

- (d) a Council;
- (e) a person holding an office or position established by or under an Act ... or to which the person was appointed by the Governor in Council, or by a Minister ...

The government, in its advocacy for Service Victoria, says that 55 million transactions are completed every year through various customer service agencies for things including licences, permits, updating contact details, paying fees and licences et cetera. Under the bill relevant ministers who have responsibility for the agencies whose functions will now be able to be accessed via Service Victoria may agree — and the bill says ‘may’ agree — in writing to transfer customer service operations to Service Victoria. This is one of the questions that we have raised with the government, because if the word is ‘may’, then the word is not ‘must’. That does allow for a minister, and consequently an agency, to not agree to transfer customer service operations to Service Victoria.

One of the essential issues with regard to this bill and to Service Victoria itself is if it is going to be, as the government has said, a one-stop shop but there is no requirement under the bill for agencies to transfer their functions, then, ipso facto, it is not necessarily going to be a one-stop shop. Whether or not Victorians really want a one-stop shop is a debatable point. I know Mr Rich-Phillips spent a long time outlining the problems with the legislation as the opposition sees it, and certainly I think one of the questions is what else might have been done rather than setting up Service Victoria, which, as I have said, has already been set up and is operating, albeit to a very small degree. The government tells us that 10 000 people have used Service Victoria so far. In a state with 4.5 million people that is not very many. But the essential question could be, and it is one I have raised with the government, why, if there are problems with the way the agencies are delivering their services, they cannot just be brought up to speed, so to speak.

The bill allows for progressive transfer and new types of transactions. Service Victoria will operate on different tiers of interaction, so some tiers will require less verification of identity than others. It creates what has been called an electronic identity credential for each individual. This credential may be used by the individual only once or it can be saved to be used over and over again. I think under the bill the electronic identity credential will last up to 10 years or until a person decides they do not want to maintain it any more.

The electronic identity credential, which has a somewhat Orwellian name, has been the subject of much discussion between me and my colleagues and

between me and the government. I am not even sure if I could say I am totally certain as to what an electronic identity credential is. I am more sure than I was at first, but it did take quite a lot of discussion to actually come to an understanding of what an electronic identity credential is, how it may have a life of 10 years and how it can be used by Service Victoria to assure other agencies that an individual has established their identity to such a level of certainty that they will not have to repeatedly establish their identity either through Service Victoria or through other agencies that require this.

It is fair to say that this is the crux of the issues with the bill. As I say, I have explored this issue with the government at some length in discussions with departmental advisors and a meeting the government held with staff of Service Victoria et cetera, but I still think that for the public record, if the bill gets into the committee stage, this is an issue that does demand more scrutiny and further explanation from government. I do agree with Mr Rich-Phillips that the public at large is not very aware of Service Victoria at all or of the establishment of what is being called an electronic identity credential.

Business interrupted pursuant to sessional orders.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

14:02:30

Small business assets

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) (14:02) — My question is for the Minister for Small Business. Minister, family bus companies operated by generations of one family are now subject to negotiation with the Andrews Labor government that will see the government nationalise their depots, buses and intellectual property. I therefore ask: does this set a further unfortunate precedent for small businesses throughout Victoria following the removal of taxi licences whereby the Andrews Labor government is prepared to remove hard-earned assets from family businesses?

Mr DALIDAKIS (Minister for Small Business) (14:02) — I thank the member for their question. I recall a question very, very similar to this on the last sitting day prior to the break, and I believe my response then, as it will be now, was that the portfolio undertaking this work of course falls within the purview of the Minister for Public Transport. I would direct questions or concerns that the member may have about policies to the relevant portfolio minister.

Mr Davis — On a point of order, President, as with that earlier question, the example I used was to flesh out a concern about the safety of the assets of small family businesses, and I have asked the minister a very direct question about whether there is an issue about the removal of assets from small family businesses for which he does have responsibility. He answered the question at the time, on your direction. This is a similarly phrased question and a similar example has been used to flesh out this developing concern, so I would put it to you that he ought to answer the question. It was framed carefully to move to a general principle about the safety of family business assets.

The PRESIDENT — On the point of order, I am not in position to advise the minister or instruct the minister on how he answers the question. One of the problems about framing a question with a preamble is that you actually do provide an opportunity for a minister to address the preamble and not the substantive question. The minister has given his response on the basis of addressing the preamble. I am not in a position to direct him differently in terms of that answer.

Supplementary question

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) (14:05) — President, that is extremely disappointing that the minister is not prepared to answer a question squarely within his portfolio, and I therefore ask: Minister, have you received representations from bus owners or bus associations regarding the government’s brazen agenda to seize their assets, and have you received those representations in the role that you hold as Minister for Small Business?

Mr DALIDAKIS (Minister for Small Business) (14:05) — I thank the member for their question. I will take that question on notice to endeavour to find out whether my office has received correspondence. I do not recall having received a direct approach to me personally, but of course that does not allow for the fact that we may have received correspondence or requests, so I will seek advice from my office and provide that information to the member.

North Richmond supervised injecting facility

Ms FITZHERBERT (Southern Metropolitan) (14:06) — My question is to the Leader of the Government and is in relation to the impact of drug-affected individuals leaving the supervised injecting facility.

Following the January Rainbow Serpent Festival, Victoria Police issued a press release stating, and I quote:

We also saw far too many people making dangerous and illegal choices by getting behind the wheel when they were either drug or alcohol affected.

This kind of behaviour puts the whole community at risk and is completely unacceptable.

We have zero tolerance for these individuals.

Police were testing those leaving the festival to detect drug drivers and get them off the roads.

So I ask: after taking ice at the Andrews government injecting facility in North Richmond, will drug addicts be immediately tested if they get behind the wheel, as occurred at the festival early this year?

Mr JENNINGS (Special Minister of State) (14:06) — I thank Ms Fitzherbert for her question. The matter that was well and truly teased out during the committee stage of the supervised injecting facility bill that took place in December was in fact the attitude that the police would take to people coming to and from the facility.

Ms Wooldridge interjected.

Mr JENNINGS — I think Ms Wooldridge may have selective amnesia in relation to what took place during the course of that committee stage. We actually discussed that it is in fact the choice of the police in terms of providing for the safety of the community and for assessing the impact and the risk that any individual in the community may pose at any particular place at any particular time. It is the responsibility of the police to make that assessment and take the appropriate action as they see fit. That was clarified in the committee stage at great length, and in fact I am reiterating that today.

Supplementary question

Ms FITZHERBERT (Southern Metropolitan) (14:07) — Minister, further in relation to drug-affected individuals leaving the supervised injecting facility, given the Transport Accident Commission’s own website states:

Methamphetamine ... can lead to over-confidence, rash decision-making and risk taking. Insomnia caused from ice and cocaine use can affect a driver’s reflex and concentration.

what legal advice has the Andrews government received to indicate that the state would not be liable for any death or serious injury as a result of a car or a pedestrian crash from an ice-affected driver who has just exited the North Richmond ice injecting facility?

Mr JENNINGS (Special Minister of State) (14:08) — President, Ms Fitzherbert is actually desperate to try to make a connection between my answer and the legal status of these matters as it may relate to a facility in Richmond, but in fact the same rule of law, the same standard, applies to any individual in those circumstances that she described, regardless of where they may be, regardless of where their car may be, in the state of Victoria. It is unaffected by being in Richmond. It is unaffected by the law and there is no change in the circumstances of the police, and any sanctions that would apply will still apply before and after the introduction of any facility in Richmond.

Timber industry

Ms BATH (Eastern Victoria) (14:09) — My question is to the Minister for Agriculture. Minister, in its open letter to the Premier the G6 group of sawmillers said:

In less than six months your government ... has created a wave of uncertainty and confusion, which has swept away investment and optimism and replaced it with the threat of destroying hundreds, if not thousands, of jobs.

Will you guarantee supply to these sawmillers and remove the current threat to hundreds of eastern Victorian jobs?

14:10:00 **Ms PULFORD** (Minister for Agriculture) (14:09) — I thank Ms Bath for her question. The issues around timber supply and the allocation of this resource that this government has been dealing with are issues that we inherited from the previous government. In terms of some of the prescriptions that were put in place that have constrained supply, there are of course, as members in this place are well aware, also significant resources that have been lost through fire on a number of occasions, most dramatically and significantly the fires around Black Saturday. The G6 group of timber mills that Ms Bath refers to are a number of mills that have been undertaking some advocacy as a group.

I recently visited Fenning Bairnsdale and talked to them about these issues, which are well-known and understood. There are some things that are being said in their advocacy that are not accurate, though, and I will take the opportunity to correct the record. It is being asserted that contracts have been cancelled and supply that was expected is not forthcoming. That is not the case. Contracts have an extension provision which has not been exercised this time on account of a change in the amount of timber available. I certainly correct anyone, including Ms Bath, if they are under the assumption that contracts have been cancelled, because that is just simply not true.

What I can indicate to the house and indeed to these companies is that VicForests has been working with all mills on future timber supply needs over the last week or so and that will continue for the next couple of weeks. The timber allocation plan and the allocation order are close to being finalised and will be released in coming weeks. As I have said, contracts were not torn up — were never torn up — as has been claimed. There are optional extensions in those contracts that were not extended due to the impacts on supply, due to fire and the protected species arrangements that the former government put in place.

Supplementary question

Ms BATH (Eastern Victoria) (14:12) — I thank the minister for her response. The G6 also raised concerns about the conflict of interest the Victorian government has between the state-owned VicForests and Australia Sustainable Hardwoods (ASH), the Heyfield mill, in which it owns a 49 per cent interest. How can you guarantee to Victoria's other sawmillers that ASH has not and will not get favourable treatment in the allocation of Victoria's native timber resources?

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Agriculture) (14:12) — I am more than happy to make that guarantee. There is a bit of unnecessary scaremongering from the National Party going on in this industry, but certainly I am happy to make clear to the house, to the community and to our timber towns that all mills, including Heyfield, will be treated equally in terms of the opportunity to meet their future timber supply needs. That is why VicForests are currently talking to all mills about what their needs are and what their future plans are. I will also take this opportunity to remind the house of the arrangements that the government put in place to ensure that there was no conflict of interest in making Minister Carroll the responsible minister for the Heyfield mill.

School cleaners

Mr ONDARCHIE (Northern Metropolitan) (14:13) — My question is for the Minister for Small Business. Minister, on 28 March this year in this place you said in relation to the Andrews government's school cleaner cuts, and I quote:

... let us remember and remind the chamber — took this course of action because there was a vast array of roting and taking advantage of employees —

I ask: given that you have indicated a vast array of roting of employees, can you please detail the evidence which identifies that these small family businesses were roters and taking advantage of employees?