

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

FIFTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

Wednesday, 7 March 2018

(Extract from book 3)

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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)

| | |
|---|------------------------------|
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| 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 |
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| 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 — Ms Mikakos, Mr O’Sullivan, Ms Pulford, Mr Purcell, Mr Rich-Phillips 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, 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 Elasmr, Mr Melhem, #Mr Purcell, #Mr Ramsay, #Dr Ratnam, Ms Shing, #Ms Symes, Ms Truong and Mr Young.

Standing Committee on Legal and Social Issues — #Ms Crozier, #Mr Elasmr, Ms Fitzherbert, Mr Morris, Mr Mulino, Ms Patten, Mrs Peulich, #Dr Ratnam, #Mr Rich-Phillips, 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 Elasmr 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*): Mr Gepp and Ms Patten. (*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

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Deputy President:

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The Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS

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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 | AC | 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, Luke Bartholomew ⁹ | Northern Victoria | Nats |
| Dalla-Riva, Mr Richard Alex Gordon | Eastern Metropolitan | LP | Patten, Ms Fiona ¹⁰ | Northern Metropolitan | RV |
| 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 |
| Elasmr, 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 ⁷ | Western Metropolitan | Greens | Somyurek, Mr Adem | South Eastern Metropolitan | ALP |
| Herbert, Mr Steven Ralph ⁶ | 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

⁴ Resigned 27 May 2016

⁵ Appointed 7 June 2017

⁶ Resigned 6 April 2017

⁷ Resigned 9 February 2018

⁸ Resigned 25 February 2015

⁹ Appointed 12 October 2016

¹⁰ ASP until 16 January 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; Greens — Australian Greens;
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, 7 March 2018

The PRESIDENT (Hon. B. N. Atkinson) took the chair at 9.34 a.m. and read the prayer.

PETITIONS

Following petition presented to house:

Box Hill development

To the Legislative Council of Victoria:

The petition of the residents of the City of Whitehorse draws to the attention of the Legislative Council of Victoria that there has been rampant development in central Box Hill without a comprehensive and thorough development plan involving substantial community input. This development affects not only people who live and work in the immediate area but has implications for those residing in surrounding areas.

The petitioners request that the Legislative Council of Victoria call on the Minister for Planning to place a moratorium on development in central Box Hill until a thorough and comprehensive development plan for the area can be established to protect against inappropriate development and ensure the needs of the community will be properly met.

The plan must have substantial input from the community and encompass building design, height limits, setbacks, landscaping, public spaces, transport, parking and traffic management.

**By Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan)
(3548 signatures).**

Laid on table.

NOTICES OF MOTION

Notices of motion given.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS

Young farmer scholarships

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Agriculture) (09:49) — I am very pleased to rise and inform the house about the latest initiative in our government's commitment to help young people follow their dreams in agriculture. We believe that every young person should have the opportunity and support they need to reach their full potential. That is why we are backing our dedicated young farmers through the Young Farmers Scholarship program.

I would like to inform the house that applications are now open for round four of the Upskill and Invest — Young Farmers Scholarship program. Up to \$10 000 is

available to farmers and farm workers aged 35 years or under to help them with professional development and career progression. The funding consists of up to \$5000 for study, backed by a further \$5000 to invest on-farm or in professional development activities to help put their new skills into practice. The scholarships are now into their fourth year, and over the course of the program 38 young farmers working across a variety of sectors from horticulture to dairy have been awarded scholarships, which have funded study in areas such as farming, business management, research and technology. It is part of a promise we made to young farmers before the last election, and I am very pleased to report that we are getting it done and providing these opportunities for young people who are interested in a career in our prosperous and wonderful agricultural sector.

Since the launch of the program in 2015 the Victorian government's young farmers scholarships have helped a diverse range of young farmers to grow their careers by upskilling, implementing new on-farm initiatives and boosting their professional networks. The Young Farmers Scholarship Program is helping to equip the next generation of young farmers with the connections and the business skills they need to survive and thrive in a competitive global market. Applications for the program open today and close on 24 April. To find out more visit www.vic.gov.au/youngfarmers.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Just before I call the next minister for a ministers statement I would like to remind members that tonight after statements on reports we will have the inaugural speech of Ms Truong as a new member of the house. That will probably be at around the 5.30 p.m. to 5.45 p.m. time frame.

Supported playgroup program

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Early Childhood Education) (09:51) — I rise to inform the house of how the Andrews Labor government is informing parents across Victoria to gain skills and confidence with their children.

Last week I was pleased to visit a supported playgroup in Dallas together with the local member for Broadmeadows in the Assembly, Frank McGuire, to announce a \$22.1 million statewide expansion of supported playgroups. We know how important playgroups are to both parents and children. They provide a space for children to learn through play and help parents make stronger connections with other parents and their community. This is especially important in the first years of a child's life.

Supported playgroups are convened by a trained facilitator who can provide specialist advice as well as referrals to additional services if needed. Currently supported playgroups operate in less than half of Victoria's local government areas, but this expansion means they will now be available across the entire state. This expansion will add approximately 750 new supported playgroups and will mean an additional 6000 families will be able to participate in a supported playgroup each year. Families in areas like Banyule, Greater Bendigo, Macedon Ranges, Nillumbik, Yarra, Moonee Valley and Melbourne, just to name a few, will benefit from new supported playgroups being established in their local communities. All local government areas that currently run supported playgroups will receive a boost to support the employment of staff with appropriate skills and experience.

Like any skill, parenting can be learned and improved, which is why having access to the right support and information is so important. We want all parents to feel confident in their parenting skills and able to use these skills to create a positive environment. This initiative forms part of our landmark \$202.1 million investment in the Education State *Early Childhood Reform Plan*.

Post Sentence Authority

Ms TIERNEY (Minister for Corrections) (09:53) — I rise to inform the house that the new Post Sentence Authority, charged with overseeing many of Victoria's most serious criminals, has officially started work. The independent authority with its inaugural chair, Judge Ian Gray, will assume the role that the Adult Parole Board of Victoria (APB) played previously, but expanded, to ensure the community is kept safe.

The Andrews Labor government is strengthening the state's management of serious offenders through the Harper reforms. With the new Post Sentence Authority officially starting work last week the Andrews Labor government has now implemented 24 of the 35 recommendations made by Justice Harper. We will soon expand the scheme to include serious violent offenders, in line with Justice Harper's recommendations, when we bring the final tranche of legislation to the house later this year.

These reforms are underpinned by \$390 million of additional funding over successive budgets to implement every recommendation of the Harper review. This includes the building of two new secure facilities that will house serious sex and violent offenders subject to post-sentence orders. These are crucial changes that will keep Victorians safe, and the

new authority will have additional powers to manage serious sexual and violent offenders. The commitment this government has made to the implementation of all of Justice Harper's 35 recommendations highlights its dedication to comprehensive and evidence-based policy.

I take this opportunity to wish Judge Gray all the best in his chairing of the new authority. It is very difficult but ultimately very important work that will significantly assist in the ongoing safety of Victoria. I also take this opportunity to thank His Honour Peter Couzens, chair of the Adult Parole Board of Victoria, and other members of the APB board, who have discharged their responsibilities admirably.

Engage!

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Youth Affairs) (09:55) — In another portfolio capacity, I rise to update the house about the Andrews Labor government's continued support for youth engagement and to congratulate the successful grant recipients in the latest round of Engage! funding. I was recently really pleased to announce that more than \$12.3 million will be provided to 107 local government and community organisations over the next three years to support local projects that help young people to actively participate in and connect with their local communities.

In January I was fortunate to visit successful Engage! grant recipients in Frankston. Together with the local member for Frankston in the Assembly, Paul Edbrooke, I announced \$265 000 in funding for two Engage! programs in his local community, including Frankston City Council's Youth Involved program to support young people with health and wellbeing literacy, local decision-making, career and education planning opportunities and avenues for job skills development, and also the SalvoCare Eastern youth services' Tools for the Trade program, which is a trade orientation program for young people.

The very next day I was pleased to join Sharon Knight, the member for Wendouree in the Assembly, and Geoff Howard, the member for Buninyong in the Assembly — both local members in Ballarat — to announce \$435 000 over the next three years for four programs across Wendouree, Buninyong and Ripon. This includes funding for Arts Access Victoria to run Nexus for young people with a disability, young deaf people and those who experience mental illness to engage in the arts; funding for Yeramun Toort-baram, an Aboriginal empowerment program; funding for the City of Ballarat to run Umm: In Action!, a program for young people to be actively engaged, valued and

respected citizens; and funding for Big Brothers Big Sisters — Engage! Ballarat program to facilitate meaningful mentoring relationships for young people.

A number of other great programs have been funded. All these programs have been funded because we believe every young person should have the opportunities and support they need to reach their full potential, including those who face disadvantage. I congratulate all the successful grant recipients.

Cohuna Neighbourhood House

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Regional Development) (09:57) — I am pleased to rise to inform the house about our government's commitment to the town of Cohuna in the Shire of Gannawarra and particularly the government's support for the work of the Cohuna Neighbourhood House. The Andrews government will provide a \$20 000 grant to the Cohuna Neighbourhood House to run a number of initiatives that promote social inclusion and community development.

The Cohuna Neighbourhood House, which is an organisation largely run by volunteers, is contributing \$2000, with a further \$2000 raised by the local community. The \$24 000 investment will go a long way with five distinct initiatives that promote social inclusion, local history, housing needs, local activities and access to neighbourhood house events. The Cohuna Neighbourhood House will develop a database so that the club can promote and coordinate its important community events more effectively, expand its range of activities and support older, less mobile residents to attend events through better coordination of the bus service.

The grant will also help the publication of the region's rich history, as documented by William Blandowski, a scientist who studied the biodiversity of the Gannawarra region. Another project will see the development of a platform to connect small rural communities and showcase examples of best practice in community development. There will also be funding to investigate housing needs within the Cohuna community and to explore the potential to use the Rupanyup community enterprise housing model as a solution.

Members who visit any regional Victorian town will find strong and active community groups like the Cohuna Neighbourhood House. The Andrews Labor government is pleased to announce this grant today and to be providing some assistance to Cohuna, a wonderful

place for people to live, to work and to be active and engaged members of the community.

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

United States trade mission

Dr RATNAM (Northern Metropolitan) (09:59) — Recently Premier Daniel Andrews proudly announced his return from a trade mission to the US. What were the sectors he was trying to court on his visit? The trade in arms, in misery and in war and the coal and gas multinationals leading us into climate change disaster.

Media reports stated that the meetings held in Washington were with Lockheed Martin and Northrop Grumman, the biggest global arms manufacturers and profiteers from the devastation of war; ConocoPhillips, a large oil and gas company currently involved in coal seam gas fracking in Queensland and interested in the disputed area off East Timor; and the global coal giant Peabody Energy, which sold 20 million tons of coal from its Australian operations last year as global temperatures soar from fossil fuel-burning-induced climate change. We also see the Labor government buying advertisements in the *Age* to spruik projects supporting the manufacture of armoured tanks by global giant and arms dealer BAE Systems.

There is a synergy here — climate change will be the driver of global conflict into the future — but really should Victoria be helping global corporations profiteer from the misery of the world? At a time when we should be investing in peace and disarmament and rapidly moving away from the use of fossil fuels, Victorians will be disappointed to learn that their Premier is trying to make Victoria the arms capital of Australia. With thousands of jobs waiting for investments in the renewable energy industry, in public transport, in building affordable housing, in the science and research sector, in education and in health, how devastating is it that our Premier seems more interested in investing in war than a more peaceful future for all of us?

Malka Leifer

Mr DALIDAKIS (Minister for Trade and Investment) (10:01) — The fight for justice continues for the alleged victims of Malka Leifer, the former principal of the Adass Israel School in my electorate, who fled Australia exactly 10 years ago. For the vast majority of those 10 years she has lived her life freely in the midst of a prolonged extradition process. Finally she is being held in custody facing allegations of misleading the court through feigning mental illness.

I think it is worth recognising how far we have come. Only last June, when I met with Michal Biran, a visiting member of Israel's Parliament, I raised this issue, as I have done with every Israeli official and politician I have met since my appointment, including the Israeli Attorney-General; Tzachi Hanegbi; Merav Michaeli; Hilik Bar, the Deputy Speaker of the Knesset; countless deputy foreign officials; Israeli ambassadors here; and Australian ambassadors there — in fact anybody that would listen. Upon Michal's return to Israel she informed me how little was known about the case in Israel and how she was even having difficulty finding someone to brief her on it. That was only nine months ago. I commend Michal's unwavering advocacy and her determination to not just apply diplomatic pressure but also engage with the Israeli community as well. She has become a trusted ally to Dassi Erlich, a survivor of Leifer's abuse and one of the most courageous and determined victim advocates we have met.

Only a year ago this story was barely known outside Australia. It has been through the quest for justice led by a handful of people, particularly these two extraordinary women, that this case is now making international headlines. To Dassi and her sisters I say that, whatever happens, know that your pursuit is shared by all of us. We will not rest until you get the justice that you deserve, because every child, no matter their age, religion or postcode, deserves to have a life free from the cruelty and pain that was inflicted upon you.

Federal infrastructure funding

Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria) (10:03) — I am not surprised that some people are completely confused about federal government funding to Victoria. The Premier, Daniel Andrews, would be very chuffed about it. He is the one creating the confusion and muddying the waters. He would be delighted if you thought Victoria was missing out. But the reality is that the state is sitting on billions of dollars from the Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull. The Premier simply needs to start using them.

In April 2016 Daniel Andrews received \$3 billion for 48 transport infrastructure projects across the state. Only three have been completed. They were fully funded by the Prime Minister and cost less than \$200 000. Daniel Andrews keeps telling Victorians that the state only gets 9.4 per cent of the commonwealth's infrastructure funding. In fact the figure is closer to 20 per cent. Last week's federal purchase of Victoria's share of the Snowy Hydro scheme delivered yet another \$2 billion. Worse still, the Premier is failing

even his own promises. He pledged 10 per cent of the \$9.72 billion sale of the lease of the port of Melbourne to new regional transport infrastructure projects. But \$288 million of that \$972 million promised to regional Victoria has been spent on 'periodic maintenance'. Periodic maintenance does not equate to new regional transport projects.

Mr Andrews excels in stunts to attract financial attention from Canberra. His Labor colleagues love his circus and probably find it very funny. But for regional Victorians the joke is not quite so comical. In the country the question is not about how many lanes they need, lane widening and about how many tunnels need digging; it is about whether a road is safe to drive on at all. Some are washed away; some of them are worn away. People are dying. The train system similarly needs attention. Some are sardine services so cramped they become stifling hazards in the heat. That is why only last week Matthew Guy announced \$633 million to ensure that regional trains for places like Warrnambool, Shepparton and Swan Hill are modernised.

SPC Ardmona

Mr GEPP (Northern Victoria) (10:04) — Last week I covered plenty of kilometres in my electorate, and I was lucky enough to help SPC celebrate their 100th anniversary. The fact that we were even celebrating this auspicious milestone is due to a happier time when there was unanimity about regional jobs in this place. Whilst the federal coalition were prepared to let SPC die — just like the motor vehicle industry in this country — the state coalition did step in, with Dr Napthine, the then Premier, supported by Labor. I was talking to a senior manager last week who said, 'We couldn't have done it without the AMWU. The contribution the union made to our plant was significant'. However those days appear to be no more, with the state coalition now teaming up with the Greens to block 400 jobs in the proposed Benalla precast concrete factory.

You go to the website of the Assembly Leader of The Nationals and member for Murray Plains and the first thing you see is a quote about how he supports practical measures to promote growth in local jobs. Then he sends Mr O'Sullivan and Ms Bath into this place to vote to stop local jobs. Well, you could not get any more practical than dropping the silly parliamentary shenanigans the coalition and the Greens are playing with around the West Gate tunnel. But wherever I went in the electorate last week one thing was for sure: I did not have one single person approach me and say it was a good idea for the National Party or the coalition to

cost north-eastern Victoria 400 jobs. We will see later today if The Nationals continue to say one thing in the electorate and do something else in Spring Street or if they come to their senses.

International Women's Day

Mr GEPP — Finally, I note that it is International Women's Day on Thursday. I pay my respects to all the wonderful women who are the backbone of so many of our regional communities.

Duck hunting season

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan)
(10:06) — The majority of the Victorian community is dismayed that yet another duck shooting season will go ahead, with the approval of the government, beginning on 17 March and running to the long weekend in June. Eighty-seven per cent of Victorians are opposed to duck shooting, including in regional Victoria, as seen by the formation of Regional Victorians Opposed to Duck Shooting, who have been making great inroads and getting a lot of support amongst regional Victorians to end duck shooting.

Victorians are appalled that this barbaric activity is allowed to continue in spite of massacres of ducks in the past few years. The 2016 season should have been cancelled due to extreme drought and desperately low water levels, together with a high incidence of blue-green algae in many of the lakes. Similarly the 2017 season should have been cancelled due to the lowest number of birds ever recorded and many game bird species with low numbers by order of magnitude, which I raised in the Parliament last year. Also the Game Management Authority was warned of the presence of protected birds on the Kerang wetlands, but still those wetlands were not closed and we saw the massacre of birds.

This season should also be cancelled due to drought, high temperatures forecast — as we can see this week — few wetland habitats, low numbers of birds and the fact that they are not breeding. Shooting is clearly unable to be monitored or controlled, yet sadly the season will go ahead despite overwhelming evidence that it should not.

Multicultural communities

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan)
(10:08) — I wish to congratulate the various community and multicultural organisations who put in a lot of work in the organisation of festivals and events such as the very popular Lunar New Year, which has

just finished. Many of us attended many functions sharing in the celebrations, as well as the Holi Festival, which was celebrated by our Indian community last weekend. I want to congratulate the Shri Shiva Vishnu Temple in Carrum Downs and Australian Indian Innovations Incorporated for their wonderful festivals, as well as local community festivals, including the one organised by the Lynbrook Residents Association.

I also wanted to express concern and dismay at this government's cynical and divisive approach to multicultural affairs becoming blatantly partisan.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mrs PEULICH — It is becoming blatantly partisan. In the Indian community we have seen a level of politicisation that has been unheard of, but no Indian precinct has been delivered as yet. Collection and recruitment from the Indian community is rife. We have seen the African communities still contending with their challenges, but the Labor Party succeeded in launching a friends of Labor in African communities group. We have seen the Victorian Multicultural Commission nobbled to the extent where it is no longer a statutory authority. Even their logo, in many instances, is removed from events. But we do see government MPs inviting recipients of multicultural grants to their fundraisers so they can cash in, get kickbacks and squeeze money out of people who are being used and exploited for political benefit.

International Women's Day

Ms TIERNEY (Minister for Training and Skills)
(10:10) — I recognise that tomorrow is International Women's Day and use this opportunity to congratulate the women in my electorate on their outstanding achievements, past and present, and note the positive encouragement of this government's policies in encouraging the community participation of our women.

Local government is one of the areas where the gender gap is narrowing, although there needs to be a lot more work. In 2016, elections in 23 of the 24 councils chose women in nearly 36 per cent of positions. Right now in western Victoria there are 11 women serving as mayor, up from eight last year. They are leading many rural communities and regional towns. In Geelong, the 24th council, which elected councillors in 2017 after a period with administrators, a very important role was played by WILD, Women in Local Democracy, in mentoring and training women who considered standing as candidates. This government is pleased to support the leadership offered by WILD. This sort of

leadership by women of women will lead to greater gender equality. One of WILD's leaders, Jenny Wills, inducted onto the Victorian Honour Roll of Women in 2008, continues to provide an example of strong women in our contemporary community. Jenny's citation notes her role in pioneering social planning in local government and sustainable communities. It reads:

Jenny Wills has pushed the boundaries for change in local government and the community to make services more accessible for women and increasing opportunities for women's participation.

More than 60 inspirational women with links to western Victoria have been inducted onto the Victorian Honour Roll for Women, initiated by the Bracks Labor government. These women were born in, lived in or worked in western Victoria in fields as broad as farming, Indigenous and disability advocacy, science and community service administration. I value all of their contributions and wish them the very best for International Women's Day tomorrow.

Markham Avenue, Ashburton, redevelopment

Ms FITZHERBERT (Southern Metropolitan) (10:12) — On Saturday I was really pleased to attend with Mr Davis a community rally on the Markham estate. Ms Pennicuik was also there. The Ashburton Residents Action Group has been a driver for this issue locally. They represent the fury that locals feel in relation to the government's plans for the site and their 'My way or the highway' approach to this development.

The original development had 62 social housing units and 120 private units, and of the 62 units there were fewer bedrooms in total, by a long way, than there were previously. So it is actually a reduction in what was previously there, and that is why people do not like it. Also the six levels that were proposed are wildly out of kilter with the level of density surrounding it. The new plan is really only a slight tweak that has been done with no consultation with the local community, who indeed mentioned a number of times how angry they were to have never had a response from the Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing despite their various approaches.

Recently the inquiry that has been going on into the public housing renewal program got some updated figures on the public housing waiting list. The figure that is used by the government is usually 35 000; it is actually 37 000 — that was confirmed — so it has gone up significantly. That is the number of applications, not the number of people. The paltry number of new

housing units that are proposed, which is actually a reduction on the previous stock, is a drop in the bucket to address this need that has blown out on this government's watch.

Special Olympics

Ms SHING (Eastern Victoria) (10:13) — I rise today to congratulate two gold medallists from the Special Olympics who, as residents of the Latrobe Valley, took home gold on the weekend of 24 and 25 February in Canberra. To Sarah and to her brother Craig, congratulations and our very, very best wishes. The community is absolutely delighted to celebrate your achievements and all of the pride that you have brought to the local community.

Eastern Victoria Region schools

Ms SHING — It was wonderful to welcome the Minister for Education back to Gippsland and to actually do some calculations as we turned a sod at Warragul Regional College and celebrated the commencement of planning for a Colman Foundation partnership for a feed-in kinder and community education facility at Morwell Central Primary School, as well as looking at increases and improvements to education. Tallying that up, this government has spent, compared to the previous government's investment of \$1 million across the Legislative Assembly seats of Morwell and Narracan, \$65 million in education in the three years that it has been in government. This is a really significant achievement, and we are very proud to support these growing communities.

Gippsland Tech School

Ms SHING — It has been absolutely wonderful to see the work that continues on the ground to develop new and emerging jobs and energy and advanced manufacturing initiatives, including through the tech school, which will begin operations when its construction is finished in March. I look forward to seeing all that we can produce with the bright, innovative and energetic contribution of our young people as they embrace the future of industries and all of the opportunities that they present for the growing Latrobe Valley.

Community safety

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS (South Eastern Metropolitan) (10:15) — Since Parliament last sat the crime wave has continued to roll on through the south-east. On Saturday, 24 February, in Frankston a 29-year-old man was bashed unconscious when he tried

to defend a woman who was being abused in the car park of a McDonald's. In Dandenong a 19-year-old man at the skate park was attacked by a thug brandishing a knuckleduster who stole his wallet. On Monday, 26 February, in Keysborough a 49-year-old man was bludgeoned in the head with a hammer as he slept next to his wife by three thugs in balaclavas who invaded his home at 2.00 a.m.

On Tuesday, 27 February, in Mentone an 88-year-old man was the victim of a home invasion at 6.00 a.m. On the same day at Dandenong Plaza a group of thugs were throwing shopping trolleys off the roof onto cars below, undeterred by the fact that they were only one block from the police station and the Dandenong Magistrates Court. In Skye on the same day three men with their faces covered invaded a home. A man who was sleeping there confronted the trio and sustained injuries before they escaped.

On Wednesday, 28 February, in Cranbourne West a group of thugs with shotguns ambushed a man as he arrived home and stole his motorbike. On Friday, 2 March, in Mulgrave two men armed with firearms robbed Vegas Waverley Gardens at around 6.30 p.m. in the afternoon and escaped with an unknown amount of cash. Patrons chased the offenders, shots were fired and a man was taken to hospital with head injuries.

Daniel Andrews has weakened our bail laws, he has reduced police powers and he has undermined our courts, and Victorian families continue to be the victims.

Waste management

Mr MELHEM (Western Metropolitan) (10:17) — I rise to speak on the release of my public consultation report regarding waste-to-energy technology in Melbourne's west, which was commissioned by the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, the Honourable Lily D'Ambrosio. Victoria has a serious waste storage problem, with around one-third of Victoria's waste ending up in landfill. My local community has made it clear to me that we must start looking at alternatives to landfill to avoid this unsustainable build-up. This recent report shows broad support for the concept of a waste-to-energy plant being established in Melbourne's west.

These findings came from two community consultations held in my electorate of Western Metropolitan Region late last year. There was also input from local government and industry stakeholders. The report highlights the desire for a shared burden of waste management. The recent approval of new landfill

airspace for the Melbourne Regional Landfill Ravenhall site has caused communities in my electorate to believe too much responsibility is being levelled on the western suburbs.

Waste to energy presents an exciting alternative. While the technology associated is still slightly underdeveloped, the benefits around environmental sustainability and renewable energy creation make it worth pursuing. This could go a long way to alleviating the livability concerns of the expanding suburban areas around Melbourne, especially in the west.

I commend Minister D'Ambrosio for her effort in this space, and I am looking forward to the response to my report and also the discussion paper which she launched last year. I am looking forward to the outcome of that discussion paper and the policy going forward to make sure landfall in Victoria will be a thing of the past.

Rochester police resources

Ms LOVELL (Northern Victoria) (10:18) — On 30 November 2017 on behalf of a constituent I directed an adjournment matter to the Minister for Police regarding the poor police service delivery in small regional communities in my electorate, in particular the lack of genuine police presence in Rochester. My constituent stated that police at Rochester rarely worked afternoon shifts, meaning there is generally no police presence in the town after 5.00 pm. In her response, the minister provided factually incorrect information, stating the Rochester station received regular night shift patrols by the Kyabram night shift divisional van. Kyabram police station is a 16-hour station that does not perform night shift patrols. In future the Minister for Police should ensure her answers are factually correct, particularly when answering a constituent's genuine inquiry.

Mr Gepp

Ms LOVELL — It is always amusing to me when members of the Andrews Labor government publicly take credit for the achievements of previous coalition governments. Only last week when speaking at a public function in Shepparton our colleague from across the chamber Mr Gepp, attempted to rewrite history by claiming his government had delivered funding that was delivered by the Napthine government. Thankfully Mr Gepp's slip of the tongue was in front of an informed crowd who knew he was talking utter rubbish, and many of those present made negative comments about his attempt to take credit for something that was funded long before the last state election.

Mr Gepp is from Melbourne and obviously does not understand that regional communities are engaged and informed when it comes to projects in their cities. Although it was good to hear Mr Gepp acknowledge in Parliament this morning that the funding came from the Napthine government, in future he should undertake some research to improve the accuracy of his public statements rather than making a fool of himself.

PLANNING SCHEME AMENDMENT GC65

Debate resumed from 21 February; motion of Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan):

That, in relation to amendment GC65 to the Brimbank, Hobsons Bay, Maribyrnong, Melbourne, Port of Melbourne and Wyndham planning schemes which facilitates the delivery of the West Gate tunnel project, this house —

- (1) notes planning scheme amendment GC65 was gazetted on 7 December 2017;
- (2) notes section 38(1) of the Planning and Environment Act 1987 requires the Minister for Planning to cause a notice of the approval of every amendment to be laid before each house of the Parliament within 10 sitting days after it is approved; and
- (3) contingent on any tabling of the amendment, and pursuant to section 38(2) of the Planning and Environment Act 1987, revokes amendment GC65.

Ms SHING (Eastern Victoria) (10:20) — As I was saying when I was on my feet before the commencement of question time in the last sitting week, this is a project that makes sense and it is a project that is fundamentally needed. It is a project that will deliver the amenity, the infrastructure and the forward planning that a growing city like Melbourne so desperately needs. What we have seen in the meantime, though, is several stakeholder groups come out publicly yet again — and these are people from the base of the Liberal and National parties and from the Greens support base — and indicate that they desperately want this project to go ahead and that, amongst other things, the Victorian Parliament must not stop the West Gate tunnel project.

If you open up the *Herald Sun* at page 10 today, you will see another advertisement, which is underpinned by the Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and its CEO, Mark Stone, who today said again that this project needs to proceed. The Australian Logistics Council, G21, the Urban Development Institute of Australia, Infrastructure Partnerships Australia and the Victorian Transport Association are yet again putting their money where their mouth is in a full-page advertisement on page 10 of the *Herald Sun* imploring the coalition, from their own support base within the

coalition, to not hold up this project with their ridiculous parliamentary tactics that are not supported by those who support them.

What we have also seen is the Maribyrnong Truck Action Group and community organisations in the west come out very, very strongly in favour of this project proceeding on the basis that we simply cannot wait for the infrastructure improvements to take place that will take trucks off the road, will reduce the heavy vehicle traffic loads at peak periods in densely populated areas and will in fact contribute to better livability. As deputy chair of the Environment and Planning Committee I have heard evidence given to our inquiries in relation to planning and other matters over the course of this government around the respiratory challenges, around the social challenges and around the livability challenges presented by such large volumes of trucks on our roads in the west of the urban area. In this regard this is a project that not only will remove these trucks from the road and will improve the local amenity in a way that Greens supporters within the community are now clamouring to have explained to the party that is supposed to support them but will enable the city to continue to grow.

We see that those opposite lack the spine and lack the courage to be able to come into this place and stand up and say why it is that they are abandoning their base and why it is that they are abandoning planning. We see a speakers list that is all but empty of those opposite. We see three or four coalition speakers. We see The Nationals playing possum on this issue, when they are happy to spruik the efforts of their current opposition leader, Matthew Guy, to build sky roads in the middle of Melbourne using the Snowy Hydro funding and proceeds. Then what we see is the Greens abandoning all of their earlier rhetoric about the importance of taking trucks off our roads. This seems like an epic episode of parliamentary tactics that is wrapped up as a cheap cake-eating exercise. It has got to stop, because the city is growing and we need infrastructure and facilities to enable this to occur.

If those opposite are even vaguely serious about being some sort of alternative government in the lead-up to a state election, then they have got to stop playing these ridiculous games and start to act in the interest of the community in order to be able to have any credibility whatsoever when it comes to population growth, when it comes to the most livable city and when it comes to getting Canberra to actually cough up the infrastructure money that we so desperately need and are consistently being cheated of. What we see is a coalition that is sloppy, lazy and incapable of doing anything constructive as it relates to getting major infrastructure

projects to go ahead, and the Greens are equally to blame.

Mr ELASMAR (Northern Metropolitan) (10:25) — I rise to oppose this planning GC65 revocation motion. Simply put, we are an expanding population, and as a consequence of that fact we are planning our traffic management for the future. It makes sense to the motorists who are currently utilising the West Gate Bridge to drive into Melbourne. The whole point of the West Gate tunnel is to facilitate the efficient movement of motor vehicles and save travel time for many thousands of Victorians. We are building the West Gate tunnel because drivers in the west — and Mr Finn will understand this — and in Geelong and Ballarat desperately need an alternative to the West Gate Bridge.

It will create 6000 jobs, including jobs for 500 apprentices, trainees and graduates, and up to 150 jobs for former auto workers. It will take 28 000 vehicles and 8000 trucks off the West Gate Bridge and 22 000 vehicles off the Bolte Bridge. It will finally ban thousands of trucks from local streets, with 24/7 truck bans in 2022 to improve safety and reduce noise. Importantly, it will give Victoria's economy an \$11 million boost. This vitally important project has been approved by an independent panel as part of the most comprehensive environmental and planning approval process ever conducted for a Victorian road project.

The Property Council of Australia's Victorian executive director, Sally Capp, said revoking projects in Parliament opens up a 'new avenue' for properly vetted projects to be pulled at the last minute, driving up costs and delays and creating uncertainty. She warned that this would threaten investment and development in the state, saying:

We have just made it harder to do business in Victoria. We have made it harder to build worthwhile projects in Victoria.

The Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry has called for all parties to support the West Gate tunnel project proceeding without amendment or delay. The chief executive of the Property Council of Australia, Ken Morrison, has said in relation to revocations:

... as an exercise in good governance this is a shocker.

Politicians using a political chamber to let off steam on a controversial issue is not new. But actively overturning the legitimate decisions of consent authorities is quite another.

The CEO of the Urban Development Institute of Australia, Danni Addison, who used to be a ministerial adviser to the former Liberal Minister for Planning,

now Leader of the Opposition, the Honourable Matthew Guy, said the use of parliamentary processes to overturn planning decisions for political reasons will have significant consequences for Victoria's economic future. She said in a press release:

The integrity of Victoria's planning system is critical to growing the state's economy, creating employment opportunities, and to attracting investment in the housing and infrastructure we need ...

We have a serious problem when members of state Parliament deliberately use parliamentary processes and voting to thwart planning decisions which have already been assessed and approved through the planning process.

...

... this parliamentary action has introduced unprecedented risk and uncertainty into the ... system ... Our community deserves better from our elected officials.

The Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry believes the project should proceed as quickly as possible due to its obvious benefits for the whole community. I am not sure the opposition is listening to its constituents, but we on this side are listening. Construction has already begun on this magnificent project. For too long Victorians have desperately needed a second river crossing.

Mr Finn interjected.

Mr ELASMAR — I have been to the west many times, Mr Finn. There are no legitimate grounds for this house to revoke the planning scheme amendment. If the opposition succeeds in this act of economic vandalism, it will be a pyrrhic victory — that is, a victory that inflicts such a devastating toll on the victor that it is tantamount to defeat. Someone who wins a pyrrhic victory has been victorious in some way although the heavy toll negates a true sense of achievement or profit. We believe the time for talk is over.

The Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry chief executive, Mark Stone, has said delaying the project would be 'disastrous' for the state's economy and for so many living in the state's west. And so it would for all Victorians because it is not only people from the west who drive there. People from all over Victoria travel to the west. Mr Stone continued:

The government was elected with a mandate to deliver important projects like this one. Contracts have been signed, work has started and the project should proceed.

For all the reasons that I have outlined in my contribution I oppose the revocation of amendment GC65 to the West Gate tunnel project, and I urge all members of this house to oppose this motion.

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Agriculture) (10:36) — This really is quite an extraordinary debate that we are having in the house these weeks. Our government has a very proud record in the delivery of major infrastructure projects. Just this morning I was up and out early throughout the city, and I lost sight of the number of construction sites I had to navigate around on my little run this morning. This project is so important, and Mr Finn has been interjecting the whole time Mr Elasmar has been on his feet, saying, ‘Come out to the west. See what it’s like in the west’. We are very keen for this project to proceed. I have spent a lot of time getting from Melbourne to the west.

Mr Finn — Did you ever stop in Altona or Brooklyn or places like that? Did you ever talk to the people in Williamstown? Did you ever talk to them — the people on Millers Road?

Ms PULFORD — Those communities need relief from the congestion that they are experiencing.

Mr Finn — Have you ever driven down Millers Road, I wonder?

Ms PULFORD — Yes, of course I have driven down Millers Road. What an utterly ridiculous question that is.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Melhem) — Order! Mr Finn, I believe you had a chance to speak on this motion.

Mr Finn interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Melhem) — I am happy for you to join the list. Ms Pulford to continue, without assistance from anyone.

Ms PULFORD — In response to Mr Finn’s constant commentary about who does and does not know about congestion in the west, this project will be beneficial to many, many parts of the state in different ways. It will relieve congestion in the western suburbs, and it will make Melbourne more accessible for people from Geelong, from Ballarat and from further west than those places.

Of course there are also significant benefits for this project in Benalla. The people in Benalla perhaps think of this project less as an efficient path to Melbourne as they do an efficient path to employment. I know Ms Symes has been a very, very strong advocate for her community in her quest for this project to be allowed to go ahead, because in Benalla this project means that there will be 400 new jobs. That is game changing for Benalla. Ms Symes, what is the population of Benalla?

Ms Symes — Around 10 000.

Ms PULFORD — Around 10 000 people. That is an amazing number of jobs for a community of that size, and what a wonderful, wonderful opportunity it is for the people of Benalla and surrounding communities who might seek to have employment in a business that will be providing the resources for this project. I will come back to that.

This debate is also a debate about the role of this house. It is a debate about proper processes that can be followed and the kind of environment we want to create that is conducive to investment and progress in this state. These are also very, very important considerations for us. I remind members of some comments made by a former member of this place who is now the Leader of the Opposition in the other place, Mr Guy.

Mr Finn — He is going to be an outstanding Premier too.

Ms PULFORD — I do not know that he would be an outstanding Premier, Mr Finn, because Liberals always cut funding for regional Victoria in essential services such as health and education — TAFE is still recovering. This unbelievable effort on regional rail infrastructure the other day was something else, because I know that people in regional Victoria remember well the six train lines that Mr Finn and his friends shut down. If I could just reflect on what Mr Guy said in this place on 14 April — it was in a debate about a motion to revoke a planning scheme amendment, a matter in Williamstown — the member said at the time:

We have clearly stated that we do not want to turn the upper house of Victoria into a responsible authority on every planning matter around the state. If we choose one, then we choose every one of them to deal ourselves in on.

Whether it is this one or whether it is the one that the Liberals and the Greens want to debate this afternoon — the Markham estate — the Greens and the Liberals have decided to turn this chamber of the Parliament into a planning authority. I note the very wise counsel of the President about the appropriateness of that, because it is an important mechanism but it is one that needs to be used incredibly judiciously. What we have at the moment is politics being given precedence by political opponents over jobs, over economic realities, over sound investment decisions and over proper processes. I fear that we are going to spend the rest of this year on Wednesdays in opposition business time debating whatever project the Greens and

the Liberals can come to agreement on in their desire to knock off.

What message does that send to the Victorian business community? I think it sends an incredibly concerning message. Mr Elasmar made some comments in his contribution about some of the concerns that have been publicly expressed by leaders in the business community. I would just like to reflect on some of the comments of the chief executive of the Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Mark Stone, who has said that delaying this project would be disastrous for the state's economy and disastrous for so many living in the state's west. He said:

The government was elected with a mandate to deliver important projects like this one. Contracts have been signed, work has started and the project should proceed.

That is a really important point. This is not some theoretical project; this is a project where work has already commenced, where people are turning up to their jobs to undertake the project, where industry has invested and committed and where contracts have been signed. I know Mr Finn said before that he thought that Mark Stone would not know where the west is. I am not expert on how well Mark Stone knows the western suburbs, but in my dealings with Mark Stone I certainly know, and I am confident, that he is very conscious of the needs of Geelong, that he is very conscious of the needs of Ballarat, and I would hazard a guess that he is very conscious of the needs of Benalla, so I am not sure —

Mr Finn — Does he know where Altona is?

Ms PULFORD — I reckon Mark Stone would know where Altona is. Maybe we can check with him. I reckon Mark Stone does know where the west is. The Liberals may think that he does not, but this is a significant leader of the Victorian business community, and he among many others, including people who are gravely concerned about the actions of the opposition on this question — many economists and many business community leaders — is very, very worried about the reckless nature of the way that the Liberal Party is approaching this question.

If I could just talk for a minute about the benefits of the project, they are significant —

Mr Finn interjected.

Ms PULFORD — Mr Finn, this is really important. You might think that this is not important, but we have a significant project that has been contracted, that has been commenced —

Mr Finn interjected.

Mr Gepp — On a point of order, Acting President, you invited Mr Finn to shut his cakehole about 10 minutes ago. I invite you to invite him gain.

Mr Finn — On the point of order, Acting President, I was in fact sitting here quietly until the minister provoked me with a range of comments that I felt duty-bound to respond to. I have in fact done that, and for Mr Gepp to make the sorts of allegations that he has is appalling. I am almost tempted to ask for an apology and a withdrawal.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Melhem) — Thank you, Mr Finn. Ms Pulford to resume her contribution.

Ms PULFORD — Thank you, Acting President. In my defence I was not provoking anyone; I was simply responding to the barrage of interjections. But if I can just take a moment to talk about the design of the project. There will be 14 kilometres of new and upgraded walking and cycling paths, which includes a 2.5-kilometre veloway for cyclists. I certainly see a lot of cyclists in the inner west making their way through —

Mr Finn — When was the last time you were in the inner west?

Ms PULFORD — Monday, and before that Saturday evening, actually. The industrial and other unused land in the inner west will be transformed by the project, with almost 9 hectares of new green spaces and wetlands — interestingly, that is something the Greens remain unimpressed by. With direct connections to the port of Melbourne, the West Gate tunnel project will take over 9000 trucks off local roads. When the project opens, if the Liberals and the Greens are unsuccessful in stopping it, the project will enable 24/7 truck band in the inner west on Francis Street, Somerville Road, Buckley Street, Moore Street, Blackshaws Road and Hudsons Road. These will be enshrined in law.

It will provide up to 20 minutes in travel time savings between the city and Melbourne's west, and I am personally very, very excited about that part of the project. We estimate a reduction in serious crashes of 16 per cent. Of course the benefits of that are probably difficult to quantify in terms of the impacts of serious crashes on people's lives that are avoided, but they are very, very significant, and we must always be mindful of road safety. There will be 70 kilometres of new traffic lanes over 17 kilometres, from Kororoit Creek Road to Wurundjeri Way, and over 9 kilometres of new

and replaced noise walls, which will make for quieter homes and parks along the West Gate Freeway.

Over 17 500 trees will be planted. It was nice to have the nursery industry in the building this week. I am sure they would welcome the opportunity for 17 500 trees to be planted. They greened up the Parliament beautifully yesterday; it was lovely to see them. Some 110 000 tonnes of steel will be used, 92 per cent of which will be milled in Australia and New Zealand, and 93 per cent of materials will be local content. When you look at the pressure that the steel industry is about to come under — and this is not exclusive to Victoria; this will be a challenge globally — we need to be providing every bit of support we can to the steel industry.

This is a very well conceived project. This is a project that has had a long period of extensive community consultation. There has been a rigorous environment effects statement (EES) process. There were 504 submissions received on the EES. There were a number of public meetings and information nights that provided an opportunity for local residents to speak to members of the project team and to learn about the design proposal. The EES hearings were chaired by a panel of independent experts. There were hearings throughout August and September and a report was provided in October last year to the Minister for Planning. As much as this is a meritorious project that will be very, very important for people west of here, not just in the western suburbs but in all of western Victoria — and the amazing opportunity that creates for the people of Benalla — this is about the economic vandalism and the wilful destruction that the Liberal Party are trying to bring to our government's major projects agenda.

Now, we are very, very busy on major projects, whether it is the Murray Basin rail project; the Mildura line, which opened just last week; level crossing removals; or the metro rail project. The list is long.

Mr Finn interjected.

Ms PULFORD — Mr Finn, your side is jealous because you did nothing, you built nothing, you delivered absolutely nothing and you had no major projects agenda, so do not try and wreck ours. We are determined to deliver our project with all the benefits that it brings to the community, all the benefits it brings to the economy and the many, many thousands of jobs that are created.

Ms TIERNEY (Minister for Training and Skills) (10:51) — I rise to make a contribution to the debate and oppose the motion to revoke the planning scheme

amendment GC65 moved by Mr Davis, which would have the effect of stopping work on and then further delaying the West Gate tunnel project. There are no legitimate grounds for members in this place to pass such a motion. This revocation motion strategy has been tried before with the deliberate and calculated goal of frustrating the government's infrastructure building agenda.

That has also been substantiated by members of the business community. You only have to look at the *Herald Sun* of 21 February, where an article has the heading 'Tunnel vision costly' and the subheading 'Big business backs Andrews on West Gate dig'. The chief executive officer of the Business Council of Australia, Jennifer Westacott, said:

Governments and oppositions are entitled to disagree on policy, but at some point the government of the day has to be able to get on with delivering the infrastructure the community so desperately needs.

Ms Westacott went on to say:

... the cost of delaying yet another major transport project in Victoria would be immense.

You cannot just turn on the tap and expect infrastructure investment to flow. It will be years before another project of this scale will be ready to be built.

If and when that happens, the state will face higher costs and the project is likely to take much longer to build.

The general manager of public policy for the RACV, Bryce Prosser, said:

Doing nothing is not an option and vital infrastructure projects need to move forward and not become party political.

I noticed today, again in the *Herald Sun*, a whole one-page ad by the Australian Logistics Council, G21, the Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI), the Urban Development Institute of Australia (UDIA), Infrastructure Partners Australia and the Victorian Transport Association. It is an open letter in the newspaper which states::

Dear Victorian members of Parliament,

Re: Melbourne's much-needed alternative to the West Gate Bridge —

and it is fairly strong and quite succinct —

For Victoria's sake, the Parliament must not stop the West Gate tunnel project.

Using parliamentary processes to overturn planning decisions, for political reasons, would be irresponsible — and we all know from the east-west's cancellation that it would negatively impact Victoria's economy.

Costs increase, delays increase and Melbourne cannot get better, if projects and planning decisions are subject to divisive politics.

The West Gate tunnel has a contract — and construction has begun — with a workforce that will peak at 6000 Victorians.

Investors need to know that when they sign a contract with the state of Victoria, it will be honoured.

The West Gate tunnel project will:

- remove 9000 trucks from local streets;
- connect Victorian producers to global markets, via the port of Melbourne;
- cut 20 minutes off commuting times and release new housing;
- safeguard Melbourne from being shut down by one accident on the West Gate Bridge.

Melbourne has not successfully built a motorway since 2010 — but the population has grown by half a million people in this time.

Victorians need more and better infrastructure — not more politics.

Melbourne needs an alternative to the West Gate Bridge — and this project delivers it.

Yours sincerely ...

and I will repeat: the Australian Logistics Council, G21, VCCI, UDIA, the Victorian Transport Association and Infrastructure Partners Australia.

Nearly 90 years ago, in the 1930s, an eminent Australian historian, Keith Hancock, described the Liberal side of politics as ‘the parties of resistance’, and he saw Labor as ‘the party of initiative’. You would have to ask yourself: after all of this time, what has changed? If you look across the road in this chamber, you would say: nothing much at all. It is the road of fractious politics. It is the politics of stalling, it is the politics of blocking and it is the politics of delay. It is all directed to prevent change to the way traffic moves on the western side of the city in particular, and in doing so it stands in the way of an initiative that will make such a difference to the city, to the region and to Victoria as a whole.

With this revocation motion we see a desperate opposition attempting to block what is a fantastic project for no good reason, apart from straightforward opportunism. This revocation motion is a political stunt designed to manipulate parliamentary processes in order to delay and obstruct, and not to achieve a better project or pursue good planning.

In contrast to the do-nothing record of the previous government, the Andrews Labor government has spent the last three years addressing the backlog and moving Victoria forward. The economic benefits of the West Gate tunnel project are clear, the long-term planning for the future is in place and Victorians will reap the benefits into the next generation.

This project is desperately needed because of Melbourne’s traffic congestion. It is clear to all that the West Gate tunnel project has obvious long-term benefits. The widening of the West Gate Freeway and the complementary upgrade to the Monash Freeway will move traffic more efficiently, reducing travel times as well as moving vehicles more reliably and safely. The twin tunnels under Yarraville will provide a much better link to the port, and a second river crossing will provide route options, especially from the west. We can get more trucks off the local streets, and there will be system-wide benefits, with better connections from the port to CityLink, to inner-northern suburbs, to the CBD and beyond. There will be a city centre bypass as well.

Of course as the advertisement says in today’s paper, the other benefit of this project is that it will deliver more than 6000 jobs, which are needed in this state. In my electorate of Western Victoria Region we have seen the loss of jobs with the shutdown of the automotive industry and of course Alcoa. Toyota Altona on Grieve Parade has also closed. So there are many, many people who are job ready and are wanting to pick up the work that goes along with the construction of this project.

That is to understate the situation. We are a job-creating government. Since 2014 we have created 204 300 new full-time jobs — 320 000 all up — and we are leading the nation. The West Gate tunnel project will deliver, as I said, more than 6000 jobs, and some of those workers are already on the job in the preparation stage. I understand there are something like 700 workers. That is not just 700 workers; that is 700 families who are already reliant in terms of their wages on this project. In terms of our job-creation agenda, we have already established a 10 per cent minimum of employees on government infrastructure projects who must be apprentices and trainees. This project will also, in a similar vein, increase the number of apprentices and trainees that this state will have. Again, when you compare that to the previous government it was a government that had the number of young people in employment fall by 20 000. The West Gate tunnel, as I said, is already underway. If the Liberals are successful in their move to stop the West Gate tunnel, over 700 Victorian workers now on the job will lose their jobs. I would put to the house that this would be an absolute act of economic vandalism.

It is clear in terms of congestion that Melbourne will benefit from this project, but I clearly put to the house that it will also benefit regional Victoria. You can see that in terms of the work that is being done by a number of companies across western Victoria and their need to have easier access to different parts of Victoria, including Melbourne. You only have to look at Keppel Prince Engineering in Portland, which is doing some very important structural work for the project. Last week we heard from Jaclyn Symes, a member for Northern Victoria Region, who went into significant detail on the precast concrete manufacturing facility that is in Benalla. That will deliver 400 jobs when it is in full operation. That will also be supplying a number of things to Victorian and interstate projects.

Victoria is Australia's fastest growing economy. The West Gate tunnel project is estimated to deliver an \$11 million boost. The National Australia Bank monthly business survey shows that business confidence in Victoria has doubled since November 2014. Business does understand that this government is providing opportunities, so you really do wonder at the disconnect between the opposition and the traditional supporters that they like to be associated with in the business community. What is the real purpose of this revocation motion when you are disenfranchising your political and economic base and when you are disenfranchising 700 workers and their families? What is the possible rationale for this stop-start approach by those opposite?

Like the Metro Tunnel project, the West Gate tunnel will use local materials. There will be 93 per cent local content for design and construction of the tunnel, roadworks and elevated structures and up to 92 per cent local steel. More than 110 000 tonnes of steel will be used to build the two underground tunnels, the bridges and other infrastructure. I note the optimism of Mr Melhem that western suburbs steel millers will potentially benefit from this opportunity. It is one of 80 public projects with minimum local content requirements. Those opposite, when in government, had no local content requirements and bypassed local manufacturers.

Again, I would like to emphasise that this project will provide better access to the port of Melbourne, the largest and busiest container port in Australasia. One of the key features of the West Gate tunnel project is that it will facilitate access to the port for freight — 6 million standard containers per year, which is one-third of Australia's containerised trade. The value of exports from Victoria is up more than 10 per cent to \$50 billion in the year to September 2017.

I do not know if those opposite have ever tried to commute from Geelong or beyond to Melbourne in the weekday peak hour, but I know that it can be a very, very trying experience. I live in regional Victoria, and I regularly travel the Geelong–Melbourne stretch along the Princes Freeway and onto the West Gate, as my ministerial office is at 2 Treasury Place. Because of the congestion, I have often chosen to take the ferry trip across the bay rather than face the traffic that becomes a car park from the Point Cook bend across the West Gate to the CBD. If my ministerial office was anywhere other than the CBD — if it was in the north or to the east — I would be looking at travel times of 2½ to 3 hours or more. The same can be said of commuters travelling from Ballarat on the M80, joining the congestion onto the West Gate in Brooklyn. This project will provide greater access to jobs from the west.

The West Gate tunnel and the second river crossing will provide an alternative route, sharing the load in terms of traffic movement, and will give us all something to fall back on in the event of a disruption. Melbourne and the west have been crying out for this for a long time, and Geelong has been crying out for it for a long time too, I can assure you. But it is about more than just easing traffic congestion. A major incident on the West Gate shuts down the city. It potentially shuts down the port and much of Victoria. We see a small version of this each time there is a significant accident on the bridge or the freeway on a weekly basis. Sometimes this is a daily event. This scenario is no longer an option in the 21st century with a rapidly growing state and very strong growth in the western suburbs. Melbourne will hit 5 million people in 2018, and it has grown by 1 million since 2010. The West Gate tunnel project is the first major road project since that time.

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) (11:06) — I am very pleased to be able to make a contribution to this debate. I am not pleased that we are having this debate. I think this debate reeks of economic vandalism on the part of the Liberal-Greens alliance, but I am pleased nevertheless to get on record my very strong support for the West Gate tunnel project and to express my dismay on behalf of many Victorians who will be scratching their heads as to why anyone in this Parliament would be trying to wreak havoc with this project. For anyone who has travelled over the West Gate Bridge and who has spent time stuck on the West Gate Bridge as they try to get to their place of employment or place of business, I think they would certainly be scratching their heads as to why the Liberal Party has teamed up with the Greens party yet again. This is of course a very regular occurrence for those of

us in the upper house. They have teamed up yet again to cause economic vandalism in this chamber.

We have put forward a very good proposal to create a much-needed project in the community. This is very much in keeping with this government's very strong investment in infrastructure. You just need to look to our track record and record investment over the last three and a half years of this term to see that our government is delivering on the projects that this state needs. We are also investing in projects that have a very strong job creation focus as well. Just in terms of those projects with a local content policy, since 2014 our government has announced 80 public projects with local content requirements; 70 of those projects are already underway, with a combined value of more than \$49 billion. In their four wasted years the former Liberal government managed just eight projects with mandated minimum local content. So we are putting in place important road and rail infrastructure, school infrastructure, public hospitals and many other projects that this community needs and that this state needs, plus this project is providing very strong employment growth.

That stands in stark contrast to what we have seen from those opposite, where we had an absolute mess from Matthew Guy as planning minister. You just have to look at what happened at Fishermans Bend to see his legacy there of letting it rip without due consultation and without appropriate consideration of the needs of the community in terms of schools, parkland or other infrastructure that that community needs into the future. That is why our Minister for Planning, Richard Wynne, has taken very decisive action in recent weeks in relation to this project, calling in 26 live development applications to ensure that we can provide for appropriate development in the community with appropriate densities and to make sure that due consideration is given to the needs of those future local residents.

Coming to the West Gate tunnel project, you just have to look at yesterday's media in relation to these matters to see the strength of feeling that various organisations have about this project. You just need to look at the full-page ads placed in the papers today from organisations such as the Australian Logistics Council, the Urban Development Institute of Australia, Infrastructure Partnerships Australia, the G21, the Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Victorian Transport Association. Some of these organisations have been very close supporters of the Liberal Party over time. You see the strength of feeling that these organisations do have about this project. You just have to look at this ad to see how these

organisations think that the Parliament should not stop the West Gate tunnel project. This full-page advertisement states:

Using parliamentary processes to overturn planning decisions, for political reasons, would be irresponsible ...

Costs increase, delays increase and Melbourne cannot get better if projects and planning decisions are subject to divisive politics.

The West Gate tunnel has a contract — and construction has begun — with a workforce that will peak at 6000 Victorians.

This is a very clear message from these organisations about their support for this important project and the fact that they feel that this project should not be delayed. They particularly call out the politics that are being played out here. We have got an abuse of parliamentary process and an unprecedented process being put in place to stop a project that is already underway and that has gone through all the appropriate planning processes that it needed to.

This call to not play politics with infrastructure projects is something that in fact was the position of a previous Minister for Planning, now the Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly, Matthew Guy. On 14 April 2010, while speaking on a Greens party motion to revoke a planning scheme amendment in Williamstown, Mr Guy said in Parliament:

We have clearly stated that we do not want to turn the upper house of Victoria into a responsible authority on every planning matter around the state. If we choose one, then we choose every one of them to deal ourselves in on.

That was Matthew Guy's position back in 2010, when he was the planning minister. He was expressing concern with the upper house effectively becoming the responsible authority for all planning decisions. Yet, as is often the case with the Liberal Party, they have now got selective amnesia about their previous positions in relation to a whole range of things, and this no longer stands. What we are seeing is a wrecking exercise on behalf of the Liberal Party joining forces with the Greens party. Matthew Guy, more recently, has again expressed similar sentiments, yet that does not ring true here today. On 20 November last year, on Channel 9 News, Matthew Guy was reported as saying:

What Melbourne needs to do is take the politics out of our infrastructure delivery. I mean, there's no more arguing. We need to start getting on with some of these plans to free up traffic congestion.

Well that is exactly what we are doing. We are delivering on a much-needed project for the community. Coming back to the joint advertisement that was placed in the papers today, if you look at the

point that these organisations are making, they are making it very clear that the West Gate tunnel project will remove 9000 trucks from local streets, connect Victorian producers to global markets via the port of Melbourne, cut 20 minutes off commuting times, release new housing and safeguard Melbourne from being shut down by one accident on the West Gate Bridge. These are all commendable objectives, and these organisations are saying that we need better infrastructure and not more politics.

It is interesting that these views are not just held by business organisations. Resident groups as well as exasperated by the views taken by members as part of this Liberal-Greens alliance. You just have to look at a statement put up on the website of the Maribyrnong Truck Action Group (MTAG) on 1 March this year to see that local community residents who have been affected by considerable truck movement in their community are also disappointed by what has happened in relation to this project. They say in their statement on their website:

The Victorian Greens have been longtime allies, standing with MTAG at protests and community meetings, supporting our calls for truck bans; freight on rail and a truck bypass. However, MTAG is bitterly disappointed at their decision to join with the coalition to block parliamentary planning approvals for the West Gate tunnel project.

They go on to say:

Unfortunately this is just another chapter in the bizarre and unhelpful politicisation of the infrastructure needed to take trucks off residential streets in Melbourne's inner west.

What we are seeing is residents groups, who have previously worked closely with the Greens party in relation to these matters, throwing their hands up in despair and not understanding why the Greens party would in fact be seeking to block a much-needed project that will actually take trucks off their local streets. It makes no sense whatsoever for the Greens party to be joining in this great Liberal-Greens party coalition, this alliance to yet again wreak havoc on this particular project.

Mr O'Sullivan — Will you take their preferences at the next election?

Ms MIKAKOS — Let us have a look at the track record just in the seat of Batman, where the Liberal Party will not even stand a candidate. They have not even got the courage to stand a candidate in Batman to support the Greens party candidate to get up. That speaks volumes about the cynicism of the right wing of the Liberal Party, the right wing of the coalition that has

now taken over in Victoria — and Ms Crozier is taking the lead there.

Ms Crozier — On a point of order, Acting President, where do I start? I was just going to ask you to bring the minister back to the motion that we are discussing today and not talking about her factional issues within her own party, which is that they are at war with one another.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Melhem) — Thank you, Ms Crozier, there is no point of order. I think there has been interjection on both sides.

Ms MIKAKOS — What we are seeing from the Liberal Party in recent days is people hedging their bets just in case Michael Kroger loses the president's ballot. They are talking about giving young offenders a hug now. They are expressing compassion for them; they are concerned that there are too many of them on remand; they want to let more of them out on bail; they want to give them a group hug. These are sentiments you would expect from the Greens party. I think that just goes to show that the Liberal Party — Ms Crozier and Ms Fitzherbert — are spending a lot of time with the Greens party lately.

Ms Crozier — On a point of order, Acting President, the minister is clearly defying your previous ruling. I ask you to draw her back to the motion. It has got nothing to do with anything in relation to party matters or otherwise. We are talking about a very important motion here, and she is just waffling on again.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Melhem) — Thank you, Ms Crozier. I did not uphold your earlier point of order, but I do agree the minister should go back to talking about the motion on the West Gate tunnel, not other matters.

Ms MIKAKOS — Absolutely, Acting President. Unfortunately time does not permit me to express all the sentiments I would like to about the Liberal-Greens party alliance, but I am sure I will have other opportunities to talk about the many examples of when they have cosied up together to wreak havoc on this state.

Coming back to this project, this is a really important congestion-busting and job-creating project. It will be a massive boost to the Victorian economy. It will allow the streets of the inner west to be unclogged. It is important that this project be allowed to continue. It is important that we get on with it, and that is what our government is doing. This is going to create 6000 jobs. It is going to remove thousands of trucks from local

streets. It is going to deliver better travel times for motorists from Geelong, Ballarat and Melbourne's west, and I am sure that the people of Geelong, Ballarat and Melbourne's west will cast their judgement accordingly in November on both the coalition and the Greens parties in terms of this ridiculous position that they have been taking here in this house.

We know how the whole of Victoria will benefit from projects that our government is putting in place, making sure that we have got fewer cars and fewer trucks on the West Gate Bridge and making sure that travel times can improve. This is a project that has had enormous consultations. It has had a very lengthy process. It has gone through a rigorous environment effects statement process, ensuring that the community got to have its say. It included extensive community consultation on the project, including public meetings and presentations, 504 submissions and expert advice being considered. This motion should be opposed, and members should support this important project to be delivered.

Mr PURCELL (Western Victoria) (11:22) — It gives me great pleasure to rise today to speak on the revocation of amendment GC65 for the West Gate tunnel project. My contribution will not be political — which is unusual for this place, I know — but it will discuss the issues in western Victoria and why this tunnel is required for the people of western Victoria, in particular those in business but also in other areas, including the need to get people from Melbourne to western Victoria and also to get people from western Victoria to Melbourne.

I travel the West Gate Freeway regularly, I would imagine once or twice a week, and it is really an issue in that from my place I can get to the West Gate Bridge in probably 3 to 3½ hours on a regular basis, and then I can add another hour or maybe 10 minutes from there, depending on traffic. If you need to get to Parliament or to a meeting and you are unsure of how busy it is going to be — and one slight accident on the bridge will cause significant delays — you need to build this into your time lines. Irrespective of the benefits to western Victoria, I must say that the use of revocation motions in this place has become excessive. I do not support it. I would support it if I believed the issue was extreme. I believe this is the sort of issue that governments are elected to work through and it is for governments to make their decisions based on what they believe is right. If the people of Victoria do not agree, they have the chance every four years to change governments and to vote for or against the government, as it happens.

As I said, this for me is more than that. This for me is what is required for Western Victoria Region, the electorate that I represent. Before I go on to look at some of the issues and why this project is needed for western Victoria, I do think it is important that we recognise that this tunnel is backed by most industry groups and most industries within the state. For them to come out and place significant ads in regional papers and state papers, at significant cost to them, shows that they do more than just give this lip-service; they do believe it is an important project and one that needs to be supported by this house. As I said, the real issue is that businesses in western Victoria need this tunnel in western Victoria because it will allow them to get their product to market and it will also allow them to get to the port of Melbourne much more quickly and more cost-effectively.

I was one of the members of this house who sat on the Port of Melbourne Select Committee, which was a very good committee, and I must admit I enjoyed the work on that committee. But with the predictions of growth that will occur in the amount of traffic that will go through the port of Melbourne — and a great deal of that will come from regional Victoria and in particular western Victoria — we do need to have better access to that port. The growth in the amount of traffic that will increase year on year through to the port of Melbourne and the rest of Melbourne will be extreme and will clog up, if they are not already clogged, the current access routes into Melbourne.

There are many businesses in western Victoria that need this access. I will quickly go through some of those, and most of them I know extremely well. I will start with one that I actually worked for for 10 years when I graduated, and that is a company called GlaxoSmithKline, as it is now. Glaxo pharmaceuticals was where I, as an accountant, spent the first 10 years of my working life. I started in Port Fairy, then worked in Melbourne and then in London. The issue with them was that every time we had either international directors or visitors from overseas, the 4 or 5 hours it would take for them to get from Melbourne to Port Fairy on our road network — they would usually stay in Melbourne overnight and then drive to western Victoria — was more than they would normally travel on their annual holidays in Europe. It would get them over probably half a dozen countries in Europe. To travel that distance with an unsure estimated time of arrival, because of roadworks and the ability to get out of Melbourne, was something that they found quite unusual and something they did not expect to see in a First World country like Australia. This was a common issue. Because they thought Melbourne to Port Fairy was such a distance, they believed the factory should be located closer to

Melbourne. For anyone who is trying to push for decentralisation it is a serious problem when you have extreme distances from a major airport to the country areas that are even harder to reach because of bad connections with road networks and also with access to the major cities.

Glaxo, probably two years ago, were taken over by an Indian company called Sun Pharmaceutical Industries. It was bad enough when it was owned and operated by the English and then the Americans, but now the owners of that company believe the roads in India are better than the roads and connectivity of the company to the major cities in Victoria. If our ability to get from our country areas to our major city of Melbourne is being compared to the ability to get from parts of India into its major cities, I think we have got a long way to go. One of the major reasons for that is the ability to get from the edge of Melbourne into the city. It is something companies in western Victoria need to have access to. These are the reasons I believe we need to support the tunnel, and I believe these are the reasons why so many of the industry groups have actually come out in support of it. They are not doing it for any political reason. They are doing it because they believe it is the right thing to do. They believe we need to have access from the west into Melbourne, and we need to have it very soon.

There are many other industries in western Victoria that do need to have access to the Melbourne port. One of the major exporters out of Victoria is Alcoa. All of their produce, all of the aluminium that leaves the Portland smelter, goes by road into the Melbourne port. If the increases in the traffic through the port — increases over the bridge — continue to occur, they are going to become less competitive. Irrespective of the American imposition of tariffs on aluminium, there will still be a significant amount of material that will need to be transported via road into the Melbourne port. For aluminium to go through Alcoa, through the Portland smelter, they definitely need this tunnel to go ahead.

The majority of produce from dairy companies in western Victoria — whether it be Fonterra, Saputo, Murray Goulburn or any others — goes via road into the Melbourne port and then overseas. The extra burden and cost of getting this product to market is a burden that the tunnel would help allay, and it would certainly help western Victoria. I could go on. Keppel Prince Engineering are in the same basket. They have a lot of their visitors coming to Melbourne from overseas, particularly Singapore. They need to get to Portland, so that gets into somewhere in the order of a 5 or 6-hour drive.

We have smaller companies like Bamstone. Bamstone are a bluestone cutting factory based just outside of Port Fairy. They have somewhere in the order of 50 employees, so there are 50 families who rely on this factory surviving. For people who do not know Bamstone, if you are ever walking around the streets of Melbourne all of the bluestone that was used to build the footpaths of Melbourne came from Bamstone. That started back in the Jeff Kennett days and still continues today. Even so, they do not have it all their own way. A lot of it comes from other factories in western Victoria, and their competitors are through the Chinese market. This is probably a good opportunity for me to thank Greg Barber, who not many years ago actually helped me in this house to help that company survive. I raised in an adjournment matter one night that the City of Melbourne had changed their tendering strategy for bluestone to include a lot of Chinese imports. To Mr Barber's credit, he actually got onto the council that night and we finished up getting the tendering process changed. That company is certainly in his debt and so are the 50-odd families of those that still have a job.

The vast majority of Midfield Group's product goes through the port of Melbourne — the vast majority of the meat processing. If we look at Southern Ocean Mariculture, an abalone farm in western Victoria, again their product all goes overseas, and a lot of that is either through the port of Melbourne or, if it is frozen or cryo-packed, through Tullamarine airport. Small business, even though they do not export, do need to have access to the major city in Victoria, that being Melbourne, and their suppliers and also the owners go to and from Melbourne on a weekly basis. So we need to have good access for those who use the bridge and we also need to have good time lines to get to and from Melbourne. As I said, the reason I do not support the revocation motion is that these businesses do need to have access to the Melbourne port and also to central Melbourne, and access at the moment is not good enough.

Going the other way, we have tourism coming out of Melbourne from the airport. Usually the international visitors tend to stay in Melbourne but then travel from Melbourne into western Victoria. The most popular tourist destination in the state is the Twelve Apostles; I think it is somewhere in the order of 2.2 million visitors per annum. Without getting into some of the other issues in regard to the road condition, in regard to the amount of traffic and in regard to the poor condition of the Twelve Apostles — not the apostles themselves but the car parks and facilities that are there — these visitors often arrive late at night and have early starts in the morning for a day visit. Whether it should be done in a day is another question, but they have very early

starts, and more and more often they are now driving themselves. They need to get out of Melbourne at a very early hour to travel to the Twelve Apostles and then try to get back again.

Regarding the issue of international drivers on our roads who are very tired, which I have raised in this house previously, they do spend somewhere in the order of 12 to 14 hours a day driving or in minibuses getting to their destination of the Twelve Apostles and returning, and these are not safe activities for them to undertake. Anything that reduces that time would be of benefit to the safety of Victorians and the safety of our visitors. It also would be of benefit to our tourism industry, because what it would mean is those visitors would have a much better experience. If they spend less hours in their car or in their minibus or some other means of transport, it would make a huge difference to their enjoyment and satisfaction of the places that they visit, whether it be the Twelve Apostles or many of the other attractions along the Great Ocean Road.

As well as that, there are many other tourism events and activities, including this weekend, where people from Melbourne will travel to destinations. This being a long weekend, there will be a mass exodus of people who will be leaving Melbourne and travelling to country Victoria, which we in country Victoria certainly encourage and welcome with open arms. But anyone who has travelled into western Victoria on a long weekend and tried to get back on a Saturday or more particularly on a Sunday evening will find that the traffic jam is such that it actually takes away from the experience of the short holiday break they have had.

For people who will be travelling down this weekend to Lorne or Geelong or other parts of the coast, even coming to see the spectacular Port Fairy Folk Festival, which again is booked out — there are other free acts around the town, so I would encourage people to come down — the issue is that at the end of the weekend they will all need to get back to where they live, and for the vast majority of them that is back to Melbourne. If we do not have good access into Melbourne, if we do not have the ability for people to get back into the biggest city in the state, they will stop coming. They will not travel for 4 hours if that gets to 5 hours or, if it gets even worse, 6 or 7 hours, which is on the cards, and if we do not do something about it, they will not be the tourists of the future.

As well as that, there are many others on a normal weekend who will travel to many of the other great tourism spots in western Victoria, whether it be to look at some of the natural tourism sites like Tower Hill or the Glenelg River or some of the national parks. Many

of these people will stop attending and stop being visitors to our region if they do not know how long it is going to take to get back to their point of destination. As I said, for most of them it is back into Melbourne. Statistics actually prove that. Melbourne is the most popular city, and the greatest number of visitors to western Victoria do come from Melbourne, whether they be international visitors staying in Melbourne or whether they are actually Melbourne people themselves.

So not only do we need to make certain that the access into Melbourne through the tunnel is improved; we need to make certain that our road network is better as well. We need to put a lot of work into making our road network better. Currently the Princes Highway between Colac and Geelong is being duplicated, which will certainly help, but once you get to Colac the road falls into disrepair, and there needs to be significant work done to improve that. There are many other areas where our road network needs work. If we go further west and look at the work that is currently being done, on a daily basis I get notification of work that is just being wasted. I have raised this here before: if you look at the work that is being done around Heywood, where there is a natural spring — and for people who do not know, Heywood was actually relocated not long after Victoria was settled because the bullock drays could not get through the natural springs at the river crossing, so they had to move Heywood further south and closer to Portland — VicRoads have been trying to fix this piece of road for months. From the reports that I am getting and from what I can see, it is not getting any better.

We need to put a lot of work into our road network that will connect to the West Gate tunnel and the West Gate Bridge, because it is more than just making the entrance to Melbourne or the exit from Melbourne better; the issue is that we need to make our complete network better. We need to make certain that our total road network is in such a state that we can get from one place to another and that we do know how long it takes so that when we go to plan a trip, we can have a look at Google Maps and see that it is going to take 4 hours and 10 minutes and that we have confidence it will take 4 hours and 10 minutes rather than 5 hours and 10 minutes, which is the case at the moment because of the congestion that we have on the West Gate.

If you are running a business and you are trying to get your product to market, if you are trying to get it to the port of Melbourne or if you are trying to get back to your accommodation in Melbourne, you will find that it is not reasonable to accept adding another hour to your trip just because we do not have good access into the most populous city in the state.

The port of Portland is a great asset to this state, but it has never really got to a stage of taking advantage of its status as being the best deepwater port in this state. I believe the reason for that is that exporters from Melbourne cannot rely on getting their product to that port in a timely fashion. It is very difficult. For decades that port has been going to be the next biggest thing in this state, but it will not be until we can assure exporters that they will be able to get their product from the most populous city in the state to the best deep-sea port. We do need to make access into Melbourne much better than it is to be able to get the reliability and the consistency back so we know how long travel will take.

One of the areas that really concerns me is in regard to education. The issue with education is very similar to the issue that I raised in regard to tourism. Many prospective students come out here to look at places like Warrnambool TAFE or Deakin University's Geelong or Warrnambool campuses. These institutions are trying to entice international students onto their campuses. Many prospective students visit with their parents to have a look at the alternatives for education. Their general means of getting there is to spend a day or two in Melbourne to see how the transport network works in Melbourne, and then to have a look at university campuses, whether they be Deakin University campuses in Warrnambool or in Geelong. If on the way to Geelong or Warrnambool, or on the return trip, they have to spend literally hours in traffic jams, that does definitely put them off. They do get distracted from their purpose, and that is to pick the best university. I can tell you that Deakin is a great university. It does a great job and it needs to be supported. But when you have the tyranny of distance and the tyranny of time, the issue that getting over the West Gate Bridge and getting to and from Melbourne causes is a real problem.

I conclude by saying that if I supported this motion I would not have the best interests of Western Victoria Region at heart. I do believe that if anyone is genuinely trying to support country Victoria — and in my instance it is in particular regard to western Victoria — and has their interests at heart, they would not support this revocation motion. I will just finish by saying, taking the politics out of this, that if we look at what the industry groups are saying, if we look at what the businesses are saying in my part of the world, in western Victoria, if we look at what the educators are saying and if we look at what the visitors are saying, we do need to have better access to Melbourne and to Melbourne ports, and for that reason I will not be supporting this revocation motion.

Mr SOMYUREK (South Eastern Metropolitan) (11:49) — I rise to oppose this revocation motion relating to the West Gate tunnel project. This motion seeks to halt one of Victoria's most monumental infrastructure projects since the construction of the West Gate Bridge. Since 1978 Victorian communities and industries have been connected by this bridge carrying around 200 000 vehicles per day. Indeed this bridge and its connecting freeway is one of the busiest road corridors in the nation. The significance of this level of usage and the demand for alternatives for rapidly growing communities require responsible infrastructure planning and construction. This project is such a significant investment into the provision of Victoria's infrastructure, and opposition just for opposition's sake will not ensure Victoria's livability.

It is without doubt that, as with every major infrastructure project, communities will be impacted to some extent; actually even small infrastructure projects or changes to local land use can be disruptive to local residents and businesses, and some will be impacted more than others. Victoria is growing rapidly because of its livability, and we must respond to that growth to ensure that Melbourne remains the world's most livable city surrounded by livable and healthy regions. The health of our communities and the prosperity of our industry rely on us to ensure that family members are not travelling in cars away from their loved ones for longer than necessary and that industry is not unnecessarily delayed by bumper-to-bumper congestion that increases running costs, decreases profits and keeps workers away from their families.

All governments have in the past, at times, unfortunately failed to consult and engage adequately with the community and industry, but I have to say I have been impressed by the unprecedented level of documentation and facilitation of community and stakeholder consultation to ensure that stakeholders are sufficiently informed about the West Gate tunnel project.

Acting President Dunn, as you are no doubt aware, a 10 000-page environment effects statement was released early last year which stakeholders and the community were able to review and provide feedback on. Various suggestions were adopted through changes made to the project relating to increasing public space, improving neighbourhood aesthetics and environmental considerations. Then late last year other integral documentation was released, including the project summary, the concession deed amendments, the exposure draft of the West Gate tunnel bill, the value for money assessment, copies of the contracts between Transurban and the state and the full suite of project

agreements. Some of these types of documents are usually considered to be commercial in confidence in other projects, yet this government has managed to release them all in an act of transparency.

This is because this government is committed to bringing the community and industry along with it in the construction of this much-needed and long-awaited second river crossing, and as a result of the government's level of engagement this is actually happening right now. This project is one of the most fundamentally important traffic congestion relieving measures, and it will benefit residents and businesses from Gippsland to Geelong and everywhere in between. The project ticks so many boxes in terms of benefiting every aspect of Victorian livability. Workers, families, industry and the Victorian economy are benefiting already with construction underway and immediately employing 6000 people, including 500 apprentices, trainees and graduates and up to 150 jobs for former auto workers. I have got to say, this is because of the Victorian Industry Participation Policy (VIPP), which I had a little bit to do with formulating.

I was very critical of Mr Dalla-Riva when he was a minister for manufacturing in that he did not go far enough. Mr Dalla-Riva and I had many debates across this chamber about what good the government can do as a purchaser in maximising local content. There is no use just building these construction projects if you are not maximising local content. We can import jobs from overseas or we can signal to the local manufacturing industry that we do care about jobs, and a good way of doing that is with local content. This project not only delivers jobs and invests in infrastructure but it also ensures that we maximise local content and therefore local jobs in so doing. I have got to say I was proud to push our local content with our VIPP policy in opposition.

The project will see 28 000 less vehicles on the West Gate Bridge and 22 000 off the Bolte Bridge. This level of reduction will benefit not only those in the west but also many of my constituents in the south-east when they are travelling on the M1. Not only will this project make real life-improving changes to Victorian lifestyles through less congestion and less time spent on roads away from family and employment for many, it will also contribute overwhelmingly to the Victorian economy, providing a massive \$11 billion injection of funds and investment.

The project will use 110 000 tonnes of steel; 92 per cent will be milled in Australia and New Zealand, and 93 per cent of that material will be local content. It is all about the local economy. Again, I was involved in our

steel policy. Steel is a strategic industry, as we can see with what they have been doing in the US over the last couple of days. It is still a strategic industry for the Victorian economy, and of course we should be aiming to maximise local content in steel.

We have heard time and time again from industry about the economic benefits of the project to this state. Victorian industry leaders have publicly expressed their concern about the use of this type of parliamentary motion that could produce highly undemocratic outcomes and result in economic downturn.

Mr Mark Stone, chief executive of the Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, has said previously that delaying the project would be disastrous for the state's economy and for so many living in the west. He makes a significant point about the democratic process that enables such projects to take place by saying, and I quote:

The government was elected with a mandate to deliver important projects like this one. Contracts have been signed, work has started and the project should proceed.

The chamber of commerce also calls for all parties to support the project and to proceed without amendments or delay.

If this revocation motion is successful, our planning system will be undermined and confidence in doing business in Victoria will be eroded by the uncertainty of the finality of our decisions formed subsequent to community and stakeholder engagement.

In conclusion I would like to say that I cannot find an aspect of this project that is not transparent, that is not in the interests of all Victorians and that is not of significant economic benefit to the state of Victoria. With that, I oppose the motion.

Business interrupted pursuant to sessional orders.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Men's sheds

Mr YOUNG (Northern Victoria) (12:00) — My question today is for the Minister for Families and Children. Today the government announced a new funding round for the men's shed program. No doubt the minister will rattle off the figures in her answer, but what I would like to raise today is something that has become apparent to me and many others: the reluctance of the average down-to-earth bloke to attend a men's shed. It appears that the emphasis when promoting men's sheds is on mental health, and while I have no

doubt that men's sheds are a valuable tool in this space, men are reluctant to participate in this kind of activity when it is overtly about a mental health initiative rather than something engaging to them. Minister, what is the government doing to address the stigma that is associated with men's sheds being primarily about mental health?

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) (12:00) — I thank the member for his question. I absolutely reject the premise of the member's question. I have had the opportunity now as minister over the last three years to visit many men's sheds right across Victoria, and can I just say that our men's sheds are doing a wonderful job of being an inviting environment for men of all ages in the community to attend and participate in a range of activities.

Having support for greater mental health and wellbeing is a commendable outcome of men's sheds, but they are in fact sources of support for men of all ages in many ways. Of course they are important for men who may otherwise be isolated at home — and I have spoken to men who have lost a partner that they have been with for a lifetime, and that has been a source, obviously, of enormous personal grief for them — and to have the support of other men in the men's shed has been a very, very supportive thing for them. But our men's sheds do many things.

They teach men of all ages important skills in terms of the types of woodwork and other trade-based things that they might be doing. They help teach men important skills in a vocational sense. They make things for the community. They are putting back into the community. I have seen men's sheds that have made furniture for nursing homes and local kindergartens that they have donated. They have donated to their local RSLs and they have made and donated wooden toys to local early years services, so they are making an enormous contribution to our community.

We are as a government very proud supporters of our men's sheds. We have put in place about \$1 million of funding every year, and I am very proud that today I have formally opened up a new funding round of \$885 000. I encourage Mr Young to spread the word in his local electorate about the benefits of obtaining funding to enable more men's sheds to be established in communities that do not otherwise have them or for existing men's sheds to be able to expand. We have more than 360 men's sheds in Victoria. We have got 15 000 people attending a shed in Victoria each day. Last year's funding round enabled 13 new men's sheds to be funded and 10 existing sheds to be refurbished, so

we are making a significant investment. In fact our funding has seen 70 sheds either established or upgraded since we came to office.

We are very proud of our track record in supporting men's sheds. They are amazing places. We want to encourage more men to participate in them, so I absolutely reject the suggestion that there is any stigma at all associated with being involved in a men's shed. We want to have more men from diverse backgrounds, including from Aboriginal communities, apply to establish men's sheds so that we have men from a range of backgrounds in our community able to access these really supportive, much-loved and much-appreciated organisations in their own communities.

Supplementary question

Mr YOUNG (Northern Victoria) (12:04) — The government seems to be a little bit sensitive about the question I asked. It is in no way a negative reflection on men's sheds. I commend the work that men's sheds do. I congratulate the government for the continued funding of them, but I have been speaking to a lot of people about the thought process behind someone trying to approach a men's shed and their reluctance to do so. So while you have mentioned that you are trying to engage those people and that you are funding these places, and that is great, you have not actually answered the question as to how you are trying to reach new people and reach out to those people who may be reluctant to join a men's shed, because they are a good part of our community.

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) (12:05) — I thank Mr Young for his supplementary question. I am very happy to sit down with Mr Young and have a discussion about this, because I do think that sometimes this is the best way to progress these issues if there is some reluctance on the part of his constituents. I can certainly provide a range of examples that he can share with his constituents about the very positive contributions that men's sheds are making to men right across Victoria in a very tangible way to convince his local community of the benefits in participating in a men's shed. I certainly look forward to working with him and with my department in relation to any organisations of men or groups of men in his community who might well want to apply for funding to establish one, because we have already seen many communities benefit from our funding and we want to continue to support local communities to establish men's sheds.

Devondale Murray Goulburn

Mr PURCELL (Western Victoria) (12:06) — My question is for the Minister for Agriculture, and it is in regard to the sale of Murray Goulburn to Saputo. Last week the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) announced that it had concerns over the inclusion of the Koroit plant in the asset sale and the effect that this sale would have on the competition for raw milk in western Victoria. The worst result for dairy farmers in the south-west would be if either the current Saputo plant at Allansford or the Murray Goulburn plant at Koroit were sold to a dairy minnow to appease the ACCC's concerns. If this happens, the minnow will quickly be smashed by the international giants, Fonterra or Saputo, leading to the exact duopoly situation that the ACCC is trying to avoid but with severe consequences for the community and dairy farmers. My question is: Minister, have you had or do you intend to have discussions with the ACCC to make certain that the dairy farmers in western Victoria are protected from this sale?

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Agriculture) (12:07) — I thank Mr Purcell for his question on this very important matter and for his interest in the issues that underlie the work that the ACCC is currently undertaking with Saputo as it seeks to advance its proposed purchase of Murray Goulburn, a \$1.3 billion transaction. The ACCC has identified issues in relation to the proposed sale, in particular on the question of competition in the south-west. This comes about because Saputo's existing operations in Victoria are in Warrnambool, not all that far from Koroit at all. So the Saputo purchase of Murray Goulburn's entire operations nationally would certainly pose a risk to competition in the south-west, and that is something that the ACCC has flagged. It has indicated that it will make a final decision by the end of April.

In recent days, as I imagine Mr Purcell is well and truly aware, Saputo has lodged a proposed undertaking with the ACCC on the divestment of Koroit, and I, like Mr Purcell, share concerns that there be appropriate levels of competition in the market and that this exists in each of our three dairy regions. In this instance it is an issue that is confined to the south-west, but certainly the question of strong competition for farmgate milk price is a really important one for our dairy farmers.

I have not spoken to the ACCC. I have spoken to the former federal minister for agriculture about these issues, and the Treasurer has also spoken to his federal counterpart, who is the minister responsible for the ACCC. That was a little while ago now; it was at the time that this was first announced and first flagged. I

believe the ACCC and Saputo have been working through this in the months since then. I am certainly more than happy to work with Mr Purcell to ensure that the concerns that he is raising are conveyed to the new federal Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources, David Littleproud, if that would be of some assistance.

Supplementary question

Mr PURCELL (Western Victoria) (12:10) — I thank the minister for her response. The thing with the ACCC is that Saputo have actually said that they are in discussions in regard to the issue with Murray Goulburn. They have not said that they are looking to divest Murray Goulburn, Koroit. My belief is that they will actually purchase all of Murray Goulburn, including Koroit, and divest elements of that, because the Murray Goulburn Koroit factory is much more efficient. Either way, in regard to these factories that are 25 to 30 kilometres apart the issue is that at some stage it may well get to the situation that if it is sold to them, one of these factories will actually close. So I ask: what guarantees can you offer small towns in regard to employment if such a thing did happen to either of those factories?

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Agriculture) (12:11) — I thank Mr Purcell for his further question. My advice on this, and this has been moving reasonably quickly in recent days, is that Saputo have lodged a proposal with the ACCC about divesting Koroit. There are some media reports today that suggest that there is actually quite a lot of interest in purchasing that plant by some significant and established players in the market, so I am not immediately concerned about the risk of either of the plants in the south-west closing. The quality of milk production is excellent, the quality of the workforce is excellent and there would appear to be quite some interest in the purchase of Koroit in the event that divestment is something that comes about as a result of the work that Saputo are doing with the ACCC. But certainly I can assure Mr Purcell that our efforts to support job creation and the retention of jobs in every part of regional Victoria, including in the south-west, are great, that our record is strong and that we will provide every assurance that it will continue to be so.

Duck hunting season

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan) (12:13) — My question is for the Minister for Agriculture and follows from her verbal and written responses to my questions over the past few weeks about the ability of the government to effectively regulate duck shooting. The Pegasus report that you

told me on 18 February you would not release has been released by others and is damning of the ability of the Game Management Authority (GMA) to enforce duck shooting regulations. Surveys are reporting the presence of protected species on many of the most popular wetlands where we have recently seen massacres of all sorts of birds, including protected birds. In your written response to me on 21 February you told me that:

Authorised officers from the ... (GMA) and other departments and agencies will be out in force over the opening weekend ...

of this season. My question is: what percentage of Victoria's 15 000 wetlands do you expect will be covered by these officers?

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Agriculture) (12:13) — I thank Ms Pennicuik for her question. The Pegasus report that Ms Pennicuik is referring to is now a publicly available document. I am conscious, President, that we might get into some of this in an item that is listed for debate later today, so I probably will not dwell on this for too long. It is a report that the GMA commissioned following my request that they undertake a review into the events of the last duck hunting season opening weekend and also to consider the capability of the GMA itself. It does not make for enjoyable reading at all.

The GMA is a reasonably new entity; it was created in 2014 by the former government. The board, which is substantially a new board, of which the chair has been in place for about a year, have accepted all of the recommendations in the Pegasus report apart from one, which goes to the fundamental question about the design and structure of the GMA. That is really not a question for the board, that is a question for government, and I have asked my department for advice on options that might provide us with better arrangements. The government is very much still considering that part of the report.

I had not proposed that that report be released until we were confident that the operational matters that it goes to were appropriate for release, but it has found its way into the public domain. It now sits on the GMA website so that people to whom it has not been provided and who are interested in this can have a look at it, but it has been widely canvassed in the last week.

Most of our hunters do the right thing, and I think that that is a really important point to emphasise. But what we had last year was some completely unacceptable behaviour by a minority. It was the first real test of the new GMA, and they did not pass it well. The focus now of course is on the arrangements for opening weekend

in 2018, which is the weekend after this weekend coming. We have put in place an additional enforcement effort, and we have amended the regulations, which members in the house would be aware of, as we have spoken of them here before. I have also instructed my department to provide additional personnel and expertise to the GMA to assist with and review operational planning ahead of this year's opening weekend. This is now in place, and the ongoing review of the structure of the regulator is something that we will continue to work on.

But in response to Ms Pennicuik's specific question about the number of wetlands that will be staffed by the multi-agency effort to ensure compliance, I will take that on notice and seek to provide a written response to Ms Pennicuik.

Supplementary question

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan) (12:17) — Thank you for your response, Minister. I have read through the Pegasus report regarding the GMA, and I remind the house that the Greens opposed the formation of the Game Management Authority. I think on reading the Pegasus report you would have to say that it is incapable of actually redeeming itself and doing the job that it is meant to do, which is to enforce the regulations. The recommendations of the report will not go towards fixing that. You referred to the massacre last year, but there have been massacres virtually every year. The Pegasus report goes back to the 2012 Box Flat massacre, which is mentioned there, and many others. Given that the surveys are showing protected species are on many wetlands, will you act now to prevent more massacres by closing those wetlands?

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Agriculture) (12:18) — I thank Ms Pennicuik for her further question. The advice that comes to government about protected species on certain wetlands and the recommendations to close certain wetlands in response to those counts is a decision that will be made in coming days, as is always the case. I have received —

Ms Pennicuik — Yes, but in the past you've been advised to close them and you haven't.

Ms PULFORD — Well, the government has in each instance acted on the recommendation of the Game Management Authority in relation to recommendations about closures. I received advice from the GMA just last night and will be considering that over the remainder of this week with a view to providing that information to hunters who need it in terms of preparing where they are planning on going

and where they are planning on not going in the lead-up to opening weekend.

Regional forest agreements

Ms DUNN (Eastern Metropolitan) (12:19) — My question is for the Special Minister of State representing the Premier. Minister, on 27 March the regional forest agreements (RFAs) between the commonwealth and the state of Victoria for East Gippsland and the Central Highlands will expire. These RFAs exempt native forest logging operations from the application of the commonwealth's Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999. On Friday, 2 March, Justice Mortimer from the Federal Court of Australia gave court orders on the case of *Friends of Leadbeater's Possum Inc. v. VicForests*, such that this case, which may have major implications for the validity of RFAs, is an ongoing concern. Will the Premier hold off rolling over or extending the RFAs in East Gippsland and the Central Highlands pending the outcome of this landmark case in the Federal Court?

Mr JENNINGS (Special Minister of State) (12:20) — Let us backtrack through Ms Dunn's question. Ms Dunn has quite correctly identified that there is a matter before the Federal Court dealing with this in relation to the application of the RFAs, the exemption from the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act and the operations of forestry activity currently and into the future. Because she has put that on the public record — she knows about it; I know about it — she would also know that in fact I probably will be mindful of the determination of the court and not pre-empt it in relation to what it may —

Ms Dunn — So you're not going to roll over or extend?

Mr JENNINGS — No, what I am saying is that I am not pre-empting the consideration of the court and the Victorian government is not pre-empting the consideration of the court. You are also mindful, and I am sure the court is mindful, that in fact come the end of March there is a consideration that needs to be given to the status of the regional forest agreements into the future. At some point in time when the court has made a determination the Victorian government has to consider either as a consequence of that determination or as a consequence of the RFA terminating at the end of March that a decision will need to be made depending upon the appropriate circumstances at the time, the appropriate determination of the court and the appropriate ongoing consideration of the Victorian community's interests as to how the government may

act. I am not in a position to pre-empt them, the Premier is not in a position to pre-empt them at this point in time and my ministerial colleagues, for that matter, are not in a position to pre-empt them prior to those matters either coming together or being considered in lock step in the relevant time frame when decisions would need to be made. So the Victorian government and I are not going to get ahead of the court at this moment.

Supplementary question

Ms DUNN (Eastern Metropolitan) (12:23) — Thank you, Minister, for your answer. The RFA amendment that granted the 13-month extension to the East Gippsland regional forest agreement was signed by the Acting Premier, James Merlino, on 20 January 2017 while the Premier was conveniently on summer holidays. In the amendment it states, and I quote:

The state and commonwealth share a common policy intent to provide stability for forest industries in the East Gippsland region through the continuation of the agreement while the Victorian Forest Industry Taskforce of major stakeholders process is underway by extending the duration of the agreement until 27 March 2018.

Considering you, Minister, have described the Forest Industry Taskforce as being subject to, and I quote, 'an inconclusive truncation', with no outcomes to speak of, will the Premier accept that the state would be breaching the amended agreement if it proceeds to extend or roll over the RFAs?

Mr JENNINGS (Special Minister of State) (12:24) — I thank Ms Dunn for her question. There is a bit of a rub in this question, because I understand Ms Dunn has made it her political mission in life, as is her right, to advocate for the abolition of the Victorian native forest industry, and she has consistently done that and she has consistently argued for conservation outcomes, so she is committed to that outcome. In the absence of a withdrawal of forestry activity in Victoria she would be confronted with an interesting challenge: is it better to actually have a regulated environment through the RFAs and then as a consequence a forest practice that is actually forced to consider not only industry needs but conservation needs in a regulated way or to lead to an unregulated environment? I think she would reach the conclusion that it is better to have a regulated environment, and that is the Victorian government's view.

The PRESIDENT — Mr Ramsay. And, Mr Ramsay, happy birthday.

Metropolitan Fire Brigade enterprise bargaining agreement

Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria) (12:25) — Thank you, President. My question is to the Leader of the Government. Minister, given the confirmation that Mr Blandthorn was engaged by the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC) as part of the Metropolitan Fire Brigade’s enterprise bargaining agreement negotiations, can you advise if his engagement has now ceased or is ongoing?

Mr JENNINGS (Special Minister of State) (12:26) — I thank Mr Ramsay for his question. I am not certain of what confirmation Mr Ramsay is referring to. I am not in a position to be able to confirm myself the employment status of Mr Blandthorn, which is the subject of the question. The nature of that engagement and by whom it was done have not been provided to me, so I am not in a position to say, as he has asserted, that there has been confirmation. I am not certain of that matter because I have not been advised of it.

Supplementary question

Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria) (12:27) — In fact I sat in on question time in the lower house, and I can assure the minister that Mr Merlino confirmed that employment. Given you have taken that question on notice, what is the cost to taxpayers of Mr Blandthorn’s engagement by DPC?

Mr JENNINGS (Special Minister of State) (12:27) — I was not actually able to listen to question time in the Legislative Assembly today. Sometimes I am able to do so; sometimes I am not able to do so, and today was one of those days where I did not. Because I have not received any advice on this subject in relation to the matters that he has raised, I will need to take advice on that matter. I am certain the President will have an expectation that I will furnish some response in relation to my inadequate answer at this moment.

Community correction orders

Mr O’DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) (12:28) — My question is to the Minister for Corrections. Minister, the Auditor-General revealed the number of high-risk offenders remaining in the community on a community correction order (CCO) skyrocketed under the Andrews government from just a handful in 2014 to more than 3000 in 2016. Minister, as at the end of February this year how many dangerous, high-risk offenders were avoiding jail and were living in the community on a CCO?

Ms TIERNEY (Minister for Corrections) (12:28) — I do thank the member for his question. The fact is that the number of CCOs has increased since 2014, when there was the abolition of suspended sentences. The fact is that since we have come to government we have taken significant action to reform sentencing, unlike those that botched the baseline sentencing model. We have restricted the courts from using CCOs for some of the most serious crimes, we have created statutory minimum sentences for aggravated carjacking and aggravated home invasion and we have passed legislation to increase sentences for 12 crimes, including murder and rape.

Supplementary question

Mr O’DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) (12:29) — As the Leader of the Government alluded to, President, I will be, in due course, seeking your guidance for a written answer to that question. By way of supplementary I ask: Minister, noting the significant increase in reoffending for those on a community correction order, what was the recidivism rate for the high-risk offenders remaining in the community on a community correction order in the 2016–17 financial year?

Ms TIERNEY (Minister for Corrections) (12:30) — I thank the member for his question. I do not have that level of detail in front of me, but I can assure the house that those that committed murder and rape and were in the community are not now.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Can I also just indicate that it is a big week for birthdays. Ms Springle added an extra year to her life yesterday.

Youth justice system

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (12:31) — My question is to the Minister for Families and Children. Minister, a young offender known to be a main instigator in the riots at Parkville was transferred to Malmsbury, where he sexually assaulted a female staff member. In addition to this he has been taunting Victoria Police on Facebook, and after being transferred back to Parkville once again he assaulted a staff member, this time with a hammer and chisel on the staff member’s first day on the job. Minister, with a category 1 incident occurring every 13 hours in youth justice, why is someone who has been transferred several times between youth justice facilities and with a string of violent offences, including rioting and sexually assaulting staff, allowed to remain in a youth justice facility?

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) (12:31) — Thank you to the member for her question. Can I say at the outset that just yesterday we had the Liberal chair of a parliamentary inquiry in her foreword complain that there were too many young offenders on remand. They were complaining that there were too many young people locked up in custody and on remand and therefore wanting them to be out in the community on bail, despite the fact that they have previously complained about young offenders being on bail.

What I can say to those opposite is that our government has put in place a significant overhaul of the youth justice system as well as how we respond to youth offending. We are putting in place the toughest bail laws and sentencing laws for young offenders as well as a significant overhaul of how young people are dealt with whilst they are in custody. Those opposite remember very well that they tried to scuttle a bill —

Ms Crozier — There were no riots under us.

Ms MIKAKOS — Ms Crozier claims there were no riots under the Liberals. This is extraordinary. It is no accident that the parliamentary inquiry did not ask for a single document that related to the pre-November 2014 period — not a single document. She has the audacity to come in here and claim that there were no riots at all under the previous coalition government when in fact the WorkCover data shows that there were more claims and a higher level of payouts because of staff injuries during the previous coalition government. There was actually a higher level of WorkCover payments made during the time that Ms Wooldridge was the minister, because in fact we did have very serious staff injuries.

What I can say to the member is that we have not waited for a deficient report to be handed down that does not explore issues before November 2014. We have gotten on with the job of putting in place significant reforms of this system. We did in fact commission the first independent review of the youth justice system by Professor Ogloff and Penny Armytage. Even before that report was publicly released in August of last year we had started implementing those recommendations, with a \$50 million response to the most pressing recommendations in that report that are seeing significant changes, as well as more safety and emergency response team staff being recruited as part of that. Forty-one additional staff were funded in late 2016 and another 21 staff were funded last year. We are putting in place more staff in these facilities to ensure that staff and young offenders can be kept safe. We are also going in and having to retrofit facilities that

Ms Wooldridge commissioned, like the newly secured facilities at Malmesbury that we have had to go and fix up.

Ms Crozier — On a point of order, President, the minister has gone nowhere near to answering this very specific question in relation to why this young offender remains in that facility and has not been transferred.

Ms Shing interjected.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I might have said that if you had not helped — or hindered. I agree that the minister has not gone anywhere near answering the question, but I have got to say that she has faced provocation from persistent interjections. It is pretty hard for me to actually bring her back to the matter if other interjections are actually giving her an opportunity to respond to them. I would suggest that when any member places a question they might sit and wait for the answer. It would be a lot easier for me to bring a minister back to being more responsive to a question if indeed, as I said, there were not so many persistent interjections. The minister to conclude.

Ms MIKAKOS — The point that I would make to the member in terms of the premise of her question is that she would infer that this young offender should be out on the streets. Would she like him to be released into the community? She knows full well that transfers to prisons are in fact decisions made by the independent Youth Parole Board. In fact there have been a number of transfers during the time that I have been minister, and when we did transfer young people to prison we had criticism from those opposite. So can they be consistent for at least one week? On one day you want compassion; on another day you want them released from remand and you want group hugs. Can you be consistent for at least one week?

Supplementary question

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (12:37) — Minister, last year you said, and I quote:

There are very serious consequences now for assaulting staff or engaging in property damage whilst you're incarcerated, as well as committing serious offences while they're in the community.

With this young offender's violent record since your comments were made, doesn't this just prove that you say one thing to get media off your back whilst the exact opposite happens and continues to happen each and every day within our youth justice facilities?

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) (12:38) — No, and the legislation that put in place these more severe consequences was legislation that you tried to scuttle.

Youth justice system

Ms FITZHERBERT (Southern Metropolitan) (12:38) — My question is also to the Minister for Families and Children. Minister, last year the Andrews government said vulnerable or violent young people sharing cells or double-bunking in youth justice has made it difficult for authorities to supervise and separate them. Minister, for how many calendar days in 2017 and 2018 has double-bunking occurred in either the Parkville or the Malmsbury youth justice centres?

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) (12:38) — I thank the member for her question. That is a number that I do not have with me at the moment, but what I would say to the member is the point that I was making at the time was that there were advocates who were opposing the gazettal of the Grevillea unit who were in fact advocating for this as the alternative to transferring young people to that facility. With 60 beds being offline, that would have necessitated a very significant number of young offenders to be double-bunked for a prolonged period of time as part of the necessary fortification works that were then required.

So it is important that the member understands that there are situations where young offenders themselves request to share a room with another person, and there are a very small number of rooms in our youth justice facilities that enable young people to share a room. This might occur, for example, when we have an Indigenous young offender who might wish to share a room with another Indigenous young person. So it does occur from time to time, but it is certainly the exception and not the rule. It needs to be understood as quite a separate matter to the context in which I was making those remarks, which related to having 60 beds offline.

Ms Fitzherbert might well now be advocating for the position of Hugh de Kretser and the Human Rights Law Centre, who were in fact putting this up as the alternative option at the time. So it is really important when you want to come in here and try to put words in my mouth and misquote things that I may have said in relation to a different context that you understand that it was in that context that I made those comments.

Just yesterday Ms Fitzherbert tabled a report in which she said we had too many young people on remand. Maybe it is now Liberal Party policy that we release

more young people on bail. That seems to be Liberal Party policy now — that we release more young people on bail. We make no apology for the fact that we have put in place the toughest bail and sentencing laws for young offenders in this state's history and that we are getting on with overhauling the youth justice system — something that never happened in four years. Now we have got Mary Wooldridge saying to the community, 'Trust me. I'm going to build another secure facility'. Well, we saw what happened when she built Malmsbury.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Minister, I have been fairly lenient in terms of the remarks that you have made in response to this question. You have conceded at the outset that you did not have the information with you and have then proceeded really to a debate of the matter and a reflection on the opposition, which as you understand is not part of our question time protocols. Minister, do you need to conclude or will we simply save your energy for the supplementary question?

Ms MIKAKOS — Thank you, President. President, I have another 40-odd seconds to go, and of course I am responding to interjections from those opposite. But what I can say to the member is that we have not waited for her report. We have gotten on with the job. We are taking action in relation to reforming the system with a new facility being commissioned, fortifying the existing youth justice facilities, putting more staff in place and also making legislative changes. What we saw from those opposite over four years was putting an Ombudsman's report in the bottom drawer —

The PRESIDENT — Thank you, Minister. Minister, I did say specifically that you were not just debating but reflecting on the opposition.

Supplementary question

Ms FITZHERBERT (Southern Metropolitan) (12:43) — I will leave aside the deliberate distortion of the contents of the report and the opposition position; we can deal with that another day. Category 1 assaults in youth justice are now at record levels, with a 116 per cent increase on the previous year, so I ask: is double bunking the reason for this dramatic increase in young offenders being assaulted, and if not, what is?

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) (12:44) — I thank the member for her supplementary question. As I have explained on numerous occasions now, we have in fact overhauled the deficient incident reporting system put in place by the previous minister. It is not accidental that there was not a finding or recommendation about the incident

reporting system in Ms Fitzherbert's report yesterday, because when they investigated this, and this was specifically included in the terms of reference, they found that the smoking gun that they were looking for was in fact Ms Wooldridge's incident reporting system that she put in place in 2011. It was in fact her system she put in place that meant that serious incidents were not being reported.

Ms Fitzherbert — On a point of order, President, my question was very clearly about why the assaults are happening, not the reporting system.

Ms MIKAKOS — I am coming to that.

The PRESIDENT — Minister Mikakos.

Ms MIKAKOS — Thank you, President. As I was explaining to the member, we have had to overhaul this deficient reporting system. We have now put in place a better reporting system with a wider variety of incidents being captured in this data, including self-harm incidents. I would have thought that the member who professes her interest on health matters would actually welcome that. We are actually capturing more —

The PRESIDENT — Thank you, Minister.

Youth justice centres

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (12:46) — My question is again to the Minister for Families and Children. Minister, a former youth justice staff member is quoted as saying, 'I was amazed when I saw 15 clients literally walk out of the supposedly most secure unit in Victoria for juvenile justice. And yet no-one was held accountable — no manager, no CEO, no director'. Minister, has anyone ever been held accountable for Victoria's largest ever youth justice mass escape, and if so, who?

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) (12:46) — I thank the member for her question. We had the Victorian people in fact vote out those sitting opposite because when they commissioned the Malmsbury Youth Justice Centre, and Ms Wooldridge was in fact the responsible minister, they did not do a proper job. We had to put funding in the budget last year to go and fix up Malmsbury. We are in the process now of improving the fencing around Malmsbury as well. We have had to go in and fortify new buildings in Malmsbury — so-called secure facilities in Malmsbury — to make sure that this situation cannot happen again. Yet Ms Wooldridge thinks that she can be trusted to build a secure facility out in the outer suburbs — and she will not tell us where — for young offenders with drug addiction

issues. She cannot be trusted to be building any secure facility.

The PRESIDENT — Minister, the question was very specific. There was an investigation into the particular incident and presumably there was an outcome from that investigation. So far it would be my understanding from your response, if it is accurate, that that outcome was that Ms Wooldridge was responsible for the breakout. Either that is true or it is not true, and I suggest if it is not true that you move on to answer the question, do not debate and do not reflect on the previous minister.

Ms MIKAKOS — Thank you, President. I have actually spoken about these matters at some length previously, and I have spoken about how I asked the former Chief Commissioner of Police, Neil Comrie, to review this specific incident and other incidents as well. In fact the executive summary of that report has been publicly released — the findings of that particular incident and our response to it. Our response to his recommendations has in fact been to go in and to fortify the secure — so-called secure — units that Ms Wooldridge commissioned. So it is important that the historical context be understood about these matters. Ms Fitzherbert and Ms Crozier had no interest in looking at any of this in their inquiry, of course — the Liberal-Greens alliance inquiry — but it is important that the members opposite go and have a look at Neil Comrie's report. They should go and have a look at Mr Comrie's findings and his recommendations, because they have in fact been publicly released. They are matters that I have spoken about in this house on numerous occasions.

We have gone about reforming the system. We have been implementing Mr Comrie's recommendations. We have also sought his advice in terms of the design imperatives that need to go into the new high-security facility that is being built at Cherry Creek, because we want to make sure that the mistakes made by those opposite are not going to occur again in relation to this new facility. We are addressing matters that have come about as a result of independent reviews, including the independent Ogloff-Armytage review, where we have accepted, either in full or in principle, every single one of those recommendations, and we are getting on with implementing those recommendations. Now those opposite may not —

Ms Crozier — On a point of order, President, I noticed that about a minute into the response you asked the minister to come back to the question, because it was very specific. She is still debating the issue, and I would ask you to draw her back to the specific question

that I asked: who is responsible for the mass escape at Malmesbury?

The PRESIDENT — Minister, the question was fairly specific: whether or not there was any accountability of any individual in respect of that breakout. I appreciate you taking up other recommendations and so forth, and I thank you for actually returning to being responsive to that question in most of the remarks that you have made subsequent to my last comments. I would be keen to understand if there was an accountability position established in that review as well.

Ms MIKAKOS — Thank you, President. What we have seen are significant changes to management. We made a machinery-of-government change, where youth justice moved across to the Department of Justice and Regulation. We have had experienced corrections staff take over the running of our youth justice system. We had a change to the executive director of the youth justice system. Those opposite — Ms Crozier — were calling Mr Comrie’s review a whitewash. Let us not forget that. We put in place independent reviews, and we had those opposite seeking to play political games with it. We have got on with implementing the changes that need to be made, and there have been very significant reforms that have been made — more than a billion dollars of funding going to the youth justice system — investment and changes that never occurred from those opposite.

Supplementary question

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (12:52) — Minister, the Premier often says that what happens under his leadership is his responsibility. Why have you never followed the Premier’s direction and accepted responsibility for Victoria’s largest ever youth justice mass escape?

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) (12:52) — Those opposite want to wash their hands of anything that happened or in fact did not happen pre-November 2014. They want to come in here and suggest that somehow all these issues started in November 2014. Even your own report does not find that. You did not ask for a single document pre-November 2014, but even your own report talks about the longstanding issues of the youth justice system. That was certainly what came through from those individuals who came forward and gave evidence to the inquiry. You did not want to explore these issues, but that is certainly the evidence you were presented with and that is certainly what comes through in some aspects of your report. So you might want to play

political games with this matter, but we are getting on with the job. We are getting on with fixing things that you never addressed for four whole years.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Answers

Mr JENNINGS (Special Minister of State) (12:54) — There are nine written responses to questions on notice: 4984, 11 634, 11 862, 12 381–2, 12 483, 12 518, 12 526 and 12 546.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Written responses

The PRESIDENT (12:54) — In respect of today’s questions, Mr Young’s supplementary question to Ms Mikakos, the context of me seeking a written response on that is that Mr Young was looking at ways in which men are being encouraged to participate in men’s sheds. I see that those sorts of strategies might well be of interest to members of the house. Whilst the answer did cover a number of matters and ticked off on Mr Young’s points, I think that sort of promotion of men’s sheds perhaps was not covered — so that is one day. Ms Pennicuik’s substantive question to Ms Pulford is one day; Mr Ramsay’s supplementary question to Mr Jennings, two days, involving a minister in another place; both Mr O’Donohue’s substantive question and supplementary question to Ms Tierney, one day; Ms Crozier’s first substantive question to Ms Mikakos, one day; Ms Fitzherbert’s substantive and supplementary question to Ms Mikakos, one day; and Ms Crozier’s second substantive question to Ms Mikakos, one day.

Members have raised two queries with me about seeking the reinstatement of questions. One is from Mr O’Sullivan. I had already ordered a written response to this question, which was provided. I have no ability to order a second written response. In regard to a question by Ms Wooldridge on 21 February to the Minister for Training and Skills, in the supplementary question Ms Mikakos sought details of how organisations that might have been affected by changes in funding could seek to increase their allocations in 2018 — in other words, whether or not there were some processes whereby they could seek to increase the allocations. The answer given was quite a responsive answer to the overall question, but perhaps that particular matter was not provided by the minister and I would seek the reinstatement of that supplementary question.

CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS

Eastern Metropolitan Region

Ms WOOLDRIDGE (Eastern Metropolitan) (12:57) — My constituency question is to the Minister for Public Transport in the other place, and it relates to the promised extra train services from Eltham. This line has had significant work in terms of the Hurstbridge line, and the removal authority now says the project will be completed by mid-2018. In 2014 the Labor Party candidates proclaimed they would introduce three new morning peak-hour services originating at Eltham and Hurstbridge if elected, yet four years later long-suffering travellers are still waiting for two of these services to begin. All that has happened is that one service that began last August was pulled back from Greensborough to Eltham. The minister is on record as saying, ‘The government is getting on with the Hurstbridge line upgrade to enable extra services, including two more in the peak’. So clearly my question is: with these works now finally due to be completed, when exactly will the government introduce a new timetable, including the extra Eltham services that the government promised to deliver four years ago?

The PRESIDENT — There are a couple of meetings and so forth today that I think members are involved in, so it might be an appropriate time to actually finish for lunch.

Sitting suspended 12.58 a.m. until 2.02 p.m.

Eastern Metropolitan Region

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) (14:02) — My constituency question is directed to the Minister for Families and Children — a fantastic minister, Jenny Mikakos. It is to do with men’s sheds in the eastern metropolitan area, and in particular I have been out to one in Doncaster and also one in the Mount Waverley area in recent months. They are fantastic facilities. They are a place where men can get together and enjoy each other’s company but also use their hands. A lot of ex-tradies that I come across just like to use tools, and when they retire it gives them an opportunity — and there are a lot of people who are not ex-tradies that just enjoy using tools as well. A lot of them make toys for great causes. So the question I ask the minister is: is there another round of funding coming up to renew and build new sheds, and could she let me know how these men’s sheds could apply?

Northern Metropolitan Region

Mr ONDARCHIE (Northern Metropolitan) (14:03) — The constituency question I have today is for the attention of the Minister for Education, James Merlino, and it is in regard to Reservoir East Primary School, which has pretty much been left behind in the education revolution that the Andrews government claims is the new Education State. The school has paint peeling from the ceilings, and teaching equipment has been crammed into storage areas. There have been burst pipes and roof leaks in what is a makeshift school hall. It is not unusual to see the staff members wandering around the school with power tools fixing leaks and holes where they can. The school received some money for a master plan, which is somewhat out of date now, and it pretty well has been ignored budget after budget after budget. The school needs about \$8 million for the work to bring it up to speed so the children can have good facilities for a reasonable education. So my question for the minister is: will he write to me advising when Reservoir East Primary School will get the funding they need to bring their school up to speed?

Eastern Metropolitan Region

Ms DUNN (Eastern Metropolitan) (14:04) — My constituency question is for the Minister for Planning, and it is in relation to a land advisory standing committee panel process for the Boronia Heights secondary college site. Community members have reported to me that as part of the panel process they were unable to submit their preferred options in relation to the zoning of the land. They reported to me that the panel had come to a view that the land was zoned as neighbourhood residential and that they had no ability to impact any changes in relation to this, which seems at complete odds to the standing committee’s terms of reference. So my question is: what action will the minister take to ensure there is an opportunity for community members to make verbal submissions to the panel as to the most appropriate zonings on the site, particularly in relation to the biodiversity hotspots and the remnant vegetation there?

Northern Metropolitan Region

Ms PATTEN (Northern Metropolitan) (14:06) — My constituency question is for the Minister for Planning. I recently had a meeting with the Pentridge Community Action Group. They are pretty happy with the way the development of the Pentridge prison site in Coburg is going, except for D Division, which is up for sale again, and the asking price is \$4.5 million. The government seems to be having great difficulty selling

this, and I think one of the reasons is because it has a covenant over it that a heritage museum must be built and must include at least eight cells of that building. As the museum has not been constructed, we have not been able to find a developer at the moment and it has been for sale for quite some time, so the community group is asking: would the government consider purchasing D Division to establish the museum as well as public housing?

Northern Victoria Region

Ms SYMES (Northern Victoria) (14:07) — My constituency question is for the Minister for Tourism and Major Events. This weekend will be the fourth annual Wall to Wall Festival in Benalla. The festival has been a resounding success and has doubled in size each year, with about 5800 people visiting in 2017. This year 20 top street artists from around Australia, the US and Malaysia, including local artists, will paint the town walls. The town has been transformed into one big outdoor gallery. This weekend will see the painting of 22 murals, a wooden re-creation of a milk bar, a paint-by-numbers interactive community event, tours, inflatable sculptures and many workshops. The Labor government provided \$125 000 for this year's event, and what I am after from the Minister for Tourism and Major Events is information on how this investment translates into that all-important tourism dollar and job creation.

Eastern Victoria Region

Ms BATH (Eastern Victoria) (14:08) — My constituency question is for the Minister for Agriculture. Builders and building supplies across Gippsland are struggling to access locally sourced and processed timber framing. Imported baltic pine product is available, but it is not the same quality as the local timber. Since the closure of Carter Holt Harvey in Morwell the processed timber comes in from South Australia, but the local suppliers say there is uncertainty in the future of that timber supply. Only yesterday Leongatha suppliers completely ran out of the local timber for pine decking, and builders had no option but to use Malaysian rainforest merbau. This situation is compounded by the Andrews Labor government's disgraceful decision to halve the timber supply to the Heyfield hardwood mill. Victorians are aware that the government does not have the timber industry's back, but at the very least what is the minister going to do to support our local markets, keep builders viable and support local jobs?

Eastern Victoria Region

Mr MULINO (Eastern Victoria) (14:09) — My constituency question is for the Minister for Families and Children. Local men's sheds provide safe, friendly and inclusive places where men from all walks of life are able to come together on projects of mutual interest and be connected to their community. Last year I had the pleasure of announcing a number of men's sheds, including \$60 000 for the Mooroolbark Men's Shed and also funding of over \$35 000 for the Willum Warrain Men's Shed in the Assembly electorate of Hastings, which is quite a remarkable social entity for the Indigenous committee in that area. The question I have for the minister is: what further support is the Andrews government providing to ensure that more communities in my electorate of Eastern Victoria Region will have access to men's sheds?

Southern Metropolitan Region

Ms FITZHERBERT (Southern Metropolitan) (14:09) — My constituency question is for the Minister for Public Transport in the other place. An asbestos pipe was unearthed at the Anzac station site on Friday, 23 February, but project managers reportedly waited until Thursday, 1 March, to stop work and begin removing it. The *Age* reports:

They also waited until Thursday evening to put up signage warning the public of the find.

Residents posted on Twitter pictures of workers fully enclosed in protective clothing working on the site while residents, cyclists and workers moved around the area with no dust barriers in sight. What assurances can the minister offer in response to the concerns of residents and local workers, that their health has not been compromised by this response to asbestos at the Anzac station site?

South Eastern Metropolitan Region

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) (14:10) — I raise a constituency question for the Minister for Police, and it is in response to a communication I have received from Jasna Dolic. Jasna Dolic is Bosnian born, and recently she was awarded a City of Monash Golden Plate Award for food safety for Yassna's Pizzeria cafe and catering. Jasna wrote that the business had been going well for two years but it is now at a critical point because she has to fight constant burglaries. She has been targeted five times in the past 12 months, and she is devastated. She calls on the government to deal with the escalating crime rate, especially in the Assembly seat of Mulgrave, which is where this business is located. She asks for tougher

sentencing and legal punishments as police cannot do anything without a legal system revision. The human rights of hardworking citizens are being neglected and criminals live in almost hotel-like prisons. I ask the minister to visit and meet with local traders in shopping strips to see what the government can do to address their concerns and prevent the destruction of their businesses.

PLANNING SCHEME AMENDMENT GC65

Debate resumed.

Mr DALIDAKIS (Minister for Trade and Investment) (14:12) — I rise to speak against order of the day 1, revocation of amendment GC65 — West Gate tunnel project. The motion before us is one that regrettably was put forward by Mr Davis. I note that Mr Davis is in the chamber but not in his place. However, he is here at least to hear my contribution against his revocation motion. What this revocation motion does is seek to disadvantage the people of western Melbourne and also beyond. It will affect people not just in the Geelong region but right through to the west of Victoria and including the people to the north of the Geelong Freeway corridor. This motion to stop the West Gate tunnel project will result in greater transport time for commuters who use their vehicles to get to work.

The West Gate tunnel project will provide a second major crossing to the west; this one will go over the Maribyrnong River. I say ‘second major’ because there are a number of smaller crossings, including Footscray Road, amongst others, but this will be the second most significant crossing that we as a community will see built in our lifetimes — one of the largest infrastructure projects that people in Melbourne will see built before their very eyes. Of course there are a number of projects that could fight for that title. We as a government have worked very hard on a range of infrastructure projects, not least of which is Melbourne Metro. Why? Because we are a government that does everything for all people. We do not just provide one mode of transport for one group of people. We do not provide public transport such as trains to the exclusion of people who use roads and we do not provide roads to the exclusion of people who use public transport. We look to provide a range of infrastructure projects that will allow our community, our businesses and our people to get around the city in a number of different ways — road, rail, tram, train, bus. We can do it all.

What Mr Davis is attempting to do with the revocation of the planning amendment is effectively to take away our ability to progress with the infrastructure project in

and of itself. This is not about pursuing a good planning outcome at all. This is in fact an act of vandalism — an act of economic vandalism — the likes of which I am not sure the public have ever seen before in this place or beyond. What we have is a project that will create 6000 jobs. That will include jobs for 500 apprentices, trainees and graduates and up to 150 jobs for former automotive workers.

It is not a surprise that Mr Davis cares little for automotive workers. He was part of a government that ran the automotive manufacturing sector out of Victoria when the then government, under Premier Denis Napthine, sided with the federal government under Prime Minister Tony Abbott. They said goodbye to the automotive manufacturing workers, so it is no surprise that they care little for automotive manufacturing workers being able to be re-skilled, retooled and re-employed in a new way in relation to the West Gate tunnel. And it does not matter to Mr Davis that 6000 jobs are being put at risk through his politicisation and political bastardry in this place, because those 6000 jobs that will be affected do not include his own. He is very happily ensconced in this place. His job is protected by the fact that he is the number one person on the Liberal Party wish list for the next election. In effect Mr Davis will have a job regardless, so he has put forward this politically opportunistic revocation motion in a way that unfortunately does little to provide confidence to our community about what we are doing in this place not only to build infrastructure and provide opportunities for work but also to make life easier for commuters on a daily basis.

When you consider that the West Gate tunnel will indeed take 28 000 vehicles and 8000 trucks off the West Gate Bridge and 22 000 vehicles off the Bolte Bridge, already you can see the immense benefit that it will provide to our travelling public, not the least of whom are those people that would then use the West Gate tunnel as that secondary crossing. But of course it is not just the people that travel along the West Gate corridor that will benefit significantly from this infrastructure project. It also benefits significantly people in our inner west — a traditional heartland of the Labor Party and where my father worked almost his entire life, travelling across the West Gate Bridge and through those streets in his little sedan when he went to work every morning and, thankfully, came home safely every evening. This will take thousands of trucks off local streets with a 24/7 truck ban from 2022 to improve safety and reduce noise.

Importantly, Acting President Morris — I am sure that you will appreciate this more than most on your side — it will also give Victoria’s economy an \$11 billion

boost, and that boost is not limited to just people in the City of Melbourne. That includes businesses across the supply chain right throughout regional Victoria, including as far away as Benalla, where a local steel fabrication business will be given the work through the supply chain to support this very project that is being put at risk by, as I said earlier, politicisation — the use of a revocation motion, a most serious and egregious use of a parliamentary instrument to attack an infrastructure project that has serious and significant benefits not just for today but for tomorrow, and not just for tomorrow but beyond, and not just beyond for one generation but for many, many generations to come. This is a project that we were given a mandate for. This is a project that the Labor Party took to the last election.

Mr Davis — No, it's not the same project.

Mr DALIDAKIS — Mr Davis is interjecting and is not in his place. Let me tell you, because I certainly am in mine and I have the call, that Mark Stone, the chief executive of the Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI), said:

The government was elected with a mandate to deliver important projects like this one. Contracts have been signed, work has started and the project should proceed.

They are very important words from a man that is often on your side, Acting President — not that you sit on your side at the moment, you sit in the middle, and in a very regal way I might say; but you sit in the middle nonetheless in a way that belies your political background. Chief executive Mark Stone has managed to put it so succinctly; let me repeat it for you one more time. Let us hope that Mr Davis is listening. This is your motion, Mr Davis — through you, Chair. You should listen to the words of Mark Stone, the chief executive of VCCI, because you are so far ignoring the words of the leader of the business community in Melbourne, who says, and again I quote verbatim:

The government was elected with a mandate to deliver important projects like this one. Contracts have been signed, work has started and the project should proceed.

Mr Davis might not like to listen to me; he might like to talk through my contribution, because this is an inconvenient truth to Mr Davis. He is an economic vandal, and he does not want to listen to the words of respected members of our business community, respected members of our social community or respected leaders of our greater community. He is not interested in listening to the words of Mark Stone, because it does not help his argument. Why? Because his argument is facile. His argument holds absolutely no weight — no weight intellectually, no weight

politically and no weight from a policy context. In fact the only reason that Mr Davis is grandstanding is that he wants to try and oppose something that the Labor Party is putting forward. He wants to try and attack a project that we went to the election with and he is now trying to oppose.

Dr Ratnam interjected.

Mr DALIDAKIS — And of course there are interjections from the Greens — the people that are as pure as the driven snow and yet so pious, sitting here interjecting away. Why? Because they want to put tens of thousands of trucks back on inner western and inner-city Melbourne streets. They actually do not care about the residents of Footscray, Seddon and Yarraville. All they want to do is grandstand and see a project knocked off, so they get together with the Liberals.

Ms Pennicuik interjected.

Mr DALIDAKIS — And they are interjecting again. They want to pretend that they are sweet and spice and all things nice, but they want to interject. They cannot handle the truth. They and Jack Nicholson share something in common: they cannot handle the truth, nor can Mr Davis, nor can the little coalition that is coming together between the Greens political party and the Liberal-National coalition, who are wanting to be economic vandals not just to businesses in Benalla but businesses in Melbourne, to our residents in inner-city Melbourne and our residents in Geelong and Ballarat — our beloved residents of Ballarat. The residents of Ballarat will also be able to use this infrastructure. This infrastructure is not to be used only at the discretion of people in the inner west or Geelong, although they will predominantly be the users; in fact it is also to be used by those beyond Geelong to the boundary and the borders, beyond to our west, to Warrnambool and beyond into South Australia. If people come in that way, they will have access to a brand-new corridor that they would not have had access to otherwise.

I understand if people are suspicious of politicians standing here using the opportunity to push forward our point of view; I can respect that people would have question marks about that. I quoted from Mark Stone earlier — twice in case people were not listening — but let me quote for you also the national chief executive of the property council, a gentleman by the name of Ken Morrison, who said in relation to revocation motions in general:

... as an exercise in good governance, this is a shocker.

Politicians using a political chamber to let off steam on a controversial issue is not new. But actively overturning the legitimate decisions of consent authorities is quite another.

That was Mr Morrison. I have also quoted Mr Stone. Let me tell you from today's *Herald Sun*, that great virtue of a newspaper, I just wish to read this to you. It is not my language, so I want to make sure I quote correctly from it:

It says:

Dear Victorian members of Parliament.

Re: Melbourne's much-needed alternative to the West Gate bridge

For Victoria's sake —

not your own, Dr Ratnam, that was not in it; I am just ad-libbing —

the Parliament must not stop the West Gate tunnel project.

Using parliamentary processes to overturn planning decisions for political reasons, would be irresponsible — and we all know from east-west's cancellation that it would negatively impact Victoria's economy.

Note that I am reading this completely, irrespective of whether it supports us in one part or attacks us in another. It goes on:

Costs increase, delays increase and Melbourne cannot get better if project and planning decisions are subject to divisive politics.

The West Gate tunnel project has a contract — and construction has begun — with a workforce that will peak at 6000 Victorians.

That is 6000 families — and this is not in the advertisement — that Mr Davis wants to deny a wage and the ability to feed their children, pay their mortgage, send their children to school and pay their own transport costs. That is not good enough for Mr Davis. He has a job, and he does not care, come hither or thither, whether somebody else has a job because as long as his job is ensured he does not care for anybody else's.

The advertisement goes on:

Investors need to know that when they sign a contract with the state of Victoria, it will be honoured.

The West Gate tunnel project will:

remove 9000 trucks from local streets;

connect Victorian producers to global markets, via the port of Melbourne;

cut 20 minutes off commuting times and release new housing;

safeguard Melbourne from being shut down by one accident on West Gate Bridge.

Melbourne has not successfully built a major motorway since 2010 —

under the last Labor government —

but the population has grown by half a million people in this time.

Victorians need more and better infrastructure — not more politics.

I could not have said it better myself. But this advertisement is not from me, it is not from the government and it is not from the Labor Party; it is signed off by the Australian Logistics Council, the Urban Development Institute of Australia, Infrastructure Partnerships Australia, the G21, the Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Victorian Transport Association.

In the last 12 seconds of my contribution I can do nothing more than let that advertisement stand in *Hansard* for time immemorial so that those opposite can understand the risks that they pose to our economy and our community going forward. We must oppose this revocation motion under every circumstance. I move my time be extended.

Mr JENNINGS (Special Minister of State) (14:27) — I thank Mr Dalidakis for his contribution, and in the spirit of his contribution being extended I pretty much if not exactly mirror Mr Dalidakis's contribution, because I think he and I wholeheartedly share the concerns of this government that in fact this Parliament is on the cusp of acting in an irresponsible way that will deny the citizens of Victoria the great opportunity that the West Gate tunnel project will be able to afford them in terms of the benefits for commuter travel — for our community to travel safely and in a better way through the metropolitan landscape, whether they are moving primarily from the west into the city, to the ports or to the northern and eastern suburbs.

Very importantly for that traffic, for those going home at night as they traverse the metropolitan road network during the course of a working week, there are major benefits that derive from this project that I think at the moment the Parliament is at risk of ignoring — turning its back on the community benefit that will be derived from this project and indeed exercising in a way its power to revoke a planning scheme amendment in a fashion that is now becoming a regular occurrence in this chamber. This is something that I think the community would have some concerns about. Indeed

Mr Davis's behaviour in this chamber on many occasions —

Mr Davis interjected.

Mr JENNINGS — In response to some of the revocation motions that may have existed previously, I am going to quote in my contribution later on the words of your current leader, who did not want the Parliament to be used to revoke planning scheme amendments.

Mr Davis interjected.

Mr JENNINGS — The words of your current leader, the Leader of the Opposition, who refused for the Parliament to be an instrument for denying projects that have community benefit, denying opportunities for social housing and denying other opportunities — in this case, major road infrastructure.

This Parliament is on the cusp of acting in a totally irresponsible way, and a number of prominent organisations in the community have called that out. A number of key members of our community have called that out, and I will refer to those during the course of my contribution. The important elements of the West Gate tunnel project are not something that have all of a sudden sprung into the consciousness of the community or the Parliament. Indeed there has been a lengthy statutory process that has led us to this point. The Parliament today wants to revoke the planning scheme amendment which would allow works to continue into the future and to deny the project from proceeding.

The project was designed to be concluded in 2022. It will take over 9000 trucks off local roads. It will introduce a 24-hour, seven-day-a-week truck ban in the inner west on Francis Street, Somerville Road, Buckley Street, Moore Street, Blackshaws Road and Hudsons Road. Those curfews will be enshrined in legislation. It will reduce by 20 minutes travel times between the city and Melbourne's west. The business case and the planning for this project were predicated on a 16 per cent reduction in serious crashes. It will see 70 kilometres of new traffic lanes configured within a 17-kilometre journey along those roads from Kororoit Creek Road to Wurundjeri Way. Within that, there are associated benefits to the community which will include over 9 kilometres of new and replaced noise walls, meaning quieter homes and parks, on the West Gate Freeway. It is designed to increase upgraded walking and cycling paths — 14 kilometres of those paths, including a new 2.5-kilometre veloway for cyclists — completing the missing link to the Federation Trail.

It has also been designed to achieve a 9-hectare improvement of new green open space and wetlands in the inner western suburbs. There are many, many reasons why this project will actually address many, many community concerns that have been expressed over many years in relation to the impact upon cars and trucks. Most specifically in relation to the inner west it will deal with better access in and out of the port. It will deal with better access into the city, and indeed I reiterate that it will take 28 000 vehicles and 8000 or 9000 trucks — depending on which notes I am referring to, but quite a significant number of trucks — off the West Gate Bridge and 22 000 off the Bolte Bridge.

That has a benefit in its own right, but beyond that it has the ability to create 6000 jobs —

Ms Symes — 400 in Benalla.

Mr JENNINGS — Four hundred in Benalla, I am reminded by my colleague Ms Symes, who represents that community and who is mindful not only of the immediate construction effort but in fact of the supply chain and the skill sharing of this scheme across our community in the way in which the government intends to make sure it is implemented, which will include an additional 500 jobs for apprentices, trainees and graduates and will also include up to 150 former auto workers who will be able to participate in this important infrastructure project.

I indicated a couple of minutes ago that this project has not bubbled to the surface surprising the Parliament or surprising the people. There has been a lengthy statutory process undertaken, and the project went through a rigorous environment effects statement (EES) process. There were over 500 submissions that were received on the EES. A number of hearings were actually held in Footscray between August and September of last year. From them a report went to the Minister for Planning, who then took recommendations from the consideration of that consultation process to introduce the planning scheme instrument and to provide approvals for this project.

When the planning minister responded in December — taking into account his assessment of the project, based upon the EES and following the public hearings and the advisory committee report — he identified, beyond what I have described in my contribution already about the benefits of the scheme, some additional measures that came through that process and which were then added to improve the project. The Minister for Roads and Road Safety accepted those recommendations and incorporated them into the design and the contractual

arrangements. They included noise reduction measures along Miller's Road, Brooklyn; voluntary acquisition of properties along Hyde Street which are already affected by a public acquisition overlay; noise walls along existing and future open spaces along the corridor; the redesign of the Mackenzie Road off-ramp across the Maribyrnong River to reduce visual bulk and improve amenity; importantly the lowering of the Wurundjeri Way extension to improve the amenity of this urban renewal area; and improving access between North Melbourne station and Docklands. There were further traffic management works to be undertaken in north and west Melbourne in concert with the City of Melbourne to cater for changing traffic patterns in those areas.

To reiterate, there was a full EES process, 500 submissions, public hearings, advisory committee recommendations and an assessment that was provided to the Minister for Planning. He responded by adding those design improvements to the scheme that the minister for roads accepted. The planning minister then proceeded to gazette this planning scheme amendment GC65 to enable those works to proceed. That amendment is now subject to the intrigue and the wilful interference motion by Mr Davis in terms of actually preventing this project from occurring. This is the matter that the Parliament is considering today.

That gazettal process was totally in accordance with the normal practices and processes of the tabling of planning scheme amendments in this Parliament. But Mr Davis could not help himself: he tried to get ahead of the consideration of that planning scheme amendment by pre-emptively moving this motion prior to the planning scheme amendment even being tabled.

Mr Davis — Because you said that you were not going to do it quickly. You were holding, delaying, and delaying deliberately. We know what you were doing.

Mr JENNINGS — Mr Davis, we know what you do. You invent parliamentary processes and procedures, and you will use any recourse available to you to get your way and to overturn the view of your leader in relation to his view about whether the Parliament should use revocation motions in this way. One thing I can say about Mr Davis is that he has been very, very successful in abusing parliamentary process over a very long period of time. It has been one of the hallmarks of his career — and congratulations to him. He has created chaos every time he has chosen to intervene in this place. He ignored his responsibilities for four years as a minister. He was not able to answer a single question, but was able to run around his accountability in this chamber —

Mrs Peulich interjected.

Mr JENNINGS — You were here, Mrs Peulich, and you agree with me when I say that he did not actually acquit his responsibilities as a minister in this chamber.

Mrs Peulich — No, I do not. I think you are a worse offender, but you put a gloss on it.

Mr JENNINGS — A gloss on it — with my broadbrush approach. Mr Davis did on one occasion provide an answer, saying that one thing he was proud of in his health portfolio was that the handwashing rates had gone up in public hospitals at the time. That was something that he was very, very proud of, and quite understandably.

Mr Davis is not only not very popular with our side of politics but he is not very popular with a lot of people who normally would be associated with his side of politics. There are a lot of industry players who are actually very concerned about this matter.

Ms Shing interjected.

Mr JENNINGS — I do not know whether it is about Mr Davis's preferred candidate for the mayor of the City of Melbourne. The Victorian executive director of Property Council Australia, Sally Capp, representing the interests of the property council in terms of the construction industry, has put pen to paper to indicate that in fact it is totally inappropriate for this Parliament to interfere by using this revocation motion. In fact her words were that if the Parliament acts in this way:

We have just made it harder to do business in Victoria. We have made it harder to build worthwhile projects in Victoria.

In fact her national chief executive, Ken Morrison, has said:

... as an exercise in good governance —

he did not use the phrase 'Mr Davis's actions', but I will insert those words —

this is a shocker.

Politicians using a political chamber to let off steam on a controversial issue is not new. But actively overturning the legitimate decisions of consent authorities is quite another.

My colleagues have referred to a full-page advertisement that appeared in today's *Herald Sun*. It looks like a prop but it is not. It is a life-size rendition of what was in the *Herald Sun* today. It is signed off by the Australian Logistics Council, the Geelong Authority alliance, the Urban Development Institute of

Australia, the Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Infrastructure Partners Australia and the Victorian Transport Association. These stakeholders have not always been fans of the Labor Party. Quite often they have come in to bat for the Liberal Party, when in fact the Liberal Party —

Ms Shing — What about the Maribyrnong Truck Action Group?

Mr JENNINGS — Yes, the truck action group have in relation to their support for the Greens actions before, but not today. Mark Stone has said:

The government was elected with a mandate to deliver important projects like this one. Contracts have been signed, work has started and the project should proceed.

That is the view of the government. The project has already commenced and it has the ability to deliver results by 2022. There are up to 700 people who are employed on the site as we speak.

A number of other organisations have criticised this. The Australian Institute of Architects has criticised this through Victorian chapter president Vanessa Bird. The CEO of the Urban Development Institute of Australia, Danni Addison, who apparently used to work for Matthew Guy, said:

The integrity of Victoria's planning system is critical to growing the state's economy, creating employment opportunities, and to attracting investment in the housing and infrastructure we need ...

We have a serious problem when members of state Parliament deliberately use parliamentary processes and voting to thwart planning decisions which have already been assessed and approved through the planning process.

The minister that she used to work for, Matthew Guy, who has actually spoken on revocation motions in the Parliament, said that the Parliament should not be used for this purpose, but Mr Davis has successfully overturned that political position of Matthew Guy and is running his own show, affecting the viability of this important project for the people of Victoria.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Morris) — Thank you, Mr Jennings. Your time has expired.

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) (14:42) — I want to briefly conclude this debate and thank those who have contributed to it. I want to start by saying that in fact what we have witnessed is a scandalous filibuster by the government. Let us be clear: they fought very hard to stop the tabling of their own planning scheme amendment for most of a whole

sitting day and this motion has now been continuing for three sitting weeks. But nonetheless —

Mr Jennings — It is still well and truly within the statutory limits and the normal process.

Mr DAVIS — Oh, and we understand exactly what you were doing. You were trying to build up a head of steam and say, 'The project's progressing'. How dare you use the statutory powers — the powers in the law as a chamber to protect the public. How dare you do that. How undemocratic. It is an outrageous attempt to abuse parliamentary process and bully the Parliament by delaying the tabling of those documents. We know exactly what you are up to.

Let us be clear: this is a bad project and it is not the project that the government went to the election with. Let us be clear that the project the government went to the election with was a small slip-road for \$500 million. If they were building that, there would not be any objection from anyone.

It is also not the Eddington proposal. Going back to the thorough analysis that was done by Sir Rod Eddington, it is not that proposal. It funnels traffic into the central part of Melbourne, and that is a very interesting point in terms of the new access charge that the government wants to put on through this process.

Mr Finn — A new tax.

Mr DAVIS — A new tax, despite the promises of the then Leader of the Opposition that he would not add new taxes, charges or levies. That is what he said. Let us be clear too: how else is this funded? It is also funded by a massive new set of charges on the existing CityLink parts. So those who come into the city from the north and west down the Tullamarine will be smashed. Families will be smashed with new tolls that go up year after year — 4.25 per cent a year on a massive escalator. I make that 51.6 per cent over the decade, an increase in tolls far above what the CPI is likely to be, and then a massive extension for Transurban and its consortium into the period of the 2040s. This is built, let me make it clear, on the back of families and on the back of families in the south-east as well, who are going to take a massive hit in their family budgets. Somebody who was paying hundreds of dollars a week in tolls will now pay much, much more under this plan.

Why has this plan come forward? It has come forward because Daniel Andrews's mates at Transurban have come forward with a sneaky market-led proposal. Now, there is nothing wrong with a market-led proposal. Private firms act in their own interests, and it is entirely

within Transurban's purview to do so, but it is the government's job and it is the Parliament's job to actually stand up for the people and actually say, 'This is not in the interests of the community'. This is being funded the wrong way. This is being foisted on the community. This is a \$6.8 billion road. It is not what the government went to the election with a promise for. You said it was shovel-ready actually, Mr Jennings; you said it was shovel ready. It is not even remotely shovel-ready, the small slip-road. You knew it was a feint, as it were, before the election, and an attempt to push people off into some other area.

Let us be clear here too: what is going on here in terms of funnelling the trucks into the central part of the city and funnelling people up onto the Bolte Bridge without somewhere to go does not provide that east-west movement that is actually a secure way into the future. We know the government has already torn up the east-west contract and the east-west arrangements that were in place under the previous government. You crushed that contract, and you did it unlawfully in effect. You did it outside the normal lawful processes. You went and you did a side deal with the various companies involved.

Let us be clear on the discussion of revocation motions in this chamber in the recent period. This is squarely —

Ms Shing — They're all yours.

Mr DAVIS — Well, they're not all mine. Mr Tee did a number, and where did Mr Jennings's vote go when Mr Tee pulled on a revocation motion? Where did Mr Tee's support come from? It came from many people on that side of the chamber, so let us not have any precious calls about the use of revocation motions. I agree they are there as a protection for the community and they are there as a last resort. Let us be clear: the government's processes are failing, as in this government. Its consultation processes, its communications with the community, are repeatedly failing. It is overriding the community in the most scandalous and outrageous ways. That is when they are appropriate. If there is ever an occasion when it is appropriate to use a revocation motion, it is this one.

The opposition obviously wants to see certainty and predictability for business. We wrote to Transurban and the consortium on 29 December. On the day the government put up its redacted version of the contract, we wrote to Transurban and said, 'Please do not incur any substantial additional costs, because the planning and approval processes are not yet complete'. The fact is they were not yet complete. The Planning and Environment Act 1987 gives the power to either

chamber to revoke a planning scheme amendment. Transurban know that because they wrote to the stock market and told them. They said, 'We actually don't have all the approvals, and there is a chance that if the approvals are not granted in fact the project will not proceed'. So there was an outcome there, and Transurban told the stock market themselves that that was the case.

Here is the rub on this. You have got a government also that have overturned existing permits down at Fishermans Bend. Years later they are overturning existing permits. Really, I do not think we need to be lectured by Daniel Andrews and his scurrilous government. Think about the closeness of that government to Transurban. This is a firm that is acting in their own interests. We have seen Tim Pallas's chief of staff move across in a scandalous move. We have seen the ex-Brumby staffer, Alison Croweller, move across to Transurban corporate affairs. These are people who have been employed by this government and who have gone across to Transurban in a very doubtful set of arrangements — a set of arrangements that do not bear looking closely at and that are stinking to high heaven.

The community knows what has gone on here: an arrangement with Labor. Labor is crooked in so many ways. Here you actually have a set of arrangements that are not in the community interest and that are going to see a massive windfall for Transurban. It is clear to everyone that the advantage of the contract is to Transurban. Transurban think this is fantastic, and it is fantastic for them, but it is not fantastic for the community. It does not provide the transport solutions that are needed and it does not provide the outcomes for communities that are needed. Families will be smashed —

Ms Shing interjected.

Mr DAVIS — Ms Shing, down your end of the state everyone who comes in via the M1 will be smashed. Every family that comes in will be smashed by the Transurban toll escalator — 4.25 per cent a year, every year from 2019 to 2029.

Ms Shing — On a point of order, Acting President, I am getting a little bit stropky with the fact that Mr Davis is pointing incessantly at me. I take offence, and I would ask that he stop.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Morris) — Ms Shing, you well know that that is not a point of order. However, Mr Davis, before you continue, I —

Honourable members interjecting.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Morris) — Ms Shing, Mr Mulino, Mrs Peulich, thank you. I do note that there have been a significant number of interjections from my right-hand side while Mr Davis has been making his contribution. I would encourage Mr Davis to continue making his contribution. The pointing across the chamber may cease and you may conclude your contribution. Please proceed.

Mr DAVIS — Thank you, Acting President. I will heed your warning, and I will not point across the chamber; I was somewhat provoked. Let me just be clear here: the reason I was pointing was because of the impact on many in the community. The south, the east and Gippsland, for example, are areas that will pay massively higher tolls. If you are paying \$5000 or \$6000 a year in tolls, you can add 52 per cent to that. Let us see how families respond to a 52 per cent increase in tolls. If they are paying \$10 000 a year in tolls, you can imagine the impact on a family budget with that sort of significant increase. That applies to those who come down the Tullamarine as well, with the enormous impact this will have on each and every one of those people. The people of Sunbury will be right in the gun under this proposal.

I also make the point that the planning processes behind this have not been satisfactory. I am not going to go through the earlier contributions that were made on this, but it is sufficient to say that I believe this has not been a good planning process, and it is not a good project.

House divided on motion:

Ayes, 22

| | |
|------------------------------|-------------------|
| Atkinson, Mr | O'Donohue, Mr |
| Bath, Ms | Ondarchie, Mr |
| Carling-Jenkins, Dr | O'Sullivan, Mr |
| Crozier, Ms | Pennicuik, Ms |
| Dalla-Riva, Mr | Peulich, Mrs |
| Davis, Mr | Ramsay, Mr |
| Dunn, Ms (<i>Teller</i>) | Ratnam, Dr |
| Finn, Mr | Rich-Phillips, Mr |
| Fitzherbert, Ms | Springle, Ms |
| Lovell, Ms | Truong, Ms |
| Morris, Mr (<i>Teller</i>) | Wooldridge, Ms |

Noes, 18

| | |
|-------------------------------|--------------|
| Bourman, Mr (<i>Teller</i>) | Mulino, Mr |
| Dalidakis, Mr | Patten, Ms |
| Eideh, Mr | Pulford, Ms |
| Elasmar, Mr (<i>Teller</i>) | Purcell, Mr |
| Gepp, Mr | Shing, Ms |
| Jennings, Mr | Somyurek, Mr |
| Leane, Mr | Symes, Ms |
| Melhem, Mr | Tierney, Ms |
| Mikakos, Ms | Young, Mr |

Motion agreed to.

CHARITIES AMENDMENT (CHARITABLE PURPOSE) BILL 2018

Statement of compatibility

Ms PATTEN (Northern 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), I make this statement of compatibility with respect to the Charities Amendment (Charitable Purpose) Bill 2017.

In my opinion, the Charities Amendment (Charitable Purpose) Bill 2017, as introduced to the Legislative Council, is compatible with human rights as set out in the charter. I base my opinion on the reasons outlined in this statement.

Overview of bill

The main purposes of the Charities Amendment (Charitable Purpose) Bill are to:

- amend the Charities Act 1978 to insert a definition of charitable purpose that applies to Victorian legislation. This definition excludes advancement of religion as a charitable purpose but does not affect the otherwise charitable works of religious institutions.

- adopt this definition for the purposes of exemptions provided under the Duties Act 2000, the Land Tax Act 2005 and the Payroll Tax Act 2007.

- exempt religious institutions from the liability to pay land tax pursuant to the Land Tax Act 2005 in relation to a place used exclusively as a place of public worship.

Human rights issues

Human rights protected by the charter that are relevant to the bill

The Charities Amendment (Charitable Purpose) Bill 2017 does not limit any human rights.

Consideration of reasonable limitations — section 7(2)

As the bill does not raise any human rights issues, it does not limit any human rights, and therefore it is not necessary to consider section 7(2) of the charter.

Conclusion

I consider that the bill is compatible with the charter because it does not raise any human rights issues.

Fiona Patten, MLC

Second reading

Ms PATTEN (Northern Metropolitan) (15:00) — I move:

That the bill be now read a second time.

Sanitarium, the manufacturer of Australia's iconic breakfast cereal Weet-Bix, is a charity. As a nation we buy and consume more than 1.4 billion Weet-Bix per year, yet as a consequence of its charitable status, Sanitarium pays no company tax in Australia, quite unlike its multinational competitors Kellogg's, Kraft and Nestlé.

Were Sanitarium still based in Melbourne where it was founded, it would also be entitled to exemptions from various Victorian taxes, including land tax, stamp duty and payroll tax.

How is this possible? That the manufacture and sale of breakfast cereal for profit is a charitable activity?

Because Weet-Bix is manufactured by a company wholly owned by the Seventh Day Adventist Church.

A charitable tax break of this type does not mean that the resulting income stays in Victoria or is even spent on charitable activities. As the Seventh Day Adventist Church has acknowledged, it has invested millions of dollars generated by its 'group one' entities, including Sanitarium, into US-based companies.

This is not what most people understand a charity to be. Compare this to taxes, which can only be spent by the state for the benefit of the community.

Paying its 'fair share of tax' does not abrogate the ability of a business like Sanitarium from generating profits for the church, just as Kellogg's, Kraft and Nestlé pay tax and return profits to shareholders. Taxes benefit the community, just as charitable activities do; neither is mutually exclusive.

I use Sanitarium as an example, but there are many more.

Fairfax revealed recently, when it published its investigative report into the wealth of the Catholic Church in Australia, that the church holds assets in Victoria valued at more than \$9 billion, making it the largest non-government landholder in the state.

Those holdings reportedly include banks, a superannuation fund, an insurance company, a news service and telecommunications provider. Properties reportedly include offices, residences, car parks, conference centres, tennis courts, mobile phone towers and a restaurant.

That Fairfax article highlighted again the lack of transparency and accountability around religious institutions, just as the royal commission and the Betrayal of Trust inquiry did before it.

The government acknowledged this in part yesterday, in announcing their Legal Identity of Defendants (Organisational Child Abuse) Bill 2018.

My response to this lack of transparency is this bill.

A bill that does not in any way inhibit the genuinely charitable activities of religious organisations. A bill that does not affect land tax exemptions for places of public worship. But a bill that may see profitable religious-run commercial enterprises pay their fair share of taxes for the benefit of all Victorians as a whole.

Most people understand a charity to be 'an organisation set up to provide help and raise money for those in need', being the Oxford dictionary definition. Victorian laws should reflect this, just like the laws of the United Kingdom and Canada.

My bill operates by redefining 'charitable purpose' as it applies to Victorian statute to exclude 'advancement of religion' as a charitable head. This amendment will ensure that tax exemptions for charities in Victoria only apply to those organisations engaging in objectively charitable works, including:

advancing health, including preventing and relieving sickness, disease or human suffering;

advancing education;

advancing social or public welfare;

relieving the poverty, distress or disadvantage of individuals or families;

caring for and supporting the aged;

caring for and supporting individuals with disabilities;

caring for, supporting and protecting children and young individuals; and

assisting the rebuild after a disaster.

Turning to the structure of the bill:

Clause 1 of the bill sets out the purposes of the bill.

Clause 3 inserts definitions of charity, charitable purpose and disqualifying purpose into the Charities Act 1978.

Clause 4 inserts new sections 1B to 1F into the Charities Act 1978, which set out the criteria for determining whether an entity is a charity, whether its

purposes are charitable and whether it operates for the public benefit.

Clauses 4 and 5 also provide certain protections from unintended consequences.

The remaining clauses of the Charities Amendment (Charitable Purpose) Bill 2017 provide for the adoption of these definitions in the Duties Act 2000, the Land Tax Act 2005 and the Payroll Tax Act 2007.

As I have already stated, religious-run charities and places of worship remain protected.

I acknowledge the limitations on this house of Parliament provided by section 62 of the Constitution Act 1975 — namely, that a bill ‘for imposing any duty, rate, tax, rent, return or impost must originate in the Assembly’.

When construed narrowly, removing an exception to an existing taxing law does not itself impose a tax. Other members may wish to be heard on this issue on a later occasion.

This bill clarifies and aligns the concept of charity with 21st century expectations.

I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned on motion of Ms SYMES (Northern Victoria).

Debate adjourned until Wednesday, 21 March.

The PRESIDENT — Having listened to Ms Patten’s second-reading speech, I have some concerns regarding the competence of the Council to initiate the bill due to the requirements of section 62 of the Constitution Act 1975, which Ms Patten actually referred to in her speech. In that context I note Ms Patten’s comments regarding the merits of the bill and the application of section 62. I indicate that before debate resumes on the bill I will give this matter consideration and make a ruling as to whether or not the bill can proceed any further in the house.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Written responses

The PRESIDENT (15:07) — I also indicate at this stage that at question time I asked for a further written response to a question by Ms Wooldridge in relation to which she had indicated that the response did not meet the requirements of the question in terms that the question put was not answered. However, I have since

been informed by the clerks that that was the second occasion on which that particular question had been presented to me seeking a further response, and under the standing orders I am only able to seek a further response on the first occasion. On the second occasion that is not an opportunity available to me, and therefore I advise the house that I will not be insisting that the minister provide a further written response in respect of Ms Wooldridge’s question, which if I remember rightly was asked on 21 February.

DUCK HUNTING SEASON

Mr YOUNG (Northern Victoria) (15:09) — I rise today to move:

That this house —

- (1) acknowledges that duck hunting is an important pastime to many Victorians through which they enjoy time with family and friends, health benefits of an outdoor physical activity and the opportunity to harvest wild sustainable food;
- (2) notes that the changes to the 2018 duck season arrangements are ill-conceived and unworkable;
- (3) affirms that the Game Management Authority is best placed to administer, regulate and manage game hunting in Victoria as a statutory authority; and
- (4) calls on the Minister for Agriculture to —
 - (a) return the opening time for the 2018 duck season to that of last year;
 - (b) suspend regulations 51A and 51B of the Wildlife (Game) Regulations 2012 until consultation with stakeholders has occurred; and
 - (c) adequately resource the Game Management Authority to enable them to perform their compliance functions throughout the 2018 season.

The motion is in regard to a broad range of issues but more specifically the issues that have come to light over the past few months in regard to this 2018 duck season. It is without pleasure that I have to stand here and speak to this motion, because another year has come and gone, and last year was another year where we enjoyed quite a successful hunting season, and again we are subject to numerous issues around the debate on whether duck hunting should continue in this state and the management of it.

Unfortunately I find myself again defending what is an activity that has been a part of my life for my entire life, part of my father’s life and part of my grandfather’s life. It is a generational thing for my family and for many others. I stand here today on behalf of all those families — on behalf of those people who partake in

duck hunting — because they are absolutely fed up with what is happening to them. They are fed up with every year being questioned and harassed and told that what they do is wrong. It is simply not right to be told what you do is wrong for no fault of your own. We are constantly attacked and berated for the actions of a minority. This occurs not just with what I am talking about here with duck hunting, but it occurs in so many other parts of our society where laws are put in place that impact everyone as a whole when they are laws that really should be focused on a very few people, and particularly those people who are doing the wrong thing.

Turning to the details of my motion, it states:

That this house —

- (1) acknowledges that duck hunting is an important pastime to many Victorians through which they enjoy time with family and friends, health benefits of an outdoor physical activity and the opportunity to harvest wild sustainable food ...

Those three things are what is important to me about duck hunting. There is such a wide activity around the actual activity of hunting. It is an experience in its entirety. It is not just about the moment that you hunt and shoot a duck and then when you harvest it and eat; it is about the whole thing. It is about the build-up to the duck season. Already there is so much talk among the duck hunting community about how excited we are for what this season will bring and how excited we are to get away from our jobs, to get away from those things in life that are dreary and drag us down and to get out and enjoy an activity that we love doing with our friends and families. There is conversation between people who may otherwise never speak to each other. There is conversation between myself and people from the other side of the state. There is conversation between those people and people interstate. There is conversation between those in other countries who partake in this activity in their own country. It really is a very tight-knit community. The excitement that reverberates among them in the lead-up to the duck season opening is just an amazing thing. It is really fantastic to see that camaraderie where everyone comes together and looks forward to the one activity.

It is no different to any other sport in the lead-up to a big event. It is no different to the excitement among the football community when finals start and we get that September fever. We look forward to the grand final, and there is discussion between everyone, not just those who are involved with the two teams that are going to play in the grand final, about how it is going to happen, what is going to happen and what the outcome will be.

People make predictions. They get excited about that feeling, that sensation, that builds to it — and that is what it is like for the duck hunting community in the lead-up to the duck season opening.

All of that gets dragged down every time we have someone stand there and tell us that what we are doing is wrong. For the most part there are people who lead this agenda against duck hunting through simply an ideological belief that we should not be doing it, because for the most part the facts do not stack up. For the most part there are campaigns run against duck hunting that depict fluffy little animals. It is very feel-good and touchy-feely, and it is designed to pull at the heartstrings of people, but in reality the facts do not stack up. So often we are presented with misinformation from those campaigns against duck hunting. We are always trying to defend ourselves, and we should not have to. I want to have a duck season come around and be able to be involved in the excitement of it. I want people to get excited about it and talk to those people and visit those people and go scouting in the months leading up to the duck hunting season opening with those people, without having to constantly be attacked and without having — and this is very important — the fear that the government is going to take it away from us.

We have gotten to a stage now where every year we are scared of what is going to be taken away from us. We have it in so many instances. We have it taken away from us in bag limit restrictions. We have it taken away from us in closures of wetlands. We have it taken away from us in lack of process around environmental watering and changes to environmental watering patterns, deliberately done to suit times when duck hunting will not be able to take place on wetlands. We have so much misinformation and a lack of information that is put out by those agencies responsible for administering the duck hunting season. We have had cases where right up until the Friday night before duck season opening places have been closed through some random part of a random act that has been dug up just to close them — on the night before the duck season opening. This kind of thing is really, really frustrating to someone who has planned and anticipated this and has put a lot of effort, a lot of time and a lot of money into it. To be told on a Friday night — through a lack of communication from the government, and it takes until the Friday night, when a police officer comes and tries to move them on — is crazy.

There have been things more recently put in place to address some of those issues. One of them is the establishment of the Game Management Authority. The authority itself is a statutory body responsible for this

area. It was great to see the Game Management Authority come to life in 2014; it really was. I was not in this place at the time; I wish I had been, because I would have taken great pleasure in sitting on the yes side of the chamber and voting for it. I really would have, because it is a body that we need and it is a body that we must have to administer what is a very, very popular activity — one that has a lot of regulation around it. When you have got a lot of regulation around an activity, having a dedicated body to administer it is paramount.

They are some of the issues that we really, really struggle with. It takes away from the things that we want to do when duck season comes around. It takes away from getting out and enjoying that weekend with no worry about it. It takes away from just wanting to go out and enjoy time with your family but also trudging through a swamp or doing a long walk and getting a bit of physical activity and a bit of sunshine out of it. I always lose a bit of weight around that time of the year. If we get a good quail season as well, it usually helps that along. This constant worry takes away from that and impacts on the enjoyment that duck hunters get out of what they do, not to mention that there are other reasons, as I said before.

It is a wide activity. It is a very, very broad activity. It is all about the planning and then getting out there and hunting. After the hunt, if you have a successful hunt, it is about harvesting that food, taking it home, cooking it, eating it and enjoying it with your friends and family. Again, it is a whole experience, and we want to be able to enjoy it, which is why I said I am not taking pleasure in standing here.

This year, though, we have seen some remarkable changes to the regulations surrounding the duck season opening. Earlier in the year, at the end of January, we had some new regulations put in place by the minister responsible. They are regulations that go to issues which I have talked about before. Specifically those regulations are around the retrieval of birds and keeping the meat that is harvested from those birds. They are two things that I have spoken to at great length amongst duck hunting communities. They are two things that I have spoken to the minister about. The minister answered a question from me just last week in which I had raised those two issues. They are two things that I would like to stand by as a concept for what a good, responsible hunter does. We have no issue with reinforcing in regulation what is good practice. What is good practice for a hunter is to make all attempts to ethically kill what they are trying to harvest and then to make all attempts to retrieve it and salvage whatever

meat they can out of it for their own consumption or that of their friends and family.

Those things are what we do. They are why we do this. No self-respecting hunter is going to tell you that they like shooting a heap of ducks and leaving them on the water. No self-respecting hunter is going to tell you that they are not doing it to harvest the meat. The good people who practise this for the right reasons do that. So when those regulations were put in place I was happy, particularly with the one about the retrieval of meat. We have no problem with that. The Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party are right behind initiatives like that which go to the ethical way in which we hunt. The problem is we had some issues with the first regulation, which is regulation 51A of the Wildlife (Game) Regulations 2012. The literal translation of that regulation has been taken to its extreme by the Game Management Authority (GMA) in the information it has put out. There has been argument around one word, really, the word ‘immediately’ — that a person must immediately retrieve an animal after they have struck it, with the definition of that animal being a downed bird.

There has been some confusion around how that will be applied. The Game Management Authority put out some information about that which confused the issue even further, because what it did was put in place an interpretation of that regulation that is outside the practice of duck hunting for the most part. It showed a lack of understanding of what traditional methods of duck hunting are. It was hard to explain to people who had been hunting for years and years — people who had been hunting for decades. I struggled to explain this to them because it is so far removed from the traditional practices of hunting that it was unexplainable to someone who has been hunting for decades. We have tried to address that. We get answers back from the government like ‘This is what is taught in the shotgun education program’ and ‘This is what is in the ethical code of practice’. That is fine. Those things that are taught in education programs and in the ethical code of practice may have the same wording, but when it is put in a regulation it becomes a literal translation. This is where we run into an issue.

The word ‘immediately’, in its literal translation, has caused problems. For example, for those who do not understand how it works, the common practice for duck hunting is that you would set yourself up on a bank near some water, put out your decoy spread, get in a little hide — set up a hide around so you are camouflaged from the birds — and you would sit there and bunker down for a period of shooting. If you were really skilled, you would have a duck call and you would be making calls to the ducks to try and get them to come

in. Then when they are close enough, within a reasonable range to make an ethical kill, that is when you would attempt to make your harvest. That could be done from a bank, or it could be done by waiting out in the water. I do it a lot. I love waiting out in wetlands. You get in your little spot, your feet start to sink in the mud and you are there. You are planted there and you are ready. You have got your set-up all out and it has taken you a couple of hours to put your decoys out. Similarly, you might do it in a little bit deeper water from a boat and tie yourself up to a tree. You have got your decoys spread out. Again you have spent hours doing this, and you have a session of shooting.

The practice is you would shoot a bird and it might land in the water in front of you. That bird is there, it has been killed humanely, it is a clean kill and that bird can stay there. That bird is not going anywhere. To then have in regulation a law that makes you have to retrieve that immediately is unworkable because it is not the practice of what we do. You might shoot three, four or five. You might have shot eight birds lying in front of you in the water. They are there, you know they have been killed cleanly, they are not going anywhere, and you make the decision after you have shot a few to get out of your hide, to get out of your spot that is camouflaged, and go and retrieve them; or if you have got three birds there and a bit of wind blows up and they start to blow away, for fear of losing them you make the decision to go and get them, and it does not interrupt the period of shooting. That is the thing that the people who have made these regulations just do not understand. They do not understand the actual practice of duck hunting, and it is unfortunate that we have regulations being made without a firm understanding of the practice.

I would have loved to have been standing here saying that these regulations have been a good thing; I really would. There are a lot of people who would doubt that, but I put it to them that there is no doubt about it: regulations that enforce good practice and the ethical harvest of wildlife are absolutely a good thing and is something we want to see put in place so that when people do not do the right thing we can come down hard on them. We need those things. We need to make sure that those who do not want to practise ethically cannot practise anymore. We need to take their licences, seize their firearms and seize their cars — seize everything; I do not care. I want to see a body run in compliance with these powers of regulation that is able to do those things — to be able to come down hard on the ones that give me a bad name. It is the reason that I am standing here again defending duck hunters. But that will only happen if the authority has the power and the resources to do it.

We have got a Game Management Authority. As I said before, it was set up in 2014. It has been in place for a few years now. It seemed to me that it was a very quick sort of set-up. I keep calling it a shell of an organisation. It was not set up in such a way that it could do all of the things it should be doing. It was set up in such a way that it had compliance powers, but it was not given the resourcing to do that. Also a Game Management Authority should be much more than that, because, as I said before, duck hunting is much more than just what we do out there in the hunt; it is the whole experience. If a Game Management Authority is administering that whole experience it has to be involved in that whole experience. That is how it would have the knowledge of what we do so that it is able to regulate it properly. That is what has been lacking from the Game Management Authority.

I point to the Victorian Fisheries Authority that this government set up a little while ago. Like I said before, I would have loved to have been sitting here voting for the establishment of the Game Management Authority, but I was able to sit in this place and vote for the establishment of the fisheries authority. It was great to see because it was done right, it was done properly. It was done in such a way that it enabled that body to be involved in the sector: to be involved in the fishing community, to be able to improve things for the fishing community, to be able to go out and run compliance. They are funded well. They have staff. They have the ability to manage things. They have the ability to change things. They have the ability to consult with other bodies and be involved. They are making great leaps and bounds in the sector of fishing, and I love seeing that happen.

But what we have at the moment is a Game Management Authority that cannot do that. We have a Game Management Authority that is sitting back, under-resourced, without proper legislative ability. It is unable to get into the space of that sector properly, unable to really relate to the community of hunters and unable to do anything that connects them. That is why I have proposed a bill to make changes to the authority's objectives and functions, because I want the Game Management Authority to have the same ability as the Victorian Fisheries Authority in its objectives and its functions. I want it to be facing in that direction. I want it to have the legislative abilities to do things in that space. The government did a great job with the fisheries authority, and I want the Game Management Authority to replicate that.

But most importantly, in the short term, I want the Game Management Authority to have the ability to nail the people who are doing the wrong thing. It is going to

be brought up by the Greens. The Greens do their job as much as anyone would expect. They are very predictable. They are going to bring up all those horrible things that we hear about in the media and we hear about in those campaigns, and good on them for doing that. They are just repeating the same thing again and again, and at the end of the day what they want to see is more compliance. At the end of the day what they want to see is those illegal things not happening. At the end of the day they also want hunting to be banned, because they are ideologically opposed to it.

But in reality they do want to see the same things I want to see. They want to see people who do the wrong thing nailed, because that is a reflection on me, that is a reflection on what I do, and I am saying that as a duck hunter not as a member of Parliament. I am not standing here for myself. I am standing here for an entire community of people, the 26 000 licensed duck hunters. I am saying on behalf of all of them that we want to see the people doing the wrong thing nailed. I do not think this government has done a good enough job on it. We have been calling for this for ages. We have been over and over it again and again. We need to have more ability to do this, and the only way to do it is for me to stand up here every year and whinge. Every year we go through the same thing: we whinge and we whinge and we whinge, and we do not get anywhere.

It seems to me that the government will be happy for the GMA to fail. It seems to me that certainly there are people within government departments who would love to see the GMA rolled back into them, and it is not what hunters want. Hunters want a Game Management Authority that they have a relationship with. They want a Game Management Authority that they trust and to administer what they do properly. They want a Game Management Authority that has the experience and knowledge to advise against silly regulations like regulation 51A, because it does not actually make sense.

Point (4) of my motion calls on the minister to do a number of things. I call on the minister to suspend the new regulations in the Wildlife (Game) Regulations 2012 until such time as a round of stakeholder consultation has occurred. I am not convinced that it has. I do not know how any of these conclusions could have been reached had proper consultation taken place. If it has taken place and it still reached these conclusions, it has taken place with the wrong people. It has not taken place with people who are involved in hunting; it has not taken place with people who know what they are talking about in that space. It has taken place with people who just want it to stop, and that is why it seems that these regulations are

ridiculous. We are calling on the government to just hold back on these regulations. Like I said before, it is something that we advocate for — the ethical, responsible harvesting of these animals — and a regulation reinforcing that is not a bad thing. I want to be able to stand with the minister and say, ‘These regulations are good for duck hunting’. But until there are some changes made in consultation with the relevant stakeholders, that cannot happen.

The third matter is that we want the Game Management Authority to be adequately resourced to enable them to perform their compliance functions throughout the 2018 season. That really goes beyond then as well. We are not just talking about the 2018 season; it is an ongoing issue. I will have to stand up here next year and say the same thing when it does not happen. We really need the government to step in and fund this authority to be able to do their job properly and come down on the people in hunting who create the problems.

We also call on the minister to return the opening time of this season to that of last year. It is something I have not spoken about yet, so I will do so now briefly. We have for some reason moved the opening time of this year’s season to 9.00 a.m. on the Saturday, with the following Sunday starting at 8.00 a.m. This is different from the other two regulations, which I want to stand behind and I want to agree with; I really do. If we get some fixes and some changes to them — they are only minor changes — I will agree with them. But unlike those regulations, there is absolutely nothing to be achieved by changing the opening time. Again we are just putting another restriction on the people who do the right thing — the people who wait until opening time and start shooting. This regulation is not going to stop those people who do the wrong thing — those who want to start shooting before the opening time. It is an issue that comes up every year. I am not going to back away from that; it is an issue. But again those people who do the wrong thing are the ones that need to be addressed, not the people who do the right thing, and so changing the opening time is not going to achieve anything.

The decision to shoot earlier on the opening morning is a conscious decision. Last year we had an opening time; we had a definitive time. It does not matter what that time is; we have got a definitive time. The conscious decision to shoot early is already something that is wrong. So to make the conscious decision to do it is not going to be changed by a different time. Those people are just going to be making the conscious decision to shoot earlier. It does not make much sense. Again, the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party

absolutely stand by real compliance in this space, in that you can tackle people who are doing the wrong thing. This is just a bureaucratic notion, a thought bubble — I do not know what you call it. It is not going to address that problem, so we are calling on the minister to change that opening time.

Having addressed the points in my motion, I would like to finish my contribution to this motion by reading something that was written by an avid duck hunter from Geelong by the name of Blair Findlay. It was posted on Facebook. He had a little bit of a rant, as we all do every now and then. But as I read it the other day I really understood what he meant by it. This goes to show the frustration amongst the shooting community when every year rolls around with duck opening and we do not know if the government is going to take it off us. It is the frustration of being scared of that. I will just read it:

It's now less than 14 days until the opening of the 2018 Victorian duck season. A season that sees us all presented with a new swag of regulations and challenges.

Social media can be a powerful tool. A tool the hunting community has certainly embraced. Unfortunately at times we may be oblivious to that power at the time we are posting.

In the days that followed the opening of the 2017 season my newsfeed was flooded with hunters racing to complain about the actions of others. People seemed to become obsessed with focusing on even the most trivial matter, immediately overlooking the great things that had occurred in that same period.

For every selfish individual who fired a shot before the legal opening time, there were thousands who didn't. For every bird lost, there were tens of thousands harvested and utilised to feed friends and family. For every hunter who complained that their morning was ruined by another hunter too close, there was many wishing that they could have an old hunting partner by their side just one more time.

Grandfathers hunted with grandchildren for the first time, wives hunted with husbands and kids, mates shared the first of many openings together, a dog retrieved its last bird and another retrieved its first.

These are the moments we should focus on and share. These are the memories we will take with us throughout our lives and the stories we will recount around the campfire the night before future hunts.

We should not focus on the selfish actions of a few irresponsible people and we should not allow their actions to form people's views of us, or distract us from the passion that unites us all.

That sums it up for me, because I have in the past been defined by those who do not like what we do and I am now refusing to be defined by that. I am going to refuse to be defined by those who tell me I am wrong for what I do. I refuse to be defined by people who put up lies

and propaganda in an attempt to stop me. From this point forward I will be defined by what I do as a duck hunter. It is a huge community and it is a strong community, and it is getting stronger. I implore the house to support this motion. It is a good motion. You will not regret it. Thank you.

Ms SYMES (Northern Victoria) (15:36) — I am going to speak to Mr Young's motion today. I am by no means an expert when it comes to duck hunting, and I concede that Mr Young certainly is. His inaugural speech set out his vast background in this space. What I do share in common with Mr Young is the electoral region that we represent. I am quite conscious that there is a lot of legitimate recreational activity in relation to duck hunting that is partaken in our electorate. I have never been involved in any such activities — it is not my thing — but I certainly will not stand in the way of those who do partake in that legitimate activity. While I do respect the people who have those views, I am also actually quite happy to listen to those who have views that are completely opposite to those of Mr Young, and I think we will probably hear a little bit of that today. I will probably be somewhere in the middle.

From the government's perspective we support this recreation and we believe that hunting in Victoria should be safe, responsible and sustainable. It is acknowledged that an estimated \$439 million flows into towns and regional centres across Victoria, supporting approximately 3500 jobs. Just popping up on my Twitter feed today while I was —

Ms Shing — Did you win at Twitter?

Ms SYMES — Facebook — that is how good I am at social media — the other one. On my Facebook page I follow a lot of the local papers, obviously, because it is a good source of news when you cannot be out in your region. The *Alpine Observer* reported on the highly anticipated Wild Deer Hunting, Guiding and Fishing Expo on the weekend. I am not sure if you attended, Mr Young; did you guys go?

Mr Bourman — I did not, but he did.

Ms SYMES — You did? I did not know about it, but it seems to have been a very, very big success with 500 exhibitors packed into 250 available sites, so it was a great economic generator for the community of Myrtleford and for people who are interested in hunting.

As we heard the minister say today in some of her responses in question time and we also heard this from Mr Young, the vast majority of hunters do the right thing, but last year there was a small group of hunters

whose actions were completely unacceptable. That is why the chair of the Game Management Authority (GMA) was asked to undertake a review of the compliance operations following last year's opening weekend. Last year was the first real test of the GMA's effectiveness as a regulator since it was set up in 2014. We have taken significant steps to boost compliance capacity for this year's season and put in place new regulations to make it easier for officers to detect any hunters who choose to do the wrong thing and bring the recreation into disrepute, which Mr Young also touched on. The minister did say yesterday that she was not happy with the GMA's performance last year and that she is expecting much better compliance activity this year.

Most of the in-field compliance personnel are from agencies other than the GMA; surge capacity from Victoria Police, the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, the Department of Justice and Regulation and Parks Victoria is also crucial to support the work that the GMA purports to do. I understand that those resources have been boosted for the 2018 season.

The season commences on Saturday, 17 March, and it goes for 12 weeks, which means it will close on 11 June. The bag limit, which I think means how many ducks you can have in the bag — is that right, Mr Young? — will remain at the standard 10 birds per person per day; however, like last year, the hunting of blue-winged shovelers will be prohibited due to persistent low numbers of that species.

Ms Shing — You would not want to be a blue-winged shoveler.

Ms SYMES — I do not want to be a blue-winged shoveler. The settings for the 2018 duck season are based on an analysis of habitat and water bird surveys conducted across eastern Australia and other data relating to game duck abundance, habitat distribution and climate. This year, as we have heard, hunting will commence at 9.00 a.m. on Saturday and 8.00 a.m. on Sunday of the opening weekend, and this will apply across the whole state. The revised start times come in at the recommendation of the GMA. They will provide hunters with improved light conditions to identify birds — and I suppose that would be good for those blue-winged shovelers, Ms Shing — and help minimise the problems experienced last year from early shooting, because obviously it helps the protected birds but it also helps in the recovery of the birds if you can actually find what you may have killed.

Hunters will see more game wildlife police and water police officers out in force during this year's season.

We are increasing the enforcement to target the minority of hunters that do not do the right thing. New regulations have also formalised what is standard practice for most responsible hunters. Hunters will be required to recover the game birds that they shoot, and as Mr Young explained — as I said, I have not been out to a duck shoot — that is a common practice and most people are very committed to that. I understand that the purpose of that is to salvage at least the breast meat. Under the regulations hunters must make all reasonable efforts to immediately recover a downed game bird. For someone like me who is not an expert in this field, a 'downed bird' is one that has been brought down to the ground or water as a result of being shot or one that has been shot on the ground. Do you shoot them on the ground?

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms SYMES — Okay, if they are not dead. I am learning as I go along. Once a bird is downed a hunter must focus on that bird only and make all reasonable efforts to retrieve it immediately. Immediate recovery is important to ensure the hunter remains focused on the downed game bird. This will minimise the loss of downed birds and ensure that any bird that is still alive on recovery can be immediately dispatched in a humane way. The expectation that a reasonable effort is made to immediately recover a downed game bird is not new, and Mr Young certainly covered that. It has always been a requirement under the code of practice for the welfare of animals in hunting. The code is made under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986, and the current version has been in place since March 2015.

Under section 3, 'Hunter conduct', the code requires that a hunter must shoot to cause a quick and painless death. Every animal which is shot must immediately be examined to ensure that it is dead. Every animal which is not dead on retrieval must be humanely destroyed immediately, and if an animal is wounded and escapes, all reasonable attempts must be made to locate it so it can be killed quickly and humanely before the hunter hunts another animal. Immediate recovery is also best practice under the shotgunning education program which is delivered by hunting organisations. This practice is now simply being replicated in the game regulations.

In addition to the new regulations, we have made it more challenging for people to pass the waterfowl identification test. It is going to be increased from a pass mark of 75 per cent to 85 per cent, which will help improve the skills of any new hunters. I am assuming

you and your friends go all right in those tests, Mr Young?

Mr Young — 100 per cent when I was 12.

Ms SYMES — When you were 12? I am not surprised, Mr Young. We understand the importance of education, awareness and communication, and that is why our government has been supporting hunters since we were elected. The 2016–17 Victorian budget set aside \$5.33 million for this. That funding has supported government agencies working with hunters to improve the promotion of responsible hunting, provide better hunting opportunities and ensure our game species remain sustainable. The deer association has been supported to coordinate its members to participate in controlled culls of invasive deer species on public and some private land, and funding has also flowed to the Firearm Safety Foundation of Victoria, which educates gun owners and shooters about the responsible and safe storage, handling and usage of firearms.

Our *Sustainable Hunting Action Plan* set out a multimillion-dollar investment to support Victoria's 50 000 game hunters. The plan marked a significant milestone for game hunting in Victoria, because never before had a government and community partnered to develop and see through so many measurable outcomes. Our government is working with our agencies and the community to promote responsible hunting, maximise the economic, environmental and social benefits of hunting to Victoria, improve hunting opportunities and ensure that game hunting remains sustainable. The hunting action plan sets out practical objectives for the GMA, which is the subject of the motion today, but also for the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources, the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning and Parks Victoria.

The plan establishes 22 clear and measurable actions that the government is undertaking through to 2020. Some of the key actions within the plan that Labor is committed to delivering are: the implementation of the waterfowl adaptive harvest model, which will provide a more robust system for monitoring and declaring each duck season; an improved game licensing system, which will allow hunters to pay licence fees online; improved and more accurate maps of hunting areas, which will allow hunters and non-hunters to better understand where hunting may occur; and a deer management strategy and easier processing of wild deer meat, which will assist hunters and landowners to better manage deer, particularly in north-east Victoria.

A substantial proportion of the state's public land is available for recreational hunting, including large areas of state forest and hundreds of state game reserves. Sustainable hunting requires sound game conservation and land management, and it must also incorporate the principles of responsible, safe and humane hunting to ensure that environmental, economic and social benefits are maximised. We have heard through Mr Young's contribution that he is committed to those outcomes and that responsible hunters that he works with are of the same view. With our deer, duck, quail, pheasant and partridge populations, we are regarded as having some of the best hunting opportunities in Australia. Ensuring that hunting continues to be a safe and sustainable recreation for future generations is a key focus of this government.

So with that in mind, it is extremely important to have some restrictions. I am just a little bit confused by Mr Young's motion in relation to his view of the GMA, because in one sense he is seeking to affirm that the GMA is best placed but then he has said that the advice they gave was ill-conceived and unworkable. So I was just a little bit confused about how that support goes — you support someone but then you kind of give them a backhander at the same time. I think the GMA plays an important role, and I think some restrictions are certainly required.

I note that I went back through some of Mr Young's comments from the past and I am not sure there has necessarily been a duck season that he has been 100 per cent happy with. There always seems to be some issue. I think it comes down to perhaps a little bit of a threshold issue. I was very fortunate to participate in the polmie shoot sometime last year —

Ms Shing interjected.

Ms SYMES — It does not involve shooting polmies. It was the first time that I had held a gun, and I happened to connect with two clay targets. Many of Minister Pulford's staff proved to be quite good at that activity. It was a fun day, and there were lots of people in attendance from all parties. It is a great economic attraction for gun clubs, and there is a great centre just out of Kilmore.

For me, shooting a clay target is probably the level that I would consider stopping at in terms of my gun activity. Some people would have a view that maybe shooting pest animals on your farm is a level that you might stop at. Then you have recreational shooters as well. I think it is all a bit of an extreme, and depending on where you think that threshold sits —

Ms Shing — Where does that threshold sit?

Ms SYMES — There have been a lot of hunting stories in the media just this week. I do not know if they are conveniently placed with Mr Young's motion today. Yesterday I was reading, and I do not know how this popped up on my Facebook page either — I do not know what it says about me — that in America —

Mr Ramsay — You've got too much time on your hands.

Ms SYMES — Perhaps. In America they are about to remove restrictions on the importing of elephant trophies from African nations on a case-by-case basis. This is breaking from President Trump's earlier promises to maintain an Obama era ban on the practice. There was a formal memorandum over there which withdraws its Endangered Species Act 1973 findings for trophies of African elephants from Zimbabwe and Zambia, effective immediately. There are a lot of different levels of what people think is appropriate in hunting.

This reminded me of a conversation that Mr Young and I had last year, and actually Mr O'Sullivan was involved in this conversation. There is a house apparently in our electorate that has game animals in it. It was an interesting conversation that I was having —

Ms Shing interjected.

Ms SYMES — I think they are taxidermist stuffed animals that Mr Young was telling me about. His view was that you should be able to import dead animals into Australia as trophies. It was an interesting conversation, but it was even more interesting when he revealed that he plans on going to Africa to shoot a giraffe. Mr Young is pushing out the thresholds. I think the National Party and the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party often have pretty similar views on some of these hunting practices, but I think that threshold was just a little bit high for Mr O'Sullivan, but I will not put words into his mouth.

Ms Shing — On what basis does he want to shoot a giraffe?

Ms SYMES — I did ask why you would want to shoot a giraffe, but Mr Young told me it was similar to shooting a horse.

Ms Shing — Why would you want to shoot a horse?

Ms SYMES — I am talking about thresholds. My threshold stops at the clay targets. Some people have gone through the thresholds, and Mr Young has a very

very high threshold compared to what I think a lot of Australians have. I guess the point I am trying to make is: will Mr Young ever be happy with any restrictions in relation to the Game Management Authority? I take on board his absolute commitment to conservation and ethical standards within the hunting sector. I have heard him talk in the chamber before about making sure that you are responsible, that you take your rubbish away and all those kinds of things, so I am certainly not alleging that he is an advocate for a free-for-all. I am just putting on the record that depending on the perspective you come from you might have a different view of what are appropriate restrictions and what are not.

Given the motion today is reasonably critical of our efforts and that it asks the minister to do things that I think she has already put on the record that she will not be agreeing to, I will not be supporting the motion today.

Mr O'SULLIVAN (Northern Victoria) (15:54) — It gives me much pleasure to speak this afternoon on Mr Young's motion in relation to duck shooting, the Game Management Authority (GMA) and a number of other items. I can say that the Liberals and The Nationals on this side of the house will be supporting this motion.

It is a motion that looks at a whole range of different aspects of hunting, which is very much a legal activity here in Victoria. As Mr Young has pointed out very well, there are a lot of regulations around all forms of hunting. For just about every recreational pursuit that you can dream of there is a set of regulations about an inch thick covering the conduct of that recreational activity. We are very much over-governed when it comes to the number of regulations we have on these things. It seems that there are a lot of people who sit around from one year to another who justify their positions in the particular organisations they find themselves in by dreaming up new regulations that can be brought in to cover some of these activities.

Mr Young's motion talks about the 2018 duck season and the new regulations that have been introduced, and I will mention those as well. It talks about the Game Management Authority — that it is the best organisation to administer, regulate and manage game hunting in Victoria. That is certainly something that this side of the chamber subscribes to.

Point (4) of the motion asks the Minister for Agriculture — and I am glad the minister is in the chamber to listen to this debate — to look at the regulations that have been put in place and to make

some adjustments before the season commences in a couple of weeks so that the regulations covering the 2018 duck season will be more workable. Mr Young is an active hunter himself and particularly in the duck shooting space. He understands what it means from a practical point of view because he regularly undertakes that sport and has been doing it for many years — indeed for longer than any of us would care to remember — so he knows what he is talking about when it comes to the practicalities.

He went through each of the regulations, particularly regulation 51A, which covers the retrieval of the birds, and articulated why it is quite unworkable in terms of this season. It has hunters scratching their heads in bewilderment as they wonder why these types of regulations have been brought in. I suspect that the group of bureaucrats who suggested them probably do not have a full understanding of the implications. When you are sitting around in a workshop somewhere it is probably a great idea, but when you put it to the practicalities test it fails dismally.

The motion talks about the appropriate resourcing of the Game Management Authority to enable it to undertake its compliance functions throughout the 2018 season. That is something that I will have more to say about in my contribution today. The Game Management Authority was established back in 2014 after a lot of consultation with the industry. The industry was strongly in favour of having its own separate authority which would be able to undertake the necessary aspects of managing hunting, particularly the duck season when it comes up.

As we know, hunting in Victoria contributes a significant amount of money to our economy. When the coalition was in government, and when Peter Walsh was the Minister for Agriculture and Food Security, he asked the department to undertake an assessment of the economic activity in Victoria. The report came back showing that hunting was worth \$439 million to the Victorian economy. That is a lot of money that is generated for the economy, and a great deal of that is fed into regional areas, where most of the hunting takes place, so it is a great way of continuing to pump money from Melbourne and other areas and other states out into regional areas.

If you go to small towns that are close to the duck hunting areas, they rely on the money that comes in from duck hunting to sustain their businesses and employ people when those activities occur. As we know there are something like 46 000 licensed game hunters in Victoria, and there are about 3500 Victorian jobs sustained from hunting activities. I think

Mr Young said there were 26 000 duck hunters that go out hunting. As we all know it is a tradition that has been going on for years and years and years. It has been handed down through the generations.

Certainly my father and his father before him loved to go out and shoot ducks. Whilst I have never actually participated on the opening morning of duck hunting season myself, I have shot a couple of ducks in the past. There is nothing better than being able to harvest your own game meat, cook it, take it home to your family and friends, share it around and get other people to experience what some of that beautiful meat tastes like. There is nothing better than having a couple of ducks in the camp oven and once they are cooked properly sharing it with friends. There is no doubt that hunting has a significant role to play in this state, and I would certainly like to see that continue.

What I find somewhat annoying about the operation of the Game Management Authority is that while it was set up with the best intentions and the current government makes the right sorts of noises in relation to the Game Management Authority, I do not think the government has given it its full support. I do not think the government has shown leadership throughout the bureaucracy to ensure that the Game Management Authority is given every chance to succeed. I actually suspect that this government would prefer to see the Game Management Authority fall over so that they can point and say that this was set up incorrectly by a coalition government.

As Mr Young indicated in his motion, the Game Management Authority is not properly resourced to the level that it certainly should be so that it can undertake the role that it is meant to undertake. I think this is probably in some ways the way the government is trying to work with the Greens behind the scenes to ensure that duck shooting is eventually stopped in Victoria. That is certainly something that we do not subscribe to.

As we all know, and I think the Minister for Agriculture would actually agree with me on this, when you involve hunters in addressing pest animals and trying to bring the numbers way back down, as we have seen with the wild dog bounty and the fox bounty, it makes a real impact in reducing those numbers. Certainly duck shooting also does that with ducks. We know that ducks can do a lot of damage, particularly to rice paddies, in terms of attacking those crops. So this is certainly a way of being able to address those numbers, because they do at times increase to a point where there are too many ducks and they need to be reduced in number.

There is another aspect that I particularly want to look at in terms of the Game Management Authority. The idea behind it was that they would be able to develop a game management action plan that would help guide the long-term growth of the industry. We know that the current government delayed any release of that plan for many, many months, which is another sign of how they are not committed to this industry. All they want to do is pay lip-service to this industry to try to make it look like they are doing something, but when you dig down a bit deeper we understand that they are doing nothing at all to support this industry. It is like death by a thousand cuts the way they operate.

There are new regulations we have seen in relation to the later opening for duck hunting season, particularly on the first day, with start times of 9 o'clock on Saturday and 8 o'clock on Sunday. There is no scientific evidence that that will have any impact at all other than putting a new regulation on the industry. I have heard comments about there being more light at 9 o'clock so hunters will be able to more accurately hit the target bird. Well, if it requires a 9 o'clock start on a Saturday for there to be enough light, the following day at 8 o'clock it is going to be a bit darker. So there is no consistency whatsoever in terms of that argument. It is just another regulation that has been dreamed up from somewhere just to make it more difficult for hunters to do what they do in a lawful way.

There is no doubt that there are some hunters that do the wrong thing and they make it difficult for the legitimate hunters who do the right thing. I found it quite disappointing that the minister has pointed the finger at the Game Management Authority for those instances, criticising the Game Management Authority for not being able to prevent those activities or find and prosecute those people who undertook those activities. The minister was quoted in the *Weekly Times* basically saying that she does not have any confidence in the Game Management Authority as a result of the Pegasus Economics report that was supposedly leaked. I wonder whether it was actually the government that leaked that report. The minister is quoted as saying:

Last year was the first real test of the GMA's effectiveness as a regulator since it was set up by the previous government in 2014 ...

In my opinion the GMA did not pass the test.

Well, I think that they were not given the proper resources to pass that test, but I do not think the minister really does want them to succeed. Again the minister was reported as saying on Thursday, 1 March, on ABC news:

The state's agriculture minister has labelled the report 'very concerning' and refused to rule out shutting the Game Management Authority ... down.

That is very concerning, because when you look at the compliance activities of the Game Management Authority they cannot be everywhere at all times. There are a small number of hunters that do the wrong thing and that gives everyone else a bad reputation. To shut down the Game Management Authority for that reason is absolutely ridiculous. That is like saying that because there are some people that are still speeding in cars Victoria Police should be criticised and shut down. It makes no sense whatsoever. You cannot get 100 per cent compliance with regulations, because some people will just inherently do the wrong thing. We need to continue to push hard to prosecute those people who do the wrong thing.

What we need to be looking at in terms of the Game Management Authority is giving it the proper support it requires to be able to function effectively. The original chair of the Game Management Authority, Roger Hallam, himself an experienced hunter and an experienced ex-politician who understands regulation probably more than most, could see the writing on the wall — that the Game Management Authority was not getting the appropriate support from government. He found himself in a position where he could no longer remain the chair of the GMA, so he resigned from that position. It took the government many, many months to replace him and find a new chair of the Game Management Authority.

The Game Management Authority is not getting the appropriate support from other bureaucracies that would certainly help it out. It was never meant to be a stand-alone entity in its own right; it was always intended to be part of a broader scope of other agencies that would work with it to ensure that it could undertake the activities that it is required to do. Certainly the industry wants it; the hunters want it. If you talk to any of those associations — Field & Game Australia, Sporting Shooters Association of Australia and so forth — they all support the Game Management Authority, but unfortunately the government is only throwing platitudes at the Game Management Authority because it does not want it to succeed, which is really disappointing.

In terms of the motion that Mr Young has put up in relation to the duck season and the Game Management Authority, the Liberals and The Nationals on this side of the chamber will be supporting the motion because we believe that duck shooting has a legitimate role to play as a recreational activity and also in managing bird numbers around the state. This is a good motion. It is a

well thought through motion. Mr Young articulated his arguments very well, and I have a lot of pleasure in supporting the comments he made. On this side of the chamber we will be supporting this motion.

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan) (16:09) — I would like to start my reply to Mr Young's motion by saying that 87 per cent, if not more, of Victorians oppose duck shooting and they are dismayed to know that it is going ahead again this year given what has gone on in the past few years, with escalating massacres of birds, an increasing disregard of the flimsy regulations and the lack of enforcement of those regulations every single duck shooting season.

A growing number of regional Victorians are voicing their opposition to duck shooting. I have gone to observe duck shooting on opening weekends and at other times for the past 20 or so years, and there have always been a large number of regional Victorians who have expressed their opposition to duck shooting, but there are more of them now, and that can be seen by the recent creation of Regional Victorians Opposed to Duck Shooting, which is gathering a lot of support amongst regional Victorians.

I just want to start by going to some of the comments made by Mr Young in speaking to his motion. He talked about how duck shooting is an experience. Actually, the first paragraph of his motion says it is an opportunity to 'enjoy time with family and friends' and it has the 'health benefits of an outdoor physical activity'. Of course those things can be experienced without shooting ducks. You can spend time with family and friends. You can have an outdoor experience, even a camping experience, by the wetlands without shooting ducks. So I agree that those types of pastimes, spending time with families and friends and outdoor physical activity, are good; I just do not agree with combining that with shooting ducks.

Mr Young — No-one visits wetlands unless they're doing that. Why doesn't that happen then?

Ms PENNICUIK — I will take up Mr Young's interjection with regard to no-one visiting wetlands without duck shooting. In fact a lot of people visit wetlands to take photos of ducks, and a lot more would visit them if there were no duck shooters there. As I said, I have been to the wetlands many, many times and I have seen what happens, and I concur with the comments that were aired on 7.30 just last week as a result of the release of the Pegasus report as well as their own investigations and interviews with people that unsustainable hunting practices are on the rise. That is certainly what I have witnessed.

Mr Young talks about the minority of hunters doing the wrong thing. In fact my experience and my observation is that Mr Young, who talks about how he does the right thing, is actually in the minority.

Mr Young — Oh, that wouldn't be biased at all.

Ms PENNICUIK — Well, I go by what I see. He talks about misinformation. The reason I go is so that I do know what happens; I do see what happens. Someone has to go and witness and report accurately what goes on, and that is not you, Mr Young.

Mr Young also said misinformation was peddled regarding fluffy animals. Well, I have seen for myself what happens when female ducks with ducklings have been shot. Those ducklings are just lost then because ducklings follow their mothers and have their behaviour imprinted on them. They are basically helpless once they lose their mother. I have personally seen ducklings dying on the water or being brought in by duck rescuers and put into incubators but not surviving. They are fluffy ducklings. It is not misinformation, Mr Young; it is what I have seen with my own eyes. It does happen. So often not only do ducks that are wounded fly away and ducks that have died not get recovered by the vast majority of irresponsible shooters, but if there are ducklings involved then that is the end of them as well. It is not misinformation.

The 7.30 report confirmed what I have observed and experienced over the years — unsustainable hunting and irresponsible hunting; the leaving behind of birds and the non-retrieval of birds, which is against the regulations; shooting before the opening of the season; shooting protected species; and shooting swans, avocet, egrets, all sorts of birds that are not even ducks and just leaving them on the water. Of course the shooters leave them on the water because theoretically they would be prosecuted if they picked them up, but of course that never happens. And this is on the rise.

Mr Young spoke to it. Ms Symes spoke to what happened last year at the Koorangie marshes, where I was. I have been there for many, many years. I was visibly upset; I was in tears at what was going on at those marshes, where so many birds were just shot out of the sky. And it was not just ducks. Anything that happened to be flying was shot out of the sky and left there. Mr Young might roll his eyes, but this was what I actually saw with my own eyes. Some 1500 birds were recovered just from that wetland that had not been retrieved by the shooters. That is so many birds that it cannot just be a minority of shooters. It is the majority of the shooters who are leaving them on the wetlands dead or wounded and who do not bother to go to pick

them up. In fact that is why the new regulation has been brought in — to force shooters to go and pick them up, as they are meant to do. But they do not do that. So 1500 birds, including 296 protected species, were just left on the lake to die or they were already dead. It was not a minority of the shooters but the majority of them who were engaging in this behaviour. The majority of them started shooting before the shooting time. That is what I saw and heard when I was there. Just a little bit later, two big pits of birds that the shooters had shot, then recovered and buried were discovered. Again, it is not a minority of people involved.

The 7.30 report talked about questionable hunting practices and downed ducks left to die while hunters just continued shooting. I have seen that with my own eyes. I saw it with my own eyes last time; I have seen it at other times. It is not an isolated incident.

The findings of the Pegasus report that I referred to earlier today are damning. They found that non-compliance with shooting regulations is commonplace and widespread; it is not a minority. They found that it is commonplace and widespread, and it is. That is what I have seen. The GMA staff do not believe themselves that they can in any way ensure compliance or effectively sanction hunters. That is what the staff themselves say. It undermines their credibility of course, and they failed to deliver on what is their responsibility to enforce the hunting laws.

Of course the GMA was set up by the previous government. We opposed it at the time. We said it would turn into an organisation that just promotes hunting, and that is in fact what the Pegasus report found. It is made up of the people it is supposed to be regulating — the shooters — and it is advocating for them and promoting them. It is not dissimilar from the discussion we had yesterday about Racing Victoria — again, an organisation which is meant to promote racing as well as regulate it. You cannot do the two; it is a conflict of interest, and the GMA has an inherent conflict of interest. Funding of \$5 million every year goes into the GMA, and it does not serve the public interest. It is not impartial in the way it operates.

What was also interesting in the 7.30 report — and I do urge people to have a look at it — was an interview with a person from the country about the economic role of duck shooting, which of course is overestimated, overblown and overstated by both governments. After I came back from the season opening last year, I said that I made an effort to go around the town of Kerang to see if I could see any duck shooters in any shops or restaurants or at the supermarket. They were not there. They were all already out on the wetlands with their

eskies full of alcohol, and they were not coming into the town. But I do not just rely on my own observation there; I asked people if they were getting any more visitors. I asked restaurant owners and the fish and chip shop owner — not that I would frequent a fish and chip shop, but I went in to ask questions — and I was informed that, no, they had not noticed any increase —

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms PENNICUIK — I thought that might be the sort of thing duck shooters might take away to the campground with them, but I am told it is not. The Pegasus report finds the same thing.

I do not agree with Mr Young's first point about the enjoyable pastime of shooting ducks. I do not agree with his second point. Well, in some ways I partially agree with his second point in that the changes to the arrangements are ill-conceived and unworkable. I am not sure about them being ill-conceived. They are probably unworkable. They are more likely to just be irrelevant because they will be, like all the other regulations, flouted by the shooters and not enforced by the Game Management Authority. His third point is really the most amazing one, given the release of the Pegasus report — that is, he wants us to affirm that the Game Management Authority is best placed to administer, regulate and manage game hunting in Victoria as a statutory authority. I just cannot agree with that. I have never agreed with it. The Greens have always opposed the Game Management Authority, as I mentioned.

It is worth, I think, going to the Pegasus report and reading out some of the key findings. It is 116 pages of damning findings on the role of the Game Management Authority, but let us just pick out a few things. The executive summary states:

The GMA has not been able to effectively fulfil its compliance and enforcement responsibilities. While many hunters —

it does not say the majority; it says many —

are responsible and respect the ... laws, non-compliance with the game hunting laws is commonplace and widespread, and the GMA is widely perceived by its external stakeholders and its own staff as unable either to ensure compliance with the game hunting laws or to effectively sanction offenders ...

It goes on to say:

The GMA lacks ... critical mass, but its resourcing and operating models are not the primary reasons for its lack of effectiveness. The regulatory and institutional frameworks in which the GMA operates are extremely fragmented, and the game hunting laws are widely perceived by internal and

external stakeholders to be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to effectively enforce in the field.

When I said that before, Mr Young said I was paraphrasing. No, I was directly quoting from the executive summary: it is impossible to effectively enforce in the field. And that of course is the truth, because there are so many wetlands, there are so many shooters in small pockets on these wetlands and there are so few game management compliance officers that it can never be effectively enforced — never, ever and not with the recommendations in this report either. The executive summary continues:

As a small statutory body, the GMA is vulnerable to capture by the interests that it is seeking to regulate ... The GMA is not currently perceived by all of its stakeholders as independent or impartial in its administration of the game hunting laws.

That is because it is not impartial. Most of the staff of the Game Management Authority, including the chair, are duck shooters. So how can they be impartial? They are and always have been duck shooters. It goes on:

The separation of the GMA's regulatory functions from other advisory and promotional activities ...

would protect its independence, as would locating it within the department, which is what happens in other areas. It continues:

As a publicly funded and accountable regulator, the GMA owes a duty to the community as a whole ...

not just to duck shooters. It goes on:

The GMA's current position exposes the minister and the board to considerable policy and regulatory risk and if not addressed will contribute to continued non-compliance with the game hunting laws ...

et cetera.

The report's findings, which are some three pages of damning findings about the operation, the effectiveness, the regulatory governance, the approach to regulation, the operating model and the capacity and capability of the GMA, state:

The accountability and governance frameworks that underpin the operating model are inadequate and out of date.

They also state:

... additional funding alone would not necessarily provide better compliance and enforcement outcomes or prevent a recurrence of the events that have been experienced during recent duck seasons and elsewhere.

I say that because in this report it does talk about some of the incidents including, as I mentioned, the Box Flat

massacre which happened in 2013, where again thousands of birds, including protected birds, were illegally shot in this particular wetland called Box Flat. The Game Management Authority was warned before that. It was tipped off that a whole lot of hunters were going to go there and shoot everything they could, and they did. The authority also knew that the area had a presence of a whole lot of freckled ducks, which are a highly endangered species. But the authority did not shut it down and they went off somewhere else, to another wetland, and just allowed that to go ahead even though they had been warned.

There is one thing I do agree with Mr Young on, which is that freckled ducks and other protected birds, such as blue-billed ducks, brolgas and the blue-winged shoveler, which Ms Symes mentioned, should never be on a game list. I do not believe any duck should be on a game list, but how could the blue-winged shoveler ever make its way to a game list, because it is a threatened bird as well? When those birds are present on wetlands and it is known beforehand the government should shut the wetlands down. I agree that it is not the best idea to be shutting them down the night before; they should be shut down as soon as it is known those birds are there.

Already we know of the presence of large numbers of freckled ducks on Lake Elizabeth, Hird Swamp and Lake Cullen near Kerang. We have already lost hundreds, if not thousands, of freckled ducks over the last few years that have been shot on wetlands that have not been shut down when they should have been, when the government knew about it. So there is a very large number there on the Kerang Wetlands, so those wetlands should be shut down now. Again, there are some wetlands near Dunkeld, there are some near Clear Lake and Lake Bolac that also have large numbers of freckled ducks and blue-billed ducks on them. So these wetlands should be shut down. The government has this information now; I know it does, so it should shut them down now. That is how you avoid massacres of protected birds — just do not let the shooters on there. If they are allowed onto those wetlands they will shoot them, like they do every year, and then the government laments that it happens, but it happens because the shooters are there.

I will not spend too much time on this, but a really interesting part of the Pegasus report is on page 28. Ms Symes talked about bag limits in her contribution. It says that in 1992 hunters' bag surveys were conducted at 110 wetlands. Last year they were conducted at 20 wetlands. That is how much compliance is going on at checking bag limits — none.

The other point I want to make is that in the Pegasus report on page 39 it talks about the direction from the hierarchy of the Game Management Authority was a focus on enforcing compliance of protesters. It says:

The choice to prioritise action against protestors was a management decision reflected in operational planning prior to the event and was not forced upon the GMA ... It is difficult to understand why the GMA would attach a higher priority to protestor management than to the enforcement of the hunting laws for which it has the primary responsibility. Senior game officers and game managers expressed frustration with the priority attached to protestor management and indicated they could be more effective if they were able to focus on hunters.

This reinforces the comments of a spokesperson from a hunting organisation who said, regarding the events at Koorangie marshes, that charging the small number of hunters acting illegally and confiscating their firearms on the spot would have had a much greater and immediate effect than concentrating on the protesters. I saw heaps of them shooting before the starting time, shooting birds, leaving them down, shooting protected animals and nothing happened. But the first protester to go into the water and pick up a duck was arrested.

Lastly:

GMA staff feel that many hunters hold the organisation in contempt and openly flout the hunting laws ... and ... openly engage in illegal behaviour in front of them, in the knowledge that GMA authorised officers are not able to approach them in the absence of ... Victoria Police ... Facebook posts by individual hunters detailing their illegal hunting exploits only reinforce the impression of widespread non-compliance.

I would also add that those types of people engaging in this activity are also engaged in trolling and abusive posts on Facebook too.

I cannot say that I agree with Mr Young's call for the Game Management Authority to continue in that role. I think this report provides more than enough evidence to shut it down and give that role back to the department where it used to be. In terms of the new regulations, as I said, they will probably make little or no difference because they are never enforced and no-one complies with them, so whether we start at 9.00 a.m. or 7.00 a.m. it does not really matter. Although I do believe at 9.00 a.m. you can probably see the birds and at least identify if it is a duck or a swan, which is not the case at the moment. I think this motion is offensive to most Victorians, and we will not be supporting it.

Ms SHING (Eastern Victoria) (16:31) — I have heard a lot today in the chamber on this particular issue in relation to the motion moved by Mr Young and it is not surprising that all sides of the spectrum have been revealed in relation to the issue of recreational hunting

as a leisure activity as it is now undertaken. We have heard the account from Ms Symes of Mr Young's apparent desire to shoot a giraffe and we have heard, on the other side of the spectrum, Ms Pennicuik's desire to have the practice of hunting ducks as well as other animals outlawed entirely in the state of Victoria.

What I do want to state at the outset is that the many and varied views that are on the record in relation to this issue speak to a number of key positions and concerns that people have that in and of themselves and to my mind warrant the use of careful and effective regulation. This careful and effective regulation is something which, to our position within government, is delivered through the Game Management Authority (GMA) and through its resourcing as well as through the partnerships which the Game Management Authority has, including with increased water policing work that is undertaken and will be undertaken this year throughout the season, as well as the extensive stakeholder engagement that has taken place through the GMA and with relevant stakeholder bodies throughout its operation since we introduced this mechanism and this body to do the work that it does. That includes BirdLife Australia, and that is why I suspect Ms Pennicuik referred to information and data, which the government has, on survey results about what has been taking place on the ground as something which has come to the Greens' attention.

It is in fact something which tells a story of widespread consultation. This is something which government is working hard to strike the right balance on. As a regional member who is proud to represent the area of Gippsland, I note that we have an enormous number of recreational hunters throughout Gippsland. I know that Traralgon, Moe and Bairnsdale are some of the areas where we have the largest number of recreational hunting licences granted, and I know that people take a great deal of pride in the practice and expertise that they can develop through their local clubs as well as the opportunities that present for hunting, mostly of deer but also of other animals, including ducks — and wild dogs, as a consequence of our bigger, better wild dog bounty of \$120 per animal. That is now able to contribute significantly to managing this feral species, as invasive, difficult, challenging and traumatic as it is for landholders who frequently have to manage large volumes of stock loss and animal welfare issues, including lambs and calves having had their faces ripped off or their hindquarters torn off because of wild dog incursions onto private property.

In this regard I note that hunting forms a valuable and viable part of our state's economy. It is something which we know contributes hundreds of millions of

dollars to the economy over the course of any year, and it is an area which we know is attended by those who in the main absolutely want to do the right thing. But there are always going to be those who flout the rules and who have no regard whatsoever for the rules which are there not just to protect the reputation of the industry but also to meet the compliance guidelines and responsibilities that exist, for example, under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986 and the Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals in Hunting.

What we have seen is a huge increase in the understanding and education at a community level around compliance, around best practice for recovery and around the way in which this is reflected in game regulations. It is crucial to make sure that the efforts around education, awareness and ongoing communication are continued into the future. Nobody wants to have our recreational hunters treated with contempt or left in the dark in relation to the regulatory framework that properly and appropriately exists to guide them to enjoy recreational hunting activities. Similarly, nobody wants to see people go rogue in a way that damages the reputation of the industry through causing avoidable animal welfare issues because a limited number of idiots decide to go out there and ruin it for everybody.

We have significant money being put into realising the objectives of the GMA, and in the 2016–17 budget we put \$5.33 million aside for this. We have also had a number of expansions in the hunting area, which include a two-year trial of hog deer hunting on Snake Island in South Gippsland, as well as assisting people to be able to better access areas where sambar deer, fallow deer and red deer proliferate. We know that they are important quarry for hunters, who can take as much of a carcass away from an area as possible to minimise wild dog breeding cycles as well as to keep the population under control.

So let us not make any bones about it: hunting does have an important role to play within the recreational and leisure activities that people do, particularly in regional Victoria and particularly throughout Gippsland. The balance that is being struck through the work of the GMA, the regulations and the partnerships with police, with local governments and also with the community is an important one. For that reason the way in which the motion has been drafted, in particular the reference to an ill-conceived and unworkable duck season arrangement and the call for changes to be made pursuant to paragraph (4) of Mr Young's motion, puts us in a position whereby we cannot support the motion, on the basis that the work we are undertaking is

well-placed, appropriate, funded in a way that enables us to deliver on our commitments and strikes an appropriate balance in all of the circumstances and by reference to the various positions that have been illustrated in the chamber here on this issue this afternoon. On that basis the government will not be supporting the motion.

Mr YOUNG (Northern Victoria) (16:38) — I would like to very briefly reply to some of the comments made today. I will make this short. I thank the government for their comments, although I am disappointed they will not be supporting the motion. I would very much like to thank Mr O'Sullivan for his comments on behalf of the coalition and for the coalition's support behind this motion. It is very much appreciated. Typically of the Greens there was nothing much that I did not expect in there, even to the point of hypocrisy. Whilst Ms Pennicuik mentioned one report that she thought was absolute garbage on the economic value of hunting to this state, there is another report that she thinks is gospel and it should be one to live by. It is amazing how you can just pick and choose which ones you want to use. I suppose that just goes to illustrate the type of campaign that is run against people on this issue.

Specifically, just to address something that Ms Symes added in her contribution in regard to some hunting activities that I may do and a conversation that Mr O'Sullivan, she and I had, I do remember the conversation. We have had some quite robust conversations about hunting in general. I have had many robust conversations about hunting in general with a lot of people, and that goes for hunting in this state, hunting tourism coming to Australia and hunting tourism going to other places. Most certainly we talked about hunting in Africa, but I have to say there is no planned trip, and if my wife found out that I was planning a trip over there without asking her, she would be very upset. African hunting is just another arm, an extension, of what hunting is, and many people partake of it. Again, as long as it is ethical, legal and done in the right way and in the interests of wildlife management and ecotourism, then we are behind it. We are behind any form of hunting that has the appropriate regulation around it to make sure that the right thing is being done. I thank everyone for their contributions on this motion, and I commend it to the house.

House divided on motion:

Ayes, 19

Atkinson, Mr
Bath, Ms
Bourman, Mr (*Teller*)

Morris, Mr
O'Donohue, Mr
Ondarchie, Mr

| | |
|---------------------|----------------------------------|
| Carling-Jenkins, Dr | O'Sullivan, Mr (<i>Teller</i>) |
| Crozier, Ms | Peulich, Mrs |
| Dalla-Riva, Mr | Ramsay, Mr |
| Davis, Mr | Rich-Phillips, Mr |
| Finn, Mr | Wooldridge, Ms |
| Fitzherbert, Ms | Young, Mr |
| Lovell, Ms | |

Noes, 21

| | |
|-----------------------------|--------------|
| Dalidakis, Mr | Pennicuk, Ms |
| Dunn, Ms (<i>Teller</i>) | Pulford, Ms |
| Eideh, Mr | Purcell, Mr |
| Elasmar, Mr | Ratnam, Dr |
| Gepp, Mr | Shing, Ms |
| Jennings, Mr | Somyurek, Mr |
| Leane, Mr (<i>Teller</i>) | Springle, Ms |
| Melhem, Mr | Symes, Ms |
| Mikakos, Ms | Tierney, Ms |
| Mulino, Mr | Truong, Ms |
| Patten, Ms | |

Motion negatived.

PRODUCTION OF DOCUMENTS

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) (16:47) — I am pleased to move:

That this house —

- (1) in accordance with standing order 11.01, requires the Leader of the Government to table by 2.00 p.m. on Tuesday, 27 March 2018, a copy of all documents in full, signed by or on behalf of the government of Victoria, concerned with or relating to the West Gate tunnel project, including but not limited to —
 - (a) the West Gate tunnel project agreement without redactions;
 - (b) any other contract, agreement or treaty signed by the current government of Victoria with Transurban PL or any member of the Transurban WGT Co Pty Ltd consortium which seeks to vary, change or alter the tolling arrangements, time periods, charges, indexation or other tolling matter under the Melbourne City Link Act 1995 or which would seek to later vary tolling arrangements under the Melbourne City Link Act 1995; and
- (2) notes that, pursuant to section 15(3) of the Melbourne City Link Act 1995, either house of the Parliament may revoke a variation of the agreement.

This is an important documents motion, and it is clearly in the public interest. These tolling documents have not been provided in full to the chamber, and the full contract with the Transurban consortium has been placed on the website but with major redactions. These are documents that ought to be in the public domain. They are documents that the government is seeking to prevent from coming to this chamber.

The Melbourne City Link Act 1995 states in part 2, ‘Ratification of agreements’, section 15(2):

The Minister must cause a copy of each agreement under subsection (1) and a statement of each variation under subsection (1A) as published under subsection (1B) to be laid before each House of the Parliament within 6 sitting days of the House next following the making of the agreement or variation.

Subsequent to that, section 15(2A) states:

The Minister must cause a copy of each agreement under subsection (1) and a statement of each variation under subsection (1A) as published under subsection (1B) to be sent to the Government Printer as soon as practicable after the making of the agreement or variation.

Further, the houses of Parliament separately have the ability to revoke those variations ‘wholly or in part’ under the provisions of that Melbourne City Link Act. I think it is bloody-minded and outrageous of the government to be withholding those details from the chamber and indeed from the community, hence this documents motion which seeks to bring these into the possession of the chamber and under the light of community examination. It is an important documents motion, as I said. It is clearly and importantly in the public interest because any variations to the toll deeds impact on businesses, families and commuters.

We know that the CityLink project variation of toll deeds will apply largely to the existing CityLink in several ways. First, there is an escalator starting in 2019 with massive increases over a decade in tolls far and above the inflation rate, and then there is an extension later into the 2040s of the period of the toll deed. Also, under the arrangements in this contract — we know in broad detail but without all of the specifics — the details show that there will be a new city access charge and there will be a toll placed on the road that the government seeks to build.

The chamber has today disallowed or revoked the planning cover for the West Gate tunnel project, and I would be concerned if the government sought to subvert the Parliament and in any way act undemocratically, given the powers that are in the Planning and Environment Act 1987 and the ability of the chamber to lawfully revoke a planning scheme amendment within 10 sitting days of its tabling. I would be very concerned if the government were to seek to subvert those powers of the Parliament and the democratic protections that are in that act. They are there for a reason. They are there to protect the community, they are there to protect families and they are there to protect the public interest in the first instance. We say this deal is not in the public interest. We say it is certainly in the interest of Transurban. The

government has obviously done a sneaky deal with Transurban, and I have laid out my concerns about that in other forums.

The reason behind this documents motion is that these documents ought to be in the public domain in full. The chamber ought to be in a position to deal with those documents in a constructive way, as it is lawfully in fact required to do in terms of the Melbourne City Link Act 1995. As I said, the tolling deed variations and any treaties or agreements or contracts that the government has signed — some of which may be public in part, others which we know are redacted heavily and some of which may not yet have come to public like — ought to all be in the public domain. They ought to be available for full scrutiny and analysis so that the chamber can take the steps that it can legally take.

Mr Leane — On a point of order, Acting President, I am not too sure if Mr Davis actually paid attention to his previous motion, which unfortunately got up on the votes. He is now calling for documents of a project that has just been stopped. It has been stopped by his actions. He is calling for documents for a project that he himself actually stopped — maybe he has got a memory of a goldfish. The point of order is that there is no relevance to this particular motion that has been moved. As I said, maybe he has got the memory of a goldfish. He is calling for documents on a project that because of his actions has just been stopped.

Mr DAVIS — On the point of order —

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Melhem) — I am happy to listen to your point of order, Mr Davis, but I am about to rule that there is no point of order, so you can resume your contribution. I believe Mr Leane was making a statement, and he made it.

Mr DAVIS — Acting President, of course there is no point of order in this matter. The government itself has said it is going to regazette the planning amendment in an extraordinary and undemocratic step — as I described it, pointing a single finger at the Parliament and democracy. It is just extraordinary that after a revocation they would come forward and actually say, ‘We don’t care what the Parliament has said. We’re going to go ahead anyway and find a sneaky way to subvert the Parliament’. I mean, that is extraordinary. Even with Mr Leane’s point of order, within his own frame of reference, the government has said it is proceeding anyway.

The agreement with Transurban has been signed by the government and/or its agents in various forms, and they all ought to be in the domain here and in the public

domain. We ought to be able to see the details of those contracts. We ought to be able to work out how much more someone in Sunbury who uses CityLink every day to go in and out to work is going to pay. If you look at the escalator from 2019, they will be paying 52 per cent more across that period. If they spend \$5000 a year on tolls, they will be spending more than \$7500 per year on tolls as a family. If they spend \$10 000 a year, they will be spending well over \$15 000 a year on tolls.

Down in the south and the east, those who come in on the M1 will face the same escalator on toll costs. There will be massive increases in tolls that will smash those family budgets, hit small businesses and do that for a road that they do not use. This is not to pay for the roads that exist. This is to pay for a new road that the government wants to build, and they want to do it by charging massive levies, massive new tolls on existing roads. That is where the CityLink bill comes in, and that is where this documents motion comes in. The community wants to see them, and it is in the community interest for those documents to be in the public domain in full to enable the chamber to make decisions and also for the community to understand what it has been signed up to. It is an extraordinary decision of the government to smash —

Mr Leane interjected.

Mr DAVIS — Well, your government has today said it does not care what the Parliament says. It does not care what the lawful decision of the Parliament is; it does not care. It is going to send a salute to the Parliament and say, ‘We’re going to build this anyway. We’re going to find a sneaky way around the law of the land. We’re going to try and obfuscate. We’re going to try to work our way around the Parliament and the democracy that is a very big part of our system of government’. But it is Daniel Andrews and his government — an arrogant and nasty government — who are prepared to subvert processes, to act undemocratically and to act in a way that is not in the community interest.

We know that this deal with Transurban was cooked up before the election, and we know that key staff out of the Treasurer’s office — the chief of staff — hopped across to Transurban. We know that staff out of the former Premier’s office, John Brumby’s office, have gone across to Transurban. We know that a deal was done, and we know that this is a stinking deal that is not in the public interest. We know that this is in the interest of Transurban, and it is a firm that is entitled to advocate for its own interest, but the stench of this will hang around this government. This is a shocking deal, a potentially corrupt deal.

Mr Leane — On a point of order, Acting President, I still find it hard to understand the contents of Mr Davis's motion. The media has reported that the project has stopped. It has stopped out there because of the action that the —

Mrs Peulich — Please quote the standing order.

Mr Leane — The standing order is 'No project, no document', so I do not know —

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Purcell) — Mr Leane, do you have a point of order? Please continue, Mr Davis.

Mr DAVIS — So a potentially corrupt deal between Labor and —

Mr Leane — On a point of order, Acting President, I do not know who the member is making accusations against — he seems to put them across the world; he accuses everyone of everything — but if he is going to make accusations against members of this Parliament —

Mrs Peulich interjected.

Mr Leane — My point of order is that you have to do —

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Purcell) — Do you have a point of order, Mr Leane?

Mr Leane — Any accusations have to be done by a substantive motion, not by a rant.

Mrs Peulich interjected.

Mr Leane — You don't know the standing orders. You've been here a zillion years, and you don't know them, so —

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Purcell) — Thank you, Mr Leane. There is no point of order.

Business interrupted pursuant to standing orders.

STATEMENTS ON REPORTS AND PAPERS

Metropolitan Fire Brigade: report 2016–17

Mr O'SULLIVAN (Northern Victoria) (17:00) — As part of the reports segment this afternoon I wish to make a statement on the Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB) annual report for 2016–17. There is no doubt that the MFB firefighters do a tremendous job in terms of keeping the community safe. If there is a fire or an emergency situation, they are on hand very quickly to

undertake the job that they are trained to do, and they do it well. But what is interesting in relation to the Metropolitan Fire Brigade is that they are represented by the United Firefighters Union (UFU) under Peter Marshall. As we have heard before, particularly in this house, Peter Marshall is a very strong advocate on behalf of his industry. He seems to be able to demand whatever he wants for his union members, and Premier Daniel Andrews just bends over and says, 'Anything you want, Mr Marshall, we will deliver'.

We are very aware that the UFU spent a considerable amount of time prior to the last election as part of the campaign doorknocking at, I think they said, thousands and thousands of houses, and they made tens of thousands of phone calls on behalf of the Labor Party at that time, advocating that people not vote conservatively but vote for the Labor Party. In exchange for that, Daniel Andrews must have made a significant commitment of future support to Peter Marshall and the UFU, which we have seen play out over the last three years. Just this week we have seen an enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA) which has been very difficult to get through because of the provisions that are in that EBA.

We have seen a situation where a considerable number of board members and anyone who had a different view to that of Premier Daniel Andrews and Peter Marshall seemed to get sacked. Many board members have been sacked or have resigned. Essentially what has happened is that the government has sacked enough people on the board to the point where they have got enough numbers to finally get the EBA through, and even when they did get it through it was only a 4-3 vote. As soon as the EBA got through, the president of the MFB at the time, Dr Andi Diamond, resigned straightaway, so she is another one that went by the wayside in terms of that outcome. We have seen some of the benefits that will pass for firefighters as a result of that EBA. Some of them are very, very favourable if they are working for you — 196 days of holiday, sick, personal and recreational leave —

Mrs Peulich — How many?

Mr O'SULLIVAN — One hundred and ninety-six days leave per year, a 19 per cent pay rise right away and a \$3000 sign-on benefit. That is all very well for those firefighters, and many people would like to be in a situation where they could get those sorts of benefits, but it seems very strange that Daniel Andrews has been so eager to provide those sorts of benefits to the UFU.

In response to being questioned in relation to the extent of what this would cost, the Premier was quoted as saying:

When you need a firefighter, you can't pay them enough.

That is all very well, but what about the nurses, what about all the other emergency services workers, what about the childcare workers and what about the garbologists? When you need one of those, you cannot pay them enough either. There are going to be a lot of public servants — a lot of people — who will put their hands out. The paramedics will be putting their hands out — and so they should — and so will the teachers in relation to the generous benefits of this EBA. We suspect that Daniel Andrews made a very big promise to Peter Marshall and Peter Marshall is collecting that benefit on behalf of his members, and the whole of Victoria will have to pay.

It is interesting to note that in New South Wales their fire services cost \$135 per head and in Victoria it is \$243 per head, and that was before this EBA went through. It is estimated it will be another \$150 million, although we do not know how much it will be. The government will not come clean and actually tell us how much it will be. The absolute sweetheart deal that has been done between the UFU's Peter Marshall and Daniel Andrews is exorbitant. I think it is above and beyond what everyone else would think is reasonable. It will be interesting to see the payback that the UFU will now provide to the Labor Party in the lead-up to the next election. At the same time I would like to give credit to the firefighters and the safety work that they do, both in the Country Fire Authority and the MFB, on behalf of all the people who live in Victoria.

Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning: report 2016–17

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) (17:05) — I wish to make a few remarks on the annual report of the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, specifically in relation to local government, one of my pet sectors. One of the things I always come back to is the objectives for the outputs for local government. I know you, Acting President Purcell, share a passion for effective and efficient local government. Unfortunately the sector still remains largely unreformed and very flawed. We are waiting to see what happens with the local government reforms that have been promised. I suspect that they may fall a little short of our expectations. The annual report says on page 79:

This output delivers activities in partnership with the local government sector to support effective and efficient

governance and service provision. Through this output, DELWP administers programs to support local governments to increase accountability and provide support to the ...

Victorian people.

When local government falls short, there is the option of instituting a monitor. Can I say one of the councils that has been given a monitor to oversee their governance issues in particular is the City of Frankston. Whilst those issues have not been resolved as yet, because the monitor has not concluded her report, I believe that there have been some improvements. I have actually found the City of Frankston to be quite constructive, although let me say that if you judge their performance by the meetings only, the public would form a different view.

Another neighbouring council that is in desperate need of a monitor, unfortunately, is the Kingston council. I am actually calling on the minister to give serious consideration to instituting a monitor for the Kingston council; there are some serious and ongoing problems. Can I just first of all say that I was actually a councillor on the predecessor council of the Kingston council — the former City of Moorabbin — which took in parts of the cities of Kingston and Glen Eira. So it is my area, it is the area where I live, and I have ongoing concerns about the performance of the council in areas such as governance in particular; it is not a strong suit for the City of Kingston. The City of Kingston appears to be perhaps a little lacking in openness in relation to the public record of its council meetings. Audio recordings have been removed from proceedings, and councillors have been referring to secret meetings being held, even though we know that caucusing is unlawful under the act by inference. There have been very questionable business dealings, and I have received information from local constituents. Kingston council needs to be accountable and open about its dealings in relation to the Mordialloc Creek lease for Pompei's Landing. The council leased prime waterfront real estate to a resident for \$100 a year. How did council negotiate a lease which cost ratepayers \$800 000 in legal fees? Why have the terms of the new lease not been made public? Which councillors have declared conflicts of interest and when? What is the process and reasoning by which council officers and third parties made recommendations to council in regard to the lease, and where is the governance and oversight of this?

There was also the issue of failing to comply with various statutory requirements; asbestos has been dumped in a children's playground, and I am not sure that that has been adequately addressed; and inappropriate management of privacy matters by the council has been investigated, is currently being

investigated and continues to cause angst. This included the inappropriate release of information of a Mrs Gledhill to councillors which has then fallen into the hands of the local Labor member of Parliament. The act of course is silent on that, so the chief executive officer cannot hold the councillors to account.

Most recently council passed a motion which would prevent a Liberal candidate who was a councillor from performing his duties, even though the standard that they have now imposed with this motion goes far beyond any other reasonable standard that has been passed and recommended by the Municipal Association of Victoria or any other peak body. They are trying to interfere with his rights as a citizen and his rightful involvement in the political process. He is a respectful person, he is a respectable person and he is hardworking. The Labor majority has passed this motion which I believe is unlawful; it certainly would not stand up to any government scrutiny. We need a monitor to get these people under control.

Standing Committee on Legal and Social Issues: youth justice centres

Ms BATH (Eastern Victoria) (17:10) — I would like to say a few words on the report of the inquiry into youth justice centres released this week through the chair, Ms Fitzherbert, and I congratulate her on her work through that committee. In relation to this huge body of work, it is very evident that during Labor's term of office so far we have had youth crime still spiralling out of control. We have seen constant media reports of carjackings, home invasions and teens running riot.

Indeed since the end of 2014 we have seen a series of rampages in our youth justice facilities, and in 2016 alone we had at least 13 separate incidents where there had been riots, with millions of dollars worth of damage reported heavily in the media. The Youth Parole Board in its annual report of 2016–17 states from its survey that 65 per cent of young people detained on sentence and in remand have a history of alcohol and drug use. I think this is quite indicative, unfortunately, of the downward spiral of many of those people.

The youth justice centres report on page 34 states:

Advocates of diversion argue it has been proven to:

lower the incidence of youth crime and recidivism —

and that is one of the key factors —

resulting in safer communities and easing the burden on the youth justice system;

cost less than custodial sentences and remand;

improve connections between young people and 'protective factors' against youth offending behaviour, such as family, school, housing and specialist services ...

It also goes on to say:

Mr Julian Pocock of Berry Street argued that diversion programs must also achieve two further outcomes: help the young offender develop as a person; and ensure the young offender understands the impact their offending has had on their victims ...

Currently in Victoria the only drug and alcohol treatment available for young people is voluntary. If this treatment fails and the offending continues, families certainly are left to watch their child or their loved one spiral out of control, and this happens all too often. But the good news is that if we are elected on 24 November this year the Liberals and Nationals will introduce a mandatory drug residential program. This will occur through a youth therapeutic order. There will be a program and a 36-bed treatment centre that will cost roughly \$30 million and have an ongoing cost of \$20 million per year to operate. It will provide an alternative pathway for youth offenders, which is very important. This is based on the work of Children's Court magistrate Jennifer Bowles through the Churchill Fellowship. It will be based on the young people. It is very important to target and capture them before they really turn to a life of unsustainable crime, with its effect on their own personal health, so it is looking at the 15 to 17-year-olds.

One very important lesson I have learned through life is that we should not judge people, but we also should acknowledge that many families go through this in a terrible way. The nephew of one of my friends certainly has experienced the drug ice from the very early age of 17. Indeed if this program had been there for her nephew, his life might be much, much different. He is now 27, and he has been in and out of the prison system for many years. He has commented that it is so important to have some sort of supportive and ongoing individualised program. I have seen the sorrow and the frustration that has occurred for his family. I asked him what he wants done and what he would like to see to reduce the rates of reoffending in young people, and he said simply, 'Offering rehab in prison'. Offering rehab is very helpful as it is at this time that offenders are at rock bottom and desire most to accept change and get clean.

I commend the Liberals and The Nationals and the leadership team for coming up with this, including Mary Wooldridge. I think it will make a significant

improvement in changing lives at an early stage for those young people. It is much needed. It needs to operate broadly across Victoria — not just in the city but across regional Victoria, including my patch of Gippsland as well.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Purcell)

(17:15) — Before I call the next speaker, I acknowledge a former member in the gallery, Ms Hartland.

Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board: report 2016–17

Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria) (17:15) — It is good to see Ms Hartland and her friends in the gallery and many others out in Queen's Hall. I note that we are being televised out there, so I am pleased to see that we have some people listening to some very important business that I am going to bring to the chamber in respect of the annual report of the Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board.

I note in the report a summary from the president at the time, Dr Andi Diamond, who unfortunately, once the enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA) had been signed off by the board — pressured, I might add, by Premier Andrews in replacing a board member with one of his own — resigned the very next day. I bring this up from a timeliness point of view because only this week we have seen the government ticking off on the Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB) EBA with the support and encouragement of the United Firefighters Union (UFU) and its secretary, Peter Marshall, in a 'deal of the century', as identified by the *Herald Sun* only yesterday.

The deal of the century encapsulates a pay deal that no other public service has. There is a 19 per cent increase in wages over the life of the agreement and a sign-on bonus of \$3000. A leading firefighter's weekly wage goes from \$1847 to nearly \$2000 — an increase of \$120 just in a weekly wage. All allowances are up 19 per cent, and a further 12 allowances have been added on top of that. There is an availability allowance for commanders and above for being on call, with a 5.5 per cent increase. There is a relieving allowance, whatever the hell that means, of \$30.52 and a fitness leader allowance — I presume this is for fitness instructors to have our firefighters in peak firefighting condition — of \$24 a week. There is a temporary accommodation allowance of \$4.16 per day shift, a permanent relocation allowance of \$1461 and a language allowance — in case there is more than one language that a firefighter may want to use in the line of their duty. There is a trench rescue allowance of \$24 a

week, a marine response allowance of \$24 a week and a drone operator allowance of \$2.70 per hour. I am not sure how that will be provided to firefighters. There is a driving instructor allowance. It is probably a good idea if most of them have a drivers licence, but they have special driving instructors. There is a juvenile fire awareness intervention program facilitator allowance of \$24 a week and a diploma instructor allowance of \$25 a week.

Some of the conditions include \$5000 reimbursed to firefighters each time they need legal advice in relation to work, which can include disciplinary action the MFB takes against them or a proceeding at any commission, court or other body. Ambulance membership is paid through the EBA — thanks very much. There is a \$125 sports voucher each year for firefighters under the EBA. Road tolls will be paid by the Metropolitan Fire Brigade for firefighters working overtime or at another station. There is a drivers licence fee reimbursement. There is 1 hour's pay if contacted about a work matter outside rostered or on-call hours per occurrence. Wouldn't we as politicians love it if every time someone contacted us out of hours there was a reimbursement?

In relation to the veto, this is where it gets serious. All MFB policies, including bullying, harassment, equal opportunity, fraud and corruption, conflict of interest, whistleblower and any new policies, must be signed off by the union. Power of operational management is to be directed back to the UFU, so any operational matters in respect of the Metropolitan Fire Brigade must be signed off by the United Firefighters Union.

There is to be no monitoring or surveillance by the MFB of staff. Why do you think that would be in there? I recollect a firefighter who was charged with the misuse of property in relation to, I think, accessing porn material. How many hundreds of thousands of dollars did Peter Marshall use of UFU money to fight that case in our courts? But no, we now have an EBA where there will be no email monitoring for those accessing porn.

I have nearly finished. Changes to any state or commonwealth laws cannot be implemented at the MFB without consultation and agreement by the union. This EBA is a total and utter sham.

Department of Treasury and Finance: budget papers 2017–18

Mr MORRIS (Western Victoria) (17:21) — I thought Mr Ramsay could have gone on for another 5 minutes with the way he was going. I rise to make my

statement on the budget papers 2017–18 and some of the significant issues we are seeing out of the projects that the Labor Party has funded in Ballarat. One of the biggest issues we are seeing at the moment in Ballarat is the lack of clarity that the government is willing to provide with regard to the debacle that is Eureka Stadium. Prior to the last election Labor said it would fund Eureka Stadium. Daniel Andrews came to Ballarat to announce it and said that it was all wonderful and that type of thing. He did not invite the mayor along at the time to the announcement, but that is beside the point.

What we have now learned as a result of what we have seen at Eureka Stadium is that there has been a compulsory acquisition of land for \$5.5 million by the Ballarat City Council due to the botched process that the government has gone through. What we have further found out is that there was a Crown lease that the government issued to the Ballarat City Council post this acquisition of land that was entirely unlawful and had to be revoked. I have asked Minister Pulford about this, and the President has very kindly reinstated that question once. Unfortunately he cannot do it again. The minister has refused to confirm this revocation of a lease. She has not denied it, so we know it has happened. We know the government is running and hiding, having botched this project. But I can assure Minister Pulford that I am not going to leave this alone. I am going to go after this issue until the community of Ballarat is well aware of the way that her government has mishandled this project.

Speaking of projects that have been mishandled, I will move on to the Ballarat bus interchange. People often joke about Ballarat and the weather we have there. The Ballarat bus interchange that has been proposed by this government came about due to wholesale concern about the way that buses were being placed in the magnificent Lydiard Street North and not within the railway station precinct, where they quite obviously should be.

We have concept drawings now of what the bus interchange is going to look like. It has just a bit of a cover over the top. I am not sure if anybody has been to Ballarat during June or July, but it can get rather chilly. We can get a fair bit of rain, and we can even get sleet and snow. To have a bus interchange that provides absolutely no cover at all from the wind and other elements that come through this area shows that whoever developed this is certainly not from Ballarat. They have no idea about conditions in Ballarat. It is manifestly inadequate.

There was one afternoon drop-in session for consultation. This is what the government considers appropriate consultation for a significant project like that. The Ballarat community is not happy with the design for this Ballarat bus interchange. The government should have had genuine consultation, which is what it should do now before it progresses any further with this project.

Speaking of consultation, there is the issue of Mair Street in Ballarat. We have managed to stave off the government from destroying Sturt Street, but now we are onto Mair Street. The government wants to take 170 car parks out of Mair Street. One wonders why it is that VicRoads wants to go to war with the people of Ballarat. We have seen them try to destroy Sturt Street, and now they are trying to destroy Mair Street and its businesses by removing 170 car parks. Now, unfathomably, we are also seeing VicRoads changing the sequence of the lighting at Victoria and Fussell streets. This is one of the busiest intersections in Ballarat, particularly during the school drop-off and pick-up times. Cars are backed up for hundreds of metres on Fussell Street as a result of the inexplicable change that VicRoads have made.

I hear it time and time again from the people of Ballarat that this Labor government and their statutory bodies like VicRoads just come in and impose themselves on the community without any due consideration or consultation with the community about what they want. People are sick and tired of being dictated to by this government that refuses to listen or understand the needs of the community. The message is quite clear to VicRoads, to Daniel Andrews and to his ministers about what the people of Ballarat want. We want to be consulted about plans when they are being put into place; we want to be listened to; and rather than just cursory consultation, we want genuine consultation where the community is listened to and the views of the community are taken on board.

INAUGURAL SPEECH

Ms Truong

Ms TRUONG (Western Metropolitan) (17:28) — I acknowledge that we gather on land stolen from this country's First Nations people. This place, even as it serves as a beautifully kept monument to our democracy, was founded on land that is, and always will be, Aboriginal land.

I pay my deep respects to the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation, traditional owners of this land, to their elders past, present and emerging. I extend this to any

Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person here today, including my Greens sister Lidia Thorpe, MP for Northcote.

We each come to this place with our own story, each of us a reflection of the people and experiences that have shaped us. I am humbled to be standing here as the first Vietnamese-Australian woman to take a seat in this place. And I'm pretty stoked, to be honest, to share with you today what it is that I hope to do here for Victorians.

Both my grandads served in the South Vietnamese army, fighting the Việt Cộng. At the Fall of Sài Gòn in 1975 each of my parents were chosen by their families to flee on crowded fishing boats. As 'boat people' they would face starvation, pirates and the prospect of never seeing their families again. But life in Vietnam under communism was unbearable. Thousands had already died in labour camps. Millions of Vietnamese people made this same perilous journey and perished. My parents survived.

My brothers and sisters and I were born and raised in the western suburbs of Melbourne, in public housing, at public schools. We played in public parks and read books in public libraries. And when we were sick, there was Medicare.

Us kids spoke fluent 'Australian'. We had access to food, shelter and education in a country without war or bloodshed in the streets. We had the opportunities and choices that were never available to our parents.

With all that, we grew up with a huge sense of responsibility, growing up with the weight of our family's expectations to make good on their sacrifices and navigating a world that our parents often could not explain to us.

My family's Australian story began in 1983 when my parents arrived at the Midway Migrant Hostel in Maribyrnong. Today in its place stands the Maribyrnong Detention Centre — a place of misery, under a miserable immigration policy.

It is not lost on any of us kids with migrant parents how different our stories would be if we were seeking refuge today. The difference then was that, as the fallout of the Vietnam War played out, we had politicians here, significantly Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser, who had the courage and compassion to take us in and make room for us. This is the difference between me standing here as your newest MP rather than being on Manus as a detainee.

Despite a rocky home life and growing up poor, my brothers and sisters and I did well at school. My teachers at Maidstone Primary School and Braybrook College always met my big questions about the world beyond our suburbs with encouragement and generosity.

For a kid like me, the kindness and care in our welfare system, in our public health system and from my teachers and friends at school bloody well saved me from a bitter and hard life.

Western Metropolitan Region spans the local government areas of Maribyrnong, Moonee Valley, Hobsons Bay, Brimbank, Wyndham and parts of the cities of Hume and Melton. One in three residents living in this region were born overseas. Of course that means thousands of us in the remaining two-thirds have parents who were either migrants or refugees.

Today, the western suburbs of Melbourne are some of the fastest growing areas in Australia. We are among the most culturally and linguistically diverse and some of the most disadvantaged. A lot gets said about the west missing out, and it is true. If you were to map out, as I did on Google the other night, the number of hospitals, public pools and parkland across metro Melbourne, you would see how chronically undersupplied the west is compared with our eastern suburbs neighbours. We are also exposed to higher levels of pollution and obscene rates of gambling loss.

But there is diversity in every street, and this is our strength. Next door to me is Janina, a 93-year-old woman who lives independently and laughs a lot. At 16 years old she was taken from her front yard in Poland by the Nazis and thrown in the back of a truck. She never saw her family again. Across the road is a quiet Burmese family. I see my mum in this young woman, who has two little kids running around her ankles and one on her hip, while her husband is out completing a bricklaying apprenticeship. They work hard and are at the beginning of their Australian story — and we all help with toys and clothes for their kids.

Our communities are the most generous you will find anywhere. There are people fighting to preserve our built and cultural heritage, to keep our community clubs open and to connect our communities around faith, around sport and with our local waterways and grasslands. Every weekend you will find hundreds of our community groups — Scouts, Rotary, churches, mosques and temples, sports clubs, 'friends of' groups and historical societies — keeping our communities

connected to each other and to the environment that sustains us.

The traditional owners of the land referred to in this place as the Western Metropolitan Region are the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation. They would have known a time when our Western Volcanic Plains were home to a rich diversity of wildflowers, trees, grasses and plants and animals that had adapted to and supported these dry, flat, grassy ecosystems. I have noticed that many in this place do not like to talk about it much, but this biodiversity — these complex interconnected relationships between native plants and animals in our environment — keeps our air clean, keeps our climate safe, keeps our waterways healthy, and so feeds us. How strange it is that we struggle to keep this front and centre in everything we do here.

I did not grow up bushwalking or camping, but I know enough about famine, scarcity and the tendency for weeds and drought to take over whole landscapes if we don't let long-adapted species do their part in our biosphere. Climate change is a fundamental challenge to these essential balances that keep the planet livable. This is the risk of building over farmland and green wedges, of building toll road tunnels that lock in pollution and lock us into that second and third car, of powering our businesses and homes with grid technology from the 1950s. There is immense potential in transforming our relationships with these ecosystems, and I want to see Victoria lead the global change in changing these relationships.

In 2008 I rolled up to Brimbank City Council's depot in Keilor Park and joined its environment department as an environmental planner. There, amongst a heavily unionised workforce, I learned about good governance and had a steep learning curve about how to get stuff done. That's how I know that public services need to be evidence based, locally relevant and protected. We need our suburbs to be green and affordable, our public assets to remain in public hands, and for it all to work we need our community's trust and support. If you deliver services that aren't shaped by community needs, you are wasting everyone's time. When you let councillors behave badly for far too long, the public's cynicism and disengagement can unmake whole communities.

One of the key ways that I will measure my success here as an MP is in my ability to bring people in to have their say and participate. If more people see it worth their while to look up and get involved to shape the decisions that impact us, I know there is hope for the western suburbs to get the support and the services, the

infrastructure and the opportunities that we desperately need and deserve.

Some of us still remember life before smartphones, before dotcom booms and cryptocurrency. We see the harsh reality of an unsafe climate, of mounting waste that has nowhere to go, of the natural lungs and veins of our cities being choked up by more space being made for cars rather than for people, and we see the people that our systems and institutions are still letting down.

We see you.

Never before has it been so critical for us to understand what is worth protecting and what we stand for. Real, progressive change for politics, for our society, for an economy that works, for people and our planet rather than for profits and plunder depends on us turning up and rolling up our sleeves to unrig these systems and hammer out the world that we want.

We Greens believe in the public good to keep us all safe and well. I will work hard to bring people together, to connect us with a stronger sense of ourselves and our values and to the decisions that affect our lives. When we are not besieged by disadvantage and discrimination, when we are not reduced to competing against each other and being consumers, our strongest human impulse is to love and share. As a Greens MP I will continue to be part of this broader movement for an inclusive, compassionate politics — for the courage that I know we are all capable of.

I am still pinching myself that this is my life now. I have landed this dream job at 34, and every night I get to come home to my gorgeous husband and my two cuddly kids, Grace and Teddy. Rob, Grace and Teddy, if I am not with you, know that I am thinking about you. I love you all so much.

For their love and support in everything I do, I thank my brothers and sisters: Lien and Andrew Chin, and my brothers, Luong and Liem, and their partners. Big love too to my baby sisters, Loan, Lieu and Luyen Truong; my mum, Hien Tu; and my extended family, the Trans, the other Trans, the Tus, the Campbells, the D'Souzas, the Chins and my friends who complete our little village.

I thank my predecessor, retired member for Western Metropolitan Region, Ms Colleen Hartland, who has been a hardworking and much-loved advocate for us in the west and in the Greens. Her happy retirement is well deserved and her legacy is strong.

I am ready to take the baton, to honour the needs and interests of over half a million people who live in western metro.

Việt Hương rất cảm động được đại diện cho Đảng Xanh.

Và cùng một hình ảnh đại diện cho giới trẻ người Úc gốc Việt.

Kinh nghiệm của cộng đồng chúng tôi cho thấy — tự do và nhân quyền không do ai ban phát mà chúng ta phải tự dành lấy; và phải sử dụng để củng cố chúng mạnh mẽ hơn nữa.

I'll be here helping to make sure everyone in the state is afforded their dignity, for everyone to get what they need to thrive, to make laws that enable people to bring the best of themselves and to speak for themselves, whatever their circumstances. I will work hard and wholeheartedly with all of you across this Parliament and out there in Victoria to make this real for all of us.

Let's get to work.

Honourable members applauded.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms TIERNEY (Minister for Training and Skills) — I move:

That the house do now adjourn.

Regional forest agreements

Ms DUNN (Eastern Metropolitan) (17:45) — My adjournment matter this evening is for the attention of the Premier and is in respect of his responsibility as signatory to the regional forest agreements (RFAs). The action I seek is for the Premier to refrain from extending or rolling over the regional forest agreements for the Central Highlands and East Gippsland, which are due to expire on 27 March 2018. The regional forest agreements have been in place since 1998. They are 20-year agreements and are supposed to offer protection for endangered and vulnerable flora and fauna. However, what regional forest agreements effectively do is exempt logging from commonwealth environment laws — namely, the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC act).

RFAs have failed to provide security to industry and have failed to secure a reserve system to protect species. The haphazard approach to reviews, with delays as long as five years; the lack of conformance to a five-yearly review cycle; the reliance on the

efficiency of state agencies to update information such as action statements; the absence of any enforcement for failure to meet review deadlines; the lack of taking into account existing on-the-ground conditions; the lack of attention to the impact of climate change or the value of water; the exemption from the EPBC act; the automatic rollovers of RFAs; and the lack of open and transparent public process all point to a failure of this instrument to provide any protections to endangered and threatened species.

Serrated tussock control

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) (17:47) — I wish to raise a matter for the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change. It concerns a delightful lady who has contacted me. She is one of my constituents in the St Albans area, a lady by the name of Judy Ingram. Judy has spoken to me about her long-time concerns regarding the serrated tussock issue that affects her home and her neighbour's home. The issue is the land on the corner of Kings Road and Taylors Road in Sydenham that houses the ABC broadcast tower. It is controlled by Broadcast Australia, which is the arm of a private company.

It would clearly appear to be the case that they have not looked after that land to the extent that they should have for quite some time. The serrated tussock that is on that land has impacted upon many, many homes. If the wind blows a certain way, it affects people in St Albans; if it blows the other way, it hurts people in Kings Park. Either way it is something that needs to be controlled and needs to be fixed as soon as possible.

The minister and indeed you, President, may well be thinking this is a federal matter because it is the ABC and it is Broadcast Australia, and I did make a similar assumption, but that is not the case. In fact the site is covered by state law in conjunction with the local government, which has control over weeds, and serrated tussock is one of the nastiest weeds doing the rounds. It is quite extraordinary. I remember I first raised the issue of serrated tussock in this Parliament about 25 years ago, and here I am doing it again. It seems that it is nigh on impossible to get rid of, but it has to be gotten rid of because it is affecting a large number of people in the Sydenham-St Albans area. So I am asking the minister for the environment to instruct her departmental officers to deal with Broadcast Australia to ensure that they do comply with the appropriate act, that they do follow the law and that we do have a situation where that serrated tussock is eliminated from that site. It has been a blight on the lives of a good number of people there for far too long

and the time has come for the Victorian government to put its foot down and say, 'No more'.

Nillumbik Shire Council

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) (17:50) — My adjournment matter is directed to the Minister for Local Government, Minister Kairouz, and it concerns Nillumbik Shire Council. The Nillumbik mayor has indicated he would like to see the council offices along with the council library moved away from Apollo Parkways, which will be a huge issue for this area, leaving it without a library and the associated services that go with it. The action that I would seek from the minister is that she do anything within her power to discourage this action from happening.

This particular mayor has got a history of some dodgy property deals. He was in charge of Places Victoria for a period of time until he had to stand down as a result of being exposed for those particular dodgy deals. Unfortunately at the time the previous state government kept paying Peter Clarke, the mayor in question, for a month after he stood down. That is dodgy in itself. Any plans around land, in particular council land, need to be seriously scrutinised, particularly for this individual. I reinforce the action that the minister do anything within her power to stop the council offices and the library being moved from that location.

Carer support

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (17:51) — My adjournment matter this evening is to the Minister for Families and Children and it relates to young carers. I have not directed it to the Minister for Health, who I know has a role, as do various other ministers, in relation to young people who are providing care to parents or other family members, but I am hoping that the Minister for Families and Children can assist in this. It is a fairly simple action that I am asking for. I note that the government in 2016 in a media release from the then Parliamentary Secretary for Carers, Mary-Anne Thomas, spoke about the development of a carers statement. As I mentioned, I am directing this to the Minister for Families and Children because I am specifically interested in young carers.

Carers, as we know, provide a range of support and services and care to their relatives and loved ones, but young people can often be forgotten because the actual degree of care that they provide is not known. It could be a parent who has a mental illness or a disability or they might have a drug or alcohol addiction. The young people might also be caring for their siblings. So they undertake an enormous role that is often not fully

recognised. It is not fully recognised at times by their teachers and educators when they go to school and often by themselves. Their educational attainment and results can be significantly impacted because they are tired, they are worried and they are concentrating on the caring roles that they have taken on board.

There are, as we know, around 773 000 carers in Victoria, and I understand that around 71 000 of those are young carers. In this government media release it says the contribution to our community that carers undertake in Victoria alone is around \$15 billion annually. Carers, like volunteers, provide an enormous service to our community in so many ways. It says in this media release of 17 October 2016:

The Labor government will work in partnership with Carers Victoria to develop a carers statement ...

Can the minister give an update on where that carers statement is at, or release the statement if it has in fact been developed?

Nagambie tourism

Ms SYMES (Northern Victoria) (17:54) — My adjournment matter this evening is for the Minister for Tourism and Major Events and Minister for Sport, the Honourable John Eren. The specific action that I would seek is that he visit the township of Nagambie. Nagambie is in my electorate and over recent years, under the Andrews Labor government, has undergone significant investment in attracting not only sporting, festival and tourism events but also a lot of job creation and private investment in that thriving community.

Nagambie is a region of wine, waterways, wetlands, farmers markets, festivals and some of the world's best sports competitions, like next week's Australian National Parachuting Championship at Skydive Nagambie, which we are supporting. Next month Nagambie will host the World Parachutists Over Phorty Championships, to be held at the same venue, and again we have supported that event. These events create jobs and boost the local economy.

Nagambie regularly hosts rowing regattas including the prestigious Head of the River, which attracts hundreds of people to the area. I was in Nagambie on Saturday for the Nagambie on Water Festival. There is just always something going on. There are lots of things to attract visitors to Nagambie. It is a hotspot for camping, fishing, skiing, rowing, sailing and boating, and there is also the Black Caviar Trail for horse enthusiasts, celebrating the champion racehorse.

There are various events and activities that just continue to pop up; there is really a lot going on there. What I am after is for the minister to come to Nagambie to see firsthand the opportunities for greater tourism and private investment in the town and to meet with council, tourism bodies and interested people working in this field to make sure we capitalise on every opportunity that is available to Nagambie.

Shepparton infrastructure projects

Ms LOVELL (Northern Victoria) (17:56) — My adjournment matter is for the Treasurer. The action that I seek from the Treasurer is for him to stop treating the people of Shepparton with contempt and provide a commitment in the 2018 state budget to fund the investment priorities of the Shepparton electorate that I intend to outline in this adjournment matter. It is clear that the Andrews Labor government does not care about the Assembly seat of Shepparton and the Goulburn Valley when it comes to the funding of badly needed infrastructure projects. In fact this utter contempt on display comes from the very top of the government and works its way down the line.

On 30 January my staff contacted the office of the Treasurer to arrange a meeting to discuss infrastructure priorities for Shepparton leading up to the 2018 state budget. I was delighted that within two days the Treasurer agreed to my request, and a meeting was confirmed for 6 February at 4.30 p.m. Upon arrival at the Treasurer's office I was informed the Treasurer had been delayed at another meeting but he would not be too long. So I waited and waited and waited — until a staffer cancelled the meeting, saying that they had a few gaps in the diary and he would be in contact with me to reschedule. However, the staff member never got back to me, displaying pretty ordinary form by both the Treasurer and his staff.

Since 6 February one of my staff has contacted the Treasurer's office on four occasions. Emails that were sent to the Treasurer's executive assistant (EA) and an advisor on 12 and 20 February to reschedule the meeting have so far been ignored. In addition, phone calls to the Treasurer's office on 26 and 28 February, where messages were left for the EA to make contact, have been completely ignored.

The Secretary of the Department of Treasury and Finance, David Martine, recently confirmed that regional Victoria has been duded out of \$723 million from the proceeds of the port of Melbourne lease, and Shepparton has a number of projects that could be funded out of that \$723 million. Around \$70 million is required to finally bring Shepparton's passenger rail

service into the 21st century and bring us up to eight services per day between Shepparton and Melbourne and \$85 million is needed for more trains, and a future Liberal government has committed to that.

The Shepparton education plan needs to be fully funded; around \$210 million is needed to fund the construction of stage 2 of the Goulburn Valley Health redevelopment, including an integrated cancer centre; and we need further funding to progress stage 1 of our urgently required Shepparton bypass. Around \$30 million is needed for the proposed Shepparton sports stadium redevelopment, which would generate approximately \$5.7 million of new spending into the local economy, meaning more visitors, more business and more jobs.

The Treasurer cannot continue to ignore the many vital Shepparton infrastructure projects that require funding commitments in the upcoming state budget. The action that I seek from the Treasurer is for him to stop treating the people of Shepparton with contempt and to provide a commitment in the 2018 state budget to fund the investment priorities that I have outlined for the Shepparton electorate.

Kingston City Council

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) (17:59) — The matter that I wish to raise is for the attention of the Special Minister of State as the minister responsible for the local government inspectorate, and it is in relation to a motion that was recently passed by the City of Kingston. It was moved by Cr West, seconded by Cr Oxley and carried by a majority of the councillors, including councillors West, Eden, Barth, Oxley and Staikos. Whilst I know that three of those councillors are members of the ALP, the other two I would imagine are Labor-leaning Independents.

What that motion seeks to do is improperly use the position of council — the majority on the council which controls the Kingston council — to deny the rights of a person to be involved in political activities, something that is enshrined in our Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006. I would like to read the motion to the house because I think it needs to be investigated by the minister as it clearly falls short of any test of governance and seeks to basically shut down or constrain the legitimate and democratic rights of Cr Gledhill, who happens to be the Liberal candidate for the Assembly seat of Mordialloc. The motion reads, in part:

A councillor who is a prospective or nominated candidate for state or federal election should not participate in any way in the decision-making processes of the council, where they are

campaigning in relation to a matter before the council. This includes being present at council briefings, ordinary and special council meetings and interacting with council officers on the matter.

The next dot point:

A campaign means where a councillor makes public their views as a prospective or nominated candidate on a matter before the council (before or after it has been resolved) by way of letters, fliers, social media posts and other communication avenues.

Further:

A councillor who is a prospective or nominated candidate should at all times avoid campaigning on (opposing or taking credit for) council decisions in an effort to not be seen as misusing or inappropriately making use of their position.

And part 2:

In clause 8.4 Council Resources and Activities add the following paragraph:

A councillor who is a prospective or nominated candidate will not be permitted to appear in the Kingston Your City nor will they be permitted to have a ward column printed in the edition immediately preceding the state or federal election they are contesting.

It seems to me that the definition of a candidate is the one who nominates at the issuing of the writs. This far extends the limitations. It is an improper use of a position on council, and I call on the minister responsible to immediately investigate this matter and take the appropriate action to make sure that the rights of individuals to be involved in the democratic process and to continue representing the constituents are protected.

The PRESIDENT — The Clerk advises me that he believes this is a matter that the Special Minister of State could actually consider as distinct from the Minister for Local Government, so on this occasion I will accept it. But I am concerned about two matters regarding local government that were raised tonight. I understand the veracity of the matter raised by Mrs Peulich, and I believe that the councillor's rights ought to be established by way of one of the ministers clarifying the ability of a council to move such a motion. The Clerk advises me that it can fall within the province of the Special Minister of State, although I would have thought the Minister for Local Government might well have handled it. But at any rate, it will proceed there.

I was also concerned about the matter concerning Nillumbik in that I am not aware of a power that the Minister for Local Government would have to override a decision of the council. I was particularly concerned

about the focus of Mr Leane's adjournment matter on an individual rather than the council as a whole, because clearly an individual cannot make that decision by themselves; it is a decision, or not, of the council. We need to be a little bit careful in terms of those matters. Nonetheless, again I will allow it to go through to the minister on this occasion.

Responses

Ms TIERNEY (Minister for Training and Skills) (18:04) — There were seven adjournment matters this evening. The first was from Ms Dunn to the Premier, and it was requesting that the Premier refrain from rolling over regional forest agreements.

The second matter was from Mr Finn to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change. It stemmed from a constituent query, from a Judy Ingram, about serrated tussock, and the action is that the minister seek assistance from departmental officers and take steps for the eradication of the weed.

Mr Leane's matter was to the Minister for Local Government, and it is for an action about stopping the library from being moved in Nillumbik.

The fourth matter was from Ms Crozier. It was directed to the Minister for Families and Children, but in the intervening period of time I have had it confirmed that it actually is in the province of Minister Foley. The work being done on the carer's statement is being led by the Parliamentary Secretary for Carers and Volunteers, the member for Dandenong in the Assembly, Gabrielle Williams. The action was that the government provide an update or release the statement.

The fifth matter was from Ms Symes to the Minister for Tourism and Major Events, and she is seeking that he come up to Nagambie to see the tourism opportunities that exist and to meet with local tourist organisations and the council.

The sixth matter was from Ms Lovell to the Treasurer. She listed investment priorities that she is seeking the Treasurer to approve in the forthcoming budget.

The last matter was from Mrs Peulich to the Special Minister of State, and it was for the Special Minister of State to investigate the matters of nominated candidates' rights in the area of local government.

I have written responses to adjournment debate matters raised by Mr Morris on 9 February 2017, Ms Wooldridge on 23 March 2017 and 19 October 2017, and Ms Lovell on 29 November 2017.

ADJOURNMENT

Wednesday, 7 March 2018

COUNCIL

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The PRESIDENT — On that basis, the house stands adjourned.

House adjourned 6.07 p.m.

