



Hansard

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

60th Parliament

Tuesday 31 October 2023

Office-holders of the Legislative Assembly

60th Parliament

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Maree Edwards

Deputy Speaker

Matt Fregon

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Jacinta Allan

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Ben Carroll

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Mary-Anne Thomas

Manager of Opposition Business

James Newbury

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60th Parliament**

Member	District	Party	Member	District	Party
Addison, Juliana	Wendouree	ALP	Lambert, Nathan	Preston	ALP
Allan, Jacinta	Bendigo East	ALP	Maas, Gary	Narre Warren South	ALP
Andrews, Daniel ²	Mulgrave	ALP	McCurdy, Tim	Ovens Valley	Nat
Battin, Brad	Berwick	Lib	McGhie, Steve	Melton	ALP
Benham, Jade	Mildura	Nat	McLeish, Cindy	Eildon	Lib
Britnell, Roma	South-West Coast	Lib	Marchant, Alison	Bellarine	ALP
Brooks, Colin	Bundoora	ALP	Matthews-Ward, Kathleen	Broadmeadows	ALP
Bull, Josh	Sunbury	ALP	Mercurio, Paul	Hastings	ALP
Bull, Tim	Gippsland East	Nat	Mullahy, John	Glen Waverley	ALP
Cameron, Martin	Morwell	Nat	Newbury, James	Brighton	Lib
Carbines, Anthony	Ivanhoe	ALP	O'Brien, Danny	Gippsland South	Nat
Carroll, Ben	Niddrie	ALP	O'Brien, Michael	Malvern	Lib
Cheeseman, Darren	South Barwon	ALP	O'Keefe, Kim	Shepparton	Nat
Cianflone, Anthony	Pascoe Vale	ALP	Pallas, Tim	Werribee	ALP
Cleland, Annabelle	Euroa	Nat	Pearson, Danny	Essendon	ALP
Connolly, Sarah	Laverton	ALP	Pesutto, John	Hawthorn	Lib
Couzens, Christine	Geelong	ALP	Read, Tim	Brunswick	Greens
Crewther, Chris	Mornington	Lib	Richards, Pauline	Cranbourne	ALP
Crugnale, Jordan	Bass	ALP	Richardson, Tim	Mordialloc	ALP
D'Ambrosio, Liliana	Mill Park	ALP	Riordan, Richard	Polwarth	Lib
De Martino, Daniela	Monbulk	ALP	Rowswell, Brad	Sandringham	Lib
de Vietri, Gabrielle	Richmond	Greens	Sandell, Ellen	Melbourne	Greens
Dimopoulos, Steve	Oakleigh	ALP	Settle, Michaela	Eureka	ALP
Edbrooke, Paul	Frankston	ALP	Smith, Ryan ³	Warrandyte	Lib
Edwards, Maree	Bendigo West	ALP	Southwick, David	Caulfield	Lib
Fowles, Will ¹	Ringwood	Ind	Spence, Ros	Kalkallo	ALP
Fregon, Matt	Ashwood	ALP	Staikos, Nick	Bentleigh	ALP
George, Ella	Lara	ALP	Suleyman, Natalie	St Albans	ALP
Grigorovitch, Luba	Kororoit	ALP	Tak, Meng Heang	Clarinda	ALP
Groth, Sam	Nepean	Lib	Taylor, Jackson	Bayswater	ALP
Guy, Matthew	Bulleen	Lib	Taylor, Nina	Albert Park	ALP
Halfpenny, Bronwyn	Thomastown	ALP	Theophanous, Kat	Northcote	ALP
Hall, Katie	Footscray	ALP	Thomas, Mary-Anne	Macedon	ALP
Hamer, Paul	Box Hill	ALP	Tilley, Bill	Benambra	Lib
Haylett, Martha	Ripon	ALP	Vallence, Bridget	Evelyn	Lib
Hibbins, Sam	Prahran	Greens	Vulin, Emma	Pakenham	ALP
Hilakari, Mathew	Point Cook	ALP	Walsh, Peter	Murray Plains	Nat
Hodgett, David	Croydon	Lib	Walters, Iwan	Greenvale	ALP
Home, Melissa	Williamstown	ALP	Ward, Vicki	Eltham	ALP
Hutchins, Natalie	Sydenham	ALP	Wells, Kim	Rowville	Lib
Kathage, Lauren	Yan Yean	ALP	Werner, Nicole ⁴	Warrandyte	Lib
Kealy, Emma	Lowan	Nat	Wight, Dylan	Tarneit	ALP
Kilkenny, Sonya	Carrum	ALP	Williams, Gabrielle	Dandenong	ALP
Wayne Farnham	Narracan	Lib	Wilson, Belinda	Narre Warren North	ALP
			Wilson, Jess	Kew	Lib

¹ ALP until 5 August 2023

² Resigned 27 September 2023

³ Resigned 7 July 2023

⁴ Elected 3 October 2023

PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

ALP – Australian Labor Party, Greens – Australian Greens,
Ind – Independent, Lib – Liberal Party of Australia, Nat – National Party of Australia

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Tuesday 31 October 2023

The SPEAKER (Maree Edwards) took the chair at 12:04 pm, read the prayer and made an acknowledgement of country.

Members

Member for Mulgrave

Resignation

The SPEAKER (12:04): I wish to announce that on 23 October 2023 I issued a writ for a by-election for the electoral district of Mulgrave to be held on 18 November 2023.

Bills

Workplace Injury Rehabilitation and Compensation Amendment (WorkCover Scheme Modernisation) Bill 2023

Introduction and first reading

Danny PEARSON (Essendon – Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop, Assistant Treasurer, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC) (12:05): I move:

That I introduce a bill for an act to amend the Workplace Injury Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2013, the Accident Compensation Act 1985 and the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

Cindy McLEISH (Eildon) (12:05): I request a brief explanation of the bill from the minister, please.

Danny PEARSON (Essendon – Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop, Assistant Treasurer, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC) (12:05): The purpose of the bill is to modernise the WorkCover scheme to ensure it is financially sustainable and can continue to support injured workers into the future. The bill will:

- (a) introduce initial eligibility requirements for mental injury, including:
 - (i) only significant mental injuries diagnosed by a medical practitioner that predominantly arise out of or in the course of employment will be compensable; and
 - (ii) mental injuries that are predominantly caused by work-related stress or burnout will not be compensable, unless the duties are routinely traumatic;
- (b) clarify that disputes relating to initial eligibility decisions cannot be referred to arbitration, to create consistency in decision-making;
- (c) introduce a permanent Whole Person Impairment threshold of more than 20 per cent, alongside the existing work capacity test, for workers to remain entitled to weekly benefits beyond the 130 weeks; and
- (d) require the Minister to initiate an independent review of the amendments to the Scheme arising out of this Bill, by an expert panel, in 2027.

Read first time.

Ordered to be read second time tomorrow.

Summary Offences Amendment (Decriminalisation of Public Drunkenness) Repeal Bill 2023

Introduction

Brad BATTIN (Berwick) (12:06): I move:

That I introduce a bill for an act to repeal the Summary Offences Amendment (Decriminalisation of Public Drunkenness) Act 2021 and to provide for the effect of that repeal and for other purposes.

I speak to this motion in relation to the fact that we have got a huge crisis when it comes to the government's position. Its reform is not ready to go. We have got a facility at the moment that is not ready, and effective from Melbourne Cup Day, Victoria Police will no longer have the powers to arrest people who are intoxicated. Imagine people coming out of the Melbourne Cup venue and Victoria Police having had their powers removed. That is why it is important that this piece of legislation is put today.

The SPEAKER: Order! Member for Berwick, this is a procedural debate. I ask you not to speak to the bill. You are anticipating debate, and I remind other members who may speak on this procedural motion that it is a procedural motion about the introduction of a bill.

Brad BATTIN: The reason that we are introducing this bill today is so important out in the community because it is around community safety. This Parliament has a responsibility. We have a responsibility to guarantee the safety of every person in the community. It is legislation like this that is needed to ensure that the government is aware of the impacts of what will happen, and that is why this piece of legislation is so important today. The government have an option. They can delay the legislation that is currently in place by changing the date. That has been done in the past. It would prevent us being here having this debate on what is happening in relation to the decriminalisation of public drunkenness. We know that the community has called for this. We know that it has a health impact. We know and understand the impacts through the entire community and what happens. We have seen it across other states in relation to this. It is vital that this Parliament today ensures that this is on the government business program. Again the government cannot continue to hide behind the fact that they do not listen to any other person in this chamber when it comes to the procedures and the practices of this place.

Mary-Anne Thomas: On a point of order, Speaker, your ruling was very clear. This is a narrow procedural debate. I suggest that the member is straying into the details of his bill, and I ask you to bring him back to your ruling that it is a narrow procedural debate.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Berwick was not necessarily straying into the detail of the bill at this point, but I do remind members it is a procedural debate.

Brad BATTIN: When it comes to the procedures of this place it is so important that the government of the day understand that there are more views in this room than just those of the Labor Party. It is vital. It does not matter where you sit in this place, you can have an opportunity to put things forward for debate. But the problem with the government when it comes to this is that they do not want the debate. They will vote this down not because of what is happening, they will vote it down because they do not want to have the debate. If anyone on that side says we have had the debate –

Mary-Anne Thomas: On a further point of order, Speaker, once again the member is anticipating the debate by talking about what the government may or may not do. I ask you to bring him back to his procedural matter rather than anticipating what the government may do.

The SPEAKER: I do not uphold the point of order at this point, but I do again remind the member for Berwick and others who may speak on this matter that this is a procedural debate.

Brad BATTIN: When we talk about procedures – and someone has raised that this has been debated in this place before – it is really important to note that when that debate happened the government had committed to having a sobering-up centre open 12 months ago, and now we are seeing it will not be open in November.

That is why we are seeking to introduce this bill today. We want to make sure that we can have a say on behalf of that community, who were silenced and were not aware of what was happening for a trial in their area. It is so important that the Victorian Parliament is a place to have an open, honest and robust discussion about impacts in the community. That includes ensuring that bills like this, the Summary Offences Amendment (Decriminalisation of Public Drunkenness) Repeal Bill 2023, are on the record and on the government business program, introduced by the opposition, so we can put

forward the views of our local communities – particularly those communities in Collingwood and Victoria Police going forward – on how it will impact them when these changes are made. It is really important that this is debated today. We can get this through as quick as we can, and we are willing to support the government to ensure it goes through both houses so the community is safer. That is what the responsibility of the Victorian Parliament is.

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Ambulance Services) (12:12): The government will not be supporting this bill. We are a government focused on delivering for the people of Victoria. We have a much-needed reform ready to implement. I rise also in my capacity –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Member for Berwick, you had your turn.

Mary-Anne THOMAS: I rise also in my capacity as the Minister for Ambulance Services, and I will proudly let the house know that Ambulance Victoria and Victoria Police people have received the training they need so that we need no longer put people who are intoxicated in public in jail and so that we finally catch up with the other states –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, as you have previously ruled, this is a tight procedural debate, and I would ask you to bring the Leader of the House back to that question.

Ben Carroll: On the point of order, Speaker, you very much allowed the lead speaker from the opposition to bring in different parts of the debate. The Leader of the House has very clearly articulated the purpose of the legislation, which is the criminalisation of First Nations people, and having a health perspective on it. She did. The point of order should be ruled out of order.

Brad Battin interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! Member for Berwick! I ask the Leader of the House to come back to the procedural motion.

Mary-Anne THOMAS: Thank you, Speaker. We have a very full agenda this week, and we have much work to get on with and deliver through this house. Meanwhile, we are delivering on our commitment to decriminalise being intoxicated in public and to lead a health-led response, which is ready to be delivered when we introduce this reform.

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (12:14): I rise to support the member for Berwick in introducing this bill to repeal the Summary Offences Amendment (Decriminalisation of Public Drunkenness) Act 2021. We are not ready, and there is so much that needs to come into place before this is enacted on Melbourne Cup Day. This does not just affect, as the member for Berwick said, the ability to delay the implementation of the decriminalisation of public drunkenness. It could be delayed. We could get on the front foot and make sure it is ready for implementation before it is enacted. By introducing this bill to repeal the decriminalisation of public drunkenness, we can get ready. This does not just affect the city. This is the house of the people, and the people affected are in all areas of the state, including in regional Victoria, where emergency departments are under so much –

The SPEAKER: Order! This is a procedural debate, member for Mildura, and I ask you to come back to the procedure.

Jade BENHAM: Sorry, Speaker – apologies. As far as the procedure goes, I think this is such an important move to make today – and a responsible move to make. If the government were to take responsibility and say you know what, we do actually need to delay it for many, many reasons, then they too would support the member for Berwick in repealing the decriminalisation of public drunkenness. It is the responsible thing to do. It is reckless to introduce this – and not just introduce it but on Melbourne Cup Day.

Mary-Anne Thomas: On a point of order, Speaker, you have been very clear that this is a procedural motion. Once again the member for Mildura is straying into the contents of the bill. I ask you to bring her back to this narrow procedural motion.

The SPEAKER: Order! Member for Mildura, I know it is challenging for members to talk to a procedural debate – that is very clear – but I ask all members to come back to the procedural debate.

Jade BENHAM: Thank you, Speaker. The procedure before us in this place is one that every Victorian should be concerned with. Every Victorian is concerned with the implementation of the decriminalisation of public drunkenness. This procedure to repeal that act is of vital importance, and not just in the city. This process I am supporting the member for Berwick in is so important. We have to give it some context because, like I said, it does not only affect those in the city. It just defies logic that the government would not support this and just accept some responsibility and say ‘The system’s actually not ready.’ We should get it ready before it is implemented and before it hits the front page of the paper next Wednesday after Melbourne Cup Day and the system completely falls apart. It will be absolute chaos. So this procedural motion that we have before us now is one of absolute importance. I support the member for Berwick in raising this repeal bill.

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (12:18): I am very happy to speak on this matter. We get that the opposition have a particular position on what we are proposing here, which is actually a health-led response. They may not agree with it. That is okay. We accept that you may not agree with the rollout of a health-led response. I might remind the opposition that this –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! I ask members to have some respect for the member on their feet.

Nina TAYLOR: I might remind the opposition that this particular reform was already debated in this house. They have had ample opportunity to debate the subject matter of the bill.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, this is not a policy debate, it is a procedural debate, and I would ask you to bring the member back to the procedural debate.

The SPEAKER: The member for Albert Park is to come back to the motion that is before the house regarding the introduction of a bill.

Nina TAYLOR: Thank you very much for your advice, Speaker. I should say, additionally, no further good will be delivered by the raising of these particular matters at this point in time. What matters is actually delivering on these reforms, which is exactly what we are doing right here as we speak. Forgive my cynicism, but taking the expertise and information of those opposite on this particular matter here and now – I am raising a big question mark.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, you have ruled on my previous point of order in relation to relevance. This is not an opportunity to slag off, and I would ask you to bring the member back to the question.

The SPEAKER: I do not rule the point of order a point of order. The member was giving some contrast, but I do remind members it is a procedural debate.

Nina TAYLOR: Indeed, and on that note, when we are talking about a procedural debate, let us get on with the government business program. There are very important reforms to be debated. The opposition will have plenty of opportunity to debate those reforms in this house. They will not be held back. They can go for their lives, every one of them. If they want to speak on the respective bills, the grievance debate and so forth in this house, they will have ample opportunity, because I know they are always champing at the bit. They are so eager to speak on these reforms. Well, take that opportunity, but do not hold it up now with this pointless, pointless debate. Forgive me, but I query the sincerity of those opposite on this particular matter. I think it is purely a stunt to raise division. It is fearmongering.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, the member is no longer straying, the member is nowhere near the procedural debate – a matter you have already ruled on twice I believe. I would ask that you bring the member promptly back to the question.

The SPEAKER: For consistency's sake, I ask the member for Albert Park to come back to the procedural motion.

Nina TAYLOR: Thank you for your advice, Speaker. On that note I suggest that the best outcome for all involved, particularly the community, is to continue with debating the particular bills that are being presented before the house this week as part of the government program – noting our extensive reform agenda – rather than obstructing some very important reforms that we are seeking to deliver in Victoria.

Michael O'BRIEN (Malvern) (12:22): In seven days time, not just Melbourne, not just Victoria but Australia will stop for the race that stops a nation. It is also going to be the day on which a massive change to public order laws comes in, and the fact is this government has previously decided to delay implementation of these laws because it was not ready. These laws originally passed in early 2021. They were supposed to come in in November 2022, and the government chose to delay their implementation because the government was not ready. Well, the government still is not ready, and the responsible thing to do is to take the bill introduced by the member for Berwick and debate it this week, because this is a matter of timing. It is a critical matter of timing, because this is our last opportunity to save the government from itself and to make sure that police have the tools to manage people's health. We do not want to see intoxicated people locked up, but we do not want to see intoxicated people put at risk to themselves or others, and that is why it is so important that we debate this right now. The timing of this could not be more critical.

Mary-Anne Thomas: On a point of order, Speaker, it would seem that everyone is finding it a challenge to stick to this narrow procedural debate. The member for Malvern is straying into the supposed merits of this supposed bill, and I ask that you bring him back to the narrow procedural motion.

The SPEAKER: Order! I think the member for Malvern realised he was straying a little bit. I do ask him to come back to the procedural motion.

Michael O'BRIEN: As I said, the timing of this could not be more critical, because this is the only opportunity for this house to reconsider this current law, which is due to come into place next Tuesday – on Melbourne Cup Day. What are going to be the consequences if this house does not consider this now? The consequences will be that police will not have powers to manage drunk people who are a risk to themselves and others. That is the fact. That is why it is critical –

Mary-Anne Thomas: On a point of order, Speaker, this procedural debate is not an opportunity for the member for Malvern to get up and say things that are untrue. We are implementing this reform because we are ready to go. Police and ambulance officers have received their training.

Members interjecting.

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

Michael O'BRIEN: The government may not like to hear what I have to say, but the fact is it should be on the record, because timing is critical on this. The government has delayed this change once before because it was not ready. The government should get off its high horse, eat some humble pie and admit it is not ready again, otherwise the consequences next Tuesday and flowing onwards will be on the government's head. This is not about a punitive measure; this is accepting that the government has not implemented the reforms it intended to make. The government has delayed this by 12 months previously. Through the member for Berwick's bill we are giving the government the opportunity to admit that it has got it wrong again. It is just not ready. So this bill should be debated, and the government should explain why it is such a good idea to press ahead with such a major change

when it does not have the infrastructure in place. Quite possibly we will see people put far more at risk with this change than if they simply delay it, as they have done in the past. This is an opportunity for the government to actually show that under a new Premier – some new leadership – maybe it is willing to listen. We had nine years of no listening. Here is an opportunity for the government to demonstrate –

Mary-Anne Thomas: On a point of order, Speaker, I am sorry to have to do this again, but this is not an opportunity for the member for Malvern to get up on his feet and show that perhaps he would be a much better leader than the current member for Hawthorn.

Members interjecting.

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

Michael O'BRIEN: The Leader of the House simply shows by all her constant interjections and points of order that the government is desperate not to discuss this issue, but the fact is that Victorians need this to be discussed. They need it to be debated. The government needs to admit it has got this wrong. It needs to delay it, and that is why the member for Berwick's bill should be brought on. Give Victorians the chance to recover from your mistakes, otherwise it will be on the government's head.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Malvern, through the Chair!

Lauren KATHAGE (Yan Yean) (12:27): Well, we have heard from the member for Malvern that timing is critical, and the member for Mildura warns us of a total system collapse. I think it is evident what we have here. To me it sounds like a doomsday cult, and the date they have set is 7 November. I wish I could see the faces around the table of the doomsday cult strategy meeting on 8 November when in fact the world has not ended.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, this is an important question of public policy. The member has moved an important bill in relation to that matter. On relevance, the member is not speaking to the procedural motion. I would ask you to bring her back to the procedural motion.

The SPEAKER: The member for Yan Yean to speak to the procedural motion.

Lauren KATHAGE: Back to the comments from the member for Mildura, she warned of a total system collapse, and that is why she believes that we should bring forward debate on this. However, I have full confidence in our nurses and alcohol and other drug workers, who have all the training and resources to deliver the outreach services from 7 November – up to 10 teams, not just in metro areas but also in regional Victoria, which I am sure the member for Mildura will be very pleased to hear.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, I understand the member is new. You have ruled on my previous point of order that the member, with respect, is speaking to the substance of the matter rather than the procedural debate.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! I would ask points of order to be made succinctly without any other comments surrounding them. Member for Yan Yean, you will have to come back to the procedural motion before the house.

Lauren KATHAGE: Thank you, Speaker. I also thank the member for Brighton for his advice. My advice might be to buy a calendar from the newsagency and have a look at the year on the front: it is 2023. I fully support the services we have available for the police and ambulance to respond as they normally would to matters of critical emergency health and community risk. Those provisions are still there to provide that support. The member for Malvern talks about previous cautious approaches by this government to the date of this legislation coming into effect, and he somehow believes that now that is not the approach that we will take. I assure those opposite that they can relax, because the adults are in charge in this room. We will continue to –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! I will remove members from the chamber. Member for Malvern, you had your turn.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, succinctly, the member is not speaking to the procedural motion.

The SPEAKER: Member for Yan Yean, can you come back to the procedural motion before the house.

Lauren KATHAGE: The member for Berwick said that we do not want the debate. Well, we have had the debate. We have passed the legislation, and now we have got other legislation that we want to get through the house – important matters concerning transport, kinder and the circular economy and our environment, things that matter to Victorians, not things that are invented by a local doomsday cult to panic Victorians.

The SPEAKER: By leave, the member for Brunswick. Is leave granted?

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Leave is not granted.

Sam Hibbins: On a point of order, Speaker, I seek your guidance on this. We have now had a very heated debate, and the important principle of not denying the rights of the minority in this chamber has now been breached. The Greens have not had an opportunity to speak to this motion. The standing orders unfortunately have permitted this situation where this is clearly an important debate, yet the Greens have been denied the opportunity to even contribute to the debate.

I ask two things: (1) that the standing orders be looked at to ensure that the rights of the minority are not denied in these important debates and (2) whether there is something that can be done with the call to ensure that the Greens can contribute to these very important debates, because at the moment –

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Prahran will resume his seat. Now is not the time to raise these matters as a point of order. You are welcome to come and speak to me in my chambers or to the clerks, and the matter can be referred to the Standing Orders Committee, but this is not the time for that. Leave is not granted.

Assembly divided on motion:

Ayes (26): Brad Battin, Jade Benham, Roma Britnell, Tim Bull, Martin Cameron, Annabelle Cleeland, Wayne Farnham, Sam Groth, Matthew Guy, David Hodgett, Emma Kealy, Tim McCurdy, Cindy McLeish, James Newbury, Danny O'Brien, Michael O'Brien, John Pesutto, Richard Riordan, Brad Rowswell, David Southwick, Bill Tilley, Bridget Vallence, Peter Walsh, Kim Wells, Nicole Werner, Jess Wilson

Noes (49): Juliana Addison, Jacinta Allan, Colin Brooks, Josh Bull, Anthony Carbines, Ben Carroll, Darren Cheeseman, Anthony Cianflone, Sarah Connolly, Chris Couzens, Jordan Crugnale, Lily D'Ambrosio, Daniela De Martino, Steve Dimopoulos, Paul Edbrooke, Matt Fregon, Ella George, Luba Grigorovitch, Bronwyn Halfpenny, Katie Hall, Paul Hamer, Martha Haylett, Mathew Hilakari, Melissa Horne, Lauren Kathage, Sonya Kilkenny, Nathan Lambert, Gary Maas, Alison Marchant, Kathleen Matthews-Ward, Steve McGhie, Paul Mercurio, John Mullahy, Tim Pallas, Danny Pearson, Pauline Richards, Tim Richardson, Ros Spence, Nick Staikos, Natalie Suleyman, Meng Heang Tak, Nina Taylor, Kat Theophanous, Mary-Anne Thomas, Emma Vulin, Iwan Walters, Vicki Ward, Dylan Wight, Belinda Wilson

Motion defeated.

*Petitions***Great Ocean Road safety**

Richard RIORDAN (Polwarth) presented a petition bearing 435 signatures:

This petition of residents in Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Assembly to the considerable safety issue of crossing the Great Ocean Road in the vicinity of Strathmore Drive, Jan Juc is for students of local schools and members of the Torquay/Jan Juc community. Crossing the Great Ocean Road in any capacity near Christian College Geelong Surf Coast campus for students of this school, the early learning centre and other nearby schools, even with parental supervision is not a safe enterprise. In addition, there are no accessible pathways provide pedestrian or bike access to the east, west or south of this area. It is of considerable concern that an accident or fatality – will occur. Discussion between the Surf Coast Shire Council and Vic Roads has not progressed this matter. Vic Roads have not provided engineering options for safe passage at this site. Students and community members are placed at risk on a daily basis.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly calls on Vic Roads, the Department of Transport and Planning and Surf Coast Shire Council to develop immediate engineering options for safe passage via a crossing and pathway infrastructure at this site. Further that a reasonable timeline is provided to ensure that the parties work together to consult with local schools and community on options and that accountability is shared between the key parties (Vic Roads, Council and school) to commence (and finalise) this project as a matter of urgency.

Richard RIORDAN (Polwarth) presented a petition bearing 21 signatures:

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria. This petition draws the attention of the House to call on the Victorian Government to the **considerable safety issue of crossing the Great Ocean Road in the vicinity of Strathmore Drive, Jan Juc for students at local schools and members of the Torquay and Jan Juc Communities**. Crossing the Great Ocean Road in any capacity near Christian College Geelong Surf Coast Campus for students at this school, the early learning centre, and other nearby schools, even with parental supervision is not a safe enterprise. In addition, there are no accessible pathways to provide pedestrian or bike access to the east, west or south of this area. It is of considerable concern that an accident or fatality – will occur. The petitioners therefore request the State Government to develop immediate engineering options for safe passage via a crossing and pathway infrastructure at this site.

Ordered that petitions be considered tomorrow.

*Members***Acting speakers**

The SPEAKER (12:40): Under standing order 20 I have tabled my warrant amending the panel of members to preside as acting speakers to include Wayne Farnham.

*Documents***Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission**

IBAC's Operation Daintree Special Report: Government Response

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Ambulance Services) (12:40): I table, by leave, the government response to IBAC's *Operation Daintree: Special Report*.

*Committees***Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee**

Alert Digest No. 13

Gary MAAS (Narre Warren South) (12:41): I have the honour to present to the house a report from the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee, being *Alert Digest* No. 13 of 2023, on the following bills:

Crimes Amendment (Non-fatal Strangulation) Bill 2023

Early Childhood Legislation Amendment (Premises Approval in Principle) Bill 2023

Environment Legislation Amendment (Circular Economy and Other Matters) Bill 2023

Residential Tenancies Amendment (Rent Freeze and Caps) Bill 2023

Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2023

Triple Zero Victoria Bill 2023

together with appendices.

Ordered to be published.

Documents

Documents

Incorporated list as follows:

DOCUMENTS TABLED UNDER ACTS OF PARLIAMENT – The Clerk tabled:

Advancing the Treaty Process with Aboriginal Victorians Act 2018 – Advancing the Victorian Treaty Process – Report 2022–23

Auditor-General – Report 2022–23

Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978 – Order under s 17D granting a lease over St Kilda Botanical Garden Reserve

Environment Protection Authority (EPA) – Report 2022–23

Financial Management Act 1994:

Report from the Minister for Environment that he had not received reports 2022–23 of the:

Caulfield Racecourse Reserve Trust

Dhelkunya Dja Land Management Board

Gunaikurnai Traditional Owner Land Management Board

Phillip Island Nature Parks

Yorta Yorta Traditional Owner Land Management Board

Zoos Victoria – together with an explanation for the delay

Report from the Minister for Women that she had received the report 2022–23 of the Queen Victoria Women's Centre Trust

First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria – Report 2022–23

Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission – Report 2022–23 – Ordered to be published

Land Acquisition and Compensation Act 1986 – Certificate under s 7

Mental Health Tribunal – Report 2022–23

Ombudsman – Watchdog for the people: 50 years of the Victorian Ombudsman 1973–2023 – Ordered to be published

Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability – Final report – released on 30 October 2023 (13 documents)

Planning and Environment Act 1987:

Notices of approval of amendments to the following Planning Schemes:

Darebin – C217

Frankston – C164

Glen Eira – C231, C243

Kingston – C219

Yarra Ranges – C219

Regional Development Victoria – Report 2022–23

Statutory Rules under the following Acts:

Circular Economy (Waste Reduction and Recycling) Act 2021 – SR 107

Mutual Recognition (Victoria) Act 1998 – SR 109

Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition (Victoria) Act 1998 – SR 108

Water Act 1989 – SRs 110, 111

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 – Documents under s 15 in relation to statutory rules 108, 109

Sustainability Victoria – Report 2022–23

Victorian Electoral Commission – Report to Parliament on the 2022 Victorian State election and 2023 Narracan District supplementary election

Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001 – Notice of request to the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council for an assessment of the values of the Immediate Protection Areas in the Central Highlands and East Gippsland

Victorian Multicultural Commission – Report 2022–23

VITS LanguageLoop – Report 2022–23.

PROCLAMATIONS – Under SO 177A, the Clerk tabled the following proclamations fixing operative dates:

Circular Economy (Waste Reduction and Recycling) Act 2021 – Remaining provisions of Part 6 – 1 November 2023 (*Gazette S563, 24 October 2023*)

Water and Catchment Legislation Amendment Act 2021 – Remaining provisions (other than sections 23 and 30) – 20 November 2023 (*Gazette S564, 24 October 2023*).

Bills

Education and Training Reform Amendment (Land Powers) Bill 2023

Council's agreement

The SPEAKER (12:43): I have received a message from the Legislative Council agreeing to the Education and Training Reform Amendment (Land Powers) Bill 2023 without amendment.

Triple Zero Victoria Bill 2023

Council's amendments

The SPEAKER (12:43): I have received a message from the Legislative Council agreeing to the Triple Zero Victoria Bill 2023 with amendments.

Ordered that amendments be taken into consideration immediately.

Message from Council relating to following amendments considered:

1. Clause 17, line 17, omit “As soon as practicable” and insert “Within 14 days”.
2. Clause 74, after line 13 insert –

“(1A) The Chief Executive Officer must ensure the annual report includes a summary of any advice the Board has received from the Operational Committee in relation to a matter specified in section 55(2)(f) and (g).”.
3. Clause 83, line 15, before “Subject” insert “(1)”.
4. Clause 83, lines 19 and 20, omit “on Triple Zero Victoria’s website” and insert “in accordance with subsection (2)”.
5. Clause 83, after line 20, insert –

“(2) Data referred to in subsection (1) must be published on Triple Zero Victoria’s website annually or at intervals set by the Emergency Management Commissioner.”.

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Ambulance Services) (12:45): I move:

That the amendments be agreed to.

The government has made a number of sensible amendments to this bill in the other place which I wish to bring to the attention of the house. The first, amendment 1, relates to the publication of ministerial directions and amends clause 17(3). It alters the requirement for the chief executive officer

to publish on Triple Zero Victoria's website written directions issued by the minister from 'as soon as practicable' to 'within 14 days'. This is a small change to promote the timely publication of written directions issued by the minister.

Government amendment 2 relates to the publication of advice to the operational committee. This second amendment, to clause 74, followed consultation with the crossbench about a mechanism to increase transparency while not jeopardising the intent of the government's ESTA reform program, which is to build a genuine partnership between the new entity – Triple Zero Victoria – and emergency services organisations as represented through the operational committee. The amendment requires the Triple Zero Victoria annual report to include a summary of the advice provided by the operational committee on how Triple Zero Victoria and the emergency services organisations have supported each other in their respective functions. The government recognises this change will provide an assurance to the Victorian community that Triple Zero Victoria is listening and engaging with the operational committee, as is intended by this bill.

Government amendments 3, 4 and 5 relate to the timely publication of data behind new performance standards. The bill requires Triple Zero Victoria to publish data relating to the new outcome-based performance standards that will be set by the emergency management commissioner. These amendments to clause 83 clarify when and at what intervals this data must be published on Triple Zero Victoria's website. This is a commonsense approach requiring information to be published annually or at intervals set by the emergency management commissioner. These intervals will allow sufficient time for trends in the data to be identified and provide certainty to the Victorian community that the data behind the new performance standards is available for scrutiny in a timely way. I commend the amended bill to the house.

Richard RIORDAN (Polwarth) (12:47): I too just wish to make comment on the amendments to the Triple Zero Victoria Bill 2023. I would make the observation that the various opposition parties came to the government with some much-needed improvements, and we think these improvements will in fact make it a better bill. One of the concerns that the opposition and others had at the time was that the changes in the Triple Zero Victoria Bill were brought about by some very, very tragic failures – catastrophic failures, actually – in the system that led to the recorded and attributed deaths of some 33 Victorians because the system was not working as it should. So in order to make sure of the improvements that the Triple Zero Bill will bring about, it is important that Victorians have great confidence that when we are recording data and recording information those things are promptly brought to the public's and the Parliament's attention. Moving it just from 'as soon as practicable' – which of course will be very convenient for the government of the day – to 'within 14 days' really puts a critical time frame around the importance of reporting these key indicators on ambulance arrival times, pick-up times, call response times and so on.

The opposition parties wanted the government to go a little bit further and actually be quite clear about some of the data that would be reported on. We did not quite get those changes through, but the fact that what the government has agreed to do will be reported relatively promptly, within 14 days, onto websites and other publicly available sources will give some confidence to the community that elements of this bill are quite robust. So the opposition supports at this time the changes made to the Triple Zero bill.

Steve McGHIE (Melton) (12:50): I rise to speak on the amendments to the Triple Zero Victoria Bill 2023, and of course we know how important this bill is. The government has made a number of sensible amendments to this bill in the other place, which have come back to this chamber. I will just quickly go through those:

Clause 17, line 17, omit "As soon as practicable" and insert "Within 14 days".

Clause 74, after line 13 insert –

MOTIONS

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Legislative Assembly

Tuesday 31 October 2023

... The Chief Executive Officer must ensure the annual report includes a summary of any advice the Board has received from the Operational Committee in relation to a matter specified in section 55(2)(f) and (g).”.

Clause 83, line 15, before “Subject” insert “(1)”.

Clause 83, lines 19 and 20, omit “on Triple Zero Victoria’s website” and insert “in accordance with subsection (2)”.

Clause 83, after line 20, insert –

“(2) Data referred to in subsection (1) must be published on Triple Zero Victoria’s website annually or at intervals set by the Emergency Management Commissioner.”.

Again, these are sensible and important amendments to this bill, and I commend those amendments to the house.

Motion agreed to.

The SPEAKER: A message will now be sent to the Legislative Council informing them of the house’s decision.

Bail Amendment Bill 2023

Education and Training Reform Amendment (Land Powers) Bill 2023

Summary Offences Amendment (Nazi Salute Prohibition) Bill 2023

Royal assent

The SPEAKER (12:51): I inform the house that the Governor has given royal assent to the Bail Amendment Bill 2023, the Education and Training Reform Amendment (Land Powers) Bill 2023 and the Summary Offences Amendment (Nazi Salute Prohibition) Bill 2023.

Early Childhood Legislation Amendment (Premises Approval in Principle) Bill 2023

Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2023

Appropriation

The SPEAKER (12:51): I have received messages from the Governor recommending appropriations for the purposes of the Early Childhood Legislation Amendment (Premises Approval in Principle) Bill 2023 and the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2023.

Motions

Albury Wodonga Health

Bill TILLEY (Benambra) (12:52): I desire to move, by leave:

That this house condemns the health minister for committing \$225 million to a multistorey tower at Albury Wodonga Health’s Albury campus without a thorough geotechnical study or costings for additional foundations on abnormal ground on a site known to have highly reactive clay soils subject to high ground movement.

Leave refused.

Bill Tilley gave notice of motion.

Business of the house

Program

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Medical Research) (12:53): I move:

That, under standing order 94(2), the orders of the day, government business, relating to the following bills be considered and completed by 5 pm on 2 November 2023:

Early Childhood Legislation Amendment (Premises Approval in Principle) Bill 2023

Environment Legislation Amendment (Circular Economy and Other Matters) Bill 2023

Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2023.

We have another outstanding week ahead of us here in the Parliament with some very important government business to attend to. On this side of the house the Allan Labor government is committed, as always, to delivering for all Victorians, legislating on the issues that matter to people within our community and indeed making sure that the legislation that we bring to this house represents or reflects the changing times and priorities of the Victorian community.

An example of that of course is the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. This bill acquits a number of government commitments and includes, through the delivery of our road safety strategy, a number of commitments focused on our government's strong commitment to road safety. And it furthers our commitment to further study the research and to better understand the risk profile associated with those who take medicinal cannabis. Now, here in Victoria – and I say this as a former Minister for Agriculture – our medicinal cannabis industry is a very important industry for people in regional Victoria. As former minister I had great opportunity to visit some of the sites and businesses that are creating jobs and opportunities in rural and regional Victoria through the delivery of medicinal cannabis. And now as Minister for Health I am very well aware of the way in which medicinal cannabis can make a real difference for so many people in our community. When we legislated to introduce medicinal cannabis people will remember that this was done to directly improve the lives of children living with severe epilepsy concerns and other diseases. So we are very pleased now, as I said, that we continue to develop legislation, that we take account of the changing times and that we look to establish a trial to see how we can particularly measure impairment in relation to medicinal cannabis and a driver's ability to drive safely. We want to make sure that we are establishing evidence-based policy on this, and that is indeed what the trial will enable us to deliver.

The Early Childhood Legislation Amendment (Premises Approval in Principle) Bill 2023 is, once again, another important bill being led by the Minister for Education here in this place. No government in the nation has done as much as the Andrews–Allan Labor government has when it comes to expanding access to early childhood education for three-year-olds and four-year-olds. We made three-year-old kinder free so that every child can access kinder, not just those whose parents can afford it. Similarly four-year-old kinder – free and expanded into a pre-prep program, because we know that investing in the early years can absolutely change the life chances of so many children. On this side of the house – I look around this place, and I know the communities that you represent. I look to the member for Broadmeadows as an example –

The SPEAKER: Order! Through the Chair.

Mary-Anne THOMAS: I am sorry, Speaker, but I feel so strongly about this. I look at the member for Ripon. I know that real disadvantage continues to exist in these communities, and only our government has a plan, backed in by a legislative program, to deliver those changes and lift the opportunities of those communities that are disadvantaged, through no fault of their own, across our state.

Finally, the Environment Legislation Amendment (Circular Economy and Other Matters) Bill 2023 – how good is a container deposit scheme? How excited are we about the delivery of this? We are getting on and delivering. That is what we do – delivering for all Victorians. Of course we have a bit of legislation here that we will introduce to the house to ensure that progress continues as we work to overhaul and reform recycling right across this state.

It is a great government business program – lots to get on with. I commend it to the house.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (12:58): I rise to speak on the government business program. The coalition will be opposing the government business program, unfortunately. We will get to the substance of the motion, but the coalition proposed to the government that the coalition was so interested in debating the substance of the bills on the program that we would like an opportunity to

take two of them into consideration in detail – the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2023 and the Environment Legislation Amendment (Circular Economy and Other Matters) Bill 2023 – and both of those requests were denied. I can understand why – because they are difficult, complex bills, and I certainly appreciate that the ministers would not have been able to take them to consideration in detail. We know that over the life of this government we actually have not seen any bill –

Mary-Anne Thomas: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, the government business program debate is not an opportunity –

A member: What is the point of order?

Mary-Anne Thomas: Relevance – for the Manager of Opposition Business to attack our ministers in this place.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Leader of the House, the point of order is?

Mary-Anne Thomas: He is being irrelevant.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Brighton to continue.

James NEWBURY: Thank you, Deputy Speaker. I understand why the minister was nervous after denying the ministers an opportunity, and I would say again to the ministers responsible for the transport bill and the environment bill, I imagine you are perfectly able to go to the Leader of the House and say that you are not afraid to take these bills into consideration in detail because the coalition would like an opportunity to go through these bills in detail. We saw in relation to the environment bill, which is listed for debate this week – how embarrassing. We have a scheme that is starting after the recycling system in Victoria effectively collapsed five years ago, and five years later we still are not ready to implement the scheme – five years later. How embarrassing. Someone must be being paid by the hour, that is for sure. Five years later we do not have a scheme that is up and running. On Friday of last week one of 600 locations for people to deposit their cans was available and publicly stated to the community – one of 600 sites for the state. After the media drew attention to the fact, the Premier was rushed out to announce some locations, and in their haste they forgot any in the CBD. So the number one collection point for beverage cans in the state, I would imagine, being the CBD, has not got a single deposit point for the community. How very embarrassing. When it comes to business collection of cans – I will speak to that issue more in debate – there are no sites that are available.

So the coalition will be opposing the government business program because we proposed an opportunity for the government to consider two of the bills in detail, and it was denied. The government has also listed the potential for a motion to be debated this week. Our principle view is not about the substance of the motion – there have been motions debated in this chamber that have been extremely meritorious and many members on both sides have looked for an opportunity to speak to them – but we do feel that the government should use the government business program to debate legislation. That is the appropriate thing to do, and where there are motions listed, that is not an appropriate use, because we have seen numerous weeks where sledge motions have been listed and we have spent days of sitting weeks – two of three sitting days – debating motions. So the coalition will not be supporting the government business program on those grounds.

I note the Leader of the House spoke to a number of important bills. I am sure that one of the most important bills we could have been dealing with this week was the member for Berwick's Summary Offences Amendment (Decriminalisation of Public Drunkenness) Repeal Bill 2023. That should have been dealt with by the house this week. It is disappointing that next week we do not know what is going to happen. We do not know what is going to happen because the member for Berwick was not provided an opportunity to raise what was in terms of public safety a very important bill. The government took the view of pride over public safety on that bill, and it is particularly embarrassing for the government.

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (13:03): I am very happy to speak on this week's government business program, but I do have to say – I am just going to digress for a moment – it is curious; I wonder, in the opposition's tactical room when they are thinking up their master plan for the week –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, on relevance, this is a procedural debate. The member is not debating the procedural debate.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The debate in question is on the government business program. The member had just started and will continue on the government business program.

Nina TAYLOR: Indeed, and thank you for your very considered advice. I was just saying it is just curious that there is a consistency of opposing the government business program over and over and over again, and I do wonder about the rationale – I think the rationale is for the sake of it, so we can make a hiss and fuss and delay proceedings unnecessarily. On this side of the chamber we are very focused on the needs of the Victorian community and bringing forward the reforms that we were elected to deliver. I think we are fully within our right to do so, with the premise that here in this chamber everyone who wishes to do so will get the opportunity to debate the bills, as they should do, this week. I am very much looking forward to that debate. Do we resile from it? Not at all. Do you see me resiling from it? No. I welcome the debate and I welcome the conjecture, and I should say that the government welcomes the conjecture also. This is a space for democracy, and on that premise we are brought here today to debate these very important reforms and deliver on these reforms as well. Because we are not just focusing on creating the legislation; we want to actually deliver for the Victorian community. This is something that the opposition may want to take heed of – that it is one thing to oppose, oppose, oppose, but what does that actually mean for the broader community? I know that the Minister for Health has already spoken to matters to do with Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. There are some important road safety reforms there, and I would hate to think that the opposition were opposing them simply for the sake of it, when they will have ample opportunity to debate those bills properly in this chamber.

Further, we are going to speak to the Early Childhood Legislation Amendment (Premises Approval in Principle) Bill 2023. I know – when you go out in the community, when you go doorknocking and street stalling – how well received these early childhood education reforms have been to date, so we are continuing on with this because there very much is a need. We know, and it has already been debated in this chamber, how significant and important particularly those first seven years in a child's life are. This is why we are absolutely backing in our early childhood educators and the industry to make sure that they are fully supported in this process. Speaking in regard to this particular bill, with regard to the premises themselves, on the one hand it is about the importance of the curriculum and making sure that young Victorians are getting the education that they need, but it is also about making sure that they have premises that are fit for purpose. Hence it is important to debate that bill in this chamber. We want to continue on delivering for Victorians.

Finally, to the Environment Legislation Amendment (Circular Economy and Other Matters) Bill 2023. The container deposit scheme – oh, my goodness, the excitement around this in the community. They cannot wait. We are right, we are ready to go, and I know there is so much excitement on this front. What does it mean? On the one hand it means making sure that we actually increase the amount of materials that are recycled in this state – that is really, really important – but it also means significantly reducing the waste at the end of the day and specifically, if I take a further limb, the litter in our community, and who does not want to do that? These are important administrative reforms that help to back in the CDS program for Victoria. Those opposite might want to get on board instead of jacking up to every reform that we put in this place. I am not sure it is serving them well, and neither is it serving our wonderful Victorian community. Come on. Come on board, and let us continue driving these reforms forward.

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (13:08): I am pleased to rise to speak on the government business program, and as I do I just want to also acknowledge the timing this week. It is 11 years to

the day, last week, when we were not sitting, since the parliamentary apology for past adoption practices – a very important day – by the then Premier Ted Baillieu, the Nationals leader my predecessor Peter Ryan and the then opposition leader Daniel Andrews. They gave that formal apology for practices that were ‘misguided, unwarranted and caused immeasurable pain’, and I want to acknowledge the work that continues in that sector, including from the government.

It is important I think this week, when there is not another opportunity, to acknowledge that, so I am doing it here in the government business program. And I acknowledge those mothers and those children who are still dealing with it, and particularly, in my case, Brenda Coughlan of Independent Regional Mothers, who continues to fight for her cohort and for herself. And I acknowledge the government’s decision last week on a redress scheme and acknowledge also that there is still a fight continuing on elements of that. I thank you for your indulgence in allowing me to raise some of that in the government business program, but I do think it is important that the house does acknowledge the anniversary of that apology, which meant so much to so many people.

On the government business program as proposed, I do find it amusing. Here we were two weeks ago being told that the transport legislation was so good that we had 13 days to get out and deal with it and to consult the community and we would have the opportunity to debate it when we came back. We asked to go into consideration in detail, to look at the bill in detail – the government members are so proud of this bill. What are we going to do? No, we cannot go into detail; we are not going to be able to ask questions on this bill. It is 171 pages long. It has at least 10 different reforms in it. I might add that I asked when we were debating that 13-day adjournment if any of the government members ever read a piece of legislation. Based on the member for Albert Park’s contribution just then, the answer is clearly no. I am not sure she understands what this legislation is about.

We hear the member for Albert Park say that the opposition’s tactics room just looks up and says no. Funnily enough, that is what we get every time from the government. When we ask the legitimate, democratic, transparent question of if we can go into consideration in detail, we just get no every time. Once upon a time, when the Premier was the manager of government business, we at least got the kiddies’ ice-cream response, which is ‘We’ll see’. We would say ‘Can we go into consideration in detail?’ and the then manager of government business would say ‘We’ll see’. We do not even get that now; we just get a straight-out no: ‘We don’t want to talk about our bills. We don’t have ministers who are competent and prepared to go into the detail of the bill and answer questions from the chamber about it.’

The transport legislation is one of those bills that has been subject to a 13-day turnaround. The government members are always telling us ‘Oh, you’ve got plenty of time to read it and to consult’. Again, I highlight that I do not think any of them have actually read the bill. Literally today I am still getting responses from stakeholders on that piece of legislation. They have got questions. They have got concerns. I would like to be able to raise those concerns with the minister at the table and have those clauses debated – to get to the nub of what the government is trying to do, whether it has consulted with the stakeholders in the community, whether it understands the implications of the various parts of that legislation that it will be implementing. But we just get the answer no.

It is a bit rich for government members like the member for Albert Park to say to us ‘Oh, you’re just the no people, because you oppose everything’. How about saying yes occasionally when the opposition, or even the Greens, ask to go into some debate about a piece of legislation? The government members all get up and say how proud they are of their legislation. Well, let us open it up for a bit of debate. You could actually answer some questions on the detail of it.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Through the Chair!

Danny O’BRIEN: This bill is 171 pages long, but they just want to get up and read their 10-minute speeches from the Premier’s office and all move on and use their numbers to just push stuff through without debate. That is why, member for Albert Park, we are continuing to say no, because we think

this chamber should be a democratic chamber where people get the chance to debate issues, not just get up and give speeches. That is why we will continue to oppose the government business program when the government does not allow this chamber to function as a democracy.

Belinda WILSON (Narre Warren North) (13:13): I do sit in this chamber a lot, and I hear lots of different speeches as we progress through the week. I do look forward to the day that I come in here and the opposition agrees to the government business program that we put forward, because –

A member interjected.

Belinda WILSON: No, not this year you have not. In the 12 months that I have been here –

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Through the Chair!

Belinda WILSON: you have not agreed –

A member interjected.

Belinda WILSON: I would disagree with that, because I have been in the chamber every single time –

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: If the member for Narre Warren North could direct her comments through the Chair.

Belinda WILSON: Sorry, Deputy Speaker.

A member interjected.

Belinda WILSON: We can agree to disagree on that, but it seems that every time we put forward the government business program it is opposed by the opposition. I do not think that any of us gain anything from sledging particular members in this place about who has and has not read the legislation. We do go to our stakeholders. We all engage with our stakeholders, and sometimes that does need to be done in a swifter manner than at other times. That is part of our job.

We were speaking about the recycling program that is to be launched tomorrow, which is a really exciting program for all of our electorates, on both sides of the chamber. It is a really exciting time for the environment. I know there are a lot of young kids who have been collecting their cans over the last few months who have got them all ready to go to deposit.

James Newbury: Where are they going to put them? What are they going to do with them? The poor member for Melbourne.

Belinda WILSON: Well, they are going to take them to the places where they can recycle them, member for Brighton, and that is the exciting part of this scheme. I know there was a comment made that there is nowhere in the city for the offices and places and there is no-one doing collection points. Well, I was actually at a business last week with the member for Laverton here, and we went to Fruit2Work. It is an incredible organisation, and they are doing a great program where they are working with one of the providers – I think it is Cleanaway that they are working with – where they are delivering their fruit to hundreds and hundreds of businesses in the state and are actually also collecting from those businesses. So there are collection points.

James Newbury: So they have got to buy fruit for them to collect their cans.

Belinda WILSON: No. You would just need to be an existing client. They are helping those businesses out. So there are collection points and there are lots of different ways that people are recycling their cans and their bottles, which is a really exciting point.

What I am really excited to talk about is early childhood, and as a mum of three kids I know how important kinder is. I think the pre-prep program is an incredible program, moving forward. I have two boys that are young in the year, January boys, that I sent at the right age, whatever that right age

is. I know there are a number of parents on both sides of the chamber that have probably had that debate over when to send their kids. I know how important kinder, both three- and four-year-old, and also that new pre-prep program are going to be for those ones that are young in the year to give them that early development. I can actually see the member for Brighton agreeing with me. You have made my day; that is so exciting.

Members interjecting.

Belinda WILSON: Yes. We actually are in agreeance that kinder is a good thing, which is a great place to be.

Let us talk about free kinder at this point in time, should we? I think our government introducing free kinder is something that is a great initiative, which we took to the election, and it is also something that has been really strongly taken by the public. I guess you can see that from the 55 people on this side of the chamber, who were elected nearly 12 months ago. It is an exciting milestone for many of us. But it is a very, very strong program. I do not think anyone realises that kinder is up to \$2500 a year, which is something, I must say, 22 years ago I found a big surprise, an unexpected surprise and a huge expense. With the cost of living, for those young families it really does make a massive difference.

I would just like to say that I am a very proud member of the government. I think the government program that we are bringing forward this week is very strong, and I would like to commend the motion to the house.

Roma BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (13:18): I rise to speak on the government business program and support the fact that we will be opposing the government business program. The reason we are doing this is because we think it is very reasonable for us to assume that when we come into the chamber and have complex debates that need to take place on legislation that is quite detailed, then going into consideration in detail is a very reasonable request. In the eight years I have been in this place I think I have seen it twice. Now, this is something that we are asking. There are in particular two pieces of legislation out of the three that we will be debating that we need to have a more detailed understanding of to be able to debate on behalf of our community the pros and the cons and the benefits and the challenges. When we are denied that opportunity consistently it should be no surprise to the government that we are opposing the government business program.

We will be speaking this week on three pieces of legislation. There is the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2023, which has 10 different reforms within the 170 pages of the bill. I am quite astounded that in South-West Coast, where the roads are so dangerous and are crumbling literally before our eyes, there is no plan by this government to do anything. This was an opportunity for the government to address an issue that is extremely front of mind and concerning to all of the residents of South-West Coast who use these roads, whether they are passengers in the car with Mum and Dad taking them to school who talk to me about how worried they are about these roads, whether they are mums and dads worried about getting home from work at night, or whether they are bus drivers, taxidivers or truck drivers and it is their workplace that they are feeling completely unsafe in.

We see no plan from this government, and this legislation is a missed opportunity. We have got the Christmas period approaching, and people are getting more and more concerned. We want people to be safe on our roads, particularly as this busy period arrives coming up to Christmas. We see roads like the one from Port Fairy to Warrnambool literally breaking up and crumbling before our very eyes, and we see the road from Warrnambool to Mortlake absolutely falling apart. I could stand here forever and go on about that, but that is the reason we are asking for the opportunity to go into consideration in detail, so we can really press the government for the details on how this legislation will affect our community.

The other piece of legislation that we will be discussing is the Early Childhood Legislation Amendment (Premises Approval in Principle) Bill 2023. That is a fairly simple bill, and we are not asking to go into consideration in detail on it, but once again here we are discussing child care and the opportunity is there to recognise that there is a problem in South-West Coast for families to be able to

access child care. The availability is massively challenging. People want to come together and help the government by having an inquiry and being able to present at that inquiry and share the bespoke ways that they can see in the regions that we could address this issue today – not in four years time or two years time when their children are at school and the problem is still not solved. Unfortunately we have missed that opportunity because this bill does not even discuss that.

Then we get on to the circular economy and the container deposit scheme, and that is a bill that definitely needs to go into consideration in detail. There is so much information here that we just do not have because the government is not ready to deliver. This starts on 1 November – that is tomorrow – and in Portland, for example, there is nowhere you can take your recyclables to. You cannot take your containers. You cannot take your bottles. Heaven forbid you are trying to store them and you crush them and then you find out they are no longer able to be put into the system conveniently. You have to try and find another way, to go to some provider who may have some deal with one of the three contractors. But this detail is still not out there. I have spoken at length with retailers, publicans and owners of businesses who will have tomorrow the situation where they could benefit from the scheme, but they have had no consultation – none. There has been no consultation whatsoever, so it should not come as a surprise to the government that we would like to go into consideration in detail on that bill.

We heard members on the other side talk about democracy and process and fruitful debate. That is why we are here. If you continue to deny us the ability to go into consideration in detail, expect us to oppose the government business program. I would have thought that was a very logical step-through process that you could figure out for yourselves. If you want cooperation, give us the opportunity to do what we do on behalf of our community, and that is debate effectively.

Assembly divided on motion:

Ayes (49): Juliana Addison, Jacinta Allan, Colin Brooks, Josh Bull, Anthony Carbines, Ben Carroll, Darren Cheeseman, Anthony Cianflone, Sarah Connolly, Chris Couzens, Jordan Crugnale, Lily D'Ambrosio, Daniela De Martino, Steve Dimopoulos, Paul Edbrooke, Matt Fregon, Ella George, Luba Grigorovitch, Bronwyn Halfpenny, Katie Hall, Paul Hamer, Martha Haylett, Mathew Hilakari, Melissa Horne, Lauren Kathage, Sonya Kilkenny, Nathan Lambert, Gary Maas, Alison Marchant, Kathleen Matthews-Ward, Steve McGhie, Paul Mercurio, John Mullahy, Tim Pallas, Danny Pearson, Pauline Richards, Tim Richardson, Ros Spence, Nick Staikos, Natalie Suleyman, Meng Heang Tak, Nina Taylor, Kat Theophanous, Mary-Anne Thomas, Emma Vulin, Iwan Walters, Vicki Ward, Dylan Wight, Belinda Wilson

Noes (29): Brad Battin, Jade Benham, Roma Britnell, Tim Bull, Martin Cameron, Annabelle Cleeland, Wayne Farnham, Sam Groth, Matthew Guy, Sam Hibbins, David Hodgett, Emma Kealy, Tim McCurdy, Cindy McLeish, James Newbury, Danny O'Brien, Michael O'Brien, John Pesutto, Tim Read, Richard Riordan, Brad Rowswell, Ellen Sandell, David Southwick, Bill Tilley, Bridget Vallance, Peter Walsh, Kim Wells, Nicole Werner, Jess Wilson

Motion agreed to.

Members statements

HW Greenham & Sons

Peter WALSH (Murray Plains) (13:29): On behalf of the Tongala community and the wider beef industry, I would like to congratulate Peter Greenham, managing director of HW Greenham & Sons, on the opening of their new beef processing plant at Tongala. The Greenhams are a sixth-generation business in the meat industry, and what they unveiled on Saturday 7 October is a state-of-the-art plant that replaces the plant that was there for the last 30 years. By the end of the year they hope to have reached a capacity of 700 cattle per day, next year building to a full capacity of over 1000 head a day by May. Most importantly this will create 230 additional jobs in Tongala – a fantastic result for that

community and a major investment in the beef industry. The facility's design focuses on animal welfare, safety and zero-waste carcass utilisation. Additionally Greenhams have committed to environmental stewardship. Their commitment to environmental stewardship is evident with a solar power system and cogeneration providing 70 per cent of the plant's energy needs, and the upgraded water recycling capability reduces water consumption by 30 per cent. This is not only a major investment in the town of Tongala – it underwrites that town as the major employer there – but a major investment in the beef processing sector of Victoria and the export dollars that it will generate as it exports prime beef to the rest of the world.

Essendon electorate schools

Danny PEARSON (Essendon – Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop, Assistant Treasurer, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC) (13:31): I rise to give a shout-out to all the year 12 students at Strathmore Secondary College, Lowther Hall, St Columba's and Mount Alexander College, who are working tirelessly as we speak, working their way through their year 12 exams. I want to particularly give a shout-out to Mount Alexander College, which is incredibly well led by Dani Angelico. Mount Alexander College had a year 7 cohort intake of 27 students in 2015, and the school is going gangbusters thanks to a \$26 million investment by the Andrews–Allan Labor government. Why this is important is that this school services the Flemington public housing estate. I spoke with the architect, and the architect wanted to make sure that there was a multilevel building and that the year 12 floor was at the top level so students could gaze out over the city and aspire to work in the city and have a job. It is about making sure that children from a wide range of backgrounds can get to learn together and have a quality education at Mount Alexander College. This builds on the investment the government is making when it comes to the Flemington community hub, when it comes to employment programs. We have got new public housing that is being built down at Flemington, opposed by the Greens political party. We are going to rebuild the towers – again, opposed by the Greens political party, these frauds, cons, charlatans. They are a disgrace. They cannot be trusted when it comes to doing what is right, what is fair and what is in the interests of public housing tenants in the state of Victoria.

Musculoskeletal Australia

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (13:32): Today is not just Halloween but Rattle Ya Bones Day for Musculoskeletal Australia, their national awareness call for all Australians to take care of muscle, bone and joint conditions. Musculoskeletal Australia is located in my electorate. They do a fantastic job, and I wanted to give them a huge shout-out today in their first Rattle Ya Bones Day activity, hopefully the first of many as we continue. In Victoria alone there are over 2.25 million Victorians living with the chronic pain, discomfort and personal, professional and financial impacts of a musculoskeletal condition. That is why this day is so important. In fact one in three people suffer from some sort of muscle or joint condition, so a big shout-out to Rattle Ya Bones Day.

Mount Scopus Memorial College

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (13:33): I also wanted to give a shout-out to Looms for Light, an activity the Gandel Besen grade 1 kids have done to make these lovely bracelets. They have made 1000 bracelets and raised over \$5000 for those suffering in Israel, the thousands of families that have lost loved ones and those victims of terror. Congratulations to Talya, her daughter and many of those kids. The money is going to UAA, NDA and the Yarava project. Activities like this are making a really big difference for those that are suffering and dealing with a very traumatic time at the moment.

Creative October

Colin BROOKS (Bundoora – Minister for Development Victoria, Minister for Precincts, Minister for Creative Industries) (13:34): Victoria is the cultural capital of the nation. Victorians have flocked back to Creative October, a month chock-a-block with events such as Melbourne Fringe, with 461 events and more than 3000 performances at 148 venues; the Melbourne International Jazz

Festival, with 53,000 people attending 140 performances, including by international superstars Chaka Khan and Nile Rodgers. For live music, rock The Eighty-Six festival in Melbourne's north, with over 220 gigs at more than 60 venues. Victoria is Australia's home for digital games, and Melbourne International Games Week presented more than 70 events; Big Games Night Out attracted 6000 people to Fed Square; and PAX Aus was the biggest yet, with more than 82,000 games fans attending. Four thousand people snapped up tickets to the Wheeler Centre's Spring Fling. Sound Tracks saw a steam train carry music fans from Melbourne to Charlton for a live music festival. And the Live Music for Flood Recovery program saw 11 events in flood-impacted communities, including Rochella at Rochester, with 1500 people attending. The Ballarat International Foto Biennale attracted more than 30,000 – and there is more, like Craft Contemporary and the return season of the fantastic *Moulin Rouge!* And the 2023 Music Victoria Awards are on tonight to honour and celebrate our world-leading music industry. Here in Victoria the creativity does not stop, and there is plenty more to look forward to across the summer months.

Armadale train station

Michael O'BRIEN (Malvern) (13:35): In 2016 – that is seven years and four public transport ministers ago – the historic delicatessen building at Armadale railway station was closed down by Metro Trains Melbourne and Public Transport Victoria, apparently because it was structurally unsafe. For seven years now Armadale locals have watched as this heritage building has progressively deteriorated, literally rotting before their eyes. It is a terrible eyesore, but it also serves as a visual example of the neglect by this Labor government of the people of my electorate, because despite this issue having been raised by me with three successive Labor ministers for public transport – the member for Bendigo East; the member for Williamstown, who is at the table; and the member for Niddrie – nothing has happened. If this condemned building was at a major railway station in a Labor seat, we would have seen a response in seven days, not seven years. My challenge to the new Minister for Public and Active Transport is pretty simple: sit down with PTV – your department – sit down with Metro and sit down with Stonnington council and fix this long-running eyesore at Armadale station. Demonstrate to my constituents that this government actually gives a damn about people who vote Liberal and elect Liberal members to this Parliament. Decisions should be made on the basis of merit, not simply on the basis of the political colour of your local MP.

Republic of Türkiye centenary

Iwan WALTERS (Greenvale) (13:36): I am sure the house joins me in wishing Victoria's strong and proud Turkish community a very happy republic day. This week marks the centenary of the founding of the Republic of Türkiye under its first president and father of the nation, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. I am delighted that the Victorian government is supporting many special community events this week, with an investment of \$200,000 to celebrate this auspicious milestone and the strong relationship shared between Türkiye and Victoria. It is a relationship that has been sustained by the generosity of the Turkish people following the carnage at Gallipoli and Çanakkale in 1915. It is a relationship that has been underpinned by the migration of many Turkish people to Australia, a large proportion of whom have settled in Melbourne's northern suburbs and my electorate of Greenvale.

As co-convenor of the Parliamentary Friends of Türkiye, it has been a pleasure working with Consul General Doğan F Işık and his team at the Melbourne consulate to advance relations between Victoria and Türkiye. I am proud that my electorate of Greenvale has the largest Turkish–Australian population of any district represented in this house, and I am deeply grateful for the contributions of so, so many. Cumhuriyet Bayramınız kutlu olsun.

Roxburgh Park United Soccer Club

Iwan WALTERS (Greenvale) (13:37): Congratulations to all players, coaches, volunteers and generous sponsors of Roxburgh Park United Soccer Club. It was wonderful to be with the club community last Friday to celebrate another successful season. I want to particularly acknowledge the outstanding service and leadership of Ayad and Dunia Botres, who work tirelessly to provide

opportunities for young people at Roxy United. This was deservedly recognised with Hume City Council's 2023 sport and recreation community achievement award at a special ceremony I was delighted to attend last week.

Goulburn Valley floods

Annabelle CLEELAND (Euroa) (13:38): Earlier this month the Seymour community gathered to reflect on the year that has passed since the devastating October 2022 floods. The floods submerged 250 homes and businesses in our local community. At the Seymour recovery hub's community day 140 individuals and organisations were recognised for offering their support during the flood event. Alongside my predecessor Steph Ryan and many locals, I was honoured to be recognised by our community as a local champion – the certificate is proudly displayed in my office as a source of motivation to fight for our community. I will not have time to name them all, but these community champions range from CFA and SES volunteers, local businesses and sporting clubs to families and dedicated individuals. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the local heroes who contributed to the flood recovery efforts and who continue to stand by our town. There are still over 30 uninhabited homes and many displaced families. The past year has been challenging, but I remain immensely proud of this community's resilience in times of crisis. Not all heroes wear capes, but many live in Seymour.

Tooborac Primary School

Annabelle CLEELAND (Euroa) (13:39): I also had the opportunity to attend the 150th celebration for Tooborac Primary School. It is a small school with a big heart, and it was great to see past students and staff reminiscing and meeting the newest generation of students. I loved the stories of the snow events of the 1980s, the kissing tree, Friday fun, the Heathcote sports carnival and everyone's hatred of walking to the toilets. Thank you to all the past and present teachers, staff and students who made Tooborac Primary School what it is today. To the organisers of the wonderful celebration, thank you.

Middle East conflict

Kathleen MATTHEWS-WARD (Broadmeadows) (13:39): The terrorist organisation Hamas does not speak for the Palestinian people. The Israeli government does not speak for all Jewish people. I condemn the atrocious killing of 1400 civilians in Israel and the taking of hostages. I also condemn the continued killing of over 8300 civilians in Gaza, including over 3300 children. The blockade of water, food, medicine, fuel and communications to the entire population of Gaza is both inhumane and horrifying. I condemn all acts that do not fit within international law. I call for an immediate ceasefire from both sides, immediate access to aid and an immediate release of all hostages.

Broadmeadows electorate multicultural events

Kathleen MATTHEWS-WARD (Broadmeadows) (13:40): Unfortunately, a small minority of people are using this conflict to amplify hate speech and similar actions here in Australia. This will not be tolerated. I am proud to live in a country where such hateful displays are prohibited and where every person has the same rights and can expect to be treated fairly and with dignity and respect. I am so proud to live in the electorate of Broadmeadows, where I am reminded every day that multiculturalism is worth protecting and worth fighting for, where people from all over the world celebrated together at the Fawkner festival on Sunday and at least 20 different ethnic groups were sharing barbecues and playgrounds peacefully at Jack Roper Reserve. At the Hume Central Secondary College year 12 graduation on Friday you could hear both the haka and the zalget as the students' achievements were celebrated. I am so grateful to all of the community leaders who work hard every day to celebrate our diversity and safeguard our communities from division and hate.

Emerson School

Brad BATTIN (Berwick) (13:41): I rise after being invited last week to the special celebration of Emerson specialist school in Dandenong, an amazing school that produces special kids for a great future. John Mooney, who has been the principal there for I will not say how many years, but it is over

20 – he is obviously just a young principal there – has been doing an amazing job with students who have special needs. The changes he has made in that school and the way he works with the kids is outstanding, and every single teacher I have spoken to comes back and talks about the work he has done in that school to make sure that it is one of the best schools delivering specialist services for these kids.

I had the pleasure of working at this school for a 12-month period as a police officer in the police in schools program and working with youth development. One of the kids who came back I knew as Big Wal. If anyone looks him up on Instagram, he is flavour_flavour_flavour. A young kid that went through that school, he is so committed to making sure that he takes the opportunities in life that he was given by that school. He is now an entrepreneur and is buying his second business – an amazing story. Young Nick, who I used to speak with about football, who knew every result from every game from when football started up until today's date, is an amazing outcome – he celebrates the fact that he can travel on public transport as an independent person. I think that is absolutely outstanding from that school. This side will always stand with specialist schools, and I am going to invite our shadow minister out, because obviously a recent royal commission partly had discussions around getting rid of special schools, and we want to make sure that we stand up for them.

Middle East conflict

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (13:42): I rise to offer my prayers, thoughts and condolences to the communities of Israel and Palestine. I begin by standing in solidarity with the Victorian Parliament's motion of 17 October, which unequivocally condemned the heinous acts by Hamas on 7 October, which resulted in over 200 Israelis being taken hostage and at least 1400 innocent Israeli lives being indiscriminately taken – the single largest massacre of Jewish people since the Holocaust. In doing so, I also stand to draw the house's attention to the unfolding events currently taking place in Gaza.

The profound suffering being experienced by innocent civilians alike as a result of the escalating military actions, which according to the United Nations have tragically resulted in more than 7000 Palestinians being killed, including a reported 3000 children, and a further 20,000 Palestinians reported to have been injured, including over 6300 children. The majority of Gaza's 2.3 million inhabitants are now reported to be largely displaced, with little to no access to food, water, energy, health care and sanitation. This unfolding humanitarian disaster continues to break my heart and the hearts of all Victorians.

All lives are precious, be it the tragic loss of innocent Israeli lives or the loss of innocent Palestinian lives. I acknowledge the immense pain, trauma and suffering being experienced by Jewish, Muslim and Christian communities who have families and loved ones in Israel, Gaza and neighbouring territories.

Victoria is a vibrant multicultural state where our diversity is our strength and where international events have seldom impacted social cohesion. Locally everyone should be able to feel safe and there should never be any room for hateful prejudice from antisemitism or Islamophobia. As the member for Pascoe Vale, which includes parts of Brunswick West and Coburg, I want to make it very clear that I stand with every member of my community who has been impacted by these events.

Don Rosa bowls tournament

Kim WELLS (Rowville) (13:44): Today I rise to welcome both the retirement villages of the Rowville electorate and the Rowville–Lysterfield Rotary Club, who are visiting Parliament this week. As a yearly event, I invite all retirement villages within the Rowville electorate to come and compete in a bowls tournament where the winner is awarded the highly prized Don Rosa trophy. The village tasked with defending their title is actually two villages, Waterford Valley Lakes and The Links, who combined to make up a team and ended up coming in first place in November of last year. I wish the best of luck to all the bowlers competing this year, and I look forward to seeing them return again next year.

Rotary Club of Rowville–Lysterfield

Kim WELLS (Rowville) (13:45): Also attending Parliament this week is the Rowville–Lysterfield Rotary Club, who are coming for a tour and to check out what is up for debate in the chambers. I hope all members in the Parliament will make them feel welcome here as they enjoy their time in Victoria's Parliament.

Wollert Secondary College

Bronwyn HALFPENNY (Thomastown) (13:45): Our infrastructure builds more than roads, schools, stations and level crossings; it also builds communities and supports people to do wonderful things. Wollert Secondary College under the leadership of principal Ms Melissa Lozanovski has embraced an amazing project to build bee hotels to provide food and shelter for native bees, planting bee-attracting plants, decorating bee homes and so much more. It is thanks to all the students working in their own time, but none of it was possible without lead teacher Ms Brigitte Fletcher. I had the great pleasure of visiting the bee hotels not long ago.

Middle East conflict

Bronwyn HALFPENNY (Thomastown) (13:46): With a broken heart I offer my condolences to Mohamed El Saafen, who lost his wife and 40 members of her family, mostly children, in the Israeli attacks on Gaza in Khan Yunis last Wednesday night. Khan Yunis is in the south of Gaza, where people were told to evacuate to. Why so many from one family? Because families now come together so they can die together. They have no hope and feel abandoned by the Western world.

Housing crisis

Tim READ (Brunswick) (13:46): Australia's rental vacancy rate has just hit an all-time low of 1.1 per cent. On the weekend I met a couple whose rent had recently gone up from \$500 a week to \$580 a week. This means property investors are just putting up the rent as high as they like; their house did not get 16 per cent better. As reported on the *Onion* website, 'Landlord forced to raise rent due to thinking of bigger number'. Labor recently announced some housing policy in September which relies upon the private sector to build more homes. Unfortunately, it also involves demolishing government-owned public housing towers and replacing them with private housing and a net increase of an average of 16 social homes per year. With a public housing waiting list of 125,000 people, we are getting an average of 16 more social homes per year. There is so little ambition in this policy that the Greens cannot support it. The rental crisis will get worse if this is the best that Labor has to offer. Labor must rein in these unlimited rent increases and build more public housing rather than destroying it.

North Eastern Melbourne Chinese Association

Nathan LAMBERT (Preston) (13:47): I had the chance earlier this month to join the North Eastern Melbourne Chinese Association to commemorate the Mid-Autumn Festival and Chinese National Day along with Chinese Consul Song Chongsheng. Thank you to George Zeng and the NEMCA team for all the work they do in our community – and a particular shout-out to longstanding NEMCA member Wu Jihua, who told us he could still in fact remember the very first Chinese National Day in 1949. I think he is 90 years young, Mr Wu, and still going strong.

Centre of Greek Ex-Servicemen's Elderly Citizens Club of Darebin and District

Nathan LAMBERT (Preston) (13:48): I would also like to acknowledge the work of Eleni Mylonas, Toula Sardellis and the Greek ex-servicemen's club of Darebin and district. They do great work in our area. We joined them for lunch the other day and had a chance to discuss a range of issues, including Preston Market, where we are hopeful that new five-year leases will be signed with traders in the coming weeks.

Oakhill Food Justice Farm

Nathan LAMBERT (Preston) (13:48): We also welcomed a visiting delegation of Western Australian MPs to Preston last week to visit the innovative Oakhill Food Justice Farm on Tyler Street and hear about their indigenous garden and their work with Preston Primary and the local community. Thank you to Nick Rose, Lisa Reid and Jemma Stefanou for hosting us, and to Kim, Sam, Alli and the team at Tyler's Milk Bar for lunch. Unfortunately, the West Australians had very limited time in Melbourne, but we are very glad they got to see the best of it.

Reservoir

Nathan LAMBERT (Preston) (13:49): Finally, we were out doorknocking north of Reservoir Views Primary recently, and I just wanted to note that both townhouse development and the distribution of council funding continue to be significant issues in that part of the world.

Beumaris Children's Playhouse

Brad ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (13:49): A fortnight ago I spoke in this chamber of Bayside council's plans to take over Beumaris Children's Playhouse in order to expand the neighbouring council-owned kindergarten. Last week I met with Children's Playhouse president Allie Gaunt and kids together with their mums and their dads. To say that their demeanour was one of great disappointment is really an understatement. The Beumaris Children's Playhouse has nurtured the physical, mental and emotional wellbeing of our smallest community members for over 40 years and allows parents and caregivers to lean on each other and support each other when they most need it. It delivers an invaluable social connection, and it means something to people both young and old. I have had countless messages from adult constituents who attended the playhouse over the years – those who attended in the 1980s and 1990s – saying it supported them during a vital developmental stage of their youth and that they would be tremendously disappointed if the playhouse was split up and relocated to two similar sites.

Bayside council's plans are at best an unintended consequence of the government's supposed free kinder program, a program that those on the ground know is definitely not free. Whatever conversations take place, I want this to be absolutely clear: I support an ongoing and viable Beumaris Children's Playhouse and wholeheartedly reject any move by Bayside council to undermine and destroy this magnificent community organisation for this generation and the next.

Country Fire Authority Mernda brigade

Lauren KATHAGE (Yan Yean) (13:50): I was honoured to be invited by captain Steve Dusting to the Mernda CFA's 50th anniversary dinner and awards on Saturday night. That room was full of people who are our neighbours – they are tradies or they have got a shop – yet they are also the heroes of our community who are protecting us at the times that we need it. There were some fabulous reflections on the change that there has been in the community since Mernda CFA was founded. They started in a tin shed next to the mechanics institute, but now there they are on Schotters Road in their fabulous fit-for-purpose facility.

The Mernda CFA crews are notable in our community for their open days and the way that they welcome community members and children, including mine, to come and sit in the trucks and have a go. It is a very inclusive space, and I think that is why at the awards dinner there was one long table full – absolutely full – of new young volunteers. I thank the Mernda CFA for all that they have contributed to our community, and I congratulate them on their culture, which continues to attract people who also will go on to be absolute heroes in our community. To captain Steven Dusting and to all that were there, I thank you very much for having me, and I look forward to 50 more years of the Mernda CFA.

The Eighty-Six

Kat THEOPHANOUS (Northcote) (13:52): I rise to congratulate the mega success of the biggest and best party a tramline has ever thrown, the mighty Eighty-Six music festival. Over the weekend the humble 86 tramline down High Street in Northcote, Thornbury and Preston became the epic staging ground for a marathon 22 hours of free gigs. The whole area reverberated with the sound of over 220 acts at more than 65 venues, an absolute triumph of inner-north creativity and artistry.

I was super excited to start the day opening the Howl-O-Ween dog show, where pups strutted their stuff on stage and vied for prizes, all hosted by the outstanding Myf Warhurst. For those who sought to feast on more than music, Joey Kellock and his team from Thornbury's 1800 Lasagna put on an incredible street party, with local food, wine, beer and coffee. Meanwhile the independent music exchange bustled, with indie record labels offering their wares, and up and down High Street you could not miss the energy of our dedicated 86 party tram all day long with onboard musicians.

Seeing our suburbs pumping with life and revelry made my heart sing – gigs sold out, venues packed, the very best of live music in Melbourne. The inner north is a hotbed of creativity and talent. I am so incredibly proud of how our community came together to create something truly iconic and totally unique. I announced this festival last year. The Victorian Labor government funded it, and masterminds Woody McDonald and Johanna Greenway delivered it.

St Peter's Primary School, Bentleigh East

Nick STAIKOS (Bentleigh) (13:54): It was my absolute pleasure to visit my old school St Peter's last week to see *Westall '66: The Musical*, written by performing arts teacher Drew Lane. The production was about the famous UFO sighting at Westall in the member for Clarinda's electorate in 1966. The students were absolutely stunning in the production. Congratulations Allegra Aherne-McInteer, Alice Bottomley, Oscar D'Zilva, Henry McCracken, Sid Noble, Aislinn Scahill, Isabelle Suttie, Tylah Twitchett, Tess Budic, Antonia Abbondanza, Siara McCarthy, Maddie McDowall, Faith Andrinopoulos, Macy Carter, Katya Greco, Beth Keyburn, Ella Kerger, Holly Pelc, Jewel Roby, Amelia Virgona, Lulu Bloomfield, Scarlett Bloomfield, Katelynn Chung Yan Kow, Zander Engelbrecht, Chloe McDowall, Sophia Pinto, Lilly Swart, Arianna Valis, Eloise Wood-Bradley, Noah Bui, Ellena Catania, Paige Divall, Liberty Paul-McKeown, Hannah Matthews, Paige Reneaux, Jobe Wilson, Bianca Archer, Camille Bottomley, Isabel Bonnici, Alexia Hlongwane, Stella Kalinowski, Jasmine Li, Ella Quinn, Olivia Trojak Nyamuka and Stefania Vlassopoulos. Congratulations again, everyone. It was a wonderful production. I absolutely loved it. I am very proud of my old school St Peter's, which continues to do better every year when it comes to its performing arts program. They did a fantastic job.

Diwali

Juliana ADDISON (Wendouree) (13:55): Today I wish to thank president Elangovan Shanmugam and members of the executive of the Ballarat Indian Association for the opportunity to celebrate Diwali with the Ballarat Indian community on the weekend. I wish to thank members of the Ballarat Indian Association executive: Manoj Khandelwal, Rakesh Patel, Geetha Stephen, Ayon Chakraborty, Neil D'coutho, Rajinder Gill, Sumira Gambhir, Dr Sundram Sivamalai, Bandhavi Naga, Xavier Mani, Harisankar Parippaayillam and Ashish Kakaan.

It was a great honour to attend the event with the Honourable Catherine King, mayor Cr Des Hudson, my parliamentary colleagues Martha Haylett and Michaela Settle and intercultural ambassadors. Well done to Geetha and Sumira on emceeding the joyous event alongside Ujjwal and Tharunesh. It was a wonderful celebration of community, with outstanding cultural performances by dancers, singers and musicians. Thank you to the sponsors who supported the event.

The Allan Labor government is proud to support Diwali and other multicultural festivals and events, including the recent Ganesh Chaturthi festival, which was held in September in Ballarat. I am also proud

that the Allan Labor government is providing \$900,000 for the building of the Ballarat Hindu temple and cultural centre at Ross Creek. I wish all members of the Indian community a very happy Diwali.

Cranbourne Softball Club

Pauline RICHARDS (Cranbourne) (13:56): Sundays are for softball – not for me but for other members of the Cranbourne community. I was really pleased to be able to celebrate the Cranbourne Softball Club's 40th anniversary, and it was one of those sparkling events that only people in Cranbourne – well, in Clyde in this case – can put on. I would really like to acknowledge the extraordinary work of the committee members. There are a couple of names in common here. There is Amanda Clunes – who is also called Moo – Lisa Lever, Nadia Clunes, Terri Slinger, Matt Clunes and Emily Lever. They are extraordinarily hardworking members of the committee, who bring joy and happiness to so many members of the community. I would also like to acknowledge the lifelong members: Elaine Duyvestyn, Debbie Campbell, Dorothy Burke – who is known as Dot, appropriately – and Natalie Johnston. There was a lot of laughter and a lot of fun. There were games set up for the kids as well. Softball is a really important participation sport.

Jimmy Sharman's Boxers

Pauline RICHARDS (Cranbourne) (13:58): Sundays are also for celebrating book launches, and I was pleased to be able to attend the book launch of Stephen McGrath's terrific *Jimmy Sharman's Boxers*. It is a great tale. It really does highlight that when the world war was raging Jimmy Sharman's Boxers troupe did not go to war. I commend anyone going to any book launch, because to have the opportunity to hear from people is a great chance for all.

Wurreker Awards

Chris COUZENS (Geelong) (13:58): I want to congratulate the Geelong Aboriginal community and Gordon TAFE for recently winning a Wurreker award, the Aboriginal awards in education. This is really special for my community. The Aboriginal community actually spent two years developing that course, the mumgu-dhal course, which is aimed at young Aboriginal students who are not in the school system but want to continue their education in a culturally safe space. So I was really proud to see that Gordon won that award, and I do want to acknowledge the Minister for Skills and TAFE and the Minister for Education at the time James Merlino who made a commitment to get this course off the ground and provide the funding that was required. We are now hearing particularly from young women who have been involved in the course, which has been highly successful, that they now realise that they can go to university – something that was never in their minds previously.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

Members

Minister for Jobs and Industry

Minister for Government Services

Absence

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:01): I rise to inform the house today that the Deputy Premier will answer questions for the portfolio of jobs and industry. The Assistant Treasurer will answer questions for the portfolios of public and active transport, consumer affairs and government services, and I will answer questions for the portfolios of treaty and First Peoples and women.

Questions without notice and ministers statements

Payroll tax

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:01): In a letter to Victorian medical groups the Treasurer admitted that the government's health tax will put many medical practices out of business.

A member: Your question is to who?

John PESUTTO: My question is to the Premier. Will the Premier do the right thing and reverse the health tax?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:02): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question and for the opportunity to again repeat for the benefit of the Leader of the Opposition, as has been explained previously by the Treasurer, who has portfolio responsibility for these matters, and the Minister for Health, that there has been no change, and the Treasurer today made that very clear and provided that advice.

Let us also be clear on the action that we have been taking in terms of having to address the critical issue in primary care, which is of course addressing the decade of neglect from the former federal Liberal–National government. This is the key issue here that is affecting access to GP care in this state. This is the key issue here in terms of what is making it hard for Victorians to see a GP: it is the lack of bulk-billing services. And it is interesting, isn't it. There was a decade or so – there were about nine, nearly 10 years – when those opposite could have raised their voice.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Leader of the Opposition, when you have asked your question, I expect you to hear the answer. I would also like to hear the answer without interjections.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, it is not relevant for the Premier to be speaking about a former government on a tax they are currently imposing themselves.

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

Jacinta ALLAN: As I was saying, there was deafening silence during that period of time as we saw bulk-billing rates decline, as we saw increasing lack of access to GPs, and that is why we have stepped in alongside the important work the health minister is doing. We are making more –

Danny Pearson interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister for Transport Infrastructure will come to order.

Jacinta ALLAN: We have stepped in and established 27 priority primary care centres that are about providing more access for Victorians to GP services. This is the fundamental issue – we are making sure Victorians can access GP services. We are making sure they can access these services in 27 different communities around the state, and at the same time, guess what, we have an opportunity to work with the Albanese Labor government on supporting the work that they are doing –

John Pesutto: So they're helping you.

Jacinta ALLAN: No, they are helping Victorians to get access to a GP by supporting increased bulk-billing rates, which is exactly what Victorians need.

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:05): The Royal Australian College of GPs has found that nearly 80 per cent Victorian GPs will need to charge higher fees to cover the cost of this government's new tax. With Victorians facing a cost-of-living crisis, why is the Premier making it more expensive to see a doctor?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:05): In the supplementary question the Leader of the Opposition went to matters about the expense of seeing a GP. The biggest barrier to Victorians seeing a GP is the lack of access to bulk-billing doctors as a consequence of nine years of neglect from the previous federal Liberal–National government.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Mildura can leave the chamber for half an hour.

Member for Mildura withdrew from chamber.

Jacinta ALLAN: Primary care is the responsibility of the federal government, but because there has been a fundamental failure by the previous Liberal–National government we have stepped in. Twenty-seven priority primary care centres are established across the state right now, and they are delivering Victorians that access to bulk-billing doctors.

John Pesutto: On a point of order, Speaker, the question was about why the Premier is making it more expensive for Victorians to see a doctor. I ask you to draw the Premier back to the question.

The SPEAKER: Order! I have reminded members before, a point of order is not an opportunity to repeat the question. The Premier has concluded her answer.

Ministers statements: State Electricity Commission

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:07): I am very pleased to make an update to the house today on the State Electricity Commission, because the SEC is back. Labor promised it, Victorians voted for it and we are bringing it back. The State Electricity Commissioner will lead Victoria’s renewables transformation.

Members interjecting.

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

Jacinta ALLAN: It will have a focus on homes, and importantly it will have a focus on people. It is going to invest in renewable energy and storage projects – enough to power around 1.5 million homes across the state. This is going to support the powering of every public hospital, every public school, police stations and government buildings with renewable energy. Also what is important is the next big build in energy transition.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Leader of the Opposition, you are not immune from being removed from the chamber.

Jacinta ALLAN: It is going to create a pipeline of work across renewable energy projects – a pipeline of work that will support 59,000 jobs. What is important, because we do not just focus on aspects of jobs – we focus also on the training and apprenticeship opportunities – there are going to be 6000 positions for apprentices and trainees. That is why Victorians voted to bring back the SEC. They know that we have to do more work on renewable energy. They want to see more power put in the hands of people, and they want to see more jobs. We appreciate that those opposite have a different approach. They supported privatisation, they do not support the jobs, and we are very much seeing that they do not support the transmission to renewable energy.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: The member for South-West Coast can leave the chamber for half an hour.

Member for South-West Coast withdrew from chamber.

Payroll tax

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:09): My question is to the Premier. SIA Medical Centre has eight clinics located across Victoria, including one in the electorate of Mulgrave. The managing director has said that because of the health tax ‘bulk-billing will cease to exist’ and ‘a lot of GP clinics will end up closing down’. Why is the Premier imposing a health tax that will end bulk billing in Victoria?

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: The member for Yan Yean can leave the chamber for half an hour.

Member for Yan Yean withdrew from chamber.

The SPEAKER: On a point of order, the Minister for Transport Infrastructure.

Danny Pearson: Speaker, I seek your guidance on this question. The question relates to bulk-billing. Bulk-billing is a responsibility of the Commonwealth government. How on earth can the Leader of the Opposition ask the Premier a question in relation to a Commonwealth responsibility?

John Pesutto: Speaker, can I address the query?

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Tarneit can leave the chamber for half an hour.

Member for Tarneit withdrew from chamber.

John Pesutto: Speaker, it was not a point –

The SPEAKER: On the point of order.

John Pesutto: It was not a point of order, with respect, Speaker. The minister stood up and said ‘I seek clarification’. It was not a point of order. He did not say it was a point of order.

Members interjecting.

John Pesutto: Can I address the query? He was given leave to raise –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order!

John Pesutto: Can I address the query on bulk-billing?

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Leader of the Opposition, yes, the minister did not make a point of order, and if you had waited a few moments, I would have ruled that he had not made a point of order and I would have ruled your question in order. Your question is in order. The Premier is to answer the question.

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:11): The Leader of the Opposition asked about bulk-billing services for the community of Mulgrave, and I am very happy to provide information for the benefit of the Leader of the Opposition about how we are taking action to improve access to GPs and bulk-billing services for not just the community of Mulgrave but indeed 27 locations around the state, where we are establishing priority primary care centres. I remind the Leader of the Opposition of the reason why we have had to step in. This is an unprecedented step, where we as a state government have had to step in and ensure that Victorians have access to bulk-billing GPs.

John Pesutto interjected.

Jacinta ALLAN: The question was about bulk-billing GPs, Leader of the Opposition.

John Pesutto: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, the question was pretty specifically about the managing director of SIA’s comment about bulk-billing ending because of the Premier’s new health tax. I ask you to draw her back to the question.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier was being relevant to the question that was asked.

Jacinta ALLAN: As I said, I was addressing directly the Leader of the Opposition’s question about bulk-billing services for the Mulgrave community, and I am delighted to inform the Leader of the Opposition of the 27 – 27 – priority primary care centres that we are establishing across the state. I

remind the Leader of the Opposition that we are doing this and are having to take this unprecedented step because of years and years of neglect and inaction by the previous federal Liberal government, when we did not hear boo to a goose from these people opposite. We did not hear anything from these people opposite in raising their voice.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, it is entirely inappropriate for the Premier to be attacking other members of the chamber, and I ask you to bring her back from doing so.

The SPEAKER: Order! I ask the Premier to come back to the question that was asked.

Jacinta ALLAN: As I was saying, we have had to take this step because we saw that there was this inaction to address GP access, which is the primary responsibility of the federal government. Because of the situation we got to the point – and we particularly saw this through the period of the pandemic – where Victorians did not have access to bulk-billing GPs because of the failure of the previous federal Liberal government. That is why the health minister has been working incredibly hard with the primary care community to step in – in quite unprecedented terms – and establish 27 priority primary care centres across the state.

The question went to GP and bulk-billing services in the Mulgrave community. Well, of the 27 priority primary care centres there is one in Glen Waverley, which would support some in one part of the community of Mulgrave. There is also another priority primary care centre at Monash Children’s Hospital, again servicing the Mulgrave community. They are just two of the 27 priority primary care centres that we have stepped in and established around Victoria to support Victorians to get access to a bulk-billing GP service because of the failure of the previous federal Liberal–National government to ensure that there was access to GPs for the Victorian community.

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:15): The managing director of SIA Medical Centre has said that ‘As a result of the health tax, the cost to see a GP could increase by \$20 a visit’. Why is the government targeting Victorians needing to see a doctor to cover the cost of its budget blowouts?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:15): The Leader of the Opposition is wrong. We are targeting Victorians with 27 priority primary care centres that are about increasing and improving access to bulk-billing doctors in an unprecedented move, where we are stepping in in an area that has been a federal government responsibility. We have in Canberra, in the Albanese Labor government, a government that is working very hard with the priority primary care sector to ensure that there is more support for GPs to provide bulk-billing services. But in the interim we have stepped in, establishing 27 centres across the state, which is making sure that Victorians have more access to bulk-billing services.

Ministers statements: State Electricity Commission

Lily D’AMBROSIO (Mill Park – Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for the State Electricity Commission) (14:16): I am absolutely delighted – there is a guffaw over there. I wonder why there is a guffaw over there; you should be ashamed of yourselves for selling off and privatising Victoria’s electricity assets.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Before I call the Manager of Opposition Business, I am finding the behaviour in the chamber today very disrespectful. The minister was on her feet, and she was shouted down.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, I would ask you to ask the minister to refer to people by their correct titles.

The SPEAKER: I ask the minister to come back to her ministers statement.

Lily D'AMBROSIO: Sorry, Speaker. Thank you very much. I am absolutely delighted to report to the house, updating them on our ending of Victoria's reliance on dirty expensive fossil fuels, replacing them with more affordable, more renewable, reliable energy. The SEC is now back. It is now a company registered with ASIC. The Premier and I last week released the SEC's 10-year *Strategic Plan*, outlining how the SEC will accelerate us towards 95 per cent renewables by 2035. We are investing already from this last budget – an initial \$1 billion to go off and deliver that 4.5 gigawatts of new replacement electricity – renewable storage generation projects, enough to power 1.5 million homes. And there is more. The SEC will manage our government's VRET project, and that will give us an extra 1.2 gigawatts of renewable energy capacity. The Premier identified, absolutely, that the SEC will be retailing the power to every government school, every police station and every building owned by the Victorian government, which is a wonderful thing. We know that we are absolutely on track to ensure that the SEC has its first pioneer projects announced by the end of the year. We have had a fantastic response from the market, which is wanting to partner with the government to deliver on these projects. Mike Cannon-Brookes, a major investor in the renewable energy revolution, welcomed the SEC's *Strategic Plan* by saying:

The strategies and thoughts behind the SEC seem very comprehensive, they seem ahead of most other states, which is excellent.

I could not agree more. This is excellent. The SEC is back for Victorians, and we will back Victorians all the way.

Payroll tax

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:19): My question is to the Premier. The Minister for Health has previously stated in respect of GPs 'absolutely nothing has changed'. Given that the Treasurer has admitted that the government's health tax will put medical practices out of business, will the Premier correct the record on the health minister's misleading comment?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:19): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. The only record that needs correcting is his broken one. It is his broken record. The Treasurer's letter to the GP community was simply putting in place information of existing arrangements. Now, if that is something that the Leader of the Opposition fails to understand, that is a matter for him, but that is the information that the Treasurer was providing to GPs.

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:20): Will the government support the opposition's bill to amend the Payroll Tax Act to ensure that tenant GPs and other tenant allied health professionals are not considered employees by the State Revenue Office?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:20): No.

Ministers statements: economy

Tim PALLAS (Werribee – Treasurer, Minister for Industrial Relations, Minister for Economic Growth) (14:20): I am pleased to talk about the enormous opportunities that growth in the Victorian economy is presenting for all Victorians. This is being led by the state's investment in the state-owned SEC – and a big shout-out to the Minister for Energy and Resources, who is doing a fantastic job of securing our zero-emissions future. Going back to the SEC means that we will be investing in renewables, and in so doing we will be creating lasting value for current and future generations. As well as helping achieve Victoria's nation-leading renewable energy target, the new SEC will support the creation of 59,000 jobs. It will increase gross state product by \$9.5 billion through the energy transition. We know that those opposite are scared of renewables, except maybe the members for Bulleen and Malvern. But we also know that it is fitting that we tell them on Halloween that this government's investment in growth industries like renewables is not going to stop – not a ghost of a chance. Just this week Victoria has been recognised as the economic powerhouse of the nation.

Danny O'Brien interjected.

The SPEAKER: The member for Gippsland South can leave the chamber for half an hour.

Member for Gippsland South withdrew from chamber.

Tim PALLAS: He has been doing it all day, Speaker. Just this week Victoria was recognised as the economic powerhouse of the nation in the CommSec *State of the States* report. As the report says, strong economic activity, solid retail spending and business investment have seen Victoria again recognised as the engine room of the national economy. Victoria was ranked first on relative economic growth and construction work. In the past three years we have created more jobs than New South Wales, South Australia and Tasmania combined.

Electoral reform

Tim READ (Brunswick) (14:22): Yesterday the Electoral Matters Committee –

The SPEAKER: Order! Who is your question to?

Tim READ: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday the Electoral Matters Committee heard more evidence that MPs who use Glenn Druery to get themselves elected in the upper house then repay him by employing him using their parliamentary funding. This arrangement is fraudulent because he is not required to do any work while being paid. The arrangement is also corrupt because he obliges MPs to always vote against group voting reform. Victoria is the only remaining state that has not eliminated this anti-democratic and corrupt distortion of the will of voters. Given the latest revelations, will the government now commit to eliminating group voting?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:23): I thank the member for Brunswick for his question. I will not be drawn on some of the allegations that he made in the preamble to his question. There are independent bodies that are responsible for investigating those claims that he has made, and it is up to those independent bodies to investigate should they consider it appropriate to do so.

In terms of the question around the consideration of group voting tickets, as the member has identified, the Electoral Matters Committee is currently doing its work, as it does after every election – it does an inquiry into the previous election. That committee is not due to report until towards the middle of next year, and we will consider its recommendations at that time.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Brunswick on a supplementary question, and I remind members that matters before committees are highly confidential.

Tim READ (Brunswick) (14:24): Given the Commonwealth and other states, most recently WA, have done away with this obviously corrupt system, is it not a fact that the government could introduce legislation to eliminate group voting now?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:25): I have really nothing further to add to this supplementary question that I did not state in my answer to the member's substantive question, and I would suggest if the member wishes to make a submission to the committee's inquiry he should do so.

The SPEAKER: I acknowledge the former member for Bayswater and minister Heidi Victoria in the gallery.

Ministers statements: renewable energy

Sonya KILKENNY (Carrum – Minister for Planning, Minister for the Suburbs) (14:25): I am absolutely delighted to update the house on the work the Allan Labor government is doing to support a once-in-a-generation energy transition. Navigating the energy transition requires whole-of-government effort. As Minister for Planning I am committed to making better decisions faster to accelerate our path to 95 per cent renewables by 2035 and net zero by 2045. A total of 187 energy generation, storage and transmission projects have already been approved – almost \$28 billion in investment. There are another 130 projects in the pipeline, with the potential for massive-scale energy

generation. Over the coming years I expect to see more: a greater volume of projects seeking to play a part in renewable energy generation, storage and transmission for all Victorians.

Why are we doing this? Because when it comes to renewable energy, more is better – better for cheaper bills, better for our health and the environment and better for jobs. The Allan Labor government is giving certainty to industry that Victoria is the state to invest in for renewable energy. With coal-fired power stations announcing their closure by 2035, it is absolutely critical for us to continue the strong investment into renewable energy projects, and that is why we are bringing back the SEC, led by my terrific colleague the Minister for the State Electricity Commission. We will be keeping the lights on, keeping the bills down and delivering 100 per cent renewable energy. We are also ending gas connections for new homes requiring a planning permit from 1 January next year, putting more money back into the pockets of more Victorians, giving more households access to cheaper, cleaner and healthier all-electric homes. By working together we can build a renewable energy future that serves all Victorians. But as the rest of the world is transitioning away from fossil fuel, those fossils opposite –
(Time expired)

Darren Cheeseman interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! Member for South Barwon, it is inappropriate to be yelling across the chamber when your colleague is on their feet.

Payroll tax

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:28): My question is to the Premier. Is a tenant GP who leases a room from a medical practice owner and works under an independent agreement considered an employee for payroll tax purposes?

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! I do not need multiple answers. The Premier will answer the question.

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:28): Well, Speaker, you will be pleased to know that on this side of the house we will all give the same answer, unlike some of the hysteria we are seeing from those opposite. The more media attention the member for Gembrook has had today, the more hysterical the Leader of the Opposition has become. Anyway, the answer to the opposition leader's question is: that is a matter for the State Revenue Office.

A member: The member for Berwick.

Jacinta ALLAN: Oh, Berwick, sorry.

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:29): Has the Treasurer advised the Premier of the criteria he will be using to personally determine which medical practices with tenant GPs will be forced to pay the government's health tax and which will have their tax liabilities reduced or waived?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:29): As has been advised to the Leader of the Opposition previously, these are well-established matters that are oversighted by the Treasurer and the State Revenue Office. There is no change to these arrangements, and as the Treasurer has indicated, he will work through these matters on a case-by-case basis.

John Pesutto: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, the question was about whether the Treasurer advised the Premier, given his comments in the media today saying that he will personally intervene to decide who pays the tax and who does not.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order. The Premier has concluded her answer.

Ministers statements: energy policy

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Minister for Education, Minister for Medical Research) (14:30): The Allan Labor government has a big climate action agenda, and we are making sure that students have a clear pathway to jobs of the future in the clean energy sector. Our government, under the Minister for Climate Action's leadership, has committed to net zero by 2045. This is the most ambitious target on the mainland. Tomorrow the groundbreaking container deposit scheme will come into force, something we are all proud about but those opposite could not do. We also know we will deliver Australia's first offshore wind farm in Gippsland and a wind terminal in Hastings –

Members interjecting.

Ben CARROLL: Just calm down. The camera is up there, mate.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister for Education, to continue.

Ben CARROLL: Can I also say what a difference it makes having the member for Hastings. Let us all remember that those opposite held the seat of Hastings for 16 continuous years, with four years in office – did not deliver anything. Arguably it was unrepresented by them for 16 years. We have now a true Labor member with a seat at the table, getting jobs done.

But we have got a lot more to do. We have got \$7 million to embed renewable energy in our TAFE system, \$20 million for 10,000 students to do work experience and we are also delivering the \$10 million hydrogen energy worker training centre. We are getting on with the job –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Leader of the Opposition, I would ask you to cease throwing insults across the chamber.

Ben CARROLL: Is it any wonder his own backbench says he spends more time at the mirror and less time speaking to them?

The SPEAKER: Order! Through the Chair.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, it is disorderly to make personal attacks across the chamber.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! I have said repeatedly today that the disrespect in this chamber is out of control. The Minister for Education to continue, without assistance.

Ben CARROLL: Under the Allan Labor government, students of today will have the jobs of tomorrow. We know the clean energy sector is a jobs opportunity, and under our reforms in the Education State we are making sure every person, no matter their postcode, no matter their background, has a stake in the future to deliver clean energy and meet our ambitious clean energy targets instituted by the minister for climate change. We are getting on with the job. We believe in climate change. We will fund programs and initiatives like tackling transport emissions to meet our targets. While those opposite keep looking in the mirror and keep looking backwards, we will get on, look to the future and deliver jobs for the 21st century.

Rulings from the Chair**Constituency questions**

The SPEAKER (14:33): I have reviewed the constituency questions from Thursday 19 October. The member for Pakenham and the member for Eureka both sought an action. The member for Pakenham also asked two questions. I therefore rule those constituency questions out of order.

I also take this opportunity to flag my intention to rule out future constituency questions that ask ministers to provide advice or to provide an update on matters, as these are technically actions. Whilst previous rulings have allowed such questions, it has become clear to me that this is causing some confusion for members, and therefore going forward I will rule them out of order.

Constituency questions

South-West Coast electorate

Roma BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (14:34): (380) My constituency question is to the Minister for Community Sport, and I ask the minister: on what date can Portland Gymnastics Club expect to receive funding for their new facility? Last year, Minister, your Labor candidate for South-West Coast promised funding to redevelop the current facilities into a high-performance gym the whole community could be proud of. Then after this year's budget a Labor member in the other place proudly announced the government had committed \$1.25 million for the project. None of these promises have been delivered. Silence is all the community has had. This understandably gives the club no confidence that the promise is close, let alone a certainty. The Portland community had a plan for a multipurpose indoor facility that would host not only gymnastics but also basketball, volleyball, table tennis and more. It was a plan that I was proud to support at last year's election. This government overrode the community's plans, and now they are not even coming good on their election promise for the alternative. Minister, the level of disrespect being shown to volunteers who give up their time and effort to run this club is not going unnoticed by the community. They deserve an answer and a date.

Ripon electorate

Martha HAYLETT (Ripon) (14:35): (381) My question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and I ask: what is the state Labor government doing to make the roads safer for pedestrians and motorists in the Calder Highway towns of Inglewood and Wedderburn in my electorate? Roads are the number one issue in Ripon, and constituents contact me regularly regarding inconsistent speed limits in our country towns. Recently locals in Inglewood and Wedderburn have banded together to call for action to improve safety along the Calder Highway in each community. In Inglewood, Peter Moore and the Inglewood Development and Tourism Committee are calling for a speed reduction to 40 kilometres per hour along Brooke Street, as accidents and near misses are all too common. And in Wedderburn, Cheryl Fowler and over 620 locals have signed a petition calling for a speed reduction along the High Street stretch of the Calder Highway, as residents struggle to cross the busy road to access the pharmacy and post office. Trucks and other vehicles race through both towns in the Loddon shire, and locals want speed limits reduced to improve safety for all ages. I look forward to the minister's response.

Gippsland East electorate

Tim BULL (Gippsland East) (14:36): (382) My constituency question is to the Premier. Last sitting week the Premier agreed to meeting with harvest and haulage forest contractors, and the information I am seeking on behalf of my constituents is when this meeting will occur. I know a request has been sent to the Premier, and it is very important that this meeting is not fobbed off to the Minister for Agriculture and that the Premier is true to her word and meets with this cohort of people herself. The clock is certainly ticking when it comes to the forest contractors having to make very important decisions about their own futures, with the timber industry concluding on 1 January. The information that I do seek from the Premier is when this meeting that she has committed to will indeed take place.

Monbulk electorate

Daniela DE MARTINO (Monbulk) (14:36): (383) My question is to the Minister for Emergency Services. How is the Allan Labor government working to deliver support for bushfire preparedness and emergency management across the electorate of Monbulk? The latest seasonal bushfire outlook for spring suggested that Victorians can expect a drier and warmer season and, as we have already seen, an earlier start to the fire season in some parts of the state. Below average rainfall across the

Dandenong Ranges during winter has also exacerbated concerns of a longer fire season ahead. Being one of the most bushfire prone places in the world means that bushfires are front and centre in the minds of the people across the Dandenong Ranges. I recently attended an emergency management briefing with our local police emergency management coordinator and have been engaging with several CFA captains who are working hard to communicate with residents old and new about preparing for the upcoming bushfire season, encouraging people to prepare their properties and revise their bushfire survival plans. I look forward to hearing the minister's response and how the Allan Labor government is keeping Victorians safe before, during and after – *(Time expired)*

Nepean electorate

Sam GROTH (Nepean) (14:38): (384) My question is for the Minister for Public and Active Transport. Those who visit or indeed live on the southern Mornington Peninsula already know that we struggle every day in my area for transport options. We have limited bus services, no trains or train stations and no trams. This means many of my constituents rely on taxis to get from A to B. In recent weeks I have had several concerned locals contact me and my office to report ongoing interruptions to taxi services. Some of these issues include difficulty getting taxis after 3:30 in the afternoon; elderly residents being left stranded by 13CABS, even with a regular taxi booking; and constituents facing wait times of over an hour for a taxi to arrive. All these issues are more likely to get worse over the approaching summer period, so my question is: will the minister take action to ensure these issues around taxi services are resolved for my constituents?

Glen Waverley electorate

John MULLAHY (Glen Waverley) (14:38): (385) My constituency question is for the Minister for Skills and TAFE in the other place. Minister, how will the national skills agreement between the Albanese federal government and the Allan Victorian government benefit the Holmesglen TAFE Glen Waverley campus in my electorate? Only a couple of weeks ago the Allan and Albanese Labor governments signed a \$3.15 billion landmark national agreement to strengthen our TAFE and training sector. Victoria has led the nation when it comes to TAFE reform. After first being elected at the end of 2014 we reopened TAFEs that had been previously closed by the Liberal government.

Furthermore, we have introduced and extended free TAFE for many Victorians. More than 80 free courses are available to study, all of which are priority courses so Victorians can get the skills they need for our most in-demand jobs. Our TAFE reforms are helping Victorians get their first qualifications, gain skills that Victoria needs and achieve career changes. I look forward to seeing how the five-year national skills agreement, which will come into effect from January next year, will further strengthen our TAFE sector, including our Holmesglen TAFE campus in Glen Waverley.

Brunswick electorate

Tim READ (Brunswick) (14:40): (386) My question is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. Research from Victoria and overseas shows that a local speed limit of 30 kilometres an hour allows motorists to get where they are going while keeping vulnerable road users safe. Both the councils and the constituents in my electorate, supported by the TAC, Victoria Police and the World Health Organization, all support lowering local road speed limits to 30 kilometres an hour where appropriate. But Victoria's speed zoning policy classifies 30 kilometres as an exceptional speed limit, meaning councils only have the power to run lengthy and costly trials rather than making a permanent change. It is time to allow councils to make our streets safer. When will the minister amend the speed zoning policy so that 30 kilometres an hour is no longer a special-purpose speed limit needing state approval and instead make it a standard allotted speed limit?

Lara electorate

Ella GEORGE (Lara) (14:41): (387) My question is for the Minister for Children. Can the minister please inform me how many families in my electorate of Lara have benefited from our government's free kinder program? On this side of the house we understand that access to kindergarten significantly

reduces rates of developmental vulnerability amongst children. In my community of Lara people are excited that free kinder is also helping with cost-of-living pressures. The cost of early childhood education and care is out of reach for many Australian families, and it is great to see that here in Victoria the Allan Labor government is addressing this affordability issue. We understand that the first five years of a child's life are so critical for healthy development, and that is why we are investing in early childhood education. So again, my question to the minister is: how many families in the electorate of Lara have benefited from our government's free kinder program?

Ovens Valley electorate

Tim McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (14:41): (388) My question is to the Minister for Water, and it is on behalf of Peter Nankervis, whose property is located at Nariel Creek. The clarification we are seeking are the steps required to move forward for Mr Nankervis to obtain a 350-megalitre allocation bore licence. In March 2021 Mr Nankervis applied for a licence and Goulburn–Murray Water assisted, and they gave him feedback in June 2022 to say they were working on it. In December 2022 Goulburn–Murray Water wrote to say that more assessments needed to be done before a licence could be granted. A 20-megalitre allocation was subsequently granted even though Mr Nankervis had not applied for it. We seek clarification on the actual steps required to move this application forward so that Mr Nankervis can use his legal and legitimate bore.

Hastings electorate

Paul MERCURIO (Hastings) (14:42): (389) My constituency question is to the Minister for Outdoor Recreation. Minister, what planning work is being undertaken to restore the Tankerton boat ramp? In the 2023–24 May budget \$900,000 was allocated to the restoration of the Tankerton boat ramp on French Island. When I was last on French Island, prior to the budget, I asked about this boat ramp and where it was. Noel, a long-time local who was showing me around, pointed to a rocky area and said 'That's it'. Upon closer inspection I concluded that it would take one of those massive military all-terrain trucks to be able to drive on this so-called boat ramp, let alone reverse a boat in or out. Community members from French Island have been asking me questions like: when will work begin, what will it look like, when will it be finished and when can I launch my boat. I know they will be very keen and very happy to receive an update.

Business of the house

Notices of motion

Danny PEARSON (Essendon – Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop, Assistant Treasurer, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC) (14:43): I advise that the government does not wish to proceed with the notice of motion, government business, today and request that it be removed from the notice paper.

Bills

Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2023

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Melissa Horne:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (14:45): I am pleased to rise to say some words on the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2023, which is a very large omnibus bill with quite a number of different sections to it that I will go through in some of the detail here. It is one of those ones, I suspect, for which I will have no trouble filling the full half an hour, because it is quite a complex bill with a number of moving parts.

The main, I guess, political element of the bill is the introduction of a process for a research trial for driving and medicinal cannabis, but the bill also provides for the regulation of e-scooter and e-bike

and other vehicle share schemes by local councils. It aligns bus driver accreditation with accreditation of commercial passenger drivers and brings in a whole new section in the Bus Safety Act 2009 in that respect. It clarifies governance arrangements for various transport agencies, including Safe Transport Victoria and V/Line. It makes various other road safety reforms, including allowing speed cameras and speed detection devices to be used for detecting speeding bikes and e-scooters, as well as some other rules on alcohol interlocks. There are rules amended around the sharing of data from commercial passenger vehicles and the public transport network with particular respect to CCTV footage, Myki data and other travel data, and there are multiple other technical and consequential amendments in the bill as well.

But I will begin by talking about the medicinal cannabis issue and driving. This is quite a vexing issue. It is somewhat of a wicked problem for government policymakers to address. There are some in the community who would say that it is very simple, but I do not believe so, and I will go into a bit of the detail now. Clause 56 of the bill introduces an opportunity for the minister to designate a road safety research trial which effectively exempts those participants in a trial from the existing road rules, because what the trial will do is it will determine:

... to what degree it is safe for someone to drive or be in charge of a vehicle after consuming or using a drug, a combination of drugs, or a drug or combination of drugs and alcohol ...

Likewise, it will look at fatigue, and it will inform the methods that police may use to assess impairment when a person is driving. This is, I guess, the nub of the matter. At the moment, obviously, we have introduced medicinal cannabis and people can get a prescription for that, so it is legal to take medicinal cannabis with a prescription. However, it still remains illegal for someone to have THC in their system – tetrahydrocannabinol – which is one of the three things that are tested for in drug and alcohol roadside testing, the other two being MDMA, or ecstasy, and methamphetamine. A drug test via mouth swab tests for those three. Obviously we have blood alcohol tests as well and a .05 per cent blood alcohol content limit. The problem is that someone who takes medicinal cannabis could potentially have THC in their system. Now, in most cases people will only be impaired for driving purposes or for any purposes for a couple of hours, but the THC can stay in their bloodstream for days, weeks or potentially even a month, which is one figure that I have heard. As a result, if a person is tested on the roadside, despite the fact they might be completely free of any impairment from THC, they may in fact test positive to THC and therefore be breaching the Road Safety Act 1986. Quite naturally users of medicinal cannabis are saying ‘Well, I’ve got a prescription, the government has said it’s legal for me to use medicinal cannabis, and now you’re punishing me for doing so on the road even though I have no impairment’. The issue of impairment is not an easy one to address.

If I go back to a little bit of the history on this, members will recall that a former member in the other place introduced a private members bill on this, I think it was in 2019. The government, because it did not support that legislation and neither did the opposition, set up a process and an expert committee to look into it, which came to a number of conclusions, none of them final, in dealing with the matter. And then, with the election of two members of the Legalise Cannabis Party at the last election, they brought in another bill in the other place, virtually identical to the earlier bill, which was debated in the other place earlier this year.

As the responsible shadow minister, again I prepared the opposition’s position on that, and I did absolutely see both sides of the story here. It is certainly a concern of many Victorians that they are taking medicinal cannabis and are therefore unable to drive. On the other side of things, it is not as simple as saying that there should be an exemption for people taking medicinal cannabis, because that potentially could be abused by people utilising cannabis in a recreational sense. I hesitate to use the word ‘recreational’ to distinguish between the two types of uses – prescribed and recreational. If someone is a prescribed user, using it for whatever ailment they may have – it is often for pain and it is often for insomnia that people are using medicinal cannabis – it also does not stop them potentially using marijuana/cannabis recreationally and then being able to drive and then show their prescription to a police officer when they are pulled over and say ‘Hey, I’m off scot-free’. I guess that is the

potential ramification that we have with simply providing an exemption. Indeed the parliamentary library has provided a report on this bill today. It goes through some of the history of it and mentions Victoria Police's comments about this issue in a submission to the other place's inquiry a few years ago that said:

... cannabis use remains a significant threat to road safety.

It goes on to say that THC is likely:

... to reduce a driver's ability to have full control of a vehicle ...

through slowing down reaction times, distorting perception of speed and distance and reducing concentration. The parliamentary library report goes on to say this is affirmed by other agencies, such as the Transport Accident Commission and VicRoads. I think we all understand that. Whether it is excessive alcohol or whether it is cannabis, we know that there is going to be an impairment effect, and from a road safety perspective that is the issue that remains quite tricky. So it was that the government opposed the Road Safety Amendment (Medicinal Cannabis) Bill 2023 earlier in the year in the other place, as did the opposition, but we said at the time that we understood the unfairness of the current situation and that we would keep an open mind on this particular issue. As it is, this bill today, the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill, actually sets up the ability for the government to designate a process.

It is disappointing that the government has failed to agree to our request to take this legislation into consideration in detail, because there are many questions that we would like answered on the bill broadly but also on this particular issue of a trial, including things like where the trial is going to be held. The government indicates that a trial will be off-road in a closed environment, but that is not reflected in the bill. So where is it going to be? Who will be involved? How will the trial be undertaken? I am sure the government will at some point give us this information, but it would be nice when we are actually debating legislation that will set up a trial or allow a trial to occur for the government to give some indication of what that trial will actually involve. In a sense the government has kicked the can down the road with this issue. I also support the option of looking at a trial to see whether we can erase what is certainly an unfairness for people who are using medicinal cannabis, but that needs to be balanced by the road safety issues that are prevalent, which I have just gone through. Perhaps a future speaker on the government side might explain in some more detail how the trial will work – who will be involved, who will run it and all of those sorts of things – because I think this is an important issue and one that needs to be addressed in time, as I said, by balancing the need for road safety, given the terrible road toll that we have had this year so far.

There are a number of other parts to the legislation. A large chunk of the bill actually deals with accreditation of bus drivers. It implements a revised bus driver accreditation scheme, removing the old scheme from the Transport (Compliance and Miscellaneous) Act 1983 and placing a new scheme into the Bus Safety Act 2009. According to the government, this is designed to modernise the accreditation process and align it with the process for commercial passenger vehicle drivers and to bring it all effectively under the banner of Safe Transport Victoria. But in both the consultation with industry and stakeholders that the opposition undertook and the government bill briefing it was confirmed that the industry itself has not been consulted on this issue at all. The Bus Association Victoria knew nothing about it when we contacted them, and I am advised from the bill briefing that neither the Transport Workers' Union nor other unions were involved. Indeed the advice from the minister's office was that relevant stakeholders would be consulted during implementation of the changes. I would have thought that it would be a good thing to consult the stakeholders at the start when you are changing legislation on something like this. That is a failing, and I think the government needs to make sure that it listens to drivers and to the industry as it implements these changes.

The other bit of interest from a public perspective that certainly has had some significant media coverage and public commentary in the last couple of years is the issue of e-bike and e-scooter share schemes, particularly e-scooter share schemes, which have been trialled for some time now in the City

of Melbourne and the City of Ballarat in particular. The government has twice now extended the terms of the trial that has been occurring. It has created some controversy. E-scooters are a relatively new device in our society. They have raised concerns with people illegally riding them on the footpath. They have raised concerns with the share schemes presenting a trip hazard for people, particularly people with a disability, on our footpaths around cities and also waste matter in certain circumstances with e-bikes in the past – bikes being dumped in the river and the like by users or vandals. There are a number of issues that have yet to be addressed really in the development of these schemes. What this legislation does is effectively handballs the problem to local government and says that local government will now have to deal with it. It does this by saying that a share scheme cannot be operated unless that share scheme operator has an agreement with the relevant local government agent.

What concerns me in this is, firstly, that it is a cost-shifting issue. Secondly, it handballs a pretty tricky issue to local government. Thirdly, I am not sure that the government, certainly not through this legislation, has addressed the issues of concern that have been raised. It literally just handballs it to local government through this legislation and has not yet provided guidance or anything on those issues of pedestrian safety, of clutter on our roadsides and footpaths and all of those matters. That is reflected by the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV), which has come back to us and said:

The proposed approach, which will require each council to assess proposals and negotiate with potential providers individually, seems inefficient and appears to pass the compliance and financial obligations onto local government.

As I said, it is a cost shift. The MAV goes on to say:

Without an agreed state or national standard, and consistent approaches between councils there is a risk of a patchwork approach to managing e-scooters across the State.

That is where I have concern with respect to this legislation handing it to local government and expecting them to set it up. The MAV went on to state to me:

The State should provide a model agreement with standard conditions to guide local governments.

I agree entirely. Indeed that is something I asked about in the bill briefing with the government, and I am advised that that is exactly what the government is proposing to do, so that is welcome. But how it will address those issues of compliance and those issues of safety for pedestrians in particular and other users is a live question. I find it a little bit ironic that the government, in one of its first acts in this Parliament, established an inquiry into vulnerable road users and yet vulnerable road users like pedestrians, like cyclists, may well be impacted by these share schemes and the government is handballing the whole problem to local government and expecting them to deal with it. There are also issues of insurance and safety standards that the government needs to address. We were assured that the department will be doing that through the implementation of this bill and working with local councils, but I am yet to be convinced that the government will get this right.

Having said all that, my view, and I think the view of many of my colleagues, is that there are problems with e-scooters. There are issues of safety. I know the MAV also raised concerns about the number of accidents that occur with people involved with e-scooters and the impact that is having on our emergency departments, but those issues can perhaps be compared to the concerns had when those dreaded motorcars came along in the early part of last century. It is new technology, but it is useful technology. It is potentially green technology depending on how it is powered and certainly it is good technology for people getting around city areas in particular. We should not turn our back on things like e-scooters. We should work out the best way to regulate and manage them, just as we did those dreaded motor cars – ‘infernal machines’ I think they were referred to at the time, scaring horses and scaring ladies, so they forced people to walk along in front of them with lights.

All those things that happened 120-odd years ago are going to happen with e-scooters, perhaps not quite as dramatically. But there are issues that we do need to work through. In the end it comes back to the users themselves doing the right thing and making sure that they in fact are riding safely, doing the right thing in where they leave e-scooters and e-bikes and making sure that other people on our

road network are not impacted. I do have that concern, and as I said, there are concerns from the MAV and from the Australian Medical Association about some of these issues, and I hope that they can be addressed.

There are multiple other amendments in this legislation to different parts of the suite of transport legislation – indeed quite a number of bills are being amended here. One of those amendments is with respect to the use of alcohol interlocks. What happens here is that if someone has been subject to an alcohol interlock condition on their drivers licence, under this legislation once that alcohol interlock condition is removed from their licence they will be subject to a further three years of zero blood alcohol content. That brings those people in line with someone who has lost their licence due to drink driving and is coming back. When a person in that circumstance comes back and gets a new licence, they are also subject to three years of zero blood alcohol. That is consistent. The government says – I think with some justification – that this is about ensuring that the worst offenders are subject to tougher conditions than others on the road, and that is appropriate.

The bill also clarifies a part of the legislation regarding someone who has let their licence expire. Effectively you have a six-month grace period in which you can reapply with no further conditions. The bill clarifies that the zero blood alcohol condition will apply if you have waited longer than six months to renew, but if you are within that six-month grace period, your licence can be renewed without suffering another three years of zero blood alcohol.

Clause 48 extends the use of speed cameras and speed detection devices to bicycles and e-scooters and other vehicles. I was a little bit surprised that that did not already apply. Of course you cannot use a speed camera to send someone a fine because we do not have licence plates on bikes or scooters, but the bill does allow those devices to be used to penalise someone. That might be for speeding. It might sound a bit funny to say that someone could be speeding on a bike, but you can easily get up to 70 kilometres an hour on a bike if you are going downhill, and in a 40-, 50- or 60-kilometres-an-hour zone obviously that would be speeding. The statewide speed limit for e-scooters is 20 kilometres an hour, so scooter riders could be going over. I know members in the chamber will be aware, but if you ever go down Macarthur Street in the morning, just before 9 o'clock – I would be interested to be out there with a speed detection device, because there are some e-scooter riders that head down Macarthur Street at absolute full pelt. I am not giving the Minister for Police or anyone any ideas, but if you are looking for somewhere to go, get out there. That is certainly a place.

Clause 47 of the bill bans e-scooters for use on freeways, which I think is also sensible. Clause 46 is a minor change, but it allows police and PSOs to prevent a person who is incapable of driving from driving any other vehicles. This is, I guess, to clarify the law. Currently when someone is – the term is 'incapable of driving', but we will assume that this is from impairment – impaired from either drugs or alcohol or some other issue that may have occurred, police can take the keys effectively and stop them from driving their vehicle. This amendment stops them also from getting into another car or onto a bike or onto an e-scooter or something, whether motorised or not. That ensures that both that person and the general community on the roads are safe as well.

Part 7 corrects an anomaly of the government's own making, whereby its free rego for apprentices scheme that was introduced on 1 July this year did open up the potential that those apprentices – given they were not paying rego – were also not paying third-party insurance. This amendment corrects that to ensure that those people are covered in the event of an accident. Again, had we had the opportunity to take this bill into consideration in detail, I could have asked the minister. It was on 1 July that policy was introduced. We are nearly into November. I would be interested to know whether, sadly, anyone has had an accident and required coverage from the TAC and not been covered and indeed whether this part of the legislation is retrospective.

There are quite a number of other amendments, some of them relating to the transport sector agencies. These are effectively retrospective changes. The government has been able to make changes and introduce Safe Transport Victoria and change V/Line from a board-managed state-owned enterprise

to a statutory authority with a CEO reporting to the secretary of the department. It did that last year and in 2021 with respect to V/Line. They were done under transport restructuring orders under the Transport Integration Act 2010, and now this bill formalises those arrangements in law. In doing so it also repeals certain parts of other acts that are no longer relevant.

I want to particularly pick up on the issue of V/Line, because the change that we are formalising now, as I said, relates specifically to removing the board of V/Line and having the CEO report directly to the transport secretary. At the time this happened, Minister Ben Carroll was the Minister for Public Transport. He issued a media release on 16 June 2021 that said:

The Victorian Government is taking action to ensure V/Line is set up to deliver better services for fast growing regional communities.

Other parts of the release said that ‘the Government wants to ensure we maximise the performance of V/Line’ and that these changes to move from a state-owned enterprise to a statutory authority were about:

... improving oversight and delivery of regional public transport services.

So I had a quick look. Here we are, two-and-a-bit years down the track from that promise, and I had a quick look at the most recent performance figures for V/Line. I see the member for Narracan taking interest in this, because he knows he has plenty of commuters in the Warragul and Drouin areas and in Trafalgar and Yarragon and all those parts that particularly are commuting. The Gippsland line is currently on 79 per cent punctuality, well short of the target punctuality of 92 per cent. In my own area, going to Bairnsdale – so the line from Sale going on to Bairnsdale – it is currently at 82.5 per cent. Normally we have a bit of a fight on the coalition side among us country MPs over who has got the worst performance, but I have got to say – sorry, member for Narracan – that the member for South-West Coast has got us all covered at the moment. Punctuality in September for the Warrnambool line was just 51.2 per cent. Then not far off the member for Narracan and me was the member for Murray Plains, with Swan Hill and Echuca at 75 per cent punctuality, well short of the target of 92 per cent. You can pluck the figures from any month, because there is only one month’s figures each time you go to the website. Sadly for the government, every time I go to the website I can be guaranteed that I will find that the punctuality targets, particularly for the Gippsland line, are not being met.

That is no different today despite the investment that is being made. I note that in that media release and repeatedly the government continues to talk about its big investments in the regional rail network. Well, ‘Thank you very much, Darren Chester’ is what I say, because 80 per cent of the funding comes from the federal government. We see it time and time again. There are billions of dollars being spent on transport infrastructure in Melbourne and it is pretty much all state government, but when it is funding for projects outside of Melbourne, the state government loves to take credit for them, but what does it do? It asks the federal government and in particular the former federal coalition government to actually fund them. Well over 80 per cent of the Regional Rail Revival was funded by Darren Chester as the federal minister for transport infrastructure. The minister who was at the table before, the now Premier, they do not recognise that often. They just say it was our project, but it was in fact the Nationals and Liberals in Canberra that actually made sure that those projects happened, because this government is happy to spend money on the regions but only if it is someone else’s money. It is one thing to talk about all the wonderful things that the government is delivering, but when it comes to regional Victoria and particularly when it comes to V/Line, it is continuing to fail.

There are a couple of other areas that I will just touch on in this legislation. There are multiple minor other amendments, and literally at the back of the bill there are pages and pages of amendments that simply update language and change names that are no longer relevant. There are some amendments that clarify the right of drivers to a review of decisions under the Commercial Passenger Vehicle Industry Act 2017. There are further regulation-making powers under the Marine (Domestic Commercial Vessel National Law Application) Act 2013, and I should acknowledge here that that would actually be the responsibility of the Minister for Ports and Freight and that many of the other

issues are the responsibility of the minister for public transport. And the shadow minister in this case is about to get up and give what I think will probably be one of the best speeches you will have heard today. He is going to give an absolute ripper. I am just the warm-up act. I know you are enjoying it over there, but I am just the warm-up act. The Shadow Minister for Public Transport has got more to say. So there is that marine change.

The bill also formally abolishes the infrastructure reference panel under the Road Management Act 2004. This panel, I am told, was actually abolished or disbanded in 2019 and has not met since 2018, but it was a committee effectively to advise governments on changes to particularly roads, to codes of conduct, to codes of practice with respect to road and road making, and it was made up of various different agencies – roads authorities, utility providers, public transport providers. The bill ensures that those organisations and other ministers will still be required to provide feedback to the minister in the making of those codes.

I think I will just touch on it – I have had a lot to say over a long period of time now about the roads – but gee, do we need some better advice on our roads, because the state of the roads in Victoria at the moment is an absolute disgrace. It does not matter where you go. It is sad to say, but some of us in the country are sort of used to it, but now when you are going on our highways and freeways – Acting Speaker Edbrooke, in Frankston only a couple of weeks ago 25 people hit one pothole and blew their tyres in a night. I drove the Western Highway to Ballarat the other day and it is a disgrace. The Hume Freeway from time to time as well when I get up there – these roads are just appalling. The government has failed very dramatically on roads. Not surprisingly, after a 25 per cent budget cut this year and 45 per cent since 2020, our roads are in an absolutely terrible state. The government needs to be doing far more not only in spending but also in the accountability of VicRoads and our contractors to actually make sure they do a good job. But anyway, this bill – there are many things in it – is not being opposed by the opposition, and I look forward to further debate.

Josh BULL (Sunbury) (15:15): I am really pleased to have the opportunity this afternoon to contribute to debate on this important bill, the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. In a previous member's contribution, he was pumping up another member of his team. He was looking forward to their contribution –

Wayne Farnham: So am I now.

Josh BULL: So am I. I am going to have to stay in here for that one. I did particularly enjoy parts of the contribution – the acknowledgement, I think, of some of the state government's investments. This government has invested in significant services that go to transport for our state, moving people to where they need to go each and every day – to work, to education and to see family and friends, making sure that we are investing in transport both for the needs of today and the needs of our future. This bill is, as has been mentioned, an important bill that is before the house. It is an omnibus bill that contains a number of changes – significant and important amendments – which I will go to shortly.

Before I do, I do just want to touch on what I think is a most ambitious and exciting suite of transport projects to get Victorians to where they need to go in a more efficient and more reliable way, whether that be those significant investments around the Metro Tunnel, due to open in 2025; the West Gate Tunnel; the North East Link; getting on and moving 110 dangerous and congested level crossings by 2030; or upgrading key arterial roads particularly in my community as well as in communities right across the north, in the west and in parts of the growing south-east which were formerly – Acting Speaker Edbrooke, as you know – country roads, which due to population growth receive significant demand. More and more people are using those roads each and every day. Ensuring that we are working with Major Road Projects Victoria to upgrade those key arterial roads is of course something that this government is immensely proud of.

The list goes on, whether it be new stations; the extension of train lines – indeed new trains; different modes of transport; or the Suburban Rail Loop, a transformative project that will link all of our

metropolitan train lines across the state and create along the way thousands and thousands of jobs. This is an ambitious, bold agenda, but what we needed to do when we came to government was to get on and deliver those projects which, because of four years of neglect, had simply not been delivered. They were left on the shelf. Nothing was up and running. There were no big investments to be able to get on and deliver these projects. Now, fast forward to nine years later, this is the work that been done by members of this government and the incredibly hardworking teams – thousands of people – that are contributing to these projects each and every day and delivering some outstanding results. This bill is about delivering a more modern and in many ways a more responsive transport network. It is about ensuring a balance between fairness and safety and embedding many of these values within the amendments that are contained in the legislation.

The bill enables, as has been mentioned previously, research trials to support evidence-based road safety policies, particularly in relation to medicinal cannabis trials. It establishes a legislative framework for local governments to manage issues in relation to vehicle-sharing schemes, such as e-scooters. It implements important bus driver reforms. It implements changes to commercial passenger vehicle laws in relation to information sharing. It enables Safe Transport Victoria to designate waters for the purposes of the national standard for commercial vessels, and it clarifies the persons exempt from paying the transport accident charge. The TAC are still fully covered for traffic accidents, which is an incredibly important reform and amendment. It reforms the process for determining the disclosure and the use of information in relation to the public transport network and supports the efficient administration and regulation of the transport sector through a number of other improvements to the operation of transport laws.

We know that the provisions contained within the legislation before the house today make amendments to a suite of acts, those being the Road Safety Act 1986, the Road Management Act 2004, the Transport Accident Act 1986, the Bus Safety Act 2009, the Commercial Passenger Vehicle Industry Act 2017, the Marine (Domestic Commercial Vessel National Law Application) Act 2013, the Transport (Compliance and Miscellaneous) Act 1983 and the Transport Integration Act 2010. What I want to do in the time I have left is just touch on a couple of these. As I mentioned, they can broadly be defined across the nine categories or parts, if you like, of the bill, but I do just want to touch on a couple of the amendments that are contained within the bill.

As I mentioned earlier, one of the key reforms in this bill enables the minister to designate road safety research trials. These trials could be for the purpose of determining to what degree it is safe for someone to drive a vehicle after consuming drugs or alcohol or while they are affected by fatigue. It could also be for the purpose of informing the development of methods used by police to assess whether someone is impaired by drugs, alcohol or fatigue. This amendment is both important and exciting in many ways because it enables the government to run world-leading trials, making sure that we are always at the forefront of trials, making sure that we are working with experts in the field to ensure that our transport network is the very best it can be, but importantly ensuring that the balance between safety and surety – not just those big investments, those large-scale projects that I spoke about earlier – is part of the government's agenda. Due to population growth and due to improving technology, making sure that we are at the forefront of research trials is incredibly important.

We know from looking at other jurisdictions across the world and working with companies that invest in new technologies that technology is advancing at a really significant and rapid rate. Making sure that we are working closely with those in the field that do this really important work not only enables us to build that world-class public transport system but most importantly protects and saves lives. Acting Speaker Edbrooke, through your journey you have worked in emergency services and you understand the importance of road safety, how dynamic the transport network can be, how things can change very quickly when it comes to an accident and how many of these incidents occur when people least expect them to occur. Making sure that we are able to strike that balance between what is safe and what is acceptable on our roads and our public transport network is incredibly important.

There is a significant amount of work that has been done in the medicinal cannabis space, making sure that we are providing the very best options for those that are experiencing challenges and relying on medicinal cannabis to treat their various conditions. This needs to be supported so that those individuals can get the treatment they need but also not be penalised by our authorities for being on the road. That is why I think one of the key amendments within this legislation, as has been mentioned, is incredibly important. The minister will have the authority, the power, to designate and work with those agencies and make sure that we are performing the very best research to get the very best results.

We are a government that is about delivering the big projects and the small projects, about ensuring that all Victorians, no matter where you live, have the strongest, the most dynamic, world-leading network of trains and trams and buses and roads and shared-user paths – all of the things that link in, that build our public transport system, that enable people to get to friends and family, to work, to study, to school, to all of the places that we need to go. Ensuring that this network is the very best that it can be is not just about big capital investments. They are incredibly important, but it is also about reviewing our legislation, about making it modern and dynamic and fit for purpose. That is why this legislation before the house today is so important. There are many amendments within the bill. I did not have the opportunity to touch on all of them, but it is a significant bill, and I commend it to the house.

Matthew GUY (Bulleen) (15:25): This is going to be such a shame. I wanted longer than 10 minutes, but that is what we have got. I am looking forward to my own speech after the member for Gippsland South's comments, so we will wait and see. I was interested in some comments from the member for Gippsland South. Obviously my interest in this bill is particularly around V/Line and bus services around the state. There is no doubt that over the last 20-odd years we have seen a significant increase in patronage, particularly on the V/Line rail network, as there has been on regional rail services, particularly throughout the east coast of Australia, where they are most prevalent.

What I find interesting, not just in this bill and its relevance to the structure of V/Line and the operation of V/Line, is why we have had such an increase in regional rail patronage for V/Line. From the outset V/Line is unlike country trains in New South Wales or Queensland Rail, which do not service the city rail networks. V/Line is servicing part of the Melbourne metropolitan rail system and has been for some time. Particularly where we have had the growth into the western and the north-western suburbs, where the current government had committed to electrify to Melton and electrify to Wyndham Vale, we are now seeing massive patronage growth on station platforms. The member for Sunbury would know, because his was one of those which was growing until it was electrified, but they did not follow through with the plan to go to Melton or to Wyndham Vale and now what is needed clearly up towards Wallan.

What we have are country rail units in VLocitys, which are not built to handle suburban rail services, servicing some of the busiest rail stations on the Victorian rail network, city or country – Tarneit, Wyndham Vale, Melton and even Rockbank and now some of the big developments like Woodlea out in the north-western suburbs. They are not built to do that, and that is where patronage growth in particular has come from. That is why people, particularly on the country and regional services, cannot get seats on those trains. Boasting about, as this government does, VLocitys being full might be a boast in a press release by the previous minister, now the Deputy Premier, but it is no boast to someone who is on a Gippsland train and stuck in a crush until Pakenham or those going out to Geelong experiencing the same thing. Boasting about that is like a New South Wales minister boasting about running XPTs up to Gosford. It is ridiculous. They were not built for those kinds of systems.

Melton and Wyndham Vale are not the only two lines which are experiencing huge problems in terms of V/Line operation due to broken promises from this government. We do hear a lot of talk from this government about what they have done in transport and what they have done in terms of level crossing removals, and some of that has been quite good. But let us be frank: what was promised to Geelong in terms of fast rail before 2018 was unequivocal. I happened to fish out the V/Line timetable, and I saw that most Geelong line trains nowadays take 1 hour and 5 minutes. Maximum speed is 160 kilometres an hour, and they are running at 1 hour 5 minutes with a few stops. Some are still doing the express services, which are diesel hauled, in exactly 1 hour. That still does not equate to the 1940

timetable which was 58 minutes, where trains ran at 70 miles an hour hauled by steam locomotives, or the Kennett government's, where trains were at 54 minutes to Geelong on the express services. So they are slower now than they have been for the last 70 years – not something to boast about, I would have thought, particularly when you promised a fast rail to the second-largest city in the state.

The member for Gippsland South would know, like many Gippsland patrons and most of my family in the Latrobe Valley who take the train, that there is congestion particularly from Drouin to Bunyip. When you have single-line sections in-between duplicated sections this creates mass issues on rail networks. To their great credit the Brumby government saw this between Westgarth and Clifton Hill and eliminated it – common sense, good policy. Of course this was promised in 2017, and the money was provided effectively by the federal coalition government, so I do not know why – and the member for Narracan and I were out looking at this the other week – it is now impossible for this government to follow through on a simple pledge to duplicate the platforms at Bunyip and Longwarry and to eliminate the single-line section over the Bunyip River, which was a promise and a commitment from this government. They can build a \$50 billion railway line from Cheltenham to Box Hill that no-one asked for, but they cannot build a half-billion-dollar bridge over the Bunyip River, which Gippslanders have been crying out for.

Danny O'Brien: Which they promised.

Matthew GUY: Which they promised. And if you are lucky enough to get on one of those trains out to East Gippsland – and you might go all the way out to the member for Gippsland East's electorate or the member for Gippsland South's electorate, to Sale or to Bairnsdale – you might be on one of the VLocity services, about which this government again said, 'We're going to eliminate the N Set diesel-hauled locomotive trains', which were introduced by the Hamer Liberal government back in the early 1980s in the new deal for country passengers with increased passenger rail speeds and brand new country trains. But of course those trains now have no window shades, no reclining seats and no buffet service.

Danny O'Brien: The VLocity services.

Matthew GUY: These are the Labor Party VLocity services. They are the longest trains in Australia by distance without a proper buffet service. I was recently on the trains in Western Australia – buffet service on the Prospector and on the Australind. There are buffet services going into northern New South Wales on all Xplorer and XPT services and buffet services for country train travellers up in Queensland. In Victoria, no way: 'We'll stick you on a bus on rails.' That is the government's attitude to country rail passengers. They will invest in X'trapolis 2.0s for city passengers and boast about that, but when it comes to providing a service for V/Line passengers, this government is wanting.

This bill certainly exposes what this government has been promising in V/Line services and not delivering. In Albury, where I was the other day, trains are now running at 3 hours and 20 minutes compared to 3 hours and 30 minutes – only 10 minutes quicker despite a 35- or 45-kilometre-an-hour increase in maximum speed for the last 60 years – because the government could not care less about country travellers.

I want to make some comments about our bus network. This government is hell-bent on some kind of Venezuelan ideological takeover of our bus system. They have got no money, but they have got this Chávez-esque plan to kind of take over the bus network, to kick out all these Victorian families who have owned and run buses for the last 50 years and say 'No way, we reckon a Canadian pension fund based in Vancouver can do it better'. What? I am not joking. They reckon that they can get a Canadian pension fund – this is the idea of the now Premier and the now Deputy Premier – to go and say to Melbourne bus-owning families, 'You're going to have your buses and your depots compulsorily acquired if you sign these contracts'. And lo and behold, there are going to be a couple of big corporates, like Kinetic, owned by the Canadians, who are going to come in and replace Victorian families and

probably Victorian jobs and probably, as this bill talks about, Victorian safety standards – because Transdev failed all of those – with multinationals. Who would have thought to replace Victorian families with an operator of a state-owned asset that is indeed a multinational? One has to ask: do you reckon this government has got the contingent liabilities on its balance sheet to handle another 2000 to 3000 buses? Well, I am betting at this point that if they cannot pay for a bridge over the Bunyip River, they probably cannot pay for the upkeep of 3000 buses, but I will be interested to see if the Treasurer can come into the chamber with a witty one-liner after lunch to see if he can explain that.

At the end of the day, Victoria's country rail network is expanding in patronage primarily because this government will not fulfil its commitments to the people of Melton and Wyndham Vale. It will not provide regional Victorians with the proper first-class service that it committed to. It is putting all of its money into the Suburban Rail Loop at the expense of infrastructure that is needed – not wanted, needed – to upgrade our country rail network. The fact that we are now talking about speed limit reductions on the north-east line because this government will not allow the money to go forward for their share of upkeep, because it is all being directed to a rail tunnel from Cheltenham to Box Hill, speaks volumes about how this government could not give a stuff about the bush. And that is why in the operation and management of public transport – the coalition introduced Sprinters and raised the maximum speed of country trains for the first time since 1937, and a Liberal government introduced a new deal for country passengers in 1981 – we always put country travellers first, unlike the Labor government.

Luba GRIGOROVITCH (Koroit) (15:35): I was very interested in what the member for Bulleen had to say, and it is interesting how invested he seems to be in country travellers. I notice that he mentioned both Melton and Wyndham Vale on a number of occasions. I will touch on that later on once I get to V/Line through the course of my notes, but it does give me great pleasure to stand here and commend this legislation to the house.

Victoria has always had a strong track record in leading life-saving road safety policies, and that is what this legislation is really about. In 1970 we led the world by becoming the first jurisdiction to introduce mandatory seat belts. In 1976 we were the first state to introduce random breath testing. In the late 1980s Victoria again was a world leader in introducing speed cameras. In 2004 Victoria was the first state to introduce mandatory roadside drug tests, and in 2008 Victoria introduced its graduated licensing system.

These initiatives have been found time and time again to have saved countless Victorian lives. This strong record has continued this year with a suite of reforms under the Allan Labor government, with targeted driver distraction and seatbelt-wearing offences coming into effect in April and further road safety initiatives being enabled through this bill. The main purpose of this bill is to continue the state government's strong commitment to road safety and the delivery of the *Victorian Road Safety Strategy 2021–2030*. I love speaking about public transport – being trains and buses – but I will get there afterwards, once I get through the main part of the bill.

This bill will enable research trials to support evidence-based road safety policy, particularly with regard to medicinal cannabis; establish a legislative framework for local governments to manage issues specific to vehicle-sharing schemes; improve road safety outcomes by making updates and clarifications to the Road Safety Act 1986; and support the efficiency of the administration and regulation of the transport sector.

Around six years ago the Allan Labor government led a comprehensive reform of the commercial passenger vehicle, CPV, industry. The reforms created a separate, modernised scheme for commercial passenger drivers under the Commercial Passenger Vehicle Industry Act 2017. However, the bus driver accreditation scheme remained unchanged. This bill will align the two driver accreditation schemes by establishing a bus driver accreditation scheme under the Bus Safety Act 2009. This scheme reflects the best practices found in the commercial passenger vehicle driver accreditation scheme. This will both modernise the bus driver accreditation scheme and enable Safe Transport

Victoria to find efficiencies in the administration of the aligned schemes. The bus safety reforms will also ensure that STV's exemption powers are aligned with commercial passenger and marine safety legislation. As part of the alignment the bill will enable the recognition of driver accreditations between the two schemes.

One of the key reforms in this bill is that it enables the Minister for Roads and Road Safety to designate road safety research trials. These trials could be for the purpose of determining to what degree it is safe for someone to drive a vehicle after consuming drugs and/or alcohol. It could also be for the purpose of informing the development of methods used by police officers –

Emma Kealy: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I would like to draw your attention to the fact that the member appears to be reading her speech.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Paul Edbrooke): I ask the member for Kororoit if she was reading her speech or referring to notes.

Luba GRIGOROVITCH: I am referring to notes.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Paul Edbrooke): Thank you.

Luba GRIGOROVITCH: It could also be for the purpose of informing the development methods used by police officers to assess whether someone is impaired by drugs, alcohol or fatigue. This amendment is both important and exciting as it enables the government to run world-leading research trials, not just relating to medicinal cannabis but also in other areas where there is scope for additional research to support ongoing work to address some of the most difficult challenges in the road safety space and ultimately to make our roads safer for all users.

Emma Kealy: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, following my previous point of order. The member has not lifted her eyes from the document in front of her. She is reading her speech.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Paul Edbrooke): I have ruled on that point of order. The member for Kororoit has the call.

Luba GRIGOROVITCH: As I was saying, this amendment is crucial to these sorts of reforms because it allows for a process that can change how the Road Safety Act and its regulations apply to trial participants, so that specified provisions of the act or regulations might not apply to trial participants at all, or they might apply to trial participants but in varied forms. In the context of the closed-circuit medicinal cannabis trial that was announced by the Allan Labor government earlier this year, this will enable trial participants to drive in a controlled environment after taking their prescribed medicinal cannabis without fear of breaking the law whilst participating in valuable research to inform Victoria's approach to drug driving and medicinal cannabis into the future. THC is the primary compound in cannabis.

Emma Kealy: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, it has been the custom and practice of this place and previous rulings have indicated that a member may not read a speech. Again I draw to your attention, for the third time, that the member who is currently on her feet has kept her eyes constantly down and is clearly reading a speech. Again, I ask you to review this matter in the way that it has been decided on and ruled upon by previous Chairs.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Paul Edbrooke): Thank you, member for Lowan. As I said before, the member has clearly stated she is referring to notes, and I believe the member. I am very reluctant to draw a line between the threshold of referring to notes and reading those notes. However, I will remind all members of the house that they do have to refer to notes, they cannot read straight from them.

Luba GRIGOROVITCH: Now, referring to my notes, I did want to say that the trial aims to understand a few key points: (1) – and I will read this from my notes – how THC contained in medicinal cannabis impacts driving performance in different patient cohorts and under different

circumstances and how this translates into risks on the road; (2) the relationship between THC concentrations, driving performance and road safety risk to aid potential regulatory reform; and (3) progressing this reform is important because we understand that medicinal cannabis is playing an increasing role as a therapeutic option for individuals with certain health conditions who have genuine need to drive. The road safety research regarding actual individuals prescribed medicinal cannabis for a therapeutic purpose is highly limited, and so it is essential that we take cautious steps to properly understand the risk profile of these individuals.

This government took action in 2021 to bring V/Line more directly into the centre of our public transport system. At that time I was the secretary of the Rail, Tram and Bus Union and I remember it fondly. The intention of this bill is to confirm that that arrangement is in legislation, and that is one of the reasons I am so proud to be speaking to this bill. The Allan Labor government is absolutely committed to providing regional Victorians with faster and more frequent connections, and that is why we have made record investments in regional public transport and taken steps to build a stronger V/Line.

The member for Bulleen earlier had a lot to say about the neglect of country travellers, but that is simply not true. Something else we have done is introduce our regional fare cap, one of the biggest changes that we have seen at V/Line in the past 40 years, to deliver fairness and equity between regional Victoria and metropolitan Melbourne. I have got to say that my colleagues here who represent the regions are very proud of that, and it is something we have spoken about on a number of occasions in caucus. Our \$4 billion Regional Rail Revival program is upgrading every passenger rail line across the state, delivering faster and more frequent connections right across this state, our state of Victoria.

This bill also establishes a new part of the Road Safety Act that will govern vehicle-sharing schemes in respect of e-scooters, e-bikes and bicycles. Electronic scooters, as we all know, have become increasingly popular. It is a form of transport that gets people around fast and smoothly. Many e-scooters are privately owned, but –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, may I refer you to *Rulings from the Chair*, page 58. There are a number of rulings at 7.5, and if I can quote:

It is a well established practice that members do not read their speeches.

I know that a number of members have called points of order on the current member. The member is clearly reading from a speech, which established practice holds as disorderly.

Colin Brooks: On the point of order, Acting Speaker, in the previous *Rulings from the Chair* it is quite clear that previous Speakers and Acting Speakers have in this particular instance sought the advice of the member making a contribution. If that member makes the remark that they are referring to notes, the practice has been that the Chair takes them at their word, and that should be respected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Paul Edbrooke): On that point of order, just to clarify before we move on to the next speaker, in *Rulings from the Chair*, under Acting Speaker Cooper in 1994:

The Chair may ask a member if they are reading their speech or referring to notes. If the member says they are referring to notes the Chair accepts the member's assurance.

I think we have been succinct and consistent with that.

Roma BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (15:45): I rise to speak on the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2023, a bill that makes a number of changes to transport legislation, and a couple of those I will probably focus on. The one that I will begin with is that it clarifies the government's arrangements for various transport agencies, including V/Line. Back in 2021 the government converted V/Line from a board-managed, state-owned enterprise to a statutory authority with the CEO directly reporting to the secretary of the department. This bill formalises those arrangements. The point I want to make is that this shuffling of the deckchairs really has not achieved any efficiencies. At the time the then Minister for Public Transport Minister Carroll put out a press release, on 16 June 2021, talking about this efficiency that they were introducing with the change for direct reporting by the

CEO to the department and how this was set to deliver better services for fast-growing regional communities.

Now here we are today. South-West Coast is in a really terrible state, to be honest, because the government themselves set a target for punctuality of 92 per cent. South-West Coast's punctuality is at 51.2 per cent. That means half the time the train does not turn up on time. The punctuality is that great a fail: it is at 51.2 per cent. We heard the member for Kororoit say that they are delivering for regional Victorians and say that the member for Bulleen, who spoke before me, who said that the government are letting down regional Victorians, was wrong. Well, there is your evidence: 51.2 per cent punctuality. That is absolutely appalling. South-west Victorians get on a train and only half the time can be guaranteed that they are going to be delivered to their destination. Often that is Melbourne, where they have got appointments for doctors or specialists or to see family and friends, or appointments for the elderly, who have no other way of getting to those appointments and often have had to wait six months to get them, because the appointments are so hard to get with specialists in Melbourne. So this is really serious.

The reason I find this so disturbing is because in 2017 the then Premier Daniel Andrews flew to Warrnambool to make the announcement that we would be getting new train sets. Those train sets would be delivered, and they would bring to Warrnambool a new way of us getting to town in a reliable and punctual way. Well, it is nearly 2024 and we have not got those trains delivered. But what we are promised instead of what the Premier promised back then are trains that will have no buffet cars and trains that will not have seats that are designed for the long haul. As I just mentioned, many of those travellers are elderly and going to medical appointments, but the government is not listening to the people of South-West Coast and the needs they have.

So what have we got? We have got unreliable V/Line services. Under this Labor government the Warrnambool train is mostly, if not always, replaced by buses. They are infamously replaced by buses, very often at short notice, including when passengers are already on board, due to the ageing fleet of the N-class carriages and locomotives. It is as simple as that. They fail all the time. People get on them and then have to get off again. They are late. The rail replacement buses are often slower than the train service, they lack the facilities that passengers rely on and they often do not have enough seats, leaving those with tickets – people who actually purchased tickets, so they are part of a system – stranded at the station and waiting hours, or even until the following day, to catch another service. This does not sound like Victoria, does it? This sounds like I am talking about a country in South America or – actually, you know what, even Eastern Europe is way better than this.

On one such occasion a young constituent – not so young actually – Toby Pettigrew wrote to me to explain how the train he was meant to catch from Melbourne to Warrnambool was cancelled at Geelong and replacement buses were called. However, the buses did not have enough seats for everyone getting off the now cancelled train. Toby explained to me that as it was the last V/Line service of the day, station staff could not guarantee that there would be enough future buses for these stranded passengers. Toby's experience is not unique. As I said, punctuality for the Warrnambool V/Line service is only at 51.2 per cent. This is an absolute fail by the Allan Labor government, a follow-on from the Andrews Labor government and a follow-on that seems to be very similar to what we have been seeing. It does not seem any different at all. We have had promises that were not delivered for our regions – in fact we have seen things cancelled – so no-one is surprised to see that these trains have not been delivered. I see in South-West Coast a community that was promised new trains and has not had them delivered.

That part of the bill is one of the things I wanted to raise, but another part of the bill that is concerning is the fact that the government, which has been trialling e-scooters, have now in this bill put in place provisions for regulation of e-scooter and bicycle share schemes by local councils. That might sound good, but what we have seen is that the government has had a trial of e-scooters, has extended that trial recently and is now, I think, shoving the responsibility across to local councils. They have not actually put the guidelines in place, and they have not addressed the issues.

In Melbourne you often see two people on a scooter – no helmets, young people going along the roads quite dangerously. There are clearly not enough police to be able to oversee this, because it is a frequent thing to see in the city, here in Melbourne. You come out onto the footpath, walking out from a shop, and then, bang, you collide quite frequently with people on the footpath on these scooters. I think it was the AMA that said recently that there was quite a significant increase in the amount of people presenting to accident and emergency with injuries as a result of being hit on footpaths or young people on roads that are not wearing helmets. This is really dangerous.

This has not been resolved. We have had two trials, or an extended trial, and now the government says local government can actually do it their own way and is not providing guidelines. The Municipal Association of Victoria have come out and said we are going to have a patchwork of rules across the state. It just does not sound sensible at all. I think it would be a brave local government that actually takes this on, to be honest, because what would make no sense would be to have rules across all the local LGAs – and there are 79 of them across the state. That does not make any sense at all. But it is not surprising to me that this government cannot figure out what to do and cannot make rules that actually work, even though they have had two trials and now have passed the buck to local councils and probably shifted the cost across as well. It is most concerning, but I am not surprised.

Here we are in the Parliament today. There was a private members bill that was put in by my parliamentary colleague the member for Berwick about changing the date for the public drunkenness laws, giving more time so that this can be done responsibly. But what we saw was that the government shut this down. So we will have on Tuesday next week the law coming in to have a health-led approach, which I do not disagree with, for public drunkenness, but the police in Warrnambool said to me just two weeks ago, ‘We do not have the knowledge. We haven’t been told what we are going to have to do, and it’s really hard for our members to have nothing in place.’ The responsibility that they have had for years for the safety of people will not be able to be actioned by them, yet no health services around South-West Coast will be able to do anything either, because there is no sobering-up centre. I do not know whether people are going to be picked up by an ambulance and sit in the ambulance for four hours to sober up if that is how long it takes. But I am pretty confident that most of the ambulance services in South-West Coast are already struggling to meet demand, so I do not think that would be an appropriate solution either.

It is very disappointing that we have a government that cannot deliver on its promises. They said they would do this. They could not deliver by November 2022, so they gave themselves until November 2023. And now we still have not got the appropriate services in place to do what we agree with – a health-led response to public drunkenness. At this point we will have the powers removed from the police, but we have not got a way of being able to be confident that the services are available. It is a chaotic government that is really falling apart at the seams. It does not matter whether you look at the public drunkenness laws or whether you look at the e-scooter trials or whether you look at the V/Line public transport system and the V/Line situation in South-West Coast or the increasing road toll that we see right across Victoria actually, because I think a lot of that has to do with our crumbling roads and the lack of investment the government is making into regional Victorian roads, which are crumbling in front of our eyes. Every year we blame winter when, surprisingly, winter is pretty wet most years in South-West Coast, and that is not something new that we are learning to deal with. So I am just very uncomfortable with what I am reading in this bill about the e-scooters and many of the other aspects of it, and I am very disappointed that the government is letting Victorians down when it comes to V/Line, especially in South-West Coast.

Daniela DE MARTINO (Monbulk) (15:55): It is a pleasure to rise today to speak on the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2023, and far from being a government falling apart at the seams or crumbling I think we are a fantastic government actually, the most progressive one in this country, especially when it comes to roads and road safety – and I will go into that a bit further. We have always led the way in this state, and proudly we continue to do so. I think we have got it together. And boy, I tell you what, we have got bills coming out left, right and centre. We do not stop. We keep moving

forward, we are always reforming and we are never, ever too afraid to consult with others and go, do you know what – we could improve upon this. And that says a lot about us.

This is a jam-packed omnibus bill – 171 pages long. It covers much ground, be it road, rail or even water, and I thank the Minister for Roads and Road Safety for all the work that has gone into producing this. It is certainly a tome. It covers a number of reforms. I will only speak to a few today though, because 10 minutes is not that long a time and there is a lot to touch on. But I do think it is important that before we discuss road safety we actually look at the proud and long history that Victoria has, leading the world and the nation when it comes to road safety reform.

Many of us here – take it as a compliment, everyone – will not remember a time when you were not compelled to wear a seatbelt. We are pretty young, most of us. In 1970 we made it compulsory. When I first travelled to Italy, my first ever trip, as a 16-year-old, it was certainly not compulsory in the city of Naples. In fact at one stage when they did determine it should be compulsory they produced T-shirts with a black slash across, so when you sat there behind the wheel police would think you were wearing one. We do not do that here. We put our safety belts on. We all do it. It is automatic. Excuse me – there are some who fail to do so, but they are very, very, very few.

I think we should never take for granted, though, our road safety history, because this did not happen by accident, it happened by design and subsequent governments over the years. We have always led the way. The member for Kororoit noted our significant record in road safety, and I am keen to make a note of it as well, because it is worthy of being noted and remembered. And when you look back and reflect on what we have done it gives you a guide for where we are headed towards – and as I said, we are a progressive government here. We will continue to strive to always reform and improve things for the lives of all Victorians.

Now, I did mention the mandatory seatbelts in 1970, and then in 1976 – before I was born, I am just going to add that for the record because I can – mandatory breath testing was introduced ahead of every other state in Australia. I will not make any more references to my birth year, because I am going to skip past and I was alive when the next part came in, and that was speed cameras in the 1980s. Again we led the world. In 2004 we led the country again by introducing mandatory roadside drug tests, and in 2008 we introduced a graduated licensing system – I am just going to call that a GLS, because I will refer to it a couple more times – which keeps our youngest and our newest drivers as safe as possible by requiring 120 hours of driving experience before you even take your test.

I cannot tell you how important this is. I was actually looking at the statistics on VicRoads. There is a study that was done 10 years after we introduced that scheme which steps out how many accidents have been avoided through the work that was done there – because it is not just 120 hours. It is night-time hours. There is encouragement for you to take your learner driver with you out in terrible driving conditions because they are safest then – and I mean safest. Negligible numbers of casualty accidents occur when there is a learner there with a competent driver sitting next to them.

Then when we let them go off and they drive out with their P-plates on, we know now that since we introduced the graduated licensing system they are so much safer than they were prior to that. In the UK the day you get your licence, which could also be the same day that you apply for your learners permit, you drive out with nary a condition on you and no indication to any other driver that you are a new driver on the road. There is nothing – nothing – that tells anyone else. I have spoken with family over there who have said they think our system is world class and should be replicated wherever possible. I have to agree.

So let us never, ever take it for granted that we have these systems in place. It is through hard work and reform and legislation and studying the science and hard efforts made by ministers and their teams and the government backing them that lead to best practice. So do you know what I am going to say: a pat on the back for everyone who has ever been involved in road reform here. It is fair to say that we have a great track record in Victoria in leading the way internationally and nationally when it comes

to road safety. We have saved lives and we have avoided injuries from the work that has been done over more than half a century. For more than 50 years we have been going on about this, and well we should have. This April we saw a targeting of driver distraction and new seatbelt-wearing offences come into effect, and this bill continues our proud legacy.

The first reform I would like to address is the enabling of road safety research trials, the first of which will be in relation to medicinal cannabis and driver impairment. But these trials will not be limited solely to this; the bill will allow other trials to take place down the track – all in the pursuit of greater, world-class road safety. It is a really, really exciting initiative. But in order for it to take place the Road Safety Act 1986 needs to be amended to protect trial participants from the fear of breaking the law as they drive in controlled situations whilst using medicinal cannabis.

We were the first Australian state approved by the Office of Drug Control to legalise medicinal cannabis through the Access to Medicinal Cannabis Act 2016. But a severe consequence for those who have medicinal cannabis in their system – prescribed for health reasons – is that any trace of THC, which is delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol, will result in the loss of that person's driving licence if they are pulled over and drug tested and test positive. That means that people at the moment are in a situation where they have got to choose between taking medicinal cannabis, which assists them with their pain or their inability to sleep effectively, or driving a vehicle and having their independence.

I welcome this reform and the research to come. The Allan Labor government is proud to follow the science. We always have been, and we will continue to be. The independent research on this issue which is to come I am sure will lead the way for many other places around the world as well, because I can tell you that jurisdictions outside of our state and outside of our country look to what we do here in Victoria. In fact many of you may remember our Transport Accident Commission ads. They have been noted and have won international awards for their effectiveness. So we should all be proud in this place.

Another effect that this bill will have is that anyone who has lost their licence and has had a three-year zero blood alcohol content restriction placed upon them will have that take effect from when their interlock device is removed. That is an important initiative.

Another reform I want to touch on – but I will have to be brief because I have obviously spent a bit of time talking about our proud record on this – is the modernisation of the bus drivers accreditation scheme, aligning it with the Commercial Passenger Vehicle Industry Act 2017 to reflect best practice. Once again, we seek best practice here as a government, and that is a fantastic thing. I would like to take this opportunity to state that last week was Bus Awareness Week, and my dear friend Mr Galea from the other place and I jumped on a bus in Belgrave which was clean, beautiful, new and had an automated voice telling you what the next stop was, like you were on a tram or a train. One of the loveliest bus drivers I have ever come across – Craig – drove me around. I got to sit down, and someone drove me through the rainforest outside of Belgrave around Monbulk. I thought, 'This is pretty amazing.' This is my moment to say to you all: there are very few places in Victoria where you can catch a suburban bus, take a beautiful trip through a temperate rainforest and let someone else do the driving for you on winding roads you may not be familiar with. So I would like to say to people, get out there on a bus. If you have not done so for a long time, I strongly encourage it. Enjoy that moment. I cannot tell you how nice it was. It was a fantastic opportunity. I am quite excited about where we are going with bus travel.

A member interjected.

Daniela DE MARTINO: Yes, absolutely. I had great company with Mr Galea there, for sure. So I just wanted to make a note that public transport is incredibly important. We see that. We hear that as a government. We work always to reform and to improve the way things function for Victorians, because we understand how important it is for people's everyday lives for road safety to be improved, for bus networks to be improved. It is not doom and gloom out there, actually – it is pretty bright, the

future, and that is because we are always striving to make it even brighter. So I commend this bill to the house.

Emma KEALY (Lowan) (16:05): It is wonderful to be able to speak about transport in this place. Whether it is about our roads or whether it is about rail services, I think that I try to mention those topics nearly every week that I get on my feet in this place. So it is wonderful to have the opportunity to be able to speak today to the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. This is of course an omnibus bill. It covers a number of provisions which will make many changes should the bill pass. Most importantly it will set up a legal process for a research trial of driving and medicinal cannabis use. It will also clarify governance arrangements for various transport agencies including V/Line, which is where our rail services will come into my debate, and makes various other technical and consequential amendments, particularly related to road safety, as was covered off by the member for Monbulk.

There is also reference and some changes in relation to bus driver accreditation, which is another important area of public transport in my area, because we do not have any other public transport in my electorate. My electorate of Lowan covers 20 per cent of the land mass of the state of Victoria, and we do not have any publicly operated rail services. It needs to be changed.

One of the things that we announced in the lead-up to the last election – and I am very proud of that – was around cab fares for regional commuters to access our public transport in the commute into Melbourne, and I am very, very pleased that the Labor government have also matched that policy, which is fabulous. I think we have seen that now in place, which has had an enormous impact on the accessibility of public transport to so many people in my electorate, particularly, though, for people who drive to Ararat. There are no trains, as I said, so the nearest public rail service is at Ararat, which is about an hour from the largest centre in Lowan. The nearest is about an hour away, so generally people will drive to Ararat, park there and then jump on the train to commute to Melbourne. I have been amazed with the support for this service. Having a capped fare is making it so much more accessible during this cost-of-living crisis for people even to drive that additional hour – or longer if you live closer to the South Australian border – and then to jump on a train, whether it is cheaper than buying fuel, running that risk of damage to your vehicle when you are driving up the Western Highway, or whether it is around being able to use that time in a more productive way.

We know there are very important road rules around driving while utilising your mobile phone. In this day and age we expect people to keep on top of things and respond so quickly when it comes to messages from work, so there is always that demand there and that people are keeping their eyes away from the road when they should be, in fact, focused on the road. So in terms of a road safety initiative, I would urge the government to review those commuter numbers on the western line in particular and to strongly consider extending that service to a minimum of Horsham and Hamilton in the south-west of the state and to perhaps consider taking that rail service even further. Dimboola is traditionally the housing point for rail. There are a number of rail engineers and drivers who still work in that area and live in that area. You could of course take it that one step further to the next big town, which is the community of Nhill, and within Nhill there have been tireless campaigners to bring back passenger rail to that area. You are getting towards a 5-hour drive to Melbourne from there without any stops. Often people who live in that area are jumping on the Overland, which is an important rail service – it is our only connection – but it is important that we do support all people who live in rural and regional Victoria.

For the lower section of the spur that goes down from Maroona through Hamilton down to Portland, the passenger rail service may not end at Hamilton – it may be an opportunity to connect into Portland, which has a growing tourism capacity. They now have cruise ships that are coming to port in that area. It certainly would stack up, given the numbers we are seeing just to Ararat and I think even beyond on the coach services that feed into that rail network.

Of course our biggest challenge when it comes to delivering more rail services to western Victoria is the differential in rail gauge. While I am sure, Deputy Speaker, this will greatly interest you – and

perhaps it may be a reminder of when I have mentioned this in this place before when you have been in the chair – the change in rail gauge is what is crippling us in western Victoria in accessing the metropolitan system. Back in the 1990s there was what was called the One Nation rail program, which was outlined by then Prime Minister Keating. Keating's plan was to standardise all rail across the nation. We in Australia have got a history of having many different gauges, which has meant that trains have not been able to travel from area to area very easily. A considerable amount of money was put into standardising the system, but it ran out. As a result we have standard gauge from the South Australian border through to Ararat; it cuts down through the spur at Maroona and then heads either through Hamilton to Portland or to the east to Geelong. For us to get a train that would ideally go, say, from Horsham or Hamilton to Ararat and then to Ballarat and to Melbourne cannot happen if we use the existing train sets.

But there is a solution. There are fabulous train sets that have adjustable bogies that are utilised in Europe, which means that you can use existing train sets. And perhaps there are some train sets that could be utilised in Victoria today by simply having a bogie attached which could have a clutch system, and if they drive very slowly through an area where there is a change in the width of the gauge, once they are in the new gauge, whether it is going from broad to standard or standard to broad, they lock the clutch or the gear back into place and they can go full speed through to the next stop. This is a very cheap and very straightforward solution, and I believe the government should be pursuing that as a matter of urgency. We need equity and access to train services across the state, and a way to tackle the road toll is of course for more people to travel on rail rather than on road, particularly when we are often competing with major truck transport on the roads in our local area.

I would also like to see an increase in the number of services. The V/Line service is the only service that people of the western suburbs have access to. It always surprises me that the metro service does not go out there – it is all V/Line. Since the capped fares, there is absolutely standing room only and people are packed like sardines in the carriages. I think a greater frequency of services is absolutely needed through the western suburbs, but particularly out to Ararat as well. There are so many commuters now that there is often just standing room through to Ararat from Melbourne. I urge the government to consider extending services but also to increase services to the west of the state.

I would like to quickly mention some other aspects of this legislation. We have got the trial environment to test driving and medicinal cannabis use. This is a way that we can look at an off-road research trial. It is a way forward, and it is something unique where we have an otherwise prescribed drug which is then testable through drug driving laws. We obviously need some sort of pathway forward, and this may be the opportunity to test what the implications are, given that medicinal cannabis is only active in the system for a couple of hours rather than for a longer time frame.

I would also like to mention that when we are talking about road safety the quality of roads is so important. There are potholes that riddle the roads in my electorate. The Western Highway, which is terrible really from Deer Park or so all the way through to the South Australian border, desperately needs investment. And we need to see the duplication of the Western Highway happen sooner rather than later. There are now such great big weeds growing around the builders shed near the birthing tree near Beaufort that it just shows that this program has been in place for such a long time. It was supposed to finish in 2016, yet it has not even started. The Labor government needs to tip some money into that program. The federal money has been sitting there for a long time. I know it is under the 90-day review, which I think is now at about 185 days past the review date. We need to get that road fixed as soon as possible and save some local lives.

I went to Warracknabeal the other day and I was absolutely appalled at the condition of the Henty Highway. That has had some works done recently, but it is certainly not up to scratch and must be reviewed as soon as possible and the funding extended to make that road safe. The Hamilton Highway is disastrous, and there are enormous expanses along the Glenelg Highway that are just horrifically dangerous. I would also urge the government to review the condition of the roadsides. There is an obligation to manage the roadside weeds. Some of the roadside weeds in my part of the state are well

above my height. I know I am not very tall; however, they are considerably high, and it does impair drivers' vision. There is a reference in here to bus driver accreditation. I note that the bus drivers association were not consulted about that. But most of all, no matter what sort of public transport it is or whether it is private transport, I urge the government to invest in regional rail and regional roads to fix country roads and save country lives.

John MULLAHY (Glen Waverley) (16:15): I am proud to contribute to this debate on the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. Firstly, I would like to thank the Minister for Roads and Road Safety and the Minister for Public and Active Transport for their work on this omnibus bill and for bringing it before the house.

This bill seeks to make a range of improvements in the transport sector. The first section addresses road safety, which is a matter close to my heart. I am a member of the Economy and Infrastructure Committee, and we are currently looking into the issues regarding road safety and specifically the impact of road safety behaviours on vulnerable road users. I would like to thank the other members of our committee – the member for Bellarine, the member for Shepparton and the members for Pascoe Vale, Narracan, Tarneit and Kew – for all the work that they are doing alongside me. I would also like to thank the various stakeholders that have given up their time and provided submissions to the committee and attended the public hearings. We are looking forward to reporting back to the house early next year on what we have seen before that committee.

As has been mentioned, we have got an excellent track record with regard to road safety. We have been leading the nation and the world when it comes to road safety. In the 1970s we were the first jurisdiction in the world to introduce mandatory usage of seatbelts. And something that has been before the committee with regard to that is that we have been seeing quite a bit of people not wearing their seatbelts anymore. Something we have become accustomed to is that nearly everyone should be wearing their seatbelts. Everyone has to wear their seatbelt, and I would like that to be occurring. In 1976 Victoria introduced random breath testing, becoming the first state in Australia to do so. We once again led the world in the 1980s, becoming one of the first jurisdictions to introduce speed cameras. In early 2000 Victoria also introduced mandatory roadside drug tests and the graduated licensing system. All of these policies have made a significant impact on Victorians, saving thousands of lives across the state over several decades. As a state, and I am sure on all sides of politics across the chamber here, these reforms are something that Victorians are grateful for. Improving road safety for drivers, passengers, pedestrians and all Victorians is something to be celebrated, and we should not take that for granted. That is why I am proud to be part of the Allan Labor government – a government that is continuing to introduce new road safety measures so we can continue to prevent deaths and accidents on our roads.

In relation to this specific bill, one of the key reforms is to allow the minister to designate road safety research trials. This is extremely important when it comes to the matter of driving and the use of medicinal cannabis. Once again Victoria led the nation in cannabis reforms in 2016 by becoming the first state to legalise medicinal cannabis under prescription for therapeutic use. This was a huge win for Victorians suffering from illnesses that can be treated by medicinal cannabis, including cancer-related symptoms, epilepsy and multiple sclerosis.

However, we are aware that there are issues facing individuals who use medicinal cannabis and who also wish to drive. Under our current presence-based drug-driving laws it is illegal to have any THC detected if you are driving. This is because THC is capable of impairing and intoxicating individuals. It is important to note that THC can be present in some forms of medicinal cannabis. Under the current laws users of medicinal cannabis would be committing an offence by driving if THC was detected in a drug test, even if they were not intoxicated or impaired by the medicine. As a result, many Victorians who need to use medicinal cannabis are faced with a tough decision – having to choose between health care and the ability to drive. We know that doing the right thing by Victorians in this situation is a challenge. We want to be able to make sure that medicinal cannabis users can drive if they are not impaired while at the same time ensuring the safety of other drivers on our roads.

It is why this bill seeks to allow the minister to designate road safety research trials, including a trial to help address this issue. We are wanting to establish a closed-circuit track trial in order to see how THC in medicinal cannabis can impact the performance of drivers and how this may impact increased risks on our roads. Additionally, such a trial would aim to determine the relationship between THC concentrations, road safety risk and driver performance. This trial would occur on a closed-circuit track, separate from public roads, so we do not put any road users in potential danger during the trial. Of course this trial would be operated by professionals ranging from road safety partners, health professionals and independent research organisations in collaboration with the Department of Transport and Planning.

Our government believes in establishing an evidence-based policy position on driving and medicinal cannabis, which is something I strongly support. We can only make policy that balances health and road safety outcomes by following the recommendations of evidence-based research. There will be other research and evidence that will inform policy changes regarding medicinal cannabis and driving on Victoria's roads, which I look forward to seeing. I am proud to be part of the Allan Labor government, which is addressing the real issues when it comes to health and road safety.

The next section of the bill seeks to address e-scooters and their future in our communities. Through the recent trial we know that e-scooters are becoming a very popular means of transport for Victorians for moving around our community in an active and cost-effective way that also reduces congestion on our roads. We have found that when road rules are followed, e-scooters can be used safely for riders, pedestrians and other road users, and we would love to see their continued use in Melbourne.

However, we have to ensure that e-scooters, as well as e-bikes, do not obstruct footpaths or other public infrastructure. I am sure many of you can remember the oBikes that were introduced in a trial in 2017. They cluttered our footpaths and streets, with dozens and dozens and dozens of oBikes found in the Yarra River, which was a disgrace. We must work to ensure that this situation is not repeated. Considering the e-scooters on trial can also be parked in public spaces, we have to make sure that such problems do not occur. However, we know that there are always instances of e-scooters blocking pathways and other public infrastructure.

That is why we need to make sure that our local councils are equipped with the appropriate powers to take action. This bill seeks to introduce the right for local councils and communities to have a say in what is safe and appropriate for their area when it comes to e-scooters and e-bikes. If required, councils will have the ability to prevent such sharing schemes from operating in their local government area. We are giving the option to local councils so that they are aware that e-scooters and e-bikes may not be suitable for every community. Furthermore, this bill seeks to require the operators of such vehicle-sharing schemes to provide sufficient insurance for riders and others, including passengers. As part of giving councils their own autonomy regarding the presence of e-scooters in their areas, councils can make this insurance a condition of operation in their local government areas. We want to make sure that the use of e-scooters can be safe, effective and fair for all Victorians, and this bill seeks to do exactly that.

When thinking of road safety, I am sure that one thing comes to mind for many Victorians, and that is drink driving. Tragically too many lives are lost on our roads due to people driving under the influence of alcohol. Nobody should ever have to lose their life in this way. Over the years steps have been taken to address drink driving across our state, including the installation of alcohol interlock devices in cars for repeat drink-driving offenders. Another policy in place is the zero blood alcohol content condition for offenders. All drink-driving offenders are subjected to the zero blood alcohol content condition when they return to licensed driving, for a minimum of three years. These measures are in place to ensure the safety of not only the driver but also any passenger on board and everyone else on our roads.

However, the zero blood alcohol content condition and alcohol interlock are applied concurrently. This leads to the most serious drink-driving offenders, after the removal of their alcohol interlock device, spending less time on the zero BAC condition. This stands in contrast to the most effective

and logical method to reduce recidivism, and this amendment seeks to address this by requiring the removal of an alcohol interlock device to be accompanied by the imposition of a further zero BAC requirement. We are preventing repeat drink-driving offenders from taking the wheel again before serving an appropriate sentence. Instead of the current arrangement, where the zero BAC requirement is applied concurrently with the alcohol interlock, this period will apply for three years after the device is removed.

The Allan Labor government is taking sensible, logical and proactive action to ensure that our roads are safer for all Victorians. I am proud to be part of a government which is nation leading in roads and transport infrastructure and road safety. This government will always look at ways in which we can improve our road safety standards. We will make continual improvements to our transport infrastructure system through an evidence-based approach. This amendment bill does exactly that, and I commend the bill to the house.

Cindy McLEISH (Eildon) (16:25): From time to time we get to deal with an omnibus bill in the Parliament, and I will note that the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2023 we have before us was one that was introduced with a 13-day period of adjournment, not the typical 14, so I think we have done a remarkable job to get up here and be able to present our case as well as we can.

This, as I mentioned, is an omnibus bill, and it deals with quite a number of areas. One of the ones that is actually quite interesting is the setting up of the legal process for the research trial of driving with medicinal cannabis. I will talk about that in a little bit. As we have heard from other speakers, we have got regulation around e-scooter and bicycle share schemes by local councils, and it is interesting how many councils were involved in that – who was driving that and who was not driving that. We have the bus driver accreditation program and governance arrangements for various transport agencies, including V/Line. Certainly we have heard of some of the issues so far from this side of the house with failing and poor V/Line services. We have different road safety reforms about speed cameras and speed detection devices, using them on bikes and e-scooters, and that will allow me to talk in some detail and at some depth about some of the road safety issues that are present in my electorate.

There are a number of another areas, but I am going to start just with the medicinal cannabis. It is quite an interesting situation because it is not like a traditional drug that might be in your system for just a short period of time. So if it is in your system for a longer period and you are not influenced by it and you are pinged for drug driving, so to speak, that does not seem very fair. I think we are very open-minded about this particular part of the legislation that is before us. One of the things that I find quite interesting is this trial would be closed circuit in a controlled driving environment. They will try to work out what that looks like and how that will work, but I was interested that even for off-road we need to make changes to the Road Safety Act 1986 to facilitate this trial. I am very interested in how that might go. Of course, as is very typical, we have got little detail about where, when or how this trial will run, so we would like to know a little bit more about that.

I want to just mention the bus driver accreditation. There is a whole bunch of issues around buses and bus drivers. What this is doing is implementing an accreditation scheme and taking the old scheme from the Transport (Compliance and Miscellaneous) Act 1983 to try and modernise and change the accreditation process. Now, one of the things that the government fails on consistently – and it is absolutely consistently – is consultation and what consultation means and how they do it. Consultation does not mean: we have decided we are going to do this, and here is what is happening. Consultation means going to people – going to those with skin in the game. In this case that is a lot of the bus companies, the networks that are involved in delivering public transport across the board. Now, they did not know. Neither the industry nor the Transport Workers' Union were consulted about it, and the minister's office advised that relevant stakeholders – this is what I loved – will be consulted during implementation of the changes. 'Will be' is not consultation. The consultation has to happen before so that you get it right the first time. You do not get a little bit into the legislation and think 'Oops, we've made a little bit of a boo-boo here. We need to come and fix it up and bring it back'. You need to get through all of that in the first instance.

We know that the government has a pretty interesting background and history with the bus system and their approach to nationalising it a number of years ago. I know many bus companies in my electorate – I have McKenzie's, I have Martyrs and we have Ventura in the wider area – were exceptionally concerned about this and the length of the contracts that they were required to take out. If you wanted a longer contract, you had to pretty well hand over all your buses and depots, and that is just so wrong. We have Ventura, who are turning 100 years old next year. They are a private company.

I was pleased to hear the member for Monbulk before talking about what a wonderful service Ventura, the privately operated bus company, gave to her going through the rainforests in the Dandenongs. She made comments particularly about the service operators and the drivers and things like that. Private companies very much pride themselves on how they deliver their transport. I and many people in my electorate have seen these companies grow as family-owned businesses. They have really grown and deliver such a great service, and the drivers are so helpful to everybody. I think the government's attitude towards the bus companies has been pretty appalling for quite some time now.

I want to mention also the 684 bus service from Eildon to Southern Cross. Again there was poor consultation. The bus used to go from Eildon into Alexandra through many little country towns and down through Healesville and stop at Chirnside, stop at Eastland and stop at East Melbourne at the medical precinct, and this was particularly important for so many people who could alight and go to their specialist appointment. We do not have trains; we rely on the V/Line buses in my electorate. They were looking at terminating that at Lilydale and telling everyone to pop off the bus, get on the train. Now, a lot of people that take that are elderly and really enjoy being able to get on at one stop and off where they need to get off. I FOied documents from here, and what a letdown it was to get virtually nothing back, not the real assessment of what people on the ground did tell them. I know when they did the assessment it was hard to get the consultation happening in country Victoria in my electorate rather than just at Healesville. We needed it across the Divide, and Carmel Denham from Buxton did a good job in really lobbying to get this changed.

I also want to mention the Road Management Act 2004 and part 5 of the bill here, which refers to the abolition of the infrastructure reference panel, and roads and road safety. For too long the roads in my electorate have been neglected, and they only get fixed when there is commentary on the radio and in the newspapers. And the different companies that fix tyres and wheels tell me how booming their business is because of the shocking state of the roads. You can go anywhere in my electorate and ask those that fix all of the tyres how business is, and they will tell you that because the government completely neglects the roads, business for them is good. But it is not for the people who damage their vehicles. We have had classic cars damaged at \$2400 a pop, and they do not get compensation. We have had multiple vehicles on the side of the road, and especially when it is dark and raining you cannot see those potholes.

We have had some work done on the Melba Highway because it has just been so desperately needed, but the Heidelberg-Kinglake Road is a problem and the Whittlesea-Yea Road is a problem, as are Maroondah Highway and Warburton Highway. I have mentioned the Melba Highway, the Goulburn Valley Highway – there are so many roads. The road between Mansfield and Barjarg has had some pretty significant works done recently, and that is long overdue – in fact it is probably from Maindample to Benalla. But when I raise these issues time and time again with the minister I get multiple letters with the same reply. The reply is not very useful when it says 'We are investing all this money over 10 years'. Well, it is not being invested now. It is all patchwork at the moment. They say they are doing all of this maintenance and repair work, but they are not. It is not evident. It is invisible in my electorate, except in the instances where it is on the front page of the newspapers or it is a story. I think Channel 7 did stories all around the state. Every night they ran a different area with potholes, and I know my electorate was featured quite heavily there.

We have got this money that is back-ended. Now, why is this investment in roads back-ended? We all know why it is back-ended. It is because the government is failing to keep control of its balance sheet. They are failing to make the right investments and manage those investments to keep them in control

instead of having them blow out to the extent that they are blowing out. Of course for this government their philosophy is: 'The project is a little bit overdue. We don't have enough money here. Let's just whack on a few more taxes. Let's hit the businesses a little bit more. Let's hit ratepayers a little bit more, and for people who are already suffering from the cost of living, let's make it even harder on them.' So the government's way to prosperity, I think, is tax, tax, tax. Well, that does not work, and it is not going to work. I implore the government to look at their budget a little bit more carefully and bring some of that roads investment forward, because in country Victoria we absolutely need that roads investment. It is no good having it in six years time when the roads are in the absolute worst state ever. We need that investment now.

Paul MERCURIO (Hastings) (16:35): I rise to talk on the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. I apologise in advance if I repeat what has been said in the chamber, but there are a lot of good things in this bill that are worth repeating. It is a big bill – it is 171 pages covering a lot of different aspects of transport and transport reforms, and I believe it is a good bill. It focuses on such things as road safety policy; medicinal cannabis trials; e-scooter sharing schemes; important bus driver reforms; changes to commercial passenger vehicle laws; the designation of orders to clarify the national standard for commercial vessels; a clarification around the Transport Accident Commission, or the TAC as we know it; reforms around the disclosure and use of information in relation to the public transport network; support for the efficient administration and regulation of the transport sector; and other improvements to the operation of transport laws. As I said, it is a big bill, it is a busy bill. My main contribution to this bill will be regarding the proposed trial around medical cannabis and driving, but first I would like to talk about a couple of other things.

I absolutely encourage more use of bikes and e-scooters and believe that there should be more bike lanes in every town, but I do see the issue that e-scooters and e-bikes create when they are just left on the footpath, on the side of the road or in a random park. In my electorate we do not have a fantastic bus service, which I am working on, but the more e-scooters and e-bikes we have down there, the more kids can actually get to school, they can get to jobs and it frees them up to earn a living and look after their education. So I certainly support having more e-bikes and e-scooters. This bill will seek to assist local governments by giving them greater control over e-scooter and e-bike share schemes. We will achieve this by allowing local councils to decide whether having an e-scooter or e-bike share scheme is allowed within their LGA, and the operator will have to negotiate an agreement with the relevant council to operate. Additionally, the bill will allow local councils to set conditions on how the scheme will operate and also let councils decide where the most appropriate place to leave e-scooters and e-bikes is so as to minimise them being left on footpaths, where they can become a hazard or obstruction. This strikes an important balance of still letting people use their e-scooters or e-bikes while being respectful of the local areas and conditions.

Another important aspect of this bill is the implementation of important bus driver reforms. Before my time in this place this Labor government established reforms to the commercial passenger vehicle, or CPV, industry. These reforms created a separate and modernised scheme for CPV drivers, but those reforms did not make any changes to the bus driver accreditation scheme. This bill will align the two driver accreditations by establishing a bus driver accreditation scheme under the Bus Safety Act 2009. Essentially, putting these two together just makes sense – being under the same regulator in Safe Transport Victoria will improve efficiencies in regulatory monitoring and compliance.

That is about that for me. I would really like to talk and spend some time on medicinal cannabis and driving. One of the key reforms in this bill is that it enables the minister to designate road safety research trials, the idea being to get a group of people to a closed driving circuit and allow them to consume medicinal cannabis. Then their driving will be observed, data will be collected and we will find out how they are affected by medicinal cannabis and by how much they took. This is quite a subjective thing, as we all know. It will be much more scientific than I have explained it, but the fact that the minister can designate a safety research trial actually means that people who take part in this trial will be exempt from legal action against them due to driving with illegal drugs in their system. I

find this quite fascinating. It is a good thing, this trial, but I would advise people not to drive to this trial, because once they have done the trial they will not be able to drive home, because they will have THC in their system. In fact they probably should not drive for a week after this trial, because they may get a positive test due to having THC in their system and they will be fined thousands of dollars and they will lose their licence. So I think they will be brave to do the trial.

The Victorian Labor government legalised medical cannabis way back in 2016 in recognition of the therapeutic and health benefits that it gave people – people who are suffering from conditions such as epilepsy; conditions causing extreme pain like endometriosis, postural orthostatic tachycardia syndrome or cancer; and people who have a loss of appetite or extreme nausea because of other medical treatments. I applaud the government for doing that. It is and was the right decision, but it is unfortunate that while medicinal cannabis is now legal to take, it remains illegal to drive with traces of cannabis in your system – that is, with THC in your system. The fact is THC remains in the user's system for days and even weeks after the initial consumption, whether it be through a medicinal jelly or smoking a joint. It is recognised in a lot of the research that has been done around the world that THC remains in the system long after the high from THC has passed. Some research estimates that the high only lasts for, as some people have said in this chamber, a couple of hours or 4 hours.

There have been many trials around the world to try and understand the level of impairment from medicinal cannabis use throughout the stages of initial consumption and the following hours and days. To this day, no framework has been developed in any country around the world in the same sense that we have the alcohol framework, which says if a person has a blood alcohol level under .05, they are not considered impaired and it is legal to drive, but .05 or higher, they are considered impaired, and it is illegal to drive and they will suffer legal consequences for doing so. It is my hope that this trial can find a specific, measurable and quantifiable framework to measure the level of impairment over a period of time after consuming medicinal marijuana so we can determine with the same accuracy as the blood alcohol level when a medicinal cannabis user is no longer impaired by the high of their medication and is safe to drive.

The reason this is so important to me is that people in our community who already have an incredibly tough journey, people who rely on legally prescribed cannabis to get by, are living in fear. I have a close friend who has severe health issues, and the only thing that goes some way to alleviating those symptoms and allows them to get on with their life in as positive a way as possible is medicinal cannabis. They are a responsible, self-aware person. They take medicinal cannabis often at night to help them sleep because they are in so much pain they cannot sleep. They often come home from work in the afternoon and might have medicinal cannabis because they have severe nausea, and sometimes they cannot eat for days. So medicinal cannabis relieves this.

I just wanted to point out something that the member for Gippsland South said. He stated the concern that medicinal cannabis users might also use cannabis recreationally and somehow have a free ride, which is one reason why they do not want to legalise it. It is really quite silly, because quite frankly, when you are in chronic pain 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 52 weeks of the year, for years on end, there is no such thing as recreation. Sadly, they are stuck in this no-man's-land of not wanting to take harder drugs and suffer some of the horrible side effects from them – not to mention the highly addictive nature of some of those prescription medications. They want to live their lives and go about their day just like anyone else. They do not want to be constantly frightened whilst driving to the shops or driving to work or driving to get food or even going to their doctor for their legally prescribed prescription. They do not want to constantly go about their day in fear of being pulled over and testing positive to THC, even if they have not taken any for several days. I might add that someone said that this is a choice between taking medication and driving. I disagree. This is a choice between surviving and not surviving. The consequences are severe if you get caught, with huge fines and the loss of your licence. In my friend's case, they would probably lose their job, their income, their lifestyle, their flat and all hope. Sometimes hope is the only thing that gets them through. Legalising medicinal cannabis

back in 2016 gave people initial hope. It is time to finally restore that hope to those that need it and deserve it. I commend this bill to the house.

Wayne FARNHAM (Narracan) (16:45): It is a pleasure to rise today to speak on the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. This is a pretty wideranging bill and makes a number of changes across both the roads and road safety and public transport portfolios. It is one I have been waiting to see from this government, which has had a very, very thin agenda in recent months. The bill is an omnibus bill, and it includes reforms relevant to both the roads and road safety and public transport portfolios. The bill sets up a legal process for a research trial into driving and medicinal cannabis use; provides for regulation of e-scooter and bicycle share schemes by local councils; aligns bus driver accreditation with the accreditation of commercial passenger vehicle drivers; clarifies governance arrangements for various transport agencies, including V/Line; makes various road safety reforms, including allowing speed cameras and speed detection devices to be used on bikes and e-scooters and rules around alcohol interlocks; amends rules surrounding the sharing of data from commercial passenger vehicles and the public transport network with respect to CCTV footage and Myki travel data; and makes various other technical and consequential changes and amendments.

I will start with the cannabis trial, which we discussed earlier this year in this house. It is a big challenge for the government. I do have empathy for people that need to take medicinal cannabis to have a better quality of life. In doing so, that obviously impedes their ability to drive. It is a very, very fine balancing act between someone having a better quality of life and not putting other people or other road users at risk. This is a big challenge for the government. I would have thought, being such a challenge, we would have had a little bit more detail on the trial itself and how that will work. We are under the impression it will be an off-road trial, as in it might be held, say, at the Lang Lang testing centre or a facility like that. It will be a two-year trial, I think, from memory.

It is a big challenge because THC in your system does last for a long time. I know people that have smoked cannabis for years, and some of them are okay and some of them are not. I think everyone's personal disposition will affect the way their cannabis treatment affects them. The government has got to find this balance between literally giving someone a quality of life and letting them drive and not hurting other people. The challenge here is the THC and how long that lasts in the system and how that impairs people. What is the impairment? It is very, very hard. I would hate to be a police officer trying to judge the impairment of someone that says 'I can take medicinal cannabis; I'm allowed to drive'. If you have ever seen someone that is stoned, literally, their eyes are droopy and their speech impaired and all the rest of it. But when they have got a licence to say 'I can drive; I'm allowed to take medicinal cannabis', at what point in time do we say you are impaired? The impairment then is taking away their right to drive. It is a really big challenge. I am interested to see the results of this trial and what level of impairment is 'Now you can't drive'. It is good they are doing the trial; I actually think that is a good idea. But it is such a fine line that the government has to tread in this space of medicinal cannabis use and a person's right to drive, so it is going to be very interesting. But we would have liked more detail on that.

I am going to take off probably from where the member for Bulleen went today with V/Line and – probably the only way I could put it – the poor performance of V/Line and the fact that train times now are no better than they were 70 years ago. In my electorate, in Narracan, in 2017 announced by the federal Liberal–National coalition was \$490 million to upgrade the Gippsland line. It was announced in 2017. In 2018 there was a commitment by the government to duplicate the line from Bunyip to Longwarry, and again in 2022. Now it is not happening. It is done. To be honest, it is very, very frustrating for Gippsland commuters. People are using public transport more and more to get to and from Melbourne. People in my area are continually shunted onto buses, and sometimes it has taken them up to 4 hours to get back to Warragul or Drouin. That is not good enough.

This line duplication is so important to improve train times. I know people will argue that, and they go, well, sometimes there are not enough carriages. At the moment we have three carriages and there should be four or five. There are not enough carriages there to transport the people up and down the

line. The duplication is so important for more trains. You cannot get more trains when you have this single section of track from Longwarry to Bunyip. Deputy Speaker, it would be like you coming to me and saying 'Member for Narracan, build me a house – I want a 40-square house'. I would say no problem, and I would finish the house and give you 20 squares. Two questions you would ask me: where is the rest of it, and where has the money gone? They are the two questions that my community is asking this government: where is the rest of the duplication, and where has the money gone? Because the money was not the government's money; it was federal money – \$490 million. The state government put in \$30 million to \$40 million. So where did the money go? Has it gone into the Suburban Rail Loop? Are Gippslanders now put again to the back of the list for the sake of a government project in the city?

My community is getting very, very frustrated because I keep asking questions but I do not get the answers. The last time I asked a question about this particular subject, Bunyip to Longwarry, I got a press release from the then minister for infrastructure, who is now the Premier, talking about Stratford, 200 kilometres away. Now, that shows a total lack of respect from the now Premier for my community. Surely if I get up in this chamber and I ask a legitimate question that is of concern to my constituents, I should get an answer that is relevant. Not somewhere 200 kilometres away – that just shows a total lack of respect. No wonder my community is getting so angry about our transport problems. I hear in this chamber all the time 'We're removing 110 level crossings. We're improving rail. We've got better rail. We've got better roads'. Every time I yell out in the chamber 'What about Narracan?' there is silence because there has not been one level crossing removal in regional Victoria. I have a level crossing in Warragul that will take you 20 to 30 minutes to get through if you are picking up your kids in school time. Where is our share of the level crossing removal? Where is our share of the better rail services?

As the member for Bulleen stated earlier, there is a \$50 billion project in Melbourne and we cannot get a bridge built. But the government had to contribute so little; it all came from federal. So where has the money gone? Why won't they build the bridge? I did hear the excuse that Strzelecki gums and a southern brown bandicoot are the problem. Well, the government had no issue removing trees for projects in Melbourne. So why is there an issue removing trees in regional Victoria so we get better infrastructure? Why is that all of a sudden a major issue? If you are really concerned about the southern brown bandicoot, by all means employ a vet, have a look, I do not know. But there has got to be a way around it, because my community deserves better than what the government has delivered to date. My community deserves better than broken promises and an inefficient rail service to Gippsland. And it does not just affect me – it affects the member for Morwell and it affects the members for Gippsland East and Gippsland South. We are all on that same line. So we are getting substandard service from this government, and I would like the government to fix the service.

Jordan CRUGNALE (Bass) (16:55): I too rise to make a contribution to this debate on the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. It is a pretty packed bill and it covers a series of road safety focused areas. A whole heap of things have been included – reforms and amendments – that we have heard others in the chamber on this side speak about. We have also heard about our strong track record in leading life-saving road safety policies. We know what happened in the 1970s, when we led the world in becoming the first jurisdiction to introduce seatbelts and also the first state to introduce random breath testing. In the late 1980s we led the world in introducing speed cameras, and in the first decade of this century we were the first state to introduce mandatory roadside drug tests as well as the graduated licensing system. All these initiatives culminate in saving lives.

The strong record has continued this year with a suite of reforms under the Allan Labor government, with targeted driver distraction and seatbelt-wearing offences coming into effect in April and further road safety initiatives enabled through this bill. One of the key reforms in this very jam-packed bill of great reforms and amendments enables the minister to designate road safety research trials. This is important, as it will enable our government to run world-leading research trials.

I do want to spend a bit of time talking about the medicinal cannabis trial and also a great facility in my fine electorate of Bass. Under the current presence-based drug-driving laws any detectable amount of THC constitutes an offence under the Road Safety Act 1986, including if it has resulted from taking prescribed medicinal cannabis. The medicinal cannabis can be detected in a roadside presence test, regardless of whether the driver is impaired. Our government has acknowledged the challenges with balancing individual health and driving needs with road safety outcomes, and we are committed to establishing an evidenced-based policy position on medicinal cannabis and safe driving. This will be through a closed-circuit track trial, which will provide valuable information while also mitigating possible risk to all road users on the public road network. It is all about doing the work, as I said, with evidence-based policy to inform the research.

The proposed medicinal cannabis trial will be developed and implemented by an independent research organisation with governance provided by the Department of Transport and Planning, road safety partners and experts and health professionals. The proposed trial will look at the level of driving impairment produced by medicinal cannabis with THC as well as evaluating driving performance. What is important is that it will be conducted in a controlled driving environment that is physically separated – obviously – from public roads, with safety considerations for all participants and research staff being a priority.

Progressing this reform is important also because we understand that medicinal cannabis is playing an increasing role in the therapeutic option for individuals with certain health conditions who have a genuine driving need. It is most often prescribed for the treatment of chronic pain, but it is also used to treat anxiety; cancer-related symptom such as pain, nausea and reduced appetite; epilepsy; insomnia; and MS. The road safety research regarding actual individuals prescribed medicinal cannabis for therapeutic purpose is highly limited, and so it is essential that we take cautious steps to properly understand the risk profiles of these individuals.

It would be a bit remiss of me not to mention the fabulous processing facility in Bass. It is called MediPharm. Victoria was the first state in Australia to legalise access to medicinal cannabis, and Wonthaggi was the first Australian region to have a medicinal oil manufacturing plant and an independent global manufacturing company to enter Victoria's medicinal cannabis industry. It was back in 2019 when I joined with our former Premier and representatives from the Canadian medicinal cannabis company MediPharm Labs at the grand opening. It was paving the way for giving more people access to life-changing treatment and creating up to 60 new jobs whilst also supporting local agriculture and business. The facility in my understanding was sold to OneLife Botanicals in 2022. It processes up to 75,000 kilograms, which is quite a lot, of medicinal cannabis into resin each year – it is a remarkable facility – for use in medicinal products, partnering with more than 50 agricultural growers across Australia, including 30 in Victoria. In 2021 it achieved an export milestone from Australia to Germany.

Many medicinal cannabis users have reported significant reduction in their pain since accessing the medication and being able to participate much more fully in everyday activities. Medicinal cannabis users have raised concerns for several years that Victoria's current laws mean they risk losing their licence or being fined each time they drive. It is a commonsense approach to initiate this trial to understand the effects of medicinal cannabis on driving.

In December 2020 our government established the medicinal cannabis and safe driving working group made up of senior representatives from across the government's road safety partnership as well as health professionals, road safety and academic experts. Despite a vast amount of research on THC and driving, the working group heard that research on medicinal cannabis and driving is currently limited and therefore no definitive conclusions on the safety implications could be made at this stage. While strong relationships exist between blood alcohol concentrations, impairment and crash risk which informs our drink-driving legislation, no similar relationship has been established for THC that is universally accepted. That is why it is essential that the impairing effects of medicinal cannabis with THC on driving behaviour is investigated in a fully controlled environment to understand the effects

of medicinal cannabis on driving before considering any change in legislation. It is important to also note that although the proposed closed-circuit medicinal cannabis trial is extremely important, it is just one part of the program of works in this space, which includes the development of a medicinal cannabis support tool for prescribing clinicians and other road safety research initiatives.

While medicinal cannabis is prescribed for a range of complex conditions, there is limited evidence-based information available to support prescribing to patients who have a driving need. Our government has already commenced the development of a medicinal cannabis clinical decision support tool to assist prescribing health professionals in providing appropriate advice and considering the driving requirements of their patients when prescribing medicinal cannabis. When completed, the tools will support clinical decisions on driving for prescribers of medicinal cannabis, support conversations with patients and provide guidance material to support safe transport choices. The Allan Labor government is also reviewing road safety outcomes in other countries. This is really important as well to ensure that we have access to the latest information and data on medicinal cannabis and driving. Our steering committee involving the partners will be established to monitor the proposed closed-circuit trial as well as other initiatives, with all the data and evidence to be carefully considered before any future recommendations.

I am proud of the measures this government has taken over a long period of time to reduce the number of lives lost on our roads, and this bill enables Victoria to take on world-leading road safety research and continue to implement evidence-based safety reforms that will save lives. In a nutshell this bill, with all the other reforms and amendments that are listed in the bill, will make our roads and transport system safer, fairer and more accessible to use. I commend the bill to the house.

Martin CAMERON (Morwell) (17:04): I rise today to talk on the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. Firstly, I would like to thank the member for Gippsland South for his detailed report to us so we could actually work our way through the bill to see what the changes are going to be and how they are going to affect people moving forward.

Now, the bill is an omnibus bill and includes reforms relevant to both the roads and road safety and public transport portfolios. The bill sets up a legal process for a research trial of driving and medicinal cannabis use, provides for regulation of e-scooter and bicycle share schemes by local councils, aligns bus driver accreditation with accreditation of commercial passenger vehicle drivers and clarifies governance arrangements for various transport agencies, including V/Line. It makes various road safety reforms, including allowing speed cameras and speed detection devices to be used on bikes and e-scooters. As the member for Gippsland South said before, we do not have so many e-bikes and e-scooters in country Victoria at the moment, but you have only got to walk to work of a morning in Melbourne and they absolutely fly past you, so we can see why there is a need to do that. It amends rules around sharing of data from commercial passenger vehicles and the public transport network with respect to engaging with some CCTV footage and Myki and travel data and makes various other technical and consequential amendments. I do note that we will not be opposing the bill, as was said by the member for Gippsland South.

The government has been under a little bit of pressure, especially since the election of two Legalise Cannabis MLCs in 2022, to reform road safety arrangements which currently disadvantage people who take medicinal cannabis. So the trial is coming to fruition, and we can all see the reasons why that needs to be. As it is the only legally prescribed drug that is screened with a swab or blood test, users can be charged or lose their licence if they actually get tested and it is proved that cannabis has been found in their systems – that THC has been found in their blood system. While impairment after taking medicinal cannabis usually would only affect a person for a matter of hours – the feeling of it and the help that medicinal cannabis does give them – THC can remain in a person's bloodstream for anywhere up to a week, a fortnight or even a month depending on how their body does deal with the remains of the THC. Hence a driver could be completely unimpaired for driving purposes yet test positive to THC, and they can lose their licence and also cop a few substantial fines. Roadside testing currently tests for alcohol, as we know, and illicit drugs via a mouth swab which tests only for THC,

MDMA and methamphetamine. There is no drug BAC percentage test available to detect the levels of drugs in your system, so a driver taking THC and having it in their system can only test either positive or negative, which is a concern if you are on medicinal cannabis for reasons to help your day-to-day living.

There are many members in our community, and I know a few – well, a lot actually – who are using medicinal cannabis for various reasons to enhance their quality of life. I have an aunty that has used medicinal marijuana for her knee and joints, and it has actually made a great improvement to her quality of life. She is of an age where she does not have to get in the car and drive herself around, but we have many people in the community that have ailments or are dealing with cancer or cannot sleep and so forth who use these alternative medicines. But after they use them, they still need to be able to function, especially if they have a family. They need to be able to get to work, drop the kids off at school, access the supermarket and engage in their general day-to-day life while using medicinal marijuana. So it is pertinent that we have a trial that can actually allow them to be able to have a quality of life but also deal with the day-to-day running of a family and their life in general where they need to get around. The research trial is needed, as I said, and moving forward it actually will be interesting to see what those results are.

As stated earlier, the bill also clarifies governance arrangements on V/Line. We heard from the member for Narracan before about V/Line up in our neck of the woods, and it involves me as the member for Morwell in the Latrobe Valley, the member for Gippsland South and the member for Gippsland East. The V/Line train runs from Melbourne right through to Bairnsdale, dropping off and picking up all our residents on the way through. Data from V/Line's September 2023 performance reports shows that the Gippsland line is lagging well behind others in regional Victoria when it comes to reliability. Just 79 per cent of services on the Gippsland line run on time, compared with 90.9 per cent of services running on time in Bendigo and Seymour. The V/Line punctuality target is 92 per cent. As we see with the 79 per cent efficiency down in the Latrobe Valley and the Gippsland line, we are well below the recommended percentage and what it should be for punctuality.

In August this year, when we got the figures through, punctuality was only 68 per cent. It just backed up all the emails and calls to my office from people that have been left stranded at railway stations in Melbourne. We had a couple during the football season that had got the family on the train in Traralgon and made their way down to a Thursday night game. When the game finished, they went back over to the train station to go home and the train had been cancelled. It took them 4½ hours via buses – waiting for buses – to get home. We cannot have that. We need reliability in our train services so that members of our community can rely on a service coming through.

We have had a lot of upgrades to the Gippsland line that the government has been doing. VicTrack have upgraded our lines, and they have also upgraded the signalling system. But as the member for Narracan stated, we get to a bottleneck once we get past Warragul where we go to a single track going across the Bunyip River. What we do need desperately, as he stated before, is a duplicated line going across. We do sit here sometimes in amusement and listen about the level crossing removal program, which is fantastic for people that live in the city, and how great it is. I would love to be able to go back and talk to the people in the seat of Morell and in the Latrobe Valley about how maybe one day our level crossings – our dangerous level crossings – will be removed in regional Victoria also, which would allow us access to the city in a very quick time.

Some of the data that we also have is that the trains are slower now than they were 50 to 60 years ago for the journey from Gippsland down to Melbourne. I know there is more population, and we can pick up any excuse under the sun, but if we are spending a lot of money on the rail component of Victoria, surely we can spend a decent amount to make sure that the connection between country Victoria and the city works well down our way. Listening to the member for Bulleen's contribution, it is not only the Gippsland line that suffers but regional lines all the way around Victoria. Some of our members – my Nats colleagues – do not even have train services going into their areas. As we develop as a state

we need to look at the whole picture and not just be city centric – we need to make sure that we do look after our regions.

Darren CHEESEMAN (South Barwon) (17:14): It is with some pleasure that I rise this afternoon to make my contribution on the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. I must say in reflecting on this bill and wading my way through this very substantial piece of reform, I reflected on the nature of Victorians. Victorians are a group of people that generally like to adopt new technologies and new opportunities early on. Indeed it is Labor in government that in so many ways over the last 30 or 40 years has set about reforming this state to make it a great place to live, to raise a family, to have a well-paying job and to be able to get around our great state – to be able to get to work on time, to be able to jump on our public transport, on our roads and to be able to get to where we need to get in a timely way. For so many of us our daily lives are caught up with the time we spend in getting around the state of Victoria.

It really does not matter where you live, it does not matter where you work, it does not matter where your friends are; all of us require in one way or another the provision of government-owned assets and infrastructure to enable us to get where we need to get, whether that be our tram network, whether that be our train network, whether that be our road network or whether that be the cycling and walking infrastructure that we have in this state. In so many ways when we reflect upon that we must recognise that for a part of the last 50 years – a significant part of the last 50 years – there was a dramatic underinvestment in our public infrastructure to enable us to be able to get where we needed to get, and particularly in rail. When we look at our rail assets around Victoria, we look at when they were built and we look at when they were modernised and invested in, the reality is that for a significant part of our last 50 years there was a dramatic underinvestment.

Very pleasingly, and certainly from a Victorian regional MP perspective, as someone who has lived in our great regions of this state, I must very much in the first instance commend the Bracks government for recognising that underinvestment that had occurred over the last 40 or 50 years with the significant investment that they made particularly in our regional cities of Ballarat, Geelong and Bendigo by reinvesting, by putting in place the capital investment programs that our growing regions needed. Of course that sat very much in stark contrast to the period of time immediately prior to the Bracks government, when we had the Kennett government, whose approach to our regional rail network was to make significant cuts and closures. We had rail lines, such as the Ararat line, closed. We had the Maryborough rail line closed, we had the Mildura line closed and we had the timetable for our regional cities significantly cut, and that very much I think was the defining moment of that government for our great regions of this state.

When we look at the Andrews and now Allan governments, what we can very clearly see is massive investment in our public transport networks, and I particularly want to highlight from a Geelong perspective the massive investment that has been made on the Geelong rail line, a project championed by the former transport minister and now Premier Jacinta Allan, to make sure that the Geelong rail line got the investment that it needed to ensure that that great city and every single one of our commuters had a fantastic rail line that they could rely upon. We have seen a massive investment in and redevelopment of the Waurn Ponds train station. That was opened about 18 months or so ago now. We are currently, right now, having a massive investment in the Marshall train station. That will be complete I hope by about this time next year, and the same with the South Geelong train station. This will mean that those commuters living to the south of the Barwon River, in the growing City of Greater Geelong, will have a first-class set of railway stations that they can access to access that rail line to head to Melbourne for work or for pleasure. I certainly know, having spent a fair bit of time talking with commuters, particularly from the Waurn Ponds station, how pleased they are with that investment that has been made.

My seat, the seat of South Barwon, represents a significant part of the growth corridor of Geelong. I think, pleasingly, what I can say to the voters of South Barwon is that we do not just recognise the importance of their train stations for them, we also recognise the importance of removing dangerous

and congested level crossings. Indeed, as a part of the investments that we have been making, we are currently, right now, removing the Surf Coast level crossing. That is going to make a significant difference to the 40,000 or 50,000 people that cross that level crossing every single day. We have removed the Barwon Heads Road level crossing, and we have made a massive investment into the duplication of that road.

These investments are significant, but I also think it is important to recognise the great challenges we have had in this state around these things. Not just over the last 10 years, but putting it into a historic context, we have seen in Victoria Victorians being early adopters of new technologies and new opportunities. We have seen constantly, time and time again, that it is Labor in government that recognises those opportunities and puts in place often world-leading schemes to make our roads safer. We made sure that those that get injured on our roads get the care that they need through the TAC scheme that was put in place all of those years ago, and we made sure that other road users could recognise clearly cars around them that might be operated by learner drivers through the introduction of L-plates and later on P-plates. All of these things have made a significant difference to our transport systems. They have made our roads exceptionally safe in global standards, and Labor in government will continue to strive to make these investments, to make these reforms and to make our systems as safe as possible.

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (17:24): It is my pleasure to rise today to speak on the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. This omnibus bill includes reforms that I am thrilled to talk about in this place today for a number of reasons. But I am going to concentrate on a few specific points, those being the medicinal cannabis research trial, regional rail – both freight and passenger rail – as the member for Mildura and the bus industry, in particular one of our local bus line operators and how amazing they are in delivering their service in rural Victoria.

Starting with the medicinal cannabis trial, both the government and the opposition opposed a bill from the Legalise Cannabis Party in the other place in March this year. However, we did recognise how unfair the current arrangements are, especially given that taking antidepressants, opiates and even antihistamines – and there are a lot of us that take antihistamines and sometimes a lot of them, especially at this time of year – can actually impair your driving, particularly if you are not taking the non-drowsy kind, but those drugs are not tested for. Likewise heroin and cocaine – there are no tests for those, so unless there are obvious signs of impairment, drivers that might be using those drugs can walk away scot-free, which is incredibly unsafe. So we obviously are not there just yet with the roadside drug testing, given that the current tests only test for the presence of THC, MDMA and methamphetamine – and not by percentage found, it is just for the presence of – and THC can stay in the blood for up to a month. This is an issue, and it is quite unfair. Obviously we err on the side of road safety in every sense, because the battle on the roads is real, particularly out in the regions with the state of the roads. It is the responsible thing to do, of course. However, we did say at the time that the bill was raised in the other place that we would keep an open mind once these things became available.

I do have some knowledge in this area. Uncle Patsy Taverna, who was probably more of a cousin than an uncle – but we are Italian, so everyone is ‘Uncle’ and ‘Aunty’ –

A member interjected.

Jade BENHAM: Everyone is family; it is always ‘Uncle’ and ‘Aunty’. Uncle Patsy took medicinal cannabis oil to alleviate the symptoms of chemo and other cancer treatments and ultimately the effects of his cancer, and it actually allowed him to live a much better life for the time that he had left. It now seems like a pertinent time to recognise that Uncle Pasquale Taverna passed away on 18 September this year – and may he rest in peace.

Moving on, let me talk about regional rail as the member for Mildura, the only regional city in the state that does not have a passenger train. As the member for South Barwon mentioned before, it was closed in the 1990s, and since then the Labor government has had every chance and dangled that carrot

in front of the people of north-west Victoria. They have had 20 years to make a commitment to bringing the train back to Mildura, which would service all those towns going through as well, including Ouyen. They are desperate for a rail connection because timetables from South Australia and other places, bus timetables, do not line up, which is incredibly frustrating. So when we talk about better regional services, again what that actually means is better services for the outer Melbourne suburbs out to Bendigo, Ballarat and Geelong, and it does not include the rest of the state. The press release in fact from the then minister in June 2021 mentioned that the government was making improvements to every regional rail line in the state. I guess because there is no passenger rail on our lines, that counts us out as well.

While we are talking about rail, we may as well raise the Murray Basin rail project. Actually in both terms I have had a quite in-depth conversation with the member for Bulleen, talking about – and he made some great points during his contribution – the promises of the Murray Basin rail project. The member for Bulleen did talk about promises and broken promises, and some claim that the Murray Basin rail project is now complete. Well, it is not. Right now the rail freight train from the biggest agriculture centre in the state has to travel from Merbein to Melbourne and the Port of Melbourne via Ararat. That is like driving to Melbourne via Shepparton. It just makes no sense. There is a pretty simple fix to this, and that is to reinstate the Ballarat freight corridor. It just seems like common sense. I realise common sense is a superpower, but it does make sense. It would make for much more efficient rail freight, getting food to port and to market in a much swifter fashion so we could then take some trucks off the road – multimillions of truck hours off the roads that are already not fit for carrying B-quads – and put it onto rail, but at the moment it is just not efficient enough.

We could also be having real conversations about getting the Mallee Ouyen intermodal project – the port link – up in Ouyen, which is again off the table. Without that corridor it is just not efficient enough. So again, food producers who put food on your plate do not seem to be the priority, even though it makes sense. Seaway Intermodal actually have some very knowledgeable people in this space. The member for Bulleen and I did have a very lengthy conversation about it, and the member for Lowan also raised the system around the European train sets. But Seaway Intermodal, who operate our intermodal rail freight out of Merbein, have some very knowledgeable people – in fact some of the most knowledgeable in the business, one might argue – so they are the ones that should be consulted to have actual conversations about what some real solutions are. This project was going to standardise the entire system, but the cash ran out. It is almost a catchcry of the government: ‘There’s no cash here’. The member for Lowan also raised the interesting concept, like I mentioned, of the rail sets that they use in Europe, which is really interesting and gives another possible solution instead of standardising what is left of that project because it remains unfinished. And the member for Narracan made an interesting point: if you wanted him to build a 40-square house and he only built a 20-square house, you would come asking: where is the rest of it, and where has the money gone? That is what we have been asking about the Murray Basin rail project, because it is not complete and it is just not efficient enough at the moment to make rail freight able to remove some of those trucks from our roads.

Finally, I wanted to get to buses, and more specifically the bus driver accreditation and the amendments to the Bus Safety Act 2009 to implement a revised scheme. We have heard other members talk about how neither the bus industry nor the Transport Workers’ Union were consulted on these changes as it would be done during implementation, but I wanted to raise again that talking to people on the ground can be really valuable. Last week I had a catch-up with Robinvale’s favourite bus driver and bus line operator – it is a family-run business. There are a couple of them – Zaffina Bus Lines, Bulzomi’s and Ryans Bus Lines – in our neck of the woods. I caught up with Pat Zaffina last week, and this is a gentleman who comes to me with ideas frequently on how he could fill gaps in rural public transport. Given we have such a transient population that comes to the agriculture centre for work – many of them from overseas and do not have cars – more public transport is actually what we need, and yet all of the options and proposals that he has submitted to the department get knocked on the head and there is never any progress, or communication sometimes. His knowledge should be sought after. He is on the ground, already operating. He can see firsthand where exactly the holes are

and the best way to fix them. Some of them not only are very low cost but, again, make a lot of common sense. I love when people come to me with not only what the problem is but some possible solutions, and I am sure we all love that. If the government wants to make real improvements to public transport in regional and rural Victoria, I cannot stress enough how important it would be to have a meeting with people like Pat Zaffina, with people like Ros Milverton of Seaway Intermodal and with people like those in Ouyen Inc, who have been trying to get the Ouyen Mallee port link project up for a long, long time. Have a chat with them just about the most practical, pragmatic, commonsense and often low-cost ways to actually improve transport in regional Victoria.

Paul HAMER (Box Hill) (17:34): It is a delight to rise this evening and talk about the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2023, which as has been described by others, is quite a substantive omnibus bill that seeks to change a number of existing acts. Chief amongst them are the amendments to the Road Safety Act 1986 to undertake road safety research trials that are to be designated by the minister for the purpose of determining degrees of safe driving after consuming or using a drug or while affected by fatigue and, as well as those changes in the Road Safety Act, to establish a legislative framework for local governments to manage issues in relation to vehicle-sharing schemes such as for e-scooters. There are a number of other changes, such as the continuation of Safe Transport Victoria as a sector agency under the Transport Integration Act 2010 and the bus driver accreditation scheme under the Bus Safety Act 2009. There are consequential changes to a number of other acts as well as a number of other miscellaneous and technical amendments to the Marine (Domestic Commercial Vessel National Application) Act 2013, the Road Management Act 2004 and the Transport Accident Act 1986.

I do want to start with and will probably spend most of my contribution on the changes to the Road Safety Act. I was just reflecting on the earlier contribution from the member for Monbulk, who is still in the chamber, talking about the history of the road safety initiatives that have occurred in Victoria, and we should be very proud of that long list of events and being the first jurisdiction in the world to have compulsory seatbelts. I was just doing a bit of research before. There are still today jurisdictions in the United States that do not require seatbelt wearing in any seat, not even in the drivers seat. There are a number of states that do not have mandatory seatbelt laws for anyone except the adults in the passenger seat and in the drivers seat. If you are an adult passenger in the rear seat, you are not required to wear a seatbelt in many jurisdictions in the United States, even still today. So we should be very proud of our long history of achievements in that space. I think that was introduced in 1970, and in 1976 we were the first state to introduce random breath testing.

The member for Monbulk's story about how someone – I am not sure if it was the government or a private enterprise – came up with the idea of the T-shirt with the sash did remind me of some of my early journeys in my engineering career. Some of the old-timers would reminisce about the times after work where they would have a number of drinks, and it was often the one who had drunk the most who was the designated driver to drive home, because obviously there was no random breath testing. I am very glad to say that the culture, thanks to the laws and thanks to the education programs that we have introduced over many years – and I think that has been a bipartisan approach – has changed, and definitely changed for the better.

I want to talk specifically about the new section 99C, relating to how the minister may designate road safety research trials. It is a fairly general section. It will allow for a number of research trials to be introduced as designated by the minister. As has been flagged, in this instance the legislation is being set up so that it will enable a closed-circuit trial to test medicinal cannabis use and its impact on road users. I do want to just touch on the point that the member for Mildura made about the use of other drugs in one's system. I know certainly as a regular antihistamine user – and just thinking back to some of the other medications – even a medication such as Sudafed, which has pseudoephedrine in it, is still available. It is behind the counter, but it is still available from your pharmacies. While I use it obviously on very rare occasions when I feel that nothing else is assisting, and it does have all the

appropriate warnings on there, there is not anything stopping me from actually operating a vehicle and going out and driving.

It is important, I think, to consider that medicinal cannabis is now a legal drug and that there needs to be an appropriate accommodation of understanding how that interacts with the road system. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare had done some research on the proportion of the population who take cannabis for medicinal purposes. Their estimate was that it was about 2.7 percent of the Australian population, which equated to about 600,000 people, who were taking cannabis for medicinal purposes. Now, not all of those were by prescription, but the figures from the TGA have suggested that in 2022 there were more than 300,000 patients Australia wide that had been prescribed medicinal cannabis. So if we are looking at that in proportionate terms in Victoria, we are talking probably 75,000 to 80,000 patients in Victoria who were prescribed to take medicinal cannabis, and that is obviously to treat a range of conditions.

It is an issue that I probably would not have anticipated coming into this place, but it is an issue that has been raised by constituents to me at street stalls and in emails: people saying that this is a law that they really want to get changed. Some of these constituents are existing cannabis users – they are taking medicinal cannabis – and they want to be able to have the ability to drive, particularly because, as I understand it, the cannabis does stay in your system for quite some time. It basically restricts you, even if you are not necessarily a regular user but you are using it at a particular discrete time, and it prevents you from driving for quite some period after that point.

There is also another angle to this in that for some people not driving is not an option. In order to be able to continue with their job or continue doing the daily activities that they and their family require, they need to have access to a car. They need to be able to drive. So where a recommended treatment might be medicinal cannabis, in some instances I do know of constituents who have chosen not to take that pathway, even though that might be the recommended pathway, simply because they cannot afford to give up driving and they do not want to take the risk of driving while they have medicinal cannabis in their system. It is a really important trial that will be undertaken, and of course it is absolutely important from a road safety perspective that all safety precautions are taken.

I do want to give a particular shout-out to the Monash University Accident Research Centre. They are a terrific organisation. I used to have some correspondence with that organisation many years ago, and their staff and researchers have changed, but they do a wonderful, wonderful job and do world-leading research. I commend the bill to the house.

Chris CREWETHER (Mornington) (17:44): I rise today to speak on the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2023, an omnibus bill that includes several reforms to both the roads and road safety and public transport portfolios. Significantly, the bill sets up a legal process for a research trial of driving and medicinal cannabis, an initiative which the government has been under some pressure to implement for some time, with this issue also now directly impacting a family member of mine.

Cannabis is the only legally prescribed drug that is screened for in swabs or blood tests, and users can be charged and lose their licence if THC is found in their blood system. While impairment after taking medicinal cannabis usually would only affect the person for a matter of hours, THC can remain in a person's bloodstream for up to a month. As such, a driver could be completely unimpaired for driving purposes yet test positive for THC and lose their licence. I mention this family member of mine in this context. Without naming them, this person has gone through PTSD and a number of mental health issues over several years. They finally, mainly over the last year, managed to get their life and mental health back in order, and only about a month ago purchased an item to start a new business of their own, which requires a drivers licence. This person takes prescription cannabis to help them sleep at night and was stopped by police for a random drink and drug driving test. Unfortunately the drug test came back positive, and this family member now faces loss of licence because the current law does not distinguish between driving under the influence and detection of drugs in the system with cannabis. There is no defence, as well, against detection of drugs. I am afraid that this will mean that this family

member cannot now commence and operate their business, and after so many years it could lead to a downward spiral again. Adding to this, motorists who take prescribed drugs such as antidepressants, opiates, benzodiazepines and even antihistamines may be impaired for driving purposes, but these drugs are not tested for by police. Likewise, heroin, cocaine and a number of other illicit drugs are not tested for, so unless a driver is clearly and observably impaired, they can escape with no charge.

Since my election as the member for Mornington I have been in close contact as well with Mount Martha resident Andrew. Andrew is a small business owner, father of three and grandfather of one. Approximately 12 years ago Andrew was diagnosed with degenerative osteoarthritis in his lumbar spine. Tragically the disease, with which almost 2.2 million Australians suffer, has no cure. Over the past 12 years Andrew has managed the disease through a multifaceted management plan, including exercise, diet, supplementation, physical therapy and medication. Unfortunately the disease causes chronic pain for which there is no long-term relief. The only relief Andrew seems to receive from his unbearable pain is when he medicates with oxycodone or hybrid CBD and THC medicinal cannabis. For a long time Andrew has been advocating to many members of this place and the other place that specifically excluding prescribed medicinal cannabis THC medicines is clearly discriminatory and that we need a change. For so many years Andrew abstained from using a legally prescribed medicinal cannabis drug because it was not an option for him to cease driving, with his livelihood and health depending on that privilege. Instead Andrew was forced to opt for opioids, which are more problematic, given their side effects and potential for addiction. Sadly, Andrew is not alone. Victoria's cannabis laws have caused countless numbers of chronically ill people to opt for more addictive prescription medications like valium, temazepam, opiates, antipsychotics and more – and please excuse my pronunciation, not being a medical doctor. Many patients have been choosing to stay on their more dangerous and more addictive medications because of Victoria's stringent driving laws.

Now indeed it is illegal to drive with any amount of THC in your system in all Australian states except for Tasmania. In Tasmania, while it remains illegal to operate a vehicle with any amount of THC in your system, if you are a medicinal cannabis patient you can claim an exemption as long as your THC levels are minor, they are not impairing your ability to drive safely and the THC was obtained and administered in accordance with the Poisons Act. Despite all this, we do need to have road safety at the forefront of our minds when considering such changes and safeguard against the potential for any changes to be abused or misused by, say, recreational users of cannabis. It will be very interesting to see the outcomes of the off-road research trials and consider how we can make exemptions for medicinal cannabis users while ensuring safety for others in the community. I do look forward to further details from the government on where and how the trial will run.

Another point with respect to this bill is e-scooters. Of significance, this bill, in relation to e-scooters, sets out that e-scooter share scheme operators are now requiring, if this bill is passed, permission from local government authorities. Local governments will be able to set conditions on how such schemes operate. E-scooters have become so popular around the world, including in Victoria. They often serve as convenient, fun ways to get commuters where they need to go. They are also environmentally friendly and help ease congestion on our often traffic-laden inner-city roads in particular. Overall I think they are a great addition to the transport options in Victoria. That all being said, footpaths and roads can sometimes be cluttered with these scooters in various locations, and unfortunately that has become too common in certain areas, where it has become dangerous for pedestrians and others. This can pose a hazard to e-scooter operators, pedestrians and other road users. While there is little evidence in Australia, with no national database existing on e-scooter crashes and other injuries caused by e-scooter operations, international studies have suggested that there are about 115 serious injuries per million e-scooter trips, a rate that is comparable to motorcycles.

While the technology is of course here to stay and is welcomed, we need to continue to adapt this framework so that we can ensure everybody's safety, particularly those people with disabilities, older residents and the most physically vulnerable in our communities. As I have touched upon, e-scooters present a variety of challenges for local governments. Given that these devices can be left in a large

number of locations within their trial zones, there are often issues with e-scooters being left in hazardous places, blocking pedestrian access, posing tripping hazards or otherwise creating an impact on the use of public spaces. The bill provides no guidance on how operators and councils will be required to address these aforementioned concerns; however, the opposition has been advised that guidance and a model agreement are being developed by the Department of Transport and Planning to assist local councils. The department also claimed that this legislation has been sought by local government.

On a separate point, I would like to see more initiative in relation to protecting pedestrians from e-scooter hazards. If you ever walk along the footpaths of Melbourne's CBD and some other places in particular, it is not uncommon for you to be somewhat startled occasionally by a huge gust of wind as an e-scooter zooms past you on the footpath, going quite fast. While footpath riding using an e-scooter is currently illegal – and I will leave enforcement matters in the capable hands of the police – it is certainly an issue of concern to e-scooter operators and pedestrians, although I do acknowledge that clause 48 extends the use of speed cameras and speed detectors to all vehicles, including scooters and bicycles. Such devices can be used to fine scooter and bike riders for breaking the speed limit or to penalise e-scooter riders travelling faster than the 20-kilometre-an-hour statewide limit. Clause 47 also bans e-scooter use on freeways.

Finally, the bill makes several other changes to various road rules and legislation. It touches on bus driver accreditation and also buses and rail more generally. On this point I note that the electorate of Mornington currently has no passenger rail services in the whole of the electorate, including in Mornington, which is one of the largest centres in Victoria with no passenger rail services, much as is the case with Mildura, as the member for Mildura mentioned. Mildura is actually the largest centre in the whole of Australia with no passenger rail services. But a number of years ago, as the member for Frankston knows well, I had worked to secure \$225 million of budgeted funding towards the Frankston to Baxter rail service. This funding is currently still on the table. But unfortunately this project has never received the support from the state Labor government that is necessary, and it sits on the 90-day review by the Albanese federal government at the moment. Let us hope this funding is not scrapped and it is supported, because this will mean closer rail services for the whole of the Mornington Peninsula, and it would also, hopefully, open the way for the eventual return of Mornington passenger rail.

In addition I note that I had worked to secure over \$38.5 million several years ago for the Kananook and Frankston train stations, as the member for Frankston would also know, and I do note his work in securing the state Labor government contributions towards these projects as well. The Frankston project I had an opportunity to go down to the other day to see. It has commenced. But I do note that these projects are also listed on the 90-day review in terms of the federal funding, so I hope that funding that I secured many years ago will not also be scrapped. These things need to be focused on in addition to this bill.

Tim READ (Brunswick) (17:54): I am speaking on behalf of the Greens and also the Brunswick electorate on the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. It is a bill that amends many disparate areas of transport legislation. I am not going to go into all of the detailed, technical proposed amendments – I will leave it to my colleagues in the other place to speak in more detail on the entirety of the bill – but I will discuss where the bill engages with road safety, road trauma and active transport in the inner city.

The headline amendment proposed in the bill is to enable the Minister for Roads and Road Safety to establish a framework for a road safety research trial for driving under the influence of drugs such as medicinal cannabis and potentially other substances by allowing regulations to change the Road Safety Act 1986 for the purposes of establishing the trial. Victoria passed legislation to enable access to medicinal cannabis in 2016, but unlike all other prescribed medications that can affect a person's driving ability, including classes of opioids and benzodiazepines, for some reason the government decided that the general offence of driving while impaired is not sufficient to deal with medicinal

cannabis but rather that any amount of THC – the active element of cannabis – in a person’s test result, however minute, should be an offence. Now, why the government decided that one prescribed drug should be treated entirely differently from every other prescribed drug, including some far more sedating, is puzzling. It is also irrational and entirely political.

But of course cannabis has caused far more cognitive impairment in Australian politicians over the last half a century than it has in Australian drivers, and as a result we have seen little change to our ineffectual cannabis laws from Australian governments for the last 50 years. The Greens position is that those with a prescription for medicinal cannabis should be treated the same as a person driving under the influence of any other prescribed drug under the Road Safety Act. But the proposal here to initiate a trial on the effects of medicinal cannabis on driving does at least suggest a scientific approach will be adopted to this specific aspect of drug policy, so we will support this amendment. But I do wonder why we are stopping here and why we are not undertaking scientific trials for other drug policies and laws in terms of their impact on public safety and public health, because what we will find is that we have laws and legal status for drugs that are largely political and arbitrary and that are not based on science and not based on safety or on reducing harm. In fact in some ways our current drug policies are maximising harm. So let us do a scientific trial of pill testing and let us do a scientific trial of the decriminalisation of drug use to seek to improve public safety more broadly beyond driving and beyond prescription drugs as well.

Let us turn from one trial to another. Victoria is now heading into the third year of what began as a one-year trial of e-scooter hire schemes, which has now been extended. In the interim Victoria has also allowed the use of personal electric scooters. In terms of uptake, this scheme has been a great success, reflecting the reality that in all major cities many people really do not want to have to drive in traffic and find and pay for a place to park in the inner city and in the inner suburbs when there are cheaper, cleaner and faster ways to get around. As an e-bike user I can travel into the city whenever I want. Door to door from my home in Brunswick it is about 20 minutes to Parliament by e-bike, it is about 20 minutes by car and it is about 20 minutes by tram, provided you do not have to look for a park or wait for a tram. So scooters and bikes are really good at joining the dots in transport systems, and particularly in other cities they are often referred to as last-mile transport or last-kilometre transport. And the lack of emissions and pollution is a great bonus.

However, there have been some issues and problems with the trial, many of them reflecting the longstanding issues and problems with Victoria’s active transport policies and infrastructure which have really just been magnified by the uptake in all of these new technologies. The primary issue is safety – safety of those using the e-transport, but this is also applicable to those using other unpowered active transport, whether it is cycling, skateboarding or walking. I have heard concerns of emergency doctors who have seen a substantial increase in scooter injuries, albeit from a baseline of zero before the technology was available. Because the need to change how we move about this city is obvious and because these problems are predictable, not insurmountable, and should really have already been resolved by a progressive government committed to planning for a metropolis which, I read today, will hit 6.4 million people in little over a decade but, as we know, has nowhere to put the million-odd extra cars on the roads from this population growth, something needs to change. And so I am glad that the government has finally adopted a Greens policy from two elections ago to appoint a minister for active transport, noting even conservative governments elsewhere did this years ago. That points us to some of the problems that we have observed both in the e-scooter trial and in active transport more generally.

The government needs to get serious about planning and investing in separated road lanes to protect e-scooter users from cars. E-scooter users are not surrounded by a ton of plastic and steel, like drivers. Therefore physical separation will prevent cuts and bruises from becoming life-altering and sometimes life-ending injuries. The government did belatedly release a cycling strategy in 2018 but it has been ignored, and it has become even more relevant today with the advent of e-transport and population growth. The cycling strategy stated the obvious: that many more people, particularly women, will use active transport and not cars if it is made safe to do so, and the only serious way to improve safety is

to create a barrier on the roads between those in motor vehicles travelling at high speeds and those who are at best only protected by a helmet and their skin.

But this government simply has not invested in the relatively inexpensive infrastructure required to make vulnerable road users less vulnerable, and where it has, the rollout has been piecemeal, leaving people vulnerable for at least part of their trips. Too much of the hard work, planning and financing of active transport infrastructure has been left to councils, meaning some, like Melbourne City Council, have moved substantially forward, but this infrastructure has not carried on to the neighbouring inner suburbs – not in an integrated way which would protect people end to end, from home to their place of work or school. So I am concerned that this bill also appears to propose putting responsibility for how scooter trials are run and regulated back on every separate LGA and council to decide, rather than at least providing some statewide guidance and direction, which is required to ensure that there is consistency and continuity across the state.

Every morning when entering my electorate office I see the end result of a piecemeal approach. There is a multitude of dumped rental e-scooters along Brunswick Road and Nicholson Street because this is the point at which the scooters are GPS restrained from moving beyond the trial zone. This artificial geographic restriction may be necessary during the trial but also serves to illustrate that we must ensure that there is a consistent framework and rules operating across all of Victoria to make this scheme work for people. Councils have an important role to play, but the state government must provide the direction, strategy and funding for an integrated active transport network, and this means providing the end-to-end infrastructure along major inner-city transport routes to separate motor vehicles from vulnerable road users.

Emma VULIN (Pakenham) (18:03): I rise to speak on the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. Improving road safety is a vital area of work for this government, and I congratulate the Minister for Roads and Road Safety and her team for developing this bill. We have heard from lots of different speakers today, and sections of our contributions might be similar in places, as there are lots of different policy areas covered in this bill. This bill covers various aspects of our road safety policy and transport administration. This needs to be amended to move forward on the state's road safety strategy and on transport management in Victoria.

The most newsworthy aspect of this bill involves drugs, and that always sparks some attention. In 2016 Victoria became the first state in Australia to approve medicinal cannabis under prescription for therapeutic uses. This treatment is now helping thousands of Victorians to manage their pain if they have chronic, long-term health conditions and many who are managing their pain as they suffer from a life-ending disease. When I was the candidate in the lead-up to the November election, and since being elected, I have had discussions with people in my community who are taking prescribed medicinal cannabis. They have expressed their frustration at the discrimination they feel from not being allowed to drive whilst taking legal medication and at the impacts this has on their day-to-day lives. They have expressed the inconvenience this causes. It severely limits the options they have for transportation. The cost of taxis, relying on family or having to use public transport, which unfortunately is not as regular as we would like in parts of my electorate, and which I might add I have been advocating for, has the impact of isolating them in our community as they cope with their ongoing health challenges. This is a human rights challenge, and it feels really unfair.

Victorians, including those in my electorate, are forced to choose between taking prescribed medicinal cannabis to cope with their severe chronic pain and having the freedom of being able to drive to work, drive for education or for family purposes and put up with the debilitating pain. As the member for Box Hill spoke about, there are people that choose not to take this prescribed medication for the very fact that they are worried that they will not be able to drive. I know people in that position as well. Given that the THC can be shown in the bloodstream well after the effects of the drug has worn off, the driver can test positive but show no physical impairment. Victorians using medicinal cannabis are effectively banned from driving long after they become unimpaired from using this medication that they have been prescribed.

Work has already started to develop models for how doctors would manage giving permission for a person taking medicinal cannabis to drive. Some of this has been done through the work undertaken by the medicinal cannabis and safe driving working group in 2021 and documented in the report *Assisting Medicinal Cannabis Patients to Drive Safely*, but work now needs to be done to expand our knowledge of the impact of THC impairment on our driving. This group found this knowledge was currently lacking. While there is a strong relationship that exists between blood alcohol concentrations, impairment and crash risk which informs our drink-driving legislation of .05 BAC, no similar relationship has been established for THC that is universally accepted. Therefore it is necessary to conduct world-leading research to expand our knowledge of the impairment of medicinal cannabis on driving while ensuring the safety of all road users. Many of the speakers here today have spoken about how Victoria often leads the way for our nation and in fact the world.

This study currently cannot be conducted under our current Road Safety Act 1986. This would take the form of a controlled closed-circuit trial to assess and understand the impacts of medicinal cannabis on driving impairment. The research will be an Australian first. The trial aims to understand how the THC contained in medicinal cannabis impacts driving performance under different circumstances, how this translates into risks on the road and also the relationship between THC concentrations, driving performance and road safety risks to aid potential regulatory reform. The reform in this bill will allow the Minister for Roads and Road Safety to designate a road safety research trial and declare the specified provisions of the Road Safety Act 1986 or regulation made under the act either do not apply or apply in a varied form to trial participants for the purpose of the trial. This amendment will allow for the declaration of trials for a range of road safety measures. This amendment will not be limited to a research trial for only medicinal cannabis.

I strongly support this bill reform, as it will find a solution for people in my electorate who need this support – those people who are managing chronic health conditions or who are managing their pain during terminal diagnosis. Medicinal cannabis is most often prescribed for the treatment of chronic pain but is also used to treat anxiety; cancer-related symptoms such as pain, nausea and reduced appetite; epilepsy; insomnia; and multiple sclerosis. I have a friend who suffers from chronic pain and has been using medicinal cannabis now for a couple of years. The transformation in her has been incredible. She now manages to attend more activities and with a smile on her face. It is really lovely to see. Previously the pain would cause isolation, which was very hard for such an amazing and usually very active local champion in her local community. People who depend on this pain management treatment need this reform, and this state needs to listen to them and others in our community completing research trials so safe and appropriate rules can be made for driving.

Another part of this bill will provide local government with more control of the e-scooter and bicycle share schemes. E-scooters, under rideshare schemes, have become very popular with Victorians and visitors to this state. They can be, along with bike share schemes, a great way to get around and help our environment along the way. They can help ease congestion and be a great link to other forms of transport, like getting to the train. They do have their downsides, as we have heard from many other speakers here today. They are often set up so the hirer is not required to return them to the location they hired the bike or e-scooter from. They are often left on footpaths and in other public places in ways that block access, or the equipment becomes a tripping hazard with e-scooters littering walkways, which leads to an array of coloured scooters and bikes littering Melbourne. This impacts on pedestrians being able to use the space safely – even just walking through an area can be difficult at times.

The reforms will effectively ban the provision of e-scooters and bicycles by share scheme operators in a local government area unless the operator has an agreement in place with the relevant council. It will be up to the operator to ensure that e-scooters and bikes are only used in the council area where specific arrangements are put in place. I welcome this change as it puts control back in the hands of the local communities that are impacted. The arrangements will then suit that local government and its individual needs. If the local community does not want the share scheme, the council might decide not to make an agreement. This reform strikes an appropriate balance between making e-scooters and

other vehicles available for use and maintaining council's ability to ensure the amenity, use and safety of public spaces. Although there are no services in my electorate currently, it does provide a framework in case an operator wishes to open a service. I must say taking an e-scooter from my office to the Officer train station and catching the train to Parliament sounds like it would be a bit of fun. Private e-scooters are seen out and about in my electorate, and I encourage all my constituents to continue to use them safely and follow the road rules.

Another part of this bill relates to our bus drivers and bus driver licences. We need bus drivers to drive our public bus services. There are lots of buses utilised in my electorate, and I want to take this opportunity to give a shout-out to all of the bus drivers that work so hard within my community. I give a special shout-out to Mark, who has driven my children to and from school for about nine years now, so he is a pretty amazing man. We need our drivers to be well trained to carry passengers safely, and we need it to be straightforward for them to be licensed. This brings the bus driver accreditation in line with the Commercial Passenger Vehicle Industry Act 2017. The reform will bring bus driver and commercial passenger vehicle driver accreditation under the same regulator, which is Safe Transport Victoria, and it just makes things that little bit simpler.

In summary, this bill covers a range of safety measures to keep Victorians safe on our roads and in our waterways – things like the Australian-first trial for trialling drivers in regard to the possible impacts of THC whilst on prescribed medicinal cannabis, new e-scooter legislation and making bus driver accreditation clearer, simpler and up to date. I commend this bill to the house.

Steve McGHIE (Melton) (18:13): Today I rise to contribute on the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. I do want to make some reference to some comments that were made previously by the members for Bulleen and South-West Coast in their reference to the Allan Labor government not looking after regional constituents or passengers on our rail networks. I have got to remind them that it is thanks to our \$4 billion Regional Rail Revival that on the Ballarat line an additional 135 services have been added, and of course that includes trains every 20 minutes during the peak times. Since we have had the rate cap we have had more than 2 million trips on the Ballarat, Ararat and Maryborough lines – since late March – and I think that is an amazing outcome. I do believe that we will see some amazing figures come out through annual reports shortly, so we will have to wait and see when they are tabled. I will come back to some of the things that have happened on the Ballarat line and the Melton line in response to the members for Bulleen and South-West Coast.

I do want to remind the opposition that they closed down regional rail lines. Here they are having a go at us over this bill and us not supporting regional constituents and passengers in transporting them from their cities into Melbourne and back. They clearly have short memories in regard to what they did to regional rail lines. I thank the Bracks government for returning those lines. Maryborough and Ararat and Stawell and places like that would probably not be the cities that they are today without the Bracks government returning those lines.

I want to come back to the Ballarat line and in particular the Melton component of the Ballarat line. I have just made reference to the fare cap, and since March there have been about 2 million trips. The Ballarat line was duplicated by this government, and we are going to have a further upgrade of the Melton line – a \$650 million further upgrade of the Melton line. We will be removing three level crossings, and that work has already started in Melton – the geotechnical and surveying work – and one level crossing will be removed at Truganina in the seat of Kororoit. We are building a new Melton railway station. We have upgraded stations at Ballan, Bacchus Marsh, Rockbank and Caroline Springs, and we built a new station at Cobblebank. So to criticise a government that has delivered all of that since 2014 is quite amazing. There is more to be done, and I am pleased to say I have been part of the previous Andrews government and now the Allan government, led by Premier Allan, that has delivered all of these projects that we have committed to right across the state. But in particular I am pleased that there was an upgrade of the Ballarat line and the Melton line, and I know my constituents are pleased with it.

Of course this is an omnibus bill, and I will only go to a few things in regard to the reforms. I should also remind the opposition that on this side of the house we have 18 regional MPs compared to the opposition's – I think there are eight on the other side in this house. We represent regional areas far more than the conservatives do. This legislation in essence enables a research trial to support evidence-based road safety policy, particularly with regard to medicinal cannabis, and it establishes a legislative framework for local governments to manage issues specific to vehicle-sharing schemes and their impacts on amenity and accessibility. It is improving road safety outcomes by making updates and clarifications to the Road Safety Act 1986. And finally, it supports transport sector administration and regulation through reorganisation of transport sector agencies, an alignment of regulatory schemes, information disclosure reforms and other improvements to legislation.

We are bringing about a road safety research trial that relates to medicinal cannabis and fatigue and declares that specified provisions of the Road Safety Act or regulations or rules made under that act do not apply or apply in a varied form to participants. Here in this great state of Victoria – home of the mighty Hawthorn Hawks – there exists a stringent zero-tolerance legislative policy regarding THC, the primary psychoactive substance found in cannabis, especially concerning its presence in drivers. We have all seen the big drug buses on our highways, and we have all seen the ads from TAC. But it is important to acknowledge that there is a growing chorus of voices advocating for change, and we know things need to change. These calls for reform are coming not just from politicians but also from patients in need, who even though they are patients have lives to lead. Of course they have kids to take to school and they have jobs to go to, and also they are passionate advocates who have a deep concern for the welfare of our society.

Clearly some of these people rely on medicinal cannabis to manage their day-to-day lives but also to live a full life with not only their family but their friends. In understanding the complexities surrounding this issue in existing legislation and the proposed changes, it becomes evident that the perspectives of various stakeholders must be taken into account. Public safety, individual rights and the wellbeing of those relying on cannabis for medicinal purposes are all crucial aspects of this discourse that prioritises both safety and compassion in our society. Of course cannabis arrests around the world disproportionately affect minorities, and it is right that we begin to fix this issue.

The fact is cannabis can be safe and can be used safely. Every drug on the PBS has warnings about what you can and cannot do while taking it. Again, for example, you should not give Viagra to men with heart conditions. It is not a great idea to drive after you have taken anything with codeine or anxiety medications, anti-seizure drugs or some antidepressants, and it is says so right there on the packet. Cannabis should not be any different. We all know someone who needs medicinal cannabis, whether we think we do or not. We all know someone whose life and wellbeing could be improved by prescription medicinal cannabis. Obviously it has been proven to support people in need, whether it be for pain relief or for other reasons, and the member for Pakenham alluded to a whole range of medical conditions where they have been seen to improve because of access to medicinal cannabis.

Evidence-based safety pilots are how we got seatbelts into cars here in Victoria, and that was a first for the Western world. If we cast our minds back to 1970, which I remember really well, that is when the government introduced legislation for the compulsory wearing of seatbelts. But 14 months later all other Australian states followed suit, following Victoria, and seatbelt rates increased to attain 90 per cent by 1977. Incidentally, though, the Bolte government forgot about kids in the back seats, and that came much later under the Cain Labor government in 1986. Of course children need special restraints fitted in the vehicles, rather than just fitted into the adult seatbelts, and wearing seatbelts properly leads to the saving of lives.

I have got to say, as an ex-paramedic, I did attend many vehicle accidents some years ago where people were not wearing seatbelts, and on many of those occasions in my attendance at accidents most of those people were ejected from their vehicles, sustaining serious injuries and in some cases some people were killed. So seatbelts clearly save lives, and that has been proven over the last 50-odd years in this state. Unfortunately in recent times we have seen a number of people that have been killed on the roads. This

year a number of them were not wearing seatbelts, and that is very unfortunate. I know some members have alluded to the fact of the state of the roads, but the highest incidence of deaths on the roads this year have been due to speed and the non-wearing of seatbelts. Again, I just send a message out to people that it is really important for your own safety and other people's safety to wear seatbelts.

I was going to touch on e-scooters, but I think a number of people have raised that. I did have a bit of a note here: do I want to see grown adults riding around on a kids toy? I do not, but of course it is their right to do so. I do not know that I would get on an e-scooter and scoot up and down the street to catch a bus or a train or something like that, but I know that a lot of people have fun on them – and good on them. I support them, I support this bill and I commend it to the house.

Gary MAAS (Narre Warren South) (18:23): It is terrific to be here to make a contribution to the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. It is always a thrill to speak after the member for Melton, who said he was choosing not to make some comments about scooters and then spent the last 30 seconds indeed making comments about scooters. I will, however, pick up on the scooters aspect. Indeed I was quite fortunate to sit on the government's e-scooter trial panel, and part of what led me to go on that panel was the overseas experience in major cities around the US of being able to hop on those scooters and go for a bit of a ride like a kid and to see just how effective they were in what has been referred to in this place as the last mile, where you can actually get to a major transport hub on that form of active transport. Just on that, I am very proud to be part of a government that actually has an active transport minister as well. It just shows how future-looking this government is.

In terms of the actual bill, it aims to improve road safety, support research, align accreditation schemes and ensure responsible operation of vehicle-sharing schemes while addressing various aspects and issues that are associated with transport regulation in Victoria. It is very forward-looking, and road safety is just absolutely paramount in the state of Victoria, as others have been speaking to. It is an omnibus bill and as such makes various amendments to several transport acts, enabling the minister to designate road safety research trials to determine safe driving after drug use or fatigue. It ensures the continuation of Safe Transport Victoria as the sector transport agency with defined objectives and functions and implements governance changes in accordance with the Transport Integration Act 2010. It aligns the bus driver accreditation scheme with the scheme for commercial passenger vehicle drivers, allows for internal and external review of accreditation application decisions and provides powers for Safe Transport Victoria to set regulatory fees. It makes various technical and miscellaneous amendments to different acts, including the Marine (Domestic Commercial Vessel National Law Application) Act 2013, the Road Management Act 2004 and the Transport Accident Act 1986. It also defines terms which are crucial and relate to road rules: 'bicycle' and 'pedestrian' as well as 'electric scooter'.

It introduces a zero blood- or breath-alcohol concentration requirement for three years following an alcohol interlock condition period. It expands the authority of police officers regarding incapacitated drivers and introduces regulation for vehicle-sharing schemes, allowing operators to make arrangements with municipal councils to operate within specific districts. It allows the minister to designate research trials for safe driving under the influence of drugs, including medicinal cannabis, and expands the potential for various road safety research trials beyond medicinal cannabis too. It enables trials to modify the application of the Road Safety Act 1986 to participants, clarifies that owners of registered motor vehicles exempt from transport accident charges are treated the same as those who have paid the charges and replaces provisions related to the lawful use and disclosure of information, as well as providing for the continuation of Safe Transport Victoria and defining its constitution, objectives and functions. As I said, the amendments do cover quite a wide range of topics, all in the aim of improving road safety, streamlining those accreditation processes and enhancing the regulation of transport-related activities in Victoria.

There are some 10 objectives, including road safety research trials and bus driver reforms, which have been spoken to by many speakers in the house. There are the commercial passenger vehicle law amendments for the facilitation of information sharing between Safe Transport Victoria and external agencies, which are there to reduce administrative burdens through information-sharing agreements,

aligning commercial passenger vehicle information with safety legislation. Marine safety is another key objective. Transport accident charge exemptions are there to clarify that individuals exempt from TAC payments are still fully covered for traffic accidents. There are public transport network changes and transport restructuring orders. Of course there are the medicinal cannabis trials, which have been gone into in some detail by some speakers in the house.

Another key part of the legislation, as I mentioned before, is the e-scooter trials. The bill introduces regulations to govern vehicle-sharing schemes, including e-scooters, bicycles and e-bikes. It requires operators to have authorising agreements with local councils to operate in their districts and ensures responsible operation of these schemes to prevent clutter and maintain safety. As I know you, Acting Speaker Addison, would be aware, back in 2021 the government committed to undertaking a trial of commercially operated e-scooters. It did so in a few districts with a few councils around Victoria, and of course Ballarat was one of the areas where that trial took place with various operators. I think Neuron Mobility was the preferred scooter operator out your way, and there was Lime and Neuron out in other council areas, including Melbourne, Port Phillip and the City of Yarra as well. The trial has been extended, but it did show that councils worked very successfully with those operators to not only set service standards but implement amenity and parking management strategies as well.

In terms of state government and what it has done throughout that trial, it set speed limits in place. With the hire scooters, as much as you could try you could not get them over the 15-kilometre speed limit – unless you are going downhill apparently. But it also put a limit on the actual number of scooters that each council could have and indeed where those scooters could be ridden. It has been quite thrilling actually to hear that the Allan Labor government recently announced that it is extending the trial for the summer period over the next six months to collect the most comprehensive dataset to inform the future of that program in Victoria. More than a million people signed up to hire e-scooters in Victoria during the trial, with 5 million trips taken and more than 9 million kilometres travelled.

The Department of Transport and Planning is developing a guide for councils with advice on how to manage e-scooter share schemes, including parking management and operator insurance requirements too. I am very happy to say the Labor government will continue to monitor and assess the use of these scooters across the state and amend regulations if required to address those emerging issues. The number 10 objective, which I did not get to, was Safe Transport Victoria, but it would appear that I am out of time. So on that basis I would like to commend the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill to the house.

Sarah CONNOLLY (Laverton) (18:33): I too join my colleagues this afternoon to speak on the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. I absolutely love getting up in this place to talk about transport for many, many reasons, but mostly because it is so very important to my constituents in Melbourne's west, whether they are bus drivers, Uber drivers, taxidriver or truck drivers. We have got lots of truck drivers in my electorate, a lot of owner-drivers in Truganina and Williams Landing. What I also have a lot of are commuters, particularly in Melbourne's outer west. Whether it is road or rail, my community absolutely relies upon the work we do here in this place to make it easier for folks to get around Melbourne – in particular Melbourne's west.

The contents of this bill today relate to two really important effects to deal with the changing nature of road use. One of the really great things about governments like the Allan Labor government is that as new forms of transport and new challenges and new issues emerge – and let us face it, over the term of this long-term government there have been quite a few of those – it is really important for government to be able to pivot and go ahead and implement policy, legislation and legislative reform here in this place to make sure that our road and road safety laws keep up with that change.

Now, Victoria has a really strong history of implementing nation-leading road safety reforms. I think everyone here in this place can cast their mind back to 1970, whether they were born or not during that time. I know I certainly was not. But in 1970, for those that were – and for those that were not, like me, it is a history lesson – we were the first jurisdiction in the whole world, so this is pretty

significant, to introduce mandatory seatbelts, something we would not even think twice about today, right? It is something that we just do automatically. Six years later we introduced random breath testing, the first again in the nation to do so. In the late 1980s – so yes, I would have been born then, in the early 80s – we were again the first in the world, this time for introducing speed cameras to our roads. I think every person in this house and most certainly out in the community – any punter that you asked out on the street about introducing road safety speed cameras onto our roads – well and truly knows they are a good thing and do indeed save lives by getting drivers to slow down on our roads. In 2004 we led the nation in mandatory roadside drug tests, and in 2008 – this really is a history lesson, isn't it – we introduced the graduated licensing system, differentiating Ls, red and green Ps and the full licence. All of these road reforms have been proved time and time again to make our roads safer. We must constantly be thinking about how to make our roads safer and doing everything we can to indeed make them safe and, most importantly, save lives. That goes to the heart, really, of what we are talking about today.

I am going to start with a little bit of a contribution on the medicinal cannabis trial. We know that one of the key things that this bill introduces is research. It is a research trial into medicinal cannabis and driving. We know that Victoria is a national leader when it comes to medicinal cannabis. We were the first state to legalise this treatment back in 2016, because the evidence shows that cannabis can have a positive health impact in treating things like arthritis and chronic pain. I recognise that this is something that has been raised by the Legalise Cannabis Party in the other place. When I was preparing this contribution for the bill I was thinking back to medicinal cannabis and instances in which that can be used as part of the trial and us legalising it back in 2016, but it made me cast my mind back to a really great family friend of ours, not in this state. Her name was Christine, and Christine very sadly some years ago passed away after a 10-year battle with cancer. I know towards the end there was not really anything that could relieve her suffering and her pain. I am not sure if it was medicinal cannabis or the other kind, but it certainly had an effect in helping relax her and reduce her pain. When I think about medicinal cannabis and the impact it has on people's lives for many different reasons, I know for Christine it gave her relief there in the end, and that was really important. So I am very pleased to see that we were the first state to legalise this treatment back in 2016.

Fortunately this is something that our government has been working on since 2020, when we set up the medicinal cannabis and safe driving working group, because whilst we have legalised the use of medicinal cannabis here in Victoria, this has presented an issue for people who receive a prescription but also need to drive. These people in an ideal situation should not have to choose between driving to work, to school pick-ups and drop-offs, to do the groceries and to visit friends and family and taking their medication. In many cases that medication is relieving a condition that causes immense pain, like for my family friend Christine, and a disability that does not have an alternative remedy. Having said that, of course there are always risks, and this has been a topic of some discussion in the community – and so it should, because making our roads safer is always a really important topic of discussion in the community. We know that there is a risk with people with THC in their system getting behind the wheel and driving whilst under the influence, but the same is also true of people who drink drive. There is a key difference, and I think it is fair to say that people who need to take medicinal THC but are not in any way impaired by using it should be able to drive without being apprehended by Victoria Police. But the fact is that we do not really know enough at the moment to make that determination because there just simply is not enough research on it, and that is why we are running this trial – to see if there is indeed a road safety risk posed by drivers who take medicinal cannabis and if those risks might be able to be managed.

This bill before the house this afternoon will do this by creating a mechanism to declare that the current legislation that prohibits driving whilst using cannabis – we absolutely want to see how this trial goes and use the evidence from it to inform how our laws will take this into account. Either way it is really important that we have this trial, because we want and we need our roads to be safer for everyone. In fact what this bill does is take this a step further by giving the minister a more general power to

designate road safety research trials, so theoretically we would be able to conduct similar trials in future to assess how we might make our roads safer.

In the time that I have got left, I am just very briefly going to touch on the second key thing that this bill deals with, our government's e-scooter trial. It has been somewhat controversial here in Victoria. As somebody who has spent time in Queensland, I know it was controversial up there with the scooters, and I remember many, many stories being on the front page of the local paper there, good and bad. But what we do know is that e-scooters are becoming a more and more popular mode of transport, of getting around, with over 4 million rides recorded in just four local government areas. They are of course cheaper than buying a car. You do not need petrol to use them. They are especially suited to travelling short distances in areas like inner Melbourne. Like all new transportation modes, it is really important that they are integrated into our road safety framework, and it needs to be in a considered manner, which is why we have been running the trial limiting their use to the cities of Melbourne, Yarra and Port Phillip as well as Ballarat to see how they operate in both metropolitan and, importantly also, regional cities. A regional city environment is just as important.

In the almost 40 seconds I have got left, I do want to say something about the bus accreditation system. It is what I am most excited about in this bill. I have just talked about how we love our buses in Melbourne's west, but with Bus Awareness Week happening just last week – I was able to have a ride on a local bus with the member for Tarneit and the Wyndham City Council mayor – I want to give a big shout-out to our bus drivers. They do an incredible job in our local community. It provides really great secure work and even sometimes secure part-time work for individuals in our community, and as the granddaughter of a bus driver myself I do want to say thank you – thank you for everything you do – to those drivers.

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (18:43): I rise to speak in support of the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. This is a bill that builds on the Victorian Labor government's strong commitment to road safety and the delivery of the road safety strategy through a number of new measures, initiatives and reforms, including through enabling the conduct of a world-leading research trial into medicinal cannabis and driving and further improving road safety by protecting amenity and accessibility in public spaces in relation to e-scooter and e-bicycle share schemes. The bill provides a number of other omnibus-type measures, but one in particular that I will draw upon towards the end of my remarks is consistency around transport legislation by aligning bus driver accreditation under the Bus Safety Act 2009 with the accreditation of drivers of commercial passenger vehicles under the commercial passenger vehicle scheme.

As I said in my first speech to Parliament, with so many young families and elderly residents now living across Pascoe Vale, Coburg and Brunswick West, improving road and transport safety across my community will continue to be a high priority. Victoria has always had a strong track record in leading with life-saving road safety policies. In 1970 we led the world in becoming the first jurisdiction to introduce mandatory seatbelts. In 1976 we were the first state to introduce random breath testing. In the late 1980s Victoria again was a world leader in introducing speed cameras. In 1986, I would like to point out, the Victorian Parliament, with the support of both major parties in this place, passed the Transport Accident Act 1986, creating the TAC from 1 January 1987. In 2004 Victoria was also the first state to introduce mandatory roadside drug tests, and in 2008 Victoria introduced its graduated licensing system.

These initiatives have been found time and time again to have saved countless lives and improved the state's road safety standards, and by continuing to build on these historic road safety reforms and also by building on the investments that have been made by the Victorian Labor government across my community since 2014, we can continue to help create a safer commute for transport workers, motorists, bus drivers, pedestrians, cyclists and vulnerable road users so locals can get home sooner, safer and more sustainably.

Locally, some highlight projects I would like to draw the house's attention to include the construction of the game-changing Metro rail tunnel, which will provide for increased capacity on the Upfield and Craigieburn rail lines; the removal of the four dangerous level crossings along the Upfield line via Coburg at Moreland Road, Reynard Street, Munro Street and Bell Street, which have been accompanied by a world-class active transport, cycling, walking and open-space corridor; the construction of two new landmark train stations at Moreland and Coburg stations, which when combined with the level crossings are the catalyst for the revitalisation of central Coburg and the Upfield and Sydney Road corridors; improved tram services along route 1 on Nicholson Street, route 19 on Sydney Road and route 58 on Melville Road, including through the introduction of low-floor and accessible trams; as well as the recent new and improved timetabling for tram routes 1 and 58, with services to be boosted on Friday nights with a tram every 15 minutes until 10 pm to make it easier for residents and workers to access the CBD.

The release of the Victorian government's new *Melbourne's Tram Plan* will also help provide the ongoing pathway to ensure we continue to make our city's tram network more accessible, more technologically advanced and more efficient in the years to come. The development of a modern, sustainable bus network across the north through Melbourne's northern bus review, which we are working through, will help develop a more modern, faster, reliable and environmentally sustainable network for local commuters across the north. The Victorian government's \$11.9 million investment to finally remove the dangerous roundabout at the Sussex Street and Gaffney Street intersection in North Coburg through the installation of traffic lights has continued to improve road and pedestrian safety in the heart of my electorate, which is at the front of my electorate office. \$4.6 million has been delivered to facilitate the Glenroy to Coburg cycling link via Derby Street to significantly enhance safety for people who ride bikes and for pedestrians and motorists. We are also investing \$3.7 million –

Bridget Vallence: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, it is a wideranging debate, but it is not the take-note motion on the budget, it is actually a specific bill, so I would encourage you, on a point of relevance, to bring the member back to the bill.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Juliana Addison): I ask the member for Pascoe Vale to speak to the bill and continue.

Anthony CIANFLONE: Thank you, Acting Speaker. I was merely trying to draw on the record that we have been investing locally to improve road safety, which this bill also ties into and which I will now take the house's attention to. Thank you to the member for Evelyn.

Bridget Vallence: Acting Speaker, I seek your guidance as to the state of the house.

Quorum formed.

Anthony CIANFLONE: Thank you, Acting Speaker, and thanks to everyone for coming along to have a listen.

This bill does build on those commitments, some of which – locally – I did touch on, and it will continue to help us make the state's roads a lot safer going forward through a number of progressive reforms. The main purpose of the bill is to continue the government's work in this space – namely, through enabling the conduct of a world-first, leading research trial into medicinal cannabis and driving. While this is a road safety challenge, it is also an issue of human rights. We currently have a situation where Victorians are forced to choose between taking prescribed medicinal cannabis to treat medical conditions and being able to drive. This is because it is not legal to drive while there is the presence of tetrahydrocannabinol –THC – in a person's system, whether or not they are actually impaired at the time of driving the vehicle. Given THC can remain in a person's system for a number of days, Victorians using medicinal cannabis are effectively banned from driving long after they become unimpaired from using this prescribed medication.

That is why to address this situation it is necessary via the bill to conduct world-leading research to expand our knowledge of the impairment medicinal cannabis causes on driving while ensuring the safety of all road users through a closed loop trial. This will be an Australian first. The reforms in this bill will allow the Minister for Roads and Road Safety in consultation with other relevant ministers to designate a road safety research trial and declare that the specified provisions of the Road Safety Act 1986 either do not apply or apply in varied form to trial participants for the purposes of this closed loop trial. Research trials will also not be limited to the use of medicinal cannabis, and this amendment will allow for the declaration of trials for a range of road safety initiatives. This provides for flexibility in testing the efficacy of a range of other technologies and approaches to further expand the evidence base for future reforms and to continue delivering more road safety improvements in time. I have spoken to quite a few people in my electorate on the doors and in the community who have actually raised this issue specifically with me and who I know – given the time I have, I will not be able to divulge their details – will very much welcome this trial.

The other major reform contained in this bill is around e-scooters and e-bicycle share schemes and reforms in that space. The use of e-scooters provided under share schemes is proving increasingly popular across Victoria, as we know, with Melburnians in particular taking up the devices in very high numbers. To ensure the safety of e-scooter riders, pedestrians and other road users the Victorian government is enabling the use of e-scooters through trials throughout Victoria under certain conditions. E-scooter riders using these devices as part of the trial have been required to follow road safety rules, including the wearing of helmets and restrictions on speed where the e-scooters are able to be lawfully ridden.

E-scooters as well as bicycles and e-bikes made available via share schemes are useful and popular modes of transport for people wanting to travel short distances, whether it be locals or tourists wanting to experience our state and CBD. E-mobility vehicles also help ease congestion. They are an affordable mode of transport and will also help provide first to last mile access on public transport, which I look forward to the member for Melton doing very soon when he gets on his e-scooter to his local train station.

Whilst e-scooters in Victoria have many of these benefits in terms of transport and mobility, there can be issues with share schemes' e-scooters or bicycles being left on footpaths or in other public places in a way that blocks access, creates tripping hazards and otherwise creates an impact on the use of public amenity and ambience in public spaces. That is why the bill will give local governments greater control over e-scooter and e-bicycle share schemes within their local government areas. The reforms will effectively ban the provision of e-scooters and e-bicycles by share scheme operators in a local government area unless the operator has an agreement in place with that relevant council.

With the time I have got left I would also like to draw the house's attention to the reforms around bus licensing and accreditation which bring it into line with the Commercial Passenger Vehicle Industry Act 2017, and in doing so I want to acknowledge the work of the Transport Workers' Union – the TWU – who do a magnificent job in representing so many bus drivers across the state, with a particular shout out to Ravneet, who drives out of Bundoora and does a great job, and a great bus driver he is.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Juliana Addison): Before I call the member for Albert Park, I would like to acknowledge the Honourable Jaala Pulford, the former Minister for Resources, Minister for Employment and Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy and, very importantly, a Wendouree constituent. You are very welcome.

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (18:53): I am very happy to speak on the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2023, noting it has certain multimodal elements to it because that reflects the modern way that we get around our cities. There is no longer just one method of transport or two methods of transport. There are many ways to get around the city, and that is the most efficient and modern way to do it. Efficiency is one issue, but I note that there is a key focus in this bill on safety, as there should be. I am really proud of Victoria's record when it comes to innovation and safety on the roads. We have a terrific record.

In 1970 – it has been said, but I am going to say it again because I am so proud of it – Victoria led the world in becoming the first jurisdiction to introduce mandatory seat belts, noting there are still some people that are not using them, so I hope everyone gets on board and remembers to do that for their safety. In 1976 Victoria was the first state to introduce random breath testing, and I think above all else the fact that it could save a life – it could save the life of the driver, whoever is with them and whoever else is out on the road – just reinforces that need to stay safe and certainly to not combine drinking and driving.

In the late 1980s Victoria again was a – get this – world leader in introducing speed cameras. I know sometimes people might say ‘Oh, I got caught on the speed camera’, but when you think about the fact that one of the major contributors to the road toll is speeding, there is a really good rationale to having these sophisticated mechanisms in place. Then in 2004 Victoria was the first state to introduce mandatory roadside drug tests; again you can see Victoria leading the way with these safety mechanisms. And then in 2008 Victoria introduced its graduated licensing system. What is really good and really comforting to know is that these initiatives have been found time and time again to have saved countless Victorian lives.

Now, I might get to one of the key elements of the bill. One of the key reforms in this bill is that it enables the minister to designate road safety research trials. Determining to what degree it is safe for someone to drive a vehicle after consuming drugs and/or alcohol or while affected by fatigue is one of the purposes for which the trials could be used. That would seem to be very much a significant focus on safety. You can see a significant theme here: Victoria is leading the way and really focusing on the safety of our Victorian constituents. Another purpose is informing the development of methods used by police officers to assess whether someone is impaired by drugs, alcohol and/or fatigue. Fatigue I think is no surprise to anyone here. Sometimes we take it for granted – ‘Oh, she’ll be right. I’m a little bit overtired, I haven’t had enough sleep, but I’ll be right; I’ll get home’. Well, we know that fatigue can have a significant impact on your ability to drive appropriately and safely.

But I am really, really excited about the fact that we are creating the ability to run world-leading research trials when it comes to those who may have to take medicinal cannabis for a whole variety of pretty significant ailments and making sure that we know exactly what way that will impact them and their ability – or not – to drive safely, and we will be doing it in a safe and controlled environment. On the one hand when you are looking at a medication you think about the half-life of the medication, but on the other hand what does that actually mean? What is the difference it does or does not make in terms of your ability to focus while driving? I am really enthused about this because it has been said in the chamber that there are a significant number of Victorians who are taking medicinal cannabis for a whole variety of ailments, and it makes sense that those particularly who need to drive or who want to drive for whatever reason – you know, in a democracy you are allowed to drive – are able to do so with the comfort of knowing exactly the impact that that medicinal cannabis might have on them and are actually enabled to do it in the future.

But the whole point of this legislation is to provide a safe and supported way to undertake that very important research, and I am certainly looking forward to the outcomes of that, noting how many Victorians are taking medicinal cannabis as we speak and are quite compromised under the current circumstances – that is, ahead of this legislation being passed and that important research being properly documented and undertaken. But it also paves the way for testing other prescription medications and/or illicit drugs and the particular impact that they may have in due course, should there be a desire for research into those specific areas for Victorians in terms of the way that they drive. It is also to give comfort, but it is just really important information because there is also the nuance between one driver and the next and seeing the consistency in terms of ‘Medicinal cannabis lasts this amount of time’ and ‘At what point do we see a difference in terms of the impact on the way a person drives?’ You know, it may be that we are really able to pave the way on so many fronts for so many Victorians. I think this is really timely, but I am also really proud that it is in Victoria that we are leading the way on this research.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.*Adjournment*

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

Maroondah Highway–Killara Road, Coldstream

Bridget VALLENCE (Evelyn) (19:00): (401) By failing to upgrade the Maroondah Highway at Coldstream and fix the dangerous Killara Road intersection the Allan Labor government continues to put the safety of pedestrians and motorists at risk. The action I seek is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety to join me at a Coldstream community meeting to explain why the Labor government has not yet delivered this vital road safety project. Four years ago, in 2019, \$20 million in Commonwealth funding from the former federal Liberal government was allocated to the state Labor government's Department of Transport specifically to upgrade the Maroondah Highway and Killara Road in Coldstream. Despite this, the state Labor government has for four years sat on this funding, further putting the safety of our community at risk.

Given the Allan state Labor government's woeful record on infrastructure delivery, with projects more than \$30 billion over budget, the Albanese federal Labor government announced a 90-day review of projects that have received Commonwealth money but are not yet started. Now, 180 days into the 90-day review, the residents of Coldstream, Gruyere and Yering and indeed right across the Yarra Valley are deeply concerned that Labor is considering pulling this funding from this vital road safety project and from the Coldstream community. Make no mistake, it is the Allan state Labor government that has stalled this project and is seeking permission from the federal Labor government to redirect the funding they have already received away from the Coldstream community. If I have somehow got that wrong, the Labor government could simply start using the money allocated and get on with the job of fixing Maroondah Highway and Killara Road.

Last week, on 24 October, around 100 local residents joined me and my federal Liberal colleague Aaron Violi MP at a community meeting in Coldstream, determined to keep this campaign going. This massive turnout of Coldstream, Gruyere and Yering locals shows unequivocally how much it still matters to them that this local road gets upgraded. Residents at the meeting wanted to know why no Labor MPs have offered to meet them, to listen to their concerns, to hear why this road safety project is so important for the community or to explain why the works promised for completion in 2022 have not yet been done. They make a lot of sense, which is why on their behalf I am seeking this action of the roads minister: join me to meet the community and explain why Labor has not fixed this notoriously dangerous road despite having funding. I will not rest until the funding for this project is confirmed. The Allan Labor government needs to guarantee that this vital road safety upgrade for Coldstream will proceed before there is another tragic fatality.

Republic of Türkiye centenary

Iwan WALTERS (Greenvale) (19:03): (402) My adjournment matter this evening is for the Minister for Multicultural Affairs, and the action I seek is for the minister to inform me how the Victorian government's \$200,000 investment will assist our state's Turkish community to celebrate the centenary of the Republic of Türkiye this week. The modern Turkish republic was founded in 1923 by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, an extraordinary leader and a brilliant soldier who led his nation's armies during the First World War and defeated an invading force before becoming the father of the Turkish nation and its first president. In the century since, Australia has enjoyed a strong relationship with Türkiye, assisted by the migration of many Turkish people to Australia, a large proportion of whom have settled in Melbourne's northern suburbs and have contributed so much to our community. Organisations like the Turkish sub-branch of the Victorian RSL, led by my constituent Ramazan Altintas and Sucettin Unal, contribute to Victoria's strong relationship with Türkiye and its people by

commemorating the long history of that relationship. They ensure that we can remember the tragedy and losses of the Gallipoli campaign as friends and allies, not as adversaries.

Our state also has a deep economic relationship with Türkiye, underpinned by our warm and enduring people-to-people links. So many businesses have been established in my community by innovators and entrepreneurs whose families came to Australia from Türkiye. Family enterprises like Tek Foods, Sahara, Turkish Bread Factory and many more underpin our local economy and also create valuable exports. These trading relationships are supported by organisations like MUSIAD, the Independent Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association, whose global president Mahmut Asmali visited Victoria last week and who I was delighted to welcome to the Parliament of Victoria. Organisations like Turan Australia, the Northern Turkish Women's Association and Islamic Community Milli Gorus, led by Ramazan Otkun, serve the community in so many varied ways, from outstanding schools like Ilim College and the provision of valued social services to the faith leadership and ministry of mosque communities like ICMG Meadow Heights.

Their service to my own community is particularly inspiring. I am proud that Greenvale has the largest Turkish–Australian population of any district represented in this house and deeply grateful for the contribution of so many. I congratulate all those in Greenvale and across Victoria celebrating this auspicious centenary, and I again ask the minister to inform me how the Victorian government's significant support will assist the Turkish–Victorian community to mark the occasion of the Republic of Türkiye's centenary.

Regional rail tourism

Annabelle CLEELAND (Euroa) (19:05): (403) My adjournment this evening is for the Minister for Public and Active Transport, and the action I seek is that they support the proud rail tourism industry of north-east Victoria. Rail tourism is an important industry in my region, but it is sadly overlooked for much-needed funding from this government. With the lack of recurrent funding for Heritage Victoria and an obsession with Puffing Billy, several rail tourism opportunities in my region are being ignored. As it stands, projects in our region require infrastructure investments that will allow this untapped opportunity a chance to thrive. With the silo art trail, a thriving arts scene in Benalla and top-level markets in Violet Town, there are so many places to see along the train line. A tourist rail on the existing line between Benalla and Yarrawonga could take passengers through Gooramab, Devenish, St James and Tungamah to witness world-renowned artists, including Cam Scale, Sobrane and Tim Bowtell. The plans and infrastructure are there; this project just needs support from the state government to go ahead. The New South Wales government provides more than \$9 million to heritage rail; Victoria currently contributes nothing. But it is simpler than that right now for the state. All we are asking at present is that the tourist trains be allowed to utilise the Oaklands freight line from Benalla to Yarrawonga.

I have been lucky enough to attend events right across the Euroa electorate and see firsthand what benefits a properly funded rail tourism industry could provide. Earlier this year I was invited to the Seymour Railway Heritage Centre to witness their restoration of a vintage locomotive. Since its inception in the early 1980s SRHC has evolved to become one of three major mainline preservation heritage rail groups in Victoria, led enthusiastically by president John Crofts and treasurer Barbara Moss. Their dedication to the restoration and preservation of vintage locomotives, carriages and rolling stock from the golden age of rail travel in Australia is phenomenal. They have become a vital part of the local community in Seymour and a popular destination for tourists all over.

More recently, through attending events at Violet Town's Southern Aurora Memorial and a celebration of the 150th anniversary of the north-east train line, I have met incredible people who are preserving an important part of local history. On top of that, charters and tourism trips on vintage trains continue to draw amazing crowds of eager train enthusiasts. You will not meet a group of more passionate people than those involved with our railways. One of these people is Benalla's local legend and lifelong rail enthusiast Charlie Mead. Eighty-four-year-old Charlie started his career constructing

railway lines and other infrastructure in 1957. Charlie's impact on the industry went far beyond his work in an official capacity. For many years after his retirement he volunteered at Benalla train station, tending the gardens and helping passengers as they disembarked. I want to thank Charlie for sharing his contagious passion for the north-east railways with me. For people like Charlie, seeing proper investment in our rail tourism industry would be a dream come true.

Sunshine super-hub

Sarah CONNOLLY (Laverton) (19:08): (404) My adjournment is for the new Minister for Precincts, and the action I seek is that the minister join me at a future meeting of the community reference group for the Sunshine precinct master plan. The minister and I caught up in Sunshine just a couple of weeks ago to discuss the \$140 million that our government has committed towards upgrading the Sunshine station precinct. In fact this is only for stage 1, because what we know is that there is so much more to do. Our government's vision for Sunshine station is to create a transport super-hub – a major connection point for a number of train lines stopping at the station, including the Metro Tunnel; regional train lines to Geelong, Ballarat and Bendigo; our future Melbourne Airport rail; and the Suburban Rail Loop.

The area surrounding the station is bursting with opportunities for investment to create new opportunities for local jobs and even a place for more people to call home. The first tranche of works covered in this \$143 million is to deliver a series of works on the eastern side of the station, including a brand new bus interchange at Station Place, very much needed; better road connections in the vicinity of the station, very much needed; new station entrances; and green space. Everyone wants that, right?

For a project as big as this it is important to bring the community with us. That is exactly what we are doing with the community reference group, which meets regularly over the year to receive updates on works in the local area and provide discussion and importantly feedback on how we can achieve this vision for Sunshine. That is why I would greatly welcome the minister coming to a future meeting, taking part in these discussions and seeing firsthand the really great work that is being done to deliver on this very important precinct for Melbourne's west.

Mornington electorate arts and cultural events

Chris CREWETHER (Mornington) (19:10): (405) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Creative Industries. The action I seek is for the minister to better fund and support the arts, cultural and events sector in the Mornington electorate.

In the Mornington electorate we are blessed with talented organisations and individuals who run art studios, workshops, events, exhibitions and festivals. I can name several examples that highlight our amazing arts, cultural and events sector. There is Spare Parts Art Space, which is an art space that offers workshop spaces for emerging artists and art classes for all ages, which my kids really enjoyed taking part in on Sunday, doing prints, painting Halloween masks and more.

Mount Eliza North Primary School holds the renowned Mount Eliza Art and Design Show. Grace and I attended their opening night on Friday, and my kids and I took part in their kids art zone on Sunday. Having started in 1978, this was their 44th show. It is one of the biggest events on the Mount Eliza calendar, showcasing the work of local artists and young talented students.

The Main Street Mornington Festival encompasses the Mornington Peninsula cultural lifestyle, showcasing music, arts, food, wine, entertainment and more. I went to the festival earlier this month, after its closure during lockdowns and during the 2022 year due to funding, volunteer and logistics issues. I had secured a commitment of \$200,000 from an elected Liberal-Nationals government to support this festival and see it move to a two-day event. However, unfortunately this commitment still has not been matched by the Labor government.

There is also the U3A Mornington Visual Art Show, which also has a marvellous array of photographs, acrylics, watercolours and drawings capturing the unique talents of local artists. I was impressed with the skill on show at the official opening I spoke at this month.

Also, we have the Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery, which acquired its first artwork in 1970. The gallery has grown to have over 1900 objects, including drawings, paintings, sculptures and more. They also have historical artworks capturing Mornington Peninsula's cultural heritage. It is hosting the Archibald Prize 2023 regional tour until 5 November, which I recently joined the opening of. It is great to see the Young Archie prize, featuring artworks by Mornington Peninsula primary and secondary school students. It is also running preschool programs, school holiday workshops led by Archibald Prize 2023 finalists and more.

There is also the Neds Peninsula Cup, which I am really looking forward to going to this Sunday. It is our time to shine in the Spring Racing Carnival calendar, and it is great to wear this horseracing tie, which I was given by a local Brit to wear particularly for this speech this evening. I can go on and on about local events to support, but lastly, I will mention cultural activities run by groups like the Mount Eliza Chamber of Commerce, who have been hosting a Halloween hunt at Mount Eliza village. Happy Halloween to all those kids out tonight.

Sycle

Ella GEORGE (Lara) (19:13): (406) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Environment, and the action that I seek is for the minister to visit Sycle, a local company located in Avalon in the Lara electorate. Sycle take construction and demolition waste that would normally go to landfill and repurpose it into new materials. They recognise the substantial impact that the building and construction industry has on the environment and that only 12 per cent of all building materials currently come from recycled materials. Sycle accepts materials including concrete, asphalt, bricks, rocks, plasterboard, tyres, timber, plastic drainpipes, concrete pipes and even topsoil. At its Avalon facility Sycle repurposes those materials and sends them back out to be used again in construction projects. This even includes materials that are used by VicRoads in their road construction projects.

Along with their work in growing Victoria's circular economy, Sycle have a strong focus on social procurement, which is to be commended. They work closely with organisations such as the Power in You Project, which is a Geelong-based non-profit that helps people affected by addiction, mental health and justice related challenges to achieve lasting change in their lives. And there is also genU, who empower people living with disabilities to live happier and healthier lives. I look forward to welcoming the Minister for Environment to Sycle to hear more from the team about the innovative work they are doing in our community.

Hattah-Robinvale Road roadside vegetation

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (19:14): (407) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and the action I seek is urgent hedging and maintenance of the trees and roadside vegetation on the Hattah-Robinvale Road. The Hattah-Robinvale Road is a road where some massive processing plants and farms operate. Select Harvests have several orchards, their H2E plant and their main processing operation there, which span 100 hectares. For those that cannot visualise hectares, it is about 100 soccer pitches. It is a \$40 million operation set up in 2008, and it is huge. Rocky Lamattina & Sons is responsible for a third of the carrots right across Australia on supermarket shelves – huge, and they run a fleet of B-quad trucks. Olam, or OFI, have several orchards. Boundary Bend Olives or Cobram Estate olive oil, Redgold and now Bright Light, another almond processor, are also on this road, as well as several broadacre farms. Added to this are popular camping spots in Wemen and the Hattah-Kulkyne National Park.

So what we have is a really windy road – yes, full of potholes, but it is carrying huge trucks. It is carrying road trains – A-doubles, B-doubles, B-quads – harvest machinery, school buses, tourists and family vehicles. This road is also the main arterial road between the Robinvale-Sea Lake Road and

the Calder Highway. Like I said, it is incredibly windy. It is a fatality waiting to happen. Not only have the grass and weeds on the road reserves got out of control but because of the weather and the conditions over the last couple of years, the shrubbery, native vegetation and trees on the road reserves have really flourished. Normally we would say 'Great, it's fantastic', but now truck drivers in prime movers cannot see oncoming traffic. Because of the windy roads they cannot see left and right, they cannot see oncoming trucks and they cannot see oncoming cars. I spoke to Phil Lamattina earlier about this. He said after 30 years they have never seen it as bad but they are kind of used to getting no reaction, and his drivers actually use the trucking channel – channel 40, which I had no idea existed, but the trucking channel is channel 40 – and they make a call when they are exiting the farm.

Select Harvests, I have been out there a few times. Their farm at Carina, where I used to live, so I have intimate knowledge of this road, is a fatality waiting to happen, because if you have got tourists coming down that road that are unaware of the huge operations in this area – and it is 100 kilometres an hour, except for the bits that have potholes and circles around them; they are 40 obviously, because that is what happens – and if they hit a truck exiting at 100 kilometres an hour, that is a disaster waiting to happen. Carrots are harvesting now and dryland farmers are harvesting now – we need urgent action.

Alstom, Ballarat, site visit

Juliana ADDISON (Wendouree) (19:17): (408) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Public and Active Transport, and the action I seek is for the minister to come to the electorate of Wendouree and visit the Alstom facility. Ballarat has had a long and proud history of manufacturing rolling stock for the Victorian rail network for over 100 years, and the Allan Labor government is continuing to support this great tradition. I welcomed the announcement in the Victorian budget 2021–22 that the Victorian government would invest \$986 million to build 25 brand new X'trapolis 2.0 trains and the infrastructure they need to modernise the state's train fleet. Since April 1917 generations of Ballarat workers have repaired and maintained wagons and locomotives and manufactured trains at the rail workshops on Creswick Road in my electorate. Over the last century the rail workshops have been a significant employer for our city, and there have been many stories of fathers and sons working side by side. Also the rail workshops were a place where many apprentices learned their trade. Interestingly, the catalyst for establishing the rail workshop in Ballarat came from pressure to decentralise and support regional jobs, a value that is shared by Victorian Labor governments. Proudly the Ballarat-made fleet of Alstom X'trapolis trains has proven to be one of the most reliable trains in the Melbourne network whilst maximising passenger experience, comfort and safety. Today the Alstom site in Ballarat continues to play a significant role in train manufacturing in Victoria, and this will continue with the latest order of the new X'trapolis 2.0 trains. I look forward to welcoming the minister to Wendouree to visit the Alstom site very soon.

Country Fire Authority Warrandyte brigade

Nicole WERNER (Warrandyte) (19:19): (409) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Emergency Services in the other place. The action I seek from the minister is that she upgrades the out-of-date firefighting appliances at Warrandyte CFA. This issue is very close to my heart as it will directly impact the safety and wellbeing of my community in Warrandyte as we come into a brutal fire season. My electorate boasts an amazing group of CFA volunteers. To name just a few: group captain Shane Murphy, captain Ben Cash in Chirnside Park, captain Trent Burris in North Warrandyte and, at the CFA in question, captain Will Hodgson in Warrandyte. Warrandyte CFA's current fleet of pumps, specifically the type III medium Isuzu FTR 900 with a seven-speed manual turbo, has served them well over the years. These vehicles were the best option back in 2004. However, times have changed and technology has evolved. Modern Scania-based appliances like the Scania P 340 have become available. They have been proven to excel in Warrandyte's challenging terrain, with the ability to maintain high speeds and navigate the hills and gullies more efficiently. The Scania pumper has ample horsepower to ensure it can keep pace with the demands of our area. Warrandyte CFA has conducted rigorous trial drives through a cross-section of the response area comparing our current

Isuzu FTR 900 with the Scania P 340. While the equipment was amazing two decades ago, the time for an upgrade has more than arrived.

This is an issue of safety. Newer CFA pumpers come equipped with a breathing apparatus in the rear seats similar to Fire Rescue Victoria appliances. This feature enables their crews to step out of the vehicle with breathing apparatus on their backs ready to tackle the situation at hand. It reduces response time and increases efficiency, which is crucial when every second counts in a bushfire. Warrantyte CFA and I are requesting an upgrade to our pumpers fleet, specifically to vehicles based on the Scania cab chassis. This upgrade will not only improve our brigade's performance and response times but also enhance the safety of our volunteers and the efficiency of our operations. Our shared goal is to serve and protect the community to the best of our abilities. We have witnessed firsthand how these improvements can impact our performance on the ground and make a tangible difference in emergency situations. Together we can make our community even safer and better prepared for the bushfire season.

Werribee Mercy Hospital

Mathew HILAKARI (Point Cook) (19:22): (410) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure and Minister for Ambulance Services. The action that I seek is for the minister to provide an update on the design and expansion of the Werribee Mercy emergency department. Of course many in this place would recall from the budget that the Victorian Labor government is investing over \$100 million to expand the emergency department at Werribee Mercy, with a planned extra 34 treatment spaces made up of four resuscitation beds, 16 short-stay beds and a further 36 emergency care cubicles, to care for the rapidly growing population. The minister knows this hospital very well, having recently visited there to thank the staff for their extraordinary efforts both at the moment and across the period of COVID. I thank the minister, and I look forward to her update.

Responses

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Minister for Police, Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Racing) (19:23): The member for Evelyn raised a matter for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety asking her to join her at the Coldstream community meeting soon, with regard to intersection upgrades at Killara Road. I will pass that on.

The member for Greenvale raised a matter for the Minister for Multicultural Affairs seeking action on information relating to a couple of hundred thousand dollars that has been made available to celebrate and acknowledge the Turkish community here in Victoria to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Türkiye. That is very important and one that I will pass on to the Minister for Multicultural Affairs.

The member for Euroa raised a matter for the Minister for Public and Active Transport around support in particular for rail tourism in the north-east.

The member for Laverton raised a member for the Minister for Precincts seeking action for the minister to join her to meet with the community reference group for the Sunshine precinct master plan.

The member for Mornington raised a matter for the Minister for Creative Industries seeking action to better fund arts and cultural events across the electorate of Mornington. I hope perhaps I might see him at the Peninsula Cup on Sunday in the Mornington electorate. I will be there with the member for Hastings.

The member for Lara raised a matter for the Minister for Environment seeking action to visit a local company in her electorate, Sycle, who are very involved with the recycling of industrial products and materials, which is making great improvements to our environment.

The member for Mildura raised a matter for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety seeking urgent hedging and maintenance of grass and weeds on the Hattah-Robinvale Road.

ADJOURNMENT

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The member for Wendouree raised a matter for the Minister for Public Transport in relation to the visit to the Alstom facility. Back in 2021–22 some \$986 million was invested for 25 new X'trapolis trains, and with the amazing work many generations of working families have contributed to the Alstom factory and the facilities there she is looking forward to the Minister for Public Transport visiting very soon.

The member for Warrandyte raised a matter for the Minister for Emergency Services in the other place with regard to upgrades to the Warrandyte firefighting appliances as we approach the summer season.

The member for Point Cook raised a matter for the Minister for Health regarding action he is seeking on the upgrade and the expansion of the Werribee Mercy emergency department – \$100 million allocated for that very significant project – and I hear a lot of course on the Mercy Heidelberg campus and the work that they do out there, and they are very much looking forward to the expansion of the works at the Werribee Mercy emergency department.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Stay classy, Victoria. The house now stands adjourned until tomorrow morning.

House adjourned 7:26 pm.