity and receive a punishment sometimes just get community correction orders or are incarcerated for a very minimal amount of time and invariably are back on the streets. Certainly when we talk to police, as I do through the Geelong court system, there has been a significant increase in repeat offenders. Obviously the sentencing and punishments are not deterring criminal activity, particularly for those that engage on a repeat basis, so we need to strengthen our bail system. That is why the coalition has invested in and committed to policies that present a greater deterrence for those that are considering a criminal act, and if they do, they know the punishment will be severe. We will try and reduce the number of repeat offenders that are coming through the system on an ongoing basis.

Regarding a youth justice system in crisis, we have said many times in this chamber, particularly in question time, where we have raised it with the respective minister, Minister Mikakos, that in fact the Andrews government does not have control within the youth justice system or even outside the youth justice system. There needs to be a significant change in the way we deal with our youth offenders, because whatever the Andrews government is doing at the moment it is not working. We need to change the system itself, as well as the way it is being managed.

Regarding rising electricity prices due to Labor's forced closure of Hazelwood, again Mr Gepp was in denial about this. But the fact is, if you take away 22 per cent of Victoria's baseload power by closing coal-fired power stations, you are going to impact on the continuity of electricity supply and also the price. We know wind and solar are very expensive forms of energy and also very intermittent and would never replace the reliability or even the cost-effectiveness of coal-fired power stations.

There is no doubt that that closure and the potential for other closures as well as the moratorium that the Labor government have on onshore gas exploration are having a significant impact on the price of electricity. Their 40 per cent renewables target is actually going to create a greater impost on electricity supply in the future and continue to increase the price of electricity. The cost of living and the cost of power are no doubt significant concerns in the community, and I get exposure to that experience when I go around doorknocking and talking to my constituents. Apart from crime the main concern is certainly the cost of living.

I will now talk about the increasing traffic congestion. We know it takes longer to get to our workplace and to our places of recreation. Traffic congestion is an issue even in Barwon Heads. In fact in the summertime you cannot move across the bridge to Ocean Grove. In relation to Barwon Heads Road, Labor have decided to plonk 60 000 people in Warralily and Armstrong Creek but have not provided any transport links to ferry those people back into Geelong or Melbourne's CBD. There is a lack of rail connection, there is a lack of road connection and there is a lack of ongoing investment in infrastructure to be able to move people around safely and with some degree of timeliness to get people to places of work or places of recreation.

There was the \$1.3 billion bill for not building the east-west link. I think the error of judgement for the Labor Party and the Premier was that he actually said it was not going to cost a cent to the Victorian people to tear up the contract. The fact is that was an outright lie, whether he did it purposely or actually had bad advice — I will give him the benefit of the doubt — but nevertheless it was not a truth. In fact we know it cost \$1.4 billion and that cost is rising.

There was the betrayal of 60 000 Country Fire Authority (CFA) volunteers and their communities. There is no doubt the proposal to shift CFA volunteers out of integrated stations and to extend the reach and boundaries of the Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB) and the union influence of the United Firefighters Union into the MFB is aimed at really neutering the CFA's responsibilities in outer metropolitan and rural areas. They will be virtually pushed out to areas like Nhill and those more remote and rural outposts, and they will not have any real significant impact on firefighting in the suburbs. The trouble with this of course is that most major fires in regional and rural Victoria require CFA volunteers to provide that significant firefighting base. The professional career-based firefighters only number, I think, 1200, whereas we have potentially 40 000 active CFA volunteers on tap to be able to provide that backup. Sadly with the disillusionment of many of our

CFA brigades there will not be that capacity to take on any large fires in rural or remote areas. Unfortunately the Labor Party through the Andrews government has tried to break the spirit of that volunteerism in our firefighting force.

There are six ministers and six Labor members whose actions are under police investigation. We have covered rorting many times in this chamber. There is no doubt that the Ombudsman's report, the Privileges Committee report, the minority report and the current investigation by the police fraud squad are all actually indicators that there is something wrong here.

Mr Dalidakis interjected.

Mr RAMSAY — There is something smelling here, Mr Dalidakis, and regardless of the outcome of any of those investigations, the fact is you bent the rules. You bent the rules, and there is a price to be paid.

Mr Dalidakis — I know a couple of people that broke the rules — not in this chamber.

Mr RAMSAY — That is true; some have broken the rules and some have bent the rules, maybe wittingly or unwittingly. Nevertheless they have to face the consequences, and there will be consequences regardless of the outcomes of the police investigation, which I think is the only current one now. It was a very poor process, admittedly conducted and managed by John Lenders, who is no longer here, but nevertheless his actions will have significant impacts for the current members who are in the Assembly and this chamber.

There were 74 cancer beds axed at a cost of \$100 million and a broken education system. Mr Gepp carried on about cuts in TAFE. We actually increased TAFE funding by \$1.2 billion and also provided career courses that would give some skills base for jobs that are currently in the marketplace. It is no good providing tertiary education and training for students in industries where there are no jobs available. You actually need to link the two together.

Sporting organisations and community clubs were forced to take out loans with the cuts in sporting ground funding. This 50-50 arrangement is not working in country sporting clubs where the clubs actually have to put up half the money. They should be provided with the funds, no strings attached.

On the injecting room, well, the jury is out on that. I have yet to see any evidence. Ms Patten might say otherwise.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Ms Patten) — Thank you, Mr Ramsay.

Mr RAMSAY — I knew Ms Patten would cut me off. The moment I mentioned injecting rooms, I knew she was going to cut me off.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Ms Patten) — I am terribly sorry, Mr Ramsay, but your time has expired.

Dr RATNAM (Northern Metropolitan) (16:05) — I rise to contribute to this motion. I cannot help but reflect on what a contrast it is to go from a debate in this chamber on an actual bill, as we had after the lunch break on the bill proposed by my colleague Ms Sam Dunn, to debating an actual political stunt. It was quite extraordinary to hear others in this chamber call a debate on a bill a stunt. I just want to remind them that this is actually what a stunt is. Nevertheless I rise to make a contribution to this debate.

I am not going to join the Liberals in their ridiculous and over-the-top condemnation of the Andrews government. Yes, we have an election around the corner, but that does not mean we cannot acknowledge when a government has actually done some good things. It is important to give credit where credit is due, and I would like to begin by talking about a few of these matters.

Mr Finn interjected.

Dr RATNAM — I would say to those on the opposite side of the chamber that you might not be used to this. You might not be used to an actual positive and visionary politic, but I would encourage you to just quieten down and listen because you might learn a few things.

Let us first talk about the Royal Commission into Family Violence. It was a significant and important moment for our state and our community. The government must be congratulated for its action in calling the royal commission and in accepting the recommendations in its report and providing significant amounts of funding to support the addressing of family violence. Ending the scourge of family violence is surely a matter that we can all agree on, on all sides of this chamber. Furthermore, when a Labor government adopts and implements longstanding Greens policies we celebrate the benefits for the community.

When it comes to the climate, after a long and passionate community campaign supported by the Greens, Victoria now has its own renewable energy target to encourage the building of renewable energy, and fracking is banned across Victoria. Furthermore,

we have seen the oldest and most polluting power station in Australia finally close its doors. These are positive initiatives that go some way to addressing the crisis of climate change. They are not enough, but they are better than the climate-change-denying policies coming out of Canberra at the moment. Even the recent announcement on rooftop solar is remarkably similar to the policy the Greens took to the 2014 election. My predecessor, Greg Barber, spoke many, many times about the need for a scheme to help households get rooftop solar. Although, as my colleague Ellen Sandell, the member for Melbourne in the other place, has pointed out, renters and low-income people are left behind by the government in this policy announcement. But they are not left behind by the Greens, because our policy will assist renters to access solar and to put solar panels on public housing and public schools.

Other policies that the Greens have championed that have come to fruition in this Parliament include the safe injecting room. We are so pleased that the government finally found the courage to establish the first safe injecting room in Melbourne. Again, this was after a long campaign by the community, which was hurting from the ravages of drug use. Finally there is an evidence-based, health-focused drug response in Victoria. It is long overdue.

Let us talk about political donations reform. Finally we can start the process of ridding our politics of the corrupting influence of corporate money. Despite the government just a year ago denying the need for political donations reform in Victoria, we now have strict limits on donations to political parties and a more robust reporting regime. As I said at the time, the legislation is not perfect, but it is a significant step towards putting corporations back in their place and letting politics be redirected towards the interests of the community.

Then there is dying with dignity. The government facilitated a process to enable dying with dignity legislation to be drafted, debated and voted on, with the consequences that Victorians now have the right to die with dignity if they so choose. The Greens, and in particular my former colleague Colleen Hartland, championed dying with dignity laws for years, along with many in our community. This was an example of the Parliament enacting the will of the majority of the community on a difficult but important matter for all of us.

Let us talk about rental reforms. Hopefully sometime this week we will see the Residential Tenancies Amendment (Long-term Tenancy Agreements) Bill 2017 pass the Parliament. The Greens have

championed better rights for renters for years, only to see our attempts for reform voted down by the old parties. However, in the last moments of this Parliament we may see renters finally get the protections and rights they should have. We urge everyone here to support these overdue reforms.

With all of that, imagine what could be achieved with the Greens holding the balance of power? Not only would we hold the government to account, but so many more policies that look after people and protect the environment could be implemented.

That is not to say that the Labor government has not been a disappointment in other ways. We just saw that demonstrated in the debate on the important bill my colleague presented this afternoon. Yesterday I was present at a rally for redress for the stolen generations. It was heartbreaking to hear the stories of the stolen generations and the trauma they continue to live with. As my colleague Lidia Thorpe, the member for Northcote in the Assembly, noted at the rally, Victoria remains the only state without a redress scheme. It is now 21 years after the *Bringing Them Home* report. This is a disgrace. The fact that the government has started a treaty process does not and cannot excuse a lack of progress in providing redress for the stolen generations. This country refuses to come to terms with the past, and every act of neglect, of evasion and of not taking responsibility only adds to the trauma and hurt we continue to inflict on our First Nations people. While we absolutely welcome the beginning of the process of treaty, the government cannot keep selling off Crown land that will inevitably form part of treaty negotiations.

For this and so many more reasons they should not be logging our forests either. Not only are Labor continuing to log our magnificent native forests, but they bought a mill, so they are actually literally in the business of destroying the habitats of our native animals on the brink of extinction and putting the water catchment for Melbourne at risk. We cannot keep logging our waterways and our ecosystems. We cannot keep driving animals to extinction and bringing ecosystems to collapse. We cannot keep moving into our food bowls. This is a fundamental matter of the sustainability of this state.

Labor still sees the environment as something separate from people, something to throw some money at if enough pressure is applied, rather than understanding that we are a part of nature. We do not have anything if we do not have clean air, clean water and clean soil in which to grow our food. Protecting our forests, our rivers, our waterways and our native plants and animals

goes to the very core of caring for the state of Victoria and its people. How else can you explain Labor's opposition to a container deposit scheme, a scheme designed to remove plastic from the environment?

As we head towards the election we see Labor treating climate change as a box to tick to cover a particular voter base rather than the existential threat that it is. Being serious about addressing climate change means being serious about transitioning to 100 per cent renewable energy as fast as possible, and it means keeping coal in the ground. It also means not building massive, unnecessary, polluting toll roads. The West Gate tunnel and the north-east link are disastrous projects. The secret dodgy deals the Andrews government has done with Transurban show how much this government is in thrall to big business at the expense of our community. The Melbourne Metro project is very welcome, but the Labor government has shown it cannot be trusted, given its embrace of these terrible toll road projects.

What I cannot understand is how a Labor government is selling off public housing land when there are over 82 000 Victorians in urgent and dire need of safe, secure, affordable housing. They couch policies in terms of social inclusionary housing, but it is anything but. Right across this state they are selling our public housing land and our public parkland and pulling the wool over the community's eyes, and we will not let that happen.

What we have in the Andrews Labor government is the biggest privatisation since Jeff Kennett. They cannot look at a monopoly asset or service without flogging it off, despite all the evidence that privatisation is a bad deal for the community. Despite the experience of Victoria's out-of-control energy prices, its unreliable public transport and the mess of TAFE, and despite most social democratic parties around the world recognising the mistakes of the past, this Labor government cannot get enough of privatisation. There is nothing it will not do for a multinational corporation. It is even privatising our precious private spaces, including letting Apple into Federation Square. We Greens stand with the community when we say our state is not for sale.

One of the most disappointing aspects of this Labor government has been its embrace of the law and order agenda of the right. Building new jails is not something to be proud of; it is an admission of failure. Sitting here listening to Labor ministers boast about how many young people Labor have locked up makes me ill. This is a government that has sat by while division and hatred are sown in our communities under the guise of

a law and order agenda, because it too believes in that law and order agenda. It does not seem to care that its very own policies will end up hurting our First Nations people and our migrant communities.

In just the last couple of months in the Parliament we have seen three pieces of legislation brought on by the government for which only the Greens have stood up to the old parties and their simplistic and dangerous law and order agenda. Mandatory detention has been shown time and time again to lead to unjust outcomes, including the imprisonment of vulnerable people. The Greens were the only ones to oppose further increases in power under the guise of anti-terrorism. This was legislation that our multicultural communities were very wary of. Now we have anti-association organised crime laws extended to 14-year-olds, once again targeting and scapegoating our young people and our diverse communities.

The community is not made safe by these sorts of laws. Instead we lose our humanity, piece by piece, when we facilitate the targeting of our communities through such laws. That is what will happen. We will not be standing by and letting the coming election divide our community. We will not let you pit us against each other. We will not let you put your corporate friends first and your community and the environment last. It has been just under a year since I entered this Parliament —

Mr Dalidakis — And what a wonderful year it's been.

Dr RATNAM — It has been a wonderful year, and I have learned so much. Each one of us here occupies a privileged position, and with that comes great responsibility. People look to us for support and leadership, but sadly all too often what they see is cynical politicking and pointscoreing. We should all be looking for every opportunity to restore confidence and trust in our political system. Instead we hear the heckles and taunts. We hear them when we dare to speak about the critical issues that we are facing as a state, as a country, as a planet: climate change, poverty, inequality, human rights, caring for our environment —

Mr Dalidakis interjected.

Dr RATNAM — We hear the heckling and taunting, as has been very present throughout this debate. You tell us to toughen up. Well, how about you all grow up and act with the integrity and respect this place deserves? I do not think political life should be seen as a career. It is your life's work in this place, and what do you want your legacy and life work to be? Will

you watch and stand by as the planet burns, as you leave it uninhabitable for future generations? Will you let people continue to sleep on the streets because of homelessness? In one of the richest countries in the world, will you keep whipping up hysteria and fear and pitting people against each other, leaving our young people to stare at a bleak future for themselves, or will your legacy be one where you did everything you could to care for our environment and care for our future generations? Can you honestly say that you did everything you could to leave this place a better place than you inherited? Will you help us achieve a fair go for all, a safe and secure home for everyone, a community that each of us can connect to, a sense of belonging, justice for our First Nations and a safe and habitable climate for future generations to come?

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) (16:19) — I will just get my breath back after listening to Dr Ratnam. People wonder why the Greens are regarded as nutbags. Can I suggest that if anybody is wondering why the Greens are regarded as nutbags, they should have a read of Dr Ratnam's speech, because it started off as a sort of homage to their coalition partners in the Labor Party because we know that if things go the way that the Greens would like, they will be in a coalition government with the Labor Party come the end of November. But then the temperature changed and she turned on the Labor Party, and then she just turned on society generally. She turned on everybody, and we had just a rant from the extreme left of the Australian political spectrum.

I tell you what: if anybody wants to know why they should not vote for Labor or the Greens in November, they really should get hold of the speech that Dr Ratnam has just delivered. In fact I might actually letterbox it throughout the western suburbs. I think I will get a brochure made up and I will letterbox the key points, just pointing out some of the more outrageous pieces of ratbagery that we have heard in the chamber this afternoon.

Of course Dr Ratnam has got a very good reason for sucking up to the Labor Party. She knows what is coming. She wants her white car. That is what she wants. As Deputy Premier of this state she will get a white car and she will be —

Mr Morris interjected.

Mr FINN — A white Prius — she probably will get a white Prius, Mr Morris. God help us. So that is something we can all look forward to — not. Dear me, I was not quite prepared for that, I have to say. I will get back to the motion at hand.

When speaking to people in Victoria — it does not seem to matter where in Victoria, whether it be in the Western District, whether it be in Gippsland or whether it be in the western suburbs or in the leafy eastern suburbs — there are certain words that resonate when one talks about the Andrews government. 'Dodgy' — that is a word that resonates; that is a word that people very easily attribute to the Andrews government. 'Crooked' is another one that they use quite freely to describe the Andrews government. 'Untrustworthy' is another one, and they are spot on the money with that. And 'loathed' — they are not just talking about the government in this particular situation; they are actually talking about the Premier.

I do not think there has been a Premier in this state — and I say this advisedly, because we have had a few who have not necessarily ended their terms high in the popularity stakes — more loathed than the current one. You just have to get out and talk to people. If you want to participate in that well-known test, the pub test — and I know that there are few members who are very fond of holding the pub test — then get out and just stand at a bar anywhere and mention —

Mr Morris interjected.

Mr FINN — Yes, where is Sir Les? I mention the pub and he is gone. If members wish to participate in the pub test, all they need to do is front the main bar anywhere in this state, mention Daniel Andrews's name and see what happens. Watch all hell break loose as people let forth on what they think of the Premier of Victoria, and it will not be pretty, what they will say.

This motion by Ms Wooldridge is a very timely one, given that this is the second last sitting week of this particular Parliament, and Ms Wooldridge has outlined a number of areas of concern that I think most Victorians have. This is a comprehensive list of matters that the government — the Andrews Socialist Left government — has completely stuffed up and made a total mess of. I know the Greens might get upset here because they do not like us saying nasty things about their coalition colleagues, but I am afraid the truth demands that we go into some detail on this today.

The motion reads:

That this house notes that after four long years —

isn't that the truth —

Victoria is beset with problems caused by Premier Daniel Andrews and his Labor government and Victorians are now faced with —

- (1) the highest crimes against the person offence numbers in Victoria's history ...

One of the main issues that we have faced particularly in the western suburbs, despite what some might have said earlier today in the Parliament, is street crime, and particularly street crime by gangs. I do not remember a situation where homes were broken into while people were at home or where home invasions occurred at 5 or 6 o'clock in the morning when people were in bed and the next thing they knew half a dozen youths were running through the place, destroying the place, pinching things and indeed lifting the car from the garage. Unfortunately this is something that is not unusual, particularly in the western suburbs, although it is not unknown in other parts of Melbourne as well.

Unfortunately we still have a Premier who refuses to admit that there are gangs in Victoria. He still says and goes along with the Christine Nixon line, 'Don't mention the g-word'. He can refuse to mention the g-word as much as he likes, but the fact of the matter is that gangs do exist, they are dangerous and they are causing enormous damage. They are causing enormous fear to many, many people, particularly in the west of Melbourne.

I have spoken to many people over the past two or three years who have been terrorised or impacted in a deleterious way by these gangs. This is not a question of wanting to lock people up for the sake of locking them up. This is a question of protecting those who need protection. This is about protecting the community. This is about community safety. Unfortunately those opposite do not seem to care too much about that. As I said, they will not even admit that there is a problem, much less do anything about it. That is the sad fact of life.

Second on the list of grievances is:

- (2) sentences and a bail system that do not meet community expectations ...

That is the truth. I will tell you who is more annoyed than anybody else at the so-called legal system we have in this state: it is our frontline police. They are shattered by what is happening in our courts. They are going out there and catching a lot of these crims — when they are allowed by police command. When police command is not saying, 'Leave them alone, don't touch them', they will go out, they will do their jobs, they will catch these crims and they will get them into the courts. And what will happen? The more than likely Rob Hulls-appointed magistrate or judge will let them straight out.

As a result of that we have rampant crime on our streets, and a lot of these criminals think it is a great joke. They think it is sensational. They can go out and they can do whatever they like. They can steal, they can rob. They can just walk into shops and take whatever they want and walk out again, and if they get caught they know that the magistrate is their best friend and he or she will let them out and they will be able to walk out the door of the court to do it all over again. We have a real problem in this state. The only thing that will change this particular problem is the election of the Guy government on 24 November, and I say bring that on.

Then of course we have the youth justice system in crisis in Victoria. It is good to see Ms Mikakos in the chamber. She might show some interest in this matter because she has overseen this crisis. Let me say to Ms Mikakos: they still remember you down in Werribee. They have not forgotten you down in Werribee. Let me assure you there are still a good many people down in Werribee who are waiting with baseball bats, and not just to protect themselves from the gangs: they are waiting with baseball bats to belt the living suitcase out of this government come the next election because they remember when Ms Mikakos and Daniel Andrews tried to dump a youth detention centre on them in Werribee South, without any warning and without any consultation. They just announced it, and Uncle Fester — I mean Tim Pallas — was in on it as well. We know that after the outrage in the local community — where as I recall on one particularly cold and wet Tuesday evening some 7000 or 8000 people gathered in the centre of Werribee to protest against the Andrews government — they backed away. Mind you, if they had actually done the right thing to begin with they would not have had to back away. If they had actually done the consultation, which is not something that they are big on in any regard, they would not have had to back away at all.

Mr O'Donohue — Seven thousand people were there.

Mr FINN — Yes, 7000 to 8000 people. It was massive — absolutely packed. You could not move. It was just extraordinary on a cold and wet Tuesday night in the middle of Werribee. I have to say that was one of the highlights of my last four years in this place, speaking to a crowd like that, as I did with Ms Crozier that night in Werribee.

So we had the outrage in Werribee South. Then we have what Ms Mikakos has allowed to happen at Parkville, where the place has just been ripped to pieces. There is not much left. The only place that is left

is the dining hall, where the pizza and the Coke are consumed, as delivered by the Mikakos delivery service. And what a marvellous thing it is. They say at the Parkville youth detention centre that there is nothing quite like a Mikakos pizza. I tell you what, it's got the lot.

Ms Mikakos — On a point of order, Acting President, the member is actually misleading the house because he knows I actually got rid of the takeaway that Mary Wooldridge had —

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ramsay) — Thank you, Ms Mikakos. It is not a point of order.

Mr FINN — Thank you, Mr Acting President. Perhaps Ms Mikakos cooked them herself. Perhaps it was not takeaway; perhaps she cooked the pizzas herself. But as I pointed out at the time, we all know that if you give your kids Coke they will act up. Why would you do that? Sugar does that, and they were on the roof.

Malmsbury: we know you can just walk out of Malmsbury and you can go wherever you like. That is the way Ms Mikakos has overseen this appalling run in our youth justice system — just one of the worst ministers in the history of Victoria. I suppose we are almost blessed to be with her, aren't we? No, I didn't think so.

Sadly I am running out of time, but I would love to talk about the rising electricity prices and how the government forced the closure of Hazelwood. We remember when the minister, Ms D'Ambrosio, and the Premier said that it is not going to cost very much at all, but here we are a couple of years later and we have a 22 per cent increase. I suppose if you are on a ministerial salary, if you are on the Premier's salary, 22 per cent is not much. It is good for some, but the people of the western suburbs are copping it in the neck — not that Labor has ever worried about the people of the western suburbs. And they are doing it to us again.

I regret that I have run out of time, because I have got so much more to say. I could go for days on this. But what we can say without any hesitation at all is that this Andrews Socialist Left government has been an unmitigated disaster.

Ms SHING (Eastern Victoria) (16:34) — What we have seen from today's cavalcade of contributions is that those in the coalition are very, very good at recycling one thing, and that is tired, self-congratulatory puffed-up rhetoric. What we have seen is that week after week in this place Wednesday rocks around and it

is opposition business day and we get some form of motion that sits on either side of a spectrum of being either archly self-congratulatory or inflammatory almost to the point of self-combustion. We have seen speakers in this place, those opposite here today, become so enmeshed in the drama of their contributions that their arms have flailed and their bodies have been whipping around in some sort of frenzy of excitement, and there is nothing new in what they have to say at all.

What we have also seen from the contributions of those opposite today is the very reason people think so little of politicians. What we have seen today from those opposite is a constant reminder of 'Do as I say and not as I do', because when it comes to drafting motions like the 17-point document that appears at the front of the notice paper today, we note that the only thing to have been invited through the drafting of this motion is a response that indicates that in fact Victoria has overseen phenomenal growth across the board in the four years since we were elected in terms of population, infrastructure, programs and services and the delivery of improvements to the day-to-day experiences of people in our metropolitan areas, in our peri-urban areas, in our suburban areas and throughout regional Victoria.

What we have seen in the four years since we were elected is record investment across the board in making sure that planning has taken place to accommodate the 150 000 additional people who came to or were born in Victoria in the last year, to accommodate the 5-million mark that we have just hit and passed as far as population is concerned and to accommodate the start of the growth which will see 4 million extra people born in Victoria or come here between now and 2050.

What we have seen is unprecedented spending and investment, most importantly, in the things that enable Victorians to reach their full potential and to grow and to contribute in a meaningful and positive way to their own lives, to the lives of their family members and to the lives of the communities around them. We have seen a rate of infrastructure investment that has left that of former Premier Kennett and his ministers, and indeed probably his then adviser, now the Leader of the Opposition, in the shade eating dust.

We have seen a level of infrastructure planning and a level of investment that have led to in excess of 340 000 jobs. We have seen a drop in the unemployment rate to levels which those opposite could only hope to put in an aspirational document. We have seen investment in everything from road safety through to the schools that enable kids to have a meal before they start learning. We have doubled equity

funding for regional schools. We in fact made sure that regional Victoria received nearly double the amount across four budgets that it did under the former coalition in its entire term.

And yet those opposite, despite looking at substance and despite looking at what has been delivered and looking, as a prudent opposition might, to what might be improved or what might be contributed by way of meaningful development to policy, move motions like this time and time again, and it is a great shame. It is a great shame because those opposite could have put a skerrick of that time into coming up with policy ideas that continue to improve the lives of Victorians and improve the work in industry and in the business sector by making sure that infrastructure is built not just for now but for the future, but in fact they are unable to do that. They are unwilling to do that. They are dragged kicking and screaming to even any remote acceptance of an idea from someone other than their own quarters being a good one or having any merit, and that is the great shame of those opposite, because they have had a long time now to come up with ideas that make a difference and ideas that actually contribute. We do know that in addition to being very, very good at recycling their tired old lines they are very, very good at resting on their hands when in government and they are very, very lacking when it comes to developing ideas in opposition.

Throughout the four years of the Andrews Labor government we have seen the number of women on paid boards at a government level exceed 50 per cent because we introduced quotas. We have seen legislation introduced to protect some of our most vulnerable workers in labour hire and in casual work. We have seen, despite the kicking and screaming of those opposite, legislation drafted to provide portable long service leave to some of the most vulnerable workers in our communities. We have seen an ongoing commitment to providing better access for women — overwhelmingly women — who are victims and survivors of family violence to terms and conditions of employment that do not disadvantage them while they are in arguably their time of greatest need.

And what we have seen, despite what those opposite would claim, is that when it comes to investment in preventing crime and when it comes to investment in providing assistance and real and meaningful support for victims and survivors of crime, the Royal Commission into Family Violence, all of its recommendations and those 1776 pages are yet to be endorsed and supported by the coalition, which is yet to confirm that it will fund all of those recommendations in the event that it is elected in November. And we

know that family violence accounts for 19 per cent of the offences — or part of those offences — across the Victorian statute as far as the police are concerned. We know that, because that is the evidence given by Chief Commissioner of Police, Graham Ashton. We know that, because it is the evidence and the material that is provided time and time again by people in positions to do more about this. This is why \$1.9 billion has been invested in family violence in the response to the royal commission's recommendations. This is why \$1.9 billion in addition to that has been invested to provide 3135 additional police across the state. This is why we have family violence support workers. This is why we are providing assistance to people trying to navigate this extraordinarily difficult and challenging and often traumatic part of our justice system in an effort to access the support that will enable them to move on.

We have reformed the way in which people access support from government and government programs, and those opposite can make cheap lines that they recycle over and over again about how this government has not delivered. They can make cheap lines about everything from some correlation, or causation as they might stretch it to, that stems from the closure of Hazelwood — clearly proclaimed by Engie not to have actually had anything to do with policy settings — to our decision to provide parity as it relates to the levy. What we see here is a series of convenient lines from those opposite that amount to nothing.

We continue to act to provide people with options, including by way of the Victorian Energy Saver website, which has provided seven out of 10 Victorians with savings of upwards of \$200 per year on their electricity bills. We have provided options as far as our announcements for immediate access to solar rebates. We have provided jobs through decentralisation to people at government hubs around Victoria. We have provided opportunities for first home buyers and first home owners to move to regional Victoria, and we have cut stamp duty for those who need it most at times when they are looking to get into the property market. We have reduced stamp duty for small to medium businesses and for those businesses that are in a position to access what is now the lowest payroll tax in the nation.

What we have seen is action that makes a tangible difference to people who are living, working and doing business throughout Victoria. What we have seen is the capacity for government to work well with industry for the success of small to medium enterprise. What we have seen is the embracing of opportunities that exist for a state that is flourishing to investigate new

industries as they emerge. They may relate to technology, they may relate to the work of our tech schools or they may relate to telehealth, the work of our hospitals and our health services to provide better outreach and better in-home care. They may relate to assisting people who are addicted to alcohol and other drugs.

What we did see when those opposite were in government as far as residential rehabilitation facilities were concerned was an investment that included two additional residential rehabilitation beds over their four years in government. Just for any avoidance of doubt: that was half a bed for every year that they last occupied government. What we have seen under this government is effectively an investment that will take us to more than 400 beds over the state once our policy announcements have finished. That is an increase from around 228 to around 400. What we see is a comprehensive capacity to reach into the towns and the communities that desperately need assistance. When it comes to alcohol and other drugs, those opposite are very, very quick to condemn the work associated with progressive policy — policy that actually understands the problem —

Mrs Peulich — Marxism.

Ms SHING — I will take that up from Mrs Peulich. ‘Marxism’ is what she says. Families with parents, children or relatives who are struggling to detox and who can access in-home detox deserve that assistance. Mrs Peulich clearly was not listening, because under the former government it was half of one bed for every year that they were in government. Under our government we are up to 400 beds.

Mrs Peulich interjected.

Ms SHING — We hear a lot of yelling from those opposite. There is so much yelling from those opposite.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ramsay) — Order! Mrs Peulich, you are on the speakers list. Your opportunity will come.

Ms SHING — I think those opposite doth protest too much, because in opposition when you are in the Liberals and The Nationals coalition you do not actually have to deliver very much. In regional Victoria you can say that you cannot deliver because the Liberals control the money and the purse strings. That is probably why under the last government it was only around \$7 billion that was spent in regional Victoria, whereas under this government it has been in excess of \$13.4 billion. You can blame the coalition for the fact that everything gets spent in Melbourne, but it does not

even get spent on funding good ideas. What do we see from those opposite? They are too ashamed to actually talk about any of the ideas they have come up with because their ideas again amount to nothing. We have seen a sky road proposal that is all about creating elevated roads down here in Melbourne. We have seen a series of make-believe ideas and promises that in fact are not about creating a city of the future but are about lambasting and creating funny little videos that decry the work going into creating the Suburban Rail Loop.

What we have seen is those opposite saying in effect that because they do not like what we have done in providing free TAFE — in providing 30 courses free to people to gain the skills they need for industries and jobs in demand — they are going to gut it. They are going to cut it. What we see when those opposite have a position of authority and influence is that things are cut. What was cut under the former coalition government? To start off you had to cut the beds in half to provide half a residential rehabilitation bed every year for each year you were in office. In addition to that, \$66 million was cut out of V/Line. In addition to that, \$1 billion was cut out of TAFE. In addition to that, what we saw was that they closed schools, they consolidated benefits for their mates and they delivered nothing. If only those opposite were good enough to deliver the \$3.5 million for property developments as part of rezoning for those who actually need and deserve it most. Do you know what? Those opposite talk a big game, but what have they delivered? The answer is nothing.

Mr MORRIS (Western Victoria) (16:49) — I rise with great pleasure to support Ms Wooldridge’s motion that notes the four years that this government will have been in office come November this year and the damage they have done to our state. I thought Mr Finn had a big job following Dr Ratnam and her contribution, but after following Ms Shing’s delusional contribution I am aghast and lost for words. After listening to her contribution one might have been remiss in not recognising the fact that the Labor Party that Ms Shing is a member of is under investigation by Victoria Police for roting over \$380 000 of taxpayers money. Arrests have been made of those involved in this scam and they have been interviewed by police, and this is an ongoing investigation. Those opposite may indeed try to ignore this fact, but it is very real. Victoria Police are undertaking a very real and very significant investigation into the conduct of the ALP and their red shirts affair.

It is a significant matter to have not only candidates, as we have in Ballarat with Ms Michaela Settle, who is under investigation through this investigation, but also six ministers of the Crown embroiled in this massive

scam — this theft of taxpayers money — who the Premier refuses to stand down. We know that under Westminster tradition these ministers absolutely should be stepping aside from their roles and should not be performing the tasks that they are whilst they are embroiled in this police investigation. Not only do we know that there has been over \$380 000 of taxpayers money stolen, but we are not aware of the full extent, because ALP members in the other place refuse to involve themselves in the investigation. So one might say that that \$380 000 of taxpayers money that has been stolen is a very conservative estimation of the true amount of taxpayers moneys that have been stolen by the ALP.

It is not just theft of taxpayers money that this government is guilty of. They are also guilty of failing the first and most important role of any government, and that is to keep their community safe. We have seen massive increases in crime across Victoria. We have seen massive increases in home invasions, in carjackings, in types of crimes that were once unthought of in the state of Victoria that are now becoming commonplace. There are police car rammings, and I certainly acknowledge Mr O'Donohue for his introduction of a private members bill to address the very dangerous occurrence of police car rammings, that have skyrocketed under this government.

We know that not only has crime skyrocketed but the dealing with criminals has not been anywhere near in line with community expectation. We know that the bail system is broken. We know that there are people who are being released on bail after the most heinous crimes and, once again, committing acts of crime while they are on bail. We know that we need to fix this, and if we are elected in November this year we will certainly ensure that if at any time police oppose bail for an offender that offender will not be bailed and they will be remanded. I do feel for Victoria Police, who do an exceptional job under various circumstances, because we have criminals who time and time again are being released into the community and commit the crimes that they were initially arrested for. I cannot imagine how difficult it must be for police to be picking up the same offenders for the same crimes time and time again just because they are released due to the soft-on-crime policies of this government.

I do note that this government thinks that if they keep lying about the Hazelwood power station people will believe them. I have a very clear message for the government: the people of Victoria are not believing their lies. They recognise that it is due to the policy decisions of this government, particularly the tripling of the tax on coal, that Hazelwood was closed down. Once

Hazelwood closed down over 20 per cent of the energy generation in the state of Victoria was removed from the system. Of course once that happens we are going to see energy prices spike. What is the government's response to seeing significant increases in energy prices? They try and bribe the Victorian people by giving their money back to them and expect to be patted on the back. The people of Victoria are smarter than to be taken in by this Labor scheme. If the government wants to try to give the good people of Victoria's money back to them, what it should be doing is working to reduce energy bills rather than sending them to a website for them to do the work themselves.

We note that it was an ideological decision of this government to close Hazelwood. We will certainly see more of it if Labor and their coalition partner, the Greens, are successful at the November election. The thought of this is almost unbearable, but we know that if the Greens have the opportunity to form a coalition government with Labor they will certainly jump at the chance. Of course Labor is going to say before the election, 'No, we're not going to do it', and they are not going to do it — until they do. It is just like Daniel Andrews's view on heroin injecting rooms, which he did not support until he did, because of the Northcote by-election and the pressure that was placed on him there. We have a government and a Premier who think nothing of deceiving the people of Victoria, saying one thing before the election, giving a promise to every single Victorian not to increase taxes and charges, which of course we know the Premier has done well in excess of a dozen times since he has come to office. They are so brazen now they are not even trying to hide the new taxes they are introducing.

We note the significant waste and sovereign risk issues that this government has created for the state of Victoria by tearing up the contract for the east-west link. What type of irresponsible government tears up a contract for a vital piece of infrastructure that everyone knows that we need, and we need it now, not in 10 years time. What type of irresponsible government tears up a contract —

Mrs Peulich — One that is in cahoots with —

Mr MORRIS — With Transurban. Yes, there are some questions to be asked there, aren't there? It took \$1.3 billion to tear up a contract for the east-west link, a vitally important piece of infrastructure, just to appease Greens voters in Melbourne.

We note that for decades we have had bipartisan support of the Country Fire Authority (CFA), and for good reason, because the CFA do an amazing job

protecting our community. We are living in one of the most fire-prone places in the world, as Victoria is. We certainly well know in western Victoria after the St Patrick's Day bushfire that we rely on our CFA volunteers not only to save our properties but to save lives. That is certainly what CFA volunteers do every year. Certainly without our CFA volunteers there would have been lives lost during the St Patrick's Day fire.

So the government goes to war with the CFA because Peter Marshall, the secretary of the United Firefighters Union (UFU), wields some unknown power, phenomenal power, over Daniel Andrews and the decisions that he makes. I have said in the house before that Daniel Andrews is akin to being the king and Peter Marshall is the warlord who says, 'I'll let you stay king so long as you do what I tell you to do'. That is borne out more truly than ever through the actions of this government trying to ram through legislation that would have destroyed the CFA and handed phenomenal power to Peter Marshall, a character who already has far too much power in our fire services in the state of Victoria. This is why we have committed to a royal commission into the fire services to get to the bottom of what control Peter Marshall and the UFU have and to ensure that rather than just appeasing unions our fire services actually work to ensure that our community is kept safe.

Ms Shing in her contribution was also talking about beds in hospitals. What we know about beds in hospitals is that 74 cancer beds were axed by this ideological government at a cost of over \$100 million. We know that this government is more concerned with ideology than ensuring that cancer patients get the care they need. We know it is because of the ideological bent of this government that our health services are not being appropriately invested in. I note the concerns of the community around the funding of the Ballan hospital. What was the response from the Minister for Health? The minister said, 'It's got nothing to do with us. It's a private hospital'. No, it is a bush nursing hospital that deserves the support of the government to ensure they can do the important work that they do.

Business interrupted pursuant to standing orders.

STATEMENTS ON REPORTS AND PAPERS

Privileges Committee: matters relating to misuse of electorate office staffing entitlements

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) (17:00) — I am speaking on the Legislative Council Privileges Committee report tabled last month, *Inquiry into Matters Relating to the Misuse of Electorate Office*

Staffing Entitlements. I specifically want to address Ms Springle's minority report and to place on the record the disappointment at the Greens failing to stand up for accountability, transparency and honesty, something that their previous leader, Greg Barber, would not have tolerated. In fact I think he has been a real loss to this Parliament. His intellect, his integrity, his nous and his understanding of public views I think were on the money, and it is a shame that he has left the Parliament. I think he would have made a terrific contribution to this particular inquiry.

In relation to the substance of Ms Springle's report on behalf of the Greens, as deputy chair she says in the second paragraph about the red shirt rorts, which is basically theft:

... not only has this resulted in the exploitation of the 'grey areas' as per the 'red shirts scheme', but a profoundly inequitable system, which benefits some parties over others.

Well, grey areas — I am sorry; there is no such thing as a grey area. When you are talking about falsification of documents, when you are talking about signing forms for people who have never appeared at your office, when you are talking about people who are undertaking purely political duties on behalf of your political party but not on behalf of your community, there is no grey area. Those of us who have been around this Parliament know the rules and know what is acceptable and what is not. So to call this a grey area I think is amazingly misguided or perhaps politically convenient.

Then she goes on to talk about why this system needs urgent reform. I am sorry; whatever rules you have, they can always be cheated and rorted, because if you are a cheat and a rorter, that is what you do. It does not matter what the rules are.

She goes on to say:

The committee's endorsement of recommendation 1 of the Ombudsman's report is indeed welcome. However, while deemed by the committee to be outside the scope of the terms of reference ... Without systemic reform of this nature, the potential for similar exploitations of the rules remains a very real risk.

Unfortunately when you are in cahoots with the union movement and with big business and you are more focused on looking after your mates and putting in place rorts and scams in order to steal votes and derive benefits, and even, for example, what is going to happen tomorrow, when we are going to hear a debate in the lower house where the Premier, Daniel Andrews, is going to try to throw out Matthew Guy for the remainder of the sitting, this is not just about theft of money. This is about theft of democracy and the

democratic right of people to cast a vote, to do so honestly and, as I said, out of respect for our democratic institutions. This government — and Labor — has no respect for our democratic institutions.

We know what the rorts are, the red shirt rorts, and then the benefits which I have certainly made mention of many times over. There are a million and one rorts. If your memory is short, I am more than happy to provide you with my flyer.

Ms Springle goes on to talk about current pooling arrangements needing review. I am sorry; pooling arrangements are a very different proposition. Mr Jennings in his evidence to the Privileges Committee said it was an extension of the pooling arrangements. No, it was not. Pooling arrangements are pooling arrangements. Signing and falsifying documents for people who do not work in your electorate is cheating, rorting and breaking the rules. It does not matter what rules you have; if you are a rorter, you will rort.

She talks about how we need to establish a clear investigative capacity. Well, the Ombudsman actually does that. Members of Parliament are elected as a way of being representative but also accountable. Ms Springle talks about all of these other structures. I am sorry; as I said, nothing can make us immune from the rorts and lies of the Labor government.

Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Committee: external oversight of police corruption and misconduct in Victoria

Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria) (17:05) — My statement is on the very important *Inquiry into the External Oversight of Police Corruption and Misconduct in Victoria* report. I want to congratulate particularly the chair, Kim Wells, who navigated a quite sensitive inquiry into the role of police command dealing with complaints against police and also the potential misconduct of police as part of their internal investigations, the bulk of the cases usually conducted through police standards command.

There has been a lot of criticism from outside stakeholders about having police investigating themselves. Certainly in regional Victoria, where one-man stations or one-police-officer stations are under investigation by a regional police officer with some seniority, it was felt that those investigations may well be compromised because of the interrelationship of the senior officer with a serving police officer in a one-man station having had a complaint raised against them.

That aside, there were few cases that in fact IBAC dealt with in respect of investigations of police misconduct being referred to it. That raised concerns particularly from legal services but also from some others who are anonymous who wanted to raise their concerns about police through the standards command not fully investigating complaints of misconduct and serious misconduct through the system. Having said that, we do recognise that police play a critical role in society; preventing and combating crime, enforcing the law and protecting, assisting and engaging with the community in a whole lot of ways. The job of a police officer is a demanding one, and I do appreciate that. It is also done often in stressful and dangerous circumstances.

In 2016 the Independent Broad-based Anti-Corruption Commission Committee's *Strengthening Victoria's Key Anti-corruption Agencies?* report identified that there were a number of concerns among stakeholders about the impartiality and effectiveness of the current police complaint-handling and oversight system in Victoria. I have mentioned that.

We did go across to Northern Ireland to look at what they call PONI, the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland, which is a specific investigative body with a police ombudsman looking at complaints against police. When we undertook this inquiry we carried out wideranging research into past Australian and international inquiries, we examined a range of best practice models across the world, in fact, and the principles that were applied, and sought and received extensive evidence on the strengths and weaknesses of the present Victorian system.

The committee's research and evidence received during this inquiry demonstrate that the complaints and police oversight system needs significant improvement. The committee therefore made 69 recommendations to improve the transparency, impartiality, effectiveness and efficiency of the system. In particular the committee considers that IBAC needs to give greater priority to its functions of handling, investigating and overseeing complaints about police. For example, IBAC investigates only about 2 per cent of the allegations it determines warrant investigation, referring the rest back to Victoria Police, including a range of serious police misconduct matters. This has raised considerable concern within the community. Further, the committee has recommended that unless there are exceptional circumstances IBAC rather than Victoria Police should investigate serious police misconduct. In order to assist IBAC in carrying out these important functions, the committee has recommended the conferral of selected additional investigative and oversight powers on it.

The recommendations address the need for significant improvements in the complaints system. The committee made recommendations from a complainant-centred perspective to improve the public information about the complaints system. We see a need for IBAC to play a stronger role within the complaints system but also recognise the importance of Victoria Police continuing to play its distinctive part in taking responsibility for addressing misconduct. The committee has also been struck by the strength and diversity of contending views amongst stakeholders. We do appreciate the effort of many people who fronted the committee.

In finishing, I want to congratulate the committee and the secretariat. There is a very big volume of work here — 69 recommendations — and we look forward to the government's response to this report.

Privileges Committee: matters relating to misuse of electorate office staffing entitlements

Ms BATH (Eastern Victoria) (17:10) — I would like to make some comments in relation to the report tabled in August on the inquiry into matters relating to the misuse of electorate office staffing entitlements. I will be brief. Even though there is much to say, I think that much of it has been said before. But I want to just reflect on some of the issues that brought us to the point where this inquiry needed to be undertaken in the first place, some of the flaws in relation to the committee's ability to investigate the matter and then also the minority report.

This report has come out in effect because back in 2014, under the mastermind, Mr Lenders, the then opposition, now Labor government, and 21 members of Parliament —

Mr Davis interjected.

Ms BATH — You are correct. I take up your interjection, Mr Davis. There may well be far more. Twenty-one have been identified by the Ombudsman, and in fact six of those members of Parliament who are now ministers in this place were found to have misused and misappropriated taxpayers electorate office funds. Those funds are there to be used to support our work as MPs, to work through our constituent issues, to run our offices, to answer our phones and to meet our obligations. But what this group of people — and there may have been more, Mr Davis — chose to do was sign off on papers that enabled the red shirts, another group of campaigners solely for the Labor Party, to be paid. Did they know them? No, they did not. Did they know where they went? Maybe, but maybe they did not. They

chose to sign off on a matter that was clearly not the work of an electorate officer in their office.

Indeed as life evolved, the red shirts rorts became apparent and the Ombudsman, Deborah Glass, an outstanding human being who conducts her jurisdictional work to the letter of her requirements and does so with expediency but also with a huge level of professionalism, was asked by members of this place to investigate, and she did. But what did the Attorney-General do? He chose to put up not one, not two but three court appeals to have her silenced and to not have the matter addressed. The sum involved is around \$1 million, but it could be far, far greater than that. With respect to the Ombudsman's report she found, and I quote:

... the arrangement to employ field organisers as electorate officers was an artifice to secure partial payment for the campaign out of parliamentary funds, and was wrong.

We go forward and this house sought to have a proper and complete select committee investigation of the matter. What did Labor and the Greens do? They shut down the fact that there should have been a fulsome and complete review of the situation. The only way forward that the Greens would commit to was to have a Privileges Committee inquiry. Unfortunately the terms of reference for this committee in no way enabled that committee to investigate this to a thorough degree.

I turn to the minority report. I thank the Honourable Mary Wooldridge, Gordon Rich-Phillips and Luke O'Sullivan for their work on that committee and commend the minority report to this house and the key fact that this minority report identified, which we all know because it has been widely publicised. The Victoria Police fraud and extortion squad is now investigating these people who still sit in our Parliament, who still operate out of our Parliament, and have had a huge increase in their income because of it —

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Purcell) — Thank you, Ms Bath.

Department of Treasury and Finance: budget papers 2018–19

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) (17:15) — Today I want to talk about the state budget, and in particular the public transport output. What we have seen is that targets set in the state budget for our country rail have not been met again. Performance has been terrible in Gippsland, which I will come to in a moment. I watched question time in the lower house today and I saw Emma Kealy, the member for Lowan,

refer to the case of a woman who is a regular commuter on the line from Ballarat. Ms Kealy pointed to the fact that she had received 273 messages via SMS in recent periods on train delays. It is good that there is an SMS service. Fifteen of the messages in a day covered problems with track faults, signal faults, congestion and other numerous failings and breakdowns. The truth of the matter is that this is a case study in how the performance of V/Line has fallen. It has declined seriously.

Our country rail services are relied on by country communities. If you look at the punctuality across our services, it has declined to 85.9 per cent in the most recent July figures. It was at well over 90 per cent when the coalition was in government in its last set of figures in November 2014. But if you look for example at the Ararat and Maryborough lines you see they were on 98.2 per cent under the coalition and have fallen to 83.1 per cent; and Bairnsdale, from 86.4 per cent under the coalition to 49.3 per cent. It is an absolutely hopeless performance by Daniel Andrews and his Minister for Public Transport, Jacinta Allan.

In Ballarat punctuality has fallen from 92.3 per cent to 85.9 per cent; in Bendigo, from 95 per cent to 85 per cent, and that is a very poor performance; in the case of Gippsland, as was pointed out by Ms Bath, it has fallen from 82 per cent to 74.4 per cent; in Shepparton, from 94.3 per cent to 84.8 per cent; and in Warrnambool, from 90.6 per cent to 81.8 per cent.

If you look at cancellations statewide, they have increased from 36 in November 2014 to 283 in the period of July 2018. On the Ballarat line the number of cancellations has gone from seven to 63, and that is what Ms Kealy's constituent was pointing to. I know that Louise Staley, the member for Ripon in the Assembly, has also been complaining about and has had complaints made to her by commuters who are unhappy with the performance of V/Line, and they have every right to be unhappy. On the Bendigo line the cancellations have risen from six in November 2014 to 48, and on the Geelong line from nine to 97 in the most recent period, July 2018. On the Gippsland line cancellations have risen from zero under the coalition in its last period to 20 in July 2018; Seymour, from four to 24; Shepparton, from two to five; and on the Warrnambool line from zero cancellations to eight cancellations. It is very clear that statewide punctuality is down on V/Line and the cancellation rate has risen from 0.6 per cent under the coalition to 3.3 per cent.

People expect clean, reliable, safe railway performance. In country Victoria our community is incredibly dependent on the ability to move on the trains. I say that

under this government the performance has fallen very badly. People have every right to be very angry. Jacinta Allan appears to have her head in the sand on this matter. She appears to be very unconcerned that people from Warrnambool, Ballarat, Bendigo and up into the north-east and down to the state's south-east too are not getting the performance that is required.

I say this is a clear measure of Daniel Andrews's failure. This is a city-centric government. It is a government that does not care about country Victoria. It is a government that has turned its back on country government, and nothing typifies this more than the V/Line fall in performance. People say, 'Well, there's more people', and yes, there are. But having said that, the government could at least run the services as well as they were run in November 2014. That would be a very simple, moderate and modest benchmark, but Daniel Andrews and his government have failed on V/Line and failed very badly.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms TIERNEY (Minister for Training and Skills) — I move:

That the house do now adjourn.

Taxi registration

Ms LOVELL (Northern Victoria) (17:21) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Public Transport, and it relates to the current unacceptable delays experienced by Victoria's taxi operators in transferring their taxi registration when they purchase a new vehicle. The action that I seek is that the minister, as a matter of urgency, review the current procedures of Commercial Passenger Vehicles Victoria regarding the transfer of registration to new taxi vehicles to eliminate the delays currently experienced by taxi operators, which are negatively impacting on the income and financial viability of these important small business operators.

Since being in office the Andrews Labor government has introduced legislation that has decimated the taxi industry. Deregulation of the industry saw the worth of highly valued taxi licences drop to virtually nothing. Many taxi operators have been left with large debts after borrowing large amounts of money to purchase licences that are now virtually worthless. Operators have lost life savings, and many have had to postpone retirement because of industry changes forced upon them by deregulation. Every taxi operator is also a small business owner, and the actions of the Andrews

Labor government are yet another attack on small business in Victoria.

The creation of a new regulating body, Commercial Passenger Vehicles Victoria, means that taxi operators are now faced with draconian procedures that are affecting their businesses. I was recently contacted by a constituent, a long-time taxi operator from Shepparton, who had purchased a new car and wanted to transfer the taxi numberplates from his old taxi to his new car. Previously this entire process could be completed in one day, ensuring the vehicle was not off the road and the business was not affected. Commercial Passenger Vehicles Victoria has informed my constituent that this process will now take between three and five days. This needless delay will mean my constituent is forced to shut down his business for up to five days, and he estimates a loss of income of approximately \$3000 during this time. He has also already lost so much because of this government's treatment of the taxi industry and the negative impact that has had on the value of his licence.

The action I seek from the minister is that as a matter of urgency she review the current procedures of Commercial Passenger Vehicles Victoria regarding the transfer of registration to new taxi vehicles to eliminate the delays currently experienced by taxi operators, which are negatively impacting on the income and financial viability of these important small business operators.

Assisted reproductive programs

Ms PATTEN (Northern Metropolitan) (17:24) — My adjournment matter today is for the Minister for Health, and the action I seek is a review of the requirements under the Assisted Reproductive Treatment Act 2008. Under this act all patients that are accessing assisted reproductive programs, or IVF, are required to undertake a Victorian criminal police record check prior. They are also required to fill in police form 820B, 'Consent to check and release national police record'. They then have to fill in another form applying for a child protection order check, and if they are from overseas, they have to then go back to their native country and apply for a police check in that country.

Now, as many of us are well aware, the process of IVF is quite a roller-coaster for many people, and many people do not have a lot of time. This process takes up considerable time that many couples seeking IVF just do not have the luxury of. Of course no-one requires a police check to conceive naturally, so this application process really is discriminatory. It implies that

somehow people seeking IVF are criminals or cannot be trusted. I certainly think this is very misguided.

I could not find any reasoning for this requirement when this was raised by a constituent. I did find that the Victorian Law Reform Commission back in 2007 said that we certainly do not want any violent sex offenders from accessing IVF, and I fully agree. We could certainly work out a way that people on the sex offender list did not qualify for IVF. But to say that anyone seeking IVF must undertake a police check I think is really based on prejudice. I think it is clearly misguided, and there is no basis in evidence for this. There are the normal preconditions: financial stability and functional relationships. People who are seeking IVF do so because they very, very, very much want a child, and this is different quite often from people who conceive naturally. Melbourne IVF and many others do not support these requirements. So the action I seek from the minister is: could she review this policy position and see if we can work out a fairer framework for those couples that are actively seeking to bring a child into their family?

Sunbury car parking

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) (17:27) — I wish to raise an adjournment matter this evening for the attention of the Minister for Local Government. It concerns the issue of car parking in Sunbury and the role, firstly, of Bulla council, which has since left us, and now Hume City Council. As I have gone around with Cassandra Marr, the next member in the Assembly electorate of Sunbury, speaking to a number of people in the Sunbury township, it has become very, very clear and it has certainly been reinforced in my mind that the major issue in the CBD of Sunbury is parking. The opposition leader has been to Sunbury and made an announcement on contributing \$1 million to finding a resolution to that, and that is a very, very good thing indeed.

The point that I make is that it seems to me that there is somewhat of a fraud being perpetrated here. According to a document called *Sunbury Town Centre Database: Edition 2 — December 2011* from Hume City Council, a separate rate number 1 was commended by the Shire of Bulla in 1976–77 to in fact build a multilevel car park in Sunbury itself, and that separate rate was imposed on traders in Sunbury and continued for many years. The Hume council had the money — indeed it purchased the land for the car park — and quite extraordinarily it did not build the car park but in fact leased the land back to VicTrack, so it is winning both ways. Hume council has the levy money from the traders, and it is also receiving money from VicTrack.

This stinks, to say the very least. This is a fraud that has been perpetrated on the traders of Sunbury. The council is committing an outrage, in my view, against the people that it is supposed to be providing for and representing.

I am asking the minister to conduct an inquiry into this particular incident to establish the facts as to how much the levy raised and when and what the council's attitude is to that now. This seems to me to be an outrageous scam that the Hume council is perpetrating, and I am asking the minister to conduct an inquiry with a view to ensuring that the Hume council actually does the right thing by the traders and the people of Sunbury and provides that much-needed car parking.

Environmental water

Ms DUNN (Eastern Metropolitan) (17:30) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Water. On Thursday, 23 August, the Minister for Water, Lisa Neville, put out a bizarre media release. It said the minister had written to the commonwealth minister, David Littleproud, urging him to look at ways the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder can sell off environmental water allocations. Minister Neville then went on the *ABC Country Hour* radio show and took credit for the release of 20 gegalitres of water by the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder.

Yet things quickly went south for the minister during that interview. She was forced to admit that 20 gegalitres was a mere 1 per cent of the allocation for irrigation in the Goulburn-Murray water region. The minister then admitted it was only a tenth of the inflows to water storages in the Goulburn-Murray that past week. The minister finally admitted that there was no way of ensuring that this water would actually get to the dairy farmers and graziers that require water. Indeed with prices expected to be between \$300 and \$400 per litre, it is likely they would be outbid by almond and citrus growers downstream.

If the ABC reporter had a chance to dig further, he would have found that the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder had been planning a sale of environmental water in the Murray-Goulburn for months. Furthermore, he would have found out that the reason the environmental water was sold was that it could not be used because of the spurious constraints to overbank flows in what are naturally flood plains. Meanwhile, river red gum forests in the Gunbower, Barmah and Murray-Sunset national parks and the Nyah-Vinifera state park are water stressed. Old gum trees are surrounded by young saplings and thistles that would normally be culled by overbank watering.

Traditional owners have a strong connection to country and are saddened to see the further decline of these river red gum forests.

The Minister for Water has abused her ministerial position to politically interfere in a statutory authority and its management of environmental water holdings. These holdings could be used to save our riparian ecosystems and the communities that depend on them. It is irresponsible of the minister to push for the sale of environmental water when there is a high risk that Victoria is entering a drought. We may need that water to keep our river red gum forests on life support; for the minister to celebrate its sale is sickening. The action I seek is that the minister desist from politically influencing the use of environmental water, stop undermining the Murray-Darling Basin plan and work to save Victoria's riparian ecosystems.

The PRESIDENT — Is this the state minister?

Ms DUNN — Yes, it is the state minister.

The PRESIDENT — Can you just explain to me what the action is?

Ms DUNN — We are asking that the minister desist from political influence of a statutory authority on the use of environmental water and, in that, stop undermining the Murray-Darling Basin plan and work to save Victoria's riparian ecosystems.

The PRESIDENT — That is not an action. Can you rephrase it into an action?

Ms DUNN — The action I seek is that the minister desist from the reallocation of environmental water, as it undermines the Murray-Darling Basin plan and has great impact on Victoria's riparian ecosystems.

Rural financial counsellors

Ms BATH (Eastern Victoria) (17:34) — My adjournment matter this evening is for the Minister for Agriculture, the Honourable Jaala Pulford in this place. I would like to put on record that I thank the minister on behalf of our shadow Minister for Agriculture, the Honourable Peter Walsh, who asked for a briefing on the state of play in terms of the drought and dry conditions in regional Victoria, and the minister facilitated a briefing for country Liberals and Nationals last sitting week, which was most helpful.

What that briefing told us is something that many of us particularly in Gippsland and East Gippsland know — that we are experiencing incredibly dry conditions and drought conditions up in the eastern and central part of

the state and that the Rural Financial Counselling Service is a really important service for on-farm communication and on-farm support for farmers who are really struggling to pay their bills and feed their stock. These are very important services. In actual fact there are 50 new cases over these last few months that have requested assistance from the Rural Financial Counselling Service, and there is a huge need for additional counsellors in that Central Gippsland and East Gippsland region.

The action I seek from the minister is to fast-track additional counsellors so that they can do the work that they need to do. In speaking with some of the farmers in that area and also the counsellors I have learned that there is now an up to three-week wait from requesting services to actually getting them — three weeks when there is a severe shortage of funds, where people are under pressure and where stock feed is low. It is really important that farmers be able to engage with all the services that financial counselling can provide. In truth, this is not around just finances. Counsellors often sit at the kitchen table and act as a conduit for other services, whether they be mental health services or other health services. It is a very important outcome.

Again, I know that it is jointly funded between state and federal governments, so it is very, very important that the minister fast-track these financial counsellors into regional Victoria so that they can do that work really well and support our farming community, who are the backbone of our rural community and who provide our food bowl and ensure that our food security is there. They need that support.

West Gate tunnel project

Ms TRUONG (Western Metropolitan) (17:37) — My adjournment matter today is for the Minister for Public Transport. If you live in Wyndham Vale in Melbourne's outer west, getting to work can be a real headache. The trains are often full before they get to your station, and by the time you get to the station car park the situation could be the same. After five years of roadworks you will be able to take the West Gate tunnel, but 10 years after it opens it will be at capacity in the morning peak. If you do not want to pay the toll, you can stick with the West Gate Bridge, but by then the commute over the bridge will be even slower than it is today. It does not help that the toll road will have swallowed up one of the untolled lanes through the ring-road interchange. The West Gate tunnel is not a solution for the people in the outer west because, as Infrastructure Victoria pointed out, every time we build a new major road in Melbourne it becomes congested, again and again and again.

Our communities want real solutions, so we Greens have looked into and developed a transport master plan for the west. We now know that so much more than polluting private toll roads is possible for the western suburbs. We know we could have more frequent and direct buses so people can get to the station without having to deal with overflowing car parks. Our suburbs could enjoy metro services for metro passengers instead of leaving people in the suburbs of the outer west to catch V/Line trains to work.

We support Melbourne Metro 2, which links Wyndham Vale to the Werribee line and quadruples the line's capacity. We could be running more trains, not just at peak hour but seven days a week so that all you would have to do is turn up to a station without a timetable and know you will never have to wait long.

It is great to see the vision the government has shown in the Suburban Rail Loop proposal, but we know that to address today's congestion problems we need to work hard to improve services now. It is also important that any proposed vision or projects occur within an integrated transport plan for Victoria, a plan that is required by law but has been missing for years. It is only through proper network planning across modes that we will get people moving across our city, suburbs and regions in ways that harmonise with efficient, connected, climate-safe freight and commuter transport systems.

I ask the minister to commit to a series of real transport solutions for the people of the outer west and cancel the West Gate tunnel toll road project.

The PRESIDENT — I am satisfied with the action, but I must point out that members need to be careful about set-piece speeches, and I would suggest that that one, given the content, was very much a set piece speech that had an action tacked on the end. The action was fine. Obviously the adjournment debate in the remarks that lead up to the action are about context and the reason for something. The reason was subsumed there by Greens policy. I make this remark tonight because obviously, with only a few days of this Parliament to go, it is likely that others may also try a similar tactic.

Housing affordability

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) (17:40) — The matter that I wish to raise is, I think, for the Minister for Planning, although it could also be for the Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing. I would say it may be for the Minister for Planning. It is to do with housing —

Mr Dalidakis — You've been a member for a while.

Mrs PEULICH — Well, unfortunately housing is covered by three portfolios — public housing, planning and Treasury. My concern is as we approach the state election, many of us are hitting the pavements, knocking on doors, talking to people on phones, and crime, congestion, cost of living and corruption are the sorts of issues that people are raising with us. But one issue that is consistently raised with me is housing affordability. The concern is about the cost of housing in the private sector, especially for those who do not have a foot in the market, often because there is not quite the diversity of housing that people need —

Mr Davis — Bring on 290 000 lots.

Mrs PEULICH — We are going to bring on a substantial number of lots in order to improve the housing affordability — 290 000 lots, I am advised. In addition to that, there are issues with public housing and homelessness and affordable housing. There are lots and lots of terms and labels. The government is merging its public housing and its affordable housing lists. It is badly mismanaged. There is also a chronic shortage of housing for single persons and in particular cheap options such as bedsitters and one-bedroom apartments. The reason is that the private sector does not typically invest in those areas because there is not sufficient capital growth in order to justify the investment. For some weird reason there is not enough investment in that particular option in the public sector either.

So I am asking the minister to review our aversion to small accommodation, including bedsitters and single-bedroom apartments, for an increasing number of people who live on their own, because if you actually place a single person in a two-bedroom apartment or even in a five-bedroom home, which happens because people enjoy this lifetime tenure in public housing, there is a mismatch in need and available housing stock and we end up seeing more and more people sleeping in their cars in car parks and on the side of the road, because they actually cannot get a foothold into emergency housing, transitional housing or more affordable housing in the private sector.

I call on the minister to look to see how we can break down this aversion to affordable housing in the private sector and the public sector, because one impacts on the other. Typically speaking we tend to look at these things in segregation. I think that is why we have a problem.

V/Line services

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) (17:43) — My matter tonight is for the attention of the Minister for Public Transport in the other place. It concerns V/Line performance and serious rumours that abound amongst the public transport community. There is a concern that the government is returning to a 2016 plan to dump and run passengers — that is, to short-run the V/Line trains, particularly on the Gippsland line at Pakenham, forcing people to change and move onto the metropolitan system.

I am also concerned at the rumours I have heard that in the Warrnambool corridor the government has a proposal to dump and run in the area of Geelong, or Waurn Ponds. Warrnambool passengers will be forced to change onto trains that are obviously intended to go to Melbourne from there. Instead they are coalescing them onto V/Locity trains. In the case of Pakenham I am informed there is an advance plan. In fact I have been given a date of February. The government intends to implement this in February if it is successful in its re-election.

There is also a concern that the Seymour and Shepparton lines may face the same fate, with a change introduced at Craigieburn to enable the movement of people. I hasten to add that the coalition is totally and utterly opposed to this mechanism. Clearly the government has a problem with the performance of V/Line: declining punctuality; increasing cancellations, which I have detailed in other places; and a decline in performance over three years under this government.

Well, I say that the solution is not to cut short the country lines and force people to transfer and to bring in this dump-and-run policy. Ms Bath, I know you are aware of this. I know Danny O'Brien in the Assembly is aware of it. A number are very concerned about it. Roma Britnell and Richard Riordan in the Assembly are very concerned about the impact on people in the south-west of a policy where a change is forced at either Waurn Ponds or Geelong in that case.

The action I seek from the minister is an absolute commitment, a public statement, ruling out any proposal to dump and run — any proposal either in the Gippsland corridor, in the south-west or in the north to introduce this longstanding desire of certain members of the bureaucracy to dump and run passengers.

Responses

Mr DALIDAKIS (Minister for Trade and Investment) (17:46) — This evening we have had adjournment matters from Ms Lovell to the Minister for Public Transport, asking the minister to review transfers to new taxi vehicles; from Ms Patten to the Minister for Health, asking for the minister to review police check policies for couples seeking IVF; to the Minister for Local Government from Mr Finn in relation to an inquiry into Hume City Council over Sunbury car parking; to the Minister for Water from Ms Dunn, asking her to desist from allocating water in the Murray-Darling Basin; and from Ms Bath to the Minister for Agriculture, asking the minister to fast-track additional counselling services and counsellors.

We had one from Ms Truong to the Minister for Public Transport, asking to cancel the West Gate tunnel project. President, with your indulgence, allow me to dispense with that adjournment matter. The government will not be cancelling the West Gate tunnel project. It is one that we are committed to and we have stated we are committed to on many, many occasions. I feel no need to pass that on to the Minister for Public Transport, given the amount of times that this house has dealt with revocation motions for the planning of the West Gate tunnel. I think I am on safe ground to say that we are not going to cancel the West Gate tunnel.

There were also adjournment matters to the Minister for Planning from Mrs Peulich, asking the minister to review small accommodation guidelines, and finally from Mr Davis. President, I seek your guidance because, whilst ultimately Mr Davis did indeed finally get to an action item, it was predicated on rumours, and I am not sure that we work off the basis that rumours deliver an outcome. Nonetheless, the action that he sought is a commitment from the minister to not changing services for V/Line passengers. But again, given that that was predicated on rumour, President, I seek your guidance and advice as to whether or not that is an appropriate adjournment matter.

In the meantime, President, before you rule, I do have a written response to an adjournment debate matter raised by Dr Carling-Jenkins on 26 July 2018.

The PRESIDENT — I am happy to accept the dispensing of the matter raised by Ms Truong.

I am not in a position to actually know the veracity of issues that are raised in this place and the sources that members might have of information that they seek to obtain responses on. I can only hope that in fact there is

not a situation of an erection of a straw man, particularly in the context of the forthcoming election, to raise concerns if there is not some substance to the matter. I have to accept that Mr Davis has provided that information on the basis of some verifiable information that he has.

The house stands adjourned.

House adjourned 5.50 p.m.

