

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

FIFTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

TUESDAY, 5 FEBRUARY 2019

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By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

The Governor

The Honourable LINDA DESSAU, AC

The Lieutenant-Governor

The Honourable KEN LAY, AO, APM

The ministry

Premier.	The Hon. DM Andrews, MP
Deputy Premier and Minister for Education.	The Hon. JA Merlino, MP
Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Industrial Relations.	The Hon. TH Pallas, MP
Minister for Transport Infrastructure.	The Hon. JM Allan, MP
Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Youth Justice and Minister for Victim Support	The Hon. BA Carroll, MP
Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, and Minister for Solar Homes	The Hon. L D’Ambrosio, MP
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Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, and Minister for Suburban Development	The Hon. M Kairouz, MP
Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services.	The Hon. J Mikakos, MLC
Minister for Water and Minister for Police and Emergency Services. ...	The Hon. LM Neville, MP
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Minister for Roads, Minister for Road Safety and the TAC, and Minister for Fishing and Boating	The Hon. JL Pulford, MLC
Assistant Treasurer and Minister for Veterans.	The Hon. RD Scott, MP
Minister for Local Government and Minister for Small Business	The Hon. A Somyurek, MLC
Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Agriculture and Minister for Resources	The Hon. J Symes, MLC
Minister for Training and Skills, and Minister for Higher Education . . .	The Hon. GA Tierney, MLC
Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, Minister for Women and Minister for Youth	The Hon. G Williams, MP
Minister for Planning, Minister for Housing and Minister for Multicultural Affairs.	The Hon. RW Wynne, MP
Cabinet Secretary	Ms M Thomas, MP

Legislative Council committees

Economy and Infrastructure Standing Committee

Mr Barton, Mr Elasmarr, Mr Finn, Mr Gepp, Mrs McArthur, Mr Quilty and Ms Terpstra.

Participating members: Ms Bath, Dr Cumming, Mr Davis, Mr Limbrick, Mr Meddick, Mr Ondarchie, Mr Rich-Phillips and Ms Wooldridge.

Environment and Planning Standing Committee

Mr Atkinson, Ms Bath, Mr Bourman, Mr Hayes, Mr Limbrick, Mr Meddick, Mr Melhem, Dr Ratnam, Ms Taylor and Ms Terpstra.

Participating members: Ms Crozier, Dr Cumming, Mr Davis, Mrs McArthur and Mr Quilty.

Legal and Social Issues Standing Committee

Ms Garrett, Dr Kieu, Ms Lovell, Ms Maxwell, Mr Ondarchie, Ms Patten, Dr Ratnam and Ms Vaghela.

Participating members: Mr Barton, Ms Bath, Ms Crozier, Dr Cumming, Mr Erdogan, Mr Grimley, Mr Limbrick, Mr O'Donohue and Mr Quilty.

Privileges Committee

Mr Atkinson, Mr Bourman, Ms Crozier, Mr Elasmarr, Mr Grimley, Mr Jennings, Mr Rich-Phillips, Ms Shing and Ms Tierney.

Procedure Committee

The President, the Deputy President, Ms Crozier, Mr Davis, Mr Grimley, Dr Kieu, Ms Patten, Ms Pulford and Ms Symes.

Joint committees

Dispute Resolution Committee

Council: Mr Bourman, Mr Davis, Mr Jennings, Ms Symes and Ms Wooldridge.

Assembly: Ms Allan, Ms Hennessy, Mr Merlino, Mr Pakula, Mr R Smith, Mr Walsh and Mr Wells.

Electoral Matters Committee

Council: Mr Atkinson, Mrs McArthur, Mr Meddick, Mr Melhem, Ms Lovell and Mr Quilty.

Assembly: Ms Blandthorn, Ms Hall, Dr Read and Ms Spence.

House Committee

Council: The President (*ex officio*), Mr Bourman, Mr Davis, Ms Lovell, Ms Pulford and Ms Stitt.

Assembly: The Speaker (*ex officio*), Mr T Bull, Ms Crugnale, Ms Edwards, Mr Fregon, Ms Sandell and Ms Staley.

Integrity and Oversight Committee

Council: Mr Grimley and Ms Shing.

Assembly: Mr Halse, Mr McGhie, Mr Rowswell, Mr Taylor and Mr Wells.

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee

Council: Ms Stitt.

Assembly: Ms Blandthorn, Mr Hibbins, Mr Maas, Mr D O'Brien, Ms Richards, Mr Richardson, Mr Riordan and Ms Vallenge.

Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee

Council: Mr Gepp, Mrs McArthur, Ms Patten and Ms Taylor.

Assembly: Mr Burgess, Ms Connolly and Ms Kilkenny.

Heads of parliamentary departments

Assembly: Clerk of the Legislative Assembly: Ms B Noonan

Council: Clerk of the Parliaments and Clerk of the Legislative Council: Mr A Young

Parliamentary Services: Secretary: Mr P Lochert

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

President

The Hon. SL LEANE

Deputy President

The Hon. WA LOVELL

Acting Presidents

Mr Bourman, Mr Elasmr, Mr Gepp, Mr Melhem, Ms Patten

Leader of the Government

The Hon. GW JENNINGS

Deputy Leader of the Government

The Hon. J SYMES

Leader of the Opposition

The Hon. DM DAVIS

Deputy Leader of the Opposition

Ms G CROZIER

Member	Region	Party	Member	Region	Party
Atkinson, Mr Bruce Norman	Eastern Metropolitan	LP	Maxwell, Ms Tania Maree	Northern Victoria	DHJP
Barton, Mr Rodney Brian	Eastern Metropolitan	TMP	Meddick, Mr Andy	Western Victoria	AJP
Bath, Ms Melina Gaye	Eastern Victoria	Nats	Melhem, Mr Cesar	Western Metropolitan	ALP
Bourman, Mr Jeffrey	Eastern Victoria	SFFP	Mikakos, Ms Jenny	Northern Metropolitan	ALP
Crozier, Ms Georgina Mary	Southern Metropolitan	LP	O'Donohue, Mr Edward John	Eastern Victoria	LP
Cumming, Dr Catherine Rebecca	Western Metropolitan	Ind	Ondarchie, Mr Craig Philip	Northern Metropolitan	LP
Dalidakis, Mr Philip ¹	Southern Metropolitan	ALP	Patten, Ms Fiona Heather	Northern Metropolitan	FPRP
Davis, Mr David McLean	Southern Metropolitan	LP	Pulford, Ms Jaala Lee	Western Victoria	ALP
Elasmr, Mr Nazih	Northern Metropolitan	ALP	Quilty, Mr Timothy	Northern Victoria	LDP
Erdogan, Mr Enver ²	Southern Metropolitan	ALP	Ratnam, Dr Samantha Shantini	Northern Metropolitan	Greens
Finn, Mr Bernard Thomas C	Western Metropolitan	LP	Rich-Phillips, Mr Gordon Kenneth	South Eastern Metropolitan	LP
Garrett, Ms Jane Furneaux	Eastern Victoria	ALP	Shing, Ms Harriet	Eastern Victoria	ALP
Gepp, Mr Mark	Northern Victoria	ALP	Somyurek, Mr Adem	South Eastern Metropolitan	ALP
Grimley, Mr Stuart James	Western Victoria	DHJP	Stitt, Ms Ingrid	Western Metropolitan	ALP
Hayes, Mr Clifford	Southern Metropolitan	SA	Symes, Ms Jaclyn	Northern Victoria	ALP
Jennings, Mr Gavin Wayne	South Eastern Metropolitan	ALP	Taylor, Ms Nina	Southern Metropolitan	ALP
Kieu, Dr Tien Dung	South Eastern Metropolitan	ALP	Terpstra, Ms Sonja	Eastern Metropolitan	ALP
Leane, Mr Shaun Leo	Eastern Metropolitan	ALP	Tierney, Ms Gayle Anne	Western Victoria	ALP
Limbrick, Mr David	South Eastern Metropolitan	LDP	Vaghela, Ms Kaushaliya Virjibhai	Western Metropolitan	ALP
Lovell, Ms Wendy Ann	Northern Victoria	LP	Wooldridge, Ms Mary Louise Newling	Eastern Metropolitan	LP
McArthur, Mrs Beverley	Western Victoria	LP			

¹ Resigned 17 June 2019

² Appointed 15 August 2019

Party abbreviations

AJP—Animal Justice Party; ALP—Labor Party; DHJP—Derryn Hinch's Justice Party;

FPRP—Fiona Patten's Reason Party; Greens—Australian Greens; Ind—Independent;

LDP—Liberal Democratic Party; LP—Liberal Party; Nats—The Nationals; SA—Sustainable Australia;

SFFP—Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party; TMP—Transport Matters Party

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Tuesday, 5 February 2019

The PRESIDENT (Hon. SL Leane) took the chair at 2.05 p.m. and read the prayer.

Announcements

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The PRESIDENT (14:05): On behalf of the Victorian Parliament I acknowledge the Aboriginal peoples, the traditional custodians of this land which has served as a significant meeting place of the first people of Victoria. I acknowledge and pay respect to the elders of the Aboriginal nations in Victoria past and present and welcome any elders and members of the Aboriginal community who may visit or participate in the events or proceedings in the Parliament this week.

Condolences

JAMES EDMUND MCCABE

The PRESIDENT (14:06): Members of the chamber, I advise the house of the death, on 24 January 2019, of Mr James Edmund McCabe, member of the Legislative Assembly for the electoral district of Lowan from 1964 to 1967 and from 1970 to 1979.

I ask members to rise in their places as a mark of respect for the memory of the deceased.

Members stood in their places.

Questions without notice

ENERGY SUPPLY

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan—Leader of the Opposition) (14:08): My question is for the Minister for Small Business. Minister, I note the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, Lily D'Ambrosio, on 24 January made a statement on 3AW that 'we are absolutely confident' the state's power supplies would hold up during the hot weather of 24 and 25 January, and yet brownouts and blackouts—that is, cuts to the power supply—occurred despite the minister's assurances, and these did in fact impact negatively on vulnerable Victorians, including Victorian small businesses. So therefore my question to you, Minister, as Minister for Small Business is: what actions did you take to satisfy yourself of the veracity of the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change's mistaken assurance that Victorian small businesses were not vulnerable to hot weather related power outages?

Mr SOMYUREK (South Eastern Metropolitan—Minister for Local Government, Minister for Small Business) (14:09): I would like to thank the member for his question. Yes, we had blackouts last week—or was it the week before? A lot of Victorians were inconvenienced by it, including small businesses, but let me tell you this: the census figures that came out overnight in terms of small business confidence show that small businesses in Victoria are the most confident about the future of their businesses than anywhere else in Australia. In terms of what this government has achieved for Victorian small businesses, in the last term of office we created 50 000 new small businesses.

Mr Davis: On a point of order, President, it is a very narrow question as to what the minister did to establish the veracity of the minister for energy's statements about the impact on small business.

Ms Shing: Further on the point of order, President, Mr Davis's question in fact lasted for just under a minute in the context of all of the verbiage before he got to the very narrow casting of the question, so I suggest that in fact he opened the door for the context being provided, which the minister is currently in the process of providing.

The PRESIDENT: On Mr Davis's point of order, the minister has only just begun, but I have got to say that I believe he was relevant in the short period of time since he started. I ask him to continue.

Mr SOMYUREK: I was merely making the point that Victorian small businesses understand when once-off things happen that they do happen. I mean, it causes inconvenience to a lot of people, but they appreciate the fact that this government is a good government and it is looking after the interests of the small business community, the small business sector. The fact is that this government has grown the small business sector by 50 000 in the last four years; therefore they have a lot of trust in this government to deliver. The economy grew. Victoria's was the fastest growing economy in the whole of Australia, growing at 3.3 per cent per annum.

So the small business sector has confidence in this government. They understand that what happened with the blackouts was something that happens from time to time. Yes, they probably were not happy. Yes, they probably were inconvenienced by it, like we all were. But the fact of the matter is they have confidence in this government.

In terms of the grid and in terms of electricity as a whole, that is not a matter for the Minister for Small Business; that is a matter for my colleague in the other house.

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan—Leader of the Opposition) (14:11): The minister indicated that this appeared to be a once-off. Is he able to assure the house that this once-off will not once again impact on small businesses in future weeks?

Mr SOMYUREK (South Eastern Metropolitan—Minister for Local Government, Minister for Small Business) (14:12): Clearly this has got nothing to do with the administrative purview of my portfolio.

HEALTH FUNDING

Mr MELHEM (Western Metropolitan) (14:12): My question is to the Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services. Could the minister please outline how the Andrews Labor government is ensuring Victorians have access to high-quality, affordable public health care?

Ms Shing interjected.

Ms MIKAKOS (Northern Metropolitan—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services) (14:12): I thank Mr Melhem for his question. Ms Shing makes an absolutely correct point that they have made that critical decision to re-elect the Andrews Labor government. That is a significant decision that the people of Victoria have made, because they know that it is only Labor that has a vision and the plan to ensure that we have a world-leading health system here in Victoria. This is why we will continue to invest in our hospitals—because we want to ensure that every Victorian has access to quality health care wherever they live.

Last term we invested \$3.2 billion in health capital, double the amount the Liberals did when they were last in government, and we have no intention of slowing down. We have a massive pipeline of projects, almost \$3.8 billion worth, which will continue to drive improvements in our health and ambulance performance.

I know that the member is a fierce advocate for the western suburbs. I want to assure him that we are getting on with the task of building a \$1.5 billion new 504-bed Footscray Hospital for Melbourne's west. The new Footscray Hospital will cut waiting times and allow almost 15 000 additional patients to be treated each year. It will allow up to 17 000 western suburbs residents to be redirected from inner-city hospitals, taking pressure off other Melbourne hospitals.

We are also ensuring that people get access to world-class health care in other parts of our state. We promised that we would expand the Frankston Hospital's emergency department, and we have, with 12 new short-stay emergency beds now open. More people are choosing, of course, to make Frankston their home, and we have a huge baby boom there. That is why we have committed \$562 million to transform Frankston Hospital, with 102 new hospital beds, two new operating theatres and an additional 13 new emergency department beds. We will also deliver a massive expansion of our child

and maternal health services to meet growing demand from families in the south-eastern suburbs, including a new maternity ward, obstetrics ward, women's clinic, paediatric ward and special care nursery.

We are also making sure that our kids get the support that they need right across our state. I am very proud that we are going to get on with building dedicated flagship children's emergency departments at Geelong, Maroondah, Frankston, Casey and the northern suburbs. This investment will see existing emergency departments reconfigured or expanded so that children and their families can have their own dedicated space and staff when they need it most.

Of course we are also going to give kids access to free public dental through our public school system, and that is going to be a significant expansion and investment in our public dental system, bringing back the school dental vans that disappeared so long ago.

We are going to get on and build or refurbish nine new early parenting centres to deliver a range of critical services to ensure that parents get the support that they need and make sure that we can particularly support new parents with sleeping and feeding issues.

We are making sure that regional Victoria gets the support that it needs as well. We have committed \$100 million to transform the Maryborough hospital into a world-class hospital, and we are delivering more acute medical beds and acute surgery beds, other operating theatres and more consultation rooms to make sure that local families there can get peace of mind and the support that they need. There will be a \$100 million boost to the Regional Health Infrastructure Fund so that even more regional health services can build new facilities or complete the upgrades that they need. This is building on the landmark \$250 million investment that we made in our first term of government.

Time does not permit me to answer the member's question in terms of the full range of initiatives that our government will commit to, but what I can say to the member and what I can assure the house is that this government will repair the damage done by the coalition government and by the federal coalition government. We will keep investing in Victoria's health system and make sure that people get the support of a world-class health system in Victoria.

ROYAL CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (14:17): My question is to the Minister for Health. A recent newspaper report of 18 January stated, and I quote:

A hot weather meltdown forced the Royal Children's Hospital to shut its operating theatres and cancel more than 50 surgeries on Wednesday—

reportedly due to the environmental monitoring system having failed. Minister, if the shutdown was due to the environmental monitoring system failing to respond, could you please explain to the house the reasons why the system failed to respond?

Ms MIKAKOS (Northern Metropolitan—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services) (14:17): I thank the member for her question. I am absolutely thrilled to get a question about the Royal Children's Hospital. I believe she is asking me this question in her capacity as the shadow Minister for Health, although I understand Ms Wooldridge is claiming on all her social media outlets that she is still the shadow Minister for Health—so maybe something changed over the summer period. But I am very happy to talk about the Royal Children's Hospital, because it is a fantastic hospital that does such important work in our community supporting Victoria's children. It is a hospital that received \$468.8 million in funding in the 2018–19—

Members interjecting.

Ms Shing: On a point of order, President, I am finding it very difficult to hear. There is a lot of volume coming from the other side of the chamber.

The PRESIDENT: I would ask that the minister be heard in silence.

Ms MIKAKOS: Thank you very much. I can assure Ms Shing and members of the house that I am so excited to talk about the Royal Children's Hospital because it is a world-class hospital that we invested \$468.8 million in funding in the 2018–19 financial year under our government—\$94 million or 25 per cent more than it received in the last budget of the failed former coalition government, where Ms Crozier was actually the master's apprentice. The master is sitting next to her, her current leader now, who just slashed and burned hospital funding in this state—went to war with our nurses, went to war with our paramedics—and she was the apprentice.

Ms Crozier: On a point of order, President, this is a very important question, and the minister is again trivialising the issue by playing politics. I ask you to draw her back to the issue about the question I asked and to ask the minister to respond to this question.

The PRESIDENT: I note that the minister still has some time left for her answer. If she chooses to use it, I would ask her to come back and be relevant to the question that was asked.

Ms MIKAKOS: Thank you, President, and you know full well that I like to give expansive answers to this house, and I think those who have returned here from the last Parliament know that I like to give expansive answers. I am going to utilise every second on the clock at every opportunity, Ms Crozier, to remind you of your track record as the master's apprentice in slashing and burning health funding in this state, because you were up to your eyeballs in it—up to your eyeballs. And can I just say that the Royal Children's—

Mr Finn: On a point of order, President, I think that the minister is well and truly past the point of debating the question and clearly is in breach of the standing orders at this point.

Ms Shing: That's not a thing.

The PRESIDENT: Debating is a thing, and I would ask, in relevance to Mr Finn's point of order, that the minister become relevant to the question.

Ms MIKAKOS: I am coming to the matter, because I have got quite a lot of time on the clock still. I can confirm, as has been reported in the media—and we know Ms Crozier likes to get all her information from the media—that there were in fact some theatres closed at the Royal Children's Hospital from 2.00 p.m. on Tuesday, 15 January, to 8.00 a.m. on Thursday, 17 January, due to humidity in the theatres.

Emergency matters were not affected; these were elective surgeries. Of course it is an inconvenience to families in relation to having any cancellation of surgery, but as we know, we have been facing extreme weather events here in Melbourne in the last few weeks. We, on this side of the house at least, believe in climate change, unlike those opposite, including the member sitting right behind Ms Crozier. I do not know what her views are on the issue, but we had a combination of high temperatures and unusually high humidity levels that resulted in relative humidity parameters exceeding Department of Health and Human Services guidelines.

I am advised by my department that the risk that was assessed was a very low risk; however, the Royal Children's Hospital took a proactive approach to risk mitigation and made the decision to close the theatres because, as the member would well know, humidity breeds bacteria. Therefore they had to make sure that patients would be safe. It was assessed as low risk, but they did take the appropriate action in being proactive about this matter. I am advised that changes have been made to the system to ensure there is no repeat of the same situation.

This is an opportunity for me to restate my gratitude to the Royal Children's Hospital. The staff who work there do an amazing job, and we are going to get on with supporting them in that important work by delivering on our \$31 million expansion at the Royal Children's Hospital, including a new state-of-the-art ward and bigger emergency department. We will get on with making sure that children in

Victoria get the support that they need both at the Royal Children's Hospital and through our new children's emergency departments right across different parts of Melbourne.

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (14:23): I note the minister failed to answer my question.

A member interjected.

Ms CROZIER: No, she did not answer it. She did not answer the question of why the system failed. She explained what happened with the humidity, which I am well aware of, but why it failed, she did not respond to that. So my supplementary to the minister is: how long did it take for all of the 50-plus surgeries that were cancelled on that Wednesday to subsequently take place?

Ms MIKAKOS (Northern Metropolitan—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services) (14:23): Thank you, but clearly the member was not listening, because I did respond to this matter and I did in fact advise the house that these were issues around elective surgery matters, not emergency situations.

It is of course an inconvenience to families. All families were contacted by the hospital to reschedule their surgery. Some of those children were able to be booked in for surgery within those following few days. Of course it is a matter for the hospital to ensure that the hospital can continue to provide the surgery needed for other children who were booked in on subsequent days as well and to assess those matters based on the needs of the particular patients involved.

The hospital is doing everything possible to ensure that all the children and the families affected by this particular inconvenience can access the health care that they need. I take this opportunity to thank them for that important work and the support that they are giving to these families.

MEDICINAL CANNABIS INDUSTRY

Mr GEPP (Northern Victoria) (14:24): My question is to the Minister for Agriculture, and I congratulate her on her appointment to a number of portfolios, and of course she is my very hardworking colleague from northern Victoria. Minister, our state's medical cannabis industry is nation leading and is going from strength to strength under the leadership of the Andrews Labor government. Minister, the issue I raise is of course very important to both you and me in northern Victoria: can you update the house about how this industry is creating high-value jobs, both in my electorate of Northern Victoria Region and more broadly across the great state of Victoria?

Ms SYMES (Northern Victoria—Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Resources) (14:25): I do thank my colleague for Northern Victoria Region for the question. With respect to my ministerial colleague Ms Mikakos, it is probably highly unlikely that I will ever reach 4 minutes in my answers, so with the indulgence of the house, happy new year, happy February and welcome back everyone, in particular new members. I am very much looking forward to hearing from seven of you today for your inaugural speeches.

Of course thank you, Mr Gepp, for your question. The medicinal cannabis industry is very, very exciting, and it is just one pillar of our commitment to job creation in regional Victoria. We had wonderful figures last week that projected really, really well when it comes to reducing the unemployment rate in country Victoria. We are really leading the way in the nation in having the lowest unemployment rate since records began in regional Victoria. It is a testament to our continued investment and efforts in this regard.

In relation to medicinal cannabis, this is an industry that is going from strength to strength, particularly in the past four years. A lot of that has to do with the hard work of my predecessor, Jaala Pulford, who has worked tirelessly to get this industry up and running, and I have a lot to live up to in this regard. Our plan is not only to lead the nation in the cutting edge medicinal cannabis research and distribution industry but also to create 500 new jobs. This is all outlined in our *Industry Development Plan*, which is the road map for the development of this industry.

Last year we had The Canopy Group announce 200 local jobs in Victoria; they set up their Asia-Pacific headquarters here. I am proud to announce that we have now secured a \$30 million investment in Victoria from Cannatrack, and with this investment come 75 new jobs. Coming to your point about our region of northern Victoria, 65 of those are going to be located in the Shepparton region. I have got to say there is much excitement in Shepparton about the opportunities of this industry and those 65 jobs that are going to come online soon.

Of course this is on top of another announcement about 120 new jobs coming to the state via another company called Cronos. That is almost 200 jobs in one week that we were able to secure because of our commitment to regional job creation. It is fair to say the sector is booming, and I really look forward to it developing. Thank you so much for your interest, and I am sure that we can go and check out Shepparton when it is up and running.

BUILDING CLADDING

Ms WOOLDRIDGE (Eastern Metropolitan) (14:28): My question is to the Minister for Higher Education. Minister, the builder who built the Lacrosse and Neo200 buildings also built the Deakin University CBD housing in Geelong. What emergency measures have you as minister and the government put in place over the past 24 hours to ensure the safety of resident students?

Ms TIERNEY (Western Victoria—Minister for Training and Skills, Minister for Higher Education) (14:28): I thank the member for her question. As the member would know in terms of responsibilities, as being Minister for Higher Education, they definitely pertain to issues around appointments for Governor in Council, ministerial appointments and of course in terms of property decisions of \$5 million and over. Beyond that I am honoured to have this portfolio, because it also represents the government's intense interest in the university sector. The university sector is incredibly important to the economy of this state, and indeed I intend to be a fierce and fearless advocate for research projects that affect the ongoing economy of this state and indeed provide training and academic knowledge to this state and of course globally. In terms of the specific issue that the member raises, this is an issue that pertains to the Minister for Planning, and he has been dealing with a whole range of issues that have arisen in the last 24 hours in terms of properties that have cladding.

Ms WOOLDRIDGE (Eastern Metropolitan) (14:30): It appears to me that the minister is saying that she has no understanding of the safety of those students or if any measures have been put in place. Minister, perhaps you can then advise: has your department been advised of any potential cladding issues with this property, and if so, when?

Ms TIERNEY (Western Victoria—Minister for Training and Skills, Minister for Higher Education) (14:30): I thank the member for her question. In terms of university properties, they are the domain of the universities. I would expect that the department of the Minister for Planning, who is the minister responsible for buildings and cladding in this state, would have been in contact with all government departments and indeed institutions that do have cladding.

TAFE FUNDING

Ms GARRETT (Eastern Victoria) (14:30): My question is to the Minister for Training and Skills. I am delighted to ask this question because, Minister, this is the first year that Victorians have been able to access fee-free TAFE courses, thanks to the Andrews Labor government's free TAFE for priority courses initiative. So my question is: has there been an increase in enrolments for these free TAFE courses, and if so, what is being done to cater for this increased demand?

Ms TIERNEY (Western Victoria—Minister for Training and Skills, Minister for Higher Education) (14:31): I thank Ms Garrett for her question, for her ongoing interest in vocational training and skills and for her fierce advocacy in this area. I am really, really pleased to be part of a government that has introduced free TAFE courses in this state. They are designed to provide a pipeline of skilled workers for projects that this government has underway—jobs that this government is creating. In

terms of the 50 free TAFE courses that have been announced, with a further two in 2020, I can say that these have had serious, real and genuine traction in the Victorian community.

I am really, really proud that we have been able to make an intervention into the training and skills sector that will mean that young people that previously never had a chance of going to TAFE will be able to go to TAFE. It is a clear way that we are breaking down financial barriers so that people can now think seriously about enrolling in TAFE—getting the skills, the training and the jobs that they need. Importantly it is an opportunity to break down systemic generational poverty in this state. We can see that by the number of inquiries that we have reached. We are still getting a minimum of 70 inquiries a night. Over the Australia Day weekend there were over 200. In January alone there were 3000 enrolments in free TAFE courses, and the number, as I said, is growing.

This is real testimony that this government got it right when it said it needed to do something real and everlasting. This is an intervention that I think will serve us well in terms of a legacy issue, and it demonstrates the values of what Labor stands for and delivers at the same time. We are getting on with the job, and we are making sure that we have got all the right settings in place. We are recruiting additional TAFE teachers in training, not like those opposite. When they had the chance they sacked TAFE teachers.

Of course during this period of time we have also increased our financial commitment to TAFE. During the election period we said that we would commit a further \$220 million in capital works towards TAFE, and that was on top of the \$120 million that we allocated in the last budget for regional TAFEs. We have allocated \$172 million to free TAFE in the last budget, indeed over \$42 million to increase and improve the quality of apprenticeships and traineeships and a further \$303 million for 30 000 additional training places in this state. So this government is about making sure that we give opportunities to those that would not necessarily have them. We are making sure that those people who have to transition to other jobs or other industries get a job and get access to training. This is a government that is absolutely committed to making sure that Victorians do have access to good training that leads to jobs that are absolutely needed in this economy, and I can tell you that employers and industry believe that this is a significant intervention that will provide them with workers with the skills that they need.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Mr BOURMAN (Eastern Victoria) (14:35): My question today is for the minister representing the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, who I believe is still Minister Tierney. The police spend about \$10.5 million a year to administer and enforce law over law-abiding firearms owners despite there being no evidence that we pose a criminal threat, yet we have seen an increase in extremist animal libber activity that seems to be going unchallenged. So my question is: how much is the government actually spending on investigating and prosecuting the crimes that extremist animal activists commit?

Ms TIERNEY (Western Victoria—Minister for Training and Skills, Minister for Higher Education) (14:36): I thank Mr Bourman for his question. This is a question for the minister for police in the other place, and I will obviously refer this matter to her office. I am sure that she will provide an answer to you in the prescribed time.

Mr BOURMAN (Eastern Victoria) (14:36): I thank the minister for her answer, and I wait with bated breath. Given that the issue of extremist activists committing crimes is apparently on the increase, can the government outline what it proposes to do to stem this outbreak of crime?

Ms TIERNEY (Western Victoria—Minister for Training and Skills, Minister for Higher Education) (14:36): I again thank the member for his supplementary question to the minister for police. Again I will refer that matter to her, and I am sure she will duly respond to it.

PILL TESTING

Dr RATNAM (Northern Metropolitan) (14:36): My question is to the Minister for Health. Last week the Premier reaffirmed his opposition to pill testing, stating that he continues to rely on advice from Victoria Police about recreational drug testing. We are in the middle of the summer festival season and have already seen deaths and a number of young people harmed. The government is sticking with the status quo, resulting in more and more young people being put at risk. Minister, given that drug use is a public health issue, has the government sought advice from your department about introducing pill testing in our state, and if so, what was this advice?

Ms MIKAKOS (Northern Metropolitan—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services) (14:37): I thank the leader of the Greens party for her question. I can advise the member that every death to drugs is of course a terrible tragedy and my thoughts are with the people who suffered overdoses at our recent festivals, their families and their friends. I acknowledge their personal anguish in response to these particular tragic circumstances.

I want to take this opportunity, if I may, before I come to the matter the member has asked me about, to thank our first responders—our paramedics and police—for the work that they did and also our hospital services, which have responded to support those individuals affected by this issue.

As I have discussed this matter before, representing Minister Foley, who has particular carriage of drug and alcohol matters, the issue of drug consumption is not a simple one. It is a complex issue, and it requires many different approaches to ensure the safety of our community. I want to assure the member, before coming to the specifics of her question, that our government takes these issues very seriously. We have increased funding through a suite of harm minimisation measures to continue to tackle the issue of drug taking in our community.

Sadly we have a very high rate of recreational drug use compared to different parts of the world, and we need to ensure that young people in particular are supported with the relevant information that they need about these issues. This is why just in the 2018–19 financial year our government will invest a record \$259.8 million in drug services, representing an increase in investment of 57 per cent over our last four budgets. We have also invested \$184 million in the *Ice Action Plan*, rolling out various measures across the government. Just late last year, in October, the government announced a further \$87 million for our drug rehab plan, and a key component of that is nearly \$35 million for stage 3 of that action plan to address demand in accidental overdose treatment and a further \$12 million dedicated specifically to preventing overdoses. Harm minimisation in our community is a priority. This is why we announced the medically supervised injecting room in North Richmond, which I know some members in this house very actively opposed, and that is saving lives. For those young people who experiment with drugs at festivals and parties, we continue to invest in the DanceWize program provided by Harm Reduction Victoria. This is a program that uses peer educators to attend dance parties, festivals and nightclubs to provide trusted, friendly and non-judgemental advice to young people considering using pills. These peer educators host chill-out spaces at festivals and provide a place for young people to access advice about drug use, health resources and how to stay safe.

We have given \$500 000 a year to establish six peer networks for key hotspots around the state also to prevent overdose deaths from dangerous drug consumption. What I can say to the member is that we have a range of harm minimisation strategies in place. We seek advice from a range of people. We seek advice from various agencies who have views in government about any matter, any policy matter, as you would expect. We have certainly taken on board the concerns that Victoria Police have articulated about these issues as well. Our priority is to make sure we are not offering up something that is a panacea to young people. We need to ensure their safety and that harm is minimised. (*Time expired*)

Dr RATNAM (Northern Metropolitan) (14:41): I am concerned that my question actually was not answered. My specific question was: has the government sought advice from the department about

pill testing in our state and what advice has the health department provided to the Premier about pill testing? That was my actual specific question that I do not believe was answered in the substantive answer. My substantive question was speaking about advice. An increasing list of health organisations have announced their official support for pill testing, including the Royal Australasian College of Physicians, the Australasian College for Emergency Medicine, the Australian Medical Association, Harm Reduction Victoria, the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre and, most recently, Ambulance Employees Australia. Minister, given that so many health experts agree that pill testing will save lives, why are you as health minister choosing to ignore the many expert health voices calling for a sensible harm reduction policy in Victoria? And I would appreciate an answer to my substantive question, which was: has your department provided advice to the Premier on pill testing in Victoria?

Ms MIKAKOS (Northern Metropolitan—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services) (14:42): I actually did respond to that question. If you were listening at the end, I spoke about how of course the government always seeks views from a range of government agencies about any matter. I cannot speak for the advice that the Premier has received. You are asking me questions about matters that actually sit in Minister Foley's portfolio responsibilities. What I can say to you is that Victoria Police have raised concerns with our government about the efficacy of pill testing, and we take these concerns seriously. We need to make sure that when responding to these issues we are not offering up solutions, or so-called perceived solutions, about matters that will actually give people a false sense of security.

I know there were a range of views that the member referred to from non-government agencies. Can I just say, for example, that with Ambulance Victoria there was an attempt to misquote Ambulance Victoria's position in relation to this, speaking for an agency that reports to me as Minister for Ambulance Services, in a recent media report that was just incorrect. The head of Ambulance Victoria was actually quoted as saying— (*Time expired*)

AMBULANCE RESPONSE TIMES

Ms VAGHELA (Western Metropolitan) (14:44): My question is for the Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services. Could the minister please detail how the government's investment in Victoria's health system is improving ambulance response times?

Ms MIKAKOS (Northern Metropolitan—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services) (14:44): Can I thank the member for her question, and I apologise for the fact that I have actually got my back to her. But I want to thank her for her interest as a newly elected member representing the western suburbs and congratulate her again on her election. I know that she is going to do a great job in joining Mr Melhem and others in the western suburbs in representing the interests of people in the west. I am pleased to inform her and the house that the Andrews Labor government have delivered on our promise to recruit 450 new paramedics to boost care and to save lives in Victoria. Just last week I had the pleasure of meeting 20 of our new recruits. They are the last tranche of the 450, who will begin their shifts in March. They were undertaking some of their last training. They are part of a \$500 million investment in our ambulance services to improve our ambulance response times, the largest ever investment that we have made in Victoria's ambulance system.

I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the new recruits again, because I believe that there is no greater calling than working to save lives, working to support your fellow Victorians in our health system, whether it is as a paramedic or as a nurse or allied health professional or as a doctor. All those people who work in our health system every single day do amazing work, and I take this opportunity to thank them and to wish them well.

This investment is helping to rebuild Victoria's ambulance system. We had the previous coalition government that went to war with our paramedics. They might want to forget this history, but I can tell you that the paramedics have not forgotten it—they certainly have not forgotten it. We had under the previous government a deterioration, led by Mr Davis, who is now the Leader of the Opposition

in the upper house, to a record low of 73 per cent, the worst on the Australian mainland. That is what the Liberals' legacy is—it is always to slash and burn—whereas we have turned this around. Just the latest data shows that our paramedics are in fact responding to emergencies faster than ever before. Our latest data shows that we have now reached 83.9 per cent of code 1 patients—that is, our most critical, urgent matters—being responded to within 15 minutes, an improvement of 2.5 percentage points on the same quarter a year earlier.

This is the best ever response rate in Ambulance Victoria's history, something that members on this side can be immensely proud of. This is despite a record number of code 1 emergencies paramedics responded to during that quarter. They are helping more people than ever before, but they are doing it more quickly than ever before, particularly in relation to those urgent matters. The average response times to code 1 cases has also improved, with ambulances arriving on the scene 11 minutes and 12 seconds after call-out—31 seconds faster than for the same time last year.

Unlike those opposite, we do value our paramedics and we invest in them to make sure that Victorians can feel safe and get the support that they need. We have also committed a further \$109 million. At the last election we committed \$109 million to support the life-saving work of paramedics and to make sure that we can invest in an extra 90 new paramedics, building on those 1000 new paramedics rolled out across the state over the past four years. We are delivering \$25 million to upgrade and build new ambulance stations and deliver 23 new vehicles on the road. This will include many high-demand locations in East Bentleigh, Clyde North, Ocean Grove and Gisborne. I look forward to updating the house from time to time about this continued work and the results of this particular investment. But I can assure the member that more paramedics on our road means— *(Time expired)*

PET WELFARE

Ms TAYLOR (Southern Metropolitan) (14:48): My question is to the Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional Development and Minister for Resources. Dogs belong in a home, not in a puppy farm or a factory.

Members interjecting.

Ms TAYLOR: A matter very close to my heart, I must say.

Ms Shing interjected.

Ms TAYLOR: Yes, indeed. Could you please update the house on the implementation of the Domestic Animals Amendment (Puppy Farms and Pet Shops) Act 2017 and how the Labor government is making Victoria better for pets?

Ms SYMES (Northern Victoria—Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Resources) (14:49): I feel somewhat upstaged by the asking of the question. Thank you so much for your question, your passion for this issue and indeed your first contribution since your inaugural speech, so thank you, Ms Taylor.

In December 2017 it was the Andrews Labor government that made history with Victorian legislation seeing us being the first state in Australia to ban puppy farming once and for all. The new laws delivered on our commitment to stamp out puppy farms, reform pet shops in our state and improve traceability of online sales of cats and dogs. The number of fertile female dogs that a breeder can own and register with local councils has been capped at 10, and only those meeting very strict additional requirements are eligible to seek approval to keep an absolute maximum of up to 50 fertile female dogs.

Illegal breeders will no longer be able to funnel puppies and kittens through pet shops to unsuspecting members of the public who really do not know where they have been sourced from. Pet shops will only be able to sell dogs and cats sourced from shelters, pounds or voluntary registered foster organisations, and there can be no more puppies in shop windows, which I think many of us have now

accepted is very distressing. There are not very many people trying to fight the argument that that is an appropriate measure in this day and age.

The traceability of cats and dogs will be improved significantly when the pet exchange register comes into effect later this year. Breeders, foster carers and members of the public advertising a cat or a dog will have to enrol on that register. The regulations will sit under our landmark puppy farms and pet shops act, and these have actually been released for consultation. To successfully implement the pet exchange register, amendments to the current Domestic Animals Regulations 2015 are required, and minor changes will clarify and improve the commercial dog-breeding approval scheme. Animal sale permits and microchips and other technical changes are also being proposed.

I encourage interested community members to go to engage.vic.gov.au and make comment on the draft regulations, and of course that invitation obviously extends to member of this house because I know there are many people in this house that are very interested in this topic. We have made it abundantly clear every step of the way that we are committed to improving animal welfare in this state, and our puppy farm reforms are just one example of our commitment in this regard.

A related topic would be our proposed overhaul of the 30-year-old Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986. That is something that I am sure we will be discussing further in this house in due course, and I welcome input from members of this house—especially you, Ms Taylor, with your passion for this particular topic. Thank you again.

WRITTEN RESPONSES

The PRESIDENT (14:52): Regarding today's question time, I thank Minister Tierney for pursuing a written response from the Minister for Police and Emergency Services for both Mr Bourman's substantive and supplementary questions. I ask Minister Mikakos if she could supply a written response to Dr Ratnam's substantive question. That would be greatly appreciated.

Ms Wooldridge: On a point of order, President, in relation to my question to the Minister for Higher Education, she made it very clear that despite having responsibility for assets over \$5 million she was not the minister in relation to the Deakin University CBD housing. I wonder if that could be referred to the responsible minister for a response.

The PRESIDENT: The answer is no, it cannot, in the form that we have in our standing orders now.

Ms Tierney: On the point of order, President, what I said on the record was decisions around property over and above \$5 million, not the ongoing issues of assets of \$5 million.

The PRESIDENT: I am not too sure if that is a point of order.

Ms Crozier: President, I am happy to provide you with a copy of the question I asked the minister. It was around the environmental monitoring system that failed. I asked the minister why this system failed to respond. We know that it did not respond, but in that very longwinded answer that the minister gave she did not actually say why it failed to respond. I really think that was the crux of the question, so I would like that to be reinstated. Also, I do not believe that the minister actually fully answered my supplementary in relation to: have all those 50-plus surgeries that were cancelled been followed through and have they all taken place?

The PRESIDENT: As far as the supplementary goes, there is nothing in the standing orders for the President to request an answer to the full satisfaction of the person asking it. I am happy, Ms Crozier, in the next period of time to review your question as far as your original point of order goes and get back to you sometime shortly.

Ms Mikakos: I was rising to my feet in relation to Dr Ratnam's matter, but I do believe that I did in fact discharge Ms Crozier's as well. But in relation to Dr Ratnam's question to me, it was in fact a

question asking me what advice the Premier had received from the Department of Health and Human Services. That is my recollection of it. I am not in a position to advise members about advice that the Premier or other ministers may have received. I can advise in relation to advice that I have received. I have advised the member and the house what the government's position is and that it receives advice from a range of sources about any policy matter. So I do believe that I have discharged this matter, given that I am unable to respond directly to the specifics that the member is seeking.

The PRESIDENT: I think the concern here for the Chair is that the question referred to advice from your department to the Premier's office. It is not for me to tell you how to respond in writing to the question, but it still stands that we would be very happy if you, as per the standing orders, would respond to the substantive question.

Just to bring it to the attention of everyone, the standing orders have changed. It is no longer 'sitting days', as in one sitting day or two sitting days; it is actually business days now. So despite the fact that we are not sitting on Thursday, Ms Tierney, the response from Minister Neville will be requested for Thursday. So thank you, and I will get back to Ms Crozier's point of order shortly.

Ms Mikakos: And similarly I imagine Dr Ratnam's question to me will be directed to Minister Foley as it is a matter for Minister Foley's portfolio.

The PRESIDENT: No, there seems to be some confusion, Minister. The question was about your department's advice to the Premier, so that—

Mr Jennings: Sorry to interrupt, President, but on the point of order I can actually clarify for your benefit and the benefit of the chamber that advice in relation to pill testing would be under the responsibility of the Minister for Mental Health, as he is responsible for alcohol and drug services, and it would have been that minister who was responsible and the department working for him under those circumstances to provide that information rather than the Minister for Health.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Leader of the Government for that help, but the question from Dr Ratnam was about Ms Mikakos's department. Now, if Minister Mikakos's department has no responsibility, I would expect that the written response might be, 'We didn't give any advice because we have no responsibility'. That could be, but the bottom line is that the question asked was about that minister's department. So, thank you.

Members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT: We are all reasonably happy, other than Ms Crozier at this point.

Questions on notice

ANSWERS

Mr JENNINGS (South Eastern Metropolitan—Leader of the Government, Special Minister of State, Minister for Priority Precincts, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs) (14:58): There are five written responses to questions on notice: 7–11.

Constituency questions

EASTERN VICTORIA REGION

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) (14:58): I raise a constituency question for the Minister for Public Transport. The Pakenham level crossings need to be removed urgently and it cannot wait until 2025, the time committed to by the Andrews Labor government. The new Pakenham East stabling yards, due to open soon, will increase the down time for the boom gates at a time when traffic and population are both increasing significantly. The question I pose for the Minister for Public Transport is: will she bring forward the removal date for the Pakenham level crossings to be completed during this parliamentary term and as soon as possible?

WESTERN METROPOLITAN REGION

Mr MELHEM (Western Metropolitan) (14:59): My constituency question is for the Minister for Education and Deputy Premier of Victoria, the Honourable James Merlino. Last week over 1 million students returned to school, and these students enjoy better classrooms and new and upgraded schools and positive curriculum changes thanks to the Andrews Labor government. I am excited to see that the Andrews Labor government is following through on its commitment to invest \$5.7 billion into our schools, making Victoria the Education State. This dedication to excellent facilities and teaching will ensure that every child is provided with the knowledge, capability and attributes they need to succeed in life. With the west home to some of the fastest growing areas of the state, I am excited to see so much of this vital investment happening in my electorate. My question to the minister is: what are the new schools and upgrades that have been completed in my electorate and what will they mean for students and families in my electorate?

NORTHERN VICTORIA REGION

Ms LOVELL (Northern Victoria) (15:00): My constituency question is for the Minister for Public Transport. During the recent heatwave, the people of Shepparton and the Goulburn Valley suffered through many consecutive days of temperatures surpassing 40 degrees. During this period rail passengers travelling between Shepparton and Melbourne were at times forced to travel in carriages without working air-conditioning and in some instances with no water to drink. On one particular day the situation was so dangerous that staff at the Seymour station provided one slab of bottled water for passengers to drink. There were not enough drinks for everyone, so children and the elderly were prioritised first. Despite claims to the contrary over four years in office, the Andrews Labor government continues to fail the rail passengers of Shepparton. Minister, what action are you taking to ensure rail passengers travelling between Shepparton and Melbourne will be provided with essential amenities like working air-conditioning and available drinking water on rail carriages?

NORTHERN METROPOLITAN REGION

Ms PATTEN (Northern Metropolitan) (15:01): My constituency question is for the Minister for Health. One of my constituents phoned yesterday, having had her dental appointment cancelled unexpectedly at Merri Health in Coburg. I contacted Merri Health to inquire and now understand that the cancelled appointment is a consequence of a new enterprise agreement for community health sector dentists, supported by the government, which mirrors the enterprise agreement for dentists working in hospitals. Merri Health says the proposed changes will cost them \$300 000. Without supplementary funding, this means they have no option but to cut services in order to keep operating. They explained to me that five months ago the Department of Health and Human Services suggested that some supplementary funding may be available to help agencies fund the new agreement; however, nothing has been forthcoming. Having relayed this explanation to my constituent, she asks: will the minister fund this gap so that there is no loss of dental services in the already severely stretched community health sector in Northern Metropolitan Region?

NORTHERN METROPOLITAN REGION

Mr ONDARCHIE (Northern Metropolitan) (15:02): My constituency question this afternoon is for the Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Jacinta Allan, and it concerns the car park at South Morang train station in my electorate of Northern Metropolitan Region. This is a gravel car park that is no doubt going to suffer from the oncoming wet weather as we approach the winter season. This car park is full every day, and that has not been eased by the train line extension to Mernda and the associated car parking. A Public Transport Victoria lease of a temporary parking lot on the Westfield-owned land opposite the station is set to expire in September 2019. My question for the minister is: what plans exist to give certainty to residents that appropriate parking will be available post-September 2019?

NORTHERN METROPOLITAN REGION

Dr RATNAM (Northern Metropolitan) (15:02): My constituency question is to the Minister for Planning. Yesterday we saw another apartment fire in Melbourne caused by the dangerous flammable cladding installed in apartment towers across the city. This government has known about the risks of this cladding since the Lacrosse apartment fire in 2014, yet this latest fire shows that despite setting up a cladding task force and providing assurances that they are taking the issue seriously, this government has not done nearly enough to ensure that combustible cladding has been removed from Melbourne's buildings. Instead it has issued orders to individual owners and asked them to take out loans to cover the cost, which they can attempt to recoup from the builders or developers responsible—a costly and lengthy process. The Northern Metropolitan Region is home to many apartment buildings, like the Neo200 building, where residents are still living with the risk of a dangerous cladding fire. When will this government commit to ensuring the safety of residents and immediately act to replace all combustible cladding from all affected buildings in Melbourne?

WESTERN METROPOLITAN REGION

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) (15:03): My constituency question is to the Minister for Roads. In April 2018 work began to remove the roundabout at the Gap Road–Horne Street intersection in Sunbury. The plan, we are told, is to replace it with traffic lights. As of 5 February 2019 work is continuing, but there is not as yet even a glimpse of traffic lights. This is the main intersection in Sunbury. These never-ending roadworks are causing daily bedlam and Sunbury residents are exasperated. They are fast approaching, in fact, the point of fury. Minister, why is this seemingly simple operation taking so long?

SOUTH EASTERN METROPOLITAN REGION

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS (South Eastern Metropolitan) (15:04): My constituency question is to the Minister for Roads, regarding the South Gippsland Highway road safety review, which was conducted in 2017 following a double fatality near Lighthouse Christian College in Cranbourne. The review looked at the safety of the South Gippsland Highway between Ballarto Road and Clyde-Five Ways Road, including in the vicinity of the school. As part of the review it was announced in September 2017 that a new 80-kilometre speed limit would be installed in the vicinity of the college. The review also stated that, and I quote, that:

VicRoads will be considering other innovative solutions and safety initiatives to improve the intersection of Devon Road and Lighthouse College.

As this announcement was made almost a year and a half ago, I ask the Minister for Roads what those innovative solutions and safety initiatives are and when they will be implemented in the vicinity of Lighthouse Christian College.

EASTERN METROPOLITAN REGION

Ms WOOLDRIDGE (Eastern Metropolitan) (15:05): My question is for the Minister for Roads and relates to the bus lanes along Fitzsimons Lane in Templestowe and Eltham. I ask: how many traffic infringements have been issued and what is the revenue accumulated by vehicles illegally using these bus lanes since May 2018? Fitzsimons Lane carries more than 60 000 vehicles a day and for many hours both morning and night the road is heavily congested. As a result, many vehicles, impatient at the traffic snarls, move into the bus lanes to speed their travel. In 2014 the Liberals promised to open up the little-occupied bus lanes, but the Andrews government did nothing. Only at the height of the Bolton Street upgrade fiasco did the government partially open one of the outbound lanes. The government said last May that it had been a bottleneck for decades, and it promised the work would be undertaken to improve peak hour traffic times by 50 per cent. This will include opening bus lanes to all traffic at the worst section between Foote and Porter streets, but work is not due to begin for another year. Locals wonder why these lanes cannot be open to all traffic now, or is the government hoping to attract more revenue from the infringements in the meantime?

SOUTHERN METROPOLITAN REGION

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan—Leader of the Opposition) (15:06): My constituency question is for the Minister for Planning and relates to buildings identified by the government as being at risk due to the installation of flammable cladding material. These buildings are located in the electorate of Southern Metropolitan, my electorate. We are aware of the issues that have occurred overseas with the terrible Grenfell Tower in London, and indeed the Lacrosse building here and more recently in Spencer Street. We note the government's failure to appoint the state building inspector it promised, with now a 14-month delay in that appointment. I specifically ask the Minister for Planning: how many at-risk buildings have been identified in my electorate in the local government areas of Port Phillip, Melbourne, Stonnington, Glen Eira, Monash, Bayside, Kingston and Whitehorse, and for each of those same municipalities what is the level of risk of those buildings and how many owners corporations have been informed by the Victorian Building Authority that their building is at risk?

Members**ACTING PRESIDENTS**

The PRESIDENT (15:07): I lay on the table a warrant nominating a panel of Acting Presidents. The Clerk will read the warrant.

Following warrant read by Clerk:

Pursuant to the provisions of Standing Order 2.12 of the Legislative Council, I hereby nominate—

Mr Nazih ELASMAR

Mr Cesar MELHEM

Mr Jeff BOURMAN

Ms Fiona PATTEN

to be Acting Presidents whenever requested to do so by the President or Deputy President.

Given under my hand on Tuesday, 5 February 2019.

SHAUN LEANE
President of the Legislative Council

Bills**SPENT CONVICTIONS BILL 2019***Introduction and first reading*

Ms PATTEN (Northern Metropolitan) (15:08): I move to introduce a bill for an act to limit the effect of a person's conviction for certain offences if the person remains offence free for a certain period, including prohibiting the disclosure of that conviction and for other purposes, and I move:

That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.**Read first time.**

Ms PATTEN: I move:

That the second reading be made an order of the day for the next day of meeting.

Motion agreed to.

DRUGS, POISONS AND CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES AMENDMENT (CANNABIS REGULATION) BILL 2019*Introduction and first reading*

Ms PATTEN (Northern Metropolitan) (15:09): I move to introduce a bill to amend the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981 to provide for legal access to cannabis, to control and regulate the cultivation, manufacture and supply for that purpose, to prevent young persons from accessing cannabis, to protect public health and public safety by establishing strict product safety and product quality requirements, to deter criminal activity by imposing serious criminal offences for persons operating outside the legal framework, to reduce the burden on the criminal justice system in relation to cannabis and for other purposes, and I move:

That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Read first time.

Ms PATTEN: I move:

That the second reading be made an order of the day for the next day of meeting.

Motion agreed to.

The PRESIDENT: Could we note that in the gallery we have a former Deputy President, Glenyys Romanes, with us.

Committees**SCRUTINY OF ACTS AND REGULATIONS COMMITTEE***Alert Digest No. 1*

Mr GEPP (Northern Victoria) (15:10): Pursuant to section 35 of the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003, I lay on the table *Alert Digest* No. 1 of 2019 from the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee, including appendices. I move:

That the report be published.

Motion agreed to.

Papers**PAPERS**

Tabled by Clerk:

Alpine Resorts Co-ordinating Council—Minister's report of receipt of the 2017–18 report and the Minister's report of failure to submit 2017–18 report to the Minister within the prescribed period and the reason therefor.

Barwon South West Waste and Resource Recovery Group—Minister's report of receipt of the 2017–18 report and the Minister's report of failure to submit 2017–18 report to the Minister within the prescribed period and the reason therefor.

Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability Victoria—Report, 2017–18.

Dhelkunya Dja Land Management Board—Minister's report of failure to submit 2017–18 report to the Minister within the prescribed period and the reason therefor.

Gippsland Waste and Resource Recovery Group—Minister's report of receipt of the 2017–18 report and the Minister's report of failure to submit 2017–18 report to the Minister within the prescribed period and the reason therefor.

Goulburn Valley Waste and Resource Recovery Group—Minister's report of receipt of the 2017–18 report and the Minister's report of failure to submit 2017–18 report to the Minister within the prescribed period and the reason therefor.

Grampians Central West Waste and Resource Recovery Group—Minister's report of receipt of the 2017–18 report and the Minister's report of failure to submit 2017–18 report to the Minister within the prescribed period and the reason therefor.

Gunaikurnai Traditional Owner Land Management Board—Minister's report of receipt of the 2017–18 report and the Minister's report of failure to submit 2017–18 report to the Minister within the prescribed period and the reason therefor.

Independent Review Panel—Report on the Gaming Machines Licensing Process: Allocation, 23 October 2018, pursuant to section 10.2A.11 of the Gambling Regulation Act 2003 (*Ordered to be published*).

Interpretation of Legislation Act 1984—Notice pursuant to section 32(3) in relation to Statutory Rule No. 155/2018.

Legal Services Council and Commissioner for Uniform Legal Services Regulation—Report, 2017–18.

Loddon Mallee Waste and Resource Recovery Group—Minister's report of receipt of the 2017–18 report and the Minister's report of failure to submit 2017–18 report to the Minister within the prescribed period and the reason therefor.

Murray-Darling Basin Act 1993—Amendments to Schedule 1 of the Murray Darling Basin Agreement, pursuant to section 28(b) of the Act.

North East Waste and Resource Recovery Group—Minister's report of receipt of the 2017–18 report and report of failure to submit 2017–18 report to the Minister within the prescribed period and the reason therefor.

Planning and Environment Act 1987—

Infrastructure Contributions and Development Contribution Levies—Report, 2017–18 pursuant to section 46GZJ of the Act.

Notices of Approval of the following amendments to planning schemes—

Alpine, Benalla, Greater Shepparton, Indigo, Mansfield, Moira, Murrindindi, Strathbogrie, Towong, Wangaratta and Wodonga Planning Schemes—Amendment GC114.

Cardinia Planning Scheme—Amendments C231 and C252.

Casey, Hume and Mitchell Planning Schemes—Amendment GC116.

Casey Planning Scheme—Amendments C221 (Part 1) and C228.

Glenelg Planning Scheme—Amendment C89.

Greater Geelong Planning Scheme—Amendment C368.

Hume Planning Scheme—Amendments C207 and C208.

Kingston Planning Scheme—Amendments C181 and C182.

Loddon Planning Scheme—Amendment C40.

Macedon Ranges Planning Scheme—Amendment C124.

Mitchell and Whittlesea Planning Schemes—Amendment GC55.

Moira Planning Scheme—Amendment C87.

Moorabool Planning Scheme—Amendment C90.

Moreland Planning Scheme—Amendment C173.

Mornington Peninsula Planning Scheme—Amendment C215.

Mount Alexander Planning Scheme—Amendment C82.

Murrindindi Planning Scheme—Amendment C62.

Port Phillip Planning Scheme—Amendments C154 and C159.

Stonnington Planning Scheme—Amendment C288.

Warrnambool Planning Scheme—Amendment C200.

Whitehorse Planning Scheme—Amendment C214.

Statutory Rules under the following Acts of Parliament—

Children, Youth and Families Act 2005—No. 3.

Gambling Regulation Act 2003—No. 1.

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994—No. 2.

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994—Legislative instrument and related documents under section 16B in respect of a Minister's determination of the conditions contained in the Victorian Fares and Ticketing Manual, under the Transport (Compliance and Miscellaneous) Act 1983, dated 18 December 2018.

Yorta Yorta Traditional Owner Land Management Board—Minister's report of failure to submit 2017–18 report to the Minister within the prescribed period and the reason therefor.

Business of the house

NOTICES OF MOTION

Notices given.

The PRESIDENT: Before I call for notices to make a statement on a report, I want to crystal-ball to the chamber that the next item may change the opportunity for people to make a statement tomorrow. So with regard to any notices on statements today, the statements may not be made until next sitting week. I am sure that makes a lot of sense to everyone.

The standing orders say that your notice of statement will only be on the notice paper for a week, but we are going to be generous and we are going to make sure that, if you make a notice today, it will be there next week for you, so you will not have to stand up again. What a country!

So I call on anyone that wants to give notice of a statement for next week. No? That is good. I think I talked everyone out of that one.

STANDING AND SESSIONAL ORDERS

Mr JENNINGS (South Eastern Metropolitan—Leader of the Government, Special Minister of State, Minister for Priority Precincts, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs) (15:22): By leave, I move:

That so much of standing orders, and sessional orders if any, be suspended to the extent necessary to enable—

- (1) the sitting of the Council on Wednesday, 6 February 2019, to commence at 9.30 a.m. and that the order of business on that day will be—
 - (a) messages;
 - (b) formal business;
 - (c) members statements (up to 15 members);
 - (d) general business;
 - (e) at 12 noon, questions;
 - (f) answers to questions on notice;
 - (g) constituency questions;
 - (h) general business (until 4.00 p.m.);
 - (i) at 4.00 p.m., government business;
 - (j) at 6.30 p.m., adjournment (up to 20 members);
- (2) the Leader of the Government to move the Black Saturday anniversary motion, without leave or notice; and
- (3) members who have not yet made their inaugural speeches to speak on the Black Saturday anniversary motion without that speech being considered their inaugural speech.

Motion agreed to.

GENERAL BUSINESS

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan—Leader of the Opposition) (15:23): By leave, I move:

That precedence be given to the following general business on Wednesday, 6 February 2019—

- (1) order of the day made this day, second reading of the Spent Convictions Bill 2019;

- (2) notice of motion given this day by Mr Davis in relation to the production of certain documents relating to government briefings books;
- (3) notice of motion given this day by Mr Davis in relation to the production of certain documents relating to electricity supply advice;
- (4) notice of motion given this day by Mr Davis in relation to electricity supply cuts, blackouts and brownouts; and
- (5) notice of motion given this day by Mr Davis in relation to a reference to the Economy and Infrastructure Committee relating to the impact of taxi legislation.

Motion agreed to.

Members statements

GIUSEPPE 'JOE' VRACA

Ms LOVELL (Northern Victoria) (15:24): It is with great sadness that I rise to acknowledge the recent passing on 2 January of well-known Goulburn Valley farmer and businessperson Giuseppe 'Joe' Vraca. Born in 1944 in Rosolini, Sicily, Joe left school at the age of 13 to work on a tomato farm. Looking for a better life, Joe migrated to Australia in 1961 at the age of 17 and, on his second day in Melbourne, obtained a job at Gilbertson's abattoirs in Footscray. However, his passion was always growing tomatoes, and it was not long before Joe travelled to Dhurringile to seek opportunities to start his own farm. It was here that he met his wife, Mary, and they wed in 1964. Joe's determination and tremendous work ethic saw him establish what became known as Vraca Bros and Sons, which at one time was in the top-four biggest tomato producers in the Southern Hemisphere.

Joe was a successful businessman who was beloved throughout the area for his great sense of community service. He was known for his generosity and donated to and supported many local charities and service organisations. Joe Vraca was a wonderful man who loved his family and loved his community and who will be sadly missed. My deepest condolences go to his wife, Mary, his children—Josie, Carmelo and Carmel—and their families. Vale, Joe Vraca.

AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS

Ms LOVELL: I would like to congratulate the many people throughout my electorate who were recipients of Australia Day honours and the Order of Australia and also those who were acknowledged by their local community with awards such as Citizen of the Year and other recognitions. Our state is a far greater place to live because of their selfless contribution.

VICTORIAN PUBLIC SERVICE

Ms PULFORD (Western Victoria—Minister for Roads, Minister for Road Safety and the TAC, Minister for Fishing and Boating) (15:25): I have always held the Victorian public service workforce in the highest regard, and in the four years that I served as Minister for Agriculture and Minister for Regional Development, on a daily basis I was impressed by the professionalism, dedication, intellect and commitment to excellence in the performance of their tasks and their duties as our public servants.

I would like to place on the record my thanks to a number of people with whom I worked particularly closely during those four years but in no way want to diminish the efforts of the many hundreds of other people working in support of the agriculture and regional development portfolios. But to Richard Bolt, James Flintoff, Justin Hanney, Emily Phillips and Luke Wilson, I thank you for your outstanding leadership of such extraordinary teams of people.

I would also like to thank Andrew Addie, Melissa Arch, Rebecca Brown, Rob Byrne, Emma Calleja, Kate Dosen, Sally Fensling, Ben Ferguson, James Florent, Mike Gooley, Lil Healey, Megan Higson, Beth Jones, Rob Jones, Leigh Kennedy, Rachel Lee, Stan Liacos, Kate Millar, Unni Mennon, Matt Nelson, Brad Ostemeyer, Mark Sandiford, Julie Simons, Anthony Schinck, German Spangenburg and Anthony Walkely for the work that they undertook in the delivery of things I was associated with.

It has been a great pleasure to have worked with all of these people, and I wish them very well in their future career endeavours, whether in the Victorian public service or elsewhere. Victoria is a better and stronger place for the work of our public servants.

AIIA MAASARWE

Ms PATTEN (Northern Metropolitan) (15:27): Her name was Aia Maasarwe. She was a Palestinian exchange student. She was vibrant and beautiful, with her entire life ahead of her until it was cut short on 16 January. Like so many others, I sat in silence on the steps of this Parliament a few days later in solidarity with the community. I thought about a life lost, I thought about her tragic end, and I was sad and angry.

Her name joins a list, a list that should never be: with Jill, with Eurydice, with Masa. While those women paid the ultimate price for simply just going about their lives, we know that all over this state women suffer the threat of, or actual, violence every single day of the week. At any moment they could join the list of women who have died at the hands of men—deranged, angry men—who, unable to take control of their own lives, solve their own problems and deal with their own sometimes tragic circumstances by taking it out on women.

I am sorry if some people do not want to hear this but men are the problem, and it is up to men in our community to do something. It is up to men to look at their friends, colleagues and family and say: ‘Something is wrong here, and I need to do something about it before it is too late’. So men: do something. This has to stop.

HAKEEM AL-ARAIBI

Mr DALIDAKIS (Southern Metropolitan) (15:29): I sadly rise today to talk about the incarceration of Hakeem al-Araibi. Hakeem al-Araibi flew to Thailand on 27 November 2018 for his honeymoon. He was unfortunately detained by Thai authorities, who had been alerted to his presence by the Australian Federal Police—they have not covered themselves in glory, but that discussion is for another time. However, the issue before us today is that Mr al-Araibi has now been incarcerated for over 70 days. He has been incarcerated in one of the most inhospitable places on this planet and has been subjected to some of the most inhumane treatments of people.

Following the Prime Minister’s letter to the Thai Prime Minister, which came some 50 days after Mr al-Araibi had been incarcerated, I also wrote to the Thai ambassador in Canberra. In some ways this is a complex situation shrouded in money, football politics and the denial of human rights, but in other terms it is also simple as it comes.

This matter should not be one that I have to discuss in Parliament. This matter is one where the legal and human rights of Hakeem should have been acknowledged by the Thai authorities to allow him to return safely to Australia. This man is a Victorian resident, and he is under Australia’s protection. Of course I say to the Thai Prime Minister, Naiyok Rattamontri Prayut Chan-o-cha: maintain relations with Australia, return Hakeem to Victoria now.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) (15:30): I wish, in my first contribution to this Parliament for 2019, to pay tribute to small business operators throughout the state. Small business men and women are the true heroes of our state and indeed the true heroes of our nation. These are people who risk their homes and their futures to open and run a business. They put up their own money, often their life savings, to build a business, and as I know personally there are no guarantees. There is no definite payday, and that can be pretty daunting as the monthly mortgage payment approaches.

These people risk it all to create jobs and wealth in local communities throughout Victoria. They are champions who pay their workers and their bills and then pay themselves. Their sacrifices are enormous, but still they power on. I fear to think where we would be as a state without them.

Liberal leader Michael O'Brien has taken on the role of shadow Minister for Small Business. The Liberal Party is and always has been the party of small business. As the shadow assistant minister for small business I look forward to reaching out to small business men and women and fighting for the interests of these people, who contribute so much to our state. I want them to know we are on their side, and we are about to prove it.

WYNDHAM CITIZENSHIP CEREMONY

Ms VAGHELA (Western Metropolitan) (15:32): On 26 January 2019 I was pleased to attend the annual Australia Day citizenship ceremony hosted by Wyndham City Council in the Western Metropolitan Region. This was the first citizenship ceremony I had attended since I was elected as a member of Parliament. I was joined by the member for Tarneit, Sarah Connolly, our local federal MP, Joanne Ryan, the mayor of Wyndham City Council, Cr Mia Shaw, and other Wyndham city councillors and council staff.

Over 120 residents from various countries took their citizenship pledge and became citizens of our great nation. As a migrant who once stood in their shoes approximately 17 years ago, I was delighted to witness these individuals conclude the final steps of their journey. This moment reminded me of the feeling of accomplishment that I experienced when I received my Australian citizenship.

Western Metropolitan Region is renowned for its dynamic, multicultural and diverse population. This ceremony was a true reflection of the people of Western Metropolitan Region; we are a remarkable example of multiculturalism and diversity. I congratulate and warmly welcome the new citizens to our wonderful community. I am privileged to have been given the opportunity to represent them in Parliament, and I am looking forward to serving them.

AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS

Ms BATH (Eastern Victoria) (15:33): On Australia Day this year I was delighted to attend the community celebrations in the beautiful, beautiful place of Paynesville in East Gippsland. The sun shone, the wind was still and people camped out in their camp chairs and had a fantastic time on the foreshore. Local groups and individuals came to recognise some amazing community members.

Recognising her contributions to Melon's Cottage, Tania Goranitis has donated her time and skills to improving the facility, which provides holiday respite for children and families living with cancer. I also commend Tania for her involvement with the Paynesville neighbourhood house.

Successful in the category of 2019 Paynesville Community Event of the Year, congratulations is also in order for Martin Richardson, who dedicated his time and efforts to creating a compilation of personal stories and memories based on local residents. It culminated in the production of a book that has so far raised \$3000. All that money goes towards Paynesville Primary School to establish and encourage future leaders.

I also want to mention Sergeant Dwayne Morrison for his contribution to Victoria Police as highway patrol unit commander and his work with the Gippsland Motorplex.

I also acknowledge JJ Williams, for his many years of dedication to the Paynesville Coast Guard, and citizens of the year Rob and Jan Cook for their fabulous contribution in terms of the Paynesville Maritime Museum. They have been passionate supporters and drivers of that museum.

FORMER GREENS MEMBERS

Dr RATNAM (Northern Metropolitan) (15:35): On a day full of introductions and new beginnings it is also worth us pausing to remember the contributions of those members who were not returned to this Parliament at the last election. I know that this house will also be feeling the loss of my four amazing former upper house colleagues, women who were relentless in advocating for their communities, for a better life for all Victorians and for our environment. I would like to take a moment

to acknowledge and reflect on some of their incredible work as time does not permit me to detail or do justice to their full body of work.

Nina Springle initiated the process for the criminal records of care leavers to be expunged. She also led a phenomenal campaign to reduce plastic waste in our environment and establish a container deposit scheme.

Samantha Dunn was one of the most formidable forest campaigners that the Parliament has ever seen. She spent the last four years constantly holding the government to account over native forest logging and fighting to save our forests and the habitat of our native wildlife.

Huong Truong was a passionate advocate for Melbourne's neglected west, fighting for improvements to Footscray Hospital and Sunshine College and the restoration of Stony Creek after the terrible West Footscray fire.

And Sue Pennicuik, who was one of the very first Greens MPs elected to this place, spent the last 12 years fighting for evidence-based justice policies, greater investment in public education and the arts, and the end to the inhumane treatment of animals. I know her incredible depth of knowledge and experience as well as her extraordinary work on the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee will be sorely missed in this place.

All four have left lasting legacies in this place, and I am sure they will continue their activism and contributions to our community for years to come. *(Time expired)*

GOVERNMENT ACHIEVEMENTS

Ms GARRETT (Eastern Victoria) (15:37): I am delighted to rise in this place in my new role as member for Eastern Metropolitan Region in Victoria. I would also like to extend congratulations particularly to the new members of this place and this Parliament. Preparing for your inaugural speech and delivering it is one of the most special times not just of your working life but of your life, and it is also a time for all of us who have been blessed enough to return to Parliament to reflect on the important role that we have been entrusted with by the Victorian community and how grateful we all are to be able to contribute to the state in this important role.

The good news for all of us who are here is that Victoria is booming under the Andrews Labor government. Our latest jobless figures show that we are at the lowest rate in more than 10 years, at just 4.2 per cent, and in regional Victoria the news is sensational—the unemployment rate is now the lowest on record at 4.3 per cent. Of course there is always more to be done, and that is why this government will continue to put the creation and protection of jobs in both our metropolitan and our regional areas at the core of its work.

The landmark infrastructure commitments that we have made and the unprecedented investment in skills and training, including what we heard about today from the minister with free TAFE, are really paying dividends, and we look forward to building on that immense body of work with the new suite of commitments that we have already started implementing.

I will be delighted to contribute to that in my role as parliamentary secretary for jobs and working with you all across this chamber.

AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS

Ms WOOLDRIDGE (Eastern Metropolitan) (15:39): I rise to congratulate all the residents of Eastern Metropolitan Region who received awards in the 2019 Australia Day honours. These awards are a fitting recognition of the wonderful work, often involving many volunteer hours, that these recipients have undertaken for the benefit of others in the community.

Mr Jim Siderov of Eltham North has been awarded an AM for his service to oncology pharmacy as a clinician and to professional associations. Jim has been a pharmacist at the Olivia Newton-John Cancer

Wellness & Research Centre since about 1988 and is the author or co-author of over 65 professional publications.

Mrs Jill Wright from Mont Albert also received an AM for her services to gymnastics as a national selector and administrator and an international judge. She has judged at Olympic Games, a series of world championships, Commonwealth Games and every Australian and Victorian gymnastics championship since 1978.

There were also a number of residents who received an OAM. These include Margaret Akins from Blackburn for her services to secondary education; Norman Bailey from Balwyn for his services to the performing arts; Gwennyth Baker from Box Hill for her services to community health; Craig Kenny from Mont Albert North for his service to the community; Dr Christine Durham for her services to education; Ms Yelena Ilyin from Greensborough for her services to Melbourne's Russian community; Thi Be Ha from Glen Waverley for her service to the Vietnamese community; and Mr Robert McIvor, also from Glen Waverley, for his services to veterans and their families. In Mount Waverley Mr Dennis Harris was recognised for his service to surf lifesaving and Mr David Heazlewood for his services to the community. *(Time expired)*

JACK SMITH

Mr GEPP (Northern Victoria) (15:40): I rise today to congratulate 18-year-old Jack Smith from Mildura on his appointment to the 2019 Victorian Youth Congress. Youth from across our state will make an invaluable contribution to youth affairs policy in Victoria, and I am sure Jack will make Northern Victoria Region proud with his particular focus on homelessness and youth mental health. The Victorian youth congress is a flagship project under the Andrews Labor government's *Youth Policy: Building Stronger Youth Engagement in Victoria*, and it is vitally important that we value the voices and contributions of our young people. Well done, Jack.

DR MENON PARAMESWARAN

Mr GEPP: On another matter, I wish to congratulate Dr Menon Parameswaran of Shepparton for being awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for his service to primary industry. For nearly 50 years environmental studies have been Menon's life. Now a retired agricultural scientist and academic, Menon continues to be actively involved in the community through his involvement with various health, educational and business organisations.

KORIN GAMADJI INSTITUTE

Mr GEPP: On another matter, I also wish to congratulate the Richmond Football Club and in particular the Korin Gamadji Institute on the outstanding programs that they have been delivering that help affirm identity and culture and create opportunities for Indigenous youth, particularly for young people from my electorate of Northern Victoria Region. Now in its eighth year, the KGI has engaged over 1300 Indigenous youth through its programs, with approximately 40 per cent of participants coming from Northern Victoria Region. I congratulate Aaron Clark and all of his staff at the KGI.

LIBERAL PARTY ELECTION RESULTS

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) (15:42): I congratulate all members who have been elected to this place, and thank the voters of Eastern Victoria Region for returning me as their member. It is a significant responsibility and one by which I am humbled. I want to acknowledge Martin Dixon, who retired after 22 years of service as a member for Dromana and then Nepean, and acknowledge the contribution of Brian Paynter, who was a fantastic community champion for the people of Bass, and who had a long and distinguished community record before being elected a member of Parliament. I would also like to acknowledge the tireless work of John Schurink, a local CFA captain and an outstanding individual who did his absolute best as the Liberal candidate for Monbulk; and Dale Harriman, as the Liberal candidate for Morwell, who did an outstanding job and gave it his all. I acknowledge the work of Russell Joseph as the Liberal candidate for Nepean. I would like to

congratulate Bridget Vallence for her inaugural speech in the other place, and she will do an excellent job as the member for Evelyn.

BUSHFIRE SEASON

Mr O'DONOHUE: My thoughts are with those who are dealing with the impact of fire, or the risk of fire, throughout Eastern Victoria Region. On Saturday I was in Rosedale and I was passed by brigades from Wangaratta, Benalla and elsewhere from northern Victoria joining the fight against the fires. I pay tribute to all the firefighters for the work they have done and continue to do during this difficult period.

Address to Parliament

GOVERNOR'S SPEECH

Address-in-reply

Debate resumed on motion of Ms TAYLOR:

That the Council agree to the following address to the Governor in reply to the Governor's opening speech:

May it please the Governor:

We, the Legislative Council of Victoria assembled in Parliament, express our loyalty to Australia and the people of Victoria, and thank you for the speech which you have made to the Parliament.

We declare that we will faithfully carry out the important duties entrusted to us by the people of Victoria, to advance the best interests of all sections of the community.

The PRESIDENT: Before I call anyone, I alert members of the gallery that there are to be no photographs taken of their favourite MP who is about to make a speech. I am sure they will put up a video on their Facebook site of the fantastic seven speeches we are about to hear.

Ms STITT (Western Metropolitan) (15:44): I acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet and pay my respect to their elders past, present and emerging. And I acknowledge the important contribution our First Nations peoples continue to make to our state, and I sincerely look forward to treaty becoming a reality.

I acknowledge the President of the Legislative Council and congratulate him on his elevation to that role. I acknowledge all members of the Legislative Council, my parliamentary colleagues and my family and friends in the gallery today.

Like so many, my Australian story began somewhere else.

I come from a long line of travellers. My people hailed from Scotland and Ireland and northern England. My grandparents and great-grandparents were coalminers, itinerant farm workers from Ireland who hand-picked crops in the fields of Scotland, housekeepers to the landed gentry, factory workers and clerks.

When your home lacks economic opportunity you find a new home. That is what many of my family members across the generations did. They took a great leap into the unknown to pursue opportunity for themselves and their families and to escape the poverty they were born into. That meant leaving home and travelling to places like Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

And so in 1975 as a child I took the journey with my mother from Birmingham, in the depressed midlands of England, to Heathrow Airport. We boarded a Qantas flight and made the long trip to Melbourne.

My father was waiting for us at Tullamarine airport having come to Australia the year before for work. It was an emotional reunion for our small family.

My eight-year-old memories of Melbourne: the blinding light of the sun and the huge Australian sky; the wonder of the fresh fruit and vegetables in the shops. I thought we had landed in paradise, and I have been grateful to call Australia my home ever since.

I have always felt welcome in this country, and I want to see those coming here in much harder circumstances than I did welcomed with that same spirit.

On Australia Day this year I had the privilege to witness Brimbank residents from all corners of the globe become Australian citizens. The joy and hope on display that day is the big-hearted, generous and optimistic Australia that I want to be part of.

I adapted to Australian life quickly; it was not hard. Even as a young child I could appreciate the cultural differences in Australia. No-one was putting on any airs and graces. There was none of that class snobbery that exists in England, and it felt right.

My parents were both gifted artists, but their artistic talents rarely paid our bills. Consequently moving for work was a regular occurrence for our family during my early years in Australia.

We never had much money, but what we lacked in material wealth was made up for in many other ways. We travelled. We talked politics, history and geography. My family home was full of books and maps and art from all over the world.

I thank my parents for always encouraging me to speak my mind and to think for myself, for instilling in me a strong sense of social justice, for giving me a sense of pride about my working-class background and for encouraging me to look at the big picture and question why things were so and not just passively observe life's injustices.

I am a feminist, a unionist and a worker.

From the time I could legally work I did. It gave me my own money, but it also gave me a great sense of myself—a sense of what I could achieve and a sense that I could contribute.

Whilst I did okay at school, I did not embrace university life. Work and travel took precedence, and I never did finish that arts degree. I worked in hospitality mostly—physically hard work, long hours and low pay. I often got ripped off and treated poorly, but it was not all bad. I worked for some very decent and hardworking restaurant owners, and I met some brilliant people in my co-workers who I remain friends with today.

It was an education on the job.

I think it is important as a society to acknowledge that pursuing a tertiary qualification is not for everyone, and people can make an equally valid and worthy contribution via other pathways, be that TAFE, paid or voluntary work.

I am incredibly proud of the Andrews Labor government for recognising this and investing heavily in our TAFE system to ensure that people young and old have access to the skills they will need and the skills that we will need as a community going forward. And if education is the great leveller, then a job is the great enabler. In Australia a good steady job once set you up for life. It enabled you to purchase a modest home and provide all the necessities of life.

Today that picture is very different. Rising inequality, the fragmentation of work and the insecure nature of many jobs across the economy has seen for many in this country the trashing of the 'fair go' and the principles of the 'living wage' uniquely spelt out in the Harvester judgement.

If we are to avoid entrenching a US-style working poor in this country, then the industrial landscape must change. The power imbalance in our system must be reversed and the rules changed to ensure that working people in Australia have stronger rights and greater bargaining power.

This is particularly so for women, young workers and other vulnerable workers who are disproportionately represented in work that is undervalued and insecure in nature, and who, because of this, need the restoration of a robust safety net of rights.

Twenty-five years of experience as a union official tells me that this power imbalance will not be restored with goodwill or cultural change. It will only be restored by establishing enforceable rights for workers in our laws.

I commend the Andrew's Labor government for taking on important reforms in tackling exploitation in the labour hire industry, for using the government's purchasing power to promote local employment and local content, and for reforming long service leave arrangements in this state.

I look forward to legislation passing this Parliament to further strengthen the rights and safety of all Victorians.

A casual admin job at the Victorian Trades Hall Council in my 20s enabled me to join and become involved in my own union, the Australian Services Union. I worked as the Trades Hall receptionist for three years under the leadership of John Halfpenny. Becoming the ASU delegate and having to negotiate with union legend John Halfpenny as my employer was daunting and just a little terrifying. Somehow I managed to hold my own and learn some things along the way.

I was employed as an organiser with the ASU in 1993 at a time when Victorian workers were facing some of the worst attacks on their rights in a generation. The union's secretary of the day, my friend and mentor, Gaye Yuille—a fearless union leader—taught me many early lessons about standing up for our members and never giving up in the face of a much better resourced opponent.

My assistant secretary from that time, my friend and colleague Martin Foley, was a tireless advocate for ASU members, and he taught me much about being an effective organiser and the importance of always being accountable back to the union members who we had the honour to represent. This was also the time that I joined the Labor Party, because I understood that there was a direct link between advocating for the industrial interests of ASU members and seeing Labor governments elected that reflected the collective aspirations of working people.

For the last 25 years I have had the privilege of representing ASU members across a diverse range of industries, and it has been the greatest honour to have had their support to lead the union for the past 15 years. This has exposed me to businesses, small, medium and large, across the private sector as well as the not-for-profit sector and organisations reliant on government or philanthropic funding to operate. I led a union with 70 per cent female membership, predominantly low paid and often working in undervalued occupations and industries.

I am proud of what we have achieved collectively through the efforts of so many in my union and that our union has been, and remains, at the forefront of important campaigns, including the ongoing fight for equal pay, including winning groundbreaking provisions to address the disgraceful gender gap in superannuation outcomes for women in Australia; winning paid family violence leave for workers across many industries and campaigning for family violence leave to be a universal right for all workers in the national employment standards; securing flexible work arrangements for predominantly—but not exclusively—women workers so they can remain in the workforce; securing procurement policy outcomes that promote ethical employment of local workers in the service sector; and of course the union-wide campaign to 'change the rules' for working people.

Over the years there have been many campaigns and disputes that I am old enough to have been involved in, including the fight against WorkChoices; the 10-year-long fight to secure the entitlements of thousands of Ansett workers in the aftermath of Australia's largest corporate collapse—many of those workers were residents of Western Metropolitan Region; and the fight against our members being unilaterally placed on individual contracts or having their jobs contracted out at scores of private sector employers over the years.

What is common across all these struggles is the dignity and courage of the workers involved. They inspire me and humble me in equal measure, and I will always stand with them, with my union and with the broader trade union movement.

I have lived in the western suburbs of Melbourne for almost 25 years. I moved there seeking affordable housing but found so much more. One of the best things about the west is its people: hardworking, resourceful and engaged in their communities and with inbuilt BS detectors. From the community groups who do such wonderful work in keeping community members connected, to the sporting clubs who do so much more than play sport, to the many people who volunteer, to the many carers across the region—they all display the very best qualities of the community spirit in Melbourne's west in everything they do.

In the west we are proud of our industrial history as the engine room of the state but determined not to be the poor cousins to other regions or Melbourne's dumping ground.

We live in a richly diverse region where 40 per cent of the population of the region were born overseas, representing over 130 different nationalities.

Despite recent media attention I have rarely seen racial disharmony in the west. We coexist with so many different cultures, religions and nationalities. I see this diversity as one of the great strengths of Melbourne's west, and I never want to see particular communities demonised for the sake of political pointscoring.

Currently Western Metropolitan Region is home to 835 000 residents. This is projected to grow to 1.8 million by 2050. Two hundred and fifty babies are born in our region every week. Just let that sink in for a moment. This level of growth represents huge challenges for our region, our city and our state.

Every one of the people of Melbourne's west deserves access to world-class education and health and community services, modern and efficient public transport infrastructure, decent jobs, clean air and green, open spaces to enjoy.

I am proud of the work, and record investment to date, by the Andrew's Labor government in Melbourne's west, and the election commitments soon to be delivered upon. But there is still more to do.

I believe that electoral success comes with a responsibility to use our time here to tackle the disadvantage that exists in parts of our region. This should include continuing the effort to secure decent and sustainable jobs for locals across our region with an eye to the jobs and industries of the future; tackling youth unemployment and disadvantage, particularly where generational unemployment is a factor, and building social inclusion for our young people through education, training, work, sport and other community programs; supporting our recently arrived communities to thrive in Western Metropolitan Region; continuing the important work of the first-term Andrews government in tackling gender inequality in our society; continuing to invest in measures to prevent family violence and violence against women, including addressing the link between family violence, financial stress, including mortgage and rent stress, or financial control as a form of abuse and violence, problem gambling and drug and alcohol abuse; addressing the rising levels of women's incarceration rates for what I would describe as crimes of economic and social disadvantage—women prisoners are disproportionately victims of family violence, sexual abuse, financial disadvantage and homelessness; doing more to address homelessness by increasing our social housing stock—there are currently nearly 4000 people in Western Metropolitan Region who are homeless, and this is only those that we know of, and alarmingly 58 per cent of those are women; and ensuring our frontline community services are properly funded and resourced in order to retain those experienced and qualified staff capable of working with these vulnerable Victorians, which is so important; and improving air quality in the west and tackling the illegal dumping and storage of hazardous materials. I am committed to working with my colleagues in this place and the other place on outcomes for our

region that address these and other priorities for our community, and in doing so I will always listen to the concerns and aspirations of the people of Western Metropolitan Region.

There are a number of people that I would like to thank today, without whom I would not be here. To my comrades in the union movement: thank you to the unions that supported my election—your solidarity, support and friendship mean a lot. Thank you to my union, the Australian Services Union, and the members, delegates, staff and officials. Thank you to the talented and hardworking leadership of the ASU who I have had the privilege to work with over many years and made life-long friendships with: Matt Norrey, David Leydon, Imogen Sturni and Linda White. Thank you to my Labor Party friends and colleagues for their guidance, support and wise counsel: Alan Griffin, Andrew Giles, Lily D'Ambrosio, Jill Hennessy, Kat Hardy, Mat Hilakari and Lee Tarlamis. And thank you to the Labor Party branch members, volunteers and activists who bring their heart and soul to the contest. Particular thanks to Catherine Van Vliet, Louise Persse, Vinayakk Kolaape, Emeline Gaske, Daniel Scoullar and Lori Faroane.

I wish to acknowledge the successful campaign effort by the Labor team contesting the lower house in Western Metropolitan Region and thank them for welcoming me. I look forward to working with them, and with my other upper house colleagues, for the next four years. To those MLCs elected to represent Western Metropolitan Region in the upper house: I look forward to working with you constructively in the interests of our community. I would also like to acknowledge and thank former member Khalil Eideh for his contribution to Western Metropolitan Region over his time in the Parliament.

To my family, thank you for your love and support: to my dad, who is no longer with us but who I think of daily; to my mum for her love and passion for the things that matter; and to my husband and great love, Matt, who has given me so much, including the opportunity to be a stepmother to Brandon, Dylan and Callum, each of whom I love and have built a strong bond with. To my children, Shauna and Darcy: I love you and could not be prouder of you. You all mean the world to me.

And to two very important family members, my beloved and naughty black labradors, Wilbur and Charlie: they are the special glue that binds our large blended family together, and both of them have given us so much joy, love and hilarious moments.

Finally, I thank the people of Western Metropolitan Region. I bring to this role my work ethic and my determination to ensure that my time here is focused on their needs, their priorities and their aspirations, and I commit to always be accountable back to them. It is a great honour to be a voice for them in the Parliament. Thank you.

Members applauded.

Debate interrupted.

Business of the house

NOTICES OF MOTION

The PRESIDENT: With the leave of the house, before we go to Mr Limbrick, we need to do some tidying up. Mr Davis wants to give a notice of motion, which will be part of general business tomorrow and which was omitted before.

Notice given.

Address to Parliament

GOVERNOR'S SPEECH

Address-in-reply

Debate resumed.

Mr LIMBRICK (South Eastern Metropolitan) (16:07): Firstly, President, congratulations are in order for your election to the office, and to all other members elected to this Legislative Council. I thank you all for allowing me to deliver my inaugural speech representing the people of South Eastern Metropolitan Region.

Today I have good news for some of you and bad news for others. For those Victorians who feel overtaxed and over-regulated and are generally just over the way that government interferes in their lives, I bring great news: the libertarians have arrived. But for those of you who feel entitled to other people's money or who like to meddle in private lives, impose taxes, police thoughts and censor others or who could be described as nanny statists, champagne socialists, rent-seeking fat cats, moral guardians, human red-tape dispensers or any other variety of authoritarian, I have terrible news: the libertarians have arrived.

Along with my colleague Tim Quilty from Northern Victoria Region, I am proud to represent the Liberal Democrats. We are the first people in the 160-year history of the Victorian Parliament to be elected on a purely libertarian or classical liberal platform. We believe in liberty, and we are here to make Victorians more free.

But first I would like to take this opportunity to tell you about myself. Like so many crossbenchers, I am not from the political class. My background is in IT. I am the proud father of three young boys, who I am happy could attend here today. As far as I can determine, I am the first man on my side of the family to ever finish high school. I am also the first to go to university, and I am certainly the first to ever be elected to office.

It would be fair to say that I was born and bred in south-east Melbourne. I grew up in the region on a small hobby farm in Cranbourne in a house built by my grandfather, a veteran of World War II. The area where I lived was still rural at the time, and we looked after horses, goats, cows, chickens, dogs and cats. My mother originally hailed from Highett. She was the first woman in her family to go to university and spent a long, successful career teaching in secondary schools. I am honoured that she has joined us here today in the gallery. My late father lived in Oakleigh as a child. He suffered from a number of childhood illnesses, including polio. My middle name, Boyd, is in honour of one of the surgeons that helped him. He always loved animals, especially his prized racehorse. I remember as a child being taken to the track with him at 4 in the morning to watch the training before he would go off to his day job as an investigator. Unfortunately he passed away suddenly from heart problems when I was a teenager, although he is with me in spirit here today.

My family was never political. No-one that I knew was involved in politics. I never had ambitions to be involved in politics even as an adult; however, I always had a sense of what freedom was and why it was important. I believe in the individual. There are no human rights without individual rights. Self-ownership is the idea that a person owns their own body and as long as they do not cause harm to others they may act as they see fit, and no-one, including government, should interfere in this. In the words of John Stuart Mill:

Over himself, over his own body and mind, the individual is sovereign.

It has always surprised me how unpopular this idea is. It seems there is no shortage of people who would happily invoke the power of the state to force others to bend to their will. The principles of freedom of speech and religion naturally follow from this. A healthy democracy requires free speech.

Fundamentally, libertarianism is a moral position. It is based on respect for other people and the belief that we do not know what is better for others and that coercion is wrong. Just as it is wrong for a bully in the playground to take your lunch money and tie your shoelaces together, it is wrong for governments to overtax you and restrict your freedom.

I reject identity politics. I have been saddened by the recent rise of authoritarians on both the left and the right attempting to declare certain sections of society as good or bad. Genders, races and religions

do not commit crimes; individuals do. Pitting man against woman, black against white and Christian against Muslim is a recipe for social chaos. All Australians are valuable and should be treated equally under the law.

Following the turn of the century I became increasingly concerned as governments grew ever larger and more dangerous. Even a cursory understanding of 20th century history will provide ample evidence of the disaster that awaits when government power is allowed to get out of control. My beliefs led me to join the Liberal Democrats, a party whose principles align strongly with my own. It is wonderful to see that enough freedom still exists in this great country that a person from outside the political class can be elected to Parliament.

Tim Quilty and I follow the paths blazed by our Liberal Democrat colleagues, Senator Leyonhjelm in the federal Senate and Aaron Stonehouse in the Parliament of Western Australia. They have demonstrated that we are a consistent party of principle. They never vote for a reduction in freedom or an increase in taxes, and neither will we.

The Liberal Democrats are often called a minor party, but there is nothing minor about our principles, which have been developed over centuries. Libertarians are consistently on the right side of history. We have led debates about free markets, a philosophy which has lifted billions of people out of poverty. We have been at the forefront of campaigns for women's suffrage and free speech, against slavery and, more recently, for marriage equality and assisted suicide.

I intend to carry on our grand tradition of being right by urging my colleagues to open their eyes and end the pointless, costly and deadly war on drugs. Like the failed experiment of alcohol prohibition in the US in the 1920s, drug prohibition also has been a catastrophe with similar consequences. As a taxpayer, I have had enough of spending billions of dollars on our justice, health and welfare systems to support prohibition. As a citizen who values the integrity of institutions, I have had enough of the proliferation of organised crime, petty crime and corruption. As a parent, I have had enough of hearing about young people dying from adulterated substances produced in backyard labs. It is time we not only talked about the harms caused by drugs but also started talking about the harms caused by prohibition.

In Portugal the possession of drugs was decriminalised in 2001. For a country that was once considered the heroin capital of Europe, drug-related HIV infections have fallen by 95 per cent and the drug mortality rate is now the lowest in Western Europe.

I will listen carefully to constituents about how the nanny state is encroaching on their lives and untie red tape wherever I find it. Today I pledge not to waste this opportunity to stand up to the legislative bullies, using my vote when I can and calling them out when I cannot. If we have our way, libertarians will eventually fill the seats in this place and leave Victorians free to plan their own lives instead of having it planned for them.

I would like to acknowledge and thank some of the many people who have helped get me here today. Firstly, I would like to thank the Liberal Democrats team, especially Les Hughes, Duncan Spender, David Leyonhjelm, Stuart Hatch, Tim Quilty, Adam Karlovsky, Rachel Connor and Gabriel Buckley. I would like to thank the party founder, John Humphreys. I would also like to thank the candidates, volunteers and supporters for all of their efforts, especially Matthew Ford, Kirsty O'Sullivan, Lachlan Christie and Rob McCathie. I would like to thank my wonderful wife, Etsuko, and my three sons, Sen, Kai and Nao, for putting up with me over the past few years after getting involved in politics and directing so much time and energy away from them. I would like to thank my ex-colleagues who were so understanding when I suddenly had to depart last December.

Lastly, I would like to thank my mother, who put up with so much trouble from me during my youth. Without her support and guidance, I doubt I would have ever achieved anything of substance. Thank you very much.

Members applauded.

Ms TERPSTRA (Eastern Metropolitan) (16:17): President, in rising to speak today, I pass on to you my warmest congratulations on your recent appointment to the office of President of the Legislative Council, commencing on and with Victoria's 59th Parliament.

First and foremost I acknowledge the traditional owners and custodians of the land upon which we meet, the Aboriginal people of the Kulin nation, and I pay my respects to their elders past, present and emerging. This always was and always will be Aboriginal land.

I am honoured to have been elected as a representative for the Eastern Metropolitan Region. My journey to this place was not necessarily one of well-laid-out plans, but something that arose out of a career that was dedicated to improving the lives of working people. I was born in New South Wales and am proudly public school educated. Along with learning the usual school curriculum, I attended local public schools where students came from many different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. I was welcomed into the homes of many of my school friends, enjoying a richness of multicultural experiences, and was embraced by those families during meal times and other times of cultural festivities. I was fortunate to have a number of 'mums' at one time or another as well. These early experiences gave me an appreciation of the importance of inclusivity and community that arises from our public school system. Our public schools take all and welcome all.

My parents were working-class people. My mum, Patricia, was a seamstress who later acquired further skills to work in a clerical capacity in the union movement. Her early years were punctuated by family violence and alcoholism, which left her with an unmitigated desire to leave home as early as she could. Sadly in later years she found herself having to take care of three of her younger siblings when her own mother passed away when she was just 21 years old.

My dad, John, immigrated to Australia at around the age of 21 from the Netherlands. His own early education was interrupted due to the ravages of war in Europe, but as a truck driver he continued to work, and through on-the-job training he gained stable employment in mechanical workshops as a mechanic.

Both my parents valued education, but it was my mother who impressed upon me and her sisters the importance of it and the importance of the union movement and why politics mattered. In later years my mother would say to both me and her sisters, 'You can do anything you want to', encouraging us to think in unconstrained ways about what might be possible—and not to think less of ourselves simply because of our gender.

Both my parents worked hard to bring together a small family, but despite those early beginnings my mum suffered a lengthy bout of mental illness, followed by the breakdown of my parents' marriage. Then a few years later my dad passed away at age 52 due to cancer. I was a young teen, and obviously these were difficult years.

My mum did her absolute best and returned to the paid workforce; initially she struggled to find employment. She continued to raise me and my brother as a single parent. There were many challenges along the way. But fortunately for me it was the friendships forged during my public school years and being welcomed into the families of others that would sustain me.

Consequently, from these challenging times, I came to develop a range of skills and attributes that I believe stand me in good stead today, such as resilience, persistence, forthrightness, integrity, a strong sense of fairness and a disdain for injustices visited upon those who are powerless, or on those that rely on government assistance to have a decent standard of living.

During these turbulent years, schooling was tough going. I had already decided that school was not for me and during my year 10 studies I attended the local TAFE college at night, along with a close friend. There I learned to type and to attend to other clerical duties. At the completion of year 10, I left school and entered the full-time workforce at around the age of 16. I worked for a few years in a variety of clerical jobs until I gained employment working in the union movement in a secretarial capacity. During these years, I also undertook further studies at my local TAFE, which included learning shorthand and simple bookkeeping.

I was indeed fortunate to have many mentors in my early years in the union movement. I want to acknowledge Warwick McDonald, who, as the secretary of the Water Industry Salaried Officers Union, encouraged all women within that office to develop their skill sets within that office, no matter what their role. It was here that I gained a greater insight into the importance of the union movement and how conditions and protections were gained. Many training and development opportunities were made available to me through those early years, in both formal and informal settings. I have fond memories of spending countless hours discussing politics and world events with Warwick and my former colleagues. We still have these discussions today when we meet. This in and of itself was a continuation of my education. And it was through the union movement that many doors opened for me.

Later, with the help of my colleagues, I was successful in gaining mature age entry into studying law at the University of Technology Sydney—the second woman in my extended family to attend university and the first in my immediate family. Six years of part-time study was to follow. I joke today that I fear I have suffered some form of short-term memory loss as a consequence of having to endure countless closed book exams with only the benefit of taking in a pen to write with. But I made it through those days, attending evening lectures three nights per week and also working part-time as a fitness instructor in various local gyms.

I then had a short departure from the union movement when I left my secretarial job and gained employment with Rockdale council in the rates department. It was here that I became a member of the Municipal Employees Union, as it was at the time. After a short while with council, I saw an advertisement for an organiser's role with that union. Having applied for that position and coming from the shop floor, I was successful in obtaining that role. I had the privilege of representing workers in local government from a range of backgrounds—both blue and white collar in that industry.

As the years went by, I eventually undertook other duties, including the women's officer role, industrial officer and finally I was the first woman to hold the role of metropolitan manager, which was the equivalent of a branch secretary role under the new structure which was introduced at that time. And it was here that I became acquainted with the Labor Party.

Now, it was a long time ago and the introduction to the party that I received back then would most likely not pass muster these days. The treasurer of that union said to me, quite simply, 'Well, love, if you want to work here, you'd better join the Labor Party'. And so I joined in my early twenties.

At the end of 1997 I had graduated from university with a bachelor of laws degree. A few years later I began working for the New South Wales Working Women's Centre, a not-for-profit community legal centre that was government funded to provide industrial advice and representation to women from a non-English-speaking background. Here I was able to provide legal advice and industrial advice to women who worked in a variety of industries, including textile, hospitality and clerical and workers from the sex industry. I also provided pro bono representation for women in unfair dismissal claims, underpayment of entitlement claims and in the human rights jurisdiction on harassment and discrimination claims, to name but a few.

In around the year 2000, I was then successful in gaining a role as a senior industrial officer for the New South Wales branch of the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union (AMWU)—the first woman to lead the New South Wales industrial office within the history of that branch. Here I had the

privilege of representing workers in the manufacturing industry—but it was also here that I met my husband, Barry.

After a few years, both myself and my husband relocated to Melbourne and I was not in the paid workforce for a while. As my children became older, I was able to combine my work and family responsibilities a little better and was able to undertake a variety of part-time or contract roles. For a short time I worked for the AMWU in both the state and national offices, working on education and training, award modernisation and finally in 2014, the casuals' test case as part of the 2014 modern award review. I would like to acknowledge Paul Bastian and Andrew Dettmer for their comradeship during these years and also their preparedness to be confronted with strongly held feminist views on the odd occasion. To their credit, a 'Fair cop, governor' response was more often than not proffered.

During these years that I attended to my young children, I also had the opportunity to become involved in my local community. I took up various posts, including volunteering as president of the local kindergarten, and began advocating for local issues in my community. It was during this time, when my children were young, that I undertook further studies and obtained a masters in law and conflict resolution from La Trobe University. At the conclusion of my studies it was a very proud moment to have both my young children attend with me and walk down the aisle at the graduation ceremony. However, whilst my children were young it became apparent to me that access to kinder was difficult. Waiting lists were long and placements were in short supply. Local public schools were also experiencing extreme enrolment pressures, so in later years I began working with my local community to campaign for improvements to local public school provisioning, and I commenced working on the Reopen Our Schools campaign. We gathered a mountain of local support from the community to advocate for local needs, but it was an even more pleasant surprise to learn that there was—and still is—a whole network of parents, each in their own respective local communities, campaigning for similar outcomes right here in Victoria. Hence I have met and teamed up with some of the most amazing parents, who are incredibly passionate and dedicated and who are effective community campaigners, many of whom are women.

My other career achievements also included working as a commonwealth public servant and later running my own small legal practice from home, along with another short stint at the National Tertiary Education Union, Victorian Branch. Finally, before coming to this place, I worked at the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation, Victorian Branch, as an industrial officer, managing a small team of organisers. The ANMF, Victorian branch, is a formidable union, now the largest union in Australia, boasting some 85 000 members in Victoria alone. I will miss my former colleagues at the nurses union. It was an absolute privilege and a pleasure to work with you.

Now I turn the page and a new chapter begins in my story: coming to this place, the Victorian Parliament. I hope that what I have laid out today demonstrates the power of education. Access to education is of fundamental importance. It is the great enabler. It can lift people up out of poverty, and it allows them to aspire to a better life. The ability to participate in democratic processes and to make a contribution to society depends on being able to be informed and to make choices. Without knowledge, making informed decisions is almost impossible, resulting in an individual's ability to participate in democratic processes being restricted or impaired.

A strong public education system is the jewel in the crown of any democratic society. More than just a curriculum, public education includes other purposes such as bringing people together, reinforcing our communities and helping us to connect across race and class and to include people who might otherwise be marginalised. Central to this are key principles such as acceptance, inclusion, diversity and respect. This demonstrates why our public education system must retain the hallmarks of being secular and free, as it also has an equally important role in maintaining social cohesion. Underinvestment in our public education system will only serve to widen the inequality gap and result in a more socially stratified society, and consequently access to public education must be equitable and be available to all local communities on the basis of need.

So now I stand here in this chamber as a proud member of the Andrews Labor government, which has demonstrated its strong support for public education, and also as the first woman from the Labor Party to be preselected and subsequently elected to Eastern Metropolitan Region since the 2006 reforms, which goes some way towards improving gender equality in the Legislative Council in this Parliament.

Having now set out some of my achievements, however, it is patently obvious that no-one gets to advance in their political career without the help of others, and of course the last leg of my journey to this place was not the easiest either. Consequently I need to thank and acknowledge a range of people, and this does make me somewhat nervous as I do not want to leave anyone out. But if I do, it is inadvertent and I apologise in advance. But to all of you who helped me, you know who you are, and you know how much your contribution has meant to me. To my friends, most of whom are not interested in politics at all: you keep me grounded. You will no doubt remind me that most people are generally not as concerned with politics as the politicians who reside inside the political bubble, and I will be grateful for that as I will need to stay connected with reality from here on in.

Sadly, both my parents are no longer with me now. My mum, Patricia, passed away in April last year with her sisters, my children and me by her side. But I do know that both my mum and dad would be immensely proud of where I have ended up today. To my husband, Barry: your unwavering support of my career choices and aspirations has been unquestioning and immeasurable. To my two children, Daniel and Jessica, I know you are proud of your mum, even though you both really do not want to admit it. I love you all.

As commented on earlier, to my former colleagues who contributed to my ongoing political education in the early years of my work in the union movement—Warwick McDonald, Janet Cadet and Alison Peters and many others—thank you, and I look forward to our next catch-up in Sydney soon so we can continue our long and rambling discussions about politics and world affairs.

To Kimberley Johnston, Cindy O'Connor, Darren Dwyer, Gillian Strong and Steve Dargavel: your hard work and persistence in getting me to this place and your wise words of counsel were immeasurable—thank you. To Kimberley, Cindy and Gillian—sisters—your support and words of encouragement to just keep going were simple, yet oh so effective.

To the crew at the Australian Services Union—there are so many of you—but to Ingrid Stitt, who now sits here with me in this place as a representative for Western Metropolitan Region, to Matt Norrey and all others at the ASU: I say thank you for your support.

To local ALP branch members and other supporters in Eastern Metropolitan Region who came out on pre-poll day and election day: thank you for your support and for giving up countless hours of time, away from family and friends. The result means that for all of us in the east the tide did indeed come in, and we are now left with a sea of red. Your efforts contributed to such a great result. I promise to work hard every day to make sure that the tide does not run out.

To public school campaigners everywhere: to Cate Hall, Nina Kelly, Lea Campbell and all at the extended Our Children Our Schools campaign alliance, your advocacy for equity of access to local quality public education for our children is invaluable. Keep up the fight; you are unstoppable.

To the newly expanded team in eastern metro region—Dustin Halse in Ringwood, Matt Fregon in Mount Waverley, Paul Hamer in Box Hill, Jackson Taylor in Bayswater, Anthony Carbines in Ivanhoe, Vicki Ward in Eltham and of course the inimitable Shaun Leane, who now presides over this place: I look forward to working with all of you over the next four years and beyond.

Now I would like to conclude this speech by borrowing from and paraphrasing some very wise words of wisdom by Eva Cox, feminist activist, writer, lecturer and tireless fighter for equality. I echo her words as I say this to women who may be contemplating a journey into politics or to embark upon a campaign for change. Eva said:

... if you want to make changes, belonging is probably one of the things that doesn't really fit with it, because people who belong often accept the status quo.

Eva then says:

If there's things in the world that make you angry because they are unfair, because they don't work, because they discriminate against people, because they exclude people, if you are part of a world that you don't feel comfortable with and you think you can improve it—go for it.

...

We need the stirrers, we need the outsiders, we need the people who change things. And it can be painful: people bully you, people reject you, people exclude you. Yes, it's nice to belong and be part of the warm and fuzzies, but if that's not you, then you lose something by that process ...

As Eva then says, she has never really been prepared to lose that. And neither am I.

Lastly, the wisest of words by Eva are when she says:

Don't worry about being called difficult. It shows you are making a difference.

Finally, I say this to the many other sisters in the union movement and beyond who are striving to improve things, to the many mums in their communities who are embarking on a campaign for change, whatever it may be—a fight to protect those services you want to access for your kids, to protect that local pool that is under threat, a campaign for your local school, to protect your local park or bushland environment or for better road safety or a local bus route or better footpaths—and to those women who have made that decision to enter into politics, I say to you: just keep going, and keep going, until.

Members applauded.

Mr GRIMLEY (Western Victoria) (16:39): Thank you, President, and I congratulate you on your advancement to the chair in this 59th Parliament. I also thank you for your warm welcome to me as a new member of Parliament. I look forward to working with you over the next four years.

I begin my first speech by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which we stand today. I pay my respects to their elders, both past and present. My association with the Aboriginal peoples extends to the Western Desert region of Western Australia many years ago. The person I have become to this day is partly as a result of my time spent in those remote communities, which I shall talk about later.

The Western Victoria Region holds a special place in the heart of Derryn Hinch's Justice Party. Ballarat was chosen as a launching pad of the party in 2016, when I stood with Derryn as his running mate for the federal election. Geelong was selected as a launching place for the 2018 state election. Through holding a recent job as a senior detective at the Moorabool criminal investigation unit (CIU) I have become extremely familiar with the many towns within that shire, as well as in Melton and Ararat.

The previous job that I held as an educational stationery salesperson also allowed me to traverse many other towns and smaller locales within the 80 000 square kilometres that make up Western Victoria Region. It is certainly a big patch to cover, and through my experience with the people I can say it is full of big hearts and big opportunities.

I would like to thank the many people who have supported me along the journey so far—all the volunteers at the many booths around western Victoria, those who stood in the searing sun and the pelting rain without any complaining, simply doing it out of love and a commitment to the key issues that we passionately stand for.

Although we could not field volunteers at every booth, those that we did have to this day remain solid supporters and friends, and in particular to my cousin Scott; to Rob and Deb at Bacchus Marsh and Melton; to Kim at Colac; to Christian, Daryl and my mother-in-law, Ann, at Geelong; to Janette at Torquay; to Marion and Sarah at Ballarat; to Elsie at Corio; and also to my dad, Jim, who manned the

booths, no matter what the conditions, every day, as he believes so much in what his son is standing for; and to all the volunteers, I thank you very much.

To my mum—who has also supported me along the journey over the years and has always been there to help in any way she can—I thank you. I am a very lucky person to have such supportive parents, who have stuck by my side throughout my life and have never wavered in their love and devotion to their only son.

To my in-laws, Christy, Brett, Paula, and my father-in-law, Wayne, I would also like to thank you for being there for me and helping out whenever and wherever you could over the years, and thanks for the food fights at our family gatherings as well, none of which I started myself.

To my previous work colleagues at Victoria Police, in particular at the Moorabool CIU, Daniel, John, Josh, Brian and Ben, and also Troy and Nathan, your advice and thoughts on how we can improve our legal system over my tenure will now have the opportunity of being heard in Parliament, and to all my previous brothers and sisters in blue, and indeed all emergency services workers, rest assured that you now have a representative within Spring Street who will work tirelessly to improve our judicial processes, and also work towards addressing and supporting the mental health issues that are becoming all too familiar.

I thank all the candidates who ran in the state election under the banner of Derryn Hinch's Justice Party. Your commitment to the cause is to be commended, and your continuing support as we lead into a federal election this year is greatly appreciated. I would also like to thank my friend and colleague Tania Maxwell. Like me, Tania has been with the party for many years and was selected as a candidate for her commitment to tougher sentencing and more support for victims of crime, something I know both of us will continue to push for as new members of Parliament. Thanks, Tania, for your support and loyalty. Together we are going to make a formidable team in this house.

We have a leader and founder of the party, Derryn Hinch, a man of conviction—some may say too many convictions. It is well documented that Derryn has completed many periods of detention for standing by his beliefs for the betterment of the community. I have never come across anyone, past or present, who has been willing to make this amount of personal sacrifice for what he believes in.

I thank 'team Hinch'—in particular Annette, Ruth, Glenn, Clinton, Carly and Zoe—for your support and loyalty towards me at all times. Without all of you I would not be in this position. Derryn, your friendship towards me and my family over the years has been warmly welcomed. We have always had great respect for each other, and your loyalty towards me is much appreciated.

Last of all—and most importantly—I thank my wife, Mandy, and my two kids, Michael and Brianna. Mandy, you are my rock and the love of my life. How you put up with me I do not know and I will never understand. I am the proudest father of my two kids. They have been through some tough times and have come out the other end with strength and most importantly a great sense of humour.

Despite going to a Christian Brothers high school in my younger years, I have never been a religious person. My family is my religion. I look to them for guidance and support. Instead of church, our Sundays are spent together enjoying each other's company, with the occasional barbecue or game of Monopoly. However, I am always reminding my children that just because I, or we, do not believe in religion does not mean that our views are better than anyone else's. Your religion or race or sexual orientation does not define you as a person and does not make you a better or worse person than anyone else. We are all the same, we are all human and we all share this one world we have.

I have been fortunate to have had a happy and healthy upbringing as a child. I spent my first 12 years in the much-maligned suburb of Elizabeth in South Australia, where we as kids made the most of our environment by exploring, playing sports and trying to stay out of trouble. It did not take long for trouble to find me, and I soon found myself in the back of a police car after being caught trespassing on a building site with my friends. Even though my 'friends' ran away when the police came, I

stayed—maybe because I was not too sure if what I was doing was wrong, or maybe I knew that running away was not the right thing to do. Regardless, I was taken back to my parents' place, and by that stage I was petrified. Yes, back then kids had a distinct respect for the police—something which is sorely lacking nowadays.

Anyway, I think my parents saw the writing on the wall, and a move was on the cards—out of Elizabeth and off to Geraldton in Western Australia, where I was to complete high school. I have often said that had I not been taken out of that environment then maybe I would have ended up on the other side of the thin blue line.

The move away to a new state and new school and away from my friends was tough to begin with, but I soon had a new bunch of mates to hang out with, and by the end of high school I had discovered the beauty of the beach and a beer. It also meant that I spent more time surfing than studying, and my grades may have suffered as a result. My tertiary entrance score meant that I was ineligible to attend university, even though at that stage I still had no idea what I wanted to do with my life.

It was not long after year 12 that I decided that a move back to South Australia was on the cards. It was there that I somehow got word that a tertiary entrance score in Western Australia was worth more in South Australia. How and why I do not know, but it meant that I was able to begin a course at the University of South Australia—a bachelor of arts in education. After completing six months of that course I was able to transfer to a university in Western Australia. Where there's a will, there's a way. From there I completed a teaching degree and became a pretty decent teacher, but my first job was in a challenging environment to say the least—the Western Desert.

Getting your first full-time job as a teacher is a pretty exciting time. Knowing that my accommodation in the desert consisted of a caravan parked at the back of the school, with the toilet and shower some 50 metres away, definitely took the gloss off the great news. I use the term 'caravan' loosely, by the way; it was more of a metal box on wheels with a bed just big enough for my legs to hang over the edge. As a wide-eyed and ready-to-change-the-world young fella, this made the experience a little more challenging, to say the least. To top it all off, I was told that it was a dry community. I recall saying something like, 'Of course it's dry—it's the desert!'. Imagine my surprise when I was informed that by 'dry' they meant no alcohol. You could have knocked me down with a feather. This is a place where the temperature can reach above 50 degrees. As a 23-year-old at the time I never knew such places existed.

Anyway, my body seemed to respond well to the zero alcohol during the school term, and my teaching career was off to a flying start. I loved the job, and I loved immersing myself in a new culture and meeting many wonderful people. It was all English as a second language, and I soon became familiar with many of the common words of the Ngaanyatjarra dialogue, the first of which were the swear words, of course, as these seemed to be the most commonly used in the classroom when I first started.

It was also during my tenure as a desert teacher that I experienced the impact and frequency of abuse suffered by children, as well as domestic abuse suffered by many families. At times I felt helpless, even more so as the nearest police station was over 3 or 4 hours away. Maybe this is where I began to learn how to communicate with people under extreme duress—something which became invaluable to me as a police officer.

I often reflect back on my time in the Western Desert and have come to the conclusion that I have learned more from the Indigenous peoples than I could ever teach them. I am very thankful for that, and it has made me become a strong advocate for improved living standards for all Aboriginal peoples. The tie that I am wearing today comes from an Aboriginal artist. It is a symbol of acknowledging and thanking the peoples of the Western Desert from my past being here in this present.

Doing the hard yards in the desert set me up well enough to gain a position as a school principal in the wheat belt region of Western Australia. There is something about the country that has always had a

strong pull for me; however, to further my career I had to move back to the big smoke in Perth, where my passion for teaching was overcome by my passion for justice. Where or how this came about I am not too sure, but it was a strong calling that could not be ignored.

My time as a police officer has been served in the northern suburbs of Perth and also in Kalgoorlie. I have a lot to be grateful for from my time in Kalgoorlie. It was where I met my wife, Mandy—in a pub, believe it or not. It was there where our firstborn son, Michael, came into our lives, and it was where I began to understand the issues of our Indigenous peoples' struggle with alcohol, homelessness and crime. That was nearly 20 years ago, and sadly these issues still remain to this day.

After our son was born we made the decision to relocate to Victoria, as we soon realised that our family would be more suited to being closer to our relatives in the eastern states. After a short stay in Mount Gambier, where our Brianna was born, we continued our move to Victoria, where we settled in Geelong. My reappointment as a police officer in Victoria has seen me in positions including general duties, as a detective in the sex offences and child abuse investigation team in Footscray and finally as a detective in the Moorabool police service area.

Being a police officer can be rewarding, is often thankless and is always challenging. It is a job where you will see what the worst of humanity can deliver, yet at the same time it is a job that can deliver justice to people so desperately seeking it. It has been a job where I have talked people out of jumping off the West Gate Bridge; where I have comforted a dying young man trapped in his car after an accident; where I have supported family members following the sudden and unexpected death of a loved one; where I have trawled through thousands of child abuse images on a paedophile's computer, trying to identify victims while categorising the images on a scale required for prosecution; and it has been a job where I have had to do the dreaded doorknock to tell a parent that their child has died. These are the jobs that our police service does day in and day out, so when you are having a bad day just remember who is out there trying to make your life and community safer.

Going from being someone who failed to get into university after year 12 to someone who has been a teacher, principal, police officer, detective and now a member of Parliament says something about persistence, commitment and hope. I have often said to my children and other school students that your results on a test are not a reflection of who you are or who you could be. I always encourage my children to do their best but not be defined by results; be defined by your potential and what you can do to be the best version of yourself possible. And yes, there will be mistakes along the way; how can we learn without them?

You will all get to know me as a pragmatic person willing to listen to all parties. I am here as a representative of the constituents of Western Victoria Region, but more importantly I am here as a father and a family man. I look forward to what the next four years will hold and the new lessons to be learned, because not only are we here to make our communities better places to live, but this is also a rare opportunity to make our own lives the best they possibly can be.

That is my story; that is my ethos. Thanks for listening.

Members applauded.

Mr HAYES (Southern Metropolitan) (16:54): President and honourable members, especially new members, congratulations. I grew up in Brighton, the son of a doctor and a school teacher, so in many people's eyes I had a life of privilege, but my parents had just bought a house, my father was starting his own medical practice from scratch and I was sent to Gardenvale state school. However, I did not like school, particularly after getting the strap in my first few days there for playing in the third graders' playground. So when I learned to read, quite well, I told my mum I wanted to leave school. She laughed and told me I had to do another 12 years before I could leave. I was devastated. By grade 3 my parents were able to send me to Brighton Grammar, but in grade 4 my father suffered a terrible car accident, which affected him and his earning ability for the rest of his life. Mum worked, which was not that common in the early 1960s, and Dad brought in some money, so we got by okay. My two sisters and I managed to finish at private schools, but my father's situation got worse, and he relied on drinking and heavy medication, which by the end of our schooling left him totally incapacitated.

Being a bit of a rebel and not a great student, I decided on a very different course to the academic life so beloved by my parents. I had become interested in photography and filmmaking, and to my parents' horror I wanted a career in the film industry. So I left home and went to work. The Australian film industry was almost non-existent then. I found a job in the nascent television industry with Hector Crawford at Crawford Productions in Collins Street. My first job was on *Homicide* as a music editor, although I only had the vaguest idea of what that job entailed when I started. Over the next few years Crawfords produced the top three or four highest rating TV dramas in Australia at that time. I went on to become a freelance film editor, and in 1979 I won an Australian Film Institute award for my part in editing *Mad Max*.

Members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT: As tempting as it is, can we hold the applause until the end.

Mr HAYES: However, it was my experience working in the Northern Territory on the feature film *We of the Never Never* that changed my view on how we treated the first inhabitants of this land, and I came home a firm believer in Aboriginal land rights. My parents, particularly my father, who was a keen advocate to the few who would listen back then for Indigenous recognition and other social issues, were both academic and left wing in political inclination, which was a pretty unusual stand compared to many of my friends' parents in Brighton. So I was always interested in politics and comparing and arguing various points of view.

However, it was travelling overseas for six months when I was 24 which opened my eyes to how we lived in Australia. I was trying to find my way around the gridlocked streets of Bangkok, and looking over a bridge I saw swarming below a mass of humanity living in shacks on the side of a city canal, which would be no bigger than the Elwood canal down our way. A couple of hundred people were living down there—working, living and laughing. I realized that there were many ways to live the life that I thought was normal from my little bubble in suburban Melbourne. I also realized that which so many Australian travellers come to see: we are all so enormously privileged to grow up and live in the open spaces and remaining nature of our suburbs and the surrounding countryside.

I lived in Sydney for a while working as an editor. Here I was in the heart of the film industry and lived the life of a continual after-work party—restaurants, bars, parties, picnics, drinking, eating and all that goes with it. It was the 1980s, and Sydney was a beautiful city and definitely the place to be. Few would disagree that most of the beauty around the harbour has now been spoiled by overdevelopment. I got married and divorced in fairly quick succession. I bought an old farm house in a small town, Deans Marsh—between Geelong and Lorne—as a weekend retreat, and I became more and more interested in small-scale farming, self-sufficiency, agriculture and alternative lifestyles. I got married again and we had a daughter followed by a son a couple of years later.

Computerisation had swept through the TV industry, enabling me to work from our farm house but often requiring travel back and forth to Melbourne. I studied for a diploma in applied science, farm

management, by correspondence through Melbourne University, with a view to starting a small vineyard, which would certainly supplement my growing wine cellar.

That was when devastation struck and my life had to change. My wife wanted out, citing my lifestyle, the working, the drinking, the parties and generally being away from home too much. I was not much use as a father—and what is more, she was taking the kids. My drinking, smoking and party life had to stop. I realised my health was being affected and my lifestyle was costing me more than money. I was losing friends, my lucrative business and now what I valued most—my family.

I sought help and I found it through an organisation which pointed me to a path of spiritual recovery. As a result I no longer drink or smoke, nor do I take any mind-altering substances except caffeine, and have not done so for many years. However, I did start that small vineyard on the Mornington Peninsula with a business partner. After a while I managed to reconcile with my family, and though my wife and I did not resume our marriage we became good friends and I had the opportunity to be the father I had always wanted to be to my children.

In 2003 I sold the vineyard and I moved back to Brighton again, buying an older style apartment with a backyard, where I still live today. While I always had a political interest, my real political activity was about to start in the most unlikely way. My mother, who still lived in the old family home nearby, told me that a developer had plans to build a 5-storey building of more than 100 apartments right behind her house. The whole street was affected, most of the houses being single storey. All of our neighbours were up in arms: ‘They can’t do this here!’. And the reply from our council: ‘Oh yes, they can’. It was *Melbourne 2030*, and we had been declared, without our knowledge, to be living in an activity centre. What is more, the council had plans for more 4 and 5-storey buildings scattered around North Brighton.

Our group of residents decided to run someone against the local councillor. I was the only volunteer, and I ran on the issue, opposing high-rise development. With huge community support, I was elected by a sizeable majority seeking to maintain our village character. Once elected, I had the full support of council in moving for more restrictive height controls in our village-style shopping centres and surrounding residential streets. The minister, through his department, would not allow the changes, but after much lobbying he did grant so-called ‘discretionary’ height controls but at heights greater than the council’s decision.

The developers were still not happy and took the council to VCAT, where the VCAT member overruled the council’s refusal, saying discretionary controls gave him the discretion to break them. What is more, he and other members over the years took it upon themselves to give council lectures about our housing policy, developed out of widespread community consultation, for being too restrictive. VCAT continues to grant permits for building heights far in excess of our meaningless discretionary controls as granted by the state government. So much for the wishes of the community, or democracy, where elected bodies such as municipal councils can be overridden by a bureaucrat and increasingly by the state government.

This is where I discovered the general attitude of the planning bodies. Senior planners in the government said to me, ‘Councillor, if you don’t want high rise, you must want sprawl’. I said, ‘I don’t want either’, to which they replied, ‘Well, where will you put the population?’. Research showed me how population growth had been ramped up in recent years from a long-term average of 70 000 per annum to 200 000 people per annum. Melbourne is now growing by 2500 people, seeking accommodation, every week. This fact is used by the government to overpower councils on the issue of planning in particular.

Most government planners advocate urban consolidation and the destruction of our valued Australian suburban life. They talk of high-rise schools. Where will the children play? To achieve this so-called consolidation, governments, planners and developers want to bring in more and more people, not from

the outer suburbs but from overseas, to densify the inner city. Who benefits? The developers and the property industry.

After being elected mayor of Bayside I joined an organisation called Planning Backlash. Led by the awesome Mary Drost, OAM, we represented planning groups with similar issues all across Melbourne and regional Victoria. This group has led the campaign for greater say for residents and councils and has regularly met with all planning ministers, both Liberal and Labor, up until this minister, who no longer consults with us.

Rapid population growth has been connected with our planning problems. Around this time I saw Dick Smith's documentary and found the policies of Sustainable Australia. I came to see that global population growth and the corresponding increased pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, species decline and habitat destruction have made population growth the major environmental problem, both globally and locally. Yet population growth was not even mentioned by the major political parties, including the Greens.

The Greens advocate lowering consumption, and rightly so, but until they realistically tackle the population issue they cannot address the current rate of environmental destruction and greenhouse gas emissions in this state or in this country. This issue has nothing to do with race or religion, nor should it. For no matter how much we reduce consumption and the ensuing pollution per person, if we increase the population at the same time, we will make zero or even negative progress. And we in this country are growing at rates far above the world population growth rate, and our greenhouse gas emissions keep on rising.

A similar charge could be made against the major parties, Labor and Liberal, who cry economic ruin if we reduce population growth by returning to 1980s or 1990s levels of immigration, as our party advocates. They say the current rapid population growth raises gross domestic product. Yet, as we all know, GDP per head of population growth and wages growth have been stagnant over recent years as we have imported more and more workers.

In 2010 I met William Bourke and joined Sustainable Australia. Their policies on local planning, affordable housing, infrastructure, the environment and a more diverse economy appealed to my frustrated desires, particularly at a local level. As to planning in this beautiful city and this bountiful state, planning should be a good thing, not like here, with our planning system—deregulated, discretionary and encouraging the atrocious. Then we, the residents, hopefully with the support of our councils, try to make the proposal less bad.

Even this process is under attack, with planning bodies such as the Grattan Institute seeking to remove third-party appeal rights. Even less local democracy is being demanded. Planning, we believe, should be conceived at the local level, initiated by local planning groups or citizen juries. Planning should then set the agenda, set the social and environmental goals, the population density and height controls. Then developers would have to conform to these established local requirements—a democratic process.

Finally, just before I finish, I would like to thank a few people who helped me take this journey to find my way to this most historic and honourable chamber: William Bourke, our hardworking federal president and an invaluable mentor; Mary Drost, of indomitable spirit, and the committee of Planning Backlash; Richard Rozen and my supporters in Brighton Residents for Urban Protection; Derek, Evelyn, Kerrie, David, Beth, David and John of Restore Residents' Rights; Jill Quirk, who ran in an election with me; Kelvin Thomson, a former MLA and an early advocate on population growth, who is now my fantastic chief of staff; Noel Pullen, a former MLC, who helped us in the planning battle; Alex Del Porto, James Long, Sonia Castelli and Bayside councillors past and present; my family, especially my two children, Alice and Harry.

My objective, with your help, honourable members, is to make Melbourne, and even Victoria, a great place to live, not merely a great place in population size or area to rival such places as Shanghai, New York, London or Sao Paulo. Such greatness would be mere obesity, with all the disadvantages of such. Not a city or a state where people are crammed into dogbox apartments, living on crowded and congested streets in an environmentally unfriendly concrete heat island, but a spacious city with open skies, open and tree-filled streets, with gardens. An environment where children can play safely, where the car is not king but a servant. Walkable patchworks of various styles of housing, where one would enjoy walking, cycling or travelling through by public transport. A city of learning, education, the arts and self-supporting industry, where families and communities can thrive. Where the less fortunate who may be living on lower incomes are not segregated into high-rise towers but live in affordable detached or medium-density housing spread throughout the suburbs. Where their children have the same opportunities as other children. Where ghettos of crime and despair are not created. A city where the environment—the living environment—is prized and of prime importance. A sustainable city or cities in a sustainable state.

This can only happen when people are proud of their neighbourhoods and where they, as citizens, have control over what they create—the built form, the environment, the infrastructure. This is what, I believe, we as a Parliament can achieve.

Members applauded.

Ms MAXWELL (Northern Victoria) (17:13): President, I would like to congratulate you on your newly appointed position within the Legislative Council. I would also like to congratulate all those in this chamber on your elected positions, and I look forward to building relationships and working with you all over the next four years.

I stand here today as a member of the Legislative Council and representative of Derryn Hinch's Justice Party, and I do so with courage, pride and a strong desire to successfully contribute in forging strong, fair and lasting initiatives for the betterment of our state and all who reside within its borders.

Courage, I believe, comes from strength and trusting that you can overcome adversity and fear. There have been times in my life when I have experienced adversity and fear to such an extent it became completely debilitating. I am truly thankful I have been blessed with the strength and determination to overcome such adversity. Pride comes from the fact that I have been given this unique gift through our democratic process of being able to stand before you here today and for the next four years. It is a humbling and surreal feeling to be standing in this chamber representing the people of my electorate of Northern Victoria Region, knowing that my journey is to advocate on behalf of their needs, to represent them with service over ambition, integrity over expediency, to ensure their voices are heard within this 59th Parliament.

A desire to make a positive difference to people's lives has always been a priority for me, whether that has involved simply being kind to a stranger to enhance their day or working on a campaign which has demanded long hours of research, travel, time and energy. My heart has always wanted to give more.

The catalyst for this overwhelming passion came from the tragic death of Daniel Morcombe, and his name still brings a tear to my eyes. When Daniel was abducted in December 2003, later to be identified in 2011 as having been murdered by Brett Peter Cowan, I wondered in bewilderment how a family goes on to function day to day whilst bearing such sorrow. Their resilience, strength and courage has always been inspirational and motivational to me, whilst also tarnished with extreme sadness and grief. I promised I was not going to cry.

It was this tragedy and many other horrendous and largely preventable deaths within Victoria since that day which has provided me with the drive and determination to act on that need and longing to

advocate for victims—particularly those who have lost their loved ones at the hands of violent and sexual recidivist offenders.

Three years ago I co-founded the campaign Enough is Enough, which came to fruition out of incredibly tragic circumstances in my home town of Wangaratta. The campaign provided me the opportunity to meet Bruce and Denise Morcombe and Senator Hinch, who has been incredibly supportive of the goals our campaign was attempting to achieve. Through the course of meetings with ministers and members of Parliament I became increasingly interested in the workings of politics and held a new appreciation for policy-making processes and the deep complexities of political issues. I was also greatly disturbed by some of the outcomes of our justice system and the overwhelming realisation that victims and their families had to fight constantly, long after losing a loved one, just to receive the support they required and deserved.

I am passionate about my community, safety being an extremely high priority. It is said that it takes a village to raise a child, and I believe that early intervention to support children and families is a key element to achieving a strong sense of connectedness and community spirit. Sadly, these days we have to a certain degree lost our villages to support our neighbours and communities.

It is the Enough is Enough campaign which inspired me to dream of becoming a part of this political landscape to continue to support change and contribute to creating a state which provides opportunities, growth—both social and economic—and safe communities for all.

Most of all I am here to be the voice for those who no longer have a voice to speak. I am here to seek solace and solidarity for communities who have experienced trauma and grief, to assist and enhance organisations who support the vulnerable, and to learn from my constituents about their needs to develop and sustain healthy, viable communities.

I would like to tell you now a little about my humble beginnings. I cannot claim political pedigree, nor corporate collaboration. My roots are of the land, growing up in a small rural community in a farming family. I have experienced the hardships of droughts, testing not only our farmers but our wider communities. I watched my parents struggle to make ends meet, working hard to ensure they could provide food on the table each day. These times growing up were a struggle, particularly for my parents, and one which I only truly came to appreciate as an adult.

I have worked in the harsh environment of Western Australia's mines, being no stranger to long hours and hard work—a rewarding experience where I worked with people who embody the very spirit of this country—hard work for a fair day's pay, and the great ideal of Aussie mateship and sense of humour.

Once my mining days were completed I launched a business in Western Australia, importing genuine Native American artifacts, artwork and jewellery. I became interested in the Native American way of life, travelling to reservations throughout the United States, doing business directly with the native artisans, in turn supporting their own industry. Learning about their history and culture was inspiring, fulfilling and provided me with knowledge and great admiration for these incredibly artistic, resilient people and their culture.

In more recent times I moved to the picturesque surrounds of north-east Victoria, where I now live with my daughter and husband. I am constantly discovering the beauty, diversity and opportunities which this state has to offer.

Prior to being elected I worked full-time in a senior practitioner role for a local not-for-profit homelessness organisation, helping vulnerable youth and their families in our community. As well as full-time work and supporting my family, I studied part-time, gaining qualifications in the areas of youth work and mental health, and finally my diploma. Whilst not the final achievement I wish to settle for, it will do for now whilst I immerse myself in the political surrounds of this chamber.

Working with young people and their families to overcome adversity, reduce absenteeism at school, overcome drug and alcohol issues and gain mental health support were just some of the daily tasks required working in the youth homelessness sector. This opportunity provided me with the knowledge and understanding of the importance of early intervention and primary prevention strategies. The Royal Commission into Mental Health will hopefully provide recommendations to increase support strategies. One would hope this will also identify ways in which to decrease waiting times for those who suffer mental illness in seeking the counselling and psychiatric appointments and care which they require prior to experiencing acute episodes of being unwell.

I have provided support to families over the past five years by implementing initiatives to increase community connectedness, community safety, providing opportunities for our youth, particularly those in the social justice arena, and evaluating each program's effectiveness. Working from a collective impact approach is paramount when implementing initiatives, whether large or small, as it provides objectives, measurable outcomes and alternative approaches to addressing issues—a framework I will utilise and adapt to the needs of my constituents.

I am also dedicated to support much-needed funding to assist our child and maternal health sector with the resources they require to help prevent postnatal depression and provide increased numbers of outreach staff to work closely with families to ensure attachment and bonding is monitored, encouraged and prioritised.

Family and domestic violence within our society is completely unacceptable, and it is a high priority for me to work with the relevant stakeholders, community members and government to reduce and eliminate this horrific abuse. We must stand our ground when we say 'No' to violence, and those responsible for perpetrating these heinous crimes must be held accountable.

Early intervention and primary prevention are extremely important to ensure our children are monitored from birth and that families who may be vulnerable are supported early on to prevent disconnect and create responsive assistance as opposed to reactive measures.

Working with the Department of Health and Human Services I observed firsthand how underresourced they are to encompass the needs of every family, which requires positive parenting support and other urgent interventions to keep children safe from harm.

This was also noted throughout my electorate on my campaign trail. My electorate of northern Victoria covers an area of over 100 000 square kilometres. Its character is as diverse in nature as it is in size.

Northern Victoria stretches from the South Australian border, taking in a myriad of tiny wheat belt townships in the harsh, hot, dry plains of the Western District. It follows the meanderings of the mighty Murray River, picking up the iconic towns of Mildura and Echuca, all the way to the greener climes of Wodonga and Corryong, before heading up into the magnificent alpine region. There it takes in the mountain resorts of Hotham, Falls Creek, Buller and Buffalo. The region then heads across to Mansfield, Kinglake and Whittlesea and skirts the rapidly growing metropolitan fringes as far as South Morang. From there it winds up to the beautiful area of the Macedon Ranges, encompassing the tourist areas of Daylesford and Woodend and back into the north-west of the state. Here it is back into the dry, flat plains around Wycheproof and Hopetoun and then into the Big Desert area and Murrayville near the South Australian border, a massive area to be sure, but full of incredibly unique landscapes, only surpassed by the wonderful people who populate this vast area.

An enormous amount of produce is garnered from this northern region of Victoria—fruit and vegetables from the irrigated food bowl towns of Mildura and Shepparton, wheat and sheep from the Western District, cattle from the southern and northern districts, timber from the Murray Darling plains and the forested areas of the north east.

Tourism too plays a huge part in the economic and social prosperity of this region. The winter season of the region's ski fields in 2018 saw nearly 1 million visitors through the gates of the resorts. Of

course many, many more flock to the region year round to enjoy the pleasures of such diverse things as the historic gold towns of Beechworth and Bendigo and the Murray River towns of Swan Hill and Echuca, once bustling with river trade, hauling goods the length and breadth of the river by mighty paddle-steamers, which were once commonplace. Now only a few survive to ferry tourists leisurely upon the waters of this most picturesque of rivers. In between there are myriad possibilities for visitors. Rivers and lakes satisfy the most avid of anglers and water skiers. If that is not your thing, then perhaps a visit to Ned Kelly country at Glenrowan or a hike in the high country, about which Banjo Paterson himself penned a few lyrics, which you may be familiar with.

Of course the region offers some of the most outstanding wineries in the country, with cuisines sourced from the finest local produce to go with your favourite tippie. This region, however diverse and beautiful, like other parts of the state is not without its fair share of problems to overcome and adversity to contend with. Fire, flood and drought are a constant companion in country life, and although they can be devastating, we soldier on. We push through and we help each other, as this is the wonderful character of the Australian psyche. My thoughts go out to all in this wonderful country who are currently experiencing floods, drought and fire.

From Mildura to South Morang and everywhere in between the issues identified whilst I was travelling were not dissimilar throughout the region, ranging from mental health, crime, drug addiction, the continual disagreement regarding the required interventions and responses for the Murray-Darling Basin to a lack of GPs in small towns, to name a few. The lack of resources available to provide much-needed outreach services, particularly in regard to the mental health of our veterans, was a constant topic of conversation. Our veterans often have to rely on volunteers to gain necessary support to keep them connected to their communities and to stabilise their mental health. Staff-to-patient ratios within nursing homes was a common theme throughout most of northern Victoria, with a highlight on the sad stories of abuse and neglect.

Social media is a wonderful tool and a necessity to enable communication in our vast land, but there is nothing better than being face to face with people, particularly those living in rural communities. Travelling around my electorate of Northern Victoria Region was no easy task. It is a 6-hour drive from my home town of Wangaratta to Mildura. With stops in between to speak to locals and a couple of drinks it took us two days to reach that destination. Pre-election on the campaign trail I tried to visit as many places as I could. None of this would have been possible without the unconditional support and assistance of my amazing husband, Jarrod Toomer; my daughter, Lila Toomer; and my devoted crew, Karen Jones, Dot Fox and her daughter, Cheeky Cheeks. Without these people I would not be standing here today. I sincerely thank them for their love, long hours campaigning and their commitment to helping me be elected. Through 35-degree heat and through cold, blustery wet days from 7 in the morning to 7 at night they were there to work and help in any way they could. Karen celebrated her 70th birthday at a polling booth in Wangaratta. Her dedication to help was so pragmatic that she refused to have the day off. To all my volunteers: I thank you sincerely. To Stuart, my colleague and friend, I look forward to our journey over the next four years.

I have expressed to you all here today my passion, experience, journey on the campaign trail and why I feel compelled to advocate not only for my constituents but for all who are exposed to vulnerability and adversity at some stage in their lives. I thank you all for listening, and I look forward to what the next four years may bring, both inside the walls of this chamber, within Parliament House and at the coalface of my electorate and this beautiful state of Victoria.

Members applauded.

Mr BARTON (Eastern Metropolitan) (17:34): President, congratulations on your new position in this chamber. It is an honour and a privilege to address this house as a member of the Legislative Council for Eastern Metropolitan Region. I am a lucky man, but I believe strongly that luck can be manufactured. I am here today representing an industry that has seen major changes over the past few years. We have unfinished business in this place. Our industry needs some luck, and we need some hope.

Nearly 30 years ago I started driving professionally. I drove cabs. My dad drove cabs. My uncle is a London black cab driver. It is in my DNA. In 1999, after driving taxis and stretch limos, I started working in the hire car industry and began my own small business here in Victoria. It has been a great job. Many clients have been with me for more than 20 years. I have made many friends and connections, heard and shared many tales and travelled over 2 million kilometres on the roads of our great state.

I grew to know Melbourne as it grew. I saw the changes, the economic rises and falls and the ever-expanding boundaries of our city. Thirty years ago Melbourne's population was about 3 million. Our city now covers almost 10 000 square kilometres, and I reckon I have driven most of them. It certainly feels that way. We have almost 5 million residents, and more than 10 per cent of them live in inner-city Melbourne. We can also boast, proudly or not, that we are the most densely populated city in Australia, with 485 people per square kilometre. Inner-city Melbourne has a population density of over 4000 people per square kilometre. Now we face issues of high-density living, urban sprawl and the challenges of providing transport, services and infrastructure to growing and ageing communities. These are issues that were not on the radar of a fresh, young business owner 30 years ago.

For generations my family lived in council flats in London's east docklands area of Bermondsey. These were the true working people of London. The family home was destroyed in the London blitz, so when my father came home from the war there was nothing left but dramatic social and economic change. So he and my mother became ten-pound Poms, travelled by ship to Australia to make a new life and arrived at Station Pier in Port Melbourne in 1951.

My parents worked hard, starting life in Australia in a government hostel and working their way to a comfortable lifestyle. They taught me to work hard and to make my own luck, and from them I inherited a strong sense of right and wrong. The bride is normally right and I am normally wrong—yes. I was born in 1958 in Footscray in what was then known as the Western General Hospital. That hospital was only five or six years old then, so I am very happy to see a new hospital getting done. At the time, the family was living in Tottenham in a railway home. Dad worked as a train driver and we moved many times throughout my childhood.

I went to many primary schools before the family settled, finally, in Glen Waverley. When we initially moved to that home we lived on a dirt road. Glen Waverley was on the outskirts of Melbourne. My father was a hard worker—sometimes a difficult man. He was a hard man, but he was a good man. He educated himself and built a successful career in real estate. I left school at age 15. In my family a university education was never even considered. We were working people. I am not embarrassed by my lack of formal education. Life brings great experience, and I received my education as a hardworking member of my community.

My parents had it tough; the trauma of war touched my family and had lifelong consequences. It is only on the reflection born from years and on becoming a father and a grandfather myself that I understand the true gifts that my parents gave me: a passion for hard work, resilience, a willingness to learn from everyone and, perhaps above all, an understanding that we must be grateful for what we have. Like many of my generation, my parents did not teach me to ask for help. They were a generation that was too proud. But today society faces new traumas as rapid change consumes many industries. We see it in our hardworking farmers, who, despite their consistent hard work, find themselves victims of change, from climate to legislation to technology. In my industry the consequences of deregulation have caused devastation for many. All of us have been touched.

The bride and I owned a small farm at Stanhope. This was going to be our retirement home—the chickens, the ducks, the veggie patch and the grandkids. The bride and I worked for 40 years to achieve this. We had spent years renovating that old farmhouse and a 40-acre farm. It was the Australian dream. It was what my parents came to this country for.

Uber's illegal entry slashed my income. We were unable to hang on to the farm, and we were forced to sell. The banks wanted loans paid out on my business debt. The equity left in the house paid some of the business debt off, but not all, so I find myself now paying \$1646.62 a month on a loan for licences that were revoked.

This is just my story, but I consider myself lucky because there are many thousands of families in a far worse position than I. I did not apply to the Fairness Fund, because I did not have any confidence in the process—none. For many, accessing that fund seemed a pipedream. Our views were vindicated when the Ombudsman's report was released on the rollout of that fund. This was hardly a level playing field.

President, I am 60 years of age. There will be no chance of me ever having my own home again. My heart goes out to those families who have lost everything, including their loved ones. My being here today, in this place, is a sign of hope for many in my industry who have felt their voices were not heard. Mental health services and support for disrupted industries will be one of my priorities, because I know that getting back on the horse is not easy.

In December 2016 my luck almost ran out. On the way to a job near Melbourne Airport an oncoming vehicle crossed the double white lines and hit me in what is known as a high-speed offset head-on collision. The other driver was distracted, and we are led to believe he was texting. The impact was terrible. My car was written off. I am grateful to a couple of tradies who stopped and pulled me out of my wreck. In hospital I learned how lucky I truly was. I was sore from my toenails to my eyelashes; however, I only had minor cuts to my forearm and my knee and a very minor fracture of the lower back, so kicking the footy with the grandkids was out that Christmas. I am lucky to live in a country that has mandated sensible safety regulations for vehicles. These regulations, I have no doubt, saved my life. My car was an Australian-built 5-star safety rated vehicle that had front and side airbags. The car was designed to protect occupants with a safety cell. And as always, my cars are always well maintained and always roadworthy.

I have firsthand experience of the remarkable work done by our ambulance, police and hospital staff. As Victorians we should be very, very proud of the exceptional standard of care they deliver. And beyond that was the support from the Transport Accident Commission. They helped me get back, as they say, on the road and on with life. The driver of the other vehicle was charged with careless driving.

Though I was lucky, the same cannot be said for some others. Since I became a professional driver, 12 343 people have been killed on Victoria's roads and many, many more injured. I congratulate the Andrews government on their work to reduce lives lost on our roads. In 2018 lives lost reached a low of 214, down 17 per cent on the previous year. I fully support the excellent *Towards Zero* program.

For those who work on our roads, accidents are a daily reality. And just as it appears the message to stop drunk-driving is taking hold, we now face new challenges—drug driving and increasingly distracted drivers. The use of screens in vehicles poses an enormous risk to road users. Cycling on our roads has become an extreme sport. Just 4 seconds of inattention can lead to tragedy. A recent Monash University study showed drivers were distracted on average every 96 seconds. They are doing everything from checking their phones and changing settings on their car navigation to eating and drinking and even applying make-up and brushing their hair. They are not looking at the road.

In my time in this place I hope to be a voice for all road users. I want to bring attention to the state of our roads, our decaying regional networks and the growing need to expand our public transport

infrastructure and make it more accessible and desirable. What can a government offer to entice people onto public transport? That is the challenge. I believe I have a great deal to contribute on this front.

In truth, I am as surprised as anyone to find myself here. My family and I have not been what you would call ‘political’ outside of our armchairs and the comfortable banter of our cabs and hire cars. To my knowledge, none of my ancestors were members of a political party, much less stood for office. For most of my life, politics took a very, very distant back seat to the more important matters: the bride, the children, my business and of course the Collingwood Football Club. For us, ‘politician’ was a dirty word, and until 2013 I do not think I had ever been in the office of an MP. I had not been in Parliament, except perhaps as a small child. I am not a career politician. At 60 years I am here because I have a job to do. And it bothers me that politics is such an elephant in the room. We love to talk about it in our cabs and hire cars, but in general only the outraged speak about politics. Everyone has a drunk uncle who rages about the stupidity of government, and in the media we see politicians regularly criticised and ridiculed—often for good reason. It is no wonder that people cry ignorance when we ask for their opinion on politics. At election time the public are hesitant to declare sides publicly or even with their families. So we send each generation to the ballot box confused and enraged and forced to choose.

I do not know how we improve, but I think there needs to be a new type of conversation about politics in our community—and I hope to be part of that conversation. I think we need to teach people that members of Parliament are there to help them through the red tape of government departments, to bring attention to their needs when they do not fit the system and to take their voice into this place. I intend to engage with my community and listen closely to the needs of the Eastern Metropolitan Region. I am also one of many new MPs who sit on the crossbench, representing a community issue. My issue is transport.

My journey into politics has been swift. In July 2014 I was asked to join the board of the Victorian Hire Car Association. Soon after, I took the role of president. I was confronted on a daily basis by the struggles of thousands of drivers, owners and other members of the Victorian transport economy. With the government’s surprise announcement of its intention to deregulate the industry, I found myself thrust forward to advocate on behalf of an increasingly forgotten group. In the excitement of new technology, we forgot the years of hard work, sweat and tears to build the regulations which were brought in because they were needed to bring Victoria’s taxi industry to a safe and reliable standard. It was not perfect, but it was and is improving—until it all got scrapped and now it is a free-for-all.

Like many before me, I felt and shared the frustrations of good families, migrants and those who lacked the English skills to fully participate in our democratic process. I feel the pain of thousands who face the loss of their life savings and their homes. They are trapped. And for many, too many, there seems no way out. The devastation that has been wreaked on an industry and the duty to correct it are a weight I carry into this place.

From these ashes a new political party has arisen: Transport Matters. With the support of members of all backgrounds, speaking dozens of languages, and with a population as diverse as Victoria itself, we have won this seat and a voice in Parliament. Mine is a voice for a hardworking industry made up of many immigrant families who, like mine, have sought a new start and a better life in Australia. Until now, their voices have been largely unheard. I would like to congratulate them all for their hard work and dedication. We did it!

I pay tribute to André Baruch. Without doubt, without him we would never have got off the ground in the first place. I also want to thank Linda De Melis and Toni Peters, two of the hardest working people I have ever had the privilege of working with—absolutely amazing people. I would also like to thank Dr Ali Khan and his team out in the south-eastern district. Ali came within a whisper of joining me in this place. It is my fervent hope that my voice will carry forward the words of many.

I hope to bring a unique vantage point to this place. I am proud to be the fourth taxidriver to grace this place and only the second to be elected to the Legislative Council. Former taxidriver and proprietor Herbert Thomas represented Melbourne West in this place from 1970 to 1982.

As a lifelong Collingwood supporter, I know two things. One is tragedy—the agony of defeat snatched from the jaws of victory. The other is the importance of the fourth quarter. I come to this place in what may be the fourth quarter of my life. I am, therefore, not a political lifer. I am here to do a job and to do it fearlessly, fairly and faithfully. That job is to scrutinise legislation, to advocate for the interests of all Victorians and to bring focus to matters of transport and fairness.

My aim is not to be a political purist but to embrace the mandate given to a party elected because transport matters. Victorians expect us to be advocates for good ideas, wherever they come from. I hope, however, to bring a specific, unrelenting and unflinching attention to the issues of transport within Victoria. Transport is essential to our economy, our quality of life and our freedom of choice. The tyranny of distance in the bush has crept into our cities through rising congestion, leading to social isolation, loss of economic opportunity in the outer suburbs and much less time for families together.

I am a firm believer in removing politics from infrastructure funding and in ensuring that we succeed in making the wonders of our state and cities genuinely accessible. I come with an understanding that we make some of our own luck, but not all of it. It is our responsibility in this place to make the conditions in which everyone has the opportunity to flourish and where progress does not leave anyone behind. I am grateful to the bride of 40 years, Annie. Our road has not always been smooth. It has been a challenge. However, we have got our two beautiful daughters, Emma and Kate—who have married two good men, David and Andrew—and our wonderful grandchildren, Ally, Ayden, Ethan and little Chelsea Rose. We are also fortunate enough to have another one on the way, which Chelsea Rose has named Marshmallow.

To my colleagues I say that I will always have an open door—I will drive—and that I will judge bills on their merits and will always aspire to meet the expectations of ordinary Victorians. Thank you.

Members applauded.

Ms SYMES (Northern Victoria—Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Resources) (17:56): I move:

That debate be adjourned until the next day of meeting.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned until next day of meeting.

Rulings by the Chair

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

The PRESIDENT (17:56): Before I call the minister, I want to address the point of order by Ms Crozier during question time about her substantive question. I asked the clerks to review the *Hansard*, and I have viewed the answer in relation to the question. I will ask Ms Mikakos to supply a written response to Ms Crozier. But in saying that, because of the time of day, the response does not necessarily have to be provided tomorrow; it could be provided the sitting day after that.

Adjournment

Ms SYMES (Northern Victoria—Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Resources) (17:57): I move:

That the house do now adjourn.

CONNECTGV, SHEPPARTON

Ms LOVELL (Northern Victoria) (17:57): The adjournment matter that I raise tonight is for the attention of the Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers. The action I seek is for the minister to give

a commitment to provide funding of \$2 million towards the planned redevelopment of the ConnectGV facility at 11 Bowenhall Street, Shepparton.

ConnectGV was established in 1954 and is a registered national disability insurance scheme provider and the largest disability service within the Goulburn Valley. The current day activities facility at 11 Bowenhall Street has several structural defects that make it unsafe for clients and staff. The floor has dropped throughout the facility and a wall has separated from the building structure. The redevelopment will cost \$5 million, which ConnectGV is contributing \$3 million towards. It is seeking funding of \$2 million from the state government to complete the project. The redevelopment will see the construction of a contemporary, fit-for-purpose building that will deliver all programs on one site.

On two previous occasions I have asked the former minister to commit funding to this project, yet the minister's responses failed to address the planned redevelopment in any way. In his response the minister stated that the Department of Health and Human Services has 80 per cent perpetual interest in the property at 11 Bowenhall Street. Inquiries with ConnectGV reveal that this 80 per cent interest relates to a state government grant of £13 600 to purchase the original site back in 1954. The minister also stated in his reply that DHHS had provided funds of more than \$1.5 million in capital funds to ConnectGV over recent years. ConnectGV management advise this \$1.5 million was provided in 2009 for the construction of two residential facilities in Middleton Street and not for the facility they are seeking funds for now, and that no capital funding has been provided for the facility at 11 Bowenhall Street since 1985. While the government refuses to make this project a priority, the clients and staff are forced to conduct their activities in a facility that does not meet standards.

Prior to the election the Liberal Party announced an election commitment to provide funding of \$2 million for the redevelopment. Now the Goulburn Valley community want to see the Andrews Labor government match that commitment. The action I seek is for the minister to give a commitment to provide funding of \$2 million towards the planned redevelopment of the ConnectGV facility at 11 Bowenhall Street, Shepparton.

SOLAR ENERGY

Mr MELHEM (Western Metropolitan) (18:00): My adjournment matter is directed at the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change and Minister for Solar Homes, the Honourable Lily D'Ambrosio, in the other place. Electricity costs remain a serious concern for constituents in my electorate of Western Metropolitan Region. Although prices have stabilised in January, they remain at historic high rates. This can be incredibly stressful, particularly for the families of individuals with low or fixed income.

I want to praise the Andrews Labor government and the minister for their actions on this vitally important issue through the Solar Homes package. This policy provides half-price rebates up to \$2225 for the installation of solar panels, as well as \$1000 for solar hot water systems. It is a game-changer for those struggling with high electricity prices.

The data released in mid-January shows that around 7000 Victorian households have installed solar panels since this announcement and around 16 households have already received their rebate. It is exciting to see that some of these areas with the highest level of new solar power installation are in my electorate, with 212 households in Tarneit and 123 households in Truganina taking advantage of the solar energy boom.

This program is reducing electricity costs for families and also creating new jobs. While these policies are life-changing for some, I am aware that lower socio-economic households often struggle to take advantage of the policy. The action I seek from the minister is to outline how the Andrews Labor government is helping low-income households access Solar Homes packages and how this government is ensuring they are aware of the benefits of this initiative.

DUCK HUNTING SEASON

Mr BOURMAN (Eastern Victoria) (18:02): My matter today is for the Minister for Agriculture. The duck hunting season is a politically charged activity, and there are many people who want to have their say on it—both for it and against it. One of the contentious issues is how the government arrives at any changes to the season. The government gets advice from many places and the minister makes a judgement, and any changes are then declared. There is a clear issue with transparency, as no-one other than the government has access to that data. The action that I seek from the minister is to release all that data that is given that allows the government to arrive at any changes.

TAFE FUNDING

Ms SHING (Eastern Victoria) (18:02): My adjournment matter this evening is for the attention of the Minister for Training and Skills, who fortuitously happens to be here in the chamber—good evening, Minister Tierney. The matter which I wish to draw to the attention of the minister relates to the investment in the priority courses for TAFE and the commencement of the free TAFE program, which as many would be aware was a hallmark of our re-election campaign and also a component of the skills and training delivery process, which alongside preapprenticeship training and those additional placements available has contributed to a massive upswing in the uptake of the numbers of people undertaking these priority courses, as much as anything because a greater level of accessibility has been opened up for people right throughout Victoria to be able to access those courses and then to go on to jobs in areas where skills shortages are prevalent and where therefore those jobs will be located into the future.

The action that I seek from the minister in relation to TAFE relates to Morwell and the new campus for TAFE, which is located at Federation Training, which has been the subject of considerable investment through the horticulture centre of excellence alongside work associated with manufacturing and which is just adjacent to the high tech at the new tech school. The high-tech school is something which combines innovation, technology and a number of areas which are a particular focus for Gippsland, including but not limited to allied health care services, food and fibre, forestry and new energy technology.

The action that I seek is for the minister to pay a visit to the Morwell campus of Federation Training to meet with teachers and staff to discuss the uptake of priority courses in the first instance and secondly the way in which greater accessibility can be provided to students throughout the Latrobe Valley region and throughout Federation Training campuses. This may include a discussion on the work that will be undertaken around the brand-new port of Sale campus, which we also funded in our last term of government, and how that will then open up pathways for students in central Gippsland to be able to access these opportunities as well. But any visit, further discussions and opportunities to commence a dialogue and keep that going over time with students and staff at Federation Training would be gratefully received.

AUSSIE FARMS

Mrs McARTHUR (Western Victoria) (18:05): My adjournment matter is for the attention of the Minister for Agriculture and concerns the Aussie Farms ideologues who created an online map publishing the addresses of 395 agricultural livestock businesses in Western Victoria Region. These misguided activists encourage public intrusion into farming enterprises, thereby jeopardising legitimate agricultural operations and animal safety. This so-called charity is clearly more interested in causing militant behaviour against farmers than protecting animal welfare. Their real agenda is clearly to end the animal meat and dairy production industries, which have made my region and indeed this nation one of the most highly regarded farming regions and nations of the world.

Not only is encouraging trespass on farms totally irresponsible, a breach of privacy and a criminal issue, but such behaviour presents added risk to the strict biosecurity protocols in the farming process. By such reprehensible actions Aussie Farms are actually encouraging behaviour by militants that puts

animal health at risk. These reprehensible actions have serious implications for an industry worth \$7 billion in Victoria and jeopardise not only farmer livelihoods but the economic wellbeing of all Victorians.

Aussie Farms clearly intend to encourage unlawful activity. Their registration form asks volunteers to enter private commercial properties for investigative purposes and do anything asked of them. The National Farmers Federation president reports that many farmers have been ‘hurt, scared and afraid to leave their children home alone for fear of activists attacks’.

Animal activist illegal behaviour is not uncommon in Victoria. We recently saw the theft of three goats and a lamb by activists in Gippsland. Some of the stolen animals were found by police, and you can only imagine the trauma caused to grazing animals being bundled into a car, placed in a house and then forced to wear nappies. How is this about animal welfare? What absolute hypocrisy, but typical of what underpins all extreme ideologies.

By raising this important issue on behalf of my hardworking farming families and their communities, I am requesting that the Minister for Agriculture publicly condemn the actions of Aussie Farms, call for their charity status to be revoked, as I have, and require her colleagues to strengthen trespass laws to protect the Victorian farmers that she is supposed to represent.

26 JANUARY

Dr RATNAM (Northern Metropolitan) (18:08): On 26 January I attended the very first Invasion Day dawn service at the Kings Domain resting place. This moving ceremony was organised by my former parliamentary colleague Lidia Thorpe, where about 400 of us gathered to commemorate the thousands of First Nations lives lost in the frontier wars. Later that morning I joined an estimated 80 000 other Victorians who marched in solidarity with our First Nations people through the streets of Melbourne, where we acknowledged that this land always was and always will be Aboriginal land.

Each year more and more of us come together in recognition that 26 January is not a day of celebration but a day that represents invasion, loss, mourning and grief to the First Nations communities. It is a day that marks the start of colonisation and the resulting violence against Aboriginal people in this country, centuries of mistreatment, inequality and the entrenched disadvantage of Aboriginal people that is still present today.

The impacts of colonisation continue, with lower life expectancy and lower levels of health and education and with First Nations people being more likely to be charged with outdated public order offences such as public drunkenness and more likely to die in police custody. The thousands of us who stood together in the dawn and marched together on the streets of Melbourne showed that Victorians are ready for this to change. We are ready for a proper treaty process in this state, one that reflects true self-determination and delivers much-needed justice, rights and healing to Aboriginal people.

At a time when ugly racism is rearing its head in Australia, the action I seek from the Premier is to acknowledge 26 January as a day of mourning and to establish a truth, justice and reconciliation commission to inquire into and report on the full account of the history of dispossession of Aboriginal people from the land now known as Victoria.

AUTISM EDUCATION

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) (18:10): I wish to raise a matter this evening for the attention of the Minister for Education. I have been concerned for some years about the standard and quality of education for children with autism in Victoria. Make no mistake, there are some teachers who teach children with autism who are sensational—they are spectacular and they are superb in every way—but unfortunately they are almost few and far between. That is not the fault of the teachers, I hasten to add; it is the fault of an outdated system—a system that regards autism education as second if not third rate and nothing to be too concerned about. What we need to turn our attention to is bringing the applied behaviour analysis system, the behavioural-based system, into the autism education system. It

is after all a ludicrous proposition that we can actually teach kids with autism if their behaviour is not under control. Once we get the behaviour under control then we can turn these kids' lives around.

What I am very concerned about at the moment, and what I have been concerned about for some time, is that a lot of these kids are not just slipping through the cracks but being lost altogether. I have spoken to a number of parents over the last number of years, and that had obviously made me concerned, but then last year or the year before I had my own personal experience and discovered for myself, unfortunately the hard way, that there are kids in the autism education system who are not catered for. It seems to me to be quite ludicrous when you have a system where autistic schools cannot handle kids with autism. Now, when that happens the system is stuffed and we need to do something about it. I want the minister to have a look at this as a matter of urgency. In fact I am asking the minister to have a complete review of autism education in this state.

One of my personal disappointments of the election defeat last year was that many of the things that I wanted to do in this area will now not be done for another four years at least, but I am hoping that the minister will join with me in showing his concern for kids with autism—and their families, I have to point out—and conduct a full inquiry or review, call it what you will, into autism education in this state.

ALBERTON WIND FARM

Ms BATH (Eastern Victoria) (18:13): My adjournment matter this evening is for the Minister for Planning, the Honourable Richard Wynne in the other place, and it relates to a planning permit for a proposed wind farm in the Alberton-Yarram region in my electorate. The action I seek from the minister is for him to reject this planning permit entirely, with due consideration to the adverse impact that it would have on the local community, the local environment, wildlife, bird species, the water table and very importantly the local people and residents.

Alberton and Yarram are close-knit communities that live side by side with farming operations and quite close to Ninety Mile Beach. So with land integrity it is very important to hold that and maintain it in terms of its visual amenity and also its productive capacity.

Now, these wonderful people who have rallied quite considerably and have researched this proposed wind farm in quite a lot of detail, like myself, are not against wind farms or renewable energy in any way, but their concern is where they are proposed to be located and their proximity to homes and farms.

Of the wind farm's 34 turbines, 30 of them are 200 metres tall from base to tip, and then there are a couple that are going to be 180 metres tall. The Toora wind farm, which is down the road a little bit, has a maximum height of 100 metres. So the break on the horizon and the impact on the community will be quite significant, and their contention is that many of turbines will indeed be inside the 1-kilometre buffer radius that is supposed to exist. They are concerned that this company has overlooked many of the establishments and classified them as outside the radius or outside the buffer. They are concerned in relation to the noise, the pressure and those now generally well-documented medical conditions that can arise from that ongoing thud and pressurised noise of a wind farm.

This beautiful place is also a designated wetland and home to the Nooramunga Marine and Coastal Park. They fear that there is some significant bird and animal life there specifically that can be negatively affected. There are wedge-tailed eagles, hawks and sea eagles that often pass through that region. They also note that there has been no environment effects statement conducted on this proposal. They have asked me, and I concur, to reject this proposal outright.

SENIORS CARD HOLDERS

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS (South Eastern Metropolitan) (18:16): I raise a matter tonight for the attention of the Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers. It arises from a complaint I received from a constituent in Frankston who late last year, in about October or November, received correspondence

ostensibly from Seniors Victoria, as the holder of a Seniors Card, but in fact it was a jointly branded promotion for AGL's power and gas plants. This appeared, as I said, jointly branded with AGL on it and the Seniors Card, and it was distributed in a Seniors Card envelope, presumably to all holders of a Seniors Card across Victoria. My constituent has raised two issues with this. Firstly, on what basis has the department, through the Seniors Card program, provided the details of Seniors Card holders to AGL for distribution? Is the government now selling databases of people's information to companies for promotions, as seems to be the case with this AGL promotion, and is the government, through its Seniors Card platform, endorsing this particular AGL power and gas product? Is it because it carries the logo of the Seniors Card, which is a Victorian government entity? Is this in fact endorsed as a product by the Victorian government through the Seniors Card? So what I seek from the Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers is that he now provide advice through a distribution to everyone who received this material last year to clarify whether this is in fact endorsed by the Victorian government through the Seniors Card and indeed to clarify on what basis the information relating to Seniors Card holders was allowed to be used by AGL in this promotion.

ENERGY SUPPLY

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (18:18): My adjournment matter this evening is to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, Minister D'Ambrosio. It is summer; we are going to get hot days and heatwaves. This is nothing new. Most of us in this house would have experienced hot days and heatwaves before.

On Friday, 25 January, Victoria experienced a particularly hot weather event where temperatures across the state were in the high 30s to mid-40s. Melbourne's temperature was 42 degrees. The Bureau of Meteorology had been warning Victorians of very hot temperatures for that Friday. On the Wednesday the Australian Energy Market Operator raised the possibility of a power supply shortfall both in Victoria and in South Australia. Yet you, Minister, had been repeatedly stating that Victoria would not have brownouts. Frankly, when the power goes out they are blackouts.

Minister, I am sure you will say there was a perfect storm of failures—that the transmission lines in New South Wales let everybody down, that there is the ageing of Victoria's coal-powered stations such as at Yallourn and that the power stations did not come to the party as well—but your government's decision to shut down Hazelwood has also contributed to insufficient energy supply. So despite the protestations that you might make, hundreds of thousands of Victorians were severely impacted and could have planned and made alternative arrangements for any blackouts that were to occur on that Friday. As I said, instead there were no warnings and the lights went out. Air conditioners and refrigerators stopped working, and businesses and, importantly, people suffered. Heat stress and dehydration kill.

Chandra Ojha, who I know well, was one Victorian who was severely impacted on that day, with his five-year-old daughter suffering from heat stress and becoming very unwell. It was a frightening experience for Mr Ojha and his wife. I am only sorry that Mr Ojha and his wife had to go through such a distressing situation—a situation that could have been averted if you had been honest and given Victorians some warning that, due to insufficient supply, Victoria did not have enough energy in its system for citizens and businesses on that day and that blackouts in various areas would happen. It is a situation, as I said, that was very distressing for the Ojha family. To add insult to injury, Mr Ojha and his family did not need the insensitive tweet from Mr Dalidakis after publication of an article in the *Age*. Mr Dalidakis did not help the situation with his insensitive tweet. It should not matter who Mr Ojha is. His daughter was extremely ill and his family suffered due to no warnings being in place. If there were warnings in place, alternative measures could have been made by the family.

The action I seek therefore is that you, Minister, apologise to Mr Ojha and all Victorians for not giving sufficient warnings, for the misleading information that you gave, for the huge cost to the Victorian businesses that had to shut down early as a result of the blackouts and importantly for the distress to vulnerable Victorians, both young and old.

The PRESIDENT: Before I call Mr Davis, I do recall a ruling around members not being able to call for a minister to apologise for something, but I only recall it. So I would say to Ms Crozier once again, if you give me licence to look at that before ruling it in or out, I will give you a response tomorrow, if you are happy with that.

METROPOLITAN TRAIN SERVICES

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan—Leader of the Opposition) (18:22): My adjournment matter is for the attention of the Minister for Public Transport, and it concerns the performance of our metropolitan transport system, particularly the metropolitan train system. What we have seen over the period of this government is a deterioration in the performance of our metropolitan train lines. If you look at the cancellation rate across our metropolitan system, the 12-month average in 2014 was 2.3 per cent; it is 2.8 per cent now. The November 2014 figure, the last figure under the previous government, was 1.9 per cent. The most recent figure released, for December 2018, was 3.1 per cent—a massive increase and a massive deterioration in the cancellation position. People cannot rely on our trains.

It is interesting to look at the punctuality figures. They have still not been able to match the performance of the coalition government in its last 12 months. The Cranbourne and Pakenham lines particularly have seen a very serious deterioration over the recent months. The December 2018 figures are down to 82.6 per cent on the Cranbourne line and 86.2 per cent on the Pakenham line. It is a poor performance and simply not good enough. This is also true, I might add, of many of our country services, with very poor punctuality on our country lines and a cancellation rate that is far greater. It was 1.8 per cent in the 12 months of 2014 compared to 3.8 per cent in the 12 months in the 2018 year just gone.

What I seek from the minister is that she make a statement to explain to the community why the cancellation results are so bad and why they have deteriorated over Labor's four years. This deterioration is on a broad front in terms of our metro lines. It relates to the deterioration on many of these lines, and you have got to ask why this is. These are not figures that are influenced by construction, because those figures are extracted from these figures before they are compiled. You have got to ask why punctuality is still not up to the standard of the previous government. We have got a system that is struggling, a system that needs to be improved, a system on which people rely. We saw a meltdown with the heat on a couple of days in January. Again that will come through in the next set of figures, but these figures that are in the public domain at the moment—to December 2018—make it clear that the cancellation rate is far higher.

Ms Shing: On a point of order, President, I recall that in the last Parliament there was a ruling from President Atkinson in relation to an adjournment item not being sufficiently discharged where it called for an explanation. As I understand what Mr Davis has just said, he is calling upon the minister to explain why, amongst other things, performance data has not achieved the standards that were desired. I am very, very happy to be proven wrong on this one, but again I draw that to your attention in relation to, perhaps, a line of action that is consistent with that which you said you would undertake with Ms Crozier's adjournment item.

Mr DAVIS: Further to the point of order, President, I actually asked for more than that. I asked for the minister to release a formal public statement, and that is a different matter.

The PRESIDENT: That is an action. On Ms Shing's point of order, I do recall a similar ruling, but it is a borderline thing, I have got to say.

ENERGY SUPPLY

The PRESIDENT: Ms Crozier is happy to entertain my concern and my memory around the action she sought before. She has offered to rephrase her adjournment matter as a different type of action, so I invite her to do that.

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (18:26): Thank you, President, for your guidance and understanding. If I could just rephrase the action I seek from the minister—and it is similar, possibly, to what Mr Davis has just asked of another minister—I ask the minister to provide an explanation or release a public statement to Mr Ojha and all Victorians as to why warnings were not provided on this occasion.

RESPONSES

Ms TIERNEY (Western Victoria—Minister for Training and Skills, Minister for Higher Education) (18:27): There were 11 matters raised this evening in the adjournment debate. The first was from Ms Lovell to the Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers, seeking \$2 million in state government capital funding for a redevelopment project in Shepparton. The second was from Mr Melhem to Minister D'Ambrosio in relation to access to solar panel packages and indeed the information that is provided to local communities. The third was from Mr Bourman to the Minister for Agriculture in relation to duck shooting and wanting the release of data that was used by the department and the minister in terms of making duck shooting season decisions. The fourth was from Ms Shing, and I will go to that towards the end. The fifth was from Mrs McArthur to the Minister for Agriculture in relation to Aussie Farms and privacy issues. The sixth was from Dr Ratnam to the Premier in relation to wanting 26 January to be declared a day of mourning. The seventh was from Mr Finn in relation to the standard of education of children with autism, and that was directed to the Minister for Education. The eighth was from Ms Bath to the Minister for Planning in relation to a planning permit for the Alberton and Yarram areas. The ninth was from Mr Rich-Phillips to Minister Donnellan in relation to the Seniors Card and AGL. Ms Crozier had a matter for the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change in relation to the blackouts that occurred in January. And Mr Davis had a matter in relation to punctuality, and that was directed to the Minister for Public Transport.

The matter that Ms Shing raised was directed to me as Minister for Training and Skills, and the action sought was for me to visit the Morwell campus. Can I say that I would be particularly interested in undertaking that activity with Ms Shing. We have done a number of things in that area over the last couple of years. I have got to say I did have some concerns about Federation Training. They had a history of forced amalgamation, and there were a whole range of legacy issues that needed to be dealt with. Of course the vast area of Gippsland which Federation Training covers has thrown up a number of issues.

One of the things that I am very, very proud of is that we went out to the community in Gippsland and a whole range of towns and talked to them about the sorts of things they wanted from their TAFE campuses. They were very forthright about what they wanted. I was really happy that we were able to demonstrate our commitment to the region by allocating moneys for a new Morwell training campus. That is on top of the new skills school that we have built in the region, which I was proud to help open with the Minister for Education last year. And indeed I remember that glorious day, Ms Shing, that we went down to Sale and we got the key to the padlock that was locking up that land that was fenced off. It had been vacant for a period of time, but it was a Labor government that actually went down there and announced that we were going to build a brand-new campus in Sale so there could be access for regional kids. This shows that no matter where you live, you can get a good quality education in this state.

We have come through a lot of issues with Federation Training, but I have got to say that the take-up of free TAFE at Federation Training has been amazing. Ms Shing, thank you for all your efforts, and others, in promoting free TAFE right through Gippsland. People have heard those calls, they have heard the information and we now have a dramatic increase in the number of enrolments at Federation Training. There has been a significant culture change, and of course there has been a management change. The whole institution has really come through a lot in the last two and a half years in particular, but it has been really good, positive change. I am pleased that you have been part of the journey and

that I have been part of the journey, but in particular the staff and the students have been absolutely incredible. I am thrilled that they have embraced free TAFE for Gippsland.

Ms Bath: On a point of order, President, this relates to 19 December 2018, the first day of the 59th Parliament. I raised a constituency question for the Minister for Solar Homes, and I understand that under standing orders I should have had a response within 14 days. This is the first time we are back in Parliament, so I am just seeking some information as to when that might be coming. It is a constituency question.

The PRESIDENT: I am not sure that this is the right time in the proceedings to raise that point of order. The advice that I have been given, which I believe to be correct, is that there is nothing in the standing orders to facilitate me forcing a response in that particular area, but I think in fairness it will be noted that you have now put it on the public record, and hopefully we will note that.

Ms TIERNEY: Can I also indicate, President, that I have written responses to adjournment matters raised on 19 December by Ms Bath, Mr Ondarchie and Ms Wooldridge.

The PRESIDENT: The house stands adjourned.

House adjourned 6.34 p.m.

Written adjournment responses

Responses have been incorporated in the form supplied by the departments on behalf of the appropriate ministers.

Tuesday, 5 February 2019

LATROBE SPECIAL DEVELOPMENTAL SCHOOL

In reply to Ms BATH (Eastern Victoria) (19 December 2018)

Mr MERLINO (Monbulk—Minister for Education):

I am informed as follows:

Thank you for your question of 19 December 2018 regarding the Traralgon Education Regeneration Project and its impact on Traralgon College and Latrobe Special Developmental School.

The Victorian School Building Authority (VSBA) is committed to upgrading both schools in a manner sensitive to the unique needs of the wider Traralgon College and Latrobe Special Developmental School communities.

The VSBA has undertaken extensive consultation, including community engagement workshops and an online survey, for the community to share their thoughts on the direction and development of the two schools.

The VSBA has also appointed Hede Architects who will assist in the master planning of the Traralgon College and Latrobe Special Developmental School Regeneration project. Hede Architects possess the appropriate experience for this type of project, and their appointment was a carefully considered choice with both schools represented on the selection panel and agreeable to the appointment.

With regards to the direction and scope of the project to be developed and the location of the schools, to date, a decision has yet to be made. There are many issues to be considered as part of the master planning process.

I can assure you that the Department of Education and Training is considering the feedback from the community to best inform the development of both schools.

EASTERN METROPOLITAN REGION SCHOOLS

In reply to Ms WOOLDRIDGE (Eastern Metropolitan) (19 December 2018)

Mr MERLINO (Monbulk—Minister for Education):

I am informed as follows:

The Andrews Labor Government is committed to growing educational opportunities for all Victorians and has invested more than \$3.8 billion in the past four years to improve classrooms, upgrade facilities and build new schools. This school building boom provided investment for 70 new schools and more than 1,300 upgrade projects. The former Liberal Government's total investment in school infrastructure was a mere \$1.2 billion—around \$300 million a year.

As part of our building boom, Labor has already invested more than \$230 million to upgrade schools across the Eastern Metropolitan Region during the previous term of government—this is a more than \$100 million increase when compared to the former Liberal Government.

The Labor Party announced a further \$1.5 billion in school capital during the election campaign—a threefold increase when compared to the \$500 million announced by the Liberal Party. Therefore if Labor was to match the Liberal Party's election commitments, we would effectively be cutting amount being invested in government schools.

The Government is aware that schools may have additional capital or maintenance requests. Our ongoing challenge is to responsibly balance and prioritise the needs of over 1,500 government schools, all in varying condition. I can assure you that the needs of all schools will be given equitable consideration when determining priorities for the state-wide capital works program. We will continue to use all available data, including condition assessments and pre-existing project plans when allocating resources in future State Budgets.

Please be assured that the Andrews Labor Government will deliver on its election commitments.

CRAIGIEBURN ROAD DUPLICATION

In reply to Mr ONDARCHIE (Northern Metropolitan) (19 December 2018)

Ms PULFORD (Western Victoria—Minister for Roads, Minister for Road Safety and the TAC, Minister for Fishing and Boating):

The delivery of the Craigieburn Road Duplication project does not fall within my portfolio responsibilities.

This question should be directed to the Hon Jacinta Allan MP, Minister for Transport Infrastructure.