

2017 PRIMARY SCHOOLS PARLIAMENTARY CONVENTION

***‘Zoos are a thing of the past, animals should be
rehoused in their natural environment’***

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Participants

Student Name	School
Serene Kaddour	Al Taqwa College
Yumna Sayeda	Al Taqwa College
Andrew Yeang	Apollo Parkways Primary School
Natalie Cairns	Apollo Parkways Primary School
Adam Quiao	Ararat Primary School
Jai Te Hau	Ararat Primary School
Sruthi Kalluri	Ararat Primary School
Tori Ralph	Ararat Primary School
Cooper Zucchet	Balcombe Grammar School
Mischa Gayfer	Balcombe Grammar School
Elizabeth Olsson	Berwick Fields Primary School
Grace Corbic	Berwick Fields Primary School
Tarith Colombage	Berwick Fields Primary School
Jennifer Troski	Bialik College
Rebecca Paratz	Bialik College
Liam Hewson	Burwood Heights Primary School
Robert Baleisuva	Burwood Heights Primary School
Tyler Moffit	Burwood Heights Primary School
Belinda Nguyen	Cairnlea Park Primary School
Michelle Luu	Cairnlea Park Primary School
Daniel Coulter	Charles La Trobe College
Sebastian Tonkin	Charles La Trobe College
Lara Likar	Footscray West Primary School
Philo Lee	Footscray West Primary School
Mickey Duffy	Footscray West Primary School
Caeleb Garlick	Foster Primary School
Maddi Boyd	Foster Primary School
Caitlin Edwards	Good Shepherd Lutheran Primary School
Jett Hartman	Good Shepherd Lutheran Primary School
Hudson Hancock	Greensborough Primary School
Sarah Cairns	Greensborough Primary School
Elektra Smith	Hesket Primary School
Ella Hayler	Hesket Primary School
Zach Creed	Hesket Primary School
Annabel Christian	Hillsmeade Primary School
Tom James-Medhurst	Hillsmeade Primary School
Fearghas Bennett	Kew Primary School
Greta Nibali	Kew Primary School
Amy Biggelaar	Kingswood College
David Wu	Kingswood College
Nadia Rahman	Kingswood College
Patrick Creighton	Kingswood College
Edward Black	Malmsbury Primary School
Molly Hoyne	Malmsbury Primary School
Alannah Warren	Marist College Bendigo
Amelia Hammond	Marist College Bendigo
Kerrie Hughes	Marist College Bendigo
Lilli Myers	Marist College Bendigo
Jonathan Pestrucci	Mount Ridley P-12 College
Sonita Reddy	Mount Ridley P-12 College
Eliza Charleston	Our Lady of the Assumption
Elliot Ferriggi	Our Lady of the Assumption
Liana Kalpakoff	Our Lady of the Assumption
Mia McCormack	Our Lady of the Assumption

Brian Tran	Parkmore Primary School
Valerie Golebiewska	Parkmore Primary School
Callum Taylor	Point Lonsdale Primary School
Charlie Wayth	Point Lonsdale Primary School
Lucy Cooper	Point Lonsdale Primary School
Lucy Summerfield	Point Lonsdale Primary School
Daisy Stoove	Princes Hill Primary School
Nicole Karakiklas	Princes Hill Primary School
Arwa Sharma	Rowville Primary School
Ashna Sharma	Rowville Primary School
Oscar Bartlett	Rowville Primary School
Ali Grantham	Rutherglen Primary School
Charlie James	Rutherglen Primary School
Flynn Habets	Rutherglen Primary School
Ruby Burgess	Rutherglen Primary School
Beth Mandell	Sacred Heart Parish School, Sandringham
Jolie Claxton	Sacred Heart Parish School, Sandringham
Matilda Cowell	Sacred Heart Parish School, Sandringham
Sam Keating	Sacred Heart Parish School, Sandringham
Cameron Lilagan	St Brigid's Primary School
Olivia Neilson	St Brigid's Primary School
Russell McDonald	St Brigid's Primary School
Yasmin Gillam	St Brigid's Primary School
Allen Trang	St Michael's Primary School, North Melbourne
Fiona Teklu	St Michael's Primary School, North Melbourne
Gina Forde	St Michael's Primary School, North Melbourne
Isobel Cuthbert	St Michael's Primary School, North Melbourne
Angus Ross	St Thomas More School
Emily Taranto	St Thomas More School
Matilda Leamon	St Thomas More School
Oscar Scheen	St Thomas More School
Anshi Chaudhari	The Knox School
Nektaria Toscas	The Knox School
Bill Carlin	Tooborac Primary School
Ciarna Castle-Mitchell	Tooborac Primary School
Ebony Staples	Tooborac Primary School
Lily Ford	Tooborac Primary School
Jake Talevski	Viewbank Primary School
Tristan Bramanta	Viewbank Primary School
Dylan Murphy	Wales Street Primary School
Jasmine Leaver-Anag	Wales Street Primary School
Louella Breach	Wales Street Primary School
Sam Marasco-Liddell	Wales Street Primary School

The SPEAKER (Mr Colin Brooks) took the chair at 9.04 a.m.

The SPEAKER (Mr Brooks) — Good morning everyone. How are we? My name is Colin Brooks. I am a member of state Parliament. I am the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, so this is where I usually sit when Parliament is sitting. This is my very good friend Judith Graley, who is the state member of Parliament for Narre Warren South, and she is also the Parliamentary Secretary for Education. Judith is going to speak to you in a moment to introduce the topic of today's discussion. I have just a few brief comments to basically welcome you all to the Parliament today.

The first thing I want to do is acknowledge the traditional owners of the land that we are meeting on today and to pay my respects, on behalf of all of us, to their elders both past and present. I am from Bundoora, out Greensborough way. I think we have Apollo Parkways Primary School students here today. Where are the Apollo Parkways students? Can you pop your hands up? It is fantastic to see you here from Greensborough. Whenever I come into the city and look around, I always think what this area would have looked like before European settlement. It is very hard to imagine with all the big buildings and the hustle and bustle of the city, but it is really important that we remember that before European settlement the Indigenous owners of the land here looked after the land for tens of thousands of years.

Congratulations on being selected to represent your schools at this convention today. It is a great honour for you to be representing your school here today. I know that when both Judith and I come into this place as members of Parliament representing our local communities, we get a real kick out of the fact that we have been asked by our local communities at an election to represent them. So it is a big honour for us to come in here each and every day to represent our communities, and it should be seen as a great honour for you to also come in here today and represent your schools. It is a fantastic thing that you have been selected.

One of the things that I like about coming in here, aside from what I have just spoken about, is to be able to come into such a beautiful building and work here on a daily basis. This is a wonderful building. It is steeped not just in Victorian political history but also in federal government history as well. Many of you may have already learnt that this building and this very chamber acted as the federal Parliament for the first 26 years of our nation's history. When Australia became a nation in 1901, at Federation, after the ceremonial opening of the Parliament at the exhibition buildings near the museum, members of federal Parliament came and sat here for the next 26 years of our nation's history before Parliament House in Canberra was built. When you think about it some of the most momentous decisions of our nation's early history leading up to World War I — our involvement in World War I in places like Gallipoli, our early prime ministers — all sat in this very chamber and in the places that you are sitting in here today, so this is a very special place.

I want to ask: who has seen clips of state Parliament on the TV news? Has anyone not seen Parliament on TV news? I have to say, just between us if you can keep a secret, I do not think the stuff you see on TV and the way members of Parliament behave probably shows members of Parliament in the best light. Sometimes the behaviour of members of Parliament that you see on TV is not great. What you see is usually question time, where there is lots of tension in the chamber and members of Parliament get a bit agitated and fired up, so it is usually not their best behaviour. But the good news is that the rest of the time during a sitting day and the rest of the sitting week is taken up by much more respectful debate most of the time, where different parties and different members of Parliament come together to work on solutions: work on legislation and work on policy ideas. Most of the laws that get passed through the Parliament are done so through agreement, so we work together to try and find the right way forward for the Victorian people. Whilst I am not making excuses for the behaviour of members of Parliament who you might see on TV, you can rest assured that most of the time the behaviour is a lot better, and there are a lot of people working very hard to deliver really good outcomes for our state.

What I would encourage you all to do today is to listen to each other, to be respectful and to be courteous, but also to ask questions and challenge ideas. The whole point of parliamentary discussion is to test ideas. So if you think you disagree with something or you are not sure why something is being said, ask a question or challenge that idea. That is the whole purpose of debate. Welcome today. I hope you have a great day and enjoy yourselves at the Parliament of Victoria.

Ms GRALEY — Good morning everyone. My name is Judith Graley and I am the member for Narre Warren South. I sit in this chamber just where this girl with the red bow and blonde hair is. That is my seat. I also serve as the Parliamentary Secretary for Education. That is a support minister for the Minister for

Education, who is also the Deputy Premier and sits in this seat. So welcome to the Parliament, the talking place of Victoria. It is really terrific to have you all here today.

I too would like to begin by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which we meet, the Wurundjeri people, and acknowledge their elders past and present and any future leaders that may be here with us today. I have a great commitment to walking the road of recognition and respect with our Aboriginal people. I hope you understand that today you are actually sitting in a chamber that is on the land of one of the original meeting places of Victoria, where the Aboriginal people gathered to listen, talk and make decisions about their families and their futures. So this is a very, very important place.

There are a lot of you here today. We usually only have 80 people with us in this chamber. But I can assure you that is probably enough because, as the Speaker has already outlined, we can be rather noisy. We also have a lot of things to discuss and a lot of people want to put their voices forward and their opinions forward. That is what you are here to do today. I am really pleased we also have with us Jenny Gray, the chief executive of Zoos Victoria. Jenny is a wonderful leader of her organisation and will be able to provide you with lots of information about the amazing things that happen at our local zoo. I understand that Carole de Fraga is also here, the Melbourne director of Four Paws, who do amazing work around issues in animal welfare. They will provide you with a little bit of a different story to the one that Zoos Victoria is providing. In fact this morning I woke up to a news item talking about the terribly high incidents of animals being hurt in our community, so that organisation will be able to speak about that.

As Colin said, this building has a very rich history, and you are in the lower house today. It is a good thing that you are in the Legislative Assembly because this is where the government sits. This chair is where the Premier sits. So when you get up to speak — maybe with some of my friends from Berwick Fields Primary School, which is in my electorate — if you want to stand here, you can pretend you are the Premier for the day. I can tell you that even though he relies on everybody in this chamber making decisions, he nevertheless is a very powerful person because he is the Leader of the Government. A lot of what we do as a government are ideas that he has or that he has consulted with us about. He is the salesman for our ideas. He has to get out there and do a good job — a difficult job often — of selling the government's agenda to the people of Victoria.

One of the things that we are really committed to as a government — and you may see it on your parents' cars — is that Victoria is the Education State. One of the reasons that I am really happy to have you here today is that we are strongly committed to making sure that every child — no matter where they come from, whether it is Boroondara, Berwick or Bunjil — gets a great education. One of the things that we really like about what happens in Victorian schools is the fact that you also get outside the classroom and come and learn about different things. One of the things that we want you to learn about is how to be a great citizen, because you will not be at school forever. You have got to go out there in the community and you have got to make your way. But I hope that by being here you understand that Victoria has a really rich tradition of democracy.

Democracy does not just happen. In fact very few countries in the world have a democratic system, and certainly not one as strong as ours. So to learn about democracy, appreciate it and be a voice for selling it is something that we want our students in our education system to experience. So you are going to have a great day here today. As the Speaker said, you have got to listen carefully with not only your head but also your heart to the other points of view.

When you become a member of Parliament you get 15 minutes to make a speech, and in that speech you get to talk about what you want to do in this Parliament; it is your inaugural speech. I was very impressed by a man at university who taught in the department of politics at the University of Melbourne. He said, 'To know is to feel'. So you have to feel other people's point of view as well as hear it if you are going to be a good decision-maker. That is just my tip to you today. That means that even when you disagree you have to respect that person across the chamber as well. Sometimes for me that is a little bit hard because I get a little bit vocal about some of the issues that I am really passionate about, and I think, 'How can that other person possibly think that way about that issue? It drives me crazy', but I have to show that person respect. It is in respecting each other that we make sure that our democracy continues.

You have got a cracker of a subject to debate today, I must admit: 'Zoos are a thing of the past, animals should be rehoused in their natural environment'. Goodness me — there are lots of big issues there to discuss. Zoos have certainly changed a lot since I was at school. I remember going to picnics with my parents and my school groups at the zoo, and I must admit I would see amazing animals — animals that I did not have any chance of

seeing anywhere else. I did get a little upset sometimes when I saw them in such small cages. In fact there was, I think, an orangutan — Molly the orangutan — at the zoo, a big ape in a small cage. One of her tricks was to smoke cigarettes. Can you believe that? We would go along and we would see this sick animal, not that different from us really, and she would be smoking cigarettes. It was sort of funny and interesting, I have got to say, but how about that happening today? I mean we do not want even you to smoke; there is no plan to have an orangutan performing like that at the zoo. So things have changed a lot at the zoo. It really is, I think, a beautiful place to go to see animals in a world-class zoo. I know that Jenny would always like to have more funds to extend enclosures and make them bigger and an even nicer place for the animals.

On the weekend I was actually down at Moonlit Sanctuary Wildlife Conservation Park at Tooradin. There were some kangaroos and wallabies and they were all jumping around. I had some overseas members of Parliament with me and they just loved it. They were running up and feeding the wallabies and feeding the kangaroos and having their pictures taken with them. So that was a different sort of environment for animals to be in. I suppose some of you have been to Taronga Western Plains Zoo in Dubbo, and that is a different environment as well.

So you are going to have to put your thinking caps on today and think about what you think about this question. We have, as I said, as a government a big commitment to animal welfare. You have probably all heard really sad stories of farms where RSPCA inspectors have turned up and found horses that look like they are dying, have no meat on them and are being underfed and starved, or you have heard stories about puppies being kept in big factories and producing babies non-stop. All those issues have been very confronting for us as people — as Victorians — and for the government, and the government has a really strong eye for and is taking a really good look at how we can make sure that no animal is hurt, starved or badly treated in Victoria.

How many of you have dogs, cats, birds or lizards? All of us love our pets, do we not, and we treat them really kindly, and we want everybody else to do that. When you have been thinking about this subject, I suspect you have been thinking about how we can generally treat animals better as well. So it is a big topic, it is a good topic, you will hear lots of different points of view and I wish you very well. Have a great time. Show respect, be nice, play nicely, as your teachers say, and have a great day at the Victorian Parliament. It is my great pleasure, on behalf of all parliamentarians who sit in this house, to officially open your convention today. Thank you.

Delegates applauding.

OPENING STATEMENTS

The SPEAKER (Ms Newson) — My name is Leanne Newson and I have the privilege this morning to be acting as Speaker. When it is your turn to present, I will call out your name and your school and then look forward to hearing your presentation. Welcome to today's proceedings. I must say that if I mispronounce your name, I do apologise in advance, but I will do my best.

Al Taqwa College

Ms SAYEDA — My name is Yumna Sayeda and I am from Al Taqwa College. How many of us here remember our first trip to the zoo? Think back: were you feeling excited, interested or even amazed by the different types of animals there were? Well, zoos are a common tourist attraction, and a visit to the zoo is a wholesome family activity which we all enjoy. Good morning. The topic is that zoos are a thing of the past and that animals should be rehoused in their natural environment. Today I will be discussing the positives and economic benefits of zoos.

Zoos: a place where animals are the first priority and are constantly entertained with inquisitive humans in a buzzing environment. Zoos save a lot of endangered species by bringing them into a safe environment where they are protected from poachers, habitat loss, starvation and predators. Did you know that 173 — yes, 173 — Australian species are on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species? Zoos help by bringing in these animals and taking care of them. The Association of Zoos and Aquariums has even stated that zoos are held to high standards on the treatment of animals. This clearly illustrates that zoos have acted as a stepping stone to reduce the number of endangered species, as well as ensuring that they are well looked after.

Zoos are not only a great place for an outing but also help the economy in many different ways. Research from the Australian Bureau of Statistics demonstrates that 76 per cent of international tourists are interested in

experiencing native wildlife and of these more than half prefer to visit a zoo, meaning there are about 1 504 million visits to the zoo each year. The numbers speak for themselves, not to mention that there are about 5300 employees in the zoo industry. Imagine what would happen to the employees and the economy if the zoos closed down.

To conclude, we at Al Taqwa College believe that zoos should not be a thing of the past and that animals should not be rehoused in their natural environment. As the famous Gandhi once said, ‘The greatness of a nation can be judged by the way its animals are treated’.

The SPEAKER — What a wonderful way to start our morning’s proceedings.

Apollo Parkways Primary School

Ms N. CAIRNS — Hello, my name is Natalie Cairns and I am from Apollo Parkways Primary School. We believe that zoos are a thing of the past and animals should be rehoused in their natural environment. Do you not think it is more exciting to see animals in their own habitat than to see them caged up? Is it not better to go on bushwalks and find koalas in the trees or be out on the ocean watching dolphins rather than seeing them in artificial pools? Instead of zoos there are alternatives. These alternatives are better not only for them but also for us. People and money always come first, not the animals. They die a lot earlier because of mistreatment and not being in their natural environment.

Not only will rehousing animals help animals, it can help people as well. In Africa, where you get to see animals in real life, it earns more money for the country and so it helps their economy. People will come to different places to see a variety of animals. We will be able to see animals do more exciting things than at zoos. We will be able to see them roam free. That seems more interesting than watching them look sad and do nothing. Maybe there are not as many zoos now, but some zoos are so horrible that they kill the first animals they have or sell them to other zoos, circuses and even hunting facilities. We think of animals as lower than us, but that is not true. We have committed horrible acts upon them and not cared for them. The offspring from the original animals are never set free. That is why we think we should allow animals to remain in their natural habitat and care for them there.

We spend so much money on zoos and we do not even think about conserving the places where animals come from. Perhaps we could spend this money on conservation, breeding programs, education, helping to establish tourist industries and a whole range of other services for the animals. You say that zoos are a thing of the past. Well, I absolutely agree. We should let animals roam free instead of being caged up.

Ararat Primary School

Mr QUIAO — Madam Speaker and fellow delegates, my name is Adam Quiao and I am school captain from Ararat Primary School in western Victoria. Our team, after consulting with our year 5 and 6 peers, believe that zoos are not a thing of the past. They are critical to the survival of a massive number of species around the world and need to be supported into the future. Zoos also raise public awareness of environmental issues and educate generations about the importance of wildlife conservation and habitat protection. Today’s key topic, to rehouse animals currently in zoos in their natural environments, will condemn them to trauma, isolation, potential starvation and a tragic end. Our research tells us that zoo animals are born in zoos and have no understanding of the wild. For example, Melbourne Zoo only deals with zoos in other countries that do not collect from the wild. Their animals are all born in other zoos, so zoos have become their natural environment.

Zoos protect threatened and endangered species. They provide a safe environment that is enriched, stimulating and reflects animals’ natural habitat. The notion that animals are kept in cages is from the past and is far from accurate. In fact animals are housed in large enclosures with other animals from the same habitat zones. They are able to hide from the public if they wish or interact with the public if they choose. Perhaps you have experienced a trip to the zoo when your favourite animals have been missing in action.

Finally, zoos create opportunities for people to interact with our planet’s most remarkable creatures in an environment that is safe, secure, considerate and compassionate. Therefore, fellow delegates, we hold to our commitment that zoos are vital to the continued existence of threatened and endangered species, now and into the future. For some species zoos may be their only future. Thank you.

Balcombe Grammar School

Ms GAYFER — Good morning. My name is Mischa Gayfer from Balcombe Grammar School. Zoos of the past are certainly a thing of the past. However, zoos of the present protect the future. Keeping animals captive for the fun of it is a thing of the past, but now we realise that some animals need human help. One hundred years ago zoo enclosures looked like jail cells, showing no resemblance to the animal's habitat. Today zoos perform important functions in sustaining endangered species and educating humans.

The expanding human population means animals in their habitats around the world are under threat. To resolve this problem zoos and sanctuaries keep some endangered animals in captivity for breeding purposes and as a backup population in case the numbers in the wild drop further. An example is the Tasmanian Devil. Many devils die from devil facial tumour disease. If this continues, they will become extinct. Captive devil programs are preventing extinction. Some animal population numbers are dropping because they are slow breeders. By taking these animals into specially-designed breeding sanctuaries, they can be provided with the help they need. When they are ready and strong, the young animals can be released into the wild. Some examples include rhinos, tree kangaroos and giant pandas. Some animals just need a little help from humans.

Zoos understand that awareness and education saves animals. Zoos Victoria has programs for schools and students inspiring them to become passionate wildlife advocates. Zoos provide programs allowing students to interact with animals and learn what scientists do to help.

The idea of zoos as freak shows is outdated. While we can still look at fascinating animals, these days our entry fee goes towards research, education, conservation and reintroduction of wild species. Zoos perform essential functions in preserving endangered species and educating us about the importance of protecting animals and their habitats. Zoos are definitely not a thing of the past. They are protecting the future. Thank you.

Good Shepherd Lutheran Primary School

Ms EDWARDS — Hi, I am Caitlin Edwards from Good Shepherd Lutheran Primary School. I would like to take the time to thank the Parliament of Victoria and the National Curriculum Services for providing this opportunity for us all today.

Through our reading of articles and through our personal experiences we believe that zoos are not a thing of the past and all animals do not need to be rehoused in their natural environment. Whilst we do not wish to go back to the old-style zoos of the past, modern zoos are a thing of the future providing research, conservation, education and breeding opportunities to preserve animals and their habitat.

We have seen the numbers of many animals who are identified as being in danger or on the brink of extinction come back to healthy levels through the care and breeding programs of zoos worldwide. Some of the Australian animals that zoos are currently working to save from extinction are the Bellinger River turtle, the regent honeyeater and the corroboree frog.

Zoos take great care of the animals that they are responsible for. Animals live longer in a zoo than in the wild as diseases that animals may die from in the wild can be identified earlier and treatment provided. Lack of food, predators and habitat destruction is another concern for animals in the wild that is not faced in the zoo. Through housing animals in a zoo we can provide hands-on education for the public to increase awareness of such things as habitat destruction and poaching, and the more that people are aware of these issues the greater the push for change will be.

Zoos are getting better all the time through researching and improving their understanding of animals. In the future, zoos will be even better as we will be more educated about animals, their habitat and how we can save them from extinction. When we think about the housing of animals, the aim of a good zoo is to recreate the animal's habitat as accurately as possible and to provide them with enough space to move around and enough stimulation so that they can behave naturally. Thank you, and I look forward to discussing this topic with you all through the day.

Hesket Primary School

Ms HAYLER — Hello, my name is Ella Hayler and I am from Hesket Primary School. I strongly agree that zoos are a thing of the past and animals should be rehoused in their natural environments. I believe that zoos are something that we should not have, so please listen carefully for the reasons stated below.

Firstly, animals will not learn the valuable life skills they need to hunt, run and be a normal wild animal. Zoos will cause the animals to not go with their natural instincts and they will split the animals' families up so they will not know how to do anything, because parents teach their children everything they know. Animals should be released into their natural environments, but to make sure they are okay they could be monitored until they learn how to protect themselves and their family from predators, hunters or poachers. The information they get from monitoring animals will help them choose where animals should be relocated and help the animals have a better chance of surviving.

Why do we get to live in our natural environment and animals are in a cage? Animals are taken away from their family and it is extremely heartbreaking. Animals' rights are also not considered at all. We have absolutely no right to capture, confine or breed the animals. Why is it okay to take animals away from their homes and families but it is illegal to take humans away from their homes and families? If people want to go and see the animals, they should just go into the wild or go to a sanctuary. A really good sanctuary does not buy, sell or breed the animals and only has animals that are injured or which will not survive in the wild.

In conclusion, zoos are a thing of the past and animals should be rehoused in their natural environments. Animals will not learn valuable life skills if they are kept in zoos. Animals should be relocated but monitored and should not be taken by us. Thank you for listening and please agree with me.

Kew Primary School

Mr BENNETT — Good morning, everybody. My name is Fearghas Bennet and I am from Kew Primary School. We have all seen pictures of zoos from many years ago. At Taronga Zoo in Sydney you can still visit the cruel old elephant enclosures — horrible concrete cages with chains. But zoos have come a long way since then. Walking around the Royal Melbourne Zoological Gardens you could hardly imagine that the animals are not in their natural habitats. They are called 'gardens' for a reason: the animals have huge green enclosures like they would have in the wild. Some zoos do not even have cages at all, such as Werribee Open Range Zoo and Singapore Zoo, where the animals are able to roam around freely. In zoos animals are protected from predators, and this helps them to survive and often leads to them living longer lives than they would in the wild. Their health is monitored by teams of vets and zookeepers.

It is not as simple as throwing open the gates and the animals are released into freedom; this would be extremely cruel. These animals would find it very difficult when targeted by predators, and it would make them vulnerable. Breeding animals in captivity lowers the possibility of them becoming extinct. Take, for example, giant pandas. From 1990 to 2016 giant pandas were listed as endangered. They are currently listed as vulnerable. This is because of successful breeding programs in zoos. Healesville Sanctuary is envied around the world for their research. It was the first place in the world to breed a platypus in captivity. Zoos in Australia and overseas are doing a huge amount of work to save endangered species. The future of our animals depends on zoos. Zoos have an essential role to play in protecting endangered species, breeding programs and research programs. They provide educational opportunities for visitors as well as allowing people to experience animals in a pleasant and natural environment. Zoos are certainly not a thing of the past. Thank you.

Our Lady of the Assumption

Ms CHARLESTON — Good afternoon, students, teachers and members of Parliament. My name is Eliza and today I will be representing Our Lady of the Assumption parish primary school in this Primary Schools Parliamentary Convention. We as a school strongly believe that animals are safest and most secure in zoos. Zoos protect animals from poachers and predators and are a great resource to teach people how to care for and protect animals. It is obviously a necessity to have access to health care and medicine, and any animals in zoos have much greater access to all sorts of health care, although since the animals are in good quality zoos it is unlikely that they will get sick. This is one of the reasons why our school strongly believes that animals should stay in zoos.

We also believe zoos are not a thing of the past because they are very educational. Zoos provide visitors with lots of information about where the animals have come from and how they live in the wild. They also help the animals feel more at home. Most animals enjoy life in the zoo more than in the wild because they do not have to search for food, be scared by hunters and protect their young and themselves. In zoos animals have big, spacious enclosures that they do not have to share with other animals, which would save them from being vulnerable. Another good point about zoos is that they keep breeds that are close to extinction alive by breeding, and I think that is very important.

Our main reason why zoos are not a thing of the past is that animals have protection from poachers and predators. In the wild animals are hunted relentlessly for the tusks, skin and fur. In 2016 over 30 000 elephants in South Africa were hunted for their skin and tusks. Rhino horns are believed to cure cancer, but that is false. Zoos protect animals from poachers and their natural predators. Thank you for listening to our points as to why zoos should not be closed. We hope that we have convinced you to think like us. We encourage you to visit zoos and support their campaigns. Thank you.

Point Lonsdale Primary School

Mr TAYLOR — I am Callum Taylor from Point Lonsdale Primary School, and I am here today with Lucy Summerfield, Charlie Wayth and Lucy Cooper. It is true that zoos have served as recreational, educational and conservational venues to see and experience animals firsthand, but zoos must be closed down if we truly want to experience and see animals in their natural environment, living the way they should be. If we keep these magnificent creatures locked up in cages, their knowledge of how they live in their natural environment will evaporate. Many animals in zoos have even lost the will to hunt, to capture and run. At zoos we often see young children standing outside a lion's cage cheering at seeing the king of the jungle lying meekly on the ground like a domesticated cat. Even in a purpose-built habitat enclosure these animals are still confined behind bars, and their behaviour and habits change. Because of this, people are not seeing the behaviours of wild animals in zoos but merely imprisoned creatures and pets.

These stunning beasts should be able to roam miles upon miles of terrain instead of being cramped in a small cage with a few shrubs and trees. Anyone with a modest degree of empathy would realise that this is not the same thing. The conditions animals are kept in at zoos is outrageous and are opening up these animals to diseases. Some of these animals are harming themselves — in the worst cases killing themselves — to get out of these terrible, horrendous conditions. A time will come when people will realise the murder of an animal is just as horrendous as the murder of a person — the only difference is that animals are closer to extinction.

Sacred Heart Parish School, Sandringham

Ms MANDELL — Madam Speaker, my name is Beth Mandell. I am 11 years old and I am from Sacred Heart, Sandringham. I firmly believe that zoos are a thing of the past and should go. Firstly, just like humans, animals deserve to be free in their natural habitat. Even though zoos are for our own enjoyment we can find other ways to be entertained that do not include capturing animals. Capturing animals is cruel. If we take them from the wild, they may be separated from their families and mates. If animals are bred in zoos and not let out, they will never get a chance to experience being free. I find this totally unfair and I feel that it should stop — the sooner the better.

Although zoos can be used to rescue and protect endangered animals, we can focus on rehabilitation that allows the animals to be set free after they heal. Sometimes when animals are rescued and put in zoos they are kept there afterwards for visitors to look at. If animals are kept in zoos for too long, they can suffer from negative psychological effects due to confinement. No matter how well designed the enclosures are, they do not compare to the freedom of the wild. If animals are set free into the wild after years of being confined for any reason, they may not remember how to survive. They will not know how to hunt for themselves, nor find suitable homes. This is because they have been cared for all their lives.

Although zoos can provide educational opportunities for children, most people do not use them for education as much as they do for recreation and entertainment. Some of the visitors to zoos do not care about the wellbeing of animals and throw things and tease the poor creatures. Even though the number of people that do this is minimal, the smallest amount of abuse can cause damage to the self-confidence of the animals. Many animals kept in captivity display signs of zoochosis, which is a strange repetitive behaviour with no purpose, like bar biting, pacing, plucking hair and regurgitating, just to name a few. It is almost as if the animals are going mad,

according to Slate.com. This disorder almost never occurs in the wild. Zoos do have their good points, but if we really care about the wellbeing of our animals, we should take as much care of them as we can, which means not having zoos. Besides, we are all animals with the same main needs so should we not treat each other with the same respect? Thank you for your time.

St Michael's Primary School, North Melbourne

Ms TEKLU — My name is Fiona, and this is Isobel, and we are from St Michael's Primary School. The big question children at St Michael's Primary School and all of us have been asking ourselves is: are zoos a thing of the past? Well, we have debated, argued and researched this, and we believe that we have answered this controversial question. There are many different perspectives, but we at St Michael's support zoos. We believe that only the zoos that are accredited should remain open so that zoos resemble the animals' natural habitat.

Ms CUTHBERT — My name is Isobel Cuthbert. I am also from St Michael's. Zoos save many endangered animals that are near extinction. We know we have lost many animals due to extinction, so simply imagine some of the other animals we would have lost without zoos playing their very crucial role when it comes to endangered species. There are many animal habitats that are not in existence anymore because humans have destroyed their natural environment and killed the animals for money, unproven medical benefits and possibly even entertainment. Losing zoos would be appalling. The majority of the animals would not have a safe place to live in. Certainly there is a high probability that without zoos some exotic creatures would die, which is just sad. Not only do zoos help animals but they also educate and inspire our future generations in ensuring the sustainability of their natural habitat. On the other hand some would say that holding any animal in captivity has questionable ethics. Animals have their own rights and should remain living normally. Capturing them and putting them in confined cages is nowhere near comparable to living in their own habitats, no matter how hard zoos try or how much they spend on animal cages.

Ms TEKLU — In consideration of both sides of the argument, we at St Michael's strongly agree that zoos should not close down. We are adamant that zoos be upgraded so that they remind the animals of their natural environment. Without zoos many species would not be alive. Would you rather have zoos keep animals safe or close down zoos and have many species die? It is obvious to us that there is no choice. Thank you.

St Thomas More Primary School, Mount Eliza

Ms LEAMON — Hello, I am Matilda Leamon from St Thomas More. We believe that zoos are a thing of the past and that animals should be rehoused in their natural environment. Imagine living in a confined space when you were really made to be in the wild? Up to 5000 healthy zoo animals, including hundreds of larger ones such as giraffes, lions and bears, are killed by zoos in Europe every year. It does not matter whether there is overpopulation or if they are no longer required, they deserve to live. What right do humans have to decide who lives and dies? Killing an animal is still murder. So what if they are not as intelligent; so what if they cannot speak up for themselves. This is even more reason to protect animals. They are living, breathing, defenceless creatures. We have a moral responsibility as custodians of our planet to protect these precious creatures.

Sadly, some zoos are attracting crowds with public animal dissections. Zookeepers feed some of the animals food they would not normally eat. If they were born in their natural habitats, they could hunt for the right food and find water and shelter. The animals could have an open environment if they were in the wild, but instead they are in small cages. The average space for an elephant in the wild is 640 000 acres. Meanwhile, the whole of Melbourne Zoo has over 320 different species caged and is only 54 acres. If the animals were sent into their natural environments, they would not know how to find food, water and shelter because the zookeepers do it all for them.

People claim that zoos educate children about animals. If zoos are teaching us anything, it is that imprisoning animals for our own enjoyment is acceptable. Zoos are not for animals, as we may think; they are made for us humans. Who goes to the zoo and pays to see animals in cages? Humans do. Who laughs from the outside when elephants in their 160-square metre cages slip or fall? Humans do. How would it feel to live in under 1 per cent of the space you should be living in? A sanctuary is the only thing that is a saviour to these poor animals. If people want to see active animals on show, zoos will just keep breeding new baby animals to keep the crowd happy, and that is going to lead to overcrowding in animal cages. True sanctuaries do not breed for crowds; they care for animals that need to be looked after or who can no longer be in the wild. They also do not sell them to

circuses, and they do not trade or sell these innocent animals. Zoos are a jail for animals, but the catch is they did nothing wrong. Thank you.

Tooborac Primary School

Ms CASTLE-MITCHELL — Hello, everyone. My name is Ciarna Castle-Mitchell. I am from Tooborac Primary School. Today's topic for debate is: zoos are a thing of the past and animals should be rehoused in their natural environment. We all love getting up close to our favourite feline friend, Arctic animal, cute critter and more, but what goes on when there is no one around? Zoos have done some horrendous things. For example, a healthy two-year-old giraffe had what you would call common genes. For that reason he was shot and, to make it worse, cut up in front of guests and fed to lions — and, yes, there were kids watching.

Do you think Copenhagen Zoo should have another chance, or zoos in general? Nevertheless, zoos have changed massively from the bad old days when elephants, tigers, monkeys, lions and even polar bears were in tiny cages to now where they have huge enclosures. Zoos are spending millions of dollars to keep improving their luxury enclosures. Speaking of millions, did anyone hear about the penguin incident? About four penguins were left in a chlorine-drenched pool while the zoo was building a million-dollar enclosure for them. This led to blindness for two penguins and death for one, whilst the other penguin is now suffering a nasty eye disease. We all hope they are healing well and will be happy and back to normal soon.

Can you really say that you do not love getting up close to animals that would normally run away or hurt you? Because I do. I love to be able to get to learn about the animals I would never get to learn about or see, for that matter. After all, it is a great learning experience. Why should we be forced to get rid of zoos that we love to visit? All we need to do is get zoos to stop treating their animals like they are rubbish and treat them like they deserve to be treated.

Wales Street Primary School

Mr MARASCO-LIDDELL — My name is Sam Marasco-Liddell. I do not believe that zoos are a thing of the past. Zoos are important because people can observe wild animals and learn about their habitats. Zoos raise people's awareness. Seeing an animal in the flesh has more impact than watching a nature documentary. The habitats of many animals are being destroyed for human purposes. Destruction of habitat is leading to species becoming endangered and even extinct. Zoos provide a safe place for animals.

Zoos are places where research is carried out. The research can be used to inform people about the dangers to species so that we can prevent habitats from being destroyed. Some species only survive in zoos and can no longer be found in their natural habitat. Zoos have breeding programs to help preserve endangered species. Breeding endangered animals in zoos can enable populations to be re-established in their natural habitats. An example is the eastern barred bandicoot, which is a native Victorian marsupial. It was killed off by introduced foxes and habitat loss. The bandicoot was nearly extinct in 1989 but Zoos Victoria started to breed the species. There are now three reintroduced groups of eastern barred bandicoot in mainland Victoria and another population on Churchill Island near Phillip Island. Bilbies are another example.

It would be great if all animals could live in their natural habitat, but there are too many threats to the survival of some animals. If animals must be kept in zoos, it is important to ensure that zoos' habitats are as close as possible to the animal's natural habitats and that they have plenty of space and are well cared for. Thank you for listening.

The SPEAKER — I think you will all agree with me that we have had an absolutely outstanding range of presentations. I know that the people who have spoken have done so well for their schools, but I want to particularly thank the students you have all worked with and who put the research in and put those notes together. The person who was chosen to present has done an outstanding job. There has been a full range of points of view and such good research with the work that you have done — the statistics and the individual examples that you have been able to bring to the topic — as well as the passion that you have brought to your presentation, which has been absolutely outstanding. So thank you again, and I am sure that your teachers and your family and friends who are in the visitors' gallery have been very proud to listen to you this morning and will continue to do so during the day.

I would now like to introduce our first keynote speaker, Jenny Gray, CEO of Zoos Victoria. Jenny is a trained civil engineer and has experience in transportation engineering and banking, but it was a lifelong love of animals and a longing to do something that made a difference which brought her to the zoo industry. Jenny eventually became the CEO of Zoos Victoria, and her leadership has significantly changed the direction of Zoos Victoria to encourage a core business that is all about engaging people in saving wildlife. Can you please welcome Jenny and listen very carefully to her presentation this morning?

Ms GRAY — Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I would like to also acknowledge the traditional elders of the land on which we gather — people who cared for country very deeply.

I rise to address you on behalf of zoos and on behalf of the animals who live in our zoos. I would like to start with a poem. Bradley Trevor Greive in his book *Priceless: The Vanishing Beauty of a Fragile Planet* says:

For endangered species we are both their greatest enemy and their only hope. These wonderful creatures will not argue their case. They will not put up a fight. They will not beg for reprieve. They will not say goodbye. They will not cry out. They will just vanish. And after they are gone, there will be silence. And there will be stillness. And there will be empty places. And nothing you can say will change this. Nothing you can do will bring them back.

It is that last line that always haunts me when I think about animals. If we let animals become extinct, nothing we can do will bring them back. That is why I believe now more than ever that we need good zoos. Zoos are not a thing of the past; they are most definitely a thing of our future. I will share with you five reasons why I think zoos are about our future and why I believe that we need zoos going forward.

The first point is for good zoos. I say good zoos. I am never going to advocate for bad zoos, and in fact I do whatever I can to change bad zoos, but we have a role for good zoos. The first point that I share with you is that we fight extinction. As zoos we have the facilities, the skills, the staff, the enclosures and the animals to make a difference to extinction. Sam spoke so eloquently. He stole my story about eastern barred bandicoots, but I am going to carry on sharing that story a little bit further because I know something that he does not know. Eastern barred bandicoots once ranged right across the whole of Victoria. They are a grassland species. They evolved in a time when the only threat came from above. That was raptors and eagles. Aerial predation was what they had to worry about, so their entire defence is that they sit in a bush and they do not move. That is a great defence against eagles; it is a really terrible defence against foxes, especially if you do not move. So foxes are just absolutely catastrophic to eastern barred bandicoots. Wherever we find foxes, we cannot have bandicoots.

As Sam said, zoos have worked with bandicoots for 25 years. We can breed them and hold them in captivity, but we think the big game is putting them back in the wild. That is why two years ago, almost to the day, we put 16 animals onto Churchill Island to test whether bandicoots will live on islands. What we found now is that there are over 120 bandicoots living on Churchill Island. They do really well on islands. So, before the end of this year, somewhere around November, we will be releasing 100 bandicoots onto Phillip Island, because the amazing work the people on Phillip Island have done to stop the foxes from killing the little penguins is going to be work that saves bandicoots from foxes as well. If we get that right, we will have a species that has been listed as extinct in Victoria that will be listed as vulnerable. We will have brought back the first mammal recovery of a species in Australia. We think that is worth doing.

The second thing we do is we educate visitors. Many of you have spoken so eloquently about how we educate visitors, but it is not just about biology and where they live. You can learn that online and you can watch that in documentaries. What is most important is how we educate you on what you can do to help animals. What are the decisions you make every day, what are the decisions you make in your homes, what are the decisions you make in your life that make an impact on animals? We ask you to pause and think about those things. That is why we talk about palm oil. That is why we talk about using toilet paper made from recycled paper. Did you know that we flush 5 million trees down the toilet every year? But we could just switch from using toilet paper made from recycled paper and leave the trees behind for animals. These are simple actions we can take every day to leave things behind for the animals in the environment.

The third point I share with you is that we employ smart, compassionate and caring people as zookeepers. Most of our staff have degrees and PhDs. They are experts in zoology; they are experts in animal care. While they have an incredible task looking after animals in zoos, they also leave the boundaries of the zoos and look after animals in the wild as well. I want to share with you the story of one of our keepers. Her name is Fleur and she is an orangutan keeper. Every year Fleur takes one month of unpaid leave and goes to Borneo, where she works for the Borneo Orangutan Survival project. She helps to look after animals that are coming out of the wild. They

are coming out of the wild because they have been hunted, because they have been poached and because their parents have been killed. The amazing people at the Borneo Orangutan Survival project are rehabilitating them to put them back in the wild. I was really fortunate to go with Fleur to see what she does when she goes there. What she does is she works to make sure the animals that are there have the best possible care.

I followed her around one day while she did enrichment. Each animal had a piece of wood with holes drilled into it, and Fleur has a really big bottle of honey. She goes from cage to cage talking to each orangutan. She knows their names, she talks to them and she puts a little bit of honey on their piece of wood. For the next half hour they sit scooping the honey out. It is the best part of their day. There are 600 orangutans waiting at that sanctuary to go back into the wild, and here is the tough part: there is no wild for them to go back into, because as we keep destroying the rainforests, there is nowhere for orangutans to go. While we were there we got a call to say there was an orangutan that was being confiscated, a little baby orangutan that was being held as a pet.

The Indonesian government has made it illegal now to keep orangutans as pets. That means they need to go and collect these animals and bring them back to the sanctuary. So Fleur and I went with the police and the army out into the jungle, and we went right to the end of the road, then we got onto a little barge and we went across the river. There we found a bridge. Out the back, in a cage that was only about this big by this big, there was a little three-year-old orangutan. He had no blankets and he had no company. He had been in that cage so long that they had to get a hammer to break the lock. They broke the lock off and while the police talked to the family about giving up the animal, Fleur picked up that animal and hugged it. You could see it was the first time in a long time that anyone had hugged this little baby boy. The whole way back in the car he sat on her lap, and because she is a zookeeper she knew how to hold him. He did that thing that little babies do when they are so tired that they just want to fall asleep but they are so scared that if they fall asleep they will wake up somewhere else so they will not fall asleep. He kept nodding off and waking up. We were so proud to hand him over to the amazing people at the sanctuary to look after and rehabilitate him and be able to get him back to the wild one day.

We also work hard and make money. Often people will say, 'But zoos are all about making money'. Yes, we do make money, but every cent we make we put back into animals, either into the animals we care for or into the conservation work we do. Last year we spent \$6 million on breeding animals for release back into the wild, on building new habitat and on doing research programs that can help animals survive in the wild. We are one of the biggest contributors around the world to conservation and to saving animals. If you say that people who run zoos just do it to make money, I have to laugh. There is not a lot of money to be made. It is hard work. If I was just doing this to make money, I would work in a bank and I would make a lot more money. I work in a zoo because we can make a difference to animals, and yes, of course we need money to do that.

The final point I will share with you is that our animals live a good life. Every day that I go to work in a zoo I am excited to go to work. I am excited because I know not just my colleagues but also all of the animals that live in our great zoos. People will tell you that zoos are cruel, and I have no doubt they were in the past and some will be cruel still — there are many outdated zoos where we can do better — but I am privileged to work in a good zoo where we use science and research to inform our decisions. It means we go home every day knowing that we have cared for animals, from stick insects to elephants, and ensured they have a good quality of life.

Having said that, I can also assure you we are never comfortable with what we have done. Every day we are thinking about how we can make the animals' lives better. Yesterday I went to look at a new facility we have just built, which is a hydro-gym for reptiles. Like us, reptiles are quite happy to sit still and do no work at all. How many of your parents tell you you have to get out and exercise? Well, our reptiles have to get out and exercise as well, and so what we have built for them is a big bath with jets and warm water, like a big jacuzzi. When you put a snake into it, it starts swimming. Even though they can climb out on a special perch, they just swim in that water and they love it. The little lizards sit on a perch for a while and they get their breath, and then they jump in and swim as fast as they can and jump out again. We are constantly looking for new ways to give our animals something new and interesting to do.

I would like to share with you a different story about orangutans. Dewi is our young orangutan at Melbourne Zoo. She is the exact opposite of the little guy that we saved in Borneo. She has lived with her family her whole life. She still has her Mum and Dad right near her all the time. She has her older brother who teases her and drives her crazy. She eats human food, she has shelter and she has warmth when she needs it. When she gets

sick she has vets that come and help her. Last week she got her very own Xbox as well. The Xbox is how we are starting to understand how smart animals are, and what they can use in technology is something that I do not think we have even started to understand.

When researchers have tested videos with our orangutans to see what they like to watch, they like to watch videos of their keepers. They like their keepers, and they want to know what they do when they are not at the zoo. In fact their favourite videos are of watching their keepers eat. I am sure they wonder all the time, ‘What do these people eat?’. The other thing that Dewi gets to do is she gets to be an ambassador for her species in the fight for the labelling of palm oil. She gets to be the animal that we all think of when we talk about how important it is that our food is labelled. So we call on the government, and we are very proud of the Victorian government, which is the only government in the country which has supported the mandatory labelling of palm oil on our food. Many of you will have campaigned for palm oil labelling, and I would encourage you to write to your politicians and write to people in government encouraging them to make sure that manufacturers label palm oil and make sure that they use sustainable palm oil.

These are the five things that help me to say that zoos are not a thing of the past — that now more than ever the world needs good zoos. When I opened I talked about animals not saying goodbye, but I want to share with you now an animal that did say goodbye. In 2009 we were asked to go to Christmas Island to help save the Christmas Island pipistrelle. It is a very small insectivorous bat that was under threat from very big introduced ants: the yellow crazy ants introduced by humans onto Christmas Island.

These little bats have no defence against the ants; the ants invade the roof space and little bats just get killed. So we were asked to go and help save them. They thought there were about 20 left. When we arrived we put recording devices right across the known territory and we recorded one bat — just one for six days — and then we never heard it again. We stayed for another five weeks. We arrived in time to record an extinction event. What I am going to play for you now is a recording from the last night of the last bat. That is what a goodbye sounds like. That is what it is like to lose a species.

I work for a zoo that has promised not to see that happen on our watch. We promise that no Victorian terrestrial vertebrate species will go extinct on our watch. We raise money, we do science, we do research to make sure that that does not happen. But we cannot do it alone. We need the help of Parks Victoria, we need the help of conservation organisations, we need the help of animal welfare organisations and we need the help of all of you. Together we can ensure a future that is rich in wildlife. It is a future that needs good zoos. Thank you.

The SPEAKER — Thank you, Jenny. We have some time for questions and answers. If you have any particular questions for Jenny, now is the time to ask.

Berwick Fields Primary School

Ms OLSSON — My name is Elizabeth Olsson from Berwick Fields Primary School. I have a question. Are there any species at the zoo that are endangered and that people do not know about?

Ms GRAY — Yes, there are. Thank you. The species we believe are most important to talk to Victorians about are our own Victorian species, and we are now working with 21 critically endangered animals, some of which there are as few as six left in the wild. Some we have not seen for a long time. When we ask people what animals are their favourites, do you know how many name any of those 21? Almost no-one. Everyone talks about elephants and tigers and bears; very few people talk about Leadbeater’s possums, our state emblem, or helmeted honeyeaters, also our state emblem. In fact it is not a good idea to be a state emblem, Speaker; they are all in trouble. But we talk about corroboree frogs and skinks and little mammals that people do not know about because we believe loving your locals is part of the journey to saving your locals.

Ms WARREN — My name is Alannah Warren and I am from Marist College Bendigo. I wanted to ask: why do people keep chopping down the rainforest if they already have done enough?

Ms GRAY — Thank you, Alannah. I guess if we all knew that answer, we would stop them. Unfortunately there are a lot of people with a motive to make money. If you cut down a rainforest before you plant a plantation, you get a double win: you can get all the money out of the trees that you cut down and then you get the money out of the new crop you plant. There is plenty of land that is already cleared, but then you only make the money from the crop, not from the trees being cut down. So the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil asks

people who want to plant palm oil to only do it on land that is already cleared. Yes, what we should be doing is stopping clearing any more forests. If I was king of the world, then I would sign a warrant that said, 'No more forest clearing'. In fact what we need to do is plant more forest, because our forests are already full of animals that have nowhere to go. What we need is more forest.

Mr FERRIGGI — My name is Elliot Ferriggi and I am from Our Lady of the Assumption. I would like to ask: which country has the most poaching happening and what conservation efforts are being made?

Ms GRAY — There are two regions of the world where we see the most poaching, but I think by far the worst at the moment is Africa, and the species they are really focusing in on are elephants and rhinos. I think one of the delegates spoke very eloquently about that. The zoos of America and around the world ran a campaign two years ago called 96 Elephants, which is the number of elephants that die every day. It called on the American government to stop the domestic trade in ivory and to burn the ivory stockpiles. The zoos in America were so influential that they got that passed, so the American government has stopped the domestic trade of ivory and it has called on its counterparts in China to do the same thing. What we need to do is stop the buying, because when the buying stops the killing will also stop.

Ms CHARLESTON — My name is Eliza Charleston, and I want to know: when did everyone realise that bandicoots were better off on islands?

Ms GRAY — I think we realised that about four years ago. If you look at the description of animals in the wild in Victoria, it means there can be no fence, so if we want to put animals back in the wild, they cannot be inside a fence, because even if it is a massive area they will still be considered a captive animal. So our best bet in putting bandicoots back in the wild was to find somewhere where we did not need a fence and where there were no foxes, and the only places that meets that requirement would be islands. So we are looking at three islands — Churchill Island, Phillip Island and French Island — and we are negotiating on all three islands to reintroduce bandicoots.

Ms TOSCAS — Hello, my name is Nektaria Toscas from The Knox School. I wanted to ask: while there are some associations like People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals that do not think that you guys look after animals and do not think that you send them back and think that you guys are not really raising the problems of poaching and climate change, but obviously you are, would you be willing to work with associations like PETA to solve the problems of climate change and poachers to create a better future for the animals?

Ms GRAY — Absolutely; we would love to work with anyone. This year I went to Detroit for a conference, and we had delegates from the Humane Society, we had academics like Mark Bekoff, who are openly against zoos, and we spoke about all these things. What we are clear on is that zoos need to keep improving. There are still many bad zoos, and we would love to work with the likes of the Humane Society and PETA on making bad zoos better and, more importantly, making the wild safer for animals.

Ms Arwa SHARMA — My name is Arwa Sharma and I am from Rowville Primary School. My question is: have you ever experienced the extinction of other animals or been unable to successfully breed endangered animals throughout your career?

Ms GRAY — I shared with you the Christmas Island pipistrelle, which for me was the most moving. My staff have worked with other animals, like the gastric-brooding frog. One of my staff, Chris Banks, held the last one in his hand before we lost it. The reason animals are endangered is that they are difficult. The animals that breed easily and well are the animals all around us — seagulls, rats, cockroaches — but things are endangered because they are difficult. With many of the frog species we had a very difficult time trying to work out how to breed them, but our staff are so professional they often get it right.

I worry that with many of the species we are working with, like the Leadbeater's possum, we are battling to have them breed in captivity and we are destroying their habitat in the wild. Those are the ones that keep me awake at night. Yes, there are plenty of stories where we are losing them. I always used to think that we would lose animals in our grandchildren's time or their grandchildren's time or that extinction was something for dinosaurs. Actually it is not. It is going to happen right around you even before you all finish high school. We are going to see more animals go extinct if we do not act now.

Ms PARATZ — Hello. My name is Rebecca Paratz and I go to Bialik College. My question is: what would you do if you had been given so many animals that you did not have enough room in the zoos to fit them all?

Ms GRAY — I think what we would do is we would try and get more space. But you are right: ultimately our goal is not to have too many animals in zoos. Our goal, like with bandicoots, is to put them back in the wild, and it is to find safe places, and that is why we are so excited about islands like Phillip Island. Phillip Island is rapidly becoming an ark for animals. It already looks after the little fairy penguins; now it is going to have bandicoots. So I think we have to keep thinking about how we give more space to animals, and the best way is to protect the areas that are already good right now and keep animals out in those areas as long as we possibly can.

The SPEAKER — Well done, Jenny. They were some challenging questions. I know that a number of you have your hands up, but we probably have had our time talking with Jenny. Now I would like to introduce our second keynote speaker, Carole de Fraga, who is the director of Four Paws Australia. Carole studied and taught modern European languages before completing a higher degree with a research focus on European farm animal welfare policy. She has worked at an international and a national level in the animal welfare sector for over 25 years and now works independently as a consultant. Carole was a director of Animals Australia for several years until 2017 and continues as a director of Four Paws Australia. She has represented Animals Australia on the Victorian Animal Welfare Advisory Committee and the animal welfare sector for several years on the Victorian Schools Animal Ethics Committee. Would you please make Carole welcome.

Ms de FRAGA — Thank you, Madam Speaker, and my thanks also to everybody involved for the invitation to speak at this terrific event. I notice that there is really a lot of common ground in what we are talking about, and I also congratulate the delegates who have spoken this morning so clearly and so articulately about their particular topics and given their views so well. Perhaps I will first say a little bit about Four Paws. Four Paws is an international animal welfare organisation based in Vienna, Austria, which as it happens is home to the oldest continually-operating zoo in the world. It was founded by the emperor in 1752 and opened to the public in 1779. Four Paws has offices in 12 countries of the world, including Australia, but we have only been here for three years, so unfortunately we have had no opportunity to strike up a good relationship with Zoos Australia.

We also have sanctuaries for rescued wild animals. In South Africa we have a sanctuary for big cats, which we call Lion's Rock. It is home to lions, tigers, leopards and others. These animals are primarily rescued from circuses, zoos and private keeping. In South Africa Four Paws also rescues lions from people who breed them to offer to international visitors to hunt. This is called canned hunting and is something that Four Paws is very much against. In Central and Eastern Europe we have sanctuaries for bears rescued from substandard zoos and private keeping, which means kept by individuals. It could be the man next door. In restaurants we find them as an entertainment source for visitors.

Over recent months we have also rescued wild animals from zoos that have been destroyed in war zones — from Gaza in the Middle East, from Mosul in Iraq and most recently over the past two weeks from Aleppo in war-torn Syria. We rescued five lions, two tigers, two Asian black bears, two hyenas and two dogs from a bombed out amusement park. All are now safely in a sanctuary in Jordan, and there is a nice story to tell that one of the lionesses was pregnant and waited until she got to the safe sanctuary of Jordan to give birth to her cub. These rescue missions are very dangerous for all people involved, but worthwhile as the animals are given the chance of a far better life away from the trauma of war.

What is a zoo? I find that it is often a pejorative term, whereas from what we have heard it should not be. But it is. A zoo commonly refers to an establishment that maintains a collection of wild animals, also aquatic animals, typically in a park or gardens for study, conservation or display to the public. We commonly think of a zoo housing exotic animals, that is animals that are not native to the country of the zoo, and when discussing zoo animals we often think of lions, tigers, elephants, leopards, zebras et cetera although Australian zoos also keep native animals. Some, such as Healesville Sanctuary, keep only Australian native animals.

Although individuals have held collections of animals or menageries for centuries, zoos as we know them are not really very old. Zoo is shortened from the formal term 'zoological garden', which was first given to the London Zoological Garden. London Zoo was originally intended as a collection of animals for scientific study, but opened to the public in the mid-19th century — so less than 200 years ago. I think zoos have come a long way since then. It became the model for a public city zoo, with other countries following.

More modern zoos have a very wide agenda: scientific study, breeding to maintain their own animal populations and also for conservation programs, as we have just heard, for exhibition of animals for public viewing, education, for tourism and often for close encounters with animals or overnight camping experiences et cetera, which also could be classed as tourism. Visitors can often handle and hold animals, and selfies are popular.

While not obviously harming the animal, it is a far cry from the animal's image and dignity in the wild and should be thought about from the animal's perspective — it is not helping the animal to be wild and it is not helping the viewer's viewpoint of that animal as a wild animal. In many cases zoos also treat, rehabilitate and release injured native wildlife — and I remember the stories that I read and heard from Zoos Victoria — and sometimes offer a permanent home to wild animals rescued from inferior zoos; animals that can never be released.

How does a zoo differ from a sanctuary, another word we have heard? Four Paws operates sanctuaries, where animals are housed within pens or enclosures much as they are in zoos. But whereas a zoo is likely to buy, sell, breed or trade and exchange animals globally, and in some cases capture them from the wild, a sanctuary generally takes in or rescues animals unable to survive in the wild; it offers them sanctuary or refuge. They may include injured wildlife, illegally-held or surrendered exotic pets and animals from zoos and circuses that are bankrupt or destroyed by war. Sanctuaries generally do not breed, buy, sell or trade animals, although this may not apply to Healesville Sanctuary, which comes under the umbrella of Zoos Victoria, whereas zoos breed animals to ensure a healthy and active population primarily for the public to see. However, the incentive to breed animals can lead to a zoo having too many of certain species, with surplus animals — those that they cannot or do not want to keep — sold to zoos or buyers where animals may be worse, or they may be killed by the zoo when not needed.

So, important to the statement we are here to discuss: is there an alternative to a zoo for zoo animals? Conditions, as we have heard, vary greatly among zoos around the world. Many have improved standards of space, housing, environment, activities for the animals and handling over many years, and much research has gone into this. They strive to keep animals in conditions as near to their native habitat as can be provided in a captive environment, especially the more extensive facilities, such as Werribee Open Range Zoo and Taronga Western Plains Zoo at Dubbo. We are fortunate in Australia that the leading zoos are of a high standard, and although we may not agree with all their functions, or even their reason for being, they aim to achieve good welfare for the animals in their care and zoo management and keepers generally respect their animals and care very much for them.

But many zoos elsewhere house animals in very poor conditions, particularly in countries where people think differently about animals and they are not protected by laws. It is therefore impossible to generalise when talking of zoos in terms of the environment they provide for the animals and the functions a zoo may perform. There is no question that inferior zoos that confine animals cruelly in cramped and barren cages and pens should be considered a thing of the past and closed. Few would disagree.

But where would they go? Billions of wild animals are held in zoos globally and will be for a long time because there is no alternative for the majority of them. Most animals would not have the necessary skills to survive in the wild. If they are predators, they would not be able to hunt and they could not escape from predators if they are prey, so rehousing or releasing them in their natural habitat is not an option. There is also another factor: in many cases there is little or no natural environment left for or available to animals — zoo animals at least — mostly due to human use or encroachment, so perhaps we should say that, 'Zoos are a thing of the past and the animal should be rehoused in their natural environment where this is available or can be acquired or reclaimed in the future'.

In the meantime what do we do? Is it right, is it ethical, to continue to breed animals to maintain zoo populations, or instead should zoos give homes to animals confiscated or rescued from unsuitable homes, provided they have adequate and appropriate space and the climate is suitable for the species?

Although wild and exotic animals in zoos may be bred in captivity and used to their environment, they are not domesticated and do not fully adapt to the limitations of captivity, although this may not be visible. Wild animals require their own kind of habitat. They have complex social structures and exhibit particular patterns of behaviour. From the point of view of animal welfare it is difficult to achieve the necessary high standards for each species. A lack of appropriate space and meaningful activity for the species within enclosures are common

problems. The displays may be attractive for visitors but monotonous for the animals. In particular the requirements for species with complex social systems and the need to move freely, to range widely, to have specific lifestyle needs — such as bears, who hibernate in the winter — and to belong in a particular climates generally are not suitably considered, and often these needs cannot be adequately met. Examples are elephants, polar bears and penguins from far reaches.

Abnormal behaviour can develop when conditions are not right for the animal, the most obvious to the zoo visitor being repetitive patterns of movement. However, they can also result in other abnormalities, such as a lack of activity or, alternatively, a restlessness, an increased sex drive and an aggression towards fellow animals and people, even towards their handlers, who they know, sometimes ending in injury or death of the keeper and sometimes the animal.

As mentioned, Four Paws has not had the opportunity to build up relationships with Australian zoos; however, in other parts of the world Four Paws works together with zoos, aiming to create the best standards. We help them to improve animal welfare and to emphasise the welfare of the individual animal. We also assist and encourage zoos to accept rescued animals, to improve enclosures, to exchange knowledge and to carry out public education on the animals and their species, but we agree with the keeping of wild animals in zoos only if the animals are kept permanently and free of pain and suffering and if behavioural disturbances are avoided. The risk of injury and illness due to a life in captivity must be minimised and adequate measures taken to avoid or treat negative outcomes. Keeping animals in a way that does not meet their biological requirements is not good animal welfare.

The breeding of animals in a zoological environment is often controversial. Zoos first should have sufficient space, appropriate care and a good species social structure for planned breeding and breed only the number of animals that can be suitably accommodated — and I realise this is probably easier said than done. Veterinary treatment to guarantee a good quality of life to the offspring must also be on hand.

If there are surplus young animals — that is, too many, resulting in them being of no use to the zoo — we do not believe they should be killed or sold on to animal traders. As has already been mentioned this morning, in 2014 there was news of Copenhagen Zoo in Denmark killing a healthy two-year-old giraffe that was surplus to needs — and ‘surplus’ means not only too many animals but also, and most importantly for zoos wishing to maintain healthy populations, in terms of genetics. There must be a broad enough gene pool for a healthy population of a particular species to survive in captivity.

I cannot speak for Australian zoos, but the European Association of Zoos And Aquaria estimates that its member organisations cull or kill between 3000 and 5000 animals a year, and Copenhagen Zoo claims to kill 20 to 30 a year. Some zoos reserve the right to use euthanasia or to humanely kill healthy animals to keep populations under control when alternatives are not possible. We see that this is the stated policy, for example, of Zoos South Australia and of others.

The conservation role of zoos is also controversial as it is questionable how much zoos, even on a worldwide scale, can do to assist threatened or endangered species in their natural environment, particularly when that habitat is disappearing. Here I am talking more about the conservation of endangered wild animals originating overseas, as much excellent work is done in Australia to conserve and reintroduce endangered native species, as we have heard from Jenny. Two of the species that I was going to mention are the corroboree frog and the helmeted honeyeater. Zoos internationally increasingly promote their role in conservation, but it usually refers to them maintaining their own populations of endangered animals and not maintaining them where the animals belong.

The contribution of zoos towards species protection is vital as it comes with valuable public education on species and habitat. However, before breeding for conservation in the wild takes place wherever it occurs, be it here in Australia or be it overseas, a realistic expectation of the eventual release of the animals into their natural habitat should be demonstrated, and this is seldom possible. We welcome the support of zoos for the protection of endangered species in their habitat. However, the conservation of a zoo population is just a small number of the species that are endangered worldwide and does not help the protection of species in the wild.

There have been successful reintroductions into native habitat, and one that I mention is Przewalski’s horse, which became extinct in its natural habitat in Mongolia. It was bred for many, many years in Prague in Czechoslovakia at a zoo and released back into its natural habitat several years ago, and I believe this has been

successful — but the successful reintroduction of the majority of species to their natural habitat is extreme challenging and very rare.

Many breeding programs simply maintain a genetically healthy population of endangered species likely to be chosen due to its appeal to the public, with no realistic prospect of reintroduction of these species to the wild. I do emphasise here: I am not talking about the work that is done on local populations of native animals; I am talking about the more unrealistic expectation of breeding an animal, for example, in Parkville and reintroducing it into the wild in Africa. Four Paws believes it better to protect the threatened species in their own environment together with their own environment.

In the interests of animal welfare, we believe that modern zoos should reduce the number of different species they hold, keeping those that suit the climate and the local environment. They should not replace the exotics, the non-natives — that is, they should not get new ones — that are difficult to keep to a high standard of welfare, and first and foremost, the enclosures should suit the needs of the animals rather than the public. Animals should not be caught from the wild to be put into zoos, and direct contact between visitors and wild animals and animal shows as entertainment should be a thing of the past before the zoos themselves disappear.

Finally, zoos could do more to support animal welfare in a practical sense by giving space to abused and rescued wild animals from poor keeping — for example, in circuses and private keeping. This way zoos could be more actively engaged with the current animal protection strategy of the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums, which states:

While conservation of wildlife is the core purpose of modern zoos and aquariums, animal welfare is their core activity.

What role should zoos play in the future? It is obvious, as I am saying this, that I am not saying they are a thing of the past. The argument ‘Zoos are a thing of the past, animals should be rehoused in their natural environment’ may be the ideal, but this is clearly not possible for the foreseeable future. In the meantime, improvements can be made and animals can be more responsibly bred so there is no perceived need to kill them prematurely. Improvements can be made to the facilities of many zoos to ensure the most natural life possible for a captive wild animal. Zoos could keep fewer species and choose those more suited to the available land and regional climate. They could also give homes to rescued wild animals from circuses and poor-quality zoos. This would provide a different but nevertheless interesting story for visitors and promote the welfare of animals. Whatever we do in relation to zoos, we must consider the animals, their welfare, their environment and the quality of life they lead first and foremost. As their caretakers it is our responsibility to do so. Thank you.

Delegates applauding.

The SPEAKER — Thank you, Carole. We have some time for some questions to Carole. What I am going to try and do is to pick some people who have not already had a chance to present or ask a question.

Mr HABETS — My name is Flynn and I am from Rutherglen Primary School. I was wondering what would happen if your sanctuaries were subject to an overpopulation of predators?

Ms de FRAGA — In our sanctuaries — I will take the example of Lionsrock — we try to keep the animals in their proper social groups, so we will only have a pride of lions that gets on with one another, and the animals do not breed in our sanctuaries. We have extra space at Lionsrock in South Africa — it is a big complex — and we can expand that to take additional animals, but we do not breed and we do not euthanise them.

Mr CREED — My name is Zach Creed and I am from Hesketh Primary School. What is your most endangered species at the sanctuary?

Ms de FRAGA — The most endangered species at the sanctuary — well, we really do not concentrate so much on endangered species. We look at wild animals that need to be rescued from inferior conditions. However, we do have one three-legged cheetah at Lionsrock, and we have a number of smaller cats that are perhaps not so prolific in the wild. We do not really concentrate on endangered species.

Mr MURPHY — I am Dylan Murphy from Wales Street Primary School. Do you think that Four Paws could form a relationship with Zoos Victoria?

Ms de FRAGA — Well, I certainly hope so. I do not think I could be any closer to Jenny to be asked this question. Certainly it is something that we would look to do. Zoos Victoria is certainly run in a way that we would support, and I think that we could certainly cooperate.

Ms NEILSON — Olivia Neilson from St Brigid's Primary School, Healesville. How does it feel when you rescue an animal from captivity and mistreating?

Ms de FRAGA — It really is a wonderful feeling. I had the good fortune to be in Africa when tigers were released — tigers that had been rescued from a zoo or a circus. They came from six different environments. They were taken to a rehab centre in Holland, which sounds very unconventional, before being sent to Lionsrock in South Africa. Tigers do not come from South Africa; however, we do take the trouble to build enclosures which really suit the individual tiger. It is very rare that they would be housed with other tigers. When I was there we released six of the tigers firstly into smaller enclosures. They had come from overseas; they had been in crates for several days. They were then quietened and released into small enclosures and stayed there for several days until the keepers felt that they were settled enough to be released into a broader enclosure. That, I must say, was a wonderful feeling to see and actually be on top of a crate and release the door for this tiger to come out and see where it was. Yes, it is a wonderful feeling.

Mr ZUCCET — Hello, my name is Cooper Zuccet. I am from Balcombe Grammar School. How many animals do you breed per year?

Ms de FRAGA — We do not breed animals. We try to take in animals who have been bred and then become unwanted or animals bred unnecessarily and we give a permanent home to those animals. As you have just heard, we do have one lion that has just given birth to a small cub, but that animal was pregnant when we rescued her from Syria. So we do not deliberately breed animals.

Ms GOLEBIEWSKA — I am Valerie from Parkmore Primary School. Have you heard the story of Harambe, and do you think this proves that we cannot take care of our animals?

Ms de FRAGA — I am afraid you will have to tell me the story.

Ms GOLEBIEWSKA — I think around last year there was a gorilla in an American zoo, I am pretty sure, and his name was Harambe. I think it was on the news about how he was killed just for trying to play with a misplaced toddler.

Ms CASTLE-MITCHELL — Sorry, I do remember this. So your question was it is not possible to look after these animals in captivity. That is one of the examples I was giving. I do not know the exact circumstances of this particular zoo, but it is obvious that this particular wild animal and the child who came into contact with it should not have been together. There should not have been the opportunity for the animal and the child to come into contact. Animals should be kept in an environment if they are in zoos which tries to emulate their natural surroundings, where they do not have the opportunity to harm themselves or to harm children or other visitors, and ultimately not end in the death of an animal, who did not deliberately chase that child.

The SPEAKER — The young lady over there will ask our last question. I know you have had your hand up for quite a while.

Ms CASTLE-MITCHELL — Hi, I am Ciarna from Tooborac Primary School, and my question is: at our age what is something we can do to help sanctuaries?

Ms de FRAGA — You can support sanctuaries. You can support the ethics of the sanctuaries which take in animals that do need alternative homes, and you can visit the sanctuaries and you can support their reason for being. Do respect that they do try to keep animals in their natural surroundings as much as possible.

The SPEAKER — Can you please join with me in thanking Carole and Jenny this morning. They brought a passion to the debate, as you have all too. There are so many issues to be considered, which you will be able to do in the discussion groups that will take place after morning tea. There will be a short briefing. You can listen to the arrangements and someone will tell you where to go. Then you will work in your groups to debate some of these issues in more detail and come back this afternoon with our decisions and time for more discussion and sharing of views. Again, thank you, Jenny and Carole. Both presentations were absolutely riveting.

Delegates applauding.

Sitting suspended 10.49 a.m. until 1.24 p.m.

REPORTING SESSION

Moving and debate of motions

The SPEAKER (Ms Edwards) — Good afternoon, everyone. Welcome back to the Legislative Assembly for your afternoon session. I hope you all had a great lunchtime and had a lot of discussion about what happened in the Parliament this morning. My name is Maree Edwards. I am the member for Bendigo West and the Deputy Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. I believe there is a school from my electorate here today, Marist College. Welcome. Great to have you here today. We are going to commence this afternoon with a summary of your group's views and your final decisions. So hopefully over the lunch break you have had a bit of a chance to chat about what your final decision is going to be. We will commence the reporting back session, and I ask students for their comments. Remember to state your name and your school when you stand. Could I have a representative from group 1?

Group 1

Ms OLSSON — Good afternoon everyone. I am Elizabeth Olsson from Berwick Fields Primary School and I am representing group 1. We strongly agree with the topic, 'Zoos are a thing of the past, animals should be rehoused in their natural environment.' While we acknowledge the efforts of zoos to recreate the natural environment of animals, it is impossible to beat or even equal their natural habitats. According to debate.org, animals such as elephants; who live in the warm continents of Africa, are forced to live in cold countries like Canada or even our own unpredictable Melbourne weather. According to DebateWise, lions and tigers who live in zoos have 18 000 times less space than they do in the wild. Polar bears have 1 million times less space. In zoos animals are often unhappy. Zoos often buy and transport animals from other zoos and take them out of the wild, tearing animals away from their families. While it is illegal to kidnap a fellow human being, it is okay to kidnap animals from their natural habitat.

Unnatural conditions ultimately lead to unhappiness. Animals develop strange habits, which make it seem like the animal is going mad. Because of their unhappiness, animals such as polar bears are put on drugs called Prozac. Animals in zoos are not cared for. With reference to debate.org, tigers can be interbred at zoos because they can have a white gene, which everyone loves. Even though tigers are an endangered species, the rest of the litter, which is orange, will be killed. According to DebateWise, 75 per cent of elephants in zoos were overweight and only 16 per cent could walk normally. Less than 20 per cent were totally free of foot problems.

Animals from the Tbilisi Zoo escaped when it was flooded. Animals such as big cats drowned and were shot by police. A hippo was hit with a tranquilizer dart and then awoke in a barren concrete cage. A perfectly healthy giraffe was killed and cut up in front of guests. If this is how animals are treated in zoos, do they really need to live there? Zoos do animals more harm than good. In conclusion, my team strongly believes that zoos are a thing of the past and that animals should be rehoused in their natural environments. Animals deserve the same rights as humans and the right to be free.

Delegates applauding.

Group 2

Mr CARLIN — Hi, my name is Bill and I am from Tooborac Primary School. Our group, group 2, truly believes that animals should not be rehoused in their natural environment. Zoos may not have as much space, but in zoos there are many more benefits, such as the fact that we can expand the animals' enclosures. Firstly, in zoos animals have access to health care, food and shelter. They are also safe from poachers and habitat destruction. Secondly, some zoos can stop extinction. In forests and natural habitats you cannot expand, but you can expand zoo enclosures. Some animals may not even have a habitat anymore. Thirdly, some animals lower on the food chain are struggling to survive from their predators. Lastly, if we do not have zoos, all animals, big and small, will be vulnerable to extinction. Medication could help animals from dying from viruses. Even though there are bad things about them we need zoos, and the good we are trying to do will outweigh the bad. It

is up to us to heal what humans have damaged. In group 2 we truly believe that animals should not be rehoused in their natural habitat. Thank you.

Delegates applauding.

Group 3

Ms PARATZ — Hello and welcome. My name is Rebecca Paratz. I go to Bialik College. On behalf of my group, group 3, I will tell you why zoos are a thing of the past. Zoos will and cannot provide the amount of space needed in the wild. Tigers and lions have around 18 000 times less space in zoos, and polar bears have one-millionth of the space they would in the wild. Animals in zoos display signs of anxiety and depression. This is called ‘zoochosis’. Zoochosis includes rocking and swaying. Many zoos will breed animals because baby animals cause a great deal of attention, but when these baby animals grow out of cuteness it can be bad news. Constantly breeding animals will result in overpopulation. This means zoos need to get rid of animals somehow. Animals usually go to cruel circuses, other zoos, slaughterhouses or shooting ranges. What is more sickening than hearing that zoos kill their animals? Zoos also kill the food chain because if you take one species out of the wild, what will their predators eat? Those are only a few of the reasons why zoos are a thing of the past. Thank you.

Delegates applauding.

Group 4

Ms CORBIC — Hello, my name is Grace and I am from Berwick Fields Primary School. Our group, group 4, believes that we should not rehouse animals in their natural habitats, and here are our four reasons why. Our first reason is that in the wild lots of animals are vulnerable to poaching. For example, elephants have been poached for a long time for their ivory tusks. Our second reason is that zoos have great breeding programs to help save endangered species. Our third reason is that we can extend enclosures and make changes to suit the animals’ needs. For example, if a tiger does not like its enclosure, we can always extend it and put more plants in it to help it look like its natural habitat so the tiger can fit in in the zoo. Our fourth reason is that it helps the economy. If we shut down zoos, lots of people will lose their jobs, and when people come to zoos the money they pay helps pay for the animals by both getting the animals healthy and paying for their environment. In conclusion our team believes that we should keep zoos because they have great facilities to help protect and save endangered species. We have to remember, even though it may not seem important, that animals need to have a voice too. We need to acknowledge and respect that animals have the same rights as humans and we need to treat them fairly.

Delegates applauding.

Group 5

Ms BREACH — My name is Louella Breach and I am from Wales Street Primary School. Our group, group 5, agrees somewhat with the chosen topic. We believe that animals should be rehoused in their natural environment where possible and that the standards for zoos and sanctuaries where they may be housed in cases where they are not able to make it back to the wild need to be strongly regulated. Our arguments and reasons follow. In zoos animals are kept confined, captured and caged behind bars with few shrubs and trees and with young children sticking their hands into their cage. It leaves the animals with less than an ounce of privacy. Our second reason is that keeping animals enclosed in cages is making their knowledge of their natural environment vanish and is proving detrimental to their psychological state. Our third reason is that animals deserve the basic rights that being in a zoo deprives them of. They too need their basic needs. Our final reason is that the public and zookeepers are harming animals for their own enjoyment so they can bring in money for themselves and the zoo.

Delegates applauding.

Group 6

Ms LEAVER-ANG — Hi, my name is Jasmine Leaver-Anag and I go to Wales Street Primary School. Our group, group 6, believes that zoos provide a safe environment and permanent home for animals, one that does not exist in rainforests that are constantly attacked by deforestation. Secondly, animals born in captivity are

stripped of their primal instincts. In this case releasing them would be cruel. An example of this was in 2007 when a zoo-born panda was released with a tracker. A week later it was found dead. The trade of animal fur, skin and tusks contributes to the vulnerability of many animals. In 2016, 30 000 elephants in South Africa were hunted for this purpose. Zoos prevent this. Finally, most if not all of zoo profits go back into raising awareness and further zoology studies. We believe our statements prove that zoos are not a thing of the past and should be continued for many future generations.

Delegates applauding.

Group 7

Ms LIKER — Hi, I am Lara Liker from Footscray West Primary School.

Ms LILAGAN — I am Cameron Lilagan from St Brigid's Primary School.

Mr FERRIGGI — I am Elliott Ferriggi from Our Lady of the Assumption primary school.

Ms TOSCAS — I am Nektaria Toscas from The Knox School.

Ms LIKER — Drugged, kept in captivity, technically being held hostage: how would you like it? Animals go through this every single day because animals have no choice but to like it. Ask yourself: is all the profit we are giving zoos going to the animals in their care? Do we really deserve to be lied to?

Ms LILAGAN — But at the same time zoos have come a long way, and animals are being protected from poachers and climate change. They are the angels of animal welfare. What would it be like without them? Which one are you with? We have come to the conclusion that zoos should close down. When animals enter a zoo they are exposed to zoochosis — a disease caused by anxiety and depression. Yes, animals have feelings too. Animals are exposed to zoochosis when they are held in captivity. They are then put on to Prozac, a mood-altering drug designed for the human body, to cover up the disease. Ask yourself: is that acceptable? No. It is repulsive how these animals are being treated, and we will not let this go unnoticed.

Mr FERRIGGI — Zoos have been quite a controversial topic for some time. A very controversial topic is the selling and/or culling of animals. Once in a zoo in China an Asian elephant by the name of Ned disappeared without notice. Some two years later it was discovered that he was sold for \$2 million to an abusive circus owner. Now, think to yourselves: is this okay? No.

Ms TOSCAS — As much as some zoos are trying their hardest to give these animals the best life possible, many are still not on board with this idea, and besides, zoos are not the long-term solution to protecting animals. It is up to you to speak up, protect Mother Earth and most importantly stop killing these innocent creatures, which is why zoos should close down. In the meantime other alternatives can be arranged immediately.

Group 8

Ms Arwa SHARMA — My name is Arwa Sharma and I am from Rowville Primary School. Hello, Madam Speaker and delegates. On behalf of group 8's delegates, we have come to the conclusion that zoos are of the past and that animals should be rehoused into the natural environment. How would you feel if civilians all across the world watched your every move? Aggressive behaviour develops with these animals, giving the young generation the wrong impression of the mighty animal kingdom. Animals throughout some zoos may experience physical and mental setbacks. Some animals can be diagnosed with zoochosis, which leaves them depressed and worthless and leads them to harm themselves, hence being exposed to the risk of injuries and even death.

Animals have the same rights as we do. We have no right to take their freedom and lives away from them. We have no right to take animals from their homes and throw them in a jail cell. Instead we can change our actions of harming their natural homes, which may lower the chance of endangerment of their species. Animals may have no voice and may not be able to defend themselves, but every person on this earth has the choice to help them and their future become brighter. Ask yourself: what can you do to help make a difference?

Group 9

Ms BOYD — My name is Maddi Boyd and I am from Foster Primary School. I am in group 9, and we believe that zoos are not a thing of the past because they help prevent extinction through breeding programs in the zoo, they protect animals from predators and hunters and they protect them from diseases, threats and global warming. They can also educate visitors, and this can protect the animals in the future. The animals are provided with food and water, and their habitat is close to their natural one. Most zoos will have a vet on site so that when an animal is sick or hurt the vets can help them. All the money that is raised in a zoo goes towards research, education and reintroducing animals to the wild. If in the zoo the animals choose to interact with humans, they can do it in a safe and protected manner. Zoos provide a safe and secure home for many animals. Our group believes that zoos are creating a future for many endangered species. Zoos should stay.

Group 10

Ms GOLEBIEWSKA — I am Valerie from Parkmore Primary School. Madam Speaker and fellow delegates, I speak on behalf of group 10. We truly believe that zoos are not a thing of the past but are an essential part of our future. Zoos provide a safe future for animal welfare as they stop further endangerment and extinction. In the wild people hunt animals for their fins, hides and tusks et cetera. Breeding programs will also help expand the population and lessen the risk of extinction and engagement. Because we ruin animals homes to get products that we need for our economy, such as palm oil and paper, zoos are a way of rehousing homeless animals.

Also, did you know that Australia's four leading zoos are not-for-profit? This shows that we are dedicated to saving the animals, not interested in the money they bring in. Therefore group 10 knows that zoos are an important part of our future, not only for us but the welfare of animals as zoos will lessen the risk of endangerment and extinction. Thank you.

The SPEAKER — Thank you, everyone. That was a very impressive presentation by all 10 groups. Your arguments were very sound and very emotive but also factual. You showed great knowledge, you were well-researched on your topic and you gave a thoughtful analysis. Can I congratulate you on your exceptional presentations and the execution of your arguments, both for and against, and on the great summaries of the topic that you have been debating today. Can I also say that your behaviour is exceptional. As Deputy Speaker it is not often I have such a quiet chamber to direct over, so thank you for your quietness and your respectfulness. It is much appreciated.

We are now going to move to Soapbox. I am sure that you have been made aware of the Soapbox rules. Each student will have 1 minute to stand and discuss the topic before us today. This is your opportunity to have your personal say. Do not forget when you stand in your place to state your name and your school. As we proceed through we will keep an informal speaking list, so at the end of the day you will be able to see a record of who has spoken. I would encourage you to put up your hand so I can identify who is going to be next on their feet. I do not know your names, nor do I know exactly which school you are from, so unlike when I am normally in the chamber and I call a member for a particular electorate, it is a little bit more challenging today, so please put your hand up. We will now proceed to Soapbox.

SOAPBOX

Ms CHARLESTON — My name is Eliza and I go to Our Lady of the Assumption Primary School. My group has been saying that they think that animals are safest in zoos, and I think that that is true, yet I do not think that the animals would like it better in zoos. Another point that I think is not very right about it is that some people from other countries actually eat the animals that people show in zoos. I think it is just strange to look at something that you can eat, because people do not normally do that. Animals normally would like it better to be in the wild and roaming free, so I do not think that they should be in zoos. All day people have been saying all these different points about how they should and should not be and it is very hard to know because you do not know what the animal is feeling; you do not know how they think about. Thank you.

Mr COLOMBAGE — My name is Tarith from Berwick Fields Primary School. In my group — group 3 — two people were disagreeing with the rest of the group because they thought that zoos are a good thing and the rest of us disagreed. I disagreed because there is not that much space in zoos. Polar bears have 1 million times less space, and tigers and lions. So in my group we were discussing all the facts. Thank you.

Mr SCHEEN — I am Oscar Scheen from St Thomas More School. Zoos are a vital part of society in protecting our animals, but at the same time they are also a slaughterhouse. How can we say that we are protecting them when 5000 animals in Europe are killed in zoos each year? I know many of us want to protect these animals and we all think that zoos are a vital part of information and looking after these animals, but when it comes altogether, they probably would be better off in the wild.

Ms CASTLE-MITCHELL — Hello, my name is Ciarna Castle-Mitchell from Tooborac Primary School. This has been mentioned many times this afternoon, but I am going to mention it one more time. Copenhagen Zoo shot a young, healthy giraffe because of common genes, and to make it worse then cut it up in front of guests — and yes, they were children — then fed the poor animal to lions. This has happened on more than one occasion. For example hippos, monkeys, bears and more have been shot and cut up and/or just died because of common needs, like lack of water, lack of food and loneliness, and because there was not enough room for them. We need to stop these horrendous acts or animals are going to die within the blink of an eye. Humanity needs to wake up and realise that animals deserve to live their lives like we do. How would you feel if you were taken away from your family just for human entertainment? Thank you.

Ms TOSCAS — My name is Nektaria from The Knox School. If you go to a zoo, depending on which zoo it is, they could be drugging up the animals, but then if you send them back to the wild, they could be killed by poachers. I think the reason that animals are in a mess is because of us and some irresponsible people who are out there. We need to catch them instantly. Remember that animals are just like us — they have brains, they walk around, they have tribes — and we just need to think how we would feel if we were in this situation. It is a very tricky one because you need to give the animals the freedom but at the same time we need to stop this long term and prevent any more issues happening. Let us just get out there, spread the word and protect the animals.

Mr GARLICK — My name is Caeleb Garlick from Foster Primary School. I would just like to say that, I think humans owe animals a lot. It may not have been our generation, but as humans we have a duty and we need to protect the animals, otherwise it is going to be really sad for the future generations. Thank you.

Ms LILAGAN — Animals are kept in zoos. Let us say there was a lion or a tiger that was living in a zoo for a few years. The keepers of the zoo would come in and give them their food every single day — they would just give them their food and they would eat it; every day they would give them their food again and again — but little did they know that if that animal was ever to be successful in the wild, they needed to learn how to earn their food. If an animal is living in a zoo for five years, once they are let out they are going to be thinking that someone is just going to come along and feed them. It is going to make it much harder for them to survive out in the wild.

Ms OLSSON — I am Elizabeth Olsson from Berwick Fields Primary School, and although my team has stated that we believe zoos are a thing of the past, I disagree with this. The actions of humans have caused animals to be threatened with extinction, therefore we need to fix this ourselves. Zoos go a long way to helping this through captive breeding programs. For example, at Healesville Sanctuary they have captive breeding programs for many animals, including the Leadbeater's possum, helmeted honeyeater, corroboree frog and Tasmanian devil. Some of the Tasmanian devils in Healesville Sanctuary are kept for humans to see while others are living in enclosures and made as wild as possible so that they are able to practice their hunting instincts. As we all know, Tasmanian devils are threatened with extinction due to a cancer, something that although it is not our problem we cannot do much about. Sorry I have gone over time. Thank you for listening.

The SPEAKER (Ms Edwards) — Your time has expired.

Mr WU — My name is David Wu. I am from Kingswood College. My view on the topic that zoos are a thing of the past and animals should be rehoused in their natural environment is that it is a compromise. The whole problem that is going on here is the quality of the zoos. The problem is bad zoos are just wanting money; therefore they are doing whatever they can to keep the animals happy and keep the money rolling in. If we can change the standards for zoos and have it so that zoos need to be of good quality and support animal kindness and save them from extinction, then all of this would not be happening. Thank you.

Ms WARREN — My name is Alannah Warren and I am from Marist College Bendigo. Lots of people have had their opinions — and they are all different, and that is okay — but I personally think that zoos are a thing of the past because lots of problems that humans are causing are actually worse than just being captured by a

predator. The zoos are supposed to be protecting them from predators, but they are not really doing much. They are kind of making it worse. It is just really horrible how animals are like us and —

The SPEAKER — Sorry, your time has expired.

Mr CREED — My name is Zach and I am from Heskett Primary School. I both disagree and agree. I agree because some of the stuff that happens in zoos is pretty appalling and they should be able to live like we do. I disagree because zoos still take care of animals, but sometimes they do it in the wrong way — like, if there is overpopulation, they will send the animals to circuses with abusive owners and stuff or they will sell them for money so they can pay to build more. It is kind of 50-50 — it is like one half is good and one half is bad. Thank you.

Ms GAYFER — My name is Mischa and I am from Balcombe Grammar School. I agree that zoos should stay, but after hearing what everybody else has said, I also think that some zoos should go because they disrespect the animals in the way they are supposed to be respected and because they treat them worse than what normally would happen in the wild. I think that good zoos provide animals with what they need and treat them respectfully, but in the bad zoos they do not let them do anything they want. Thank you.

Mr ROSS — My name is Angus Ross and I am from St Thomas More Primary School, Mount Eliza. My opinion on this argument is that I strongly agree that zoos are a thing of the past. I do not really get how someone can say that zoos are protecting animals when all they are doing is forcing them to breed with other animals because they are nearly extinct or because they are going extinct when they do not want to. I bet you that if someone made a device to allow animals to speak, half of them would not want to be bred in the way they are in the zoos. That is why sanctuaries, I think, are a really great idea, because that then helps the injured and sick wildlife get healthy again so that they can go back into the wild and know how to hunt when they do go back. Thank you.

Ms COOPER — I am Lucy Cooper from Point Lonsdale Primary School. I would just like to add my opinion to a few things people have said. One thing that a lot of people have been saying is that zoos help endangered animals not to be endangered anymore, but what I believe is that although animals may be endangered it does not mean that they have fewer rights. Their salvation lies in safe, natural habitats, where the main priority is creating a safe environment and not making money out of them like sanctuaries do. Another thing that some people have been saying is that that you can learn a lot about animals in zoos, but I think that although you can learn a lot about animals in zoos, you can also learn about them on the internet without supporting a place where they are caged. Also, a few people have been saying that animals are bred in captivity so you should not let them out, but if animals are bred in captivity, their whole life's purpose is to entertain us, which I think is pretty cruel. Thank you.

Mr HABETS — My name is Flynn and I am from Rutherglen Primary School. I strongly agree that zoos should be taken away. People say that the animals do not know any better, so they would not really care and would not know that being in the wild would be way better than in a zoo. I think that a zoo is one of the thousands of things that would help save animals from extinction, but when an endangered animal with unique instincts is put in a zoo, they will lose their instincts over time. As other people have said, they lose their instincts, so the animals that have the most unique instincts — which is a lot of them and why they are endangered — will be lost. Thank you.

Mr COULTER — Hi, my name is Dan Coulter. I am from Charles La Trobe College. I would just like to say that a lot of people have been saying that animals are losing their instincts, but I have to disagree. Animals are very instinctual, but their instincts return. I think that zoos should not be a place that people can visit, but I think that when endangered species can be helped to survive and then released back into the wild it is a good thing. Thank you.

Ms CHAUDHARI — My name is Anshi Chaudhari. I am from The Knox School. Many people have been making some different arguments. There are two sides, but no-one really knows the exact answer because it is really up to the animals to see if they like the zoos and if they enjoy playing in zoos. They actually should be able to choose where they want to be — if they want to be in their natural environment, or if they want to be cared for by keepers in the zoo. In my opinion, though, I think zoos are a great thing and they have been really helping animals a great amount. Thank you.

Mr TALEVSKI — I am Jake from Viewbank Primary School. I think animals should be rehoused in their natural habitats because zoos are just a prison for the animals. African elephants live three times longer in the wild than in zoos. Animals do not have enough space in zoos to run around and roam.

Ms BREACH — I am Louella Breach from Wales Street Primary School. As I said before, I only somewhat agree with the statement. I think that zoos are important in maintaining the conservation of species. Animals should be allowed to live freely where they can, but zoos and sanctuaries are essential in preventing the extinction of more species. Thank you.

Ms HAMMOND — Thank you, Madam Speaker. My name is Amelia Hammond and I am from Marist College Bendigo. A lot of the examples used here today are actually from overseas zoos, so a lot of the examples are not actually from Australia and they are from years and years ago. Zoos have come a long way. I think that zoos in Australia are actually fairly good. Our group, group 4, talked a lot about the pros and cons of why animals should be in zoos and why they should not. I would like to say that they should be in zoos and breeding should happen because we need to save animals from extinction.

Ms GILLAM — I am Yasmin. I am from St Brigid's Primary School in Healesville. Animals are unable to thrive in small enclosures, especially with unnatural weather and climates. For example, elephants usually walk up to 30 miles in just one day, but Lucy, the lone elephant at Edmonton Valley Zoo, is locked in a barn when the zoo is closed and during Edmonton's frigid months, which means she spends most of her time indoors, without much room to move. The near constant confinement because of the harsh weather has caused Lucy to develop painful arthritis.

Ms Ashna SHARMA — My name is Ashna and I am from Rowville Primary School. I do not think animals should be in zoos. I think they should be rehoused into their natural habitat. A large portion of programs for captive breeding in zoos will not release wild animals back to their natural habitat. If animals are captured, especially endangered ones, it could lead to further endangerment or even extinction as certain species of animals will find it difficult to find a mate in the wild. Animals are just like us and also have their own rights. They have the right to freely live in the wild with their families and where they feel most at home.

Mr CARLIN — My name is Bill from Tooborac Primary School and I truly believe that zoos should not close down because the animals need zoos to live. If we did not have zoos, that would mean a lot of animals would have passed by now. Without breeding programs a lot of animals would be extinct. If we do shut down zoos, some animals would have nowhere to go, like the forest of the Amazon, which is getting cut down. The forest of the Amazon is home to 1300 different types of birds and more than 400 amphibians. Why do we not protect that habitat so that if zoos have acted up previously, we can close them down and rehouse the animals? Thank you.

Mr TAYLOR — I am Callum Taylor from Point Lonsdale Primary School. I strongly believe in the topic, because once animals are finished being used in zoos and the animals are not attracting the public and not making the zoos' money, the zoos just leave the animals by themselves in the wild, without any knowledge of how to live there. Therefore these animals have no chance to be able to survive in the wild, because after zoos take the animals out of the wild into a small confined cage, their knowledge of how they live in the wild will vanish. Therefore leaving the animals in the world, unprotected from predators, basically turns them into a sitting duck. A day will come when people realise the murder of an animal is just as horrendous as the murder of a person. The only difference is that animals are closer to extinction.

Ms GRANTHAM — My name is Ali from Rutherglen Primary School. Three people in our group thought that zoos were a good thing, but the rest of our group disagreed. One point why zoos must become a thing of the past is that over the years zoos have become more of a place to go on the weekend and enjoy with friends and family rather than a research facility for wild, endangered and injured animals. We must change this as animals will soon lose their ways of living and rely on humans to care for them their whole life. They will expect to be around people at all times and be safe from predators 24/7.

Ms CAIRNS — My name is Natalie Cairns and I am from Apollo Parkways Primary School. I believe that zoos are a thing of the past, because imagine having to leave your family behind and imagine watching your family get killed? To be honest, I would never be able to watch that. They are in such a small space and so enclosed; they cannot roam free and their natural hunting instincts go away. Imagine if you just got fed your

food, like all of us. That is not normal to them; it is definitely not. They need to learn to hunt because that is their natural instinct, and they should not have to be enclosed in a small space.

Mr KEATING — Hello. My name is Sam Keating, and I am from Sacred Heart Parish School in Sandringham. I feel fifty-fifty on this topic. Half of me is saying zoos are good, because they are a safe environment for the animals, help them to breed and keep them safe, but the other side is saying that it is a bit cruel keeping them with not enough space for them to roam around. As people were saying before about animals getting killed in zoos, that does not really happen as much now because zoos have come a long way from what they started off as being. Their enclosures look more like their habitats now; they are not just big cages. I kind of agree with both sides: if they are in the wild, they can learn how to hunt, but if we just release captive-borne animals into the wild, they do not know how to hunt or survive, so that could leave a lot of animals dead if we just release all of them.

The SPEAKER — We are getting very close to voting on this, so those who are still sitting on the fence might have to make up their minds very soon.

Ms MANDELL — My name is Beth Mandell and I am from Sacred Heart, Sandringham. I kind of agree and I also do not, because zoos can be good and they also cannot. But when we really think about it, most of the pros for zoos are that they can protect animals from loss of habitat and poachers, but they are problems caused by humans. If we stopped doing that, then I do not think we would even need zoos.

Ms NEILSON — Hello. My name is Olivia Neilson from St Brigid's Primary School, Healesville. From an animal rights standpoint, we do not have a right to breed, capture and confine other animals, even if they are endangered. Being a member of an endangered species does not mean the individual animals have fewer rights. Animals in captivity suffer from stress, boredom and confinement. Intergenerational bonds are broken when individuals get sold or traded to other zoos, and no pen or even drive-through safari can compare to the freedom of the wild. If zoos are teaching children anything, it is that imprisoning animals for our own entertainment is acceptable. Thank you.

Ms SAYEDA — My name is Yumna Sayeda and I am from Al Taqwa College. Judging from what everyone is thinking, I find that this topic is very arguable. Although many people are saying that zoos are a think of the past, why would zoos want to harm animals? You might say it is because they get money, but as Jenny said, you do not get that much money if you work in the zoo. Whoever works in the zoo is very dedicated to helping animals. I feel like zoos are doing a great job and we should all support them, because if we are causing so much trouble then we should end it.

Mr MURPHY — I am Dylan Murphy from Wales Street Primary School. I think that zoos are good and bad at the same time because many zoos drug their animals and treat their animals extremely badly while a lot of zoos and sanctuaries keep their animals in really good condition and teach them to hunt and forage for food. I also think that zoos protect animals from poachers and other threats.

Mr BARTLETT — Hi, I am Oscar Bartlett from Rowville Primary School. I personally believe that zoos are a great place for animals and also our families and us. We get educated about all the different animals. We learn about what they eat and what their natural habitat is, and we can safely interact with the animals that are in the zoo. We get to see them up close, and we also get to interact with them and get guides to come, show us around and tell us all about what the animals are doing, like if they are nocturnal. They also teach us what they eat and where they live. Thank you.

Mr FERRIGGI — My name is Elliot Ferriggi from Our Lady of the Assumption primary school. I would like to say that I am very mixed on this topic as I believe that some zoos are treating animals incredibly poorly, mainly in less fortunate countries where they cannot buy as good supplies. Some zoos are treating animals rather fairly, like the Victorian zoos, which I must applaud for their fantastic work. But there are zoos that are culling and killing their animals, which is completely unacceptable. The problem needs to be resolved by others zoos that have campaigns that are totally against that, which I think is very fair. So it is a very hard topic to debate, but I am rather mixed on it. Thank you.

Ms FORD — Good afternoon everybody. My name is Lily Ford, and I am from Tooborac Primary School. Most parents and teachers believe zoos are educational. Maybe they are, but surely you do not have to abuse animals to get the knowledge you need to know, and there are other resources you could use to get the

information about animals. Have you ever wondered why zoos sometimes display animals whose habitats are disappearing? In reality humans are actually why we have to protect the animals. However, it is not always the fault of zoos. The zookeepers employed to look after the animals do not always care about the animals; sometimes it is only the money. On the other hand other zoos look after the animals exceedingly well, such as Mansfield Zoo. The keepers stay overnight to protect the animals and make sure they are okay, as well as other zoos who have captive breeding programs to protect and raise the endangered species and zoos who feed the animals the food they need to survive. Remember what happens in zoos. Is it good or bad? Thank you.

Ms LEAVER-ANAG — I have already spoken today, but listening to some of the opinions of the people around the room, my position on the matter has changed. I do think that zoos are a thing of the future and a thing that needs to be kept all around the world. But when people are talking about the zoos where animals are mistreated, I think they are looking past the idea of a zoo. Especially in Australia the idea of a zoo is to keep animals safe and to keep them in an environment that is as close to their habitat as possible. The zoos that a lot of people are against in the topic we are talking about are not as common as some people might think. Thank you.

Ms SUMMERFIELD — My name is Lucy Summerfield and I am from Point Lonsdale Primary School. I disagree with the topic because the long period of time the animals have spent in zoos would mean they would lose the will to fend for themselves, which means they would be vulnerable to poachers and other animals when released. If we were to release the animals, people who want to see the animals could go venturing to the animals' homes, which would mean the person could injure themselves or the animal. Releasing zoo animals would mean they would die out quicker than if they were in zoos. Thank you.

THE VOTE

The SPEAKER (Ms Edwards) — Thank you, everyone, for your contributions. It is not easy to stand on your feet and speak for 1 minute, particularly in front of an audience that you do not necessarily know, so well done. Your arguments were so good and so well executed, and I think from the sound of it some of your arguments may have changed some people's minds.

Now we go to a vote on the topic:

Zoos are a thing of the past, animals should be rehoused in their natural environment.

You do not have to vote with your group. This is what we call a conscience vote, so you vote according to your view on the topic. The vote will be by a show of hands, and I believe that if you wish to abstain from voting, you are able to do that as well. However, I would encourage you to vote because that is what democracy is all about. So now we will have a show of hands.

Delegates divided on question.

Question agreed to.

Delegates applauding.

CLOSING CEREMONY

The SPEAKER (Ms Edwards) — Congratulations to those who supported that. It is my great pleasure now to introduce to you, to close our convention this afternoon, the Honourable Nick Wakeling, MP, who is the shadow Minister for Education. I invite Nick to the chair.

Mr WAKELING — Thank you very much. Can I firstly start by acknowledging the Deputy Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, and I would like to place on record my thanks for your contribution to and your assistance with this important event. This is the home of democracy here in Victoria. Perhaps you were told this in the past, but where you are sitting is where the first federal Parliament sat. So the creation of Australia as a nation and all the legislation that created the federation of Australia in 1901 took place where you are sitting today. I think that shows the importance of this event.

This has been a great opportunity for everyone here to learn what is involved in a democracy. It is about listening to people's views. It is about understanding your own view, but it is also about forming your view and

standing in front of a group of people and trying to convince them to change their minds. That is what we do as members of Parliament, but more importantly that is what you have had the opportunity to do today. I even heard that some people had changed their minds during the debate. That is exactly what happens in terms of members of Parliament, particularly when it is a social issue or a conscience issue. Members of Parliament listen to debates and then they form their own views, and sometimes people change their views.

So I will just say well done and congratulations. I also take this opportunity to thank those who assisted in the organisation. To the staff, principals, teachers and families, thank you very much for allowing your students to participate in this program. Did you all enjoy yourselves?

Honourable delegates — Yes.

Mr WAKELING — Did you all enjoy yourselves?

Honourable delegates — Yes!

Mr WAKELING — Put your hands together and thank everyone who put it on. Thank you.

Delegates applauding.

The SPEAKER — Thank you very much, Nick. It is always a pleasure to have you in the chair, up here in my place. Before you all leave the chamber, can I thank you once again for your contributions this afternoon. They have been exceptional. I think some of our current crop of politicians could probably learn a lot from you, so again thank you very much. It has been a pleasure to be in the chair with you this afternoon.

Delegates applauding.

Convention adjourned 2.26 p.m.