

There are 8286 registered sex offenders in Victoria, of which 54 per cent have active reporting requirements. VicPol has a comprehensive risk-based management practice model. The government delivered reforms to the Sex Offenders Registration Act 2004 earlier this year to permit the sharing of information on the sex offender register more broadly with VicPol and also with international enforcement agencies.

Business interrupted pursuant to sessional orders.

Questions without notice and ministers statements

DUCK HUNTING

Ms LOVELL (Northern Victoria) (12:00): My question is to the Minister for Agriculture. Minister, the Government Whip, Ms Stitt, moved to adjourn debate on a duck hunting ban proposed by Mr Meddick, cutting the opportunity for me to speak. Minister, what is the government's policy on duck hunting bans, and why was the government afraid to speak on its convictions?

Members interjecting.

Ms LOVELL: The question is: what is the government's policy on a duck hunting ban, and why was the government afraid today to vote on its convictions?

The PRESIDENT: I think the second question comes under the anticipation rule as the debate was adjourned until later this day. I will call on the minister to answer the first question.

Ms SYMES (Northern Victoria—Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Resources) (12:01): I actually would not mind commenting on the introduction to Ms Lovell's question. In this place and as a participant in Monday night meetings, Ms Lovell, we have an arrangement where the crossbench are actually given a great opportunity to prosecute their motions.

Ms Lovell: Then put it to a vote.

Ms SYMES: There are several more speakers and the debate has been adjourned until later this today.

Ms Lovell: There are only 8 minutes to go.

Ms SYMES: There are several more speakers, and debate has been adjourned until later this day.

Members interjecting.

Ms SYMES: We were not asked to vote on it.

Members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The house will come to order, please. There were two questions, which is a problem, but I did ask the minister to address one of the questions and so I will call the house to order and give the minister the call.

Ms SYMES: Thank you, President. In relation to duck hunting, as I have said on numerous occasions in this house, it is an issue that there are very divergent views on, as attested in relation to the house at the moment. The Andrews Labor government had a duck season this year and we have got no change of policy in relation to that. I do not actually understand what the furore is about adjourning off a motion till later this day. If we were to vote on the motion, we would oppose it.

Ms LOVELL (Northern Victoria) (12:03): Minister, did the contribution made this morning by Mr Elasmr fully put the government's policy, or did he have one foot in each pond, ducking for cover as it were?

Members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I think that that is asking for an opinion, and I think we will just leave it at that.

WOMBAT PROTECTION

Mr MEDDICK (Western Victoria) (12:04): My question today is for the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change in the other place. A few weeks ago the Crown-linked wombat hunting scandal spread across the country and the world, and rightly so. People were appalled at this cruelty and wondered how it could be allowed to go on. I am pleased to see an inquiry is now taking place. What most people do not realise, however, is that wombats are protected in every Australian state except Victoria. The Wildlife Act 1975 allows the minister to remove wildlife from the protected list. This was done in 1984 in 193 of the regions that make up this state, and it has never been changed back. Where wombats are protected a landowner can still get a permit to shoot them. Last year 3830 wombats were killed in this way. It is time to rethink this decades-old reasoning and the way we treat our bare-nosed friends, starting with making wombats completely protected everywhere. Will the minister for the environment do this?

Mr JENNINGS (South Eastern Metropolitan—Leader of the Government, Special Minister of State, Minister for Priority Precincts, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs) (12:05): I thank Mr Meddick for his question and his concern about wildlife generally and his specific concern about wombats. Under normal circumstances, Mr Meddick, I would take my cap off to you in relation to your working knowledge of environmental conservation law and the way in which it works across the country, but in relation to the way you have just described the situation you gave the community the impression that there are no limitations on killing wombats in the state of Victoria, and that is not the case. In fact there is only what is considered to be the authorised taking of wildlife that needs an approval for that to take place by the environment minister and the environment portfolio. And so it is not open slather and open season as you may have indicated—given the impression in your question—and there are penalties that are associated with the taking of any wildlife that has not been authorised in that way. Significant penalties can be imposed upon people who act in a way that is not authorised by Victorian law. So I understand that it may not be the best form of the law that you would actually like to be constructed, but there is a law that provides for protection.

In terms of any action that is inconsistent with that law or the spirit of the law or is inhumane in relation to the treatment of any wildlife in Victoria, we share your concern about that. I will seek some further information from my colleague in the other place in relation to any considerations that may have come from the current review of the circumstances you described.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Ms TIERNEY (Western Victoria—Minister for Training and Skills, Minister for Higher Education) (12:07): I rise to update the house on data relating to participation in the Victorian training system. Yesterday the National Centre for Vocational Education Research, commonly known as NCVER, released its report on government-funded students and courses for the first quarter of 2019. The corresponding full-year report for 2018 has also been released.

In 2018 students studying in the Victorian TAFE network increased by 2.1 per cent—an encouraging result. The NCVER data for the first quarter of 2019 is even more encouraging. There was a 16.1 per cent increase in enrolments in TAFE compared to the first quarter of 2018, there was a 6.1 per cent increase in overall government-funded students across the state, female student numbers increased by 8.5 per cent, Indigenous students increased by 16.9 per cent and the number of students reporting a disability increased by 8.8 per cent.

This is a significant turning point for our training system. This government's reforms and investment in vocational training for Victorians are working, from Skills First to free TAFE. Students are coming back to TAFE and to training in record numbers in government priority areas. Our 2019–20 budget invests a further \$231 million in Victoria's training and TAFE system for more training places, to put