

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FIFTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

Thursday, 16 April 2015

(Extract from book 5)

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By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

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The Honourable ALEX CHERNOV, AC, QC

The Lieutenant-Governor

The Honourable Justice MARILYN WARREN, AC, QC

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Minister for Local Government, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Minister for Industrial Relations	The Hon. N. M. Hutchins, MP
Special Minister of State	The Hon. G. Jennings, MLC
Minister for Families and Children, and Minister for Youth Affairs	The Hon. J. Mikakos, MLC
Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water	The Hon. L. M. Neville, MP
Minister for Police and Minister for Corrections	The Hon. W. M. Noonan, MP
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Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence	The Hon. F. Richardson, MP
Minister for Finance and Minister for Multicultural Affairs	The Hon. R. D. Scott, MP
Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade	The Hon. A. Somyurek, MLC
Minister for Planning	The Hon. R. W. Wynne, MP
Cabinet Secretary	Ms M. Kairouz, MP

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

Speaker:

The Hon. TELMO LANGUILLER

Deputy Speaker:

Mr D. A. NARDELLA

Acting Speakers:

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

Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Premier:

The Hon. D. M. ANDREWS

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Deputy Premier:

The Hon. J. A. MERLINO

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

The Hon. M. J. GUY

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

The Hon. D. J. HODGETT

Leader of The Nationals:

The Hon. P. L. WALSH

Deputy Leader of The Nationals:

Ms S. RYAN

Heads of parliamentary departments

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

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

Parliamentary Services — Secretary: Mr P. Lochert

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

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

¹ Resigned 2 February 2015

² Elected 14 March 2015

PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

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

Legislative Assembly committees

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

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

Joint committees

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

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

Economic, Education, Jobs and Skills Committee — (*Assembly*): Mr Crisp, Mr Perera and Ms Ryall.
(*Council*): Mr Elasmr, Mr Melhem and Mr Purcell.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Thursday, 16 April 2015

The SPEAKER (Hon. Telmo Languiller) took the chair at 9.32 a.m. and read the prayer.

PETITIONS

Following petitions presented to house:

Police numbers

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of certain citizens of the state of Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Assembly that Premier Daniel Andrews has failed to commit to providing additional police numbers and subsequently, as Victoria's population grows, the number of police per capita goes backwards under Labor every day.

The petitioners therefore respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria calls on the Andrews Labor government to commit to providing additional front-line police numbers as a matter of priority.

By Mr BURGESS (Hastings) (64 signatures).

Regional and rural road funding

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

This petition of the residents of the district of Lowan draws the attention of the house to strong community support for the urgent need to increase investment in our state rural and regional roads in western Victoria, noting:

1. failure to maintain road surfaces to a safe standard presents an unnecessary and unacceptable danger to local families, commercial drivers and other commuters using our rural and regional roads;
2. families and businesses suffer financially when roads are not maintained to a safe standard, through physical damage to vehicles and decreased fuel efficiency due to fluctuating speeds to avoid potholes and other road damage;
3. disappointment that the Andrews Labor government have dismantled the \$160m country roads and bridges program, which helped to keep rates down by supporting local government to maintain priority local roads in their community;
4. the Andrews Labor government forward estimates indicate a cut to the VicRoads repairs and maintenance budget of \$375m per year, to a mere \$125m per year for the state, which is deemed insufficient for the roadworks required.

The petitioners therefore call on the Andrews Labor government to provide immediate and urgent funding for rural and regional roads in western Victoria.

By Ms KEALY (Lowan) (715 signatures).

Sandringham electorate bus services

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of the residents of the Sandringham electorate draws the attention of the house to the strong community support against proposed changes to bus routes 600, 922 and 923 by Transdev Melbourne.

1. The 600 will be the only bus to service Black Rock and Beaumaris and it will be the only service from Sandringham to Westfield Shopping Centre.
2. Many students currently catch the 922 bus to schools in Bayside and have to catch two different buses if the proposed changes are made.
3. For some senior/disabled constituents the Weatherall Road service is the only means of public transport.

The petitioners therefore call on the Minister for Public Transport to maintain and improve the delivery of reliable public transport services within the Sandringham electorate.

**By Mr THOMPSON (Sandringham)
(352 signatures).**

Tabled.

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

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

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

UNIVERSITY OF DIVINITY

Report 2014

Mr MERLINO (Minister for Education), by leave, presented report.

Tabled.

DOCUMENTS

Tabled by Clerk:

Bendigo Kangan Institute — Report 2014

Box Hill Institute — Report 2014

Centre for Adult Education — Report 2014

Chisholm Institute — Report 2014

Deakin University — Report 2014

Driver Education Centre of Australia Ltd — Report 2014

Federation University Australia — Report 2014

Gordon Institute of TAFE — Report 2014

Goulburn Ovens Institute of TAFE — Report 2014 (two documents)

Holmesglen Institute — Report 2014

La Trobe University — Report 2014

Melbourne University — Report 2014 (two documents)

Monash University — Report 2014

RMIT University — Report 2014

South West Institute of TAFE — Report 2014

Sunraysia Institute of TAFE — Report 2014

Swinburne University of Technology — Report 2014

Victoria University — Report 2014

William Angliss Institute of TAFE — Report 2014

Wodonga Institute of TAFE — Report 2014.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Adjournment

Ms HENNESSY (Minister for Health) — I move:

That the house, at its rising, adjourns until Tuesday, 5 May 2015.

Motion agreed to.

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

Melbourne Girls College

Mr WYNNE (Minister for Planning) — I rise to inform the house of two wonderful sporting achievements Melbourne Girls College, a public school in my electorate, recorded recently. In March the school's division 1 senior coxed four rowing crew won its event in the Head of the Schoolgirls Regatta on the Barwon River. In doing so the school became the first all-girls public school to win the top division in what is the largest single-gender rowing regatta in the Southern Hemisphere. Later in March Melbourne Girls College sent its winning crew, along with two other crews, to the Australian Open Schools Rowing Championships in Sydney, the first time an Australian all-girls public school has entered this national event. The girls in the division crew equipped themselves magnificently and won silver in the schoolgirls coxed four event. The crew's achievements are a credit to Melbourne Girls

College's rowing program, its rowing coaches and the school community as a whole.

The Melbourne Girls College rowing club began 20 years ago. The girls used borrowed boats and were unable to train on the adjacent Yarra River at that time due to lack of access, having instead to transport their boats to Albert Park Lake. I congratulate Melbourne Girls College on its outstanding sporting achievements and the example it has set for public schools in Victoria.

Anzac centenary

Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) — With Anzac Day commemorations being held over coming days and on 25 April itself, I wish to bring to the attention of the Parliament a very significant event being held at the Caulfield RSL in my electorate. Every year the Caulfield sub-branch, along with a New Zealand sub-branch, holds a well-attended dawn service and focuses on community activities for all ages. This year, being the centenary of the landing at Gallipoli on 25 April 1915, the RSL has developed an exhibition at the rear of its premises at 4 St Georges Road, Elsternwick. In an area of 800 square metres the exhibition recreates the Gallipoli battlefield from 1915, with trenches, uniforms, replications of scenes and simulated artillery.

Hundreds of sandbags are currently being installed in the exhibition. The 'Back to Gallipoli' exhibition opens on Monday, 20 April, and will run until 26 April. I encourage all residents in my electorate and members of Parliament to visit the exhibition and experience firsthand what life was like for thousands of young soldiers in Turkey in 1915. Open from 10.00 a.m. until 10.00 p.m., the exhibition was created by a professional movie designer who has produced sets for numerous international films and was part of the *Gallipoli* series itself. On Anzac Day we will be having a march down Glenhuntly Road for the very first time; the street will be closed. This will be a great event, which we encourage all to attend.

Wyndham Vale road incident

Mr PALLAS (Treasurer) — I rise to express my sincere gratitude to the people who rushed to assist the family involved in the horrific road incident in Wyndham Vale last Wednesday. I have expressed my condolences already to the family; however, I would like to reiterate today my deepest sympathies for the loss of Bol, Anger and Madit. On behalf of the community of Wyndham, I would like to thank the CFA volunteers from the Wyndham Vale, Werribee and Hoppers Crossing fire brigades, members of

Victoria Police and the ambulance service, and members of the local community who rushed to the aid of the family at the time of the incident. No-one wants this to happen in their community, but the courage and strength shown by those who came to assist in the rescue is truly commendable. I thank the emergency staff at the Royal Children's Hospital, the wider Wyndham community and the local South Sudanese community for coming together to help the family as they grieve and come to terms with the incident.

Somerville police station

Mr BURGESS (Hastings) — I call on the Minister for Police to put aside petty politics and do the right thing by my community by opening the new Somerville police station in the way intended when it was built by the coalition government. The minister fell for a trap for new ministers when he made comments to the *Western Port News* without bothering to check his facts. The minister accused the shadow Minister for Police, Edward O'Donohue, a member for Eastern Victoria Region in the Council, and me of misleading the community when we accused the Andrews government of playing politics with the Somerville police station by refusing to provide sufficient police to man the counter. The minister was apparently unaware that the former Chief Commissioner of Police, Ken Lay, committed to providing police numbers to operate the police station, including sufficient police to open the customer counter service to the public as planned.

Not only did the police commissioner make this commitment to the previous police minister and me directly but he confirmed that commitment on several occasions publicly, including in front of more than 60 people at a meeting in Parliament House. Where the minister's problems really emanate from, and why he has been forced into playing these political games, is that during last year's election campaign the coalition committed to another 350 police to complement the record 1900 police, 100 transit police and 950 protective services officers it put in place during the last four years but Labor did not commit to providing even one additional police officer for our state. Therefore one should ask: what has changed since Chief Commissioner Lay undertook to properly staff Somerville? There has been a change of government to a Labor Party which has provided our state's first socialist left Premier since Joan Kirner and which is ideologically committed to being soft on crime and anti-law enforcement.

Indented Head Boat Club

Ms NEVILLE (Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water) — On Saturday, 21 March, together with local councillor Lindsay Ellis, I had the absolute pleasure of awarding certificates of achievement to 10 children with disabilities who had just taken part in a fishing day organised by the Indented Head Boat Club, working in partnership with Gateways Support Services in Geelong. Not only were the children introduced to boating and fishing — and they all caught fish — but time was taken to view the local seals. The event was an initiative of the club, with members raising all the funds to cover the costs, including a sausage sizzle, certificates for each of the kids and a rod and reel to take home. I wholeheartedly congratulate the Indented Head Boat Club, its secretary Ray Allen and all its members for a fantastic idea and day, one the children will never forget.

Rotary Club of Drysdale

Ms NEVILLE — On Easter Saturday I was once again privileged to open the annual Rotary Club of Drysdale's Easter art show, now in its 39th year. Having been to the show many times as the local member I can confidently say it seems to get better every year, and it is great that local schools participate so enthusiastically, giving students the wonderful experience of having their art displayed publicly. I am very proud to be a sponsor of the youth art project. Community participation has always been the hallmark of the event, so I congratulate all those involved in making the Easter art show another outstanding success, from the Springvale Neighbourhood House to Drysdale Rotary, and particularly Kay Beresford, who is the president; Caroline Rickard, the chair of the art show; Jill Shallis, who is the mentor of the students; and all the resident artists. It was a great weekend. Well done to all.

Wimmera cancer centre

Ms KEALY (Lowan) — I was pleased recently to attend a funding announcement of \$1 million from the federal coalition government for the Wimmera cancer centre to be located in Horsham. This project represents a key investment in vital health infrastructure for the region and will make an incredible difference to people battling cancer in our local area. Through the significant fundraising efforts of the Wimmera Health Care Group Foundation an additional \$1 million has been allocated towards the project. In order for the project to proceed all that is required is for the government to allocate \$1 million. I will be listening to the upcoming budget with interest, and I hope the people and families

battling cancer in our region are treated with the priority and consideration that they deserve.

Hamilton District Skills Centre

Ms KEALY — In preparation for the upcoming state budget I call on the government to support recurrent funding for the Hamilton District Skills Centre, so that it can continue to deliver vital trade training for our local youth.

Lowan electorate schools

Ms KEALY — I note the pre-election commitment of the previous Victorian coalition government to provide over \$1 million to deliver key educational infrastructure projects across the Lowan electorate, including Hamilton's Baimbridge College, Dimboola Memorial Secondary College and Warracknabeal Special Development School. This infrastructure is vital to support our future generations.

Regional and rural road funding

Ms KEALY — Today I tabled a petition of 715 signatures, collected in under 20 days, calling on the Melbourne-based Labor government to urgently reverse its decision to cut country road funding by hundreds of millions dollars. I urge the Andrews Labor government to think beyond the tram tracks, to match the commitment of the previous coalition government and to provide sufficient funding to keep our country road users, including families and commercial operators, safe.

Sebastiano Pitruzzello

Ms SPENCE (Yuroke) — On 11 April I had the pleasure of attending the launch of a second biography honouring my constituent Sebastiano Pitruzzello, also fondly known as Sam. The first, published in 2003, tells the remarkable story of the man, his family and his company — the migrant, the worker, the captain of industry and Knight Commander of the Order of the Italian Republic.

Sam emigrated to Australia in 1963 and worked for General Motors for 10 years before setting up the Pantalica Cheese Company. Located in Thomastown, Pantalica Cheese Company continues to enjoy great success, and as a cheese lover I recommend not only the delicious cheese range but also the amazing yoghurts.

This second book continues the story of this incredible man, including the establishment of the Pitruzzello Estate in Sunbury. The olive grove, the Italian

machinery, the restaurant and function spaces, the five donkeys, the pressed olive oil and the wines all showcase this family's heritage. The book also highlights the great appreciation felt for all those who have assisted along Sam's journey, including my predecessor, Liz Beattie, and former Premier John Brumby.

Congratulations to Sebastiano, his wife Lucia, and his children and grandchildren. I am proud to know this inspirational man and his beautiful family. If you want to know where to find Sam at 75, just pop out to the estate. He will be in the blue overalls working as hard as ever.

Water policy

Mr KATOS (South Barwon) — The decision by the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water last week to sack all 19 water boards across the state smacks of sheer political arrogance over good governance. The decision to sack all 19 water boards is an unprecedented decision by the minister for water. This is nothing more than a desperate attempt to use the white elephant Wonthaggi desalination plant, which has been costing the Victorian taxpayer \$1.8 million a day, with not a drop of water used to date.

The minister has sacked all 19 water boards as a means to appoint subservient directors who will bow to the demands of the Andrews Labor government. This decision gives me great concern for the customers of Barwon Water. Up until now Barwon Water customers have been protected from the additional costs of the desalination plant, and I am now concerned that this will change with the appointment of the new board.

The community will not be aware that once Barwon Water places an order for desalinated water its customers will then be required to start paying towards the cost of the desalination plant. Desalinated water is at least 10 times dearer than dam water. Not only will Barwon Water customers have to start paying for the cost of the desalination plant; they will also be burdened with the exorbitant cost of desalinated water.

Last year under the coalition government we announced the Fairer Water Bills initiative, which would have seen a reduction on average of \$80 a year over the next four years for Barwon Water customers. All this work is now going to be undone by the Andrews government. I am concerned that the communities at risk will pay additional costs on their water bills that will put more pressure on the cost of living. This is on top of the additional burden the

taxpayer has already suffered as a result of the \$1.8 million a day white elephant.

Australian-Turkish memorial sculpture

Ms SULEYMAN (St Albans) — As we approach the Anzac centenary thousands of Australians will make their way to Gallipoli to attend the commemorative ceremonies to be held on 25 April. I was very proud to have attended the unveiling and official opening of the Australian-Turkish friendship memorial, *Seeds of Friendship*, on Monday, 13 April, together with the Premier and my colleagues the Minister for Veterans and the Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade, as well as the Turkish Ambassador to Australia, Reha Keskintepe; the Consul General of Turkey, Mehmet Kucuksakalli; and many other honoured guests, together with the Australian-Turkish community.

This sculpture, *Seeds of Friendship*, which is located at Kings Domain near the Shrine of Remembrance, represents the special friendship and bond between Turkey and Victoria and is an enduring expression of gratitude to both nations. I pay tribute to the fallen heroes and their great sacrifice at Gallipoli. I thank all those who have been involved in making this sculpture a reality. The memorial will ensure that generations far into the future have a place to honour and remember not only the bravery and sacrifice but also the reconciliation, mutual respect and genuine friendship born between Victoria and Turkey.

Hazelwood and Anglesea power stations

Ms SANDELL (Melbourne) — I raise the matter of Australia's dirtiest power stations at Hazelwood and Anglesea. Hazelwood is Australia's dirtiest power station and the third most polluting power station in the world. There is now surplus energy in the grid, equivalent to five Hazelwoods, so why is it still operating? If this government is serious about climate change and leading on renewable energy, why is not acting now to shut down Australia's dirtiest power station? If this government is serious about investigating the 2014 coal mine fire, how can it ignore the everyday health impacts of regular operations at Hazelwood? If the government is serious about standing up for workers, how can it risk leaving them stranded without a plan when Hazelwood's owners switch off an unprofitable and degraded asset? The government has a choice. It can leave the workers of the Latrobe Valley and their families without jobs when the company locks up and leaves, or it can lead now by replacing Hazelwood and proactively developing a

community-led transition plan that the Greens are calling for.

Today at 12:30 p.m. a crowd will gather on the steps of this building to show the government that Victorians are serious about replacing Hazelwood and Anglesea. I am here to tell the government that it should be serious about it too. We are here to remind the government that in 2010 Labor had a plan to phase out Hazelwood, and it should stick to that promise. No government can claim to have a credible climate change policy unless it has a plan to phase out coal-fired power. The government must prove that it means what it says about climate change. Coal-fired power stations must go, and Hazelwood and Anglesea must be the first to go.

Anzac centenary

Ms KAIROUZ (Kororoit) — As we approach the centenary of the landing of Australian and New Zealand troops on the shores of Gallipoli, I reflect on the sacrifice of generations of Australian servicemen and women who have served their country in conflicts and peacekeeping operations across the globe. Whenever and wherever they have been summoned, our military personnel have served with distinction. I extend my thanks to all who have served and to their families. You have given so much.

Caroline Springs RSL

Ms KAIROUZ — At this time I would like to acknowledge and congratulate the tireless work of the committee and members of the Caroline Springs RSL sub-branch in both supporting those who have returned from war and honouring the memory of those who did not. I look forward to participating in the dawn service on 25 April.

Orthodox Easter celebrations

Ms KAIROUZ — I take this opportunity to extend my best wishes for the Easter period to members of the Orthodox community in Australia and particularly in my electorate.

Coptic Christians

Ms KAIROUZ — I also make special mention of the Coptic Christian community in Victoria and around the world who have suffered sectarian violence and persecution over many years. I wish them peace and love at Easter and always.

Torus Games

Ms VICTORIA (Bayswater) — Some people are just quiet achievers. They toil tirelessly for years and years, starting from scratch, letting their work do the talking for them. One such man is Bill McIntosh of Torus Games, a Scot who settled in Australia 30 years ago with little more than a dream, a wife and three kids, and \$1500. Since then Bill has established Torus Games, which has written and published game software for huge international companies like DreamWorks, Leapfrog and Warner Bros. But it is for its ongoing partnership with Disney that I mention Torus today.

Earlier this month Bill and his wife Pam travelled to the Children's Book Fair in Bologna to receive the ultimate accolade — the 2015 Disney Game Developer of the Year Award. This award is given to just one company each year, and the quiet achievers from Bayswater have taken on the world and won! Congratulations to Bill, Pam and Team Torus for your diligence and professionalism and, with my shadow ministerial hat on, for shining the light on Victorian game development. We are all so proud of you.

Bayswater Football Club

Ms VICTORIA — It is a very elite group of football clubs that can proudly say they have reached the milestone of 1000 games, and it was fantastic to see Bayswater Football Club join that group last Saturday. The boys wore a specially designed match jumper, bearing the names of every one of the 634 players who have represented the Mighty Waters in the firsts. As the icing on the cake, our boys had a convincing 25-point win over East Burwood. Congratulations to all the players, staff and volunteers who have been involved in the last 1000 games. May there be thousands more.

Music Theatre International

Ms VICTORIA — Music Theatre International, the world's leading library of musicals, has today announced it will open an office in Melbourne. This is an acknowledgement of just how well Melbourne is positioned as one of the great music theatre centres of the world. We congratulate Sir Cameron Mackintosh.

Anzac centenary

Mr EREN (Minister for Veterans) — In the year honouring the centenary of Anzac, we have heard stories of bravery and sacrifice by men and women of this nation. Assisted with a grant from our Anzac Centenary Fund, the Community and Public Sector Union has conducted a research project which details

those public sector employees from all departments, including teachers and police — over 6000 individuals — who enlisted. The Community and Public Sector Union Victoria World War I commemorative project has placed on the public record once again the names of the men and women who, having already served the state of Victoria in peacetime, served their nation in a time of great trial and suffering.

One such story is that of Captain Albert Jacka, VC. Captain Jacka was the first Australian recipient of the Victoria Cross in the World War I. Captain Jacka's citation in part reads:

Lance Corporal Jacka at once most gallantly attacked them single-handed and killed the whole party, five by rifle fire and two with the bayonet.

Having served in peacetime, Captain Jacka also served with distinction on the front line. It came as no surprise to me when I was informed that a descendant of Captain Jacka continues serving the community in the Victorian Public Service. It is these stories and the hard work that goes into documenting them that enable us today to commemorate and honour the sacrifice made by our forefathers.

Kew Festival

Mr T. SMITH (Kew) — On Sunday, 22 March, at the invitation of the Sisters of the Carmelite Monastery, I attended the 38th annual ecumenical gathering, which is traditionally the final event of the Kew Festival schedule. The sisters once again proved to be exceptional hosts. It was heartening to see so many Kew residents of all faiths joining together in the monastery's stunning grounds to enjoy good fellowship as well as some truly exceptional passionfruit sponge cake, which is locally known as the sisters' signature dish.

Balwyn Football Club

Mr T. SMITH — I was proud to join my federal parliamentary colleague Josh Frydenberg at the 2015 season launch of the Balwyn Football Club, the Balwyn Tigers. The Balwyn Football Club is a great community club. President Richard Wilson, the committee, the players, the volunteers and the supporters continue to put in an enormous amount of work to ensure the team's ongoing success. I am happy to report that the seniors got off to a great start with a four goal win over Norwood. I wish the club all the best for the upcoming season and in its work building towards its centenary season in 2016.

Chandler Highway bridge

Mr T. SMITH — I recently received a response to an adjournment debate matter I raised regarding Labor's broken promise to immediately duplicate the Chandler Highway. The brief response mentioned that 'VicRoads is undertaking planning and early design work' on the project, yet the response failed to mention a start date for the works or a completion date. I remind the house that on 16 June 2014 the Premier said that there were 'detailed plans sitting on the shelf at VicRoads' and that the project would start immediately upon Labor coming to government. We are now almost four months in, and this project is nowhere near starting.

Greythorn Road, Balwyn North

Mr T. SMITH — The Greythorn Road shopping strip is another issue of great concern to the Kew electorate.

Reclaim Australia

Mr SCOTT (Minister for Multicultural Affairs) — Victoria is a proudly multicultural and multifaith state, and Victorians lead the nation in respect for difference and in rejection of racism. Victoria enjoys proud bipartisan support for multiculturalism, and just as a former Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Nick Kotsiras, spoke out against Geert Wilders when he sought to divide the community, this government will speak out against the Reclaim Australia group when it seeks to divide the Victorian community.

On 4 April Reclaim Australia rallies took place across the nation. Reclaim Australia's campaign is fuelled by ignorance and misinformation. The claims that the Victorian halal certification process funds terrorism are dangerous and lack any credible evidence. The federal Minister for Agriculture, Barnaby Joyce, has warned that Australian companies, particularly meat producers, as well as consumers will suffer if pressure to drop halal certification continues. Sadly Reclaim Australia has associated itself with extremists like Danny Nalliah, who linked the Black Saturday bushfires with Victoria's abortion laws.

I welcome the condemnation of the Reclaim Australia rallies by the Jewish Community Council of Victoria. Victorian Muslims have and will continue to play a fulfilling role in our multicultural society, and we will stand with them. They should not be collectively punished for the actions of a very small minority. As a government, as a Parliament and as individuals, we must remain vigilant in challenging any organisation

whose purpose is to divide. Racial or religious-based attacks will not be tolerated in Victoria.

Yom Hashoah

Mr SCOTT — Today is Yom Hashoah, and we remember the 6 million Jews and others who were murdered during World War II. As well as the murder of 6 million Jews, there were others, including Gypsies — —

The SPEAKER — Time!

Sale Specialist School

Mr D. O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) — I rise to congratulate the Sale community, and particularly the Sale Specialist School community, on its excellent campaign for funding to complete a new school. The school has seen a significant increase in enrolments over the years and has expanded where it can, to the point where it is now spread across three campuses. This is naturally a headache for staff, students and parents.

The new school parent action group has been running a community campaign for the last two years to get a new school built. The former coalition government, under the leadership of my predecessor and the member for Gippsland East, purchased a new greenfield site for the school on the outskirts of Sale and allocated \$4 million in the 2014–15 budget for planning and stage 1 of construction. We also committed a further \$15 million during the election campaign to ensure that the new school would be completed. The community campaign gathered steam post the election to ensure that the new government finishes the project, culminating in a petition with 5350 signatures being tabled by the member for Gippsland East earlier this year.

The Minister for Education has now confirmed that he will be visiting the school next week. I can assure him he will be welcomed with open arms, but only if he is bringing a cheque. I know the minister is well appraised of this project and appreciates its importance. I congratulate the minister for making the effort to come and have a look at the school, but I hope he is coming to make an announcement. The special needs children of Sale and district desperately need the government's support. They cannot afford to have a half-finished school building or to have their school end up spread across four campuses. I look forward to the minister's visit next week, but most particularly I look forward to the necessary funding being provided.

Country Fire Authority Fiskville facility

Mr HOWARD (Buninyong) — Despite the focus on trying to remediate contamination at the Country Fire Authority's (CFA) Fiskville training facility over the past few years, recent test results show that there are still serious health and safety issues at this site. This has led the CFA board to act upon its obligation to provide and maintain a working environment for employees that is safe and without risks to health, with the announcement of the permanent closure of Fiskville being made on 26 March. I visited Fiskville before the closure, as did the Minister for Emergency Services, the CEO of the CFA and many other senior CFA personnel. We also attended the Ballan fire station to talk to staff from Fiskville and concerned community members who are distressed about this decision.

While the Environment and Natural Resources Committee and the CFA will continue to undertake work in relation to the contamination and its effects on people who have spent time at Fiskville, I am concerned to see that Fiskville staff are supported through the weeks and months ahead and that the surrounding community is also supported to address the social and economic impacts of the closure. This includes ensuring that CFA career and volunteer firefighters can continue to get the training they need and that this can be provided in our region. I will continue to work with the Minister for Emergency Services, emergency management commissioner Craig Lapsley, CFA management, Moorabool Shire Council and ministers and government departmental staff to ensure that those affected by the closure know they will be fully supported over the months to come.

Towaninnie Cemetery Trust

Mr CRISP (Mildura) — Congratulations to the Towaninnie Cemetery Trust for its commemoration of World War I soldiers interned at the cemetery. In this year of Anzac commemoration I would like to thank the cemetery trust, the Wycheproof Lions Club and Cr Ellen White and her family for their efforts. The community's dedication is amazing. Despite the fact there has not been an internment at the site since 1988, this cemetery is still cared for in this remote but beautiful corner of Victoria.

Easter trading

Mr CRISP — Mildura was alive and buzzing during Easter, with most businesses doing a brisk trade. However, once the visitors had left and the tallying up was done the profits for Easter were down due to the higher wage costs incurred with the declaration of

Easter Sunday as a public holiday. This has caused Mildura businesses considerable angst as they look to the next Andrews Labor government public holiday on grand final eve. Being a Friday, many businesses will feel they should open, but they will trade at a loss because the holiday will not bring extra business to the Mildura CBD.

Country Fire Authority Red Cliffs brigade

Mr CRISP — I was delighted to visit the Red Cliffs Country Fire Authority brigade on Good Friday as volunteers collected from the streets, riverside camps and anywhere else people gathered to support Jacaranda Village, which provides aged-care services to Red Cliffs.

Mildura City

Mr CRISP — I was saddened to hear of the resignation of the board of Mildura City. The board has passionately supported the Mildura city CBD, as evidenced by the Easter Show and Shine when 21 000 people flooded the Mildura CBD. With the board's resignation, Mildura Rural City Council has big shoes to fill. Without a vibrant CBD — —

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

Alan Sanders

Mr FOLEY (Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing) — Today I would like to pay tribute to a wonderful public housing resident and community leader, Alan Sanders, who unfortunately passed away in March. Alan was the winner of the 2013 Frances Penington Award for public tenants, which recognises a public or community housing tenant who has made an outstanding voluntary contribution to their community.

Alan was a resident of the Carlton public housing estate and was actively involved in supporting and empowering other public housing residents. He encouraged public housing tenants to participate in their community and to have a say about issues affecting them on their estates and in their communities. He was a member of the Carlton Redevelopment Community Liaison Committee, the Redevelopment Tenant Network, the Carlton Safety Group and Carlton Neighbourhood Watch. He worked with Victoria Police and the Metropolitan Fire Brigade to enhance safety at the estate, developing the safety action plan and undertaking regular safety inspections.

Alan's passion for enhancing life in public housing will be missed by his fellow tenants, by the staff at the local

Department of Health and Human Services office and by his many friends in the Carlton community. Our thoughts are with his family, especially his sister Lyn Harbottle and friend Brenda Connor, in their time of loss. Vale Alan Sanders. His life and contribution will endure well into the future.

Healthy Together Knox

Mr WAKELING (Ferntree Gully) — On behalf of Tyner Road Occasional Care Centre, located in Wantirna South, I ask the Minister for Health to support the continuation of the Healthy Together Knox program by ensuring ongoing funding is allocated in the upcoming state budget. This program, implemented by the former government, has provided many Knox businesses, community groups, educators, childcare centres and preschool organisations with information, training and assistance to implement programs to benefit the Knox community. Encouraging our children to eat healthy food and increase their physical activity is so important, and I trust that this program will continue.

Ferntree Gully electorate youth council

Mr WAKELING — My annual youth council forum always presents many interesting points of discussion raised by our local student leaders. Our first meeting for 2015 was no exception, and I thank the student leaders from St Joseph's College, Ferntree Gully, Waverley Christian College, Fairhills High School and Wantirna College, who joined me for an interesting round table discussion.

Regency Park Primary School

Mr WAKELING — I congratulate school principal Ms Carolyn Drinkwater and the staff and students of Regency Park Primary School, who recently produced a *Wild, Wild West* concert. It was full of fabulous costumes and great singing. I was honoured to attend this event as a very special guest.

St Joseph's College, Ferntree Gully

Mr WAKELING — I congratulate St Joseph's College principal John Fazzino, staff and students on their recent celebration of 50 wonderful years in Ferntree Gully. The college has a well-deserved reputation of providing a wonderful learning environment for our local boys.

Knox Junior Football Club

Mr WAKELING — I was honoured recently to have the opportunity to present jumpers to the 2015 Knox Junior Football Club team members. I wish all

the players a great season and congratulate club president Ash Heppell and the club committee on their continued work in providing such a great club for our local youth.

Brentwood Park Primary School

Ms GRALEY (Narre Warren South) — Brentwood Park Primary School is an outstanding local school that has recently started teaching Chinese language classes. Students have had the opportunity to learn not only the language but also about China's fascinating history and culture. As part of this program, Brentwood Park Primary School has established a sister-school relationship with Yangzhong experimental primary school in China. Yangzhong's principal, its English-language teacher and nine students visited Brentwood Park Primary School earlier this year. They spent a number of days at the school and stayed with local families. I was thrilled to hear from the school's new student leaders about what a fantastic time they all had together. This is a great investment in the future of our students and country. Such was the success of the visit that even the *Age* ran an article about it. I know that students and indeed staff would love to visit their sister school in China. I will be asking the minister's advice on what may be available to assist Brentwood Park Primary School to organise a trip to its sister school in China.

DOMESTIC ANIMALS AMENDMENT BILL 2015

Second reading

Debate resumed from 15 April; motion of Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport).

Ms STALEY (Ripon) — I am pleased to resume my contribution on the Domestic Animals Amendment Bill 2015. Last night I talked about one of the problems with this bill, which is that it requires councils to hold restricted breed dogs for up to 14 months. I note that when the legislation was last amended, in 2013, the member for Narre Warren South made some comments on this issue. She said that she knew that local councils had to bear the brunt of not only costs and resourcing but also the emotional turmoil of having to deal with the current legislation. This was part of her contribution in supporting the amendments made in 2013, which reduced by 14 days the period a dog needed to be kept by a municipality. The member quite rightly said:

One of the things we need to do as a community, as a government and as local councils is to make sure that the people who work in local councils get adequate resources ...

I note that the bill currently before the house does not in any way address the issue of resourcing councils for holding these dogs for what would be, under this legislation, extended periods. There are rural councils in my electorate, and they are very restricted in their capacity to provide resources for things like this. In fact they strongly believe that the current government does not understand their needs, both because of policies like this but also because the government aims to end the country roads and bridges program and put a cap on rates. These are things that make our rural councils unsustainable. Putting additional costs and requirements onto councils is not the way we should be going. I suggest that at a bare minimum the government needs to come up with a way to deal with the resourcing issue for local governments.

On that point, I will talk a bit more about the problems for local governments not just with this bill but with pounds and dogs generally. The kinds of regulations we now impose on local councils has resulted in at least one of my local councils totally closing down its pound. If a restricted dog breed is found in that municipality, there is nowhere for that dog to be held. That just means councils will not enforce this law and we will be put back in a situation where we have dangerous dogs in the community, dogs whose breeds have been shown to be more dangerous than others just by the nature of their physiology.

It is fine that the government wants to have an inquiry into this issue, and that is something it has advocated for some time, but I do not see why it needs to impose a moratorium and put the onus back on to councils over this period. The government could have had the inquiry and continued to have the law operating as it was before and kept the community safe, rather than going down the riskier path of introducing a moratorium on the destruction of these dogs. By definition that is a riskier path, and I do not think that has been well thought out. It is fine to have the inquiry and get some more science behind it, but the path the government is taking in putting the onus back on to councils is not the right path.

Mr J. BULL (Sunbury) — I rise with great pleasure to speak on the Domestic Animals Amendment Bill 2015. I do so as somebody who has owned a number of dogs over the last 30 years, and all of those dogs brought a great deal of love to our family and friends. Dogs can be amazing companions. We have all heard the expression ‘a dog is a man’s best friend’; in today’s world that should read ‘a dog is a person’s best friend’. One friend said that if you want a friend in politics, you should get a dog. I am not sure I agree with that sentiment as I have a great many friends in this place.

The former member for Macedon is a great lover of dogs, and we often saw her dogs roaming around the chook house and the Parliament.

This bill addresses a very important issue for many people within the Victorian community. I have been approached on several occasions at community events within my electorate by passionate and caring Victorians who are responsible dog owners and have a great deal of love for their family pets. One person in particular is Brea Chapman. She is a passionate and responsible dog owner who has been a champion of this issue in my electorate. I first met Brea at the 2014 SunFest Festival in Sunbury and she passed on her views on the current legal framework. At the time I knew very little about restricted breed legislation, but Brea filled me in on many of the problems with the legislation and raised with me the Calgary model currently used in Canada. I asked Brea to write to me and provide more detail on the model and outline why she believes the current framework in Victoria is not working.

To quote Brea:

Although named to refer to specific breeds, in reality the breed of a dog is irrelevant, DNA evidence is irrelevant, a dog’s temperament is irrelevant: their nature, behaviour, obedience level, all irrelevant. Even assistance dogs have fallen prey to this legislation. Under the current legislation; loving family pets who have never hurt anyone, never been at large, live with children and other pets, have been torn away from their families and destroyed.

She goes on to say that a dog’s nature, just like its breed and DNA, are completely irrelevant under existing framework and that the only thing that matters under current legislation is how the dog is shaped. We discussed this further at length. She went on to note, in her view, that:

Breed specific legislation has failed globally and is failing Victoria. Our communities deserve safety and harmony and the only way to achieve that is to target the irresponsible dog owner and not the dog.

It is clear from Brea’s comments that she believes the current framework is not working, and it is my view that this bill is a sensible move. Those who have felt the effects of our current framework around restricted breed dogs have advocated strongly for the review and this will address the process and aim for a balanced and fair outcome. I am hopeful that the joint committee to be formed under this legislation will endeavour to do that.

The government’s intention with this bill is clear. The purpose of the bill is to impose a moratorium on the destruction of restricted breed dogs only in cases where

the Domestic Animals Act 1994 provides for a dog to be destroyed solely because of its status as a restricted breed. We know that the government intends to put this moratorium in place, with the commencement of the legislation on 30 September, which will provide sufficient time for the joint committee to report back to Parliament. The inquiry will investigate the current arrangements, benefits and challenges of legislative provisions for restricted breed dogs in Victoria, with a final report by 30 September this year.

Without question, safety for our community, our friends and our loved ones is paramount, and we should never compromise on community safety. However, this legislation is around getting a balance, and I note the contributions from both sides of the house. It is worth giving more consideration to the costs incurred by the local government authorities in relation to this issue. The moratorium will not protect restricted breed dogs from destruction where other destruction powers are provided, such as when a dog has attacked, when a dog has attacked livestock or when a dog needs to be destroyed on health grounds or for health reasons.

The inquiry into current arrangements, benefits and challenges of legislative provisions for restricted breed dogs in Victoria will be conducted by the committee, and the committee will endeavour to draw on research findings and contributions from stakeholders such as the RSPCA, the Australian Veterinary Association and other dog owning groups and dog experts currently in the field, and that is what we need in this space. We need the experts to have a look at the issue and, as I have indicated, that is confirmed by the accurate contributions from both sides of the house. The inquiry, as noted, will seek to comment and to take submissions widely, while listening to experts in our community. To quote the Minister for Agriculture:

There are dangerous dogs still in the community and other dogs being put down that are known to be safe.

The arbitrary confiscation and destruction of dogs can leave individuals distraught and can result, as we know, in lengthy legal battles. Councils are then required to take up the fight, costing families and ratepayers thousands of dollars. This bill ensures that no dog will be destroyed due solely to its restricted breed status until the important work of the committee is complete and the review released. Legislation will then be determined based on the findings of the committee. It is important we get this right and that it is done in a fair and just manner. I found the contribution to the debate on this bill from the member for Yuroke last night very touching. I know of her passion for dogs, and I share that passion.

Community safety is critical, and this government will never put families at risk of attack. But we recognise that calling a dog dangerous does not necessarily make it so. We need a system in place that identifies aggressive and dangerous dogs that are a real risk and keeps much-loved family pets at home where they belong. The inquiry will look at the current framework and arrangements under the existing legislation. I am certainly looking forward to the findings of the committee. I am sure that all members would agree there is a great deal of work to be done in this area. I also look forward to discussing it with my community, in particular Brea, who is incredibly passionate about this issue. I will be making contact with her to discuss the findings of the committee, and I will endeavour to have her write to me again in greater detail. With that I commend the bill to the house.

Mr HIBBINS (Pahran) — I rise to speak on the Domestic Animals Amendment Bill 2015. Taking this bill at face value, it places a one-year moratorium on the destruction of restricted breed dogs whilst a parliamentary inquiry into restricted breed legislation takes place. In previous debates regarding this matter — on previous bills and motions — the Greens have supported a review of how we can best prevent dog attacks. It is on that basis that we will be supporting this bill.

Our particular concern has centred on the ability of local government to implement legislation. There have been a number of Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) and court cases regarding the implementation of legislation — some, I note, at great cost to councils. One I think cost Monash City Council around \$200 000. Many of these issues stem from the interpretation of the standards for identifying restricted dog breeds. The Greens raised concerns about these standards in debate around both the Domestic Animals Amendment (Dangerous Dogs) Bill 2010 and the Domestic Animals Amendment Bill 2013.

Ms Pennicuik, a member for Southern Metropolitan Region in the Council and the animal welfare spokesperson for the Greens, said in regard to the 2010 bill:

One of the main purposes of the bill is to provide that the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal ... may review declarations of restricted breed dogs.

The bill also abolishes review panels. I am not quite sure why the review panels need to be abolished or whether they are not serving their purpose effectively. I have not heard any evidence of that. I am not quite sure why this measure is being taken in the bill and also I am not quite sure that VCAT will provide an expeditious or satisfactory process for people appearing before it, because very often it does not.

We are now seeing these concerns played out in many VCAT appeals and court cases at the expense of councils. It is the preference of the Greens that we have a wideranging inquiry that looks at not just specific breed legislation but the whole regime that is in place to prevent dangerous dog attacks. These attacks result in around 1500 hospital admissions and 5000 hospital presentations per year, and we know the primary victims of these attacks are children.

I prefaced my comments by saying the Greens will take the bill on face value, but we cannot ignore the fact that this bill is being brought forward in an environment where a number of organisations, such as the RSPCA and the Australian Veterinary Association, and other individuals and campaigners are opposed to any form of breed-specific legislation. I put it on the record that the Greens do support breed-specific legislation, as we have in the past, as a way of preventing dog attacks.

If we look at the coroner's report into the tragic death of a young child, Ayen Chol, recommendations from which were implemented in the Domestic Animals Amendment Bill 2013, it makes a compelling case for breed-specific legislation. I will read out some passages from this report. It quotes Dr Jane Dunnett, one of the expert witnesses, as stating:

Traditionally pit bulls were bred to be aggressive; they were bred to be intimidating; they were used as status symbols for want of a better term; they were used extensively and they still are for dogfighting, so the characteristics that those people would like are large, powerful dogs, strong jaws and a tendency to become aggressive very quickly and to become consistently aggressive and not back down.

The report goes on to state:

Her evidence as to temperament was that whilst she was wary of all dogs she treated, she was particularly wary of pit bull terriers because the dogs are exceptionally powerful. They will also become aggressive rapidly and without warning and that is a common characteristic of the breed.

A common argument against breed-specific legislation is that it is the deed, not the breed, but we know that quite often the deed is the injury or death of a child. That is really what we need to be focusing on when we are looking at these laws. Children are the primary victims of dog attacks and are at far greater risk from them. Any laws, regulations or other initiatives that come out of this review need to be centred on how we can best protect children from dog attacks. That is how the Greens will respond to any changes that come out of this review. Rather than watering down the current regime, we will be asking how we can best protect children in the community from dog attacks. The Greens will be supporting the bill.

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) — As has been previously outlined, the bill before us amends the Domestic Animals Act 1994 in order to impose a moratorium on the destruction of restricted breed dogs (RBDs) in certain circumstances and for the purposes of the proposed inquiry into the current arrangements, benefits and challenges of legislative provisions for RBDs in Victoria by a joint investigatory committee of the Parliament under section 33(1) of the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003.

As I have said on previous occasions, it is important that legislation reflects the environment that we are living in. The thing I have learnt about public policy over the journey is that there is no silver bullet; invariably it is an iterative process of trial and error and refinement in order to get it right. I note that in the contribution of the Leader of The Nationals yesterday he mentioned that the Domestic Animals Act 1994 is one of the most heavily amended pieces of legislation on the statute book. That reflects the fact that we are living in a changing environment, so there has been the desire and interest to make those reforms.

The previous Greens speaker, who has left the chamber, mentioned the importance of protecting children. As a parent of young children, I know this is something parents feel particularly anxious about. I remember a few years ago — at that stage I only had three children, and now I have five — I took the three kids to the park, and we came back via a right of way. A neighbour was working in their backyard with their back gate open. A dog came rushing out and went to attack my eldest child. In that instance the dog was not a restricted breed dog, but it was a fairly exuberant animal. The fault was with the owner, who should have had the dog properly restrained but did not.

When members are looking at this sort of legislation, we need to consider also the role that owners play and to try to encourage responsible pet ownership. In my inaugural speech I talked about the most effective public policies and said that they are those that empower individuals to make the right choices. Empowering the individual to make sure that they behave properly, responsibly and appropriately is the most effective tool of public policy. I cited then the great work that was commissioned by the Cain government in the establishment of the Transport Accident Commission as a way of trying to make sure that people behave appropriately.

Since I was elected as the member for Essendon, I have also had the privilege of getting to know and learn a little bit more about some of the great animal advocates in our community. One of the earlier events I went to

was a candlelight vigil at the Lost Dogs Home organised by Kae Norman from Rescued With Love. It was held to express the concern of animal welfare activists about the high rate of euthanasia that was being undertaken at the Lost Dogs Home.

The vigil was held in the seat of Melbourne, and I was the only state parliamentarian present; the minister in the other place was unable to make it. It became apparent that there was a widespread feeling among those present that animals be treated properly and well. The people present were from an extraordinarily broad cross-section. There were single people who lived on their own and relied on their companion animal, there were older people, and there was a very large GLBTI contingent present as well. I found quite instructive the fact that there is a lot of concern out in the community about the way that animals are treated.

In preparing to speak on this bill today I spoke with Kae Norman from Rescued With Love, just to seek her views on some of these issues. Her view and that of Rescued With Love is that any animal that is aggressive and attacks humans has no place in society. Their concern about breed-specific legislation is whether it is an effective tool in reducing the number of dog attacks in the community. Over the past 25 years breed-specific legislation has been rolled out progressively across many jurisdictions around the world but now some of those jurisdictions are revisiting that legislation. They are starting to consider whether the legislation works as an effective tool of public policy.

The view of Kae and Rescued With Love is that we must consider how we know that a pit bull is worse than a Rottweiler or a Doberman or a German shepherd. Over the course of time all have been aggressive animals that have been used for a purpose. When I was growing up in the 1970s a German shepherd was a very frightening dog. By the time the television series *Magnum P.I.* came out in the early 1980s it was probably more the Doberman that was the most frightening dog. It is almost as if in every decade we become fixated upon a particular breed and it becomes the poster child, for want of a better term, of aggressive animals.

Another interesting thing is that there is no DNA test that can be performed to determine whether a dog is a pit bull. It is not as if someone can say, 'Right. That is clearly a pit bull. We can determine beyond any reasonable doubt that that is a pit bull. Therefore it breaches the legislation and it must be destroyed'. There is an inherent risk that dogs are being killed on their looks alone, even if they are not a proscribed breed. That is why it is important to have the

moratorium provided for by the bill. We need a parliamentary committee to do its work through an inquiry. We need to go out into the community and talk to people like members of Rescued With Love, who have a lot of experience and have a great interest in and are passionate defenders of animal welfare. We need to talk to local councils, because invariably local councils are at the coalface and are dealing with this matter. We need to talk to the practitioners in the field.

In developing the legislation that will be presented to the Parliament we need to make sure that it reflects the times we live in. Many of us have young children, and we need to make sure that the legislation protects all young children. As I said earlier, nothing frightens you more as a parent when you are out and about with your young children than when you see a dog off the leash and running around. You just do not know. Some of those animals might be perfectly fine. They might be just exuberant and bounding, running around and having a great time, which is good, but you just do not know. As a parent, you find it really frightening.

I note the comments made yesterday by the Leader of The Nationals about the sorts of wounds that can be inflicted in dog attacks and the impact they have on young children. I think the Leader of The Nationals referred to the fact that he had visited the Royal Children's Hospital and had spoken with doctors about the sorts of wounds that dog attacks cause. They lead to very nasty wounds, which is a grave concern for children.

As part of this work we also need to consider encouraging responsible dog ownership. People need to be held accountable for their conduct and behaviour. They need to be encouraged to behave appropriately and responsibly. In the broader context we need to consider also what penalties are in place for people who purchase a breed and turn that breed into a fighting machine for some other purpose, because that is clearly a problem. That should be where public policy focuses its efforts. It should address that matter rather than having people say, 'This dog doesn't look like it's a nice dog. We can't be sure that it fits the DNA profile of a restricted breed; therefore we'll just consider euthanising the animal'. We need to be very careful in our consideration of this.

A great thing about legislation is that we as legislators have the power and responsibility to tinker and work with and refine legislation. Good public policy is iterative. It is a product of the work of many hands and minds, of people working together constructively, proactively and collaboratively to make sure that we get the best public policy outcome. We need to recognise

the fact that further changes will need to be made. There is nothing wrong with that. It is easy to say, 'It's perfect. Let's never touch it again'. We need to recognise the fact that legislation must move with the times and that this is an endless process that we need to go through to make sure that we end up with the best public policy outcome that reflects the broad needs and aspirations of the community. I commend the bill to the house.

Ms KEALY (Lowan) — It is an honour to stand in the house today to speak on the Domestic Animals Amendment Bill 2015 on behalf of The Nationals. We will not be opposing the passage of this bill.

I will briefly outline the bill. The government is proposing to put in place a moratorium on the destruction of registered breed dogs while an inquiry into the current arrangements and the benefits and challenges of the legislative provisions for restricted breed dogs in Victoria is conducted by a joint investigative committee. The purpose of the bill is to impose a moratorium on the destruction of registered breed dogs only in cases where the Domestic Animals Act 1994 provides for a dog to be destroyed solely because of its status as a restricted breed dog. By way of overview, a restricted breed dog is an American pit bull terrier, a perro de presa Canario, a dogo Argentino, a Japanese tosa or a fila Brasileiro. Given my pronunciation, I probably should not have listed the breeds!

If we talk about the overall purpose of the principal act, it is really about protecting people, particularly children. I recall that when I was quite young my younger brother, Sam, and I were over at a neighbours' house. They had an aggressive dog, and I distinctly recall being terrified and trying to run away. My brother would have only been about three at the time. The fear of having that dog come at us is memorable. It actually bit my brother's leg, because I was older and quicker than him. It was quite terrifying. When you look at the terms of the act and what the legislation is set up to do, we see that it is designed to ensure that we protect our people and our children from dog attacks.

We have seen horrific stories in the news of people who have lost parts of their faces, and we have seen stories about attacks on other dogs where the dogs have lost their lives. We have dogs in our community that we need to manage in some way. It is a sensitive topic because we all love dogs. I have had a wonderful dog, Charlie. He was adopted when I was up in Darwin. He was a rescue dog who had clearly been abused. Charlie was fantastic for us, and there is certainly a place for animal adoption, but we never want to see animals

attacking our children. Whatever we can do to protect our people, I think we need to do.

Currently it is an offence to breed a restricted breed dog, whether that is deliberately or by recklessly allowing the breeding. It does not matter whether both dogs are restricted breeds. Authorised officers from local councils have the power to declare that a dog is a restricted breed at this point in time. If we look to the guidelines that are given to local councils on how they should manage any restricted breed dogs they discover, we see that they cannot currently register those dogs and the dogs must be destroyed.

Implementation of this moratorium would leave councils in a difficult position because they cannot register these dogs and they will not be able to destroy them. If any restricted breed dogs are found in the coming months, they are going to have to be kept in a pound or rescue home for up to 18 months until the joint investigative committee delivers its findings. When we consider these animals and pets, that is not a good outcome for those animals. Secondly, we have the cost burden that will be put on local government in having to manage that.

I do not think there has been any information — perhaps the minister will provide further information — about how the government will support councils, but what is going to happen in this in-between period when this moratorium is in place and the councils cannot do anything to manage these animals? If you cannot register them and you cannot destroy them, they are just going to be kept in pounds and left to rot, which is a cause for great concern. Of course there is also a disincentive out there for councils to actively seek out these restricted breed dogs.

Often you see councils make an effort to try to implement any requirements imposed upon them and ensure that there are no restricted breed dogs in order to protect our children in particular. However, there is not going to be any reason for them to do that if they are just going to be lumped with the cost burden of managing animals for an extended period of time until the findings of this inquiry are delivered, and possibly beyond that depending on what action is taken with the legislation at that point in time.

When we look at what has happened with the Andrews government though we see that this is consistent with its utter contempt for local government when it comes to providing sufficient costs to help it operate, do business and uphold legislation. This is just another cost burden. We have seen the \$160 million cut to the country roads and bridges program. This funding

program was fantastic in delivering money for local roads to councils so they could keep up with any road maintenance that was required. They could use local staff, so this created local jobs. This is just another cut that is not helping local government. Particularly in my area, local government is really struggling to remain viable. There have been findings that a lot of the councils in my area are not viable. This is really going to hurt councils in my area most of all.

We have also seen the Andrews government cut the \$100 million Putting Locals First Fund and \$100 million has been cut from the Local Government Infrastructure Fund. This is putting great cost burdens on council. The government is not managing to support our local councils. This is another example of way the government snot looking outside of the current requirements and what local government can deliver. When we look at local government and how it is supported in rural areas, I think it is important that we invest in this area. We should look at retaining local jobs and keeping local economies going.

I do not think members on the other side of the chamber really understand what that is all about. I think they should get out there and start talking to people, then they might understand a bit more. I made the effort to speak to a local group, Horsham Paws, which does a fantastic job. It is a community-based association that works in partnership with Horsham Rural City Council. It is a volunteer organisation consisting of a committee of 10 people. It has a good membership base, and it does not get any funding from the government.

It relies just on membership fees. It has fantastic fundraising activities. It also runs a shop, which is great because it raises all the money itself. It has a very strong adoption program for animals and a very strong foster care program as well. Groups like this are looking to care for the animals out there that are neglected, that are given up for adoption and that are, as in the case of the dog I adopted, abused and given up to be euthanased. They do a fantastic job locally. We hear amazing stories so many times from families who have gone down the path of adopting a pet rather than buying one from a pet shop, and it is something I can certainly recommend firsthand.

Horsham Paws does an enormous amount of community work, and it is impressive that these volunteer organisations are working in the community, following their passion and saving the government money by delivering a great program and fantastic pets for families. I commend the work of the people at Horsham Paws, and I look forward to catching up with

them soon and having a look through their pound facilities.

The bill just goes to show the short-sightedness of this Melbourne-based Labor government in understanding how it develops its bills and the implications for our people and local government. It is of real concern to me, to all the councils and to my constituents how we manage the funding cuts and the great imposition on local people and local governments. I do not know how it will impact on volunteer organisations, and I am concerned that there may be an additional burden when organisations such as Horsham Paws may have to pick up that burden of managing restricted breed dogs because they cannot be destroyed now. A restricted breed dog might take the place of another dog, bearing in mind the restricted numbers of dogs that the organisation can handle in its kennels. Will it mean that another dog that is not aggressive and not a restricted breed dog will not have a place found for it and may have to be put down instead?

I do not think there has been enough information nor funding to support the proper implementation of the bill. The Nationals will not oppose the bill; however, I emphasise our concern in terms of the cost burden the bill will impose on our local government areas.

Ms WARD (Eltham) — One of the first things I would like to address when speaking in support of the bill is that those opposite seem to feel that we on this side of the house live in bit of a bubble, that we do not get out and talk to people. I find that quite astonishing because that is quite a large part of what we do. One of the interesting aspects of my campaigning last year was the number of dog owners I spoke to, especially those dog owners who are extremely supportive of our antipuppy farms policy. They were very happy to talk to me about how much they love their dogs and how much they want dogs in general looked after. It is pretty arrogant to assume that we go around not talking to people. How else would we get voted in if we did not talk to people? In fact it is a fundamental part of what we do. The Labor Party consists of many great communicators. We like to talk to people. We are the party of the people and we care about people, and that is why we are here.

I also find it interesting to talk about funding cuts. Let us talk about the funding cuts to education and to health.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Angus) — Order! I draw the member back to the bill.

Ms WARD — Thank you, Acting Speaker, I was about to get there. The bill talks about dogs and the need for us to look into whether or not we need to arbitrarily decide that a dog should be put down solely because of its breed. We have heard some lovely stories in this house, including one from the member for Yuroke, regarding dogs and their different personalities and how much we love and care for them regardless of the breed of dog. I have a dog whose head comes up to my hip. He is a big black dog, and when he goes to see people he wants to greet them — especially when he sees other dogs — and he crouches down and stares at them intently. He scares people. He is a big, black, sooky Labrador. We know that a Labrador is not a banned breed — it is a beautiful breed and he is a beautiful dog. He is very good. He is keeping up with me on the Premier's Active April challenge, which is fantastic. I hope everybody is participating in this challenge, but I will turn back to the bill.

On face value alone people can be scared of my very gorgeous, harmless, sooky dog, when all he wants is to be loved and to have a pat. I know that there are many breeds of dogs across the board who are exactly like my dog but who can, on the face of it, appear to be scary. They are not actually scary; they are just big puppies who want to be loved. We need to think about this in a more considered way. We should get out there and learn more about these dogs and work out whether or not the legislation we have is the right legislation and whether we need to change it and decide just to put a dog down solely because of who the dog's parents are — nothing about the dog or the behaviour of the dog but solely because of who that dog's parents are! In my mind that is not good policy, nor is it good law. Dogs, just like people, should be taken for who they are and judged on the characteristics they exhibit, not judged for what they look like or who their parents are. Therefore I am very glad we are talking about the bill today and being constructive. It is another example of the government being thoughtful and going about things in a considered way.

I have also heard comments about the challenges to local councils on this matter and the challenges to fantastic organisations like Animal Aid in Coldstream, where I obtained my dog. My dog is a rescue dog. He came to us when he was five months old, and Animal Aid in Coldstream is a fantastic resource that really cares about its dogs and cats. I am sure there is not one person there who would like to see an animal put down, again, solely because of who the animal's parents are.

In relation to the challenges councils may face in holding dogs for a short period of time, it will only be until September this year, when the government will

bring down a decision on where it will go next. I do not think this is going to be too onerous for councils at all, especially considering that most of us — that is, me and I suspect every dog owner in this place — register and look after our dogs and make sure that our dogs are fenced in. Occasionally dogs do get out but not often, and we try to avoid it because our councils charge us a hell of a lot of money to pick up the dogs. I suspect the number of dogs who will be in this position across our state will be very small, so the impost on our councils will be very slight. Taking cheap political shots based on how much this is going to cost councils is pretty useless because this is about dogs. This is about protecting animals. This is about looking after vulnerable animals who may or may not be a problem, and we should not be condemning those dogs to die solely because of who they are.

Only a small part of the Domestic Animals Act 1994 is going to change — that is, sections 84P(a) and 84(b) — and we have seen that this not a contentious bill. It is not a bill that is going to change a lot of things, but it is a bill that has the potential to protect dogs. This does not mean that a dog who is seriously injured or who has been maimed or who is extremely unwell cannot be euthanased. There is an understanding here of what dogs may need. There is an understanding of and respect for the needs of dogs in terms of whether we need to help them end their lives, but hopefully this bill will stop dogs from being put down for no good reason.

The bill will not affect any dog that is currently legally registered, so it is a good bill. It is another example of this government creating good legislation that clears things up and makes things better for everybody. I commend it to the house.

Mr PAYNTER (Bass) — The member for Eltham clearly is living in a different year than I am living in.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr PAYNTER — It is funny that members laugh about that, because the member said the dogs would need to be held until September this year. The bill refers to September 2016 and not September 2015, so I do not know exactly what period the member for Eltham is referring to. It is not September this year but September 2016, so the references to councils needing to hold dogs for extended periods and incur costs are correct. That is not the main theme of my contribution; I just felt it necessary to pick up the member for Eltham and make sure she knows what year she is living in. I hope she is now clear, as are the members of the government. I wonder what era they are living in.

The opposition will not be opposing this bill. There are some problems with the principal act as it stands at the moment and the parliamentary inquiry into the restricted breed dogs provisions is a good thing. The bill will require councils to hold restricted breed dogs for an extended period — I repeat, until 2016. There seems to be a consensus between local councils and animal welfare groups that the current framework is not working particularly well. In fact they have stated that it is unworkable.

There are problems for local councils when a restricted breed dog is held, and there have been a number of court cases costing tens of thousands of dollars. In 2013 the Shire of Cardinia spent over \$80 000 contesting one of its cases in court. Local councils are forced to pay between \$17 and \$30 a day to impound dogs while they remain on death row. Hundreds of dogs are being destroyed, apparently with quite little effect on the number of dog attacks that are occurring in our community. In Cardinia shire alone dog attacks went from 12 in 2010 to 28 in 2013, so dog attacks do not appear to have been minimised or reduced as a result of the restricted breeds legislation.

My primary concern, as always, is for public and community safety. That is the biggest issue here. The RSPCA's position is that dogs should not be declared dangerous purely on breed. I disagree. The community expects to be protected from dogs, serious dog attacks and the damage serious dog attacks cause. The Domestic Animals Act 1994 does that. Let us be clear that there is no place in our community for the type of dog that is listed as a restricted breed. Dogs such as the American pit bull are bred for a single purpose — that is, to fight. There is no place in our community nor in the state of Victoria for American pit bulls, and this legislation says that. There is simply no place in our community for dogs that are bred to fight, and I question the type of person who would acquire or seek to acquire a dog on the restricted breed list. Why would a person seek to own an American pit bull? Would it be to engage in illegal activity, dogfights, acts of intimidation or acts of violence? What type of person would seek to own an American pit bull?

My concern is that if the moratorium is put in place, the cost to local councils of holding and caring for these dogs until the parliamentary — —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Angus) — Order! The time has come for business to be interrupted for question time.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

ABSENCE OF PREMIER

The SPEAKER — I understand the Premier will be absent from today's question time. I understand the Deputy Premier will be taking questions on behalf of the Premier.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE and MINISTERS STATEMENTS

East–west link

Mr M. O'BRIEN (Malvern) — My question is to the Treasurer. I refer to the Treasurer's claim yesterday that the previous government paid \$339 million to the east–west link consortium, and I ask: will the Treasurer inform the house where in the 2014–15 budget update, published on 23 December 2014, does it show any payments by the previous government to the east–west link consortium, or will he admit that the claim made yesterday was just another Labor lie?

Mr PALLAS (Treasurer) — I thank the member for Malvern for his question. The water boy has been brought off the interchange bench. What we know is that in their obscene haste to reach contractual close, in their obscene effort to effectively fit the people of Victoria up with liability, what those opposite were able to do was consign Victorians to a situation where financial drawdown — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The house will come to order! I remind members that the Chair will not tolerate unparliamentary language from either side.

Mr M. O'Brien — On a point of order, Speaker, the Treasurer has been on his feet for some time now. He is clearly debating the question. I ask you to bring him back to answering the question: on what page is this supposed payment recorded?

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

Mr PALLAS — What happened here was a debt — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I warn the members for Hawthorn and Warrandyte!

Mr PALLAS — What happened here was that a debt facility had effectively been drawn down by the consortium. That means that any effort by the current

government to disentangle Victorians from the ridiculous amount of money that those opposite fitted Victorians up for — up to \$450 million went out the door but more money came back. As we have said, \$110 million came back to Victoria.

If ever we needed a lecture from those opposite about the value of this undertaking, we would be shocked to realise that they entered into a contract without justification, a contract that they kept secret from Victorians. And you want to know what page? The page is one that effectively says there are contingent liabilities to the state, which we covered and which Labor's financial statement spelt out quite clearly. But the contingent liabilities were not realised until the state entered into an agreement and saved Victorians from the \$1.2 billion that you signed us up to. We saved Victorians from that.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Treasurer will speak through the Chair!

Mr PALLAS — What is more, we saved Victorians from the \$4 billion blowout that the Department of Treasury and Finance has made clear. So you want to know about a sunk cost? A sunk cost is anybody who invests in your career. You are sunk!

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — The house will come to order. Members of the opposition and the government, including the Treasurer, will speak through the Chair. The Treasurer has concluded.

Supplementary question

Mr M. O'BRIEN (Malvern) — Noting the Treasurer's answer, if he is to be believed, will he now rule out any payments or other benefits being provided by the Andrews government to any part of the east-west link consortium that exceeds one dollar — yes or no?

Mr PALLAS (Treasurer) — When you take questions from the member for Malvern, there is no doubt that he does not suffer from any internal qualifications or uncertainty about his actions, but the absolute certainty is that Victorians would have lost more money on this 45 cent-in-return proposition that the previous government tried to sign Victorians up to. Let me be clear: our arrangements with the consortium are clear and emphatic. So far as our arrangements with the consortium are concerned, \$339 million is the total liability that will be paid. Indeed might I go further and say that the \$339 million is not money that the state of

Victoria has paid over to the consortium. It is money that was drawn down because —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Treasurer will resume his seat. I warn the Treasurer. I accept the Treasurer's excitement — it is Thursday — however his time had well concluded. When I call on the Treasurer to sit down, the Treasurer will sit down.

Ministers statements: Melbourne Metro rail project

Mr MERLINO (Minister for Education) — The Andrews Labor government is getting on with the transport projects that Victorians voted for. One of those is the Melbourne Metro rail project — the project that will bring our sluggish and crowded transport system into the new era, building two 9-kilometre rail tunnels underneath the city to unlock the whole rail network and carry thousands of extra passengers every day.

This morning the Premier and the Minister for Public Transport announced the preferred alignment and depth of the two rail tunnels that will run through the Melbourne CBD. We established the Melbourne Metro Rail Authority in February.

Mr R. Smith — On a point of order, Speaker, I refer you to sessional order 7 which says that ministers statements should be new information. This plan was first announced in 2008.

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

Mr MERLINO — The authority's detailed planning and technical work shows that building the two tunnels underneath Swanston Street is the best route for passengers and for taxpayers. Swanston Street is the most convenient location for commuters and the most cost effective for construction. A Russell Street alignment would not let passengers transfer directly between stations, and an Elizabeth Street route would be a costly engineering nightmare.

The tunnels will be built at a depth of 10 metres and not 12 storeys underground, which would be both impractical for commuters and not as safe in an emergency. Reduced depth also means construction can go ahead more efficiently, and the authority will investigate ways to reduce the disruption to the CBD. Now that we have identified the route, the authority can investigate the site in greater detail and consult with

traders. The Melbourne Metro rail project will create 3500 jobs — —

Mr Watt — On a point of order, Speaker, I refer to sessional order 7. The acting Premier, who I think probably needs to improve his acting — —

The SPEAKER — Order! The member will make the point of order.

Mr Watt — Clearly this is not new. I remember the acting Premier and others talking about — —

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

Mr MERLINO — The project includes five new underground stations: Arden, Parkville, CBD North, CBD South and Domain. The government is getting on with the Melbourne Metro rail project, a project that Victorians need and that they voted for.

East–west link

Mr M. O'BRIEN (Malvern) — My question is to the Treasurer. Given the Premier's claim yesterday, when he said, 'Those opposite when in government paid out \$339 million' to the east–west link consortium, I ask: why did the Treasurer admit yesterday that his budget has contingencies to accommodate Labor paying out \$339 million to the consortium — money the Premier claims has already been paid? Is his government incompetent or dishonest or both?

Mr PALLAS (Treasurer) — I thank the member for Malvern for his question, and I have to say he has come back. We thought he had laryngitis yesterday, but today he is back asking as inane a question as you could imagine.

The Premier made reference, in effect, to the debt facility that those opposite allowed to be brought into effect. Once that debt facility was created, a liability ultimately upon a termination of those arrangements created a liability for Victoria. You would imagine that at some point there would be a measure of introspection about whether or not the actions of those opposite were appropriate.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr M. O'Brien — On a point of order, Speaker, the question referred to a quote from the Premier :

Those opposite, when in government, paid out \$339 million.

I am happy to table the *Daily Hansard* for the benefit of the Treasurer, and I seek leave — —

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

Mr PALLAS — In terms of paying out, let us be clear: the people of Victoria paid out on you. That is why you are where you are today, and that is why you deserve to be where you are today. Today the Leader of the Opposition was asked if he regretted signing the contracts allowing the financial instruments to be created. He was asked did he regret — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Treasurer will resume his seat.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! And I warn him. The Chair is unable to hear the Treasurer's response and is therefore unable to make judgements should there be points of order. I call on the Treasurer and the house to come to order.

Mr PALLAS — Thanks very much, Speaker, and I apologise. Members of the opposition had an opportunity to reflect upon their decisions and to apologise to the Victorian people for the liability, for the debt instrument, they created that was — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Treasurer will resume his seat and government members will come to order. That includes the member for Bentleigh.

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Speaker, now that we can hear the Treasurer, it is clear that he is debating the question. I ask you to bring him back to answering the question about the inconsistencies between his position and the Premier's statement to this house yesterday.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Treasurer will be heard in silence on the point of order.

Mr PALLAS — On the point of order, Speaker, The question went to where the drawdown actually occurred; when the money was actually paid out. That was the question. To answer that question it would be impossible not to reflect upon the events that those opposite subjected the Victorian people to.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Treasurer is entitled to set the context. However, I call on him to come back to answering the question.

Mr PALLAS — The only payout that occurred was out of the debt facility drawn down by members of the east–west consortium — money that went out the door. This government managed to bring back \$110 million of money the opposition kissed goodbye to. It kissed goodbye to it, but we brought it back.

Supplementary question

Mr M. O'BRIEN (Malvern) — Given the Treasurer's admission that \$339 million will be paid from contingencies to recklessly scrap the east–west link, will he now confirm that this \$339 million currently sitting in the Victorian Treasury will now not be available for schools, hospitals and new trains for our rapidly growing state?

Mr PALLAS (Treasurer) — Sometimes it amazes me that those opposite actually think they know anything about business and about accounting. Let us start with the basics. There was a business case on this project. That business case was going to cost Victorians, by the former government's own admission, 55 cents in every dollar.

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Speaker, the supplementary question was very specific about funds currently in contingencies. The Treasurer is debating the question, and I ask you to bring him back to answering it.

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

Mr PALLAS — If we are having a discussion around how much this road has cost, I suppose we also need to realise how much this road would have cost. We have actually saved Victorians a very substantial amount of money. It is called making an investment in the things that matter, reflecting the will of the Victorian people — 45 cents in the dollar. Let us not talk about the \$4 billion blowout that the Department of Treasury and Finance yesterday confirmed was lost to Victorians.

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

Ministers statements: Melbourne Metro rail project

Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport) — I am delighted to rise to provide the latest achievements of

the Andrews Labor government when it comes to the Melbourne Metro rail project. This is a project that Victorians voted for and Victorians need. I was delighted to be with the Premier this morning to announce the Swanston Street alignment as the preferred route and announce that we will be following a shallow-tunnel construction methodology to do the construction work.

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms ALLAN — Yes, a shallow-tunnel construction methodology. We are well and truly getting on with it.

Mr Watt — On a point of order, Speaker, I refer to sessional order 7, and noting that one of the first things you do when you go to acting lessons is to learn how to repeat things, this sessional order states that a ministers statement must provide new information. We heard about this from the first speaker, therefore this is not new.

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

Ms ALLAN — We are well and truly getting on with the Melbourne Metro rail project. It is a far superior project to the half-baked, back-of-the-envelope thought bubble that was created by those opposite, the failed former Liberal government. The Lord Mayor of Melbourne, Robert Doyle, described this thought bubble as a 100-year catastrophe for the city. Why was this project a catastrophe? It was because the Liberals' failed metro rail proposal did not include building any new CBD stations; it did not provide for a station at Parkville, connecting Parkville, that important hospital and university precinct, to the rest of the city; and it was supported by no-one other than those opposite as they desperately tried to cover up their failure to take any action on the most important rail infrastructure project this city needs, the Melbourne Metro rail project, which is Infrastructure Australia's no. 1 rated project for Victoria.

There has been some concern about when this project will be delivered. Maybe those opposite did not realise that we have already announced that the expression of interest will be out next year. We have already indicated that major construction will be undertaken in 2018.

Mr Watt — On a point of order, Speaker, sessional order 7 is very clear about new projects and initiatives. The minister has just told us that the government has already announced this, therefore this ministers statement is clearly not within the sessional orders if it is something that has already been announced. I ask

that the minister be asked to sit down and stop going on with this drivel.

Ms ALLAN — On the point of order, Speaker, no matter how plaintive the member for Burwood may be, sessional order 7 does not preclude ministers from being able to provide the new information within the context of action that has already been taken by the government. It is quite difficult to be able to describe the latest achievements on the Melbourne Metro rail project without providing a little bit of context. The member may not like it and those opposite may not like it, but sessional order 7 does not preclude that from happening.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Leader of the House is right: sessional order 7 does not preclude the minister from setting context. However, there is a matter of balance in terms of setting the context and using this opportunity to do anything but to make a statement in relation to new programs, new initiatives or new achievements. The minister will continue, but I do caution ministers to keep well in mind sessional order 7.

Ms ALLAN — The Andrews Labor government took the Melbourne Metro rail plan to the election, and Victorians backed it in.

East–west link

Mr M. O'BRIEN (Malvern) — My question is to the Treasurer. In relation to yesterday's announcement that the government is scrapping the east–west link, when will the Treasurer fully release the non-binding heads of agreement?

Mr PALLAS (Treasurer) — There is a measure of overcompensation going on here. Methinks he doth protest too much. It is a sign of a guilty conscience. It is consuming him, and it is consuming the futures of all of you.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! Before calling on the member for Warrandyte, I warn the Treasurer to speak through the Chair.

Mr R. Smith — On a point of order, Speaker, the Treasurer is clearly debating the question. I ask that he come back to answering it. Theatrical classes, while government members want to show us what they have learnt, are not really appropriate.

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

Mr PALLAS — Those of us on this side of the house recognise that there was a decision by the Victorian people. That decision brought a responsibility to provide greater accountability and transparency. We released the contracts, we released the business case and we released the advice of Treasury about the cost of this project. The member for Malvern makes the member for Rowville look like an economic genius.

I can assure members that when contractual arrangements are finalised, we will make all documentation relevant to those contracts available to the public, because the public has a right to know exactly what the former government has done within the full and appropriate course of dealing with the contractual arrangements — dealing with the dodgy arrangements that it fitted Victorians up with. We will do it in a way that protects Victoria's interests, not the party political interests of those opposite. We are not going to throw money into a black hole similar to the political abyss the coalition created for itself. We are going to do the right thing by Victorians. There will be transparency, and there will be accountability. Our intention — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr PALLAS — If members opposite are looking for a time line, I am more than happy to provide one. Our intention is to complete these negotiations within three months.

Supplementary question

Mr M. O'BRIEN (Malvern) — Given that the Treasurer has not released the non-binding heads of agreement, which apparently is not even final, will the Treasurer now release details of the total amount spent by this government on lawyers, consultants, spin doctors and accountants to produce this non-binding heads of agreement to walk away from a contract the Premier claimed was not even worth the paper it was written on?

Mr PALLAS (Treasurer) — Apparently I have been asked about the sunk costs of our negotiations. Certainly what we can tell those opposite, what we can tell the people of Victoria, is that whatever expenditure we went to in order to protect Victoria's interest pales into insignificance against the liability you signed Victorians up to without a mandate and without any effort to justify to Victorians — —

Mr M. O'Brien — On a point of order, Speaker, the Treasurer is clearly debating the question. We just need to know how much it cost to walk away from a contract

the Premier said was not worth the paper it was written on.

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

Mr PALLAS — These matters will be clear. They will be clear in due course once we have completed the process. But let me be clear. If we are talking about sunk costs, let us be clear that a sunk cost, for the Leader of the Opposition, is one of unrealisable value, so land is not a sunk cost.

Ministers statements: east–west link

Mr PALLAS (Treasurer) — I am pleased to advise the house of an outstanding achievement of this government, the Andrews Labor government. We have come to a resolution of the east–west link issue, and in doing so we have restored the integrity of the Victorian government. We have also secured the future of rationally entered into and transparently accounted for infrastructure projects that will secure the future of our state. This agreement shows what can be achieved when government, business and of course the community deal with each other in good faith.

Mr Watt — On a point of order, Speaker, specifically with regard to sessional order 7, which says that the ministers — —

The SPEAKER — Order! I do know what sessional order 7 says. I want the member for Burwood to make the point of order.

Mr Watt — It is particularly around the word ‘new’. I heard this fictional story a number of times yesterday. I understand that ministers have taken acting lessons, but they do not have to keep giving me the same fictional story. That was yesterday and therefore not new, so therefore not in order — —

The SPEAKER — Order! I am afraid the member for Burwood will have to resume his seat. There is no point of order.

Mr PALLAS — Good faith is a virtue that has been lacking from those opposite in government and in the way they have practised Victorian politics in the last few years. People are coming out of the woodwork to applaud the return of integrity and accountability.

I have the great pleasure to advise the house that Standard & Poor’s has confirmed that the AAA rating of Victoria’s budget remains unaffected, and it also recognises that no compensation will be paid as part of these arrangements. That is the ratings agency’s view,

not that of those opposite. This is in part because no compensation was in fact payable, only the costs recklessly rushed out the door by the member for Malvern in his desperate effort to secure his political hide.

The Spanish embassy has come out and said it is very pleased. The French embassy has come out and indicated that this is good news for Victoria, and it is. The only bad news for Victoria is the dodgy arrangements those opposite fitted Victoria up with. Infrastructure Partnerships Australia, the Master Builders Association and the Insurance Australia Group all support it.

The SPEAKER — Order! The use of props is unparliamentary. I warn the members for Euroa, Gippsland South, Morwell and Nepean, and I ask the Serjeant-at-Arms to remove the props forthwith.

East–west link

Mr M. O’BRIEN (Malvern) — My question is to the Treasurer. Given that the Treasurer will pay \$339 million to the east–west link consortium not to build a much-needed piece of new infrastructure, can he confirm that there is no compensation available for Victorian companies like Eastern Plant Hire and William Adams CAT, who have spent millions of dollars gearing up for the east–west link project?

Mr PALLAS (Treasurer) — I thank the member for Malvern for his question. It is a tired old question — and a tired old stunt too — from the opposition in circumstances where, if opposition members wanted to learn how to do a stunt, they did not take enough notice of us in opposition, I can assure them.

Let me be clear, it is good to see that the member for Malvern now accepts that the liability around these arrangements is \$339 million and not, as the Leader of the Opposition has said, \$800 million to \$900 million or whatever ludicrous figure comes out of opposition members’ mouths. It has been a tour de force of hyperbole and inflated numbers in a desperate effort to try to make a case that has no commending value.

For members opposite: we have an arrangement of \$339 million drawn down from a debt facility they let go out the way. But there is a substantial part to this question, and I will answer it. It is about the impact that these arrangements have upon subcontractors, upon all subcontractors, and the arrangements — —

Mr Guy interjected.

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

Mr PALLAS — Any liabilities attaching to Project Co must be made good before the final contractual arrangements are entered into. All liabilities to subcontractors must be met by the east–west consortium. We stand entirely in support of processes where Project Co, in meeting its \$339 million liability, also meets its liabilities to its subcontractors.

Supplementary question

Mr M. O'BRIEN (Malvern) — Given that today's Australian Bureau of Statistics data shows unemployment in Victoria has risen again, what does the Treasurer have to say to truck owners like Marcello Di Domenico, who contracts to Eastern Plant Hire, who will lose work and may have to move interstate as a result of his government's reckless and political decision to scrap the east–west link?

Honourable members interjecting.

Questions and statements interrupted.

SUSPENSION OF MEMBER

Member for South Barwon

The SPEAKER — Order! Under standing order 124, I ask the honourable member for South Barwon, the Opposition Whip, to withdraw from the chamber for an hour. I warn the members for Kew, Forest Hill and Ringwood.

Honourable member for South Barwon withdrew from chamber.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE and MINISTERS STATEMENTS

East–west link

Supplementary question

Questions and statements resumed.

Mr PALLAS (Treasurer) — I thank the member for Malvern for his question. The member made reference to unemployment rising again, and he has great experience in this space. He would know that unemployment rose during the tenure of those opposite from 4.9 per cent to 6.8 per cent. When we came to government unemployment was 6.8 per cent. Where is it today? Recent Australian Bureau of Statistics data shows that it is at 6.2 per cent — appreciably lower

than it was under those opposite. That is because on this side of the chamber we actually care about unemployment. We make efforts in a tangible way, such as our Back to Work legislation, so we can demonstrate that we have taken real steps to create employment.

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

Ministers statements: Healthy Together Victoria

Ms HENNESSY (Minister for Health) — I rise to advise the house of initiatives that the Victorian government has taken regarding the commonwealth government's threat to cut funding to a very important health program called Healthy Together Victoria. It is an important community-based program that is tackling chronic disease in the most disadvantaged communities in our state. The Victorian government has made representations to the commonwealth government. I have recently met with the commonwealth Minister for Health to implore the federal government not to cut this important program.

Members would be aware that last year the federal government cruelly cut \$52 million out of the national partnership agreement on preventative health. That was done without any consultation and took the community completely by surprise. With the rise of preventable diseases, particularly diabetes and cardiovascular disease, preventive health programs have never been more important. It is important to understand that the consequences of cutting this program will be felt and will cut programs in the local government areas of Bendigo, Cardinia, Dandenong, Geelong, Hume, Knox, Latrobe, Mildura, Whittlesea, Wodonga, Wyndham and Central Goldfields, all of which currently run important preventive health programs funded under the pool of funding that is under threat.

Last year, in the dying days of the failed former Liberal government, the then Minister for Health called in those councils, bragged to them and proclaimed that he had found the money from the federal government. If that pot of money did exist, it is a mirage. I call upon the federal government to fund this important program, and I call upon the state Liberals to act in the interests of Victoria and also urge the federal government to fund this important program.

Ministers performance training

Ms VICTORIA (Bayswater) — My question is to the acting Premier. Can the acting Premier inform the

house why the government has shunned the Melbourne artistic community and hired a Sydney-based artist to train its ministers how to perform?

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! Government members and opposition members will come to order. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the House will allow the acting Premier to answer the question.

Mr MERLINO (Minister for Education) — I thank the member for her question. But in a week in which some really significant infrastructure projects are being debated, significant issues in the life of our state, issues that go to the economic vandalism of those opposite, that go to the good governance — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Speaker, it is clear that the acting Premier is debating the question. I ask you to bring him back to answering it.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask the acting Premier to come back to answering the question.

Mr MERLINO — As everyone in this chamber would know, as those in the gallery would know and as those upstairs would know, this is a completely frivolous, juvenile question from an opposition — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr R. Smith — On a point of order, Speaker, it is not up to the acting Premier to decide what questions the opposition asks him.

The SPEAKER — Order! The acting Premier, to continue.

Mr MERLINO — Everyone knows, particularly in this week of such importance to the economic future of our state, about the completely frivolous nature of that question. It reflects so poorly on members opposite, who still have not come to terms with the decision of the Victorian people last November.

Mr Walsh — On a point of order, Speaker, the acting Premier may think that \$90 000 on acting lessons is frivolous, but people believe \$90 000 is a lot of money for a failed result.

Mr MERLINO — On the point of order, Speaker, as opposed to a \$10.7 billion dud project — —

The SPEAKER — Order! The acting Premier will resume his seat. I uphold the point of order. I ask the acting Premier to come back to answering the question.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The acting Premier has concluded his answer. Government members will come to order. The Treasurer and the Leader of the House will allow the member for Bayswater to ask a supplementary question in silence.

Supplementary question

Ms VICTORIA (Bayswater) — I am sorry that the arts are not important to the acting Premier. As a supplementary question, will the acting Premier now introduce local content and local sourcing rules to ensure that any future artistic coaching for ministers will come from Melbourne-based artists?

Mr MERLINO (Minister for Education) — I thank the member for her supplementary question. If we are going to talk about local content, I suggest we talk about rail stock. I suspect we should talk about major infrastructure projects. I suspect we should talk about steel. This is a joke. It reflects poorly on the member, and it — —

Mrs Fyffe — On a point of order, Speaker, the Deputy Premier seems to have so much trouble in answering this question that perhaps he would be forgiven for saying to the Premier, ‘Where the bloody hell are you?’.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I can hear the Minister for Planning so clearly on a Thursday. I am beginning to be sympathetic towards former Speakers the member for Evelyn and Ken Smith, arguably a very popular Speaker.

Mr MERLINO — This is a juvenile way for the opposition to end the week. If those opposite want to talk about local content, there is the case in point.

Mr Watt — On a point of order, Speaker, the overacting Premier seems to — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Burwood will resume his seat.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! Not on a Thursday, please. The acting Premier to continue.

Mr MERLINO — This has been a week of serious matters, of significant decisions — —

Mr Watt — On a point of order, Speaker, the acting Premier is clearly debating the question, and somehow it feels like a bit of a re-run of the last question.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask the acting Premier to come back to answering the question.

Mr MERLINO — The member for Bayswater asked a question about local content. We will have a debate about local content any day of the week. When it comes to real issues like steel, like rail stock, like infrastructure projects, that is what we will have a debate on. What a pathetic way to end this week.

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Speaker, pursuant to sessional order 11(2), I submit that the acting Premier's answers to neither the substantive question nor the supplementary question were responsive to the questions. I ask you to rule accordingly.

Ms Allan — On the point of order, Speaker, the supplementary question referred to local content, and the — —

An honourable member interjected.

Ms Allan — You might find jobs funny; we do not. The acting Premier started his answer by referring to government policy on local content. He could not have answered the question more clearly. It is not our fault that the opposition has failed to grasp the seriousness of the issues that are before the Parliament this week.

Mr R. Smith — On the point of order, Speaker, while I support the member for Box Hill's point of order, in her response the Leader of the House certainly seemed to agree by leaving out the fact that the substantive question seemed not to have been answered. Accordingly, I support the member for Box Hill in asking you to have the minister respond in writing to the substantive question at a minimum but certainly the supplementary as well.

The SPEAKER — Order! I uphold the point of order.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I do not require assistance or support from the opposition. The minister

will come back to me on the next sitting day with a written response.

Ministers statements: Pakenham Racing Club

Mr PAKULA (Minister for Racing) — I rise to inform the house of a new funding commitment the government is making in order to support the Victorian racing industry. The Andrews Labor government will deliver a major shot in the arm for thoroughbred racing with \$5 million to expand night racing to Pakenham Racing Club's new racecourse at Tynong.

Racing.com Park, Victoria's first new racecourse in 40 years, opened last month. It will be the third racecourse in Victoria able to host night racing. Night racing at Pakenham will be a key part of racing's push to expand further into the domestic wagering market, and it will positively impact on international wagering through the supply of a consistent product. The state-of-the-art lights will mean up to 28 night race meetings every year. Construction of the new lighting system is expected to commence by June, with the first night racing meetings to be held in early 2016.

Racing on Thursday nights has the potential to boost annual revenue by up to \$4.5 million. As we know, Pakenham is already a strong racing and training hub. The redevelopment of the old course and the construction of the new precinct demonstrate the broader economic benefit of racing to the community. The two projects combined will have a development value of \$1.3 billion and will create the equivalent of 4600 jobs. Funding for the project is being provided through the Victorian Racing Industry Fund (VRIF), which the government has committed to continuing for a further four years. In addition to funding vital revenue-generating projects like this, the government is committed to ensuring that VRIF funding is available to help the racing industry in addressing critical governance and integrity issues.

I congratulate the Pakenham Racing Club and the Cardinia shire. This will be a great additional attraction for members of the local community to attend and enjoy all that racing has to offer.

GALLIPOLI

The SPEAKER — Order! To commemorate the centenary of Gallipoli, the Australian-Turkish community has today presented to all members of the Victorian Parliament commemorative certificates with Atatürk's *Ode*. The President of the Legislative Council and I received the certificates this morning, and

members will each receive this gracious gift over the course of the day.

The presentation of the certificates has been organised by the Australian Turkish Advocacy Alliance and the Turkish sub-branch of the Victorian RSL. I thank Adem Genç and Ramazan Altintas for coming to Parliament House today to present the certificates, and on behalf of all members and indeed on behalf of the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition I thank the Australian-Turkish community for this most welcome commemoration. The spirit they have shown unites us as we remember the service and sacrifice of Gallipoli.

CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS

Morwell electorate

Mr NORTHE (Morwell) — (Question 157) My constituency question is to the Minister for Education. Can the minister advise if his government is intending to deliver the Morwell primary schools regeneration project, and if so, what are the time lines?

The Morwell primary schools regeneration project seeks to merge Commercial Road Primary School, Tobruk Street Primary School and Morwell Primary School, in addition to redeveloping Morwell Park Primary School. The coalition pledged \$13 million for this important initiative. Whilst Labor also pledged funding, it offered \$1 million less than the coalition. Morwell residents have advised me that they are concerned as to when and if the project will be delivered and indeed if \$12 million is sufficient to complete the project in totality. Many of Morwell's primary schools are currently in poor condition. The delivery of this project will bring together around 450 Morwell students who will be able to learn in modern facilities, not only enhancing learning outcomes but also providing a boost for our inspiring local teachers and principals.

Bentleigh electorate

Mr STAIKOS (Bentleigh) — (Question 158) My question is to the Deputy Premier and Minister for Education. Will the minister ensure that funding for the redevelopment of McKinnon and Bentleigh secondary colleges is included in the upcoming state budget? Labor has a proud record of rebuilding schools, and both these secondary colleges have been beneficiaries of this. By contrast, the last Liberal Premier to turn his attention to these schools was Henry Bolte, such is the level of contempt those opposite have for public education.

My community is eagerly awaiting the funding the Andrews government has committed to, which will provide new classrooms and learning areas to replace old temporary, asbestos-ridden buildings and portables. The funding will also provide two additional basketball courts for McKinnon Basketball Association, which has 2500 members. Labor has made these commitments, and I ask that they be fulfilled in the 2015 state budget.

South-West Coast electorate

Dr NAPTHINE (South-West Coast) — (Question 159) My question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. The Myamyn-Macarthur Road is a 24-kilometre road linking the Henty Highway with the Hamilton-Port Fairy Road. It is a very busy road with many large woodchip trucks, milk tankers, quarry trucks, livestock trucks, farm vehicles, and local and tourist traffic. It is also used by the Macarthur school bus. Some 11 kilometres of the road is a two-way carriageway and 13 kilometres of it is a single lane of bitumen, which is dangerous and in poor condition. My question to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety is: will the minister guarantee that the \$2.6 million provided by the previous Liberal coalition government to begin work to upgrade this dangerous road will actually be spent on this road?

Geelong electorate

Ms COUZENS (Geelong) — (Question 160) My question is to the Minister for Public Transport. The announcement by the former Labor government of the regional rail link project provided for the first time that Geelong trains would have their own dedicated tracks through the metropolitan system from Sunshine to Southern Cross station, improving the capacity and reliability of services. I note with concern that the former coalition government did not order a single V/Line carriage for two years after it came to office and had planned to open the regional rail link in April 2015, despite knowing there would not be enough trains to guarantee reliable services on the regional network. I also note that the safest option was to defer the implementation to get the basics right and ensure that there were enough trains to deliver a reliable service. The information I seek is an update on the activation of the regional rail link and the benefits it will have for Geelong commuters.

Gembrook electorate

Mr BATTIN (Gembrook) — (Question 161) My question is to the Minister for Emergency Services. I ask the minister if she can guarantee funding in this budget for the Emerald State Emergency Service (SES)

station, which is a station in the Dandenong Ranges with a volunteer unit whose members do a wonderful job. This SES unit has more than 1000 turnouts each calendar year. Currently the unit manager, Ben Owen, has no room for any new vehicles or safety equipment in that facility. The unit members require an upgrade urgently. I understand they have been speaking to the minister about this and that they have gone back and forth with it but at this stage have had no response at all. They turn out for storms, car accidents, education and training, and when trees are down. They also assist on high fire-risk days. They are highly skilled volunteers, and they need extra support at the facility up there. I ask the minister to ensure that funding will be available so that she can respect the volunteers as do we on this side.

Carrum electorate

Ms KILKENNY (Carrum) — (Question 162) My constituency question is to the Minister for Education. Can the minister provide an update on the progress of the government's funding commitment of \$3 million for Seaford Park Primary School in my electorate of Carrum and confirm that it is included in the upcoming state budget? The minister will know that Seaford Park Primary School is in desperate need of upgrading and rebuilding, as all its current classrooms are portables. That is why Labor committed \$3 million to Seaford Park Primary School to replace the old and outdated portables and to build new classrooms and learning spaces. Unfortunately the former Liberal government abandoned Labor's plan to modernise Seaford Park Primary School, so this project is long overdue. Seaford Park's enrolment is growing rapidly, with the school introducing a second prep class this year, putting further stress on the existing infrastructure and making these works all the more urgent. The school desperately needs new classrooms and learning spaces. I know the local school community is very keen to hear about funding to build new classrooms and learning spaces, and I look forward to the minister's update.

Rowville electorate

Mr WELLS (Rowville) — (Question 163) My question is to the Minister for Emergency Services. The Scoresby Country Fire Authority brigade in my electorate of Rowville urgently requires a larger, more modern station to improve emergency response capabilities for Scoresby and surrounding communities. The previous coalition government committed, if re-elected, to fund a new \$2.5 million station. The brigade is supported by 60 dedicated volunteers and attends 600 emergency call-outs per year. Funding of \$2.5 million for such a redevelopment would provide

for a new station to be built on the current site. A redevelopment would also allow for re-engineering of the intersection of Sara Road and Ferntree Gully Road in Scoresby to allow for traffic lights and for brigade vehicles to safely use the major arterial Ferntree Gully Road. The new Scoresby station would have supplemented the coalition's previous investment in delivering a new \$5.84 million integrated station at Rowville. On behalf of the Scoresby Country Fire Authority brigade I ask the minister to match the coalition government's funding commitments in the upcoming state budget.

Buninyong electorate

Mr HOWARD (Buninyong) — (Question 164) My question is for the Minister for Education. I ask the minister to advise of the opportunity for Phoenix P-12 Community College in Sebastopol to receive a funding allocation in this year's budget that will enable the school to continue with its reconstruction program. The secondary school component of Phoenix P-12 was built in the 1960s, and the school community have been excited to see several stages of rebuilding over the past four years. They are very hopeful that this work will be able to continue to a timely conclusion over the coming year. Although the school community know that ahead of the election Labor committed \$10 million for the school reconstruction, they would be very pleased to learn that this funding will come forward in Labor's first budget. Principal Scott Dellar and his staff have done a great job in raising the aspirations of the students. This funding announcement will help the school to continue with its great work.

Nepean electorate

Mr DIXON (Nepean) — (Question 165) My constituency question is for the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water. I refer to the minister's statement that dogs should be allowed in Mornington Peninsula National Park, despite their proven negative impact on the hooded plover, which is endangered. Given that only three chicks survived this year, when will the minister increase enforcement of the current rules, which she stated is the best way to deal with this very dangerous and alarming situation?

Dandenong electorate

Ms WILLIAMS (Dandenong) — (Question 166) My constituency question is to the Minister for Police, and it relates to a Victoria Police trial that is currently taking place in my electorate of Dandenong. The receipting proof of concept initiative involves the provision of receipts by police to people in situations

where police have initiated contact — for example, where a person has been asked to provide their details. I ask that the minister provide an update on the trial to date. In particular I am keen to know whether the trial has been effective in building and promoting trust and transparency between police and the local community in Dandenong.

DOMESTIC ANIMALS AMENDMENT BILL 2015

Second reading

Debate resumed.

Mr PAYNTER (Bass) — I welcome you to the chair, Acting Speaker. I have not seen you in that role before. To finish my contribution to the debate on this bill, my concern is purely that, as a result of the additional costs involved in holding dogs, councils may be reluctant to confiscate dogs from our community for any period of time, knowing they will have to hold them for extended periods. We want restricted dogs off the streets and out of our community. I do not want to put up any barriers to local councils to prevent them from confiscating the dogs. That is my major concern. I ask the government to consider paying compensation to local councils for the cost of holding dogs, if the cost would be a barrier to the councils doing so. I do not want the councils put in a position where they would not confiscate a dog that clearly should be confiscated. I would like to see the bill passed by both houses.

Mr DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh) — It gives me pleasure to rise to speak in the debate on the Domestic Animals Amendment Bill 2015. It is fairly obvious from public discourse and discussion over the past three or four years that, as you, Acting Speaker, said, this area of policy has not kept up with the contemporary situation or the reality of every family that owns a pet. It has become a problem because it has not worked, and we need to fix it. That is what is planned to be done through the introduction of this bill.

The current legislative and policy arrangements see owners separated from their pets, and in a sense the community is exposed to dangerous dogs because councils are perhaps reluctant, after the experience of Monash City Council and other councils, to prosecute a case for declaring a restricted breed dog. It is very expensive, and there is a lot of anguish tied up with the current arrangements. It is easy to see the love each owner has for their pet, but perhaps not the independent assessment by an external party that the dog may not be the most loving dog.

There is a whole range of issues here that are problematic. One of the best sources of advice on how broken the system might be is the RSPCA, which has been quoted in the debate earlier. In June 2013 in a letter to the then Minister for Agriculture and Food Security the RSPCA said:

As we have made clear on several occasions previously, the RSPCA does not support BSL —

breed specific legislation —

Our view, based on the available international scientific evidence, is that any dog may be dangerous and that dogs should not be declared as ‘dangerous’ on the basis of breed. While we recognise that there is a strong genetic component in a dog’s propensity for aggressive behaviour, their trigger point for aggression and capacity to inflict serious injury is not isolated to any specific breed. The RSPCA does not believe that BSL is in any way effective in preventing or reducing dog attacks, or in protecting the public from dangerous dogs.

That is a very powerful message from the organisation established to be the experts in this field. There is also a whole range of problems experienced by local councils, as I mentioned earlier.

Prior to being elected I was on the Monash City Council. We contested, for at least a couple of years, at council level and at officer level the issue of breed specific legislation, specifically in relation to the case of a dog called Kerser. Kerser’s owner took Monash council to court. Monash council did what it assumed was the right thing: it declared that the dog was a restricted breed dog. The council was taken to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal, and it lost. It was taken to the Supreme Court, and it lost. It cost the ratepayers of Monash over \$180 000 for one dog. So while I understand conceptually the case the member for Bass put up about councils possibly feeling disinclined to declare a dog a restricted breed dog because of the holding costs that they will have to cover for the period of the moratorium, I think that pales into insignificance compared to the costs associated with an owner who is adamant that that dog is not a dangerous dog purely because of that assessment of the breed, which may be a flawed assessment. That case was prosecuted all the way to the Supreme Court, costing the council \$180 000. In my view the holding costs are the least of the council’s worries.

To put it into perspective, I suggest this is a very small cohort for a big amount of trouble, in terms of a big amount of financial trouble and anguish. Part of the Glen Eira City Council area is in my electorate. The *Domestic Animal Management Plan 2013–2016* for Glen Eira City Council tells us that out of 12 500 registered dogs only 5 were found to be

restricted breed dogs. In Monash the statistics indicate that of more than 10 000 dogs registered only 15 were restricted breed dogs. But those 15 in a sense are part of the cohort that caused that \$180 000 expense. For Monash council \$180 000 is probably about the budget for the animal management unit in one year, so there is obviously a problem in this space. There is a problem because of an assessment that Parliament made in earlier times about what it means to be a restricted breed dog — an assessment that scientifically does not seem to stack up.

It is a good call by this government — in fact it was an election commitment — to review these arrangements. It is vitally important that the government does that. I believe we all agree with the principle that the community should be protected from dangerous dogs; I do not think that is in question here. We all agree on that, but the balance needs to be right. There needs to be a balance of not only community safety and children's safety but also of the rights of an owner of a pet or a family who lives with the pet, particularly in a day and age where there are a lot of single-person households in which the pet really is a member of the family. I also think there is a right for animals to be judged in terms of their inherent character — and they do have inherent characters — rather than just by the low base of a definition of what breed they may belong to. I believe we agree that the community absolutely deserves to be protected from dangerous dogs, but I do not believe the current arrangements work.

I just want to clear up a misunderstanding. I have forgotten which member it was on the other side, but at least one said that this is a dangerous amendment because councils are going to abrogate their responsibilities. It is very clear that no abrogation of responsibility is allowed in this amendment. Councils will still be obliged to prosecute a case in terms of whether a dog is a restricted breed dog; the only thing they cannot do after this amendment is actually put that dog down for the duration of the moratorium.

The community should rest very easy in relation to this amendment; it does not diminish community safety in any way at all. The response we are proposing in this bill is measured and appropriate. The response is to have a moratorium until September next year while we basically bring the experts around the table to work out what is broken and how it can be fixed. I understand the discussions could include a review of data on dog attacks, breeds of dogs involved in attacks, the nature of the injuries, statistics on compliance with regulations, the science and current method used to identify restricted breed dogs and the responsible dog ownership program. They are all sensible questions to ask, and

things are not really conclusive in terms of where we are at the moment with the current legislative framework.

I am also glad that the committee conducting the investigation will take into account the views of local councils, veterinarians, dog breed experts and animal welfare organisations. I encourage the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources to engage with the councils. I have had some concerns expressed to me by Monash City Council that the department has not engaged with it adequately in the last little while, and I encourage the department to do that. Councils will probably bear the biggest brunt of the current legislative arrangements so it is important that they be engaged in the review.

To give a sense of the anguish that councils face not only in terms of the financial cost but also having to make a decision they are not qualified to make — they do not have the economies of scale to garner the best experts around the world to make decisions about restricted breed dogs — the then mayor of the City of Monash, Geoff Lake, said in 2014:

We face the prospect of hefty fees whenever we declare a dog to be of a restricted breed ...

Yet we have no other choice under Victorian law. The government's shambolic approach to law-making in this area is being paid for by ratepayers across Victoria.

Therefore this is the best way forward. I support the bill entirely and think it is very appropriate that the parliamentary committee investigate this matter. While the amendment does not provide all the answers, it recognises concerns and is seeking parliamentary oversight in relation to those concerns. It should be made clear that this amendment does not restrict the ability of restricted breed dogs to be seized or held by councils, nor does it stop the ability for a dog to be destroyed under other sections of the Domestic Animals Act 1994. Dogs that are dangerous for other reasons can still be destroyed by councils. All the amendment does is seek to solve an issue that has occupied a lot of time and anguish over the last three or four years since the legislation was formed. I commend the bill to the house.

Ms RYAN (Euroa) — It is lovely to see you in the chair, Acting Speaker. It is a pleasure to rise today and speak about the Domestic Animals Amendment Bill 2015. The purpose of the bill is to place a moratorium on the destruction of restricted breed dogs until 30 September 2016. It is the government's intention that a joint investigatory committee will report to Parliament on the current arrangements, benefits and

challenges of legislative provisions for restricted breed dogs.

The agriculture portfolio deals with wide and varied topics, and it says something about the priorities of the government that one of the first issues sought to be dealt with by the Minister for Agriculture is one that does nothing for food producers. Other issues that I would have thought were more important within the agricultural portfolio include funding for wild dogs and the government's cuts to the aerial baiting program this autumn or the wild dog bounty or even reinstating funding to help local government deal with roadside weeds and pests that impact on landholders. They are worthy issues within the agriculture portfolio that I would have thought the government would be seeking to address. I would also have thought it would have been a priority of the minister to protect the rights of food producers who rely on irrigation water. It is deeply concerning to my constituents that Labor is reopening the door to the use of irrigation water, which is currently used for productive purposes by our state's farmers, for other purposes.

It is instructive to outline the history that has given rise to this amendment. The current legislation is designed to protect communities from potential dog attacks. In 2001 Labor established restricted breed legislation, declaring particular breeds restricted in line with commonwealth legislation. In 2010 the then Minister for Agriculture, Joe Helper, introduced further amendments to give councils the power to control and destroy dogs that were considered a danger to the community. At the time the minister said that the intention of the legislation was to address community needs and expectations over serious dog attacks, and responsible dog ownership and education. Therefore it is worth noting that it is Labor's legislation that the government is now seeking to amend.

The legislation introduced in 2010 allowed for a standard to be prescribed to assist with identifying dogs regarded as being of a restricted breed. That standard did exist when the coalition came to government, and although we made some changes to that standard, the substantive part of all of that legislation existed, so Labor is seeking to amend its own legislation. As a result of that standard, if a dog fits within the definition of a restricted breed dog, irrespective of whether or not it is a crossbreed, it is subject to particular conditions. The 2010 bill also established an amnesty whereby owners of restricted breed dogs were given two years to register with their local council, which was by September 2012.

In August 2011 I was working for the then Minister of Agriculture, the member for Murray Plains, and a very tragic situation occurred where Ayen Chol, a four-year-old girl, was mauled to death by a pit bull terrier in St Albans. It was an absolutely tragic case, and I will always remember exactly where I was on that morning when I read the news and realised what had happened. There was a subsequent coroner's investigation into the death of Ayen Chol, and the coroner heard that the dog that attacked her had always been obedient. It had not shown signs of aggression or any indication that it could react like that. I distinctly remember the then Leader of the Opposition and now Premier saying at the time that he would support any measures that the government felt were necessary to reduce the threat of these dogs, in particular pit bulls, in the community. The coalition therefore moved very quickly, following the death of Ayen Chol, and closed the amnesty in September of that year. We gave restricted breed dog owners 30 days to register their dogs with councils and the animals were to be seized and destroyed if they were not registered.

Dogs registered as being of a restricted breed must be kept under very strict conditions. They must be desexed and microchipped, and they must wear a prescribed collar, which from memory is a red and yellow-striped collar. The property where they are housed must have appropriate warning signs, and they must be housed in an enclosure from which they cannot escape. They must also be restrained with a muzzle and on a leash when exercised off the property. Importantly, ownership of a restricted breed dog cannot be transferred.

Following the death of Ayen Chol, the coalition also introduced changes to the Crimes Act 1958 to increase penalties for people whose dogs attack somebody. Owners who are in that situation are now subject to criminal offences not only if their dog kills someone but also if it endangers someone's life. Owners can be jailed for up to 10 years if their dog kills somebody or 5 years if it endangers somebody's life. We also created a new offence for breeding restricted breed dogs, and that was an important move to tighten the law in response to the coroner's recommendations. It is now a criminal offence for any person, whether or not they are the owner, to breed a restricted breed dog.

I do not think there is any dispute on either side of the house about whether pit bulls should be in the community; it is a question of how the ones we have are best managed. This is very difficult legislation, but first and foremost I think it is the responsibility of this house to protect the community. I would be very concerned if the bill were used in any way by the

government and the subsequent committee inquiry to water down those protections that have been put in place. I have consulted with a number of my local councils on this bill, and they have given me feedback which I think is certainly worth noting. They feel the constant review of the legislation has increased the burden for councils and other agencies and their resources, and as a result of the legislation they have now been left in limbo while they await the findings of the parliamentary committee in 18 months.

In particular the Strathbogie Shire Council does not have appropriate facilities for holding animals for 18 months while this inquiry deliberates, which means that it and other councils like it could be forced to fork out for building new facilities at great cost or alternatively to look at commercial boarding kennel options. Local experts have told me that such options would come at great expense to local governments as they would be forced to pay a premium rate to a commercial facility because of the special needs and risks of keeping a dog. Worse still, the change could deter councils from picking up these dogs because they would not want to bear the cost of keeping a dog for 18 months. There are some significant concerns.

In conclusion, as I said earlier, The Nationals will not be opposing this bill, but we will carefully monitor the impacts of this legislation particularly on councils in relation to those concerns I have previously mentioned. I reinforce that I believe the primary motivation for changing any legislation in future and for the parliamentary committee in its findings must be the protection of human life.

Ms KILKENNY (Carrum) — Acting Speaker, I join with others in saying how great it is to see you in the chair today.

I am grateful to be able to speak on the Domestic Animals Amendment Bill 2015. This is another day in Parliament on which another election commitment is being fulfilled by the Andrews Labor government, which is a terrific thing. This is a limited bill. As we have heard from other members, it will stop the destruction of restricted breed dogs while an inquiry is undertaken into the current legislative framework. Many people in the community are clearly opposed to the senseless killing of animals simply because of their physical characteristics or the way they look. As we have heard, this is called restricted breed legislation. It raises a number of ethical issues, but it obviously also raises a number of operational difficulties with people having to make life or death decisions about family pets.

I should state from the outset that our primary goal is community safety and protecting our communities, particularly children, who are often the victims of dog attacks. No-one wants to see any person injured by a dog, and no-one wants to see a repeat of the horrific attack that killed a young child in 2011. It was just awful news. The problem of dog attacks is not new, and time and again we have seen the responses to dog attacks in legislation. Often it will be two pronged. We have seen restrictions placed on dangerous dogs, which are typically dogs that have shown aggressive behaviour. We have also seen restrictions placed on dogs purely because of their breed — that is, restricted breed legislation.

This bill will not have an impact on any of the provisions relating to dangerous dogs, so community safety is still at the forefront. This bill recognises that sometimes we need to look at how things are operating and consider the legislative environment in which they are operating. I know I speak on behalf of many members here and many members of our community when I say that we really value the positive role that companion animals play. Australian households have one of the highest rates of pet ownership in the world; extraordinarily our dog population tips more than 4 million. Pets are part of our families.

On a personal level, my sister-in-law lost her little dog, Honey, last Saturday, and her family has been devastated by that loss. Yesterday we heard from the member for Yuroke, who spoke so fondly about her beautiful Staffordshire cross, Hera. They are family, and they provide wonderful unconditional love to so many of us. Companion animals also provide a unique role in some sectors of our society and in some communities. Obviously we have seeing eye dogs and hearing dogs. I learnt recently firsthand about dogs that are used to assist people with mental health issues and people suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. An organisation known as Righteous Pups Australia helps kids with autism spectrum disorder, and dogs play a very important role in the lives of those kids. Dogs also provide companionship for elderly people who might be alone and quite isolated.

However, there are ugly aspects to pet ownership. One is dog attacks. I should say that I do not necessarily want to discriminate in relation to that. My parents have a cat and — I kid you not — it stalks people in the house — and you do fear for your life sometimes. Also, my husband and his siblings grew up with a pet sheep. This sheep used to enter their house and chase them into rooms, and they would be holed up in a room until the parents came home and got the sheep out of the house. But certainly dog attacks are way too common

and pose a serious community problem and risk, particularly to children, who are often the victims of attacks. When looking at statistics, I noted with alarm that in Victoria almost six people a day are attacked by dogs. More than 2000 people needed hospital treatment in 2008. As I said, unfortunately children make up a large proportion of the victims of such attacks.

We have heard that in 2010 the Domestic Animals Act 1994 was amended to make provision for the registration of restricted breed dogs and for further destruction powers in relation to them. That was implemented through sections 84P(a) and (b) of the act, which permit destruction of a dog solely because it is a restricted breed dog. This bill is very limited and will focus on those sections of the act. It will place a moratorium on the destruction of restricted breed dogs. However, it goes no further than that. A restricted breed dog may still be destroyed under other provisions of the act, and the bill will not change any provisions with regard to dangerous dogs. The moratorium will start on the commencement of the bill and end in September 2016. A joint investigatory committee will report back to Parliament by 30 September 2015.

There are good reasons for why we are doing this. A number of animal welfare agencies have spoken out against restricted breed legislation. Other members have spoken about the RSPCA, as well as the Australian Veterinary Association. Both have expressed serious concerns about breed-specific legislation. One of the most compelling reasons is statistics which indicate that the percentage of all dog bites inflicted by restricted breed dogs is very small.

I can speak from my own experience in this regard. I have been the victim of two dog attacks. During one, I was very little. The dog that attacked me was smaller still; it was a tiny dog. Clearly it was a dog that was just not used to being around children, and I had not been educated to understand the nature of certain dogs and understand that I had to take care. The second dog that attacked me was a very common breed of dog that normally has a very lovely temperament, so neither of those dogs was a restricted breed dog. In many cases attacks are made by dogs other than restricted breed dogs.

I have done a bit of research on this. The Australian Veterinary Association, along with the national veterinary associations of Britain, the United States and Canada, has recognised that breed-specific approaches to dog regulation are not effective as they do not protect the public by reducing dog bite incidents. This is the very purpose of this part of the Domestic Animals Act — to reduce the public risk of dog attacks. If it is

not doing that, then clearly there is an opportunity for us to review the current position, look at the legislative framework in which it is working and refer the matter to a parliamentary committee for it to assess the situation and report back so the government can implement changes which will be effective in reducing dog attacks.

The other issue this raises is that breed is a controversial issue. A number of studies have shown that it is very difficult to identify the restricted breed dogs with any kind of precision. Other studies show that all dogs are capable of being aggressive and showing traits of aggression and a propensity to attack. It is really a matter of our needing to be careful around dogs. It is important to keep in mind that all dogs have the potential to attack. It is not just restricted breed dogs that have this propensity. This was raised by the Australian Companion Animal Council, which argues that breed-specific legislation may also lead to the misconception that other breeds are not dangerous, so dog owners may not appreciate the potential risks posed by their dogs and may fail to manage them responsibly.

I do not want to pre-empt the parliamentary inquiry, but it is clear that many stakeholders believe that breed-specific legislation is not necessarily the solution to preventing or reducing dog attacks in our community. Many stakeholders support a complementary regime which addresses all factors that contribute to this conversation and which looks at things such as the socialisation of dogs, training, education of owners and training children in safe behaviour around dogs.

Under this bill councils will be required to hold a dog for the duration of the moratorium. As others have mentioned, this will pose a cost to councils. So far the cost to councils has been seen in the light of the very lengthy and costly court cases that have taken place under the current provisions. This bill is a practical measure, and I commend it to the house.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Pearson) — I call the Minister for Local Government.

Ms HUTCHINS (Minister for Local Government) — Thank you, Acting Speaker. Congratulations on your role in the hot seat of this house.

I am pleased to rise and speak in support of the Domestic Animals Amendment Bill 2015, yet another fantastic bill the Andrews government has introduced to fulfil its election commitments. Prior to the election we outlined our pledge to hold a parliamentary inquiry into

breed-specific legislation and to make amendments to the principal act to do just that, which is what we are discussing today.

There has been much concern about this in the community. In my short time as the Minister for Local Government I have heard a lot of concern expressed by local governments, primarily around what a dog's breakfast the legislation is and how it is working in practice. These amendments go some way to addressing some of those concerns, but we are taking the very sensible approach of conducting a parliamentary inquiry into this issue so we get the balance right around community safety, supporting our local communities and supporting our local councils in their enforcing of the laws of dealing with restricted breed dogs. We are also ensuring that we have a system that allows councils to actively budget around these issues rather than facing high expenditure in legal fees in trying to fight some of the cases that some of the councils have had to deal with. I will come back to that.

The amendment bill before the house ensures that there is a moratorium on the destruction of restricted breed dogs until such time as the joint parliamentary committee can report on its inquiry. The committee is expected to run the inquiry and report on 30 September 2015. The amendments and the investigation relate specifically to the destruction of a dog based solely on its status as a restricted breed dog. I would like to put on the record exactly what that definition is, because there is still confusion in my community around what a restricted breed dog is and what it is not.

The definition stands for those dogs that appear to be American pit bull terriers, or pit bull terriers as they are quite often known, perro de presa Canarios, dogo Argentinos, Japanese tosas or fila Brasileiros. Within the approved standards American Staffordshire terriers are not considered restricted dogs if the owner has one of the following certificates stating that the dog is an American Staffordshire terrier: a certificate signed by a veterinary practitioner, a pedigree certificate from a body such as the Australian National Kennel Council, a pedigree certificate from a national breed council registered with the Australian National Kennel Council, or a pedigree certificate from the Australian National Kennel Council itself. Owners may keep their restricted breed dogs as long as the dogs were in Victoria before 1 September 2010 and registered as any breed with their council before 30 September 2011.

As members will see from the definitions, this is complex, and it is something we need to better communicate to our communities through the avenues of local government. That is something I hope the

parliamentary inquiry will address. Councils across Victoria have the right to seize unregistered restricted breed dogs. Where dogs are deemed by a council to meet the standard, they are declared restricted breed dogs. Owners have the right to appeal the council's decision through the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal. That is the point at which for the last few years quite a number of councils have been overburdened by having to bear the costs of legal challenges over individual dogs where owners have fought the decision that their dog falls into this restricted breed category.

I note that the City of Monash, for example, was forced to spend well over \$100 000 fighting one case — —

Mr Dimopoulos interjected.

Ms HUTCHINS — \$180 000, sorry. I stand corrected. In that case the dog was classified as a restricted breed dog, and whilst the council was acting according to the legislation, the challenge was eventually lost and the dog was set free.

That is not the only case that councils have had to fight and in the process fork out tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of dollars of ratepayers money. Ratepayers in Cardinia last year forked out \$80 000 to defend a challenge regarding an alleged American pit bull terrier which was later returned to its owner. Since 2011 Hume council has spent more than \$115 000 just on court challenges in this area. I know the Brimbank council has a significant challenge underway. While the costs of that challenge have not been finalised, I am informed unofficially that the cost of that particular case could run to well over \$200 000.

It was never the intent of the legislation that our councils would be caught up in a quagmire of legal action. In fact that is what this amendment is about. We are trying to iron some of that out, and certainly the parliamentary inquiry is about dealing with that issue.

There is another serious factor to look at, and that is the link between the operation of the current legislation and the lowering of the number of dog attacks. I note that an article that appeared in the *Age* only 12 months ago said that between 2011 and 2013 the number of dog attacks in the City of Hume went up despite this legislation being around and despite the definitions of restricted breed dogs. Of course not all dog attacks are related to these breeds. There are plenty of small dogs out there who take a dislike to postmen and people walking past their properties who they will sometimes attack. Often aged dogs, who may not have the senses they once had, become involved in those attacks.

We have got to look at ways of providing safety to our community and not just put the burden on our local councils to fight legal cases. We need to look at solutions that provide real answers. In the same *Age* article from last year, it was found that of the nine councils contacted by the *Age* seven had reported a higher number of dog attacks in their area. I am hoping that the proposed parliamentary inquiry will look at how we can better address this issue, what some of the real solutions are we can provide to help our local communities deal with this and how we can reduce the legal burdens that are put on councils. We want to avoid the situation where a council has to go to court every time it seizes a dangerous dog, as per the definition of the legislation, only to find that although it has stood up for its community and fought hard to take a dangerous dog off the street, it ends up being required by the court to release that dangerous dog.

As the Minister for Agriculture recently said, there are dangerous dogs in the community and other dangerous breeds of dog that are put down although they are known to be safe. We have to get that balance right. We have to get our community's safety right. This amendment provides the best opportunity to provide certainty while ensuring that the community remains safe. I commend the bill to the house.

Ms HALFPENNY (Thomastown) — I rise to speak in support of the Domestic Animals Amendment Bill 2015. This legislation is an attempt to make our community safer with respect to restricted breed dogs and dangerous dogs. We have all heard the reports and in some cases have had personal experience of dog attacks. The former government dabbled with some changes to the Domestic Animals Act 1994 in response to some horrific attacks by dogs, one of which led to the death of a small child. It is important that we have legislation to protect people from animals that are not properly restrained and cared for by their owners, as well as of course dogs that are vicious and out of control.

This amendment has come as a direct response to community concern that the legislation is seen to be uncertain and unfair in its application. In particular, it is all about restricted breeds of dogs. Dogs are being put down if they are a particular breed that is considered to be not acceptable to the community. But in doing that, we need to ask how we determine what sort of dog it is or what breed of dog it is. That is where there has been a lot of confusion. Councils have had to spend a hell of a lot of money, and there has been community outrage at the application of the legislation when dogs that have done nothing have been confiscated and taken to be put down, while, as the Minister for Local Government

said, other dogs, of a non-restricted breed for example, have been left to roam free.

The legislation looks at this issue in a very intelligent way by proposing a moratorium on the putting down of restricted breed dogs until there is a parliamentary inquiry into how best to deal with dangerous dogs and how best to protect Victorians from dog attacks. Some comments by members on the other side reveal a lack of understanding of what this bill is about. In respect of having a moratorium on the putting down of dogs, they seem to think it means there will be dogs, for example, that sit in pounds for endless amounts of time, but in actual fact this amendment is very specific. It is talking about a moratorium on the putting down of any dog that would only be put down because of the nature of its breed.

In respect of dogs that have been collected and put into pounds or lost dogs homes, where the provision allows for the putting down of a dog that an owner does not collect within a statutory time, that provision will still apply. If a dog is deemed to be dangerous, in that it has violently attacked someone, then, again, there are still provisions in the act to put down the dog. This is a very specific amendment, and the moratorium is imposed for those dogs that have been deemed to be put down because of their breed.

Mr Katos — Acting Speaker, I draw your attention to the state of the house.

Quorum formed.

Ms HALFPENNY — As I said, the legislation supports a moratorium, and the proposed parliamentary inquiry will be established to look into the best way to deal with the issue of dangerous breeds of dogs to ensure that the community is protected in a way that does not cost a lot of money in legal expenses and is as straightforward as possible. As I understand from the minister, the inquiry is going to be very open and will hear from people who have been attacked by dogs. It is open to hear from breed experts, organisations such as the RSPCA and individuals. Veterinary associations and other organisations that have an interest in this issue will all have the opportunity to have their say, to put their point of view and to make recommendations for the parliamentary inquiry to consider. Parliamentary inquiries are conducted by committees that are bipartisan in nature with at least the major parties being represented.

I understand the Municipal Association of Victoria also has a considerable interest in this issue because, as I mentioned earlier, councils are the bodies charged with

having to implement this legislation and this has become very difficult and costly for them. There is also community pressure. Last year or the year before members of Parliament received countless emails and pieces of correspondence from people who were concerned about saving a dog named Bobo. We were all given lots of photos of various dogs and there were comparisons of one photo with another. There was talk about even though the dogs in the photos looked similar they were deemed to be different breeds, and it was all very confusing.

I believe the Municipal Association of Victoria is supportive of the proposal in this bill because there is also an issue about council workers, who at the moment often feel harassed and intimidated because they are the ones who are supposed to decide whether a dog is a restricted breed and take action against the owner. They are making a decision that in the end may or may not, once it goes through the court process, the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal process or wherever else, be considered to have been the correct decision even though they have done all they possibly could to try to be fair and open and act in the best possible way.

Legislation with regard to protection of the community from dangerous dogs does not get to the core of the problem, which is about the owners of animals and making sure they are responsible in the sense that they restrain their dogs and ensure that they are not allowed to wander off and attack people, that they are treated in a humane way, they are fed properly, they get the exercise they need and they are not treated in a way that turns them into vicious animals.

This amendment bill is a common-sense piece of legislation, and I am sure we will see that the recommendations of the parliamentary inquiry will be useful and tell us a lot in terms of dealing with this problem into the future.

Ms EDWARDS (Bendigo West) — I am also pleased to make a contribution to the debate on the Domestic Animals Amendment Bill 2015. As we have heard from other members on this side of the house, this can be a very emotive issue at times, particularly when we are referring to dogs that attack family members or even kill young children. It is interesting to note that opposition members are so interested in this amendment bill that there are currently three of them in the house. Obviously they do not care that much about community safety, nor do they care about this bill.

One of the things that has become obvious since the introduction of restricted breed legislation is that at times it is very difficult for animal control officers to

determine exactly what constitutes a restricted breed dog. My opinion is that dogs are a little like humans in that they may look like a particular member of their family but may have a totally different personality, so there are always issues around looks and personality, not just for humans but also for dogs.

We also have issues around the fact that council animal control officers are being forced to seize dogs that may not actually be restricted breed dogs, because as we know there is no DNA test to determine what a restricted breed dog is. Of course many dogs are seized by council officers not because they are restricted breed dogs but because they have breached the Domestic Animals Act 1994 in other ways, such as by killing livestock or attacking people on the street et cetera.

As I said, this is a very emotive topic and there are opinions on both sides around what a restricted breed dog is and how it can be controlled. I think it is really important that this bill go through because referring this matter to a parliamentary committee to inquire into the current legislative framework is important in resolving some of these issues. The bill and the moratorium until 30 September 2016 on the destruction of restricted breed dogs are very important. If anyone in this house has owned a pet and had to have it euthanased, they will understand how traumatic that can be, irrespective of whether that dog is a restricted breed dog or a valued family pet. Last year I had to put down my 17-year-old Maltese Shih tzu who had cancer, and that was extremely traumatic for me and my children despite the fact that they are grown up, because they had grown up with that dog.

As I said, it is important that the parliamentary inquiry go ahead to determine the effectiveness of the current legislative arrangements and also to determine whether further legislation might be required. Councils cannot actually register a restricted breed dog unless the dog was in Victoria before 1 September 2010 and also if it was registered before 30 September 2011, so there are restrictions around that already.

I was referring earlier to the different views that there are around this particular issue. I will refer to some comments that were compiled in an article on ABC News online on 15 August 2012: the peak body representing vets in Australia called on governments to ditch bans on dangerous dog breeds. So there are views around ditching the bans, and there are contrary views as well. The article states:

The Australian Veterinary Association ... which has launched a new strategy to deal with dog bites, says the latest research shows banning particular breeds does nothing to address aggression in dogs, and nothing to increase public safety.

The vets say a focus on registration, education and temperament testing would be more effective.

As we know, responsible dog ownership is absolutely imperative. It is particularly important to educate people in relation to how to be responsible dog owners. The article goes on to state:

But a critic says they are advocating a risky strategy that allows every dog at least one free bite, and that bite could be fatal.

In the past five years or so, each of the Australian states has moved to ban a selection of dog breeds considered to be dangerous.

Among them, the American pit bull terrier and the Japanese tosa.

In each case, the ban followed a ferocious attack, and a brief debate about whether the dog or its owner was to blame.

What breed-specific legislation has not done is decrease the number of dog bites. The reality is that regardless of breed, dogs are capable of biting — we all know that — just as people are capable of fighting regardless of their origin. Two of my children were subject to dog bites when they were quite young. Neither was bitten by a restricted breed dog. One of the dogs was a labrador and the other was an Australian terrier cross. My children were not entirely without blame for that, but nevertheless there is that justification that all dogs have the potential to bite.

In the article, veterinary behaviourist and Australian Veterinary Association (AVA) spokesperson Dr Kersti Seksel is quoted as saying that all dogs have the potential to cause serious harm. She went on to say:

If you're a Great Dane and you bite someone, the sheer size of you is going to make more damage than a Chihuahua will ...

Victims of dog attacks tend to be younger than 10 years of age, and the attacks are not always the dog's fault. Dr Seksel went on to say:

You know if the dog hasn't been fed for 24 hours and someone gives the dog a bone and then tries to take it away from it, then that would be ... some would consider to be perfectly appropriate behaviour.

If you take a bone away from a dog, you are asking for trouble. The article goes on to state:

The vets are proposing an alternative framework to dog breed bans.

And I hope they will make submissions to the parliamentary inquiry. The article continues:

They want to see all dogs identified and registered; a national mandatory reporting system for dog bites; temperament testing when a dog is sold; and a community-wide education

campaign on bites for pet owners, breeders, parents and children.

We all know that owning a dog, or any pet, is extremely good for us, and there have been a lot of studies that show that owning pets can decrease blood pressure and cholesterol. I hope certain members of the opposition own a dog. Dr Seksel said that there have even been studies 'showing that we could save millions of dollars in the annual health budget in Australia if people actually owned pets'. She also said 'dog bites, on the other hand, do cost the health budget a lot of money'. So we should get this issue on the national agenda and get the federal Minister for Health on board with it.

Something really interesting I read in this article is that RSPCA Victoria president Hugh Wirth was once a supporter of banning dangerous dog breeds. The article states:

He advocated for the breeding out of the American pit bull terrier, saying they were 'lethal' and 'time bombs waiting for the right circumstances'.

However, he does not have the view anymore. He said:

'The truth about breed-specific legislation is that it doesn't work, you don't decrease the numbers ...

'In fact you send the breeding of that particular breed of dog underground'.

He says his change of heart was brought about by the latest veterinary and dog behaviour research, which I have just mentioned. Dr Wirth said:

What I believed years ago, when I made those statements ... was the common approach that even the veterinary profession was using ...

Now that this research has been done and it's quite widespread we've discovered that our understanding of dogs and their behaviour was completely wrong.

The article states:

Graeme Smith of Victoria's Lost Dogs Home says the AVA's recommendations are a backward step.

As I said, there are always two sides to this story. Graeme Smith said:

The old system of 'deed not breed' is a system that allows dogs one free bite ...

I believe that referring this matter to a parliamentary committee is the right way to go. I hope this particular amendment will pass the house, because it is important that we get this right.

Debate adjourned on motion of Ms RICHARDSON (Northcote).

Debate adjourned until later this day.

GOVERNOR'S SPEECH

Address-in-reply

Debate resumed from 19 March; motion of Mr RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) for adoption of address-in-reply.

Mr T. BULL (Gippsland East) — It is a pleasure to rise and continue where I left off in the last sitting week in relation to the address-in-reply to the Governor. I was just about to touch on some of the achievements the former government attained in my electorate over its term. One of those was the Bastion Point boat ramp in Mallacoota, which has been built and now officially opened after what was literally decades of discussion and debate. The issue attracted vastly differing opinions in the community — and it still does to this day — but on my three visits to the ramp since it opened in December, it appeared to be very popular and well used. I am advised by some that there are issues that still need to be ironed out, but I am sure that East Gippsland Shire Council will do that. Time will tell of the ramp's economic benefits to the town, but early indications, including what I have heard from local businesspeople and what I have seen on my visits to the area, have been quite positive.

The coalition funded the first stage of the Macalister irrigation district (MID) upgrade. I note that the former Minister for Water, the member for Murray Plains, who was responsible for that upgrade, has just arrived in the chamber. The coalition government also committed to stage 2. I will touch on that a little bit later.

The coalition invested a large amount of funding in roadwork for the region. Under the term of the previous government an enormous amount of work was done on the Princes Highway, the Great Alpine Road, the Omeo Highway and many other roads. This is something I hope to see continue to the same level, because there still remains much more to be done in our region.

The \$1 billion in funding over the next eight years that the incoming government has announced for non-metropolitan roads is a significant reduction on what was spent by the previous government. The government has also announced that it will cut the country roads and bridges program. That program would have assisted shire roads. This announcement has caused and is causing significant concerns in our rural communities. We need to ensure that funding is maintained to continue the great work of the previous government in addressing the state of our roads in rural and regional Victoria.

I touched on the MID. It is at the western end of my electorate, and it also takes in part of the electorate of the new member for Gippsland South. The coalition provided \$16 million in funding for the stage 1 upgrade, with local farmers contributing \$16 million as well. Prior to the election we committed a further \$10 million. This is a project that will require ongoing support so that the system can be modernised, and it is something that I would be very keen for the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water to come and see firsthand, because it is critical to our local economy in the region.

Over the last few sitting weeks we have heard the Minister for Public Transport mention in Parliament some transport initiatives, but the problem with what we have heard to date is that there have been no announcements of funding for transport in Gippsland. In the lead-up to the election, the coalition committed \$178 million to a whole range of rail works to be undertaken in country Victoria. Those works include duplication of a section of the Gippsland rail line, which would certainly improve reliability of service and provide new services in the Latrobe Valley, Sale and Bairnsdale. This is on top of the public transport services introduced by the previous government, including bus services to Orbost and Marlo for the first time and new bus services to Bairnsdale. It would be pleasing if the new Minister for Public Transport adopted the coalition's pre-election commitment to upgrade those V/Line services that we so badly need.

In relation to education, we have two major projects on the drawing board. I am pleased the Minister for Education has agreed to come to visit the Sale Specialist School for my community. I look forward to joining him on that visit. I believe it is imminent, so I am hoping he can take a bipartisan approach to this issue and involve both me and the member for Gippsland South, because there are a number of towns in my electorate that sit within the catchment area of the Sale Specialist School. I thank the minister for his commitment to visit the school. It is absolutely critical for families with kids with special needs in communities like Stratford, Maffra, Heyfield, Boisdale and Briagolong that they have this facility.

Further down the road in Bairnsdale we have the region's biggest secondary college, Bairnsdale Secondary College. The current state of play is that it is half-built. Prior to the 2010 election we had bipartisan support for building works at the college. The coalition built stage 1 at a cost of \$10 million, and prior to the 2014 election we committed to stage 2, which was funded at \$12.5 million. We do not have bipartisan support for stage 2, and that was the basis of my

adjournment matter last night in which I invited and encouraged the Minister for Education to visit the college.

The Gippsland Lakes Ministerial Advisory Committee — and I note that the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water is at the table — oversaw the Gippsland Lakes Environment Fund, which received \$10 million during the term of the previous government. After some discussions with members of the advisory committee in relation to what they required for their ongoing programs, the coalition committed a further \$8 million prior to the election. The Gippsland Lakes are an absolute icon of this state, and the work being done in the areas of education, monitoring and investigation of environmental matters pertaining to the lakes is extremely important. The coalition is very hopeful that in the upcoming budget we might see some funds committed by the new government to ensure that the great work being done by the Gippsland Lakes Ministerial Advisory Committee can continue at a similar capacity and funding level that we committed to.

In the area of sport we have seen major upgrades to facilities in Maffra, Bairnsdale, Lakes Entrance, Omeo and Orbost. A significant amount of work has also been done to develop a signature adventure event in our region, with \$350 000 committed by the East Gippsland Shire Council and a similar amount by the previous state government. We need the new government to commit to that event so that hopefully it can go ahead. One of the projects we also committed to was a new synthetic hockey pitch in Bairnsdale at a cost of \$1 million. It would service not only the Bairnsdale community but also hockey teams in Swan Reach, Maffra, Sale and Orbost, all of which would benefit from such a great facility. I encourage the Minister for Sport to have a look at that project.

In the area of health there are two projects that require support in Gippsland East. The first is the Maffra hospital upgrade, and the first step is to develop a master plan. We committed \$75 000, and we would like to see bipartisan commitment to that upgrade. Also, an additional ambulance night service for Bairnsdale is critical for our region.

Before the election Labor made no commitments to my electorate; we only saw the Labor candidate drift into town two days before polling day. On the basis that she had a holiday house in Lakes Entrance she suggested to the electorate that she was a local, which was quite interesting given that she was a Warragul resident studying in Bendigo. Nevertheless, we would like to

see a little bit of interest, a little bit of love and the odd visit down our way from the current government.

One area of policy I want to comment on is the scrapping of the wild dog bounty. Wild dogs are a massive problem in my area. Communities in Dargo, Swifts Creek, Omeo, Licola Valley, Cann River, Orbost, Bendoc and Bonang are all impacted on by wild dogs, but the wild dog bounty is being scrapped. The bounty resulted in over 1500 dog pelts being handed in by members of the public, which had a significantly positive impact. I want to quote the views of the 2014 Labor candidate for Benambra, Jennifer Podesta, who said that the bounty was an important part of a 'multipronged approach' needed to control wild dogs. I reckon Jennifer got it pretty right, but she was not elected.

Mr Nardella interjected.

Mr T. BULL — I can tell the member for Melton that she did get that right, but unfortunately Labor is going ahead and scrapping that bounty, which is extremely disappointing for the people of my region.

In finishing up, I want to thank a few people who supported me throughout my campaign and did the hard yards with me, in particular my family: my lovely wife, Kim; and my three great kids of whom I am very proud, Daniel, Lachlan and Nikita — they are the loves of my life. I also thank my five older brothers and my older sister and of course my wonderful mother, who is a fantastic lady. I very much look forward to serving the people of Gippsland East to the best of my ability in the 58th Parliament.

Mr CARROLL (Niddrie) — It is my pleasure and honour to be in the house today to make my contribution in the address-in-reply debate, and I would like to dedicate this speech to dealing with some of the issues that have been most pertinent in my time in this place and those that will continue to be significant into the future. I am proud, and it is a privilege, to serve as the Parliamentary Secretary for Justice in the most diverse and talented team of any government in Australia. I acknowledge that we have 22 ministers, of whom 9 are female, and that is an excellent start to one of the Andrews Labor government reforms, which was outlined at the last state party conference, of putting equality on the table. It is an important step for the future.

I came to this place in 2012 after a by-election in Niddrie, replacing the Honourable Rob Hulls, a former Attorney-General. It was a by-election that the coalition did not contest, although the electorate was a marginal

seat, such was the arrogance of those opposite and the coalition's apathy toward the state of Victoria. I do not want to claim credit for the downfall of the former member for Hawthorn, Mr Baillieu. I think that can partly go to the former member for Frankston, but the decision not to contest the by-election in the early years of the government speaks for itself. It was my privilege to follow in the footsteps of the previous Attorney-General and become the state member for Niddrie.

Let us look at the fantastic vision for our future laid out by Premier Andrews and his team. First and foremost we are going to become the education state with an unrelenting focus on building the education institutions of the 21st century. We are also going to fix the 50 worst rail level crossings. The electorate of Niddrie returned me with an increased margin, and I am very proud of that. Now as Parliamentary Secretary for Justice, it is a privilege to be working with the Minister for Emergency Services, the Minister for Police and the Attorney-General, and I also acknowledge the Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing, who is at the table. I was privileged to be on the Law Reform Committee during the last Parliament, a committee which did a groundbreaking inquiry into crystal methamphetamine, the drug known as ice. The then Leader of the Opposition, now Premier Andrews, led the debate on crystal methamphetamine and, as he committed to doing when opposition, has set up a task force within the first 100 days in office and laid out a blueprint for how we can tackle this scourge in our community.

As many members would also be aware, there was an electoral redistribution for the state of Victoria in 2012. As with many other members, my electorate changed substantially. I was lucky to gain the suburbs of Aberfeldie and Keilor, and I have since been engaging with those communities. It has been a growing experience, and I look forward to expanding and engaging with the wonderful people in those suburbs well into the future.

Something I have long recognised in my electorate, since riding the Kastoria 475 bus to St Bernard's College as a teenager, is that public transport will need to continually grow to accommodate a growing state. My suburb contains the 59 tram and several bus routes, which I believe can always be fine-tuned to get the best outcomes for commuters in the local community. It is interesting that during the last election campaign, and before that, the then Napthine government promised an airport rail link. It was going to run right through my electorate. It was to go through Airport West, Keilor Park and East Keilor, but not one person in the community was consulted. It was to run through their

backyards, but the coalition government was so keen to promote that rail link that it had not done one ounce of consultation. It had even posted advertisements about it at Southern Cross station, but not one council, whether it be the City of Moonee Valley or the City of Hume, was consulted about the airport rail link. That was one of the biggest hoaxes I have ever seen. The Andrews government today, through the Minister for Public Transport, has committed to investing in the Melbourne Metro rail project, which will double the capacity of the city loop and improve our rail network.

One of the biggest issues in my electorate is the Buckley Street level crossing in Essendon. The Premier has come out and met with me and my local council and is very keen to ensure that the level crossing is grade separated so that we can have a 21st century outcome for local commuters and ensure that there will be more trains, that travel will be safer, with less congestion, and that we can run more buses.

On the subject of buses, I congratulate the Minister for Public Transport for, just this week, stopping the proposal by Transdev, which was signed under the previous government, to cancel the 903 SmartBus which runs up and down Buckley Street, Essendon. It is one of the most popular bus routes in my electorate, and it was going to be chopped in half, with potentially a 37 per cent cut in services. We need to be investing in buses. In relation to cost-benefit ratios, for every \$1 invested in a bus network, \$3.50 comes back to the community. Buses are something we need to invest in, and they are an important aspect of mobility in our public transport system. I am very happy to hear the news from the public transport minister that those cuts planned under the previous government will not proceed.

In my inaugural speech after my election to Parliament in 2012 I talked about fixing Essendon Keilor College. I have spoken many times in this place about Essendon Keilor College. In 2011 a freedom of information application showed, as highlighted in the *Herald Sun*, that Essendon Keilor College was the state's most run-down school, with 1341 items needing attention. In fact the former Minister for Education said of the school:

... the conditions at that school are disgusting, they are not safe for teachers, they are not good for those students.

Over four years the former government delivered four budgets, but there was not one red cent for Essendon Keilor College. That was four strikes and four budgets without funds for this wonderful school. In contrast, Premier Andrews and the Deputy Premier, who is the Minister for Education, have committed to providing

\$10 million to this school in this term of government, and that is something I am very proud of. The school has been around for 100 years, and it is a school in which we need to invest; unfortunately it is a school that has been neglected for far too long. The previous education minister visited this school, and it was reported in the press that he had called it disgusting and unsafe, but he did not bother to put one red cent into it. We will deliver on that promise. I am looking forward to meeting with David Adamson, the principal, to build on those plans. Unlike the education legacy of the previous government, under this government Victoria will become the education state.

Another important component is TAFE, which was a resounding issue during the last Parliament. Before I became the member for Niddrie we had a former TAFE site in Avondale Heights that had been closed for several years. On several occasions I raised that issue with the former Minister for Planning, now Leader of the Opposition, to get action on the site. The former minister delivered a lot of speeches on it and issued a lot of press releases, but we never did see any action. I am pleased that we are now finally seeing some action. We have got a new Minister for Planning, and finally we are getting some resolution about this former TAFE site, which is very important.

There is a dangerous intersection at Newman Street and Keilor Road. I am pleased with the discussions I have had so far with the new Minister for Roads and Road Safety, as well as with VicRoads, to fix this important and dangerous bottleneck. I did a survey and presented a petition during the last Parliament which had over 1000 responses. An off-ramp from the Tullamarine Freeway leading into East Keilor, with several on-ramps as well, makes it a very dangerous spot. The previous minister was fully aware of it. To his credit the previous minister communicated with me about it and started some work, but we need to finish it off and make sure that it is delivered.

I will also touch briefly on east–west link. I know this has been the topic of today, and we should highlight that what the previous government released was east–west link stage 1. It was the business case that the public was meant to accept, but it was nothing more than a 3000-word high school essay. You need only look at the commentary in the media to see that the previous government failed to take the community with it on the east–west link. The Treasurer has cleaned up the mess made by the former Treasurer, the member for Malvern, and we should be very grateful that we are finally investing in public transport. As Tony Abbott said, this government has a mandate, and we are now getting on with the job and taking a very important step

forward. In August 2013 the *Age* ran a headline ‘Engineer slams “dodgy model” for tunnel’. In July it had ‘There seems to be some madness in link methodology’. It is clear that the public relations exercise was a failure. An article from August 2013 headed ‘East–west link of little benefit, claims council in marginal seat’ shows that even Glen Eira City Council, headed by Liberal mayor Jamie Hyams, was opposed to the project.

Before I finish I want to take a minute to thank my dedicated staff and volunteers. Brody Viney, formerly of my office, was instrumental in the role of campaign manager. I thank Jackie Foley, my office manager. Deborah Wu was a constant, ongoing help in the campaign while continuing to juggle her normal duties. Her help was invaluable. I also thank the volunteers on the campaign, including Bruce Birt, Bassel Tallal, Annette Death, Maria Cardillo, Pierce Tyson, Keenan Gatens, Ashlea Gilmore and Adrian Grossi. The early morning weekend doorknocks and evening phone calls will not be happening again for quite some time. I thank them for their hard work on the campaign trail, which was so appreciated. The result will speak for itself over the next four years of productive, stable government.

I would also like to thank my parents and acknowledge my partner, Fiona Rothville, and our adorable little schnauzer, Tess, who came in very handy during the puppy farm debate. Whenever I have had a photo of myself and Tess on Facebook the response has been tremendous. I congratulate the Andrews government — it is going to be a successful and stable four years. It is a privilege to have returned, and I very much look forward to delivering on all our election promises.

Mr WALSH (Murray Plains) — I rise to deliver my contribution to the address-in-reply as the first member for Murray Plains and as the Leader of The Nationals. The new seat of Murray Plains, created in the redistribution, is very different to the seat of Swan Hill I previously represented. I put on the record my gratitude to the former member for Rodney, Paul Weller, who assisted me in being elected as the member for Murray Plains, particularly in the part of the electorate that used to be in his seat. I very much appreciate Paul’s support and help, particularly as the chair of my campaign committee for last year’s election.

This morning I read the Governor’s speech, just to refresh my memory. It is more interesting for what is not in it than what is. One of the things the now Premier talked about continually during the campaign was governing for all Victorians. Looking at what the government is doing, it is clearly not governing for all Victorians, just for those who live in Melbourne and to

a lesser extent those who live in the major regional cities. In terms of my electorate of Murray Plains, the previous government set money aside in the forward estimates for the Echuca bridge. There is no commitment from this government to that major piece of infrastructure which is not just about Echuca but about the transport network for wider Victoria.

The Governor's speech sets out the need for a world-class road network. Something that is not among the commitments of the Labor government is the country roads and bridges program. You would be well aware, Acting Speaker, from visiting local government areas in country Victoria that this was the program they most appreciated. Through it 40 councils received \$1 million each year for four years to help them bridge their infrastructure gap. Furthermore, the Local Government Infrastructure Fund, out of the Regional Growth Fund, delivered money to nearly every country town. Local government was able to use that money to access further grants, whether from the Regional Growth Fund or the sport and recreation funds that were available. We have seen netball courts, football change sheds and country halls upgraded with everything from kitchens to air conditioners. We saw something go into nearly every country town across Victoria thanks to those funds. I am concerned we will not see that sort of money going into our country communities in the future under the Regional Infrastructure Fund introduced by this government.

The Governor's speech sets out in the government's agenda the aim to make Victoria an education state.

Mr Richardson — Hear, hear!

Mr WALSH — The goal expressed in the Governor's speech is to make Victoria the education state, strengthening our economy and the skills of our people. There was an interjection from the other side of the house — the member for Mordialloc needs to understand that there is a lot more to Victoria than just Melbourne. There is no investment in education outside Melbourne. In the seat of Murray Plains the government tried to take classrooms away from Kyabram P-12 College — that is how much it cares about country Victoria. There is a portable at Kyabram P-12 College that serves as the year 9 classroom and one of the first actions of this government was going to be to take it away. Our government made a commitment of \$10 million to upgrade that school, and instead of honouring that this mob is going to take away a classroom.

When Labor was last in power there was discussion about merging three schools in Echuca — Echuca

South Primary School, Echuca West Primary School and the specialist school. We gave them the money for the detailed design of that merger. We allocated \$25 million in the forward estimates to build that school. This mob is going to do nothing.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr WALSH — Again there are interjections from the other side. If you look at the money Labor wasted in compensation for the east-west link, that would do the Kyabram school, the Echuca schools and all the schools we need to fix across country Victoria.

Honourable members interjecting.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Crisp) — Order! The member for Murray Plains without assistance.

Mr WALSH — The money Labor has poured down the drain in compensation for the east-west link would have funded all the schools our country members will stand up and talk about during the address-in-reply debate. The government is prepared to pour money down the drain.

When it comes to my former portfolio areas of agriculture and water, this Melbourne-based Labor government excels in its lack of action. The most recent example — —

Mr Foley interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Crisp) — Order! The member for Murray Plains, without assistance.

Mr WALSH — As you would be well aware, Acting Speaker, there was a great project to get an almond centre of excellence built in Sunraysia. Through the inaction of the Labor government, that centre of excellence has now gone to South Australia. The almond industry is our fastest growing export industry, and something like 70 per cent of the industry is based in Victoria, but we will now rely on South Australia for research on that industry.

I know the member for Gippsland East has already touched on wild dog control. Again there was a lot of work done to organise an integrated program and get the community involved — with community baiting, departmental baiting, departmental trapping, aerial baiting and the wild dog bounty. That bounty of \$100 a head encouraged hunters to hunt wild dogs. The now Minister for Agriculture wrote back to a farmer saying that hunting was an important part of the strategy to control wild dogs, but what did she do? She took away the bounty. That sort of decision-making defies logic.

Supposedly that money will go into aerial baiting, but as far as I am aware there will be no aerial baiting program this autumn. There are two windows for the most effective aerial baiting programs to run — in autumn and in spring — and we have missed the autumn session because the government just does not care about this issue.

The thing to bear in mind is that controlling wild dogs is not just important from a farming and domesticated animals point of view. They have a huge impact on the environment. They are higher predators that devastate many of our small marsupials, particularly around the high country. We saw a lot of crocodile tears on the other side of the house during the debate on the National Parks Amendment (Prohibiting Cattle Grazing) Bill 2015, but not much talk about pest control programs to get rid of wild dogs and stop the predation of our small marsupials and no discussion about deer, brumbies, goats or wild pigs in that part of Victoria.

In the minute I have left, I put on the public record that one of the great commitments we took to the election was for the country passenger rail upgrade program. All country communities would have received some benefit from the program. In my electorate in particular many people use the train from Echuca through Bendigo and on to Melbourne and the train from Swan Hill through Kerang to Bendigo and on to Melbourne. They deserve a better service than they are getting now. Under our government they would have had an improved service into the future. It would have been a good outcome for all the communities who would have been beneficiaries of that particular upgrade to rail services, let alone the other parts of Victoria.

The role of the opposition in keeping the government to account is sometimes hard work, but not with the number of stuff-ups and things that are going wrong and the money that is being poured down that gurgling drain as a result of poor decisions by this Melbourne-based Labor government — for example, the desalination plant, the myki project and the north-south pipeline. The Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water, who is at the table, will be building the south-north pipeline to take desalination water to recreational lakes in northern Victoria. That defies logic, and the minister has not yet identified which lakes they will be. The people of the Murray Valley want to see a government that governs for all Victoria and does something in northern Victoria.

Ms NEVILLE (Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water) — I am pleased to have an opportunity to contribute to the address-in-reply debate.

I start by thanking the community of Bellarine, a community I love very much. I love working with, supporting and being an advocate for this community. About this time last year, after the redistribution, the seat was notionally a Liberal seat — I think it was minus 2.5 per cent — so I was slightly concerned that it would be a difficult fight to win the seat. But I am here today, and I feel privileged to have the opportunity to represent the community for another four years.

In my tension, concern and stress last year, I underestimated how much the former government would continue to let down the communities of Bellarine and Geelong. In that time the coalition oversaw the closure of the Alcoa smelter, providing no support for the workers who were retrenched. It had no jobs plan. It only invested \$4 million in the Geelong regional investment fund. Unbelievably, it decided that the right thing for my community was to basically close two police stations and see Bellarine police rostered into Geelong. I will come back to that in a moment because the hypocrisy of those opposite is gobsmacking.

Labor made some very significant announcements in relation to Geelong. They were all about driving the economy of Geelong and ensuring that Geelong is well placed to rebuild and provide real job opportunities to reinvigorate the local economy. We said the state government should use the levers it has to drive economic growth in a community that has been hit hard by job losses. We committed to the rebuilding of the Geelong Performing Arts Centre (GPAC), to the next stage of Simonds Stadium, to the Drysdale bypass and to do the planning for the next stage of the ring-road around Geelong to the Bellarine Peninsula.

We also committed to enhancing regional development, which had been basically decimated by those opposite, so it can play a much more significant role in driving economic development and bringing business opportunities to Geelong. We committed additional funding for the Geelong regional infrastructure fund. We committed to ManuFutures, which is a partnership with Deakin University. Again, that is all about trying to identify and target opportunities for modern manufacturing. Geelong is very well placed for that. We have the skills base and the research capacity and knowledge to be able to drive modern manufacturing and jobs in that area. In that space, the development of renewable energy provides some real opportunities for jobs in Geelong as well.

We committed to reinstating funding to TAFE, which is really a component of ensuring that Geelong has the skills to move forward and meet the opportunities that

the government, working with the private sector, can hopefully provide. We need to ensure that we have the skilled workforce needed by any new employers in the area. We committed to the safe harbour project in Portarlinton, which is all about driving the aquaculture industry. We already have incredible capacity around the mussel industry down there. We also have a developing scallop industry which has a lot of investment going into it. As well as that, we have an oyster industry. In aquaculture we also have an opportunity to look forward to processing opportunities. There are a lot of jobs in that space and there is a great opportunity for the Bellarine Peninsula and for Geelong.

Sitting under all those really major projects I have talked about is the government's commitment to local content and local procurement on the big projects such as GPAC, the Drysdale bypass and Simonds Stadium. These projects will also require 25 per cent apprenticeships. This is about building our future workforce and ensuring that where government is investing substantial money we are getting substantial return in jobs and our economy going forward.

The government also backed in the community of Bellarine. Going back to the issue of the police station, the former government decided to make Bellarine less safe as a community. It said, 'Let's take out police resourcing. Let's close three stations'. It decided to roster something like 340 hours of police time every week into Geelong, leaving the community of Bellarine vulnerable. This government has committed to restoring those services, and it is doing that and will do that. That will be announced very soon. The hypocrisy of those opposite is reflected in Liberal Party members saying that the government needs to provide police in Bellarine. The only reason we have an issue and Labor had to make an election commitment was the Liberal Party took out those police services, and Liberal Party members defended it every step of the way.

We also had the terrible situation of Ann Nichol House. Members of the previous government not only backed in Bellarine Community Health but they lied to the community and facilitated a sale of Crown land which they refused to tell the community about or consult with the community on. Labor committed to review Bellarine Community Health. We have announced that review and that review is underway.

Labor also committed to the next stage of the schools rollout. I am pretty sure not one school in Bellarine was funded under the previous government. We have committed to Drysdale Primary School, St Ignatius

College, the Drysdale campus of Bellarine Secondary College and Geelong High School.

We have committed to a whole range of investments in sporting infrastructure. The Leopold Football Netball Club received a grant from the former federal government but unfortunately had that grant removed by the current federal government. We have backed in that football and netball club and we will be investing in it. We committed to help extend the Ocean Grove Surf Life Saving Club, the club in the state that has the most local residents as members. It is a growing club, with huge numbers of young people as members, on one of Victoria's most popular beaches.

We are committed to building the Drysdale sporting hub, which is a \$7 million project. We have committed half of that money. We have committed money for the Barwon Heads Football & Netball Club, the Barwon Heads Cricket Club and the next stage of the Queenscliff sporting precinct, which will deliver cricket and netball facilities. We also committed to the next stage of the Leopold hub, which will provide spaces for young people and older people and I hope might provide the future home for the neighbourhood house that has been established in Leopold.

As I said, Labor committed to the Drysdale bypass, which will include bike paths. As part of that we also committed to some investment in High Street, the main street through Drysdale, which has enormous traffic congestion. While we build the bypass we need to provide some relief through the town and assist people in Drysdale and Clifton Springs as well as those in Portarlinton and St Leonards.

I will touch very briefly on my portfolio areas. Environment, climate change and water are back on the agenda. That was Labor's commitment: that climate change is real, the environment matters and we need to continue to support communities on security of water. That is the base of our election platform on environment, climate change and water. From initiatives like reviewing the Office of Living Victoria, we want to make sure we have integrity and transparency in water. We want to make sure that we are supporting regional and metropolitan communities in terms of security of water.

In the environment we want to make sure that we are protecting our coastal and marine environments. We want to pull out the biodiversity strategy that those opposite dumped when they came to government. We want to make sure that we have cattle out of the high country, and that is what we have been doing in Parliament this week. Again, the bottom line is that the

environment matters. We care about it and we will be moving. We will not just overturn the effects on the environment of the backward steps taken by those opposite but will take enormous steps forward to make sure that Victoria is once again a leader in environment and climate change.

Finally, I want to thank a number of people who put up with me during the last year of stress. Not only was I dealing with the election but my son was doing his Victorian certificate of education (VCE). There were moments last year when I felt a high level of stress. I want to thank all my staff who dealt very well with that: Sue Spence, Denise Spark, Kim Walker and Martelle Love, who contributed enormously through that process. I want to thank Hamish Park, who again volunteered his time to assist in the election process. I want to thank Ben McMullen, Marcus Feaver and all the Labor Party members and community members who volunteered, doorknocked and made phone calls to the local community.

I thank local councillors Lindsay Ellis and Jan Farrell, and my parliamentary colleagues in Richard Marles; the Minister for Tourism and Major Events; Ian Trezise; and the member for Geelong. I thank Adrian Bryant from the Ocean Grove fire station; Sue Copeland, one of our local paramedics; and Dallas Gill. I felt very privileged to be able to get to know them very well and become quite close friends with a number of paramedics and firefighters as well as our nurses and teachers. I also thank Sam, my son, for putting up with my not being as great a support during his VCE year as I may have been able to be if it had not been an election year. I love him immensely.

Finally, I thank my local community, Ann Nichol and Lindsay Noss and all the people out there who worked side by side with me to make sure that we elected a fair government whose members care about regional Victoria and Bellarine.

Mr M. O'BRIEN (Malvern) — First, I thank the people of Malvern for sending me to this place as their representative for the third time. The Malvern electorate is a wonderful electorate. It is a pleasure and honour to represent the people of the electorate. When we look back over the past four years, it was a pleasure to have been able to have delivered significantly for the electorate because the people of the electorate had been duded by Labor over the previous 11 years. It is a great concern that Labor will dud them again, because that is what Labor does. Labor funds projects based on political margins, not merit. We on this side know that. Over 11 years too many schoolkids in Malvern had to

suffer through having inadequate facilities because Labor governments play politics with our kids' futures.

I was delighted during my time as a minister and as Treasurer to be able to ensure that the students of Malvern were given a fair go. When you look at some of the investments we were able to put in, it is quite impressive. It was only a start, but we made significant investments in Malvern Primary School, Lloyd Street Primary School and others. Finally they were able to get some semblance — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr M. O'BRIEN — These oncers on the backbench should do more listening and less talking; they might learn something.

Honourable members interjecting.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Crisp) — Order! The member for Malvern will proceed without assistance. The member for Malvern should know that it is unparliamentary to accept interjections.

Mr M. O'BRIEN — An important question remains. The coalition made significant commitments to other schools in the Malvern electorate in the lead-up to the last election, and significant amounts of money were set aside by the former government to fund these absolutely necessary works in Malvern. A commitment of \$2.8 million was made to Armadale Primary School for capital works, \$575 000 was committed to Malvern Central School for refurbishments and \$500 000 was committed to Malvern Valley Primary School for new double-storey portable classrooms. The question is: will this money, which had been committed and set aside to fund these absolutely essential upgrades for the students of Malvern, be honoured by this Andrews government? Or will we once again see the Labor government playing politics with our kids' futures? I suspect we will find out on 5 May. I am very pleased to have delivered for the students and the people of my electorate.

Malvern residents now benefit from having protective services officers (PSOs) on many of their train stations. This project was opposed by the Labor Party. The Labor Party has no respect for our police or PSOs. In fact, the now acting Premier — what an appropriate term that is — called them 'plastic police'! That is the level of respect the Labor Party has for protective services officers who put their own safety at risk to keep us safe.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr M. O'BRIEN — To have these little barking Chihuahuas on the backbench of the Labor Party sitting here in a building protected by the very PSOs they denigrate does nothing but discredit the party.

I was very pleased as Treasurer and member for Malvern to have delivered the full funding for the removal of the notorious Burke Road level crossing in Glen Iris. This has been in the RACV's top five worst traffic snarls in Melbourne in every one of its surveys. I am delighted that, having delivered the full funding for this removal, not even the incompetence of the Labor government is going to stop it from going ahead, because it was already out to tender at the time of the election. This appears to be one contract that Labor will not rip up. For that maybe we should be thankful.

This level crossing removal will make an enormous difference to the quality of life of not just the people of Malvern, Burwood and Hawthorn but also for all of those people who use that busy thoroughfare of Burke Road and all of those people who access the Monash Freeway. That is going to be a great and lasting achievement for the people of Malvern from the Napthine government. I am very proud to have delivered that.

I wish to quickly talk about some other matters. The coalition left office. We obviously regret leaving office, but we did so with Victoria having the strongest finances of any state in this country. We had a budget surplus of over \$1.1 billion in 2014 —

Honourable members interjecting.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Crisp) — Order! The member should be allowed to continue without assistance from the government.

Mr M. O'BRIEN — We had a budget surplus of \$1.1 billion in 2014–15, rising to \$3 billion by 2017–18. We were the only government in the country with a budget in surplus and a stable AAA credit rating from both major ratings agencies. That is the mark of the financial management of a coalition government. We had declining debt: 5.9 per cent debt to gross state product in 2014–15, falling to just 4.5 per cent in 2017–18.

We created 136 900 new jobs during our time in office. We cut payroll tax and we cut WorkCover premiums not once but twice. We abolished stamp duty on life insurance products. We reformed the fire services levy — something members opposite could not do over 11 years. It was a recommendation of the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission. Members opposite squibbed it, but we saw it through.

We introduced free CBD and Docklands tram travel. We reduced the cost of travel between zones 1 and 2 by capping fares at zone 1 levels. We doubled energy concessions from six months of the year to year round. We cut \$100 off the water bills annually of Melbourne families, and we made significant reductions to country water costs as well.

The desalination plant — the Labor Party's great legacy, that great noose around the neck of Victorians, that millstone, that \$1.8 million that Victorians are paying every day for 27 years whether they use the water or not — will be a lasting legacy of the incompetence of the previous Labor government.

Honourable members interjecting.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Crisp) — Order! The member for Mordialloc!

Mr M. O'BRIEN — Let me conclude this contribution by talking about infrastructure, because infrastructure is vital. We are a growing state. We have 109 000 extra people every year. Of course what Labor governments do is spend money. They waste money, and they do not build things. We were absolutely right to pursue a program of strong infrastructure reform, by building projects like the east–west link, which this government has now spent between \$800 million and \$900 million to rip up. That is \$800 million to \$900 million wasted to deliver nothing. There will no longer be 7000 jobs created, and \$800 million to \$900 million will be torn up and thrown down the toilet, all so that Victorian drivers can stay stuck in traffic.

When history is written this petulant, petty, student-political playing of the Labor government which is ripping up contracts and paying compensation for things which are not done will be the biggest disgrace in recent Victorian history. It is absolutely disgusting. When east–west link is built — and mark my words, it will be built one day, and it will cost a lot more than the great deal we obtained for Victorians — the people of Victoria will look back at Labor government members and tell them to hang their heads in shame for what they have done to this state.

As shadow Treasurer I will spend every waking moment trying to keep these people honest — and it will be a full-time job because we all know that Labor cannot manage money or major projects. Maybe that is why they do not have any major projects, because they know they cannot manage them. The true, ugly face of Labor is now being seen, and Victorians will have their say on this rabble at the next election in 2018. I remain

proud to be a member of the Liberal Party, in coalition with our Nationals friends, who will give Victorians a far better alternative and a return to better government.

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) — I take great pleasure in joining the debate on the address-in-reply to the Governor's speech. What a conceited, self-serving, self-indulgent rant this house was just subjected to by the now failed, one-term Treasurer. The member for Malvern had the temerity and bad manners to accuse the new members on the back bench of being 'oncers'. The only oncer in this chamber is the member who was just on his feet. He was claiming to have built things, but this was the Treasurer who made only one visit to the most populated and fastest growing electorate in the state, the electorate of Yan Yean that I have the privilege of representing.

The electoral population of Yan Yean in the time I have represented it has increased from 32 500 in 2002 to 70 000 at the time of the last election, so what did the Liberal Party do, leading into the 2010 election? What did it propose for the fastest growing electorate in the state and some of the fastest growing postcodes in the country? It made not one election commitment or promise of capital expenditure, and it delivered on that non-commitment in spades. That was one promise to the electorate that it kept.

Then finally, when the redistribution happened, coalition members said, 'Warning, Will Robinson. We have made a mistake! We actually need these people in Yan Yean now. It is notionally a Liberal seat. Jeepers creepers, what have we done over the last three and a half years? Quick! Time is running out. Let's look at the Dick Tracey watch! What can we do in the last year?'.

So on the Monday before the final budget was delivered by the member for Malvern — that one-time Treasurer — he came out to the Yan Yean electorate. I received a call from Channel 7 reporter Brendan Donohoe saying, 'Danielle, we've heard that the Treasurer is in the Yan Yean electorate'. I said, 'Goodness me, coming all the way from leafy Malvern, he has found his way up Plenty Road to Mernda'. I thought to myself, 'Thank goodness'.

The former government had had three years to do something to alleviate the congestion which had doubled commute times on their watch. In their four years the time to drive to the city from Doreen increased from an hour to up to 2 hours and sometimes even more — a distance of only 30 kilometres, the distance from Warnambool to Port Fairy. Sadly, in the month before that budget there had been a tragic

accident on Yan Yean Road in which a much-loved mother, wife and grandmother from Diamond Creek lost her life. I thought, 'Thank goodness that her death will not be in vain and this Treasurer is finally going to do something and fund a road in the Yan Yean electorate'. I was relieved. Even though it was the other side of politics and I was at risk of losing my seat because it was notionally a Liberal seat, I thought, 'This community deserves to have some money spent on it'.

But was the government paying any attention to that tragic death on Yan Yean Road? No. The Sunday before the budget what was the big announcement? Was it about the duplication of Plenty Road? Was it about the duplication of Yan Yean Road? Was it about the duplication of Bridge Inn Road? Was it about the interchange between the Hume Freeway and O'Herns Road? No, it was 500 metres of bitumen resealing in Plenty Road. The former Treasurer was in a suit on a Saturday in football season in Melbourne in the northern suburbs — did he look out of place or what! — with two other empty vessels dressed in suits. One of them was the parachuted Liberal candidate for Yan Yean, who they said was born and bred in the north, but it was nowhere near Yan Yean. He still lived at home with mum and dad and still does. He was hand-picked by the Leader of the Opposition, then the Minister for Planning in the other place. He was their star candidate. Also present was one of the members of Northern Metropolitan Region in the other place, Mr Ondarchie.

They were three stiff in suits — three empty vessels — on the side of the road in Mernda, and the tradies were tooting as they were going past because they thought it would be one of the road projects I have just named. They thought, 'Jeepers, it must be something really important!'. But it was 500 metres of bitumen resurfacing. I have news for that oncer of a Treasurer, the member for Malvern, from whom we just heard a self-indulgent and self-serving rant — and is it any wonder that they did not choose him to be the leader. The news is that it is actually the business of government every single day to do things like maintaining and resurfacing roads and filling in potholes. It is not appropriate for a statewide announcement.

The former Treasurer got the whole press gallery out to announce 500 metres of bitumen resurfacing. That is one of the fundamental reasons opposition members are not sitting on the government benches today — because they wanted to be congratulated for doing the job of government. They did not understand that their job was not to self-congratulate and talk about the things they were building when they were not building anything.

The emperor had no clothes, the community recognised that fact, and it rejected this lot. It is now up to the Labor government, led by the Premier, to undo the damage of those four years.

Unlike the Liberals in 2010, who made no commitments to this vastly growing electorate, we have made commitments, as we did in 2010 and in 2014, and we will deliver on absolutely every single one of those commitments, including the extension of rail to the fast-growing Mernda postcode, just as we delivered the funding to extend the rail line to South Morang. We ensured that it was designed appropriately so that a future extension could occur to Mernda. We will not do it in 2032, which was the timetable of the now opposition until the death knell of election eve. Then former government members tried to make the community believe that they did care but only when their political skins depended on it.

Members opposite did not care, otherwise they would have made that commitment a long time ago. The first Premier the coalition government had, the former member for Hawthorn, Mr Baillieu — a nice bloke — did not set foot in that electorate once. Then the member for South-West Coast became the Premier. He only set foot in the Yan Yean electorate when the pendulum revealed that it was notionally a Liberal seat and the political skins of coalition members depended upon it.

I am glad the Leader of the Opposition has just walked into the chamber. He has now walked out again — what a shame. I am proud to say that in 2002 I defeated him when he first ran for Parliament in his attempt to represent the electorate of Yan Yean in this august chamber. I saved Victoria from him being the Premier in a past Parliament. Later he was elected to the Legislative Council as a member for Northern Metropolitan Region, which includes the Yan Yean electorate. As Minister for Planning he sat around the cabinet table and was a part of the former government's indolence and ignorance of the needs of my community. So I am not surprised that he walked into the chamber and then walked out, because he is hanging his head in shame.

The Labor government will deliver the Mernda rail extension. We will deliver the O'Herns Road and Hume Freeway interchange, which will relieve congestion and support jobs development in the Epping North precinct opposite the Melbourne Wholesale Fruit and Vegetable Market. We will duplicate Yan Yean Road; we will take action. We will not have members of Parliament, like myself, tabling petitions with signatures from 6000 members of the community in

support of a much-needed road upgrade and then have it laughed at. We will actually do it.

We are going to get rid of seven level crossings in Melbourne's north, which will be a magnificent congestion-buster to assist my community to get to work, sport and education. We are going to provide new bus services, unlike the previous government. It was not bad enough that it did not commit to doing things in the Yan Yean electorate; the thing it did do was impose cuts. It imposed in excess of \$60 million worth of bus cuts to the fastest growing electorate in the state. We are going to introduce new bus services from Mernda and Doreen to Diamond Creek, and from Whittlesea to Greensborough, and we are going to resolve the school bus crisis.

We are going to build the police station at Mernda. We are going to build fire stations at Wattle Glen and Plenty. We are going to build the Mernda central P-12 school. We are going to do stage 3 of Hazel Glen College, which is another fabulous P-12 school. We are going to complete Wallan Secondary College. We are going to reopen Greensborough TAFE; we are going to resolve the TAFE crisis.

We are going to build a community hub in Ashley Park. We are going to fund a Wallan town centre plan for that growing community. We are going to fund netball courts for the netball players of Wallan. We are going to finally open Wallan's ambulance station. We committed to doing it four years ago, and so did the other lot. In the tradition of great ABC comedy, the former government put a fence around a block of land just prior to the election with more empty vessels in suits and said that was the ambulance station. The ambulance station in Wallan will open, and we will fix the ambulance response crisis. I look forward to meeting with my community on Wednesday next week to discuss that very important issue.

Finally, I would like to thank my fantastic campaign team led by Sash Nackovski, who is my campaign director; Matt Sheean, who was a great team motivator and campaigner; Josh Raymond, our wonder from Wallan; Calum Walker, our volunteer coordinator, who possibly spoke to every person in the Yan Yean electorate and came as a package deal with his fabulous brother, Lawrie; Helen and Rose Kenney; Lorna Smith; Michael Newman; Jeannie Taylor; Kellie McNaughton; Sirima; Leo Mollasi; Chris Atkins; Irene Magolous; Chris Curtis; Pam McCleod; Rex and Dan Nicholson, another fabulous family unit; La Famiglia Ventura; Francis, Jo, Nonna, and Fluffy, the campaign mascot; Sam Stewart, who came down from Sydney; Brian Boswell; Denice Power, Rod Curry and their children;

Robert Sonsa; the fabulous firefighters of the United Firefighters Union, especially Tom Upton; paramedics Ward Young, Chris Lallo, Jess Murphy, Richard Gardner and many more; Tom Bentley; Peter Roylance; Mara Novembre; Sue Ferguson; the Thompson family; my sisters, Julianna and Fran; my sons, Blake and Carlo, and his darling wife, Paola; and John Murphy and the Yarrambat posse for providing endless humour and moral support to my campaign, and some absolutely second-to-none sign sites.

I thank the electorate of Yan Yean wholeheartedly for returning me as a member. I commend the government's program to the house. Unlike those opposite, we will not let you down, and I acknowledge everyone who supported me to return to this place for another four years.

Mr ANGUS (Forest Hill) — I am delighted to rise today to make my contribution to the debate on the address-in-reply to the Governor's speech, which was made in December last year. I want to start by thanking most sincerely the residents of the district of Forest Hill for once again putting their trust in me and giving me their ongoing support. It is a great honour and privilege to hold this office. I assure the Forest Hill residents that I do not take this role for granted and will continue to work as hard as I can for them and assist residents in any way I can.

I also want to thank all the volunteers who worked on the Forest Hill campaign, in particular the campaign team led so ably by the campaign chairman, Greg Porter; the electorate conference chair, Robert Bartlett; fundraising coordinator Gwen Keast; treasurer Fraser Holt; and the other members of the campaign team and electorate conference executive. I especially want to thank the numerous volunteers who worked tirelessly during the campaign, branch members and other volunteers who were out constantly letterboxing, doorknocking, doing street corners, clerical duties, polling booths, scrutineering, attending fundraisers and supporting me in every way they could.

I particularly want to thank my wife, Andrea, my children, my parents and other relatives who helped so significantly during this campaign. I also thank the Liberal Party staff at 104 Exhibition Street for their assistance and support. I also want to thank my staff, Tina, Anna and Julia, who do a fantastic job in my electorate office, worked extremely hard all last year and continue to do an outstanding job to support me in everything I do.

I now want to take a few minutes to reflect on what has been achieved over the last four years under the

coalition government in the Forest Hill district. I will start by looking at the capital side of the education equation. We achieved \$2.7 million for Vermont Secondary College to build a new science wing and administration facilities. We obtained \$2.1 million for Forest Hill College to expand and upgrade classrooms and upgrade its outdoor education and sporting facilities. The coalition government provided \$100 000 to Burwood Heights Primary School to refurbish some classrooms. We provided \$187 500 to Vermont Primary School Kindergarten and \$300 000 to Burwood Heights Primary School Kindergarten for facilities upgrades. We have there total expenditure of over \$5.4 million in the last four years alone, which stands in stark contrast to the capital funding that was received for Forest Hill schools over the 11 years of the previous Labor government. I have seen a spreadsheet for that period and it is shamefully empty.

I now turn my attention to the maintenance component of the education equation. I want to put a context around this inasmuch as after we came to power in 2010 an audit conducted in 2012 showed there was an education maintenance backlog of \$420 million throughout Victoria. This was the fruit of 11 years of Labor government. In the last four years over \$2.2 million was obtained for maintenance funding at the following schools in the Forest Hill electorate: Highvale Secondary College got \$668 172; Camelot Rise Primary School, \$557 950; Vermont Primary School, \$177 762; Burwood East Special Developmental School, \$83 000; Forest Hill College, \$582 439; and Highvale Primary School, over \$103 000. An enormous investment was made by the coalition government in the electorate of Forest Hill in an effort to catch up on the school maintenance backlog at some of the 20 schools I have in my patch.

At the last election I, along with the coalition team, was able to make a number of commitments to some schools in Forest Hill. Sadly, for the residents of Forest Hill, none of those election commitments were matched. However, I can assure the residents of the electorate of Forest Hill that I will continue to campaign and fight hard to get the funding we need. Those commitments included \$4.5 million for Vermont Primary School to upgrade the central administration and classroom wing; \$1.8 million for Orchard Grove Primary School to upgrade administration, staff facilities, toilets and first aid facilities; and \$434 000 for Highvale Primary School for a significant infrastructure upgrade.

Besides those commitments to schools, there was a commitment of \$100 000 for the UnitingCare East Burwood centre to expand its counselling facilities and

to support the outstanding work that that well-regarded community service organisation is doing in the local electorate. There was also \$80 000 for Forest Hill Cricket Club to relocate its practice nets. As I said, I will continue to advocate and fight hard for my community to obtain these sorts of funds and other funds as the need arises in the electorate of Forest Hill.

I turn now to other areas. In the first coalition budget we were able to fund the Forest Hill police station, which was a \$12 million project. I had the great pleasure of being there just a couple of weeks ago with a number of senior officers from the area and others to inspect that facility, which is going along extremely well and should open in the not-too-distant future.

More broadly, one of the great facilities I have spoken about many times in this place is the Box Hill Hospital redevelopment. This was a \$447.5 million project that was delivered on time and ahead of budget. As I have said countless times in this place, the finished project ended up being a 10-storey building for the original cost of a 9-storey building. That is the way the coalition government ran capital projects of that nature. It was a fantastic project from start to finish. I had the pleasure of being in attendance at all the key milestones, and it is now an outstanding facility serving the residents of the eastern suburbs, including the residents of the Forest Hill electorate.

We also committed funds to other major works, including \$630 million for the regional hospital in Bendigo. I was up there a couple of weeks ago, over Easter, with my in-laws and saw the progress being made on that outstanding facility. What a great facility that will be for the people of regional and rural Victoria. There was also a commitment of \$250 million for the Monash Children's hospital. These are just a couple of the commitments that have directly affected the residents of Forest Hill. There are countless others, but due to time constraints I will not be able to go into them.

Hundreds of thousands of dollars have been obtained for numerous other schools, sporting clubs and community groups. For example, the East Burwood Tennis Club got \$50 000 to refurbish some tennis courts and Vermont Men's Shed got just over \$24 000 to expand its facilities. They are smaller amounts but they will have very significant outcomes for the local community. Significantly, we were able to protect 15.4 hectares of the Healesville Freeway Reserve, which was transferred to Crown land. This was a contentious local issue but it has resulted in a great outcome for the local community.

More broadly again, if we look at some of the fantastic achievements of the coalition government in the last four years, and others have mentioned these, we see the introduction of protective services officers (PSOs) at train stations, which is a fantastic policy and hugely successful. It was very well received and resulted in a significant benefit to Forest Hill residents. Many of them have spoken to me about the sense of security they now feel when they catch trains late at night as a result of that fantastic policy. We also funded and recruited additional police officers. Over 1700 additional police were recruited together with the PSOs I have already mentioned.

The government completed the removal of several level crossings, including the ones at Mitcham Road and Rooks Road in Mitcham, which is just north of my electorate but has significantly impacted on my residents. Funding was also provided for the removal of the Blackburn Road level crossing in Blackburn as part of a \$457 million level crossing removal commitment in the last state budget. That crossing is about 1 kilometre north of my office and my northern boundary, but its removal will provide significant benefits for local residents. There is also the free tram travel in the CBD. The zone 1 and 2 travel for the price of a zone 1 fare has had a direct impact on my residents because we are in a zone 2 area. This has resulted in savings of around \$1200 per annum for commuters who come into the city on a daily basis.

Importantly and fundamentally, we left the state's economy in a stable and responsible position. The budget was in a first-class position with a AAA credit rating and a stable outlook. Surpluses were projected for the current year and all the years of the forward estimates period. As the shadow Treasurer, the member for Malvern, mentioned in his contribution, it will be interesting to see how the numbers stack up in the budget in a month or so. The coalition government was able to cut WorkCover premiums, cut payroll tax and undertake significant reform of the fire services levy. These things resulted in very significant benefits for businesses and consumers in the state of Victoria.

Right now we are at the crossroads as we approach the first of the Labor budgets in this Parliament. It is causing me and residents of my electorate significant concern. We just have to look at the past to see what may happen in the future. The annual expenditure growth in the last state budget and the forward estimates under the coalition government was 2.6 per cent. It is important that we do not forget that that stands in very stark contrast to the average annual expenditure growth over the decade to 2009–10 under the previous Labor government, which was 8 per cent.

What a staggering and clearly unsustainable level of growth that was. Expense growth outstripped revenue growth year after year during the last Labor government.

The previous speaker also mentioned the great Labor white elephant, the desalination plant. We have a fixed cost to Victorian taxpayers of approximately \$1.8 million per day for 27 years excluding the cost of water. That is a staggering impost on taxpayers in Victoria.

During its term the coalition government was able to keep the economy strong and continue to expand. That assisted businesses and provided jobs for local residents. It has been of concern to me, particularly in the last few months, to see some of the editorials and newspaper headlines in relation to what is coming. In the *Herald Sun* of 6 March we see an article headed 'Spending the state broke'. All kinds of things are mentioned in that article, such as the sovereign risk that has been introduced as a result of the recent events regarding the east-west link. In the *Herald Sun* of 4 April there is an article headed 'Labor gets it wrong, again'. I do not have time to go into all the details of that article but suffice it to say that the axing of the beds at the Peter MacCallum hospital is a disgraceful outcome. A further article from the same day is headed 'Cancer fight damns Labor'. There is a lot of material there that again I do not have time to go into. But the piece goes on to talk about other matters in relation to union paybacks coming through. Even today's *Herald Sun* carries an editorial headed 'Andrews compo shame'. It says:

Daniel Andrews stands condemned.

Condemned for gross financial waste.

Condemned for a failure to meet Victoria's strategic infrastructure needs.

Condemned over his preference for short-term political gain and partisan intransigence at the cost of the greater good.

Condemned for placing at huge risk Victoria's reputation as a place to invest.

That is the message being sent to the business community. 'Victorian government is closed for business' says the headline to the editorial in the *Australian* today. I could talk all day on that, but obviously I do not have time. It will have significant consequences both now and into the future for all Victorians. That is not something any of us are going to be looking forward to.

In conclusion, I once again want to thank the residents of the Forest Hill district, my campaign team, the many

volunteers and particularly my family. I am grateful I have the opportunity to continue to work with the community to make the Forest Hill electorate an even better place to live and raise a family. As I said, I will continue to fight on behalf of local residents to ensure that my electorate receives the funding it needs to create jobs, build local infrastructure and improve schools and health services. Most importantly, I will also work hard to hold the state government to account and ensure that it delivers what it promised during the election.

Mr SCOTT (Minister for Finance) — It is a great honour to rise in the address-in-reply debate because all of us are entrusted with a very special gift when we are brought into this place by the electors. As other members have done, I place on the record my deep gratitude to the voters of my electorate of Preston, which principally comprises the suburbs of Preston, Reservoir and a tiny part of Coburg East.

The honour which has been bestowed on me and on all members of this house is one to be taken very seriously. The electors of Preston live in a fabulous part of Melbourne and a fabulous part of Victoria. It is a multicultural and diverse community. It is a community with significant disparities of wealth and income. There are wealthy people moving into West Preston in particular, there are significant areas of great disadvantage, particularly in Reservoir East and Preston East, and there are mixes of all of the above. It is a vibrant and engaged community with a great tradition of social engagement. There are vibrant sporting clubs and community groups, which are fully engaged with the community.

Every time someone is brought from such a place to this house, it is worth placing on the record the important duty we all undertake. In that context it was a pleasure that prior to the election I was able to campaign for significant improvements I am sure that the Labor Party will deliver on, including in education. The William Ruthven Secondary College is a fantastic school that achieves outstanding results. It represents a catchment of some of the more disadvantaged areas in my electorate, and yet 80 per cent of its Victorian certificate of education graduates from last year went on to university. The work the school has undertaken and the fabulous partnerships it has developed, particularly with La Trobe University and RMIT University, have not been reflected in the buildings that are available to the students.

During the election campaign I was able to campaign on a commitment from the Labor Party for \$10 million to upgrade the buildings at William Ruthven Secondary College, and that is something I am proud of and am

sure that the Labor government will commit to deliver on. The upgrade is badly needed to complement the fantastic work that is being done by both the students and the staff who work there and are truly dedicated people.

As this is the first contribution to the debate on the address-in-reply that has been given by a minister, I want to touch upon the twin responsibilities I hold as the Minister for Multicultural Affairs and the Minister for Finance. Multicultural affairs is a little different from most portfolios. In Victoria we have something special; there is a fabulous bipartisan tradition. Although address-in-reply speeches are not usually the time to say nice things about your opponents, in Victoria there has been a real cross-party commitment to a diverse, strong multicultural society, and that is very important to the state. It differentiates the Victorian model of multicultural affairs from those of a number of other states. Firstly, in Victoria we do not merely mouth platitudes. People strongly support and believe in multiculturalism.

Secondly, according to research undertaken by the Scanlon Foundation, the strong support from both the political process and the community — be it business, trade unions, welfare organisations or other social groups — has translated into much stronger levels of support for multiculturalism. In Victoria we not only talk about being the capital of multicultural Australia, the research bears it out. The Labor Party is proud to build upon the great tradition that has been established over a long period of time, and we made strong commitments during the election campaign.

I would like to touch upon one particular community, the Vietnamese community, whose members came to Australia largely as refugees in the shadow of a terrible war. They have recently celebrated 40 years of living in Australia, and they thanked the Australian community for enabling them to live in and contribute to Australian society. The Vietnamese community has been running fabulous leadership programs for young people. It has also been looking at developing a museum for the Vietnamese community. These two wonderful programs are something that, during the election, we on this side of the house were proud to support and something that will be a great addition to the community.

I would like to pay tribute to another community. The Islamic Council of Victoria, ICV, has been running a fabulous program with young people. We talk about the challenging issues in our society, and there are people in the community who would seek to radicalise our youth. The Islamic Council of Victoria has been

working hard to deliver a different narrative, to work with young people and to engage them in society so that they will not be vulnerable to those who want to spread hate and division and turn others against the rest of society. In fact the commitment of the Islamic Council of Victoria to its youth work has been borne out by additional support of \$200 000 that this government has pledged to make during this term.

The example that the Islamic Council of Victoria is setting was borne out by the recent dinner it held with the Jewish Community Council of Victoria. At this historic dinner people from the Islamic community and the Jewish community came together literally to break bread, to talk over the differences and issues between the two communities and to build a stronger Victoria. That is exactly the sort of activity that we on the Labor side of politics, as I am sure are those on the other side of the house, are proud to support. There were coalition members present at that dinner, as well as a member of the Greens. The work of building of bridges between communities is so important. As Minister for Multicultural Affairs I will be working hard to support those communities.

In terms of the finance portfolio, the largest public financial corporation for which I have responsibility as minister is WorkCover, a critical institution in our community. Around 30 000 workplace incidents take place each year. Some result in multiple claims, and they affect almost 30 000 Victorians. We have been concerned about the drift that has been going on with WorkCover. The Labor Party has already put the WorkSafe name back where it should be. We have put the 'safe' back into WorkSafe because the focus on safety within WorkCover is so important.

WorkCover is both an occupational health and safety organisation and an insurance organisation, and we need to collectively understand that if you can prevent an accident, it is much better than compensating someone for an accident. There is an unabashed enthusiasm for a renewed focus on workplace safety and a renewed focus on ensuring that all Victorians return home from work safely.

We will also be looking to extend rights. For example, presumptive rights for firefighters who have become victims of certain cancers due to their work protecting the Victorian community. That is something we will be delivering during our current term. There is also a focus on this side of the house collectively by the Labor Party and something that as the minister I am very focused on, and that is looking at what happens to the 20-odd per cent of workers who do not return to work. WorkCover is reasonably successful comparative to

other organisations in getting people back into the workforce. However, about 20 per cent do not return to work and the evidence is very strong that they suffer significantly high rates of mental health problems, have great difficulties in their personal lives and often fall into an abyss. What is sad is that the current scheme has not been measuring properly what has been happening to such people. There is a paucity of real hard evidence on exactly what is happening in their lives. We will be remedying that lack of hard evidence, and there will be an unabashed focus on ensuring that the 20 per cent of people who have not been returning to work are not forgotten.

Like other members I will refer to those who assisted me. I would like to thank my staff and my campaign staff, including Christina Han, Steve Gagen, the fabulous Unal family and Kate Dunn. Most of all there is my wife, who like many other spouses has given up many nights and sacrificed her own time to assist a member of Parliament, in this case, me.

Since I know that others have to speak — I understood there was an arrangement of about 10 minutes and I note that has been kept in the breach — I will keep my comments short. I will just say that it is again a real honour to represent the community of Preston, and I look forward to delivering during the term ahead for that community, which was so neglected by the previous government.

Ms McLEISH (Eildon) — I am pleased to speak in the debate on the address-in-reply to the address by the Governor, the Honourable Alex Chernov, AC, QC. I must say that the Governor was a strong supporter of my electorate; he visited quite a number of times. He is virtually a local, having a property around the Taggerty area. I wish him well on his retirement, and I wish Linda Dessau all the best as she moves into this role. I also want to place on the record my thanks to the electors of Eildon, a new electoral district following the electoral redistribution. I am very privileged to be the first representative of that area.

I want to talk a little about Eildon, because it is substantially different — possibly 55 per cent different — from the seat that I previously held, the seat of Seymour. With the change in electoral boundaries I lost the shire of Mitchell and I gained the shire of Mansfield. I also gained the additional areas covered by the Yarra Ranges Shire Council up the Warburton Highway and the Upper Yarra area. I gained part of the shire of Nillumbik extending to Panton Hill, Kangaroo Ground and across to Arthurs Creek. This is a total area of some 10 000 square kilometres.

The Eildon district is a wonderful place to live and work. It is home to a host of close-knit communities which are surrounded by a beautiful natural environment taking in the Goulburn River, Melbourne's green wedge, Victoria's high plains, the Yarra Valley and the Yarra Ranges. It also includes the snowfields of Mount Buller, Lake Mountain and Mount Donna Buang. It encompasses Lake Eildon and that \$750 million white elephant, the north-south pipeline, which runs smack through the front of my property. I am very familiar with it.

My electorate is quite diverse in what it offers. The agriculture includes a bit of everything, with strong viticulture and horticulture. We have quite a lot of apple orchards down at the south end. Our beef is very well known. We are extremely well known in the area for exporting bovine genetics to quite a number of countries, and we have a number of cattle studs. During Beef Week it was my pleasure to visit quite a number of those, from the north around Mansfield to Strathewen and Tarrawarra. We have a fishing industry, with two of the largest water catchments. The area is heavily tourism oriented, with the world-renowned Healesville Sanctuary and the beautiful Yarra Valley that people know quite a lot about. There is the high country, which is a wonderful place to go, and also my home town of Yea, which is a wonderful little country town that is heavily reliant on tourism.

What is common across the area is the reliance on small business as the main means of employment. To give members in the chamber bit of an idea of what can be found in this area of over 10 000 square kilometres, we have 37 primary schools, 5 secondary schools and 8 Catholic and independent schools. That is 50 schools. We have 51 Country Fire Authority brigades, 6 State Emergency Service units and 18 football clubs. Compared to what happens in a lot of the metropolitan seats, representing such a large area is a different type of challenge, as those in other country seats would know, I was privileged to have been elected as the member for Seymour in the last Parliament. Being in Parliament is an honour, and it is something I take seriously. For me, one of the most disappointing things about coming into government with a one-seat majority was experiencing the behaviour of the opposition during that period. The worst example I could come up with was when the member for Bendigo East stood in clear defiance of the then Speaker, Ken Smith, was named and was removed from the chamber for six days. I thought that display of behaviour was appalling, but members on the other side seemed to endorse that behaviour as satisfactory.

One of the highlights for me during the last Parliament was the establishment of the \$1 billion Regional Growth Fund. We showed as coalition that we were very serious about looking after country and rural Victoria, and we invested heavily in a lot of projects in small towns and communities. Many wonderful projects were undertaken, whether through the Putting Locals First Fund, through larger support from Regional Development Victoria or through the local government infrastructure program. There is the work done up at Tolmie, a really small and quite quirky community and a lovely place if people want to visit, and at Maindample. There was work done on halls at Yarck, Molesworth and on the shire hall at Yea. Works were also done on a few swimming pools and on the Mansfield Recreation Reserve. Streetscape work began at Eildon and Yarck. There were so many wonderful projects that were put forward and really grabbed by the local communities as well as the local shires. That was certainly a highlight for me.

The country roads and bridges program was also a wonderful highlight, and I know how welcome it was — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Blandthorn) — Order! I indicate to the member for Melton that his voice is very distracting.

Ms McLEISH — It was greatly appreciated by the Mansfield and Murrindindi shire councils, and the Mitchell shire as well. Under this program each of the rural shires was given \$1 million per year for the four-year term. They all had four years to work on projects that, for some of them, had been hanging around for years. At Murrindindi there were two big bridge projects: the Breakaway Bridge at Acheron and the Goulburn River bridge crossing going up to the highlands at Ghin Ghin. There are massive costs involved in these works, and for over a decade the shire worried about how it would ever be able to afford to upgrade these bridges. It was terrific that through the country roads and bridges program we were able to make that possible. I am really sad to see that it looks as if that program has fallen by the wayside.

Another positive was that the government provided gas to the regions, and Wandong and Heathcote Junction were beneficiaries of that. The former Brumby government said that gas had been extended as far as possible — it could not be extended further. We were able to defy what that government had thought were the odds and move to signing a contract to connect the

regions. That included providing gas to Warburton, which is in my new electorate of Eildon.

Another highlight of the former government's term was its provision of \$7.8 million for the Healesville and District Hospital. The former Labor government had let that hospital run down. It had a lot of empty beds, and there were a lot of complaints and huge concern in the community that the tap had been turned off. We were able to boost that hospital's standing through some great work with Eastern Health. I look forward to that work being completed.

The former government invested in racing at a local level. As the member for Seymour, I had three picnic tracks, a dog track, three larger regional racetracks and a greyhound adoption program in my electorate. There was quite a lot there. I have lost a few of those, but I have gained the picnic tracks at Merton and Mansfield. The investment by the former Minister for Racing, the member for South-West Coast, into local racing was absolutely terrific, and it was certainly welcome. It gave a real shot in the arm for those responsible for the picnic courses, who had worried for such a long time because the former Labor government had dealt with them so poorly.

Being in opposition in this Parliament is, of course, disappointing, but we will endeavour to do what we do and hold the government to account. As the government settles in we are beginning to see its true colours — the colours of socialism. The red is absolutely jumping out at us. The government has abandoned quite a lot of infrastructure projects, including work on the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre, the Melbourne Airport rail link and the east–west link. I was particularly outraged by the government's decision in relation to the Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre to pull the floor dedicated to private health. Labor is supposed to be governing for all Victorians, and some Victorians have health insurance and would choose to go private. Not everyone will choose to do so, but people who do not have private health insurance may also choose to go private. If Labor wishes to represent all Victorians, it should actually do so.

In relation to the east–west link I say the roads are still congested. We have heard others say the east–west link will still need to be built at some time. It was a good idea. In previous times Labor had thought it was a good idea, but now it has backed itself into a corner to protect some seats. We know public transport is equally as important as roads, and we were moving towards funding both, but this government is ditching road projects and trashing our international reputation. Word

does get out quickly. Prior to coming into this place I did a lot of work consulting in the construction industry, and I know of the big projects in Victoria and other states. I know how those companies talk, and I know what they are saying now. I also have friends in the banking sector, and they have told me that many in that sector are now saying the government is an absolute joke in the way it is going ahead.

I also want to comment very quickly on the Governor's address, which had a focus on jobs and growth. The government has started appallingly in this regard. It laid off the people who would have worked on the east-west link project — 3700 jobs were lost there — it pretended that the West Gate distributor project was shovel ready and now it is looking at creating two public holidays, which is really working against jobs.

As the new member for Eildon I will be doing everything I can to hold the government to account. Everyone can be assured that I will advocate strongly, not just for the people of the Eildon electorate but also for the people in the outer east — the peri-urban fringe — and for country Victoria.

Finally, I have a number of thank-yous. I thank my staff who have been with me for the journey. I thank Ryan, Heather and Chris so much for their hard work and ongoing loyalty. I thank the electorate council: Mike Dalmau, Michael Pointer, Fiona Ogilvy-O'Donnell and John Lithgow. They were fantastic. We had 39 booths to man. That is some feat, and it is indicative of the number of small towns and communities in my electorate. I thank John Ridley and Peter McWilliam, who were also a wonderful help. I thank Chris Jackson. I thank my family, who really did not see a lot of me. I thank my brother, who had to pick up a lot of the pieces with my father while I was out campaigning. I thank the branch members, who did a wonderful job. There are three ex-MPs who have had different roles in different parts of my journey. Graeme Stoney, in the north, is always a wonderful supporter; Fran Bailey down in the south, in Healesville, is a terrific supporter; and Steve McArthur is also available, and is often a terrific support. I thank all of these people sincerely.

Mr PERERA (Cranbourne) — It gives me great pleasure to contribute to the address-in-reply to the Governor's speech. As this is my first contribution to a debate in this term, I take this opportunity to congratulate the member for Tarneit on his elevation to the position of Speaker. It is a great honour for him to be the Speaker of the 58th Parliament, especially for someone of his background. He is a first-generation migrant who has faced a lot of barriers in getting to a position like this. He has cleared all of them, and he has

gotten to where he wanted to be. I congratulate him and say well done.

It is an enormous honour to have been re-elected to this place for the fourth time. With the redistribution of the boundaries last year, 60 per cent of my previous electorate, which was dear to me and which I represented over the last 12 years, is no longer in my new electorate. I miss the areas of Frankston North, Carrum Downs, Skye, Sandhurst and parts of Langwarrin and Seaford, which are no longer part of my electorate. The redistribution made the new seat of Cranbourne very marginal. Leading up to the 2014 state election the coalition needed only a swing of 1.1 per cent to take the seat.

Prior to the 2014 election the Andrews Labor opposition had a good plan for Victoria, which it articulated well, and it had effective plans for Cranbourne. However, by contrast, over the last four years the coalition did nothing in Cranbourne. In the last four years, 5000 families have moved into my electorate, but the coalition did not take up the challenge of that growth. The coalition never improved Cranbourne's public transport services; upgraded our arterial roads; modernised our hospitals; modernised our schools; drove an effective jobs and skills plan; dealt with the out-of-control crime rates, especially in Casey; dealt with the ever-growing family violence challenges — my electorate has the highest rates of family violence in Victoria; assisted our most marginalised; or eased the cost of living pressures on low-to-middle-income families.

The coalition's report card was so appalling that the good people of Victoria booted it out of office after one term. This is the first time in many decades in Victoria that a government has been booted out after a single term. The transport system was in tatters. On a daily basis there were many complaints about delayed and cancelled trains, but the former government completely ignored them. I am proud to put on the record that the Andrews Labor government has a plan to remove every level crossing between Dandenong and Caulfield and to purchase 37 new, high-capacity trains as part of a multibillion-dollar public transport package. Labor's unprecedented investment will ease congestion and reduce travel times.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr PERERA — The member says it will not reduce travel times, but it will. The removal of nine level crossings between Dandenong and Caulfield will make an enormous difference to not only the train commuters but also the driving community. Four

stations will be rebuilt at Clayton, Carnegie, Murrumbidgee and Hughesdale. There will be new and upgraded rail infrastructure in the corridor, including power and signalling upgrades. Pakenham will have a new train depot and maintenance facility. The most important thing is the addition of 37 new trains, with 50 per cent of the work mandated to be done locally, which will create local jobs. This Labor initiative will boost passenger capacity by up to 42 per cent on the Cranbourne and Pakenham lines every day, accommodating an extra 11 000 passengers in the morning peak, and it will boost capacity across the network by freeing up existing trains.

The Andrews Labor government has also commenced work on the once-in-a-generation Melbourne Metro rail project. This project will increase the capacity and efficiency of train lines serving our local area. An Andrews Labor government has not forgotten the removal of the level crossing at Thompsons Road, Cranbourne, which will provide much-needed relief to the motorists who use this busy arterial road. That is what Labor is doing to fix our local train system.

Let me now talk about the bus services which will be provided by the Andrews Labor government. Unfortunately the previous coalition government did almost nothing in this area. It extended one existing bus service to run along an extra road at Linsell Boulevard, Cranbourne East, and renamed the bus route Selandra Rise. Selandra Rise is a unique and innovative community in my electorate that is set to become one of Victoria's most livable places. Many of its residents realised that this ad hoc public transport initiative by the coalition government was a disaster because the extended bus service did not even go into the Selandra Rise residential development.

I am pleased to advise the house that the Andrews Labor government will roll out extensive new bus services in my electorate, including more route 799 services from Cranbourne North to Merinda Park on weekdays and Saturdays. It will extend the 847 service on the Berwick to Casey Central route into the new estate south of Glasscocks Road, including the area around William Thwaites Boulevard and Mountainview Boulevard. The government will also provide a new Cranbourne to Pearcedale service, more Frankston to Cranbourne services, more 898 services from Cranbourne East to Cranbourne station on Saturdays, and more 796 services from Cranbourne shopping centre to Clyde on weekdays and weekends. It will extend the 798 service from Cranbourne shopping centre to Selandra Boulevard, something the coalition government failed miserably to do. The government will also extend the 897 service route from

Cranbourne to Dandenong via Merinda Park, Lynbrook and Dandenong South to service the growing estates west of Cranbourne.

The Andrews government is investing heavily in roads in Cranbourne. Thompsons Road carries over 25 000 vehicles a day and needed to be duplicated yesterday. When Labor was in government it invested over \$55 million to upgrade this road, but in the last four years nothing was done. I am pleased to announce that the rest of the duplication of Thompsons Road, between East Link and Clyde Road in Cranbourne, will take place under an Andrews government at a cost of \$175 million.

The previous coalition government did not do anything in the area of health in my electorate. However, the Andrews government has committed \$106.3 million for a major expansion of Casey Hospital, building the hospital's first intensive care unit and opening the doors for thousands of residents in need.

I take this opportunity to thank my electorate staff and the many volunteers who manned the booths on election day and worked the phones for five to six months. I also thank my family and extended family, who were very active in the campaign. Without their support it would have been an uphill battle for me to be re-elected for a fourth term. Finally, I would like to thank the very good people of Cranbourne for electing me for a fourth term.

Mr HODGETT (Croydon) — I am pleased to rise to contribute to the debate on the address-in-reply to the Governor's speech.

Mr Nardella — Hear, hear!

Mr HODGETT — I thank the member for Melton, and I congratulate the Acting Speaker on her chairing of this robust debate and for giving me protection.

It is a great honour to have been elected as the member for Croydon and to represent people in the suburbs of Croydon, Croydon North, Croydon South, Ringwood North, Mooroolbark, Croydon Hills, Kilsyth, Ringwood and Bayswater North. We put ourselves forward to be elected, to be strong voices for the people we represent, to make a difference, to work hard and to deliver improvements to our local communities. I am pleased that in my relatively short time in the house I have developed a long list of achievements and have a proud track record of working hard and delivering for my local community. I will use my brief time today to talk about some of the improvements we have delivered to the community and some of the things I would have wanted to deliver had we been successful in forming

government but which I will now work with the government to try to deliver because they are great projects that are needed in our community.

Over time we have certainly made improvements to local schools. At Eastwood Primary School we did a \$7.3 million rebuild, which you announced, Acting Speaker. Stages 1 and 2 of that project will come to completion and deliver a fantastic local state-of-the-art facility for the Eastwood Primary School community. Mooroolbark community hub was granted \$2.4 million. Protective security officers were assigned to our local railway stations, in particular at Mooroolbark, Croydon and Ringwood East in my electorate. There has been great feedback about having protective services officers at our local stations, and I continue to hear fantastic stories. That was a great policy and one we want to continue to support.

In relation to traffic lights and road improvements, there were traffic lights installed on Cambridge and Canterbury roads. The Dining Room Mission in Croydon, which I will come to, got a \$10 000 grant, and I will come to the election commitment we will be pursuing on behalf of The Dining Room Mission. Pinks Reserve Netball Complex received \$500 000.

Mooroolbark benefited from the 1700 new police on the beat. A \$250 000 upgrade was made to Mooroolbark police station, which the local community is very pleased with, and our local law enforcement men and women really enjoy the upgrade to that facility where they can operate more comfortably. At Mooroolbark railway station we delivered a \$3.8 million upgrade. There was a pedestrian crossing at the Hull Road roundabout and right-turn arrows at Eastfield and Bayswater roads.

Yarra Hills Secondary College is another school you would be familiar with, Acting Speaker; it received \$10 million. The college received funding under the previous Labor government but it needed a commitment for stage 2. We stepped up to the plate and delivered the \$10 million stage 2 and now we have got a brand-new school in Yarra Hills Secondary College. We delivered low-floor buses on local routes and funding to eliminate graffiti. Barnggeong Reserve had an upgrade, again a modest amount of money, \$250 000, but it was a great upgrade to that local sporting facility that has junior cricket, junior football and baseball. Through design work with Maroondah City Council we were able to maximise that money and deliver great outcomes. Improvements to the traffic lights at Montrose roundabout were funded to benefit the local community. The Croydon Districts Table Tennis Association centre got \$40 000 over time, Mooroolbark Heights Reserve got lights, and the list goes on and on.

I will put forward a number of improvements that we would have funded had we been re-elected at the last election, and I raise them because I will continue to work hard and to fight for those improvements over the next four years because they are much needed in the local community. It is a matter of prioritisation. We cannot deliver everything at once, but we will continue to try to get them delivered over the next four years.

In particular I mention the Croydon Rangers Gridiron Club. Mainstream clubs such as cricket, football or netball usually receive funding, but Croydon Rangers is a successful gridiron club. As an election commitment we were offering \$40 000 to install viewing windows to enable spectators to view the game from inside a room. If members look at this facility where the Eastern Football League umpires also train, it is basically just a brick building with no viewing access out onto the playing area. For a relatively modest cost we could install those windows and greatly enhance the use of the facility by allowing people to enjoy games from inside. It is a fantastic commitment and I will put pressure on the Minister for Sport to see if he can see his way clear to committing funding to the Croydon Rangers Gridiron Club.

In all our communities we have homeless people, the vulnerable and the disadvantaged, who rely on services for meals or just to be given some companionship. The Dining Room Mission in Croydon was operated by David Koop. He may have stepped back as director now but there are a number of people who help out by providing a weekly meal to those in need, and we offered \$25 000 in funding towards its ongoing running costs. It does a terrific job of providing meals and support for homeless and disadvantaged people, focusing largely on Maroondah even though people travel far and wide from other districts. That is a community service worthy of support, and I will continue to fight for funding for The Dining Room Mission.

Croydon Primary School had approximately two-thirds of a rebuild through the Building the Education Revolution (BER) program, with the remaining one-third of the school, one wing, still needing to be rebuilt at a cost of about \$3 million. I will be raising that with the Minister for Education, who is familiar with the project. For \$3 million we could finish off that school and the students and their families would have the very best learning facilities and learning spaces at that school. As I said, it was two-thirds built under the BER program and we need to finish it off and deliver it as a brand-new school in Croydon.

I am pleased that both sides made commitments to Melba College. We made a \$10 million commitment to rebuild the college and Labor also made that commitment. I raised this matter with the Minister for Education in this house on 26 February. School principal Terry Bennett and the school community have done a wonderful job of persevering over many years to try to get the rebuild of that school underway. Stage 1 will cost \$10 million, and I look forward to getting a time frame for that commitment so I can go back and announce to that school community when the rebuild will start. There will also be some cost recovery on that project because the school will be going from two sites to one. When we kick off, Melba College will be a great project to deliver to the local community.

We announced \$1.4 million to build a new ambulance station at the five-way roundabout at Lincoln Road in Mooroolbark. The then Department of Health acquired some land in 2012. Currently the paramedics are serving the Mooroolbark community from a temporary base at the Montrose branch, and I will raise that with the Minister for Health to find out what the plans are to proceed with that ambulance substation at Mooroolbark to deliver services in and around Mooroolbark.

I will cut my contribution short in the interests of members on both sides of the house being able to make contributions as we complete the addresses-in-reply debate. However, I want to spend a few moments thanking a number of people involved in my election campaign, which is the third I have run. I had a terrific team, ably led by Fran Henderson, who is a great local person. Her passions in life are religion, politics and the Geelong Football Club. Thankfully she donated a large amount of her time to my re-election. I thank the entire team that supported me, including my staff — both ministerial and electoral — who worked hard throughout the campaign and in the caretaker period to run the ministerial and electorate offices. I could never thank them enough. They are dedicated, hardworking, terrific people.

I thank my family — my wife, Tina, and my seven kids. They certainly help on polling day to staff booths. I thank the branch members, the people who come out and work with us in the interests of getting us elected. We would not be here in this place without the support of those people. I could never thank them enough or sufficiently repay them. I thank my supporters. Without those people who support and assist us in any number of ways we would not be here. I will continue to work hard on behalf of my local community. I look forward to representing the people of the Croydon district over the next four years and to working hard to deliver a number of improvements in our local community.

Ms KAIROUZ (Kororoit) — In taking the opportunity to speak in the debate for the adoption of the address-in-reply to the Governor's speech, I would like to begin by extending my thanks to the people of the state seat of Kororoit, who have placed their trust in me for a third time. I am truly humbled by that trust and will do everything in my power to repay the faith placed in me. It is true that without the support of a team of dedicated and hardworking people I would not be standing here today. I thank my family, my staff, my campaign committee and the many supporters who provided assistance in the weeks leading up to the election and on election day. I am delighted to be able to put on the record my congratulations to the Premier and his cabinet. I know they are doing their very best for the people of Victoria. I also extend a very warm welcome to all the new members in this place and congratulate those who have returned.

In representing the people of Kororoit — and Melbourne's west more broadly — I view the term of the previous government as one of great disappointment and shame. If it were not so serious, the health fiasco under the former government would be laughable. The former Minister for Health, David Davis, allowed the previous Treasurer to slash millions of dollars from hospital budgets and refused to pay reasonable wages and conditions to ambulance employees. He appeared to spend the whole term like a pantomime clown, looking everywhere for hospital beds that did not exist. Ambulance response times suffered under the coalition government. It took Labor to get to the root of the problem.

People in the western suburbs have as much right to a responsive ambulance service and easy access to public hospital beds as those who live in the inner city. Many in the west cannot afford the gap between the fee charged and the Medicare rebate, let alone the luxury of private health insurance. While these people wait for essential surgery, their work and family life suffers — their lives are put on hold. I am gratified that we now have a health minister who understands the system and has solutions and a Premier who both understands the challenges and cares enough to do something about them.

Many of my constituents made the journey to Australia from homes across the oceans with the dream of a better life. Sometimes a tougher journey awaited them once they got here — the journey out of relative poverty. One of the reasons I joined the Labor Party as a young woman was that I saw the inherent decency in its enduring values of fairness, justice and equality of opportunity. The key to escaping the yoke of poverty is education. A decent education leads to a decent job, and

a decent job gives individuals and their families opportunities. The difference between equality and inequality is very simple — it is a job. Education is the pathway to that job. Education is something else those opposite neglected. Rather than plan and deliver new schools and an improved curriculum and outcomes, they cut and cut and cut. They left us with a system that was stagnating and, worse, a system that was falling behind the rest of the nation. We now have a government that puts people first and education front and centre.

Under the previous government Victoria's biggest net export was jobs. We watched numerous companies close their doors or downsize as the inaction of the coalition drove business confidence into the dirt. The automotive industry, the clean energy sector and manufacturing in general have been victims of coalition governments in this place and in Canberra. When these jobs are lost it cuts a swathe through electorates such as mine, where many in the workforce are semiskilled or low-skilled workers. Worse still, it means fewer opportunities for young people starting out, particularly those who do not wish to attend university or simply cannot afford it. To do nothing runs the risk of having a generation of disengaged young people with little hope of a decent future, so I am very proud to be part of a government that will reinvigorate Victoria's economy, get people back to work and procure local content where possible.

While public transport was neglected in this state, those opposite hatched one of the most disgraceful plans for a transport infrastructure project Victoria has ever seen — the east–west tunnel. This \$10.7 billion mega-disaster was fanciful and ill-conceived and proved just how devious those opposite could be. The now opposition owes the Victorian people a sincere apology for the mess it has left for an incoming Andrews government to clean up.

I want to assure the people of Kororoit that I will be a very strong advocate for them in government and will clearly make the case for the delivery of priority road and rail projects within my electorate. Since being elected to this place I have been a strong advocate for the need to fix the Main Road and Furlong Road rail crossings, as well as for the Caroline Springs train station. I am extremely pleased that the efforts of local people will be rewarded when the Andrews Labor government delivers these projects in its first term. I am also proud that this government has started work on the removal of Victoria's worst 50 level crossings, which will get Victorians home safer and sooner whether they drive or catch public transport.

The fall from grace of the coalition has been swift, hard and just. The people of Victoria saw through its deceit and broken promises and now hold those on the other side in contempt. I am proud to be part of a government that will govern for all Victorians and will set the foundations for the future prosperity of our great state.

I draw my inspiration from my family: hardworking migrants who left the war-torn country of Lebanon with sadness in their hearts but have found new hope in this country — a country of unlimited vitality, potential and opportunity. In representing the people of Kororoit, many of whom have their own stories of migration to or seeking refuge in Australia, I want to ensure they have access to opportunities to learn, earn or start a business and can raise their families in peace and prosperity. Only a Labor government can deliver a fairer and more prosperous Victoria. I am proud to be part of the Andrews Labor team — a team and a government with a bold and visionary plan, which will deliver on its promise to all Victorians.

Mr THOMPSON (Sandringham) — I am pleased to contribute to the address-in-reply debate and review the contributions made in this place by the former government to the development of Victoria at large and in particular the Sandringham electorate. The achievements for my electorate include the retention of Sandringham Hospital and its ongoing role as one of the community's most valuable assets; pivotal advocacy for the establishment of the Bayside police station; the Dingley bypass commitment; the reopening of the New Street gates; the Bayside Bay Trail bike path; the marine sanctuary at Ricketts Point; the funding commitment towards the renewal of the Half Moon Bay boat ramp; \$650 000 in funding to develop the new sporting complex at Banksia Reserve in Beaumaris; the rebuilding of the Hampton beach — at the time the Labor Party inspired the headline, 'ALP pours cold water on Liberal plan' — and support for Hampton Life Saving Club; and the abolition of scallop dredging in Port Phillip Bay.

Other achievements for my electorate include recurrent and capital funding for local schools; pivotal support for multiple foreshore clubs; traffic light improvements at Bay Road, Reserve Road, Balcombe Road, Bluff Road and Beach Road; successful advocacy to protect neighbourhood amenity and ongoing advocacy in relation to contemporary planning issues in the Highett and Cheltenham areas of the city of Bayside; facilitating the ongoing development of Sandringham Yacht Club; library and sporting club community grants; mental health service provision in the middle south-east; coastal erosion protection for Mentone Beach; opposition to Labor's push to build a bus

interchange on the Mentone station gardens site and the ongoing role for that precinct; protection of public open space at the CSIRO land in Highett through the great work of Andrew Robb, the federal member for Goldstein; and contributions to legislative reform in relation to marine parks, the Crimes Act 1958 and the governance of the legal profession in Victoria.

During my time here we have seen the achievements of the Kennett government, which include the Melbourne major events program, the privatisation program to improve the economy and reduce state debt, the construction of Melbourne Museum, the construction of Federation Square, the CityLink project and the introduction of the grand prix to Melbourne.

Contributions made by the previous coalition government include: the return of a sustainable base to the state budget; the halving of stamp duty for first home buyers; the halving of ambulance subscription fees; the doubled application of energy concessions; the Regional Growth Fund and its contribution to the development of Victoria; improved public transport timetables, extra services, improved punctuality and new trams and trains; record investment in education funding, with 24 new schools; the increase in expenditure in vocational education; the \$15 billion record budget in health and hospitals; the 500 additional paramedics and 1800 extra police; the expanded economy through international engagement and trade missions that contributed billions of dollars in future trade opportunities; and the support for the national disability insurance scheme.

In relation to the Sandringham electorate, over the next four years important work will be done to undergird the great work being undertaken at Sandringham College. Labor has a point of difference. Prior to the election, the then shadow education minister told a Bayside education forum that funding for the new school in Beaumaris would flow 'from our very first budget ... I can't be any clearer than that'. However, more recently this year he said, 'Funding will be considered as part of future budget deliberations'. This is a critical issue involving the best sporting and educational infrastructure in the southern region of Melbourne. It is important that a great outcome be developed for the benefit of future generations in the Sandringham electorate, bayside and the wider regional student catchment.

Massive work had been undertaken into that particular project by the Napthine coalition government, which developed a package of well over \$20 million for reinvestment in a state secondary college. In particular, I refer to the great work of the then education minister,

the member for Nepean, who had the vision and foresight to work with other stakeholders to develop an outcome which would leverage an outstanding result for secondary students in the Bayside region.

There is the key issue of planning and the ongoing matters in relation to ensuring that residents in Highett and Cheltenham have a neighbourhood amenity that is consistent with their aspirations and horizons. Concerns were raised at listening posts in the last term with residents stating 'our enjoyment of our properties and the reasons we chose to live in this locale have been put in jeopardy and this is already causing great anxiety and stress to all of us'.

Other concerns include the lack of community infrastructure to accommodate growth, insufficient allowance for on-site parking, permanent second-car street parking, jammed-up roads you would struggle to get a billycart down, a loss of a cul-de-sac lifestyle for children and loss of property value for properties that have already been renovated in areas which were marked for redevelopment. One resident poignantly stated, 'We bought here to live here; this was our forever home', but there are now concerns within the family that they will have no choice but to move. There was also the view expressed that other parts of the city of Bayside have the capacity for growth and that there is a prospect in relation to some commercial land that might be better able to accommodate increased density on a more structured basis. On the latter point I think there is potential for the City of Bayside to achieve a good outcome.

There was also important work in relation to conservation. I welcome the recommendation of Tim Smith from Heritage Victoria that the Mentone Hotel be included as a heritage place on the Victorian Heritage Register, and I look forward to following the progress of that initiative.

There is the issue of kindergarten funding. The previous coalition government provided increased funding in the 2014–15 budget to ensure adequate funding for a full rollout of the 15-hour program in the 2015 kindergarten year. It is now up to the Labor government to come up to that mark.

There has been a great contribution to the development of mental health services in the southern region of Melbourne. I look forward to an ongoing role being defined for the facility in Cheltenham, where, due to the benefaction of a donor and the vision of a group of hardworking parents, an outstanding facility has been developed.

Then we come to the east–west link. I quote the Premier, who on 13 August 2014, when Leader of the Opposition, said:

... a government that actually values our state's reputation and good name — doesn't rip up contracts.

I contrast that with a more recent statement where he noted:

A piece of paper that's got no more value than a ream of Reflex paper ... is not a legally binding contract.

The governments of France and Spain have expressed concerns about this particular issue, which will impact adversely on our reputation.

Finally, I wish to comment on the importance of a good outcome being achieved for the residents of the Mentone Gardens aged-care facility. I comment also on the importance of ALP commitments in relation to grade separations in the Sandringham electorate also being met.

Ms GRALEY (Narre Warren South) — I was reminded by the shambolic exhibition by opposition members during question time today of why they lost the 2014 election. I must say that I did love election day 2014. George Bernard Shaw once said that an election is 'a mud bath for every soul concerned in it'. I think that anybody who goes through an election can attest to feeling a little dirtied by the experience but at the same time being really uplifted by the amazing experience of democracy in action. I never tire of seeing newly arrived migrants in my electorate voting for the very first time and the thrill and pride they have in participating in the great democracy we have in Victoria.

I recall, too, the brilliance of winning my seat for the third time and then very soon after that result being told that we had won government. Paul Keating referred to the sweetest victory of all — an experience without comparison. I can say that on the night of 29 November it was truly a thrill to get those results. It was more than excitement, exhilaration and expectation. It was a relief, because it was good riddance to a government whose members had been lazy and crazy. People knew it and they said, 'Thankfully we can get rid of them'. I say to every Victorian who voted for the Labor Party: thank you. Those votes got rid of a Liberal-Nationals coalition government whose members began their term by launching a coup against the state's chief law officer. Along the way they sacked a Premier and they finished with a porn scandal in the Premier's own office. As our slogan said — and this gelled with the people in my electorate — Victorians deserve better.

So Victorians quite rightly turfed out Geoff Shaw and have given Frankston a chance to be proud of what their community really stands for. They have freed us of the mindless rantings and silly antics of Elizabeth Miller, and now Bentleigh has a representative of quality and one who is Bentleigh through and through. Victorians had the good sense not to vote for one of the former or current councillors of the City of Casey. That was despite the best efforts of the City of Casey to run a politically biased campaign against the sitting Labor members. It was a campaign that was certainly not appreciated or welcomed by local residents, although they funded it. The ratepayers paid for that campaign, and they are very upset. I have lost count of the number of complaints I have received about it. The people who ran that campaign should hang their heads in shame that good ratepayers money was used on such a blatantly political campaign about such a dud project as the east–west link, which is now gone. The message was clear: Victorians have high standards and they want their government to have them, too. So enough of the weird and woeful antics of those opposite and their motley band of backbenchers. They are relegated to nothing but a Trivial Pursuit question.

It is a great honour to be given the responsibility of government. Victorian Labor takes this duty, the responsibility for the future of every person in Victoria, seriously and respectfully and is committed to delivering on what we said we would do. I would like to place on the record my wholehearted thanks to Daniel and Catherine Andrews and their family. They are loving, optimistic and solid. Victorians looked at them and I believe they saw themselves. They saw good, decent and caring people, and they voted accordingly. Indeed, while a member for South Eastern Metropolitan Region was running up and down my pre-polling booth spreading despicable rumours about me, people came up to me and told me how Daniel and Catherine had helped their neighbours through very dire times. That gave me great heart because people knew what solid, respectful and loving people they are, and accordingly Victorians voted for Labor.

I say to the good people of Narre Warren South that it is an honour to represent you in this most august house. As I said earlier, this is my third term, and it feels even better than it did before. Again, I thank the people in the Labor administration team at ALP headquarters and in the then opposition rooms, who ran an outstanding campaign. It was, as the now Premier promised us, a good Labor campaign. It was really easy to get up every morning and tell the good people of Narre Warren South that Labor will rebuild Hampton Park Primary School, after the previous government had shelved its plans, and fix Thompsons Road with \$175 million by

duplicating the road as part of Project 10 000. Not one new road project was completed in Casey by the previous government during its four years.

I also told the people of Narre Warren South that Labor will provide toilets at Hallam railway station after the Baillieu government cancelled the fully funded upgrade of the station and spent the money elsewhere. I told people also that Labor, the party that had built Casey Hospital, would now fund a major \$106.3 million expansion to include an intensive care unit, an eight-storey inpatient unit, four new operating theatres, and a new surgery recovery centre. As I said, it was a good Labor campaign.

My thanks go also to my campaign team of David Iles, Nichole Hayes, Naureen Choudhry, Adam Collins, Mafa, Luke Cutajar, Vanessa Gerdes, Erica Maliki and Lynda Smith, and to the countless volunteers who gave up much of their time for the good cause. They are an excellent team and all of Nicky's friends are amazing.

I thank my family, of course: my husband, Stephen, and my children, Rebecca, Vanessa and Lucas. Without doubt they were the stars of my Facebook page throughout the campaign. My husband was a huge hit every time he appeared! I could not have done it without them and the pillow talk, the jokes at my expense and their marathon efforts in letterboxing and phone banks. Our love is without doubt my greatest source of support.

Returning to Parliament as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Premier is a great honour. I look forward to working with him to implement our no. 1 priority — that is, making Victoria the education state. Rest assured that we will.

I would like to conclude by reading part of a poem I picked up at one of Dr Francis Macnab's services at the beautiful St Michael's church. I think there are times when we all wonder why we do this job. At those times I would pull out this beautiful poem and it would egg me on to our historic victory. In part it reads:

Our future is greater than our past
The most authentic thing about us
Is our capacity to create, to overcome,
To endure, to transform, to love
We are best defined by the mystery
That we are still here, and we can still rise
Upwards, still create better civilisations.

I can assure all Victorians, especially the good people of Narre Warren South, that we have not wasted a single moment and will not be wasting a single moment and that we will not be compromising on the

commitments we gave to you. We will create a better Victoria for everyone.

Mr NORTHE (Morwell) — It gives me pleasure to rise this afternoon to give my contribution in the debate on the motion for the adoption of the address-in-reply to the Governor's speech. I take the opportunity to congratulate the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker on their elevation to their positions. I extend congratulations also to all MPs who have been elected.

The electorate of Morwell experienced a very interesting election campaign. I know these words are uttered quite often, but it is sincerely a privilege to be re-elected for a third time. There is no doubt that over the past four years there have been some significant challenges within the community, but having said that I am absolutely proud of the investment the coalition government made while it was in office. There were seven candidates campaigning for election in Morwell last year, and I acknowledge that the campaign itself was contested in a relatively good spirit. However, I cannot let this moment pass without noting those candidates, particularly Independent candidates, who flouted the truth by continually saying that the government had done nothing for our region. It is simply a joke and not true. I look forward to providing ample evidence that the coalition government invested heavily in the electorate of Morwell.

It is worth going back to the 2010 election, because I think any MP and any government should be held to account on the basis of what they promised and what they delivered. We are now seeing the Labor government contravening all of that already, even at this early stage. Going into the 2010 election the coalition made a number of commitments, and it delivered on them. Some examples include the completion of the Gippsland Plains rail trail; the resurfacing and upgrading of the Traralgon tennis court complex, a project costing in the order of \$800 000; the maintenance of the NightRider bus service in Morwell for the four years of the term; the upgrading of a number of different halls and sporting facilities; and the establishment of a men's shed at Boolarra. There was a whole range of projects we committed to at the 2010 election, and we delivered them. The member for Gembrook, who is sitting beside me, made the point that perhaps I should table this document outlining the very exhaustive contribution and investment that the coalition government made during the course of the previous term to the Morwell electorate. I will refer to that shortly.

In addition to the election commitments we made in 2010 and delivered upon, there was a whole range of

other projects and initiatives that we carried out and investments that we made. Probably the biggest one of those — and it is in the budget in the forward estimates, and we are certainly going to make sure that this government delivers on it — was a commitment of \$73 million to redevelop Latrobe Regional Hospital. The hospital is in serious need of extension and expansion, particularly the emergency department. It also needs additional beds, and that is what this project seeks to do. I was absolutely thrilled and proud to be able to announce that last year. We invested very heavily in Latrobe Regional Hospital, with a new rehabilitation centre.

In relation to the disability sector, we invested in a new respite facility in Morwell. Curiously, even with the growing population in the Latrobe Valley, there has been quite a deal of neglect of respite services in the area over a period of time. It was one of the more emotional launches I have been to when we opened that facility last year. Mental health investment has also been substantial. We were proud in government to ensure that we were able to deliver additional acute mental health beds in the Flynn ward at Latrobe Regional Hospital. We have a supported accommodation project, which is near completion in Traralgon now. The Doorway project, which assists people with mental illness in getting into private rental, is another project that has been very successful.

I turn now to law and order. Sometimes we forget the shortage of police we had in November 2010. I can assure members that we were able to deliver an additional 65 to 70 police officers. I know many of the police officers in our region, and they have been absolutely thrilled that there have been no vacancies at the Latrobe Valley police station for a period because of the investment our government made. In addition to that, in the area of community safety and crime prevention there have been some great programs, including the closed-circuit television system in Traralgon and the provision of alarm systems, security systems and fencing for a range of recreation clubs and other community organisations.

We were able to deliver real community projects. As I mentioned, men's sheds were supported, not only in Boolarra but also in Traralgon and Morwell. There were upgrades to the headspace centre in Morwell, as well as to the town hall. Newman Park in Traralgon and Morwell Town Common both had substantial upgrades. Investment was made in the Morwell Centenary Rose Garden. Our scout halls in Churchill, Morwell and other places are also examples of the many investments we were able to make.

In addition to that we were able to make a substantial investment in education. Primary school welfare officers were funded and there was additional maintenance across a number of our schools, including Kosciuszko Street Primary School in Traralgon and Yinnar Primary School. With respect to skills and training, our Regional Partnerships Facilitation Fund was very successful in the Morwell electorate.

Our investment in emergency services included the Country Fire Authority stations across a number of areas in the Morwell electorate. New vehicles were bought, including a new State Emergency Service vehicle for the Morwell team. In the area of the environment there was lots of support for 'friends of' groups established in relation to our national parks and other parks in the region. There was support for Landcare, and substantial investment was made in trails such as the Grand Strzelecki track, the Grand Ridge rail trail and the Gippsland Plains rail trail. A whole heap of bus services were added to the network, with 800 additional weekly bus services in the Latrobe Valley. Roads and sports and recreation clubs were also well supported during the course of our term in office.

I also want to refer to jobs. We had a fund called the Latrobe Valley Industry and Infrastructure Fund, to which \$50 million was attached. The whole purpose of the fund was to assist local businesses to grow, and it was a key component in creating new jobs. We spent that money; we were able to leverage \$15 million to the tune of about \$93 million through that particular program. We created around 1100 jobs in diverse sectors across our community, including in the timber, agriculture, dairy, transport, quarry and tourism industries. It was a fantastic fund that we had in place, and it delivered great outcomes. Importantly the new government has not seen fit — certainly at least at this point in time — to deliver upon that.

Leading into the 2014 election I was absolutely thrilled that the then government had announced commitments to a whole host of projects across a number of towns in the electorate I represent. Disappointingly and by contrast, whilst I concede there were some projects for the township of Morwell, it was the only town in the whole of Gippsland to which any election commitments were made by Labor. That is disappointing for the good people of Traralgon. There was not one election commitment by the Labor Party for the 28 000 people who reside in Traralgon. We went to the election with commitments such as \$9 million for an indoor heated pool for Traralgon, \$1.2 million for the Newborough Country Fire Authority station upgrade, and \$13 million for the Morwell primary schools.

regeneration project. We also committed to delivering much-needed V-Line services to our community.

Every single town within the Morwell electorate received a commitment from the coalition government that it would deliver projects that the community wants to see delivered, and we were happy to support them. My job now is to ensure that we hold the Labor Party to account in having some of those initiatives delivered.

I express my thanks and gratitude to my campaign team. Unlike other candidates, we had true local helpers; we did not have imports come in from other jurisdictions. Unlike other candidates, we did not rely upon organisations such as GetUp! or Environment Victoria or Friends of the Earth to stump up our campaign. I appreciate the work of Brenton Wight, Sheridan Bond, Kate Lancaster and the local team; all our volunteers, members and supporters; and my parliamentary colleagues and The Nationals more generally. I was fortunate enough to be the Minister for Energy and Resources and the Minister for Small Business for a short time, and I thank my ministerial staff: Matt Harris, Lea Bacon, Rachel White, Michael Dobbie, Jo Gauci, Alysha Murphy and Whitney Jago. I also thank my wonderful electorate office staff, Katherine and Tayla, who are gold. They are the most loyal staff and do a fantastic job and complete a great amount of work, as most electorate office staff do of course.

In closing, I thank my family. To Jenny and my children: thank you for your support over the last eight years. I am sure they are not looking forward to another four years, but I am, so thank you very much.

Ms HUTCHINS (Minister for Local Government) — I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the Kulin nation, the land upon which we meet, and their elders past and present. It is a great privilege for me to stand here as the inaugural member for Sydenham, a new seat that was created during the redistribution before the last election. I thank the people of the Sydenham electorate for electing me as their member. It is a great honour, and I will continue my work in standing up for the people of Sydenham, as I will stand up for the interests of all Victorians in my role as a minister.

I would not be here today without the support of the large army of volunteers and ALP supporters in my area. I sincerely thank them all for being part of the campaign. No amount of thankyou letters or certificates can demonstrate how grateful I am to the dedicated members who fought hard to get Labor back into government. I thank all the volunteers who worked as

part of my team in setting up street stalls, making phone calls, entering data and being at every pre-poll day with me, and obviously manning the booths on the day. They know the millions of things they did to help out, and I thank them very much.

I also pay special tribute to my electorate staff — Mark Gazic, Maddy Moore, Elvira Tsecoutanis, Despina Havelas and Don Townsend. I send an extremely special thankyou to Dianne Bell, my mother, without whom I would not be standing here today as the member for Sydenham. She has given me guidance on both the campaign trail and on life in general, so thank you, Mum. Both my husband and my son have stood by me through the long days of campaigning and continue to support me in my role as a minister, and I would just like to say that they both keep me laughing and keep me sane, as they did during the election. Thank you to all of my colleagues. It is a privilege to be part of the Labor team, and I look forward to achieving the things that are important to the people of Sydenham and the people of Victoria.

Locally, we committed to building a children's and women's hospital for the west, something of which I am extremely proud. As Melbourne's west is the fastest growing area in Australia, Sunshine Hospital has the third highest number of births in Victoria, with 5100 babies being delivered in the last 12 months alone. The Andrews government has committed to building the Western Women's and Children's Hospital, which will provide 237 new beds, 39 special care nursery cots and 4 new operating theatres. It is a fantastic commitment and will be a proud achievement. We do this because we understand the needs of the west and the need for growth, unlike opposition members.

Another local priority for my area is to build the Taylors Hill senior school. As I said, Melbourne's west is the fastest growing region across the whole of Australia at the moment, and we have committed to building a years 10–12 secondary school in Taylors Hill which will meet the demands of many of those kids who have to travel long distances in order to get themselves a public secondary education.

I also proudly stand here as the new Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. I was shocked, upon coming into this portfolio, by where we are currently in our achievements and lack of achievements in Closing the Gap. Labor worked hard when it was in government on closing that gap and focused on progressing self-determination for Aboriginal Victorians. We looked at funding programs in maternal and child health, we looked at policies that would go to the core of reducing smoking rates and improving the general

health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities within this state. We intend to build on those achievements of the past and work towards overcoming the unacceptable health, education and life outcomes and gaps that Aboriginal Victorians currently face.

As the new Minister for Industrial Relations, I can attest to the fact that some huge commitments were made in the lead-up to the election, and we are already delivering on them. The Andrews government believes in a fair, comprehensive safety net of wages and conditions, good-faith bargaining and the right to take lawful industrial action. That is why we have recently made a submission to the Productivity Commission and also a submission on the minimum rates of pay increases that the Fair Work Commission is currently undertaking. We also recognise the value and reward that the Victorian public service and its funded agencies deserve. Unlike opposition members, the Andrews government will not take workers for granted. We will work to ensure that we are at the negotiating table, and we will not embark on wholesale sackings like opposition members did when 4600 public sector jobs were lost.

Victorian people suffer when the government uses enterprise bargaining negotiations to wage war on its front-line workers. We will not be doing that. We will be at the table negotiating in good faith, as a model employer, making sure that we deliver in a timely manner. I am very proud to be the member for Sydenham and very excited about the work ahead in the years to come.

Mr WAKELING (Ferntree Gully) — I am very pleased to make a contribution to the address-in-reply to the Governor's speech, and I thank the people of Knox and the Ferntree Gully electorate for electing me for the third time. It is a great honour to serve this wonderful community.

I have been pleased to represent this community and to look back at what we achieved in a four-year period of government. One of the biggest investments in education in Ferntree Gully occurred during that time, and I thank the then Minister for Education, the member for Nepean, for his efforts. We saw the rebuilding of Ferntree Gully North Primary School, Wattleview Primary School, Mountain Gate Primary School, and Fairhills Primary School. What did Labor commit for those schools in 2010? Absolutely nothing. It did not care about my community, and that is why I was pleased to join with the then minister at the last election to announce funding of \$8 million for Fairhills High School, \$5 million for Scoresby Secondary

College and more than \$400 000 for Knox Park Primary School. That is over \$20 million of promises in the Knox community at the same time as Labor offered not one cent because it does not care about the people of the east. In contrast, I was very pleased to be part of a government that was delivering for my community.

We know that there was a major issue at Ferntree Gully station with respect to car parking. I was very pleased to see that as a coalition we made a very clear commitment that we would provide additional car spaces, with over \$1 million committed to provide extra car parking. Labor was not prepared to match that commitment, and we have pushed this new government to provide that vital funding.

I was also pleased to work with my local environment groups, the Friends of Koolunga and Friends of Blind Creek. The member for Gembrook joined me just recently to talk to those groups about the work we did there when in government. We were promising, if re-elected, that we would provide further funding to those groups. The minister is at the table, and I will continue to push for my community to see those funding commitments continued.

I was also pleased to walk around the nine sporting ovals that we resurfaced as a government, which has been of significant benefit, and to see the duplication of High Street Road, which has also been of significant benefit to my community. I spent two weeks standing at the pre-poll voting booth. About a third of our electorate went through, and I was there every day. I was there with my Labor opponent at the time, Matt Posetti, and I genuinely wish him well because it was a well fought campaign. He worked hard, and I congratulate him on his efforts. Many people walked in and said with disdain, 'Labor's position on east-west!'. One of the Labor campaign workers at the time said, 'We don't have to worry because we're going to rip the contract up'. I said, 'How much is it going to cost you?'. He said, 'It's not going to cost us a cent'. We were offering to take him up on a slab. You know what, Speaker, I would have loved to have taken him up on that slab because he told me that it was not going to cost the Victorian community one cent. I have not had the opportunity this week to see whether or not the upwards of \$800 million or \$900 million equates to zero compensation. I was very pleased to see the people in my community express their view this week very clearly. I have a number of email responses from my residents about the disdain they have for this government over this very important issue.

In the short period I have left available to me I say thank you very much to my community and to my

campaign team for the wonderful work they put in: Peter Horsfall; Jan Millard; Hurtle Lupton, a former member of this house; Dawn Keast; George and Peggy Lasa; Merryn Yeo; and many others on our campaign team. I also thank those people who came out and manned our booths for the work they did over several months. It was certainly greatly pleasing. I was very pleased to be able to work with my local colleagues, the members for Bayswater and Rowville. We work well as a team. We were all re-elected, and that was very rewarding.

I say thank you to my office staff for their work. Emily, Jo and Nicole worked extremely hard over the four-year period to help with the re-election process. We were very pleased with the election result. I thank the team in my ministerial office: Ben, Ana, Russell, Madeline and Matthew. They worked very hard. I also thank the departmental staff for the work they did and the support they provided.

I thank my family: my mum; my wife, Levili; and my kids, Thomas, Emily and Grace. They came out and helped me on the pre-poll booth. The girls, however, sought to go to their dance concert on election night rather than spend it with dad. I am okay with that. They were aged 8 and 6, so I gave them the benefit of the doubt. I do not think they actually understood what an election was, but I was grateful for their support during the campaign.

I thank my wonderful team of colleagues from the coalition. We have worked extremely well together. We recognise and accept that we lost the election, but we said we would hold this new government to account. I think by any measure we can say that the Leader of the Opposition and the team are clearly holding this government to account. The Victorian community is seeing already what this new government is like. I again say thank you to the people of the Ferntree Gully electorate. It is a great honour to serve in this house. I also thank you, Speaker, and congratulate you on the position you hold.

Mr NARDELLA (Melton) — Olé, Speaker, formally, on your elevation to the Speaker's position.

The Greens, Speaker, the Greens. I went outside before and there were all these green triangles. With the green triangles were all these people with wings on their backs, all these angels, just down the parliamentary stairs. Not only are the Greens the fairies at the bottom of the garden, but now we have got the angel Greens at the bottom of the steps of Parliament House. That is how kooky these people are. That is how wacko these people are, every long last one of them. That is how

wacky the Greens political party and its representatives in this Parliament and in other parliaments in Australia are.

These people are there for one thing and one thing only — that is, to destroy the Labor Party. If you get nothing else out of this speech, you will understand that the Greens political party is about destroying us. They are like the National Civic Council and the Democratic Labour Party that we fought for decade after decade following the split of 1955. They are the ones who are attacking us, along with the Liberal Party and The Nationals. They are the ones who only go and attack our seats. They never go to a Liberal Party seat. They never put money into a Liberal Party seat. They never attack the Liberal Party. What they do is sit down and caucus with the Liberal Party. They get their instructions from the Liberal Party. They work through select committees with the Liberal Party. They do the Liberal Party's dirty work. At every opportunity they go out and attack the Labor Party, and they do that consistently.

Let us have a look at the last election. I have in my hand a 2014 Victorian election brochure from the Coalition Against Duck Shooting. Whose photo is inside the brochure, caring more about ducks than the people and families of Victoria who have seen hospital beds close and money ripped out of education and TAFE? Sue Pennicuik, a member for Southern Metropolitan Region in the Council, is inside, with a duck in her hand. What is the slogan? The slogan is 'Greens First. Labor Last'. What a disgrace! What did the Greens do in the seats of Bentleigh, Carrum, Mordialloc and Frankston? They put out their how-to-vote cards, but they were open how-to-vote cards. They did not preference us first. They never put us first — before the Liberals and everyone else. Why? Because the Greens political party wanted to elect the Liberal Party and The Nationals again.

The Greens were the supporters of the member for South-West Coast as Premier and the former member for Hawthorn as Premier. The Greens political party is the appendage of the Liberal Party and The Nationals. Every time the members of the Greens political party say their policy position is such and such, they claim everything that we have ever achieved because they have no achievements of their own — they have not achieved one single thing here in Victoria or in Australia. When the Right Honourable Gough Whitlam died they even had the gall to claim him as one of their own. What a disgrace! What a shame.

Did the Greens political party save the Franklin Dam? Of course not. It was the Hawke Labor government that

saved the Franklin Dam. Whenever they are tested, whenever their mettle is put to the test, they squib it. When the emissions trading scheme was twice voted on in the Senate, they voted it down. Ultimately, they voted down the carbon tax that was passed by the Gillard government, because through that process they destroyed not only the Rudd government but the Gillard government. That is how grubby these Greens political party politicians are, both in Victoria and Australia. They are the fifth column here in Victoria, attacking only the Labor Party.

I remember that the day after we won the election in November last year, they were all together there saying, 'We're going to keep the Labor Party to account'. They did not say, 'Congratulations, Daniel Andrews. Congratulations, Labor Party. You've done a great job and we'll work with you'. No, they did not say that. It was about attacking us. It was like last time, from 2006 to 2010, when they caucused with the Liberal Party. In parliamentary committees — be it the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee, be it the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee — they sat down and caucused with the Liberal Party, taking their instructions from them. They work against the Labor Party at every opportunity. They are just appalling.

When we lost government, instead of fighting the Liberals and The Nationals and getting rid of the previous government, they attacked us. They spent every single dollar they had attacking us in Melbourne, Footscray, Prahran, Richmond, Northcote and Brunswick. That is the only thing they know how to do because they have no other policy. They only want to make sure that the mob on the other side — the Liberal Party and The Nationals — become the government here in Victoria. They have no interest in implementing their own policies to keep in tune with their own voters or even with their own members. When, for example, we put a policy on wind turbines to the people, what we will see and what we have seen in the past — although we think the Greens are warm and fuzzy and believe in human-induced climate change and want wind turbines — is the Greens going out and opposing wind turbines because of the noise, because of the wacko science reports that they put together. They oppose the visual effects as well. They go out and oppose real climate change.

I remember, Speaker — and you were in the house at the time — when the Greens political party members, all three of them, voted down the referendum option for local people here in Victoria to knock off the Howard proposal for nuclear energy in Victoria. They voted against it because they are not fair dinkum. They do not care about their own people; they only care about

themselves. They are self-serving and only care about their own position. That is just a disgrace. They only cooperate with the Liberal Party. That is what their history has been.

If we look at the government of Premier Field in Tasmania, we see the Greens destroyed that Labor government, as they did the Rudd and Gillard prime ministerships. Not once when Julia Gillard was under attack did we see the Greens supporting the Prime Minister or the government. Not once did they come out and support Julia Gillard when she was being attacked by all those males — all those disgraceful pieces of dirt. Not once were the Greens there. They were here, with the people behind them, trying to get rid of us.

They claim as theirs every achievement — such as the Franklin Dam and food irradiation, which were initiatives of the Hawke Labor government. They claim the mandatory renewable energy target and the dental scheme. Who put that in place? It was not the Greens. The Greens did not put the dental scheme in place. Labor put it in place; the Gillard government put it in place. Even though they claim the carbon tax, we put it in place.

Let us look now at what real policy change could have been. Instead of the Greens attacking us and supporting every single select committee against the Labor Party from 2006 to 2010, we could have closed the Hazelwood power station had we won last time round. Yet they allowed the Liberal Party to win. They were the ones who elected the Liberal Party.

I am being wound up. I will have more to say on this at a later stage, but I want to leave members with two things. Who was the genius who put the former Premier in the dicky-seat, all by himself, where the former member for Bass used to sit? And I want to know when those in the departure lounge are finally going to depart. I will be looking forward to those by-elections, whenever they come up.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr CLARK (Box Hill).

Debate adjourned until later this day.

ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Membership

The SPEAKER — Order! I have received the resignation of Ms Symes, MLC, from the Environment

and Natural Resources Committee effective from Thursday, 16 April 2015.

PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES

Membership

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

That —

- (1) Mr Angus, Mr Gidley, Mr Staikos and Ms Thomson (Footscray) be members of the Accountability and Oversight Committee.
- (2) Ms Asher, Ms Blandthorn, Mr Dixon, Mr Northe and Ms Spence be members of the Electoral Matters Committee.
- (3) Ms Couzens, Mr Edbrooke, Ms Edwards, Ms Kealy, Ms McLeish, and Ms Sheed be members of the Family and Community Development Committee.
- (4) Mrs Fyffe, Mr Hibbins, Mr D. O'Brien (Gippsland South), Mr Richardson (Mordialloc) and Ms Thomson (Footscray) and Mr Wells be members of the IBAC Committee.
- (5) Mr Dimopoulos, Mr Morris, Mr D. O'Brien (Gippsland South), Mr Pearson, Mr T. Smith (Kew) and Ms Ward be members of the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee.
- (6) Contingent upon the coming into operation of the *Parliamentary Committees and Inquiries Acts Amendment Bill 2015*:
 - (a) Mr Crisp, Mr Perera and Ms Ryall be a member of the Economic, Education, Jobs and Skills Committee; and
 - (b) Mr Dixon, Mr Howard, Ms Suleyman, Mr Thompson (Sandringham) and Mr Tilley be members of the Law Reform, Road and Community Safety Committee.

Motion agreed to.

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

- (1) That Mr Bull (Sunbury), Mr Crisp, Mrs Fyffe, Ms Staikos, Ms Suleyman and Mr Thompson (Sandringham) be members of the House Committee.
- (2) That Ms Allan, Mr Clark, Mr Merlino, Mr O'Brien (Malvern), Mr Pakula, Ms Richardson (Northcote) and Mr Walsh be members of the Dispute Resolution Committee.
- (3) That a select committee be appointed to inquire into and report upon complaints of breach of privilege referred to it by the house and right of reply applications referred under SO 227; such committee to consist of Ms Allan, Ms D'Ambrosio, Mr Morris, Mr Mulder, Ms Neville,

Ms Ryan, Mr Scott and Mr Wells and that five be the quorum.

- (4) That a select committee be appointed to consider and report upon the standing orders and practices of the house, such committee to consist of the Speaker, Ms Allan, Ms Asher, Mr Brooks, Mr Clark, Mr Hibbins, Mr Hodgett, Ms Kairouz, Mr Nardella and Ms Ryan, and Ms Sheed and that six be the quorum.

Motion agreed to.

STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE

Reference

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

That —

- (1) there be referred to the Standing Orders Committee for consideration, inquiry and report:
 - (a) scope and overlap of joint committees and Legislative Council committees, including options for resolving any issues;
 - (c) options for Public Accounts and Estimates Committee reform;
 - (d) appropriate size and chairing arrangements of committees;
 - (e) opportunities to enhance participation in the running of committees;
- (2) the Standing Orders Committee have the power to confer with the Procedure Committee of the Legislative Council in completing the inquiry and to report jointly to the house; and
- (3) a message be sent to the Legislative Council advising them accordingly.

Motion agreed to.

NATIONAL PARKS AMENDMENT (PROHIBITING CATTLE GRAZING) BILL 2015

Second reading

Debate resumed from 15 April; motion of Ms NEVILLE (Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water).

Ms NEVILLE (Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water) — I take this opportunity to thank all members who have made a contribution to the debate on the National Parks Amendment (Prohibiting Cattle Grazing) Bill 2015. Firstly, I want to remind the house that it was a clear election commitment of this

government to bring in this legislation. It was an election commitment we made in 2011. It received substantial coverage when we made it and in the lead-up to the election.

Having listened to a lot of the debate over the last day or so, I feel the need to step back a little bit and review our understanding of the current situation. Cattle grazing was banned in the Alpine National Park in 2005. Similarly in 2009 it was banned in the river red gum national parks, and that came into effect in 2014. Compensation was paid to all those who still held licences at the time. Those opposite who have gone on and on about the importance of cattle grazing and its history are disingenuous. At no stage when those opposite were last in government, which was not that long ago, did they attempt to amend the effect of the law as it stands, which is that cattle grazing is banned. If they had honestly cared so much about it, they would have changed the legislation.

Members of the former government could not justify reintroducing cattle grazing, and rather than go to the community and have the debate in Parliament, they misled the mountain cattlemen and the community by pretending to reintroduce cattle grazing through a so-called scientific trial. That trial was firstly knocked back and rubbished by the then federal minister and then by the courts, at a substantial cost to Victorians. Then with the change of federal government it tried again and the trial ended up back in the courts. That is where it was when we came to government. It is my view that the former government was illegally doing this trial and that it overrode the wishes of this Parliament and the legislation that was passed in 2005.

Rather than allow the court case to continue, and the costs to continue to increase for Victorians to have to bear, we have introduced this legislation, which clears that up. I make the point that if this legislation is not passed — and I believe it will be passed in both houses — cattle grazing will still be banned in Victoria. It will still be banned in the high country, and it will still be banned in the river red gum areas. I do not want Victorians to be paying for a court case to test this issue. That is what was happening. The matter was in the courts when this government was elected. If those opposite had cared enough about this issue, they had every opportunity over four years to change the legislation and they did not do it. It was basically a stunt.

The other thing that has become clear to me through this debate is that those opposite are antiscience. It is like climate change. On one side you have the overwhelming evidence of specialist scientists across

the world and on the other you have a few scientists with a view that climate change is not real. Apparently when that happens it is all debatable, it is all contestable. The situation with immunisation is similar. We have overwhelming evidence that immunisation is good for our community, but we have a few with a contrary view, and again apparently this issue is contestable.

We have the same situation here. We have overwhelming consensus in the scientific community that cattle grazing is bad for the environment and also does not reduce fire risk. We have a letter that was signed by 125 scientists who are all members of the Ecological Society of Australia. These are ecologists: people who study fire and the alpine ecology of the area. They wrote to the previous minister. The Australian Academy of Science made it clear that the whole scientific trial was flawed, and the Royal Society of Victoria expressed grave concern to the minister.

These are leading scientific organisations and scientists in this state and this country. There is no question that there is a clear consensus in the scientific community. The science is clear, and it has been clear for decades, that, firstly, cattle grazing does enormous environmental damage, and secondly, it does not reduce fire risk. I have here some of the scientific evidence on the science of cattle grazing, and I seek leave to table it. Leave is not granted? That tells a big story.

I now seek leave to table the scientific evidence that came out of the scientific trial from 2011. I am seeking leave to table the evidence that came out. Actually there is nothing to table, just blank pieces of paper. No scientific evidence came out of that trial. In fact not one scientist would put their name to the scientific trial. There was no scientific trial.

The science is clear, and that is why everyone else in the country removed cattle from their national parks. New South Wales removed it from Kosciusko National Park in the 1950s and 1960s. The science is absolutely settled. However, some opposition members were suggesting yesterday that we look at Ethiopia and Mongolia — apparently they are thinking about cattle grazing — as examples of how to manage forests. I suggest those opposite actually look at what is happening in those developing countries. They will see significant undermining of forests and significant long-term damage. If members read an article published in the February issue of *Nature World News*, they will see that cattle grazing is doing significant damage in Mongolia.

One of my favourite poems, and something people have referred to in the course of the debate, is *The Man from Snowy River*. My father used to read it to me a lot as a child. He was a big fan of Banjo Patterson and Henry Lawson. This poem tells just one of the stories of Australia — there are lots of stories about Australia. It tells a story about Australia and its connection to the Snowy Mountains. It is probably not the same long-term connection that our Indigenous people have to those areas but it is a significant story.

These stories are about men, their endurance, their perseverance and about rounding up wild horses. This poem is about mountain horsemen, it is not about mountain cattlemen. It has never been about cows. There are no cows in the poem. It is all about rounding up wild horses. But in addition, Kosciusko, which is part of the story of *The Man from Snowy River* and where it is really set, has not had cattle since the 1960s. Cattle grazing has been banned since the 1960s because even back then the scientific evidence was clear.

Let us be clear again: there is a scientific consensus to continue to ban cattle grazing. That is the overwhelming view of scientists who specialise in this area. It is overwhelming right across the country and in fact across the world. Similar science exists in relation to the river red gum area as well. I make it clear again that this is the current law in Victoria. The current law in Victoria bans cattle grazing. In fact it is banned in all of our national parks. There is none. The reason we are here is those opposite sought to find a loophole to overturn the will of this Parliament. We are seeking to ensure that the loophole that supposedly enabled that scientific trial is closed and that the will of this Parliament as expressed in 2005, which has never been changed, is maintained and respected.

That is what should be expected of all parliamentarians. Unless you are willing to change the law, then you respect and maintain the law that has been set by this Victorian Parliament.

House divided on motion:

Ayes, 45

Allan, Ms	Knight, Ms
Blandthorn, Ms	Lim, Mr
Brooks, Mr	McGuire, Mr
Bull, Mr J.	Merlino, Mr
Carbines, Mr	Neville, Ms
Carroll, Mr	Noonan, Mr
Couzens, Ms	Pakula, Mr
D'Ambrosio, Ms	Pallas, Mr
Dimopoulos, Mr	Pearson, Mr
Donnellan, Mr	Perera, Mr
Edbrooke, Mr	Richardson, Mr
Edwards, Ms	Richardson, Ms

Eren, Mr
Foley, Mr
Garrett, Ms
Graley, Ms
Green, Ms
Halfpenny, Ms
Hibbins, Mr
Howard, Mr
Hutchins, Ms
Kairouz, Ms
Kilkenny, Ms

Sandell, Ms
Scott, Mr
Spence, Ms
Staikos, Mr
Suleyman, Ms
Thomas, Ms
Thomson, Ms
Ward, Ms
Williams, Ms
Wynne, Mr

Noes, 37

Angus, Mr
Battin, Mr
Blackwood, Mr
Bull, Mr T.
Burgess, Mr
Clark, Mr
Crisp, Mr
Dixon, Mr
Fyffe, Mrs
Gidley, Mr
Guy, Mr
Hodgett, Mr
Katos, Mr
Kealy, Ms
McCurdy, Mr
McLeish, Ms
Morris, Mr
Mulder, Mr
Napthine, Dr

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

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Consideration in detail

Clause 1

Mr BATTIN (Gembrook) — It gives me pleasure to rise to speak about clause 1 of the National Parks Amendment (Prohibiting Cattle Grazing) Bill 2015. I raise an issue in relation to how you go about creating the purpose of a bill. When you are looking at the design of a bill initially you would think you would consult with those who are most affected by it and that you would at least speak to those on the ground and on the land who have been taking care of that land, whether that is for 170 years or thousands of years prior to that.

Our main issue is around the government's lack of consultation with the Mountain Cattlemens Association of Victoria, which is particularly focused around Merrijig and up through those areas. Another issue we have relates to a contract that was in place with the Gunaikurnai people, who had submitted to the previous government a letter of support in relation to its alpine grazing trial to establish a trial that would allow cattle back into the high country. They hoped the trial would

allow them the opportunity to work up there and be involved in the management of land in our alpine national parks.

We in this house and everyone in Victoria knows that we have some of the most beautiful alpine national parks in Australia. When you walk through those national parks today, you can see that at some stage there has been interference with the natural environment up there. That interference can vary. It includes the traditional owners, who have obviously burnt the land in the past and learnt to live off it while ensuring that they protected it for the future. They still do that, and they still want to ensure those skills are available. That is why the previous government put that contract in place with the Gunaikurnai people, which is very important for them into the future.

The mountain cattlemens association and other cattlemen have worked in the alpine ranges and in other parks, even prior to there being national parks. They have protected that land and ensured that it is among the best natural environments in Victoria and Australia. When you walk through the Alpine National Park now, you will see that it is in pristine condition. It is in that condition because it has been maintained so effectively in the past. It has been effectively maintained by the Indigenous people, the traditional owners, just as it is being maintained now by the mountain cattlemen.

The concern we are raising relates to consultation. We would not call making a quick phone call after doing a media release consultation. I understand that the comeback from the government every time is, 'But we have a mandate'. We totally accept that there was an election, and we totally accept that the government has a mandate to deliver things, but when you look at the electorates this legislation affects, they are all Nationals and Liberal Party seats. The Nationals and the Liberal Party are very proud to represent the communities up there. We are very proud to work with the mountain cattlemen. We are very proud to work with the local traditional owners of the land. We are very proud of the process that was followed by the former government and the progress that was made to ensure that we had a trial to look at the reduction of fuel through those areas to prevent fires in the future.

I refer to comments made by the member for South-West Coast yesterday. He spoke about mega-fires, which have such a big impact on our landscape throughout Victoria. Every past government, when you go through the reports, has said that we must look at all methods of and all opportunities for fire mitigation. This is one of those issues where you need evidence, and if the evidence came out in the former

government's proposed three or four-year trial, and it was against grazing cattle in that area, then obviously the trial would have ended. However, the government wishes to end the trial early. It wants to end a proper scientific trial that would have allowed us the opportunity to put forward to the community an alternative for fire mitigation and fire reduction. I know that fire mitigation and fire reduction are not high on the agenda of those opposite. It was not high on Labor's agenda during the 11 years it was last in government, but it is very important that it comes onto Labor's agenda for the future. The 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission has recommended that we review this, and I think this is one area where we must stand by it. We must continue this trial and we must continue with consultation and speak to the people who have worked on and loved that land for a long time.

Ms NEVILLE (Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water) — I thank the member for the questions he raised. There were a number of them. Firstly, I would like to say that we need to be clear about this. There was actually no scientific trial conducted on grazing cattle in our alpine parks. The first attempt was knocked off by the federal environment minister and then it went through the courts. There were no scientists involved and there was no scientific trial. The former government did try to put the cattle back in, but there were no scientists involved and no trial. That is the first thing I would say.

Secondly, national parks are a very small part of our public land. They are a very tiny component of all of our public land. The reason we have national parks is that we have identified some unique areas of Victoria in terms of the flora and fauna that can be found in them which we believe we need to protect. National parks make up about only 3 per cent of public land. Compared to everything else, including state parks, where you can have cattle grazing, it is a very small area. In 2005, and in the decades leading into that time, all the evidence has shown that continuing to allow cattle grazing in national parks undermines the environmental values of those parks — that is, the things that we were trying to protect by establishing that park in the first place. It is not just me saying that. I tried to table the scientific evidence, just some of it, but it is overwhelming. This is scientific evidence that comes from people who spend their lives looking at this.

There is the example of Richard Williams, who has spent 35 years, almost his whole life, in the area of alpine ecology. He worked in the high country for 35 years. His whole area of study has been the alpine environment, and he has made it clear that grazing

cattle in this area has done extreme damage. There was absolutely no evidence to suggest that it assisted in fire reduction. Work has been done by an agricultural scientist and an ecologist, and it is all in these publications, if members wish me to table them, if they have not read them. Reports from the 1980s and 1990s indicate that cattle selectively graze herbs and grass and do not feed on the elevated fuel that most contribute to landscape-scale fires that occur in alpine environments.

That is just one example. As I said, we have decades of scientific research on this issue, and the consensus is absolutely clear. Firstly, alpine cattle grazing does extreme damage to our environment, and secondly, it does not reduce fire risk in either alpine areas or in the river red gum national parks — and there is a range of scientific evidence and reports in relation to the river red gum national parks.

As I said earlier, those opposite have an antiscience view. Apparently if you have a couple of people who disagree, the science has not been resolved. It is like climate change. The whole world believes in climate change except maybe a handful on the other side of the house and therefore it is apparently contestable. The same thing happens with immunisation. It is contestable because a few people have a different view. That is not the way science works. Let us look at what ecologists and agricultural scientists — people who have spent decades working in this area — have said. Let us look at international research and the practice that has been undertaken in other states in Australia. It is absolutely clear that alpine cattle grazing is not in contention.

In addition to that, on the issue of consultation, as I said before, 3600 people participated in the 2005 consultation process on the legislation, which banned cattle grazing. This bill is not prosecuting the ban on cattle grazing; it is closing a loophole the coalition said was in the legislation. I do not believe it was there, but those opposite claim it was. I do not think I could have been clearer to the Victorian community or in my meetings with the mountain cattlemen that this was Labor policy; that if Labor were elected, the practice would not continue. There was significant consultation on removing cattle from the river red gum national parks development and in the high country, and it occurred back in 2005 and 2009 respectively.

Mr T. BULL (Gippsland East) — The issue I would like to raise with the minister relates to clause 1 and the general purpose of the bill. I note the minister's comments about listening to the scientific evidence. I would like to make some comments specifically on the issue of scientific evidence, not about climate change or the ecology of national parks. My comments are

specific to grazing and its association with fires. As the minister said, we need to listen to the science. We have a situation where grazing is being used as a bushfire mitigation measure in several countries around the world. The minister quoted a couple of obscure examples just before I stood up, but grazing on public land is currently being used as a fire mitigation measure in France, Greece and the United States.

Ms Neville interjected.

Mr T. BULL — This is about the minister's assertion that the science is in on grazing having no impact on fires. I ask her to put aside the land management issue for a moment. Yesterday in the house I quoted from several independent studies of recent years in the United States, which say that grazing is an effective fire mitigation tool. Two of Australia's most eminent scientists in the area, David Packham and Professor Mark Adams, say the science is not in. David Packham, who has 50 years of working in the area of fire controls, has commented:

On the subject of grazing and fuel reduction, adequate scientific work just does not exist in any credible form. It is a falsehood to pretend that it does so. The minister's comments in Parliament imply wider scientific work that has been done in the alpine area automatically supports this legislation. It does not.

The practice of grazing and fuel reduction is going on in other countries, two of arguably our most eminent scientists in the field say the science clearly is not in and a number of studies variously support this proposition. In the ACT, 350 kilometres as the crow flies from the Alpine National Park, grazing is being used as a fire mitigation measure.

I would like to know why — given the overwhelming evidence internationally and from our own experts here in Australia as well as from recent research papers from 2011 onwards that have been done independently and very credibly — in one of the most fire-prone areas in the world, we are ruling out a trial, when the science clearly is not in, in relation to using grazing as a fire mitigation measure.

Ms NEVILLE (Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water) — I cannot be clearer: there is an absolutely clear consensus in the scientific community. It is a clear consensus from the Royal Society of Victoria and the Australian Academy of Science. There is clear consensus among the 125 scientists, who are ecologists who deal with alpine and fire issues. There is clear consensus across the scientific community. As I said, just because a few people have a different view, it does not mean it is contestable. We have to look at

people's skills and capacities and what they are contributing to particular debates.

David Packham has a great record in terms of being an industrial chemist and working for the CSIRO. There is no question that he has a very strong record. However, of the 100 papers that people have talked about, none has been about this issue. No scientist would put their name to the research trial that those opposite are trying to undertake, and no scientist has put their name to the discontinued New South Wales research that David Packham was leading either. I am not trying to denigrate him; he has a great record in the area in which he is a specialist. What I am talking about is the people who are specialists in this area, who unquestionably say that and not only about the environmental damage but also about the fire risk.

Let us look at the Ecological Society of Australia, which is not in the fringe element of scientists. It says there is no scientific evidence to support the claim that grazing in alpine and subalpine zones plays any role in mitigating the effects of wildfire. The report to this Parliament, by the task force that was set up, said there is currently no scientific support for the view that grazing prevents blazing in the high country. In fact if members read that report, they will see it is absolutely clear that there was no difference between those areas that were affected by bushfire whether grazing was undertaken or not.

I referred earlier to Williams, who with 35 years of study is one of the leading researchers in this area. His evidence is that:

The use of livestock grazing in Australian alpine environments as a fire abatement practice is not justified on scientific grounds ...

All the information is in the scientific material, so members can read it, but they did not want me to table the evidence. The list goes on. A parliamentary committee inquiry was undertaken to look at the issue of bushfire disaster in relation to the Barmah area. That parliamentary inquiry also found that grazing does not reduce bushfire risk in that area either.

We need to make sure that we are basing our decisions on the consensus of our scientific community, not on the views that a few people might have. There is no question that that exists in relation to this bill.

Mr CRISP (Mildura) — Could the minister point to what scientific evidence was used to override the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC) recommendation in its report about grazing in the lower reaches of the river red gum national parks.

Ms NEVILLE (Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water) — Again, all of this was prosecuted in the development of legislation in 2009 that was voted on by this Parliament. The reason we did it and the reason it was agreed to was that VEAC made the recommendation, the Parliament voted on legislation that banned cattle grazing, and in addition to that we paid out all the licences that existed. Everyone was paid out. As I just said, there was a parliamentary inquiry that looked at this issue, and there are reports in relation to it, such as the study by Jansen and Robertson published in the *Journal of Applied Ecology* and entitled 'Relationships between livestock management and the ecological condition of riparian habitats along an Australian floodplain river'. I can read all of them out, but there is a list of journals and scientific evidence, and they were used to determine the decision of this Parliament in 2009 to ban cattle grazing in the river red gum area.

Ms THOMSON (Footscray) — My concern is around what has been raised about the question of consultation. I believe the minister said 3600 submissions were made to the original inquiry back in 2005 before that legislation was brought to the Parliament. I would have thought that that would have been one of the largest numbers of submissions made to any inquiry undertaken by the Parliament. That very extensive list of submissions as well as, as I understand it, visitations to the sites and engagement with cattlemen and women about the arrangements that were to be put in place and their understanding would have contributed to the evidence. The cattlemen and women had a chance to make submissions, and they took multiple opportunities to talk to members of Parliament about their concerns.

But the overwhelming number of submissions that came in suggested that alpine grazing was more dangerous to the environment and the very delicate ecosystem that exists in the high country, particularly in national parks. I also understand that we are not talking about the high country in totality; we are only talking about those areas of the high country that have been declared national parks. The minister mentioned that we have a very low percentage of land in national parks, and I would assume that means that the percentage of national parks that are in the high country would be even less again. I know we face the extinction of not only fauna but also flora vital to that ecosystem and that cattle are a threat in terms of ensuring that that flora is able to be protected. And for small animals and fauna the protection of that vegetation which provides for their survival puts all of that in doubt.

In light of the consultation that took place in 2005, could the minister indicate the level of submissions in support of the banning of cattle from these parks, in the sense of how much community consultation there was broadly speaking? That includes how much opportunity the cattlemen and women had to contribute their perspective as well as consultation with environmental groups and those who use the national parks.

It might be fine to have a licence to take your cattle into a park. If you have to take your cattle out and you are compensated, you kind of break even — you have been compensated for not being able to use the national park and for your licence. Mind you, I do not think we ask for that money back when we let them back in. My concern is for those who enjoy the natural environment for what it is and want to spend time in the national parks and ensure that generations of young people can also spend time in these natural environments amongst what is a very small percentage of Victoria's indigenous species.

I heard during the debate that there are a whole lot of blackberries. Thistles, deer and other things have been mentioned. But I think those matters have to be dealt with individually. A blackberry plague suggests that European intervention has already damaged that environment. Certainly we should be ensuring that we have a program to deal with that issue, but that has nothing to do with cattle being in the park or with the presence of deer. There have to be different measures to deal with vermin or weeds that get into our national parks. I would not have thought cutting the resources to our park system would help that either.

I ask: was the consultation broad? Did everyone get a chance to have a say in 2005?

Ms NEVILLE (Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water) — The member for Footscray has raised some important issues. As I indicated earlier, 3600 submissions were received as part of that consultation. The parliamentary task force that led this investigation visited significant areas right across the state. The mountain cattlemen were part of that consultation and so were broader communities. National parks belong to all Victorians, not just to particular communities or people.

When you look back on the drivers behind the 2005 decision to remove the cattle, the first was about the damage they were doing to the environment. The second was about how appropriate it was for cattle to be in our national parks. Deer and other pests and feral animals are also inappropriate and we need to deal with those issues, but this was something that could be

controlled and that we could do something about. The third issue was about exclusive use of national parkland and whether it was appropriate to give a small group of people access, pretty cheaply, to national parkland to graze cattle while everyone else had to pay for their agistment. People say to me, 'Why aren't we banning four-wheel drives?'. This is not about locking people out but about appropriate activities. It is about people's access to national parks, not cows' access. That is why those things continue to be permitted.

This is a really important issue about public access and exclusive use. We need to remember that people's licences were paid out, following which, just as with every other cattle owner in the state, they had to use private agistment arrangements to graze their cattle. That seemed appropriate at the time. They were the issues that came out through the task force.

In addition to that, an overlay was undertaken — the minister of the day requested that the task force have a look at whether this would increase or reduce fire risk in the alpine national parks. That was an important question raised at the time. The work of that task force and decades of scientific research clearly showed that cattle grazing would not reduce fire risk.

Mr RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) — It is a pleasure to contribute to the consideration-in-detail stage. Yesterday when we were debating this bill we heard various comments —

Mr Battin — You don't want to be questioned.

Mr RICHARDSON — We don't want to be questioned?

Mr Battin — No, you don't want to give us the answers to any of our questions.

Mr RICHARDSON — The member for Gembrook has had a couple.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! For the benefit of members who may not have been here for a while, or who have not gone through a consideration-in-detail stage, the Chair looks around and calls a member on their feet. That is the sequence of events here. I do not want any reflections on the Chair.

Mr RICHARDSON — Yesterday we heard some contributions in the debate on the bill that talked about various jurisdictions. We also heard that cows are now educating other cows, which is an education policy we were not aware of on the part of the opposition, such is the void in its education policy. One contribution

mentioned Mongolia and Ethiopia as leading examples for Victoria and Australia on the management of our national parks. I want to get the minister's view on whether, somewhere in the heavy weight of evidence and the thousands of pieces of evidence and submissions from over the course of 100 years, the international examples put forward by the opposition have been considered.

Ms NEVILLE (Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water) — Just briefly, yes, absolutely. If anyone reads *Nature World News* of 22 February this year they will see the headline 'Grazing cattle are destroying Mongolian rangelands'. To pull out a developing country like that, point us in that direction and suggest that somehow it is a leader in environmental management is an indictment of those opposite, who clearly have little respect for Victoria's environment.

Dr NAPHTHINE (South-West Coast) — I am concerned that at the rate this is going we will not get to clause 3, so I use this opportunity to refer to cattle, which are the subject of this legislation. Across Australia and the world, cattle consists of two species — *bos taurus* and *bos indicus*. In this legislation the government is only seeking to ban the species *bos taurus* rather than *bos indicus*. This suggests that some cattle will not be banned by this legislation. In the world there are both *bos taurus* cattle, which are the traditional European breeds, and *bos indicus* cattle, which are the traditional Asian breeds, but in Australia we have both *bos taurus* and *bos indicus* cattle.

In Victoria in particular we have *bos indicus* cattle of the Brahman and Santa Gertrudis varieties. Indeed the fact sheets on the department website refer to breeds of *bos indicus* cattle that exist here in Victoria — Belmont Red, Brahman, Brangus, Braford and Santa Gertrudis. I ask the minister why the legislation only covers *bos taurus* cattle and not *bos* and *bos indicus* cattle if it is supposed to ban all cattle from the high country?

Ms NEVILLE (Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water) — Because it is using the correct scientific phrase. I know that it is difficult for those opposite to understand the concept of science. With respect to the member for South-West Coast, who was a vet —

Dr Naphtine — Is a vet.

Ms NEVILLE — Is a vet. Perhaps he needs to renew his skills. The bill has been checked by Victoria's chief veterinary officer. Is the member for South-West Coast questioning the chief veterinary

officer? In addition *Mammal Species of the World*, which is published by Johns Hopkins University Press and is the standard reference on taxonomic classifications, defines *bos taurus* as a species that contains two subspecies. This classification is also confirmed by the *Oxford English Dictionary* and the integrated taxonomic information system. The definition of cattle as the species *bos taurus* in the bill is correct. It captures animals of both subspecies *bos taurus* and *bos indicus*. That has been confirmed again today by Victoria's chief veterinary officer. He said there is a common understanding that there are two species, but that is not the correct scientific phrase or reference. Again, this is based on science. I cannot overturn the reference by Victoria's chief veterinary officer. I believe we can rely on him, as well as *Mammal Species of the World*, the *Oxford English Dictionary* and the integrated taxonomic information system, as I said. I am confident that this is correct.

Dr NAPHTHINE (South-West Coast) — I appreciate the advice. I have also consulted widely, including with dictionaries and *Wikipedia*, but in particular I referred to the former Department of the Environment and Primary Industries document on breeds of beef cattle, which I am happy to table. It says that there are two species: the *bos taurus* breeds — and it lists them — and the *bos indicus* breeds. It separates them into two species. That is the department for which the chief veterinary officer works. For decades the department has said there are two species: *bos indicus* and *bos taurus*. In my veterinary training we were taught there were two species: *bos taurus* and *bos indicus*. The scientific literature shows that there are two species: *bos taurus* and *bos indicus*. *Bos taurus* includes the European breeds; *bos indicus* are the Zebu or Asian breeds, which are a different species. I quote from this departmental document:

Zebus are distinguished from the European breeds by the presence of a musculo-fatty hump, a pendulous dewlap, a pendulous prepuce in the male and a short sleek coat.

This document is a departmental document. I seek leave to table this document.

Leave granted.

Dr NAPHTHINE — The document clearly shows that the former Department of Environment and Primary Industries says that there are two species — *bos taurus* and *bos indicus* cattle.

Ms NEVILLE (Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water) — I appreciate the member for South-West Coast looking at *Wikipedia* for us, but I went firstly to Victoria's chief veterinary officer, who

confirmed that there is one species and there are subspecies. The correct scientific phrase is *bos taurus*; there is no question of that. As I said, that is confirmed by *Mammal Species of the World*, the standard reference on taxonomic classifications, the *Oxford English Dictionary* and the integrated taxonomic information system. I am absolutely 100 per cent confident that what is in the bill is correct.

Clause agreed to; clause 2 agreed to.

Clause 3

Mr BATTIN (Gembrook) — The issue I raise in relation to clause 3 concerns a specific subclause. It inserts new section 28, ‘Introduction or use of cattle in specific parks’. New subsection (2)(d) refers to ‘a Traditional Owner Land Management Board’. The concern we raise is that this takes away the rights of the Indigenous and traditional owners of the land. The government is removing the rights of people who understood the land for thousands of years prior to our arrival. They understand the concept of land management, and yet this government wants to take away their rights. That is very disappointing.

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

Clause agreed to; clauses 4 and 5 agreed to.

Bill agreed to without amendment.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

JURY DIRECTIONS BILL 2015

Second reading

Debate resumed from 14 April; motion of Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General).

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

MENTAL HEALTH AMENDMENT BILL 2015

Second reading

Debate resumed from 14 April; motion of Mr FOLEY (Minister for Mental Health).

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

DOMESTIC ANIMALS AMENDMENT BILL 2015

Second reading

Debate resumed from earlier this day; motion of Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport).

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

GOVERNOR’S SPEECH

Address-in-reply

Debate resumed from earlier this day; motion of Mr RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) for adoption of address-in-reply.

Motion agreed to.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

ADJOURNMENT

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

Ferntree Gully electorate environment groups

Mr WAKELING (Ferntree Gully) — The matter I wish to raise in the adjournment debate tonight is for the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and

Water. The action I am seeking is that the minister provide financial assistance to environment groups within my electorate, specifically the Friends of Koolunga Native Reserve and the Friends of Blind Creek Billabong. Both organisations have provided enormous assistance to the local environment, particularly through the work that their members have been undertaking in parts of Blind Creek in my electorate. Over many years the groups have worked hard at weed removal as well as planting indigenous species of plants. The work that has been undertaken by both groups has been exceptional.

Members of the Friends of Blind Creek Billabong, ably led by Fay Rimmer, have managed to plant a range of indigenous species along their section of the creek. As well as that, they have conducted regular weeding and clean-up events. After the 2010 election I was very pleased to provide that organisation with a \$50 000 grant from the government. That provided financial assistance for the planting of a whole section with indigenous species. I was pleased to participate in that planting, and just recently I had the opportunity to see how the plants have taken off in that section of Blind Creek.

The Friends of Koolunga Native Reserve organisation has been in operation for 20 years. Its members are ably led by Kathleen Loxton, who has been a stalwart of the Ferntree Gully community, and the work they have done is nothing short of amazing. Twenty years ago the Koolunga reserve was an area overgrown with weeds but more importantly it was not a place that locals would go to. The members of the group have eradicated significant weed species and have undertaken planting work. With the inclusion of a range of paths, the reserve is now a community asset. The previous government provided \$50 000 to the Koolunga reserve group, which helped with the removal of large sections of *tradescantia*, or trad weed, from the creek bed. That has enabled the group to do some really important planting along that section for the first time.

Just recently the shadow minister for environment, the member for Gembrook, was able to join me to meet with both groups and look at the work that has been undertaken, but we identified that more needs to be done. I call upon the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water to take action by providing funding grants of \$15 000 for each group so we can ensure that the important work the groups have been doing is continued.

Mentone Reserve

Mr RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) — I raise a matter for the Minister for Sport. The action I seek is for the minister to prioritise funding for the upgrade of Mentone Reserve, home of the St Bedes/Mentone Tigers Amateur Football Club and the Mentone Cricket Club, following the Andrews Labor government's \$1 million commitment to upgrade the buildings and grounds.

St Bedes/Mentone is a fantastic community sporting club within the city of Kingston, playing in the Victorian Amateur Football Association. The amateurs' motto is 'For the love of the game' and the club epitomises the spirit and values of what underpins the association. Players are not paid to participate each week, which can lead to difficulties in keeping players at clubs, but St Bedes/Mentone has a rich history of over 100 years and has seen generations of local sporting stars remain at the club.

The club's on-field success is remarkable. The current Western Bulldogs coach, Luke Beveridge, was the coach for several years and he did the unthinkable: he won three grand finals in a row as head coach from 2006 to 2008, elevating the team a division with each premiership and catapulting him into the AFL coaching spotlight. This demonstrates how well this club is run both on and off field; it is a shining light for the city of Kingston. This could not be more evident than it was on my visits throughout last year when I had the opportunity to meet players, support staff, parents and life members. The culture is infectious and makes you want to be part of it.

When I visited the club I was convinced it needed support and partnership. It was so pleasing to join the Premier last year to commit to strengthening the future of Mentone Reserve. Together with the Mentone Cricket Club, there is well over 100 years of history in Mentone on that site. One has only to walk into the clubrooms to get an appreciation of how significant the club is in forming the identity of our region.

St Bedes/Mentone is now undertaking a master plan for the site with the Kingston City Council. This is an exciting development and should link in well with the council's vision for Mentone as an activity centre. I hope the master plan goes beyond a pavilion upgrade and looks at how we can leverage the best outcomes at Mentone Reserve. I am pleased the Kingston City Council is working closely with St Bedes/Mentone, the Victorian government and the wider community to look at how vital Mentone Reserve is for the region.

Finally, I would like to reflect on a recent study of the benefits of community football undertaken by La Trobe University on behalf of AFL Victoria. It found that for every \$1 spent on a community football club at least \$4.50 is returned in social value and for every 1 player football clubs reach 10 people in their communities. It also found that association with football clubs significantly increases chances of securing employment, via networks provided by the clubs. With these considerations, the investment in Mentone Reserve is a fantastic community outcome. In conclusion, I seek that the Minister for Sport prioritise funding for the upgrade of Mentone Reserve and support these wonderful community clubs.

Lilydale railway station

Mrs FYFFE (Evelyn) — My request for action is to the Minister for Public Transport. The action I require is for the minister to say when the reopening of the second entrance at Lilydale station will be carried out, fulfilling an election commitment.

Prior to the last election, the government committed to fixing what it called a big problem for local commuters. The commitment was to reopen Lilydale station's second entrance. The Labor candidate for Evelyn made a great deal about the severity of the problem and its impact on residents, saying:

People shouldn't have to walk down the middle of the road in the dark to get to their cars.

That's why Labor will work to make the second entrance at Lilydale station safe and reopen it in a timely manner.

The crossing was initially closed by Labor's mates in WorkCover, who deemed the crossing to be unsafe. That is despite no known accidents having occurred at that crossing. One thing I do agree with the Labor candidate about is that it was wrong that people had to walk down the middle of a long, unmade car park, passing potholes and with cars pulling in and out, possibly in the dark. The crossing should never have been closed.

I have been informed that to install a crossing to today's standards would cost around \$870 000, which would ensure the proper interlinking of all necessary signal panels. I have also been told that the myki equipment that was at the now-closed second crossing has been removed and installed at Seymour station. If this is true, it will add to the costs of reopening. However, with this government's decision not to proceed with the coalition government's east-west link, which would have modernised Victoria's road infrastructure and removed the east-west divide, taxpayers will now be paying out

a fortune in costs — \$640 million plus. This may impair the government's ability to fund other worthy projects such as the promised Lilydale station crossing.

Residents of the Yarra Ranges should not be disadvantaged. Residents making the right decision to park and ride to reduce environmental emissions should not be disadvantaged by having to walk long distances back to their vehicles. After being promised the reinstatement of the second crossing, and with the infrastructure inconvenient to use, people will stop using it. Because the government's myki system is prone to fare evasion, revenue from fares is already down compared to revenue under the former ticketing system. The government cannot afford to have fewer fare paying people using the public transport system if it is to remain viable. I urge the minister to fulfil the promise made by the Labor candidate and the former shadow transport minister and expedite the construction of the second crossing.

Craigieburn railway station

Ms SPENCE (Yuroke) — I direct my adjournment matter to the Minister for Public Transport. The action I seek from the minister is an update on any plans to address the car parking shortage at Craigieburn station. Both before and after the election residents have frequently raised this problem with me. There are only 267 parking spaces at Craigieburn, but a significantly higher number of residents seek to use the station on a daily basis. This poses a significant problem for locals to access public transport services for work, study and leisure, with many now parking a significant distance away or forgoing the use of public transport altogether and pushing more traffic onto our increasingly congested local roads.

The insufficient number of parking spaces is compounded by two additional factors: the additional patronage from suburbs further north, as Craigieburn is the last station on the line, and the rapid residential growth in the Craigieburn area. Craigieburn is growing at a massive rate and has become a community of choice for many new families, and we need to ensure that services and infrastructure remain appropriate for the ever-increasing population.

Residents in Craigieburn are hopeful that the Andrews government will provide a lasting solution to this problem, given that it was the previous Labor government that recognised the need to electrify the line from Broadmeadows to Craigieburn. By contrast, the Liberal government was made aware of the need by my predecessor, by Public Transport Victoria, by Hume City Council and by residents, but rather than

supporting this growing community, the Liberal government did nothing. During the four years of that government the community faced significant population growth, and instead of recognising this growth and the need for a strong public transport system, the government cut bus services and left rail commuters in the lurch.

I ask that the minister provide information to my community on any plans for parking at Craigieburn station under an Andrews government that is getting on with delivering for Melbourne's growth areas.

Victoria Israel science innovation and technology scheme

Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) — I direct my adjournment matter to the Premier. The action I seek is for the Premier to ensure that funds are made available in the upcoming budget to continue the very important Victoria-Israel science innovation and technology scheme (VISITS), an innovation and collaboration partnership between Victoria and Israel. VISITS encourages our great two states to work collaboratively on projects of mutual benefit and access international markets. This program has had bipartisan support in previous years and was launched in 2005 by the then Minister for Innovation, John Brumby, when it was known as the VISTECH program.

In 2012 I led a review of this program with input from the chancellor of Monash University, Dr Alan Finkel, AM; the chairman of the Australia-Israel Chamber of Commerce, Leon Kempner, OAM; the former deputy chief of mission to Australia, Meir Itzhaki; and the trade commissioner of the Israel Trade Commission, Ety Levy. The scheme was reformed under the name VISITS and consisted of four program streams, including VISTRATE, supporting trade missions; VISTRIP, grants for companies to attend conferences, trade missions and meetings in Israel; VISFPC, grants of up to \$50 000 for Victorian and Israeli companies to collaborate on feasibility or proof of concept plans; and VISTECH, joint funding to leverage further investment in collaborative projects. In the two years of reviewing the program the Victorian government ran two trade missions, including one focused on health led by former Deputy Premier Peter Ryan. That helped launch Melbourne's health innovation plan. Since the establishment of the reformed VISITS scheme a number of companies have applied for grants and as a result it has resuscitated the progress in innovation and collaboration between Victoria and Israel. However, I am now informed the agreement has been put on hold.

In answer to a question asked in the other place on 19 March the Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade failed to guarantee the continuation of the program. On the Victorian government website all of these programs have now been put on hold, and I have been informed by a number of applicants that they have not heard about their pending applications. In a speech made to the Australia-Israel Chamber of Commerce on 22 October 2014 the now Premier announced a \$60 million Startup Victoria election commitment. Now is the time when we need bipartisan support on this to ensure that this program continues and that we are able to collaborate with such countries as Israel, the world leader in start-ups.

As the shadow minister for innovation I value investment in idea generation, new industry development and the opportunity for us to learn and collaborate with such countries as Israel, which is the world leader in start-ups. I call on the Premier to not throw the baby out with the bathwater and instead build on the great work that is being done and guarantee funding for the VISITS program. This is a great international collaboration and business building initiative which deserves bipartisan support.

Tandana Place

Mr DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Mental Health. The action I seek is a commitment from the minister to visit Tandana Place in Oakleigh, which is run by Waverley Emergency Adolescent Care (WEAC), to discuss specialist programs for young people in the south-eastern suburbs and possible funding sources that could be available to such community organisations. WEAC, led by the inspirational Maureen Buck and a great team of staff, does a terrific job on a limited budget to provide care and support to young people in the eastern and southern suburbs of Melbourne. Established in 1985, WEAC relies heavily on local families and volunteers.

Last year I was pleased to join the Minister for Youth Affairs and Minister for Families and Children when she visited WEAC with the former member for Oakleigh. WEAC provides a number of essential services to our community. These include the provision of emergency accommodation for teenagers within their own communities to enable continuity with local networks such as school, employment and family. WEAC also provides counselling and family mediation, training and education for carers, parents and teenagers, as well as a level of direct financial assistance to families, dependent on the organisation's budget. In Victoria WEAC is also at the forefront of dealing with

youth drug and alcohol rehabilitation through a live-in service at Tandana Place. This incredible and very well regarded facility opened in 1998 and provides residential care in a 12 to 16-week program for young people between the ages of 12 and 20. This is the only facility in Victoria that provides a live-in rehabilitation service for young people under the age of 16 years.

Since its inception Tandana has helped over 200 people, with many of the referrals coming from Corrections Victoria and close to 50 per cent of clients being from regional and rural Victoria. The young people who need the service provided by Tandana are amongst the most at risk in our community. There are varying reasons for this, such as drug and alcohol addiction, abuse, family violence and mental health issues. A disturbing recent trend is the use of ice by clients referred to Tandana. The number of clients using ice rose from 15 per cent to 62 per cent in just a five-year period.

The stated aims of Tandana are to prevent total family breakdown by providing an opportunity for time-out accommodation, together with preventive or additional services such as medication, family therapy and specialist counselling. The service to our community provided by WEAC, including Tandana, cannot be underestimated. I have visited Tandana in the past, and I know firsthand that this is an organisation that looks after the most vulnerable in our society, and they need to be supported.

It is important to commend the mission statement of Tandana, which is to provide a safe, caring environment where young people are empowered to address their substance abuse and mental health issues and develop strategies for a life without drugs. WEAC is a not-for-profit agency that operates on a mixture of funding from donations as well as from government, but like many community organisations it is under financial pressure. I very much hope to visit Tandana Place again in the near future with the Minister for Mental Health to discuss future options for this fantastic organisation.

The Cathedral Indigenous name

Ms McLEISH (Eildon) — I rise to make a request of the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water. The action I seek is for the minister to have The Cathedral in Taggerty formally recognised by its Taungurung name, Naah Naah Dhong, as well as its English name. The Cathedral is in Cathedral Range State Park, located between Taggerty and Buxton, and it is not far from a nearby community called

Narbethong, the name of which sounds very similar to the Taungurung name Naah Naah Dhong.

It does not seem to be common practice in Victoria for many of our landmarks to be recognised by their traditional Aboriginal name as well as their English name, and this is something that could be pursued, particularly in this area. We have many towns and rivers with Aboriginal names, and some people know them, but granting my request would celebrate the cultural history of this area a little more. The request was made of me by a local Taungurung elder, Uncle Roy Patterson, who lives at Taggerty. Uncle Roy has been in the area forever. He is very passionate about this matter, and he has pursued it over the years without success. No-one seems to be listening. He has only just raised it with me, and I said I am more than happy to support him because what the Taungurung people have contributed to the area over a very lengthy period is quite significant.

Uncle Roy himself is quite a character. He is always good for a bit of history and a story. He informed me that mountain peppercorns are unbeatable — and he has some for me. He also told me some of the local history of the area, having grown up in the bush. Aboriginals would make a crossing at what we call the Black Spur, so it was originally known as the Blacks Spur. The Taungurung, like many others, were moved towards Coranderrk, outside of Healesville, and their numbers in the area have never recovered. Granting my request would be a great way of recognising the cultural history of the area.

The Cathedral itself is quite iconic; it stands out. You see it as you drive down the Maroondah Highway, and it looks like a cathedral. At the right time of day the sunlight catches on the sedimentary rock, and it is absolutely magnificent. I have been known to stop and take photos of it. There is a lot of activity and there are many visitors in and around Cathedral Range State Park, and granting this request would allow people to understand the Taungurung history in the area.

Education conveyance allowance

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) — The matter I raise is for the attention of the Minister for Education, the Deputy Premier. The action I seek is for him to take urgent action to address the school conveyancing mess delivered to families in the electorate I represent, following the withdrawal of the conveyance allowance two years ago by the former Minister for Education, the member for Nepean, and the former Minister for Public Transport, the member for Polwarth. That cruel and unconscionable decision resulted in some families in

my electorate having to pay \$1500 per annum to get the students in their families to school, and many have no bus services at all.

I refer to a document that was tabled in a secretive review conducted two years ago. Families kept telling me that the then government was reviewing the boundaries and the fees to be paid by students, but the government kept denying it. Finally, under freedom of information requests, I was able to successfully obtain a copy of that review, which resulted in the postcodes of Woollert, Beveridge, Doreen and Mernda being included in the urban area and therefore no longer eligible for the conveyance allowance.

However, the problem was that there were no buses anyway. The assumption was that there were route buses, but at the same time that cruel government had cut more than \$60 million worth of bus services out of my electorate on route buses. Therefore some women with teenagers are actually having to give up work in order to get the students in their family to school. It is causing many problems. The current minister and I fought against it two years ago when in opposition, and I know he understands it because it particularly impacted on his electorate of Monbulk in the Yarra Ranges, and I know the member for Melton and others in the interface council area campaigned against this as well.

I also acknowledge the support of the Minister for Public Transport, who has just today replied to an adjournment matter I raised on 11 February. She has confirmed that there will be new route bus services beginning to service the Mernda and Doreen areas in 2016 that will particularly take care of the needs of students getting from those places to Diamond Valley College, which they will have to do for many years because of the underinvestment in local high schools and in Doreen and Mernda over the previous four years. My community will very much welcome that news from the Minister for Public Transport, but for the rest of the year the community and the many families in the area need the support of the Minister for Education to assist in a review that includes and supports the families trying to get to secondary college, which is their right.

Nunawading Primary School site

Ms RYALL (Ringwood) — My request is to the Minister for Finance, and the action I seek is to ensure that the City of Whitehorse is provided with negotiating terms for the former Nunawading Primary School site on a restricted community use basis, offering a significant discount for our local community to retain the site. The City of Whitehorse needs to be able to

make a decision on whether it will or will not purchase the former site so that our community is able to have some certainty about what will happen with the site, which is in a prominent position on Springvale Road in Nunawading.

The former Nunawading Primary School was closed by the Labor government when it was last in office, and the school community merged with the former Springview Primary School in Junction Road, Nunawading. The site was identified by the Department of Education and Training as being surplus to its needs. It was then declared surplus to government needs when all other government departments declined to request the land for their needs. In 2014 the former government cleared the land of the old and unused buildings and cleared the graffiti from the heritage building that was the original primary school building. I also sought for the roof to be patched to prevent water damage to the interior of the original building and have fencing put around the building to prevent further vandalism and graffiti. Unfortunately, regardless of the fencing, the building is being vandalised again, with new graffiti appearing regularly.

The community of the Ringwood electorate seeks the preservation of the land for community use. Many people want the land used for sporting facilities so that our local children have somewhere to play sport, which is vital for learning life skills and maintaining fitness. The Nunawading Vikings Basketball Club, local table tennis organisation and netball and other sporting organisations are very keen to see this outcome, as their needs for facilities are unmet locally. The Nunawading Vikings has over 100 teams and yet only has two courts in what was originally a basketball training facility. It has to spend significant amounts of money on hiring courts, many outside our municipality. Ultimately this means it is more expensive for the club to function, and increased costs affect fees for families. I would appreciate the minister giving our community certainty so councillors of the City of Whitehorse can make a decision as to whether they will buy the site for the community at the discounted price on a restricted community-use basis. If they choose not to, I request that the minister then explain to the community what will happen to the land.

Daylesford Secondary College

Ms THOMAS (Macedon) — I raise a matter for the consideration of the Minister for Education concerning Daylesford Secondary College. The action I seek is that the minister visit Daylesford Secondary College at his earliest convenience and again confirm the government's commitment to allocate \$10 million to

complete the rebuild of this fantastic government school. I have raised the issue of Daylesford Secondary College a number of times in this place, and I continue to do so because this facility is desperately in need of funding to complete its much-needed rebuild. It is a rebuild that was commenced by the previous Labor government and completely abandoned by the Liberal government.

In the past 12 months the minister has visited the school on two occasions. That means, I believe, he has already been there twice as many times as the former minister managed in four years. The new Minister for Education, the Deputy Premier, is responsive to the needs of our community. He gets out and about visiting schools and taking action. What a contrast to the previous minister, who hid in his bunker at 2 Treasury Place while our government schools were left to crumble. We hear a lot in this place from opposition members about how they understand the needs of country Victorians and about how good they are at representing the interests of country Victorians. If that were the case, then Daylesford Secondary College would not be in the state it is in today. If they were that good, they would not now be sitting on the opposition benches after one failed term in government.

Daylesford Secondary College is very much at the heart of the community. Over summer a group of dedicated volunteers led by Marcus Swetnam and Carolyn Lau, which included past and present students, began work on a major overhaul of the school gardens. Victorian certificate of applied learning students have been making and installing panels to decorate outdoor learning spaces and plans are in place to create outdoor seating for the students. Once the gardens are complete and the rebuild funded by this Labor government is complete, the community of Daylesford will have an attractive, inviting and contemporary learning environment for its students. That will have been due to the work of this government and of those volunteers.

The minister's commitment to allocate \$10 million to Daylesford Secondary College has been warmly welcomed. I look forward to confirmation of that allocation. I know a Labor government will not let down my community. I encourage the minister to visit as soon as possible to assure the people of Daylesford that under Labor this school rebuild will be completed.

Responses

Mr FOLEY (Minister for Mental Health) — I thank the honourable member for Oakleigh for his adjournment matter. If anyone was privileged enough to hear the member's inaugural speech and his

commitment to the issues of mental health reform and justice in this society, they would not be at all surprised that the member has raised this matter with me. I commend the member for his sustained and deeply held passion and commitment to mental health reform and justice in this society. The member has asked me to come with him to visit Tandana Place, a service run by Waverley Emergency Adolescent Care in Oakleigh. I will certainly do so. I look forward to the opportunity to see the fantastic services that the member has indicated, which are largely delivered through the philanthropic support with which that community organisation has managed to be put together.

It is particularly timely that we are having this discussion on mental health — ever so briefly here tonight, which honourable members will be pleased to hear — because earlier today the Prime Minister and the federal mental health minister released the long sat-on National Mental Health Commission's review of mental health programs and services. The first and foremost recommendation of that report by Allan Fels and the team around him is that the sector is plagued by poor planning, coordination and operation between different levels of government, resulting in duplication, overlap and gaps in services. This is no more apparent than in the crossover areas of alcohol and drugs and mental health. Sadly, I have to share with the member that the former government's botched recommissioning of both community alcohol and drug programs and mental health programs in the community has seen a substantial diminution of services. Fortunately, in a way, this particular organisation was spared from that in that, as an emerging organisation, it was not involved so much in the system.

But the national mental health review and the botched mental health, alcohol and drug recommissionings by the former government give us the perfect opportunity to refocus on these kinds of services and organisations, perfectly reflected in the honourable member's assessment of this organisation. The opportunity to visit with him to meet a community-based organisation that knows firsthand the effect that the scourge of drugs, particularly ice, can have on young people in a community setting is something that I look forward to, because what it will deliver and what it will show to us all is how far we have to go with the mess we have inherited from the former government on this issue. I very much look forward to that opportunity.

Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport) — The member for Evelyn raised a matter for me regarding the Lilydale station. Is it not fantastic to see the member for Evelyn embracing the Labor Party's election commitments and wanting to make sure that it delivers

on them? I can assure the member for Evelyn that we have absolutely every intention of delivering on our election commitments, including those that those opposite did not support but rather opposed. We will be getting on with doing that.

I am pleased to advise the member for Evelyn that Public Transport Victoria is currently working through the implementation of this commitment. The reopening of the entrance requires the government and Public Transport Victoria to address the very safety concerns that initially caused its closure. I note for the record that the member for Evelyn in her contribution described WorkCover, in taking the decision to close down the entrance on safety grounds, as 'Labor's mates'. What an astonishing insult to an independent statutory body that is concerned about the safety of workers and the community. That is an extraordinary way to describe WorkCover, which is known for its independence and its commitment to safety. It is an astonishing comment.

One of the issues that needs to be considered with the delivery of this election commitment is another important election commitment that was opposed by those opposite, and that is the removal of the 50 most dangerous level crossings across Melbourne. The Maroondah Highway level crossing, which is adjacent to the station, is one of those and needs to be taken into consideration when we consider what to do to address the safety issues at Lilydale station. I assure the member for Evelyn that we will absolutely deliver on those election commitments, with or without the support of those opposite.

The member for Yuroke raised a matter for me, and it goes to another election commitment that we made around supporting additional car park spaces at train stations. The member for Yuroke outlined very clearly the issues around the Craigieburn train station and how they reflect some of the pressures that that station and indeed many other stations on the metropolitan network are experiencing with car parks that are filling up earlier and earlier each day. It is making it more and more difficult for people to get onto public transport and travel in and out of the city. That is why we made a \$20 million election commitment to unlock government land at or near train stations that can be used to provide additional car parking spaces.

Work is already underway on this commitment, with Public Transport Victoria and VicTrack working on identifying a list of stations that will be in the first batch to be undertaken. I am very pleased to advise the member for Yuroke that Craigieburn train station has been identified as a priority through this process and we will soon be moving to the development phase. I look

forward to working with the member for Yuroke on this project. I encourage her to relay the information that she needs to relay to her community to demonstrate how like the former member for Yuroke she is. The former member for Yuroke was a pretty powerful advocate for her community, and I am sure the new member for Yuroke will be as well. I look forward to working with her on this.

In response to the remaining matters, the members for Eildon and Ferntree Gully raised matters for the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water, which will be referred for her attention.

The member for Mordialloc raised a matter for the Minister for Sport to be referred to him.

The member for Caulfield raised a matter for the Premier, which he will respond to.

The member for Ringwood raised a matter for the Minister for Finance, which will be referred.

The member for Macedon raised a matter for the Minister for Education, which will be referred.

The member for Yan Yean also raised a matter for the Minister for Education, which I will refer to him on her behalf. I note that she is pushing this issue pretty strongly with all the ministers she possibly can. She has previously raised the matter with me as the Minister for Public Transport and having some responsibility in this area, and she is pushing on with the Minister for Education on behalf of her community. The member for Yan Yean is another example of someone who is absolutely dedicated to supporting their community. I am sure the Minister for Education will be pleased to respond to her adjournment request.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Thomson) —
Order! The house is now adjourned.

House adjourned 5.40 p.m. until Tuesday, 5 May.