



Hansard

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

60th Parliament

Thursday 30 October 2025

By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

Office-holders of the Legislative Assembly

60th Parliament

Speaker

Maree Edwards

Deputy Speaker

Matt Fregon

Acting Speakers

Juliana Addison, Jordan Crugnale, Daniela De Martino, Paul Edbrooke,
Wayne Farnham, Paul Hamer, Lauren Kathage, Nathan Lambert, Alison Marchant,
Paul Mercurio, John Mullahy, Kim O'Keeffe, Meng Heang Tak, Jackson Taylor and Iwan Walters

Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Premier

Jacinta Allan (from 27 September 2023)

Daniel Andrews (to 27 September 2023)

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Deputy Premier

Ben Carroll (from 28 September 2023)

Jacinta Allan (to 27 September 2023)

Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party and Leader of the Opposition

Jess Wilson (from 18 November 2025)

Brad Battin (from 27 December 2024 to 18 November 2025)

John Pesutto (to 27 December 2024)

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party and Deputy Leader of the Opposition

Sam Groth (from 27 December 2024)

David Southwick (to 27 December 2024)

Leader of the Nationals

Danny O'Brien (from 26 November 2024)

Peter Walsh (to 26 November 2024)

Deputy Leader of the Nationals

Emma Kealy

Leader of the House

Mary-Anne Thomas

Manager of Opposition Business

James Newbury (from 13 October 2025)

Bridget Vallence (from 7 January 2025 to 13 October 2025)

James Newbury (to 7 January 2025)

Members of the Legislative Assembly

60th Parliament

Member	District	Party	Member	District	Party
Addison, Juliana	Wendouree	ALP	Lister, John ⁷	Werribee	ALP
Allan, Jacinta	Bendigo East	ALP	Maas, Gary	Narre Warren South	ALP
Andrews, Daniel ¹	Mulgrave	ALP	McCurdy, Tim	Ovens Valley	Nat
Battin, Brad	Berwick	Lib	McGhie, Steve	Melton	ALP
Berham, 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 ²	South Barwon	Ind	O'Keffe, Kim	Shepparton	Nat
Cianflone, Anthony	Pascoe Vale	ALP	Pallas, Tim ⁸	Werribee	ALP
Cleeland, 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 ⁹	Warrandyte	Lib
Edwards, Maree	Bendigo West	ALP	Southwick, David	Caulfield	Lib
Farnham, Wayne	Narracan	Lib	Spence, Ros	Kalkallo	ALP
Foster, Eden ³	Mulgrave	ALP	Staikos, Nick	Bentleigh	ALP
Fowles, Will ⁴	Ringwood	Ind	Suleyman, Natalie	St Albans	ALP
Fregon, Matt	Ashwood	ALP	Tak, Meng Heang	Clarinda	ALP
George, Ella	Lara	ALP	Taylor, Jackson	Bayswater	ALP
Grigorovitch, Luba	Kororoit	ALP	Taylor, Nina	Albert Park	ALP
Groth, Sam	Nepean	Lib	Theophanous, Kat	Northcote	ALP
Guy, Matthew	Bulleen	Lib	Thomas, Mary-Anne	Macedon	ALP
Halfpenny, Bronwyn	Thomastown	ALP	Tilley, Bill	Benambra	Lib
Hall, Katie	Footscray	ALP	Vallence, Bridget	Evelyn	Lib
Hamer, Paul	Box Hill	ALP	Vulin, Emma	Pakenham	ALP
Haylett, Martha	Ripon	ALP	Walsh, Peter	Murray Plains	Nat
Hibbins, Sam ^{5,6}	Prahran	Ind	Walters, Iwan	Greenvale	ALP
Hilakari, Mathew	Point Cook	ALP	Ward, Vicki	Eltham	ALP
Hodgett, David	Croydon	Lib	Wells, Kim	Rowville	Lib
Horne, Melissa	Williamstown	ALP	Werner, Nicole ¹⁰	Warrandyte	Lib
Hutchins, Natalie	Sydenham	ALP	Westaway, Rachel ¹¹	Prahran	Lib
Kathage, Lauren	Yan Yean	ALP	Wight, Dylan	Tarneit	ALP
Kealy, Emma	Lowan	Nat	Williams, Gabrielle	Dandenong	ALP
Kilkenny, Sonya	Carrum	ALP	Wilson, Belinda	Narre Warren North	ALP
Lambert, Nathan	Preston	ALP	Wilson, Jess	Kew	Lib

¹ Resigned 27 September 2023

² ALP until 29 April 2024

³ Sworn in 6 February 2024

⁴ ALP until 5 August 2023

⁵ Greens until 1 November 2024

⁶ Resigned 23 November 2024

⁷ Sworn in 4 March 2025

⁸ Resigned 6 January 2025

⁹ Resigned 7 July 2023

¹⁰ Sworn in 3 October 2023

¹¹ Sworn in 4 March 2025

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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BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

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The SPEAKER (Maree Edwards) took the chair at 9:33 am, read the prayer and made an acknowledgement of country.

Business of the house

Notices of motion

Notice given.

The SPEAKER (09:35): General business, notices of motion 15 and 38 to 40, will be removed from the notice paper unless members wishing their matter to remain advise the Clerk in writing before 2 pm today.

Documents

Victorian Law Reform Commission

Report 2024–25

Sonya KILKENNY (Carrum – Attorney-General, Minister for Planning) (09:35): I table, by leave, the Victorian Law Reform Commission annual report 2024–25.

Ordered to be published.

Victoria Law Foundation

Report 2024–25

Sonya KILKENNY (Carrum – Attorney-General, Minister for Planning) (09:36): I table, by leave, the Victoria Law Foundation annual report 2024–25.

Victorian Veterans Council

Report 2024–25

Natalie SULEYMAN (St Albans – Minister for Veterans, Minister for Small Business and Employment, Minister for Youth) (09:36): I table, by leave, the Victorian Veterans Council report 2024–25.

Documents

Incorporated list as follows:

DOCUMENTS TABLED UNDER ACTS OF PARLIAMENT – The Clerk tabled:

Adult, Community and Further Education Board – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister's reported date of receipt

Adult Parole Board Victoria – Report 2024–25

Agriculture Victoria Services Pty Ltd – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister's reported date of receipt

Albury Wodonga Health – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister's reported date of receipt

Alexandra District Health – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister's reported date of receipt

Alfred Health – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister's reported date of receipt

Alpine Health – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister's reported date of receipt

Ambulance Victoria – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister's reported date of receipt

AMES Australia – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister's reported date of receipt

Austin Health – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister's reported date of receipt

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Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI) – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission:

Report 2023–24

Report 2024–25 under s 31 of the *Crimes (Assumed Identities) Act 2004*

Report 2024–25 under s 42BI of the *Evidence (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1958*

Report 2024–25 under s 30L of the *Surveillance Devices Act 1999*

Bairnsdale Regional Health Service – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Ballarat General Cemeteries Trust – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Barwon Health – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Barwon Region Water Corporation – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Bass Coast Health – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Beaufort and Skipton Health Service – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Beechworth Health Service – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Benalla Health – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Bendigo Health – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Boort District Health – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Breakthrough Victoria Pty Ltd – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Calvary Health Care Bethlehem Limited – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Casterton Memorial Hospital – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Cenitex – Report 2024–25

Central Gippsland Health Service – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Central Gippsland Region Water Corporation – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Central Highlands Region Water Corporation – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Central Highlands Rural Health – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Cladding Safety Victoria – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Cohuna District Hospital – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Colac Area Health – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Coliban Region Water Corporation – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Community Visitors – Report 2024–25 – Ordered to be published

Confiscation Act 1997 – Asset Confiscation Operations Report 2024–25

Consumer Affairs Victoria – Report 2024–25 – Ordered to be published

Corangamite Catchment Management Authority – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Coroners Court of Victoria – Report 2024–25

Coronial Council of Victoria – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Corryong Health – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Dairy Food Safety Victoria – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Development Victoria – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

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Dhelkaya Health – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Docklands Studio Melbourne Pty Ltd – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

East Gippsland Region Water Corporation – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

East Grampians Health Service – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

East Wimmera Health Service – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Eastern Health – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

EastLink Project Act 2004 – Order under ss 7(1) and 7(2)

Echuca Regional Health – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Education, Department of – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Emergency Services Superannuation Scheme (ESSS) – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Energy, Environment and Climate Action, Department of:

Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Report 2024–25 under s 30L of the *Surveillance Devices Act 1999*

Energy Safe Victoria – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Essential Services Commission – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Families, Fairness and Housing, Department of – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Film Victoria (VicScreen) – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Financial Management Act 1994:

Report from the Attorney General that she had received the Report 2024–25 of the Victorian Law Reform Commission

Reports for the Minister for Agriculture that she had received the Reports 2024–25 of the:

Phytogene Pty Ltd

Veterinary Practitioners Registration Board of Victoria

Victorian Strawberry Industry Development Committee

Report from the Minister for Environment that he had received the Report 2024–25 of the Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability

Report from the Minister for Health that she had received the Reports 2024–25 of the Victorian Pharmacy Authority and the Mildura Cemeteries Trust

Report from the Minister for Housing and Building that she had received the Report 2024–25 of the Architects Registration Board of Victoria

Report from the Minister for the State Electricity Commission that she had received the Report 2023–24 of the State Electricity Commission of Victoria

Report from the Minister for Women that she had received the Report 2024–25 of the Queen Victoria Women’s Centre Trust

Report from the Minister for Veterans that she had received the Report 2024–25 of the Victorian Veterans Council

Firefighters Registration Board – Report 2024–25

Game Management Authority – Report 2024–25

Geelong Cemeteries Trust – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Geelong Performing Arts Centre Trust – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Gippsland and Southern Rural Water Corporation – Report 2024–2025, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

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Gippsland Southern Health Service – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Goulburn Valley Health – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Goulburn Valley Region Water Corporation – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Goulburn–Murray Water Corporation – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Government Services, Department of – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Grampians Health – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water Corporation – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority – Report 2023–24, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Great Ocean Road Health – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Greater Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Greyhound Racing Victoria – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Health, Department of – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Health Purchasing Victoria (HealthShare) – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Heathcote Health – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Hesse Rural Health Service – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Heywood Rural Health – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission:

Report 2024–25 under s 464ZP of the *Crimes Act 1958*

Report 2024–25 under s 31 of the *Crimes (Assumed Identities) Act 2004*

Report 2024–25 under s 30L of the *Surveillance Devices Act 1999*

Infrastructure Victoria – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Inglewood and Districts Health Service – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions, Department of – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Justice and Community Safety, Department of – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Kardinia Park Stadium Trust – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Kerang District Health – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Kooweeup Regional Health Service – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Kyabram District Health Service – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Labour Hire Licensing Authority – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Latrobe Regional Health – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Act 2014 – Practitioner Remuneration Order 2026

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Legal Services Council and Commissioner for Uniform Legal Services Regulation – Report 2024–25
Library Board of Victoria – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt
Lower Murray Urban and Rural Water Corporation – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt
Mallee Catchment Management Authority – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt
Mallee Track Health and Community Service – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt
Mansfield District Hospital – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt
Maryborough District Health Service – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt
Melbourne and Olympic Parks Trust – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt
Melbourne Arts Precinct Corporation – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt
Melbourne Market Authority – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt
Melbourne Port Lessor Pty Ltd – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt
Melbourne Recital Centre – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt
Melbourne Water Corporation – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt
Mercy Hospitals Victoria Ltd – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt
Mildura Base Public Hospital – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt
Mine Land Rehabilitation Authority – Report 2024–25
Monash Health – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt
Moyston Health Service – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt
Museums Board of Victoria – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt
National Gallery of Victoria (NGV) – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt
National Heavy Vehicle Regulator – Report 2024–25
National Parks Act 1975 – Report 2024–25 on the working of the Act
National Parks Advisory Council – Report 2024–25
National Rail Safety Regulator, Office of the – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt
NCN Health – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt
North Central Catchment Management Authority – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt
North East Catchment Management Authority – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt
North East Link State Tolling Corporation – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt
North East Water – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt
Northeast Health Wangaratta – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt
Northern Health – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt
Ombudsman – Report 2024–25
Omeo District Hospital – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt
Oral Health Victoria – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt
Orbost Regional Health – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt
Parks Victoria – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt
Peninsula Health – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

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Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt
Phillip Island Nature Parks – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt
Police Registration and Services Board – Report 2024–25
Port of Hastings Corporation – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt
Portable Long Service Benefits Authority – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt
Portland District Health – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt
Ports Victoria – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt
Post Sentence Authority – Report 2024–25
Premier and Cabinet, Department of – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt
PrimeSafe – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt
Public Interest Monitor:
Report 2024–25
Report 2024–25 under s 62 of the *Human Source Management Act 2023*
Public Record Office Victoria – Report 2024–25
Queen Elizabeth Centre – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt
Remembrance Parks Central Victoria – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt
Respect Victoria – Report 2022–23, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt
Robinvale District Health Services – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt
Rochester and Elmore District Health Service – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt
Rolling Stock Holdings (Victoria) Pty Limited – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt
Rolling Stock (Victoria-VL) Pty Ltd – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt
Rolling Stock (VL-1) Pty Ltd – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt
Rolling Stock (VL-2) Pty Ltd – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt
Rolling Stock (VL-3) Pty Ltd – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt
Royal Botanic Gardens Board – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt
Royal Children’s Hospital – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt
Royal Melbourne Hospital – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt
Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt
Royal Women’s Hospital – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt
Rural Northwest Health – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt
Safe Transport Victoria – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt
SEC Energy Pty Ltd, SEC Infrastructure Pty Ltd and SEC Victoria Pty Ltd – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt
Seymour Health – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt
Shrine of Remembrance Trustees – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt
SmartSense Agtech Pty Ltd – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt
South East Water Corporation – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt
South Gippsland Hospital – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

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South Gippsland Region Water Corporation – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Southern Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

St Vincent’s Hospital (Melbourne) Limited – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

State Sport Centres Trust – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

State Trustees Ltd – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Suburban Rail Loop Authority – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Surveyor-General – Report 2024–25 on the administration of the *Survey Co-ordination Act 1958*.

Sustainability Victoria – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Swan Hill District Health – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Tallangatta Health Service – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Terang and Mortlake Health Service – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Timboon and District Healthcare Service – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Transport Accident Commission (TAC) – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Transport and Planning, Department of – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Treasury and Finance, Department of – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Treasury Corporation of Victoria – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Treaty Authority – Report 2024–25

Tweddle Child and Family Health Service – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

V/Line Corporation – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Victims of Crime Commissioner – Review of the operation of the *Victims’ Charter Act 2006* and its benefits for victims

Victims of Crime Financial Assistance Scheme – Report 2024–25

Victoria Police:

Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Report 2024–25 under s 139A of the *Confiscation Act 1997*

Report 2024–25 under s 133 of the *Criminal Organisations Control Act 2012*

Report 2024–25 under s 42BI of the *Evidence (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1958*

Report 2024–25 under s 30L of the *Surveillance Devices Act 1999*

Report 2024–25 under s 20R of the *Witness Protection Act 1991*

Victorian Academy of Teaching and Leadership – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Victorian Arts Centre Trust – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Victorian Building Authority – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) – Report 2024–25

Victorian Convention and Event Trust – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCCA) – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Victorian Electoral Commission – Report to Parliament on the 2025 Prahran District and the Werribee District by-elections

DOCUMENTS

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Victorian Environmental Assessment Council – Report 2024–25

Victorian Environmental Water Holder – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Victorian Funds Management Corporation – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Victorian Government Purchasing Board – Report 2024–25

Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth) – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Victorian Institute of Forensic Mental Health (Forensicare) – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Victorian Institute of Sport Trust – Report 2023–24 (two documents), together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Victorian Institute of Teaching – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Victorian Legal Services Board and the Victorian Legal Services Commissioner – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt – Ordered to be published

Victorian Managed Insurance Authority (VMIA) – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Victorian Marine and Coastal Council – Report 2024–25

Victorian Multicultural Commission – Report 2024–25

Victorian Plantations Corporation – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Victorian Public Sector Commission – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Victorian Racing Integrity Board – Report 2024–25

Victorian Rail Track (VicTrack) – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Victorian Small Business Commission – Report 2024–25 – Ordered to be published

Victorian WorkCover Authority (WorkSafe) – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

VITS LanguageLoop – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Wannon Region Water Corporation – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

West Gippsland Healthcare Group – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

West Wimmera Health Service – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Western District Health Service – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Western Health – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Westernport Region Water Corporation – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Wimmera Catchment Management Authority – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Workplace Incidents Consultative Committee – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Workplace Injury Commission – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Yarra Valley Water Corporation – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

COMMITTEES

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Yarrawonga Health – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Yea and District Memorial Hospital – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Youth Parole Board – Report 2024–25.

Committees

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee

Membership

The SPEAKER (09:37): I have received the resignations of Nick McGowan and Richard Welch from the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee, effective from 29 October 2025.

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services) (09:37): I move, by leave:

That Roma Britnell be a member of the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee.

Motion agreed to.

Motions

Motions by leave

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (09:38): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the Premier for failing to back the opposition’s call to ban face masks, to protect protesters and to take action against extremists who hijack our city.

This is yet another broken promise from the weak, soft-on-crime –

Leave refused.

Gabrielle DE VIETRI (Richmond) (09:38): I move, by leave:

That this house notes: that yesterday the Israeli military killed 104 Palestinians, including 46 children, in sustained overnight airstrikes in Gaza City, Khan Yunis and refugee camps in central Gaza, in blatant violation of the ceasefire; that an additional 253 people are wounded, including 78 children, and many more are still missing under the rubble; that last week the United Nations special rapporteur on Palestine presented a report to the UN General Assembly that named 63 states complicit in Israel’s genocide, including Australia; and that the Victorian Labor government must no longer sustain its complicity –

Leave refused.

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (09:39): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the Premier for not protecting retail workers after promising to do so 18 months ago.

Leave refused.

Brad Rowswell: On a point of order, Speaker, just a point of clarification. The member for Caulfield, who just sought to move a motion by leave, was faced by a bombardment from the government side of noes. The question was never asked by the Chair ‘Is leave granted?’ The noes came from the other side. You, Speaker, then determined that leave was not granted without having asked the question ‘Is leave granted?’

The SPEAKER: Member for Sandringham, if there are noes then leave is not granted.

Brad Rowswell: Without having asked the question?

The SPEAKER: I do not have to put the question.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

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Business of the house

Adjournment

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services) (09:40): I move:

That the house, at its rising, adjourns until 12 November 2025.

Motion agreed to.

Members statements

Frankston Mornington Peninsula Local Learning and Employment Network

Sam GROTH (Nepean) (09:41): I was delighted to attend the Frankston Mornington Peninsula Local Learning and Employment Network applied learning awards, alongside my colleague the member for Mornington Chris Crewther. More than 70 outstanding students were recognised for their achievements across applied learning programs, including students in my electorate from Advance College, Dromana College, Rosebud Secondary College, Padua College and Peninsula Specialist College. These awards celebrate the hard work of students, teachers and employers who are equipping young people with the skills and confidence to succeed in the workforce. Congratulations to all who received an award.

Peninsula Surfriders Club

Sam GROTH (Nepean) (09:41): Recently I met with the Peninsula Surfriders Club – with Paul Thompson and Sean McDevitt – and I want to thank the Peninsula Surfriders Club for all the work that they do in the community in regard to both water safety and protecting people down at Gunnamatta Beach. They do a high number of rescues. But this time I was talking to them about the infrastructure needs for their club. They need new toilets to suit both male and female participants, they need storage facilities and they need upgrades to their clubhouse. I will continue to help advocate for the work that the Peninsula Surfriders Club does within my community.

Retail crime

Sam GROTH (Nepean) (09:42): I recently had a tour of Woolworths down at Rye, and I want to thank the entire team down there for the welcome. There are three Woolworths stores, which employ 431 team members. Across the summer months the Rye store is actually the busiest Woolworths in all of Australia. They have had the number one sales, because of the increase in population, in the history of Woolworths Australia-wide. I also want to recognise the poor work that this government has done when it comes to retail crime.

Keilor Park Recreation Reserve

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Minister for Education, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC) (09:42): I rise to celebrate a fantastic win for the Keilor community: the official opening of the long-anticipated upgrade to the Keilor recreation reserve. This iconic ground has been at the heart of community life in Keilor for generations. Whether it is local footy finals, the start of the cricket season or weekend community activities, this reserve is buzzing all year round with energy. The upgraded pavilion represents the best of what can be achieved when local clubs, community members and all levels of government come together. It was a true team effort and one that will benefit the Keilor community for many years to come.

It was an honour to be there, in particular when Hayden Kelly, the president of the Keilor Park Sports Club, read out the five names of the latest inductees for life membership at the Keilor sports club. In the Parliament I want to put on record my thanks and deep appreciation to the five members as well: Chris Coughlan, David Cameron, Steve Thornton, Kevin O'Neill and Brad Bult. They have made outstanding contributions. The new Keilor recreation reserve stadium, with its fantastic, world's best

fireplace, will be there for many, many generations to come. It was an honour to be able to contribute, on behalf of our government, a \$700,000 investment that shows our ongoing commitment to the strength of community sport and what community sport means, particularly to communities like Keilor that have a rich history and have spirit in community. Well done to all involved. This is a real win, on and off the park.

Patient transport

Tim BULL (Gippsland East) (09:44): I want to raise a matter for the Minister for Health, who I know is here at the table. An East Gippsland man was flown to Melbourne by air for emergency heart treatment. After 11 days he was discharged. He had no way of getting home. He lives alone, and non-emergency transport could not be arranged. Cabrini is not supported by public transport, so a taxi was organised, and he was charged \$615. He had to pay on the spot. Luckily he had the money; many would not. After two Victorian patient transport assistance scheme claims, he received just \$120, leaving the bill at \$495 for the taxi. The weekly age pension is \$589. Minister, can you make provision for higher levels of reimbursement for patients in these situations?

Bushfire preparedness

Tim BULL (Gippsland East) (09:45): Fire season is here, and we are vulnerable again in East Gippsland, as is much of country Victoria. Less than a quarter of the fuel reduction burning recommended by the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission to keep us relatively safe has been done over recent years. Fuel loads have been allowed to explode. In addition, we have the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Change firefighting fleet off the road and the treatment of the CFA has thousands less volunteers in that organisation now. You are again being told in advance, and it cannot end any differently with this approach. The policies of this government have set us up for this. If you want to protect us, do what the royal commission recommended. Ignoring that is ignoring us.

Giulia Mammarella

Lily D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park – Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for the State Electricity Commission) (09:45): I rise to pay tribute to a remarkable woman, Giulia Mammarella – a loving family matriarch and dedicated community volunteer who passed away last week aged 94. Thirty-six years ago Julia founded the Italian seniors club Circolo Pensionati Italiani di Bundoora, many of whose members live in my electorate. She will be lovingly remembered as a kind and progressive Italian woman who leaves a strong legacy behind. RIP, Giulia Mammarella.

Mill Park electorate multicultural communities

Lily D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park – Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for the State Electricity Commission) (09:46): The joy of living in our rich, vibrant multicultural state is having the opportunity to learn about diverse cultures and take part in them.

I was honoured to attend the BAPS annual Diwali at their mandir in Mill Park on Sunday. This year's Diwali was celebrated with the theme of 'Unity: a celebration of harmony, compassion and togetherness'. The celebration observed by thousands of local families is a reminder of the triumph of light over darkness and the strength found when individuals and families come together. My warm congratulations to the BAPS Mill Park on their wonderful event.

Another community highlight was the Hellenic flag festival hosted by the local Greek church, the Transfiguration of Our Lord. The festival paid tribute to the 85th anniversary of Ohi Day, where Greek forces delivered a resounding no to the axis powers in World War II, and it marked the courage of the Greek people in their struggle for freedom. The festival was proudly celebrated with traditional Greek dance performances by several schools – Aetolian, St John's and Lalor North Primary School – the Panagia Soumela Whittlesea and the Aristotelion dance academy, honouring their Hellenic heritage and the spirit of unity.

Glyn Lewis

Rachel WESTAWAY (Prahran) (09:47): I would like to take a moment to recognise and celebrate a remarkable constituent from my electorate, Mr Glyn Lewis of Bangs Street in Prahran. After retiring Glyn discovered a new passion that would transform his life. At the age of 62, while visiting a local kindergarten to read children's books, he was inspired by the delight on the children's faces as they listened to stories. That moment sparked his love for writing and a desire to contribute to early learning in a fun and meaningful way. Glyn began by writing children's books, including *Mr Barky B Loves His Lemon Tree* and *Ellie the Elephant*. His creativity soon expanded beyond children's stories and he began writing suspense and psychological thrillers for adults. His work now includes *The Bride of Fire*, *The Dead See Everything* and his up-and-coming novel *Dark Misery*. He is now selling his books on Amazon. To date Glyn has written and self-published an extraordinary 30 novels – an incredible achievement that demonstrates determination, creativity and lifelong learning. Although self-publishing has made it difficult for him to have his books stocked in the local Stonnington library, Glyn's dedication to his craft and to sharing stories with others is truly inspiring. Glyn is an absolutely shining example of how passion and perseverance can lead to extraordinary achievements at any stage in life.

Arthur Toussaint

Danny PEARSON (Essendon – Minister for Economic Growth and Jobs, Minister for Finance) (09:48): I rise to acknowledge the recent passing of Arthur Toussaint, who gave his professional life to public education in Victoria as a teacher, a leader, a principal and a mentor. Arthur did a teaching round at Scotch College but preferred to make his educational mark in public education. Starting at Sunshine Technical School, it was not very long before his enthusiasm, love of learning and leadership skills saw him rise to be the vice-principal at Werribee Technical School. During this time he was instrumental in establishing the western region vice-principals association, and he was appointed as the principal of Werribee Technical School from 1986 to 2003. Arthur initiated a shared campus program between Werribee High School and Werribee Tech in order to offer the HSC for the tech school but also a wider range of courses, and he initiated a free bus service to facilitate student transition between the shared campuses.

Arthur seized the opportunity to work with the chair of the western region principals association, and to that end he represented the western region on the central committee of the Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals, promoting the cause of the VASSP as a united and inclusive association of principals and assistant principals, as it is today. Arthur passionately mentored countless teachers and leaders in the mid-1990s. He invested his time, his knowledge and his interest in those around him. He was interested in their stories, and he had an instinct for recognising leadership potential.

In 1997 Arthur was recognised as an associate fellow of the Australian principals' centre. He received a PSM in 2004 and was awarded life membership of the Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals in 2005. To those who knew Arthur professionally, he was a mentor and fiercely loyal. He revelled in the success of others. He was honest and trustworthy, but above all else, he was a friend, a mentor for life and a man who dedicated his professional life to the betterment of public education.

Caulfield electorate office interns and volunteers

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (09:50): We love our interns and our volunteers in our office in Caulfield. I want to particularly give a shout-out to Dani, Jennifer, Josh, Rita, Sofia and Venkata, who did a wonderful job with me. They have been a real support and will have big futures ahead. Thank you to all of them.

CreativeCubes.Co

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (09:50): CreativeCubes, which is a place that brings startups together, is a fantastic facility in Balaclava. They had a pitch night in which they awarded a number of people the opportunity to come. Six businesses got 12 months free rent in a shark tank style activity.

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A big shout-out to Tobi and Simone Skovron, who founded this business. CreativeCubes spaces are everywhere around Victoria and I believe in other states as well. I suggest you get on board.

Hatzolah

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (09:51): Hatzolah celebrated their 30th anniversary. A big thank you to Josh Wonder and the team for putting on a terrific event on Monday night and for the work that they do in saving lives. I know the Minister for Health was also there and a number of others as well. Thank you to Yumi Friedman, who is a Caulfield Volunteer Award winner. He does a wonderful job.

Community safety

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (09:51): I have got to say it was very disappointing yesterday that the Premier did not back our plan to ban face masks at protests. This was a real opportunity to take those extremists off the streets and to do it. This government promises a whole lot of things and fails. It is time for the Premier to wake up and do her job.

St Vincent's Hospital, Melbourne

Natalie HUTCHINS (Sydenham – Minister for Government Services, Minister for Treaty and First Peoples, Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, Minister for Women) (09:51): We have seen reports this week that have attacked the good work of the staff at St Vincent's Hospital. St Vincent's have done an amazing, remarkable job to close the gap in category 3 wait times. Before the policy was introduced in April 2024, the average time to be seen at St Vincent's ED for category 3 patients was significantly longer for First Nations patients – on average 109 minutes longer than other patients. The difference between First Nations patients and other patients is now just 4 minutes. This is thanks to the incredible staff at St Vincent's. Emergency departments will always prioritise the sickest patients to ensure Victorians get the care they need. I want to thank the dedicated staff and compassionate workers at St Vincent's Hospital.

Attempts to link this work with treaty legislation are both disingenuous and deliberately divisive. The only link between the bill before us today and the policy that is in this bill is the requirement for consultation with Gellung Warl on appointments to health boards. The purpose of this is to strengthen Aboriginal leadership on government boards. If those opposite oppose strengthening Aboriginal leadership in health care, then they should say so. We will not apologise for putting our support behind the initiatives that help First Peoples.

SnowFest Gippsland

Wayne FARNHAM (Narracan) (09:53): I would like to rise today to congratulate the organisers of SnowFest in Warragul for their recognition recently at the Australian Event Awards for the best regional event in Victoria for 2024. It is a fantastic achievement for the event. The event has been running for quite a few years now. This local community event draws 20,000 people; they bring the snow from the mountains to the town so kids can play in the snow. I would like to say to all the organisers, congratulations on a fantastic achievement for winning that award.

Warragul and Drouin Gazette

Wayne FARNHAM (Narracan) (09:53): I would also like to recognise my local newspaper, the *Warragul and Drouin Gazette*, who have been very, very big supporters of our local community for a very long time. In particular, I would like to give a shout-out to Bonnie Collings, who was recently awarded cadet of the year by the country press association – a fantastic achievement for a wonderful young lady. I would also like to acknowledge the newspaper's achievements for best digital presence – they got highly commended; best editorial campaign – they got commended for that; and also best commercial feature, which was highly commended. I would also like to give them a big thank you for driving the homelessness forum we had in my electorate just recently. Everyone at the *Warragul and Drouin Gazette* got behind it, and it was a very good way of raising awareness.

Roz Blades Community Spirit Award

Gabrielle WILLIAMS (Dandenong – Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for Public and Active Transport) (09:55): I rise today to commend two dedicated, civic-minded young women from Dandenong High School who are the 2024 and 2025 recipients of the Roz Blades Community Spirit Award. The Roz Blades Community Spirit Award was established last year to recognise a community-minded year 11 student who contributes to their community, demonstrates kindness and empathy towards others and sets a positive example for their peers through their actions.

Roz Blades is a former City of Greater Dandenong councillor, several-time mayor and the 2021 City of Greater Dandenong Living Treasure. Beyond that she is well known and well loved as a community advocate and volunteer who has dedicated her life to serving the community since migrating to Australia in the 1970s. The 2024 and 2025 recipients of the award are Ruba Tivendale and Elaha Rezai. Ruba is a passionate student leader who has served as SRC president this year after being voted in by her peers. She has been a dedicated contributor to the school community for a very long time and has worked collaboratively with her peers for the betterment of student conditions and the school community broadly. Elaha Rezai is the 2025 recipient. She is a proud young community leader both at her school but also outside of it. She takes on leadership responsibilities through the SRC at the school, but outside of school she volunteers for important organisations like SisterWorks and Headspace. Congratulations to these two brilliant young women.

Cobram health services

Tim McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (09:56): I again stand here in this place to seek the support of the Victorian government and the Minister for Health, who is in the chamber, for dialysis in Cobram. For six years I have been raising this critical infrastructure request, and for six years we have been ignored. The Victorian government must govern for all Victorians. I know Cobram is on the Murray River and we are this close to New South Wales, but we are still in Victoria. Cobram dialysis patients travel to Yarrawonga, Shepparton and beyond. Compounding this problem, there is very little suitable transport, either free or subsidised, to support those people to get dialysis. The Royal Flying Doctor Service is a tremendous service in Cobram, but it lacks the capacity to go to Yarrawonga, because it goes mostly to Shepparton–Numurkah. One man last week told me he is now paying \$800 a fortnight. This guy is on a pension. He does three trips a week to Yarrawonga to get dialysis. He is now paying \$800 a fortnight on a pension, and I challenge anybody in this house to spend \$800 a fortnight on taxi fares and then have a reasonable standard of living on what is left. As I say, the government needs to realise there is more to Victoria than just Melbourne, and we need to support the residents of Cobram, because dialysis is a major issue and travel arrangements are at the heart of that. I certainly encourage the Minister for Health and the Victorian government to support Cobram in this quest.

Williamstown electorate

Melissa HORNE (Williamstown – Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Roads and Road Safety, Minister for Health Infrastructure) (09:58): It is always busy across the Williamstown electorate, but there are a few things that have been true stand-outs over the past couple of weeks.

It was an honour to present this year's vocational award certificates to teachers and support staff, nominated by the leadership teams at Hobsons Bay secondary schools, at the Altona Rotary Club's Excellence in Education Awards night. Congratulations to everyone who reached this massive milestone. Our teachers deserve recognition for the work they do to better the lives of their students and improve the future of our community. Thank you to the Altona City Rotary Club for hosting a wonderful evening.

Another thing is that diversity and accessibility are important parts of our community, and the Liston Tennis Club in Williamstown is doing its best to provide this for local players. When visiting the club recently I checked out a competition for people with vision impairment, and I was able to meet Tess and Brendan. Tess has already represented Australia in international competitions, and she and

Brendan are about to head off overseas to again represent Australia in international competition. Good luck to them both.

Finally, on Monday night I popped into the Hobsons Bay SES unit, who have been incredibly busy, to celebrate the arrival of their new volunteer emergency services equipment program truck. The new truck came just in time, helping them respond to over 30 requests over the last couple of weeks, so well done to them all.

Cyclist safety

Ellen SANDELL (Melbourne) (09:59): Last month a 19-year-old was struck and killed by a truck on Macaulay Road in Kensington. He was simply riding his bike to uni on his birthday. This is devastating for his family, friends and our whole community, but unfortunately this was not just an isolated tragedy. This young man was the eighth cyclist to die on Victorian roads so far this year. Cyclist deaths on our roads are often preventable if safer bike lanes are in place. Everyone deserves to be safe on our roads, whether they choose to ride a bike, drive a car or walk. But as it stands, our roads are failing the most vulnerable road users.

Safer bike lanes had been slated for Macaulay Road for years. They were consulted on and budgeted for by the City of Melbourne council years ago but still have not been built and, as I understand it, still have not been approved by state Labor's transport department, who needs to sign off on them. State government and council keep passing the buck to each other about who is responsible here, but the simple fact is too many cyclists are dying, and the community just wants governments to get on with building safer infrastructure. It is not just on Macaulay Road – across the inner city, councils are often left waiting months or years for the Department of Transport and Planning to approve safer bike lanes that could save lives. This is the case right now on Queensberry Street, for example, in my electorate. We know what needs to be done. It is time to stop the delays, stop the blame-shifting and start building safe, separated bike lanes so that every person, whatever their mode of travel, can simply get home safely.

Horseracing

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Minister for Police, Minister for Community Safety, Minister for Victims, Minister for Racing) (10:01): It is the \$10 million Melbourne Cup running next Tuesday, the cup carnival, which last year drew more than \$502 million in gross economic impact and employed 14,000 people in the carnival week alone across industries from retail to accommodation and hospitality. It goes to the broader story around Victoria, where \$4.7 billion is added to the economy every year thanks to racing – big clubs and small clubs. I was at the Manangatang Cup a few weeks back with 2500 people in a town of only a few hundred. Again, whether it is small racing or big racing, the government has your back. There are 34,000 full-time equivalent jobs in racing across the state, and we know that it is a big driver of jobs in regional Victoria. Speaker, you would be well aware that the Bendigo Cup was yesterday – a very successful event, with a huge crowd there to see Harry Coffey ride home the winner in the Bendigo Cup.

Can I say also we have contributed some \$5 million at Moonee Valley. I was there for the Cox Plate with the honourable member for Bundoora and many others to see the transformation in the housing complex there at the valley but also to see the last Cox Plate and the \$5 million contribution from our government around the housing changes that we are going to see with the significant investment in the Moonee Valley redevelopment. Back at headquarters, there is a \$1.8 million contribution from the Major Racing Events Fund to see DJ Fisher take to the stage on Champions Stakes Day.

Government performance

Nicole WERNER (Warrandyte) (10:02): Here on this side of the house we have a vision for Victoria where Victorians can feel safe in their homes and on their streets, where we can have pride in our great state because Melbourne is the best city in Australia. As elected representatives, our job is to fight for Victorians and for our state, for the sake of every generation to come. This is what we in

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the Liberal Party are committed to – to be on the side of the battler, the small business owner, the tradie on the tools, the mum and dad from the suburbs, the first home buyer chasing their dream. Victorians deserve a government that cares about them. Victorians deserve a government that does not squander and waste their money on \$13 million machete bin schemes and vanity projects. Victorians deserve a government that does not get stuck into their personal lives, telling them how they should think and what they should believe. Victorians deserve to choose for themselves. Under a Victoria we lead, Victorians can be ambitious, and they will get a fair go so they can get ahead. The Liberals and Nationals believe in Victoria. We believe in Victorians. We have a vision and a plan for our state. In November next year Victorians have a choice to make. It is time for a fresh start for Victoria.

Circolo Pensionati Italiani di Bundoora

Colin BROOKS (Bundoora – Minister for Industry and Advanced Manufacturing, Minister for Creative Industries) (10:03): I rise today to pay tribute to a remarkable community institution, the Bundoora Italian seniors club, and particularly its longstanding president Antionetta Filippi. I would like to also acknowledge vice-president Concetta Brugliera, secretary Luisa Mikheal, treasurer Frank Barbagallo and committee members Nino Del Rosso, Franca Cirilli, Giovanna Romano, Sebastiano Astuto and everybody else for the hard work that they put in.

Founded in 1989 by Antionetta's uncle Georgio, the club was born from a simple but powerful idea that people, particularly our older generation, should have a space to come together to celebrate culture, tradition and friendship. Now, 35 years on, that vision is still alive and well. The club has been the cornerstone of the Italian community in Bundoora and beyond. At its peak it boasted over 300 members, and today it continues strong with over 160 participants. Since 2005 Antionetta has led the club with heart, energy and a deep commitment. Under her leadership members meet twice a week to play bocce, to play cards, to dance and to play bingo.

They also host special lunches, which I have been lucky enough to attend with the member for Mill Park. And let me tell you, the food is just as warm and welcoming as the company. Antionetta once told me 'It's in our blood to help people,' and that spirit of generosity, care and community is exactly what makes the Bundoora Italian seniors club so special. I thank Antionetta and all of the other committee members and volunteers for their work in keeping the club vibrant and alive.

Diwali

Natalie SULEYMAN (St Albans – Minister for Veterans, Minister for Small Business and Employment, Minister for Youth) (10:05): October has been the month of celebration in the electorate of St Albans. It was an absolute delight to attend many Diwali celebrations, including the Premier's state reception, the Uttar Pradesh Association of Australia, Mata Chintapurni arts and education centre in St Albans and the Murugan Temple in Sunshine North. I am very proud to represent such a diverse and multicultural community in St Albans.

St Albans Market

Natalie SULEYMAN (St Albans – Minister for Veterans, Minister for Small Business and Employment, Minister for Youth) (10:05): On another matter, I would like to congratulate – and many locals of St Albans know him – Nick from St Albans Market, who recently was awarded the Best Business in St Albans award. A true local institution, Nick and his family have been in St Albans for many decades, since 1973, feeding locals, and it has become a real icon of the west – a market that is diverse and of course brings in so many other stalls. I want to wish Nick and his family the very best, and we could not have a St Albans without Big Sam's market.

Western Specialist Centre

Natalie SULEYMAN (St Albans – Minister for Veterans, Minister for Small Business and Employment, Minister for Youth) (10:06): On another matter, I would like to congratulate Dr Raj and

Dr Preeti Khillan of the Western Specialist Centre. They were awarded the family business award from the Family Business Association for being the best family business for this year.

Eltham Youth Advisory Council

Vicki WARD (Eltham – Minister for Emergency Services, Minister for Natural Disaster Recovery, Minister for Equality) (10:07): Young people give energy, creativity and joy to communities, and my 2025 Youth Advisory Council are a perfect example of this. I thank them for working so hard on an outstanding project to raise community awareness about environmental sustainability – their focus of work this year. This included collecting litter from local waterways, parks and schools to highlight the damaging effects of waste in our communities. These fantastic young people transformed the waste they collected into thought-provoking artworks inspired by what they found in the litter. Last Saturday we exhibited in the Eltham town square, and it was fantastic to have the Minister for Environment visit to hear from them about their great work. I thank Adele from Catholic Ladies College, Brayden and Tori from Montmorency Secondary College, Megan and Elliot from St Helena Secondary, Max from Eltham High School and Josh from La Trobe Uni for their dedication, insights and creativity. Our community is proud of their passion and leadership.

Victorian Seniors Festival

Vicki WARD (Eltham – Minister for Emergency Services, Minister for Natural Disaster Recovery, Minister for Equality) (10:07): October is when we recognise and celebrate our incredible local seniors, who do so much to support our communities. I love hosting wonderful morning celebrations for seniors each year during seniors month to thank them for all they do and to recognise how integral they are to the success of our community.

Imagine Re-Evolution

Vicki WARD (Eltham – Minister for Emergency Services, Minister for Natural Disaster Recovery, Minister for Equality) (10:08): With ‘Connect, create and celebrate’ as this year’s theme, we heard from Jayne Clarke, founder and CEO of Imagine Re-Evolution, a local volunteer-based organisation supporting children and young people. Jayne was the recipient of this year’s Nillumbik environment and sustainability award for the important work Imagine Re-Evolution are undertaking to transform and give new life to items destined for landfill. Their work connects young people and old – their oldest volunteers are in their 80s – and skills and wisdom across so many age groups. These young people are inspired to learn and create while building employment and education skills. This work is so important, combining community, creativity and care.

Team Mattitude

Pauline RICHARDS (Cranbourne) (10:08): I would like to take the opportunity to congratulate Team Mattitude on their extraordinary achievements at the local Relay For Life last weekend. Phillip and Sharon Start lost their son Matthew Start, a Cranbourne resident, to metastatic bowel cancer in October 2016 at the age of 35 years. Matthew is greatly missed by his wife, family and many friends, who aim to live their lives with Mattitude.

Val and Vince Motta

Pauline RICHARDS (Cranbourne) (10:08): In other news, congratulations to Val and Vince Motta on their wonderful anniversary.

Yuven Mendis

Pauline RICHARDS (Cranbourne) (10:09): I would like to take the opportunity to commend and celebrate the achievements of the remarkable young resident of Cranbourne Yuven Mendis, who is only eight years old but already doing so much to ensure that our natural environment remains pristine and able to be enjoyed by all. Yuven is only eight years old and attends St Agatha’s Primary School in Cranbourne. With warmer weather returning, he and his mother have begun taking long walks

around beautiful parks, and on one of these he noticed rubbish and litter scattered all over the natural area. Armed with a simple box, gloves and a rubbish picking up stick, he began collecting the litter out of concern for the local birds and small animals that might ingest and be harmed by it. ‘It is not fair,’ he told his mum, ‘the animals don’t deserve this.’ That empathy and spirit of giving back is classic Cranbourne, and the way in which Yuven is quietly cleaning up his neighbourhood and protecting local wildlife sets a wonderful example to us all. ‘We all share the world,’ he said. I would like to commend Yuven for his incredible work, which showcases the best that Cranbourne has to offer, and take a moment to thank his mother Hasanthi.

Bass Coast Malayalee Association

Jordan CRUGNALE (Bass) (10:10): A joyous welcome to the newly formed Bass Coast Malayalee Association. It was an honour to attend this auspicious occasion, beautifully timed with the harvest festival Onam, cherishing harmony, prosperity and togetherness. The children, affectionately called little stars, lit up the stage and our hearts with their performances and storytelling. Their energy was a pure delight. A heartfelt thank you to everyone who made this day so special and to president Joseph George, committee members Deepa Ipe, Rakesh Nair, Lisa Bibin, Ajeesh Sebastian and the Onam organising team of Vineetha, Shiny, Shakthi and Bibin. Our celebration was imbued with colour, tradition, culture and laughter, an exquisite feast and community spirit.

Wonthaggi Miners’ Dispensary

Jordan CRUGNALE (Bass) (10:10): When you bring the Minister for Health to town, what do you highlight as an exemplar? The Wonthaggi Miners’ Dispensary and their extraordinary team of course, one of the oldest not-for-profit pharmacies founded by coalminers in 1922, backed by six unions. The lack of affordable and adequate supplies of medications was the catalyst. Contributing part of their wages, they made essential health care accessible for their families. It was built on solidarity and care. We say they sparked what became the PBS. With over 3000 members today, the spirit of the cooperative still shines. With an abundance of pride, GM Sally Cairnduff and chair Alan Foon recounted this rich history, pointing out the photos and connections adorning the walls as to all their healthcare offerings. Thank you for your time, service and care.

Bills

Restricting Non-disclosure Agreements (Sexual Harassment at Work) Bill 2025

Statement of compatibility

Danny PEARSON (Essendon – Minister for Economic Growth and Jobs, Minister for Finance) (10:12): In accordance with the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006, I table a statement of compatibility in relation to the Restricting Non-disclosure Agreements (Sexual Harassment at Work) Bill 2025:

In accordance with section 28 of the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* (the **Charter**), I make this statement of compatibility with respect to the Restricting Non-disclosure Agreements (Sexual Harassment at Work) Bill 2025 (the **Bill**).

In my opinion, the Bill, as introduced to the Legislative Assembly, is compatible with the human rights protected by the Charter. I have this opinion for the reasons outlined in this statement.

Overview of the Bill

The purpose of the Bill is to promote the health, safety and welfare of persons at work by restricting:

- the circumstances in which non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) relating to workplace sexual harassment can be entered into;
- the terms that may be included in NDAs relating to workplace sexual harassment; and
- the enforceability of NDAs relating to workplace sexual harassment.

The Bill implements recommendation 10 of the report of the Victorian Ministerial Taskforce on Workplace Sexual Harassment, which recommended that the Victorian Government introduce legislative amendments to restrict the use of NDAs in relation to workplace sexual harassment cases.

The objects of the Bill are to:

- reduce the incidence of NDAs being used to conceal workplace sexual harassment;
- protect and empower workers who are subjected to workplace sexual harassment (referred to in the Bill as complainants), recognising their vulnerability; and
- address power imbalances between complainants and employers and other persons in the negotiation of NDAs.

Human rights issues

The human rights protected by the Charter that are relevant to the Bill are:

- the right to equality before the law (section 8(2) and (3) of the Charter);
- the right to privacy and reputation (section 13);
- the right to freedom of expression (section 15);
- the right to protection of children (section 17(2));
- property rights (section 20); and
- the fair hearing right (section 24(1)).

The Bill seeks to balance these rights, to the extent that they are held by both complainants and respondents. Each right is outlined below, before I outline why I consider that two key aspects of the Bill – relating to the information that can be disclosed in NDAs and their enforceability – are compatible with these human rights.

Information that can be disclosed in NDAs

Clauses 11 and 12 of the Bill provide that a workplace NDA entered into between a complainant (ie, a worker subject to, or allegedly subject to, sexual harassment) and the complainant's employer (or the respondent) must not prevent a complainant from disclosing *material information* about workplace sexual harassment (subject to the exceptions in each clause, as I discuss below) to a person or body specified in Schedule 1. Material information is defined in clause 3 to mean the following:

- the identity of the respondent (ie, the person who committed, or allegedly committed, the sexual harassment);
- any details about the conduct constituting the commission, or alleged commission, of the sexual harassment.

The Bill also carves out certain information from the requirement that a workplace NDA permit a complainant to disclose material information to a person or body specified in Table 1 in Schedule 1, providing that the requirement does not apply to material information that is *protected information*: clause 11. Specified bodies or persons in Table 1 in Schedule 1 include Victoria Police, health professionals, legal practitioners, government authorities and investigation bodies, and a friend or family member for the purposes of obtaining personal support (provided that they agree to keep any material information disclosed to them confidential).

Protected information is defined in clause 3 as:

- the amount of any financial compensation payable in respect of the sexual harassment; and
- the identity of any respondent who is under 18 years of age at the time of the commission, or alleged commission, of the sexual harassment.

The Bill also provides that the requirement that a workplace NDA permit a complainant to disclose material information to a person or body specified in Table 2 in Schedule 1 (ie, certain government bodies, including human rights commissions) does not apply to material information that is protected information, but also to the identity of the respondent (or the complainant's employer): clause 12. Finally, clause 13 provides that a workplace NDA must not prevent a complainant from disclosing the amount of any financial compensation payable in respect of the workplace sexual harassment to the financial persons and bodies specified in Table 3 in Schedule 1.

By requiring that a workplace NDA permit a complainant to disclose the identity of the respondent or any details about the conduct constituting the sexual harassment (subject to exceptions, including in relation to protected information), clauses 11 and 12 of the Bill engage the rights to equality before the law (section 8(2) and (3) of the Charter), privacy and reputation (section 13), freedom of expression (section 15) and protection of children (section 17(2)).

Equality before the law

Section 8(2) of the Charter provides that every person has the right to enjoy their human rights without discrimination. Section 8(3) provides that every person is equal before the law and is entitled to its equal

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protection without discrimination. Section 8(3) also provides that every person has the right to equal and effective protection against discrimination.

Under section 8(2) and (3) of the Charter, discrimination relevantly includes indirect discrimination, which occurs if a person imposes an unreasonable requirement, condition or practice that has, or is likely to have, the effect of disadvantaging persons with a protected attribute including, relevantly, sex.

I consider that workplace sexual harassment is a form of discrimination on the ground of sex as sexual harassment is recognised as disproportionately affecting women and girls. NDAs, which often include keeping confidential the existence of the complaint and the alleged harassment, are an accepted practice in settling workplace sexual harassment complaints out of court. This practice creates a culture of secrecy and a disincentive for employers to engage in measures to prevent workplace sexual harassment.

By restricting the circumstances in which NDAs relating to workplace sexual harassment can be entered into, the terms that may be included and their enforceability, the Bill operates as a safeguard against practices that may have a discriminatory effect on women and girls, and promotes their right (as well as the right of other complainants) to equality before the law under section 8(2) and (3) of the Charter.

Privacy and reputation of respondents

Section 13(a) of the Charter prohibits unlawful or arbitrary interferences with a person's privacy. The right to privacy has been interpreted broadly by the courts to include protection of a person's physical and psychological integrity, their individual and social identity and their autonomy and inherent dignity. Arbitrary interferences are those that are capricious, unpredictable or unjust, as well as unreasonable because they are not proportionate to a legitimate aim sought. An interference with privacy can still be arbitrary even though it is lawful.

Section 13(b) of the Charter prohibits unlawful attacks on a person's reputation.

By requiring that a respondent's identity be disclosable under a workplace NDA, together with personal details that may be relevant to them (ie, material information), that respondent's privacy and reputation will be interfered with.

In respect of section 13(a) of the Charter, I consider that any interference with a respondent's privacy would be in accordance with law and proportionate to the legitimate aim of protecting and empowering workers who are subjected to workplace sexual harassment, and reducing the incidence of NDAs being used to conceal workplace sexual harassment. Further, the scope of material information is limited to a person's identity and details connected to the relevant conduct, which in effect is information already known to the complainant, which, if not for an NDA, the complainant would otherwise be entitled to disclose to others. In other words, the requirement does not extend to making disclosable other personal information which may be private (such as addresses).

Finally, permitted disclosures under Division 2 of Part 3 of the Bill must be made to a person or body specified in Schedule 1. As described above, this list of bodies includes enforcement, oversight and investigative bodies, health and legal professionals, and friends and family providing personal support and making an undertaking of confidentiality. I consider it reasonable and justified to permit material information in relation to the relevant sexual harassment to be disclosed to these people and bodies specified in Schedule 1. This is because the class of people and entities have been carefully confined to the purpose of ensuring that complainants are not prohibited from reporting the sexual harassment to relevant authorities, and are able to access adequate support. Further, some people and bodies specified in this clause would be public authorities under the Charter.

Accordingly, under section 38, they would be obliged to act compatibly with a respondent's right to privacy in relation to information that they receive by operation of the Bill.

In respect of section 13(b) of the Charter, the disclosure of a respondent's identity would not constitute an unlawful attack on that person's reputation. This is because clause 11 of the Bill provides a lawful basis for the disclosure of a respondent's identity, as part of material information.

Any interference with a respondent's rights under section 13 of the Charter is also justified because it promotes a complainant's rights under section 13(a), as explained in the section below.

Privacy and freedom of expression of complainants

In addition to privacy rights discussed above, section 15(2) of the Charter provides that every person has the right to freedom of expression, which includes the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds.

In respect of section 13(a) and complainants, regulating the entry into a workplace NDA promotes a complainant's right to protection from unjustified interference with their psychological integrity, including personal security and mental stability, including in their workplace. I understand that complainants can find

the process of negotiating NDAs traumatic and distressing, and that they can experience negative mental health impacts and career setbacks as a result of signing them. The Bill also allows a complainant's privacy and anonymity to be protected by an NDA, when it is the complainant's choice, enhancing the victim-centrality of the response and compatibility with section 13(a) of the Charter.

In respect of section 15 of the Charter, the requirement to disclose certain information promotes a complainant's freedom to impart information, including material information as defined in the Bill. The exclusion in relation to protected information limits the right by preventing disclosure of a respondent's identity if the respondent is under 18 years of age at the time of the commission (or alleged) commission of the sexual harassment and, pursuant to clause 12, the identity of a respondent to certain government bodies. This is consistent with the lawful restriction on the right to freedom of expression in section 15(3) of the Charter, being that the right may be subject to lawful restrictions reasonably necessary to respect the rights and reputation of other people, including children.

Protection of children

Section 17(2) of the Charter provides that every child has the right, without discrimination, to such protection as is in the child's best interests and is needed by the child by reason of being a child.

The exclusion from a workplace NDA of the identity of any respondent who was a child at the time of the commission (or alleged) commission of the sexual harassment promotes the right in section 17(2) of the Charter to such protection as is in the child's best interests and needed by the child. I consider that the policy balance of protection of the complainant versus protection of a child, who is the alleged perpetrator, falls in favour of the child. I further consider that the protection of a child's identity would be in the child's best interests. The protection of a minor's identity recognises a child's cognitive and emotional immaturity and increased vulnerability, as compared to adults.

Enforceability of NDAs and the rights to fair hearing and property

Section 24(1) of the Charter provides that a person charged with a criminal offence or a party to a civil proceeding has the right to have the charge or proceeding decided by a competent, independent and impartial court or tribunal after a fair and public hearing. Part of the right to a fair hearing, protected in section 24(1), is the common law right to unimpeded access to the courts.

Additionally, section 20 of the Charter provides that a person must not be deprived of their property other than in accordance with law. While the Victorian courts have not determined whether the right to bring a claim against the State constitutes 'property' for the purposes of section 20 of the Charter, the Supreme Court has indicated that the term should be 'interpreted liberally and beneficially to encompass economic interests'. This could include contractual rights and accrued causes of action. Section 20 requires that powers which authorise the deprivation of property are conferred by legislation or common law, are confined and structured rather than unclear, are accessible to the public, and are formulated precisely.

Clauses 14 and 15 of the Bill provide that a workplace NDA is not enforceable against a complainant:

- to the extent that a workplace NDA has the purpose or, if enforced, would have the effect of preventing the complainant from disclosing material (but not protected) information, or if the preconditions to entering into a workplace NDA listed in clause 8 of the Bill have not been met: clause 14; and
- to the extent that a workplace NDA, if enforced, would otherwise have the effect of preventing the complainant from making a permitted disclosure: clause 15.

As the Bill restricts a respondent's right to enforce a workplace NDA against a complainant in the above circumstances, this could have the effect of altering or extinguishing an accrued cause of action for breach of contract. Such an outcome could constitute a limit on access to the courts (under section 24(1) of the Charter) as well as potentially deprive a respondent of a property right (under section 20).

In relation to any limit on access to a court, I consider it would be reasonably justified and necessary to address the power imbalances between workers and employers and other persons in negotiations to enter into NDAs relating to workplace sexual harassment. The Bill provides for protections and preconditions for parties to enter into workplace NDAs, providing procedural fairness to those parties. The Bill also includes protections to mitigate against any limitation to section 24(1): clause 17 provides that a person who receives a breach notice from a complainant, stating that any preconditions to entering into a workplace NDA have not been met, may apply to the Industrial Division of the Magistrates' Court for an order that the preconditions were met. Finally, the effect of this provision is limited to these particular matters, and does not affect the broader enforceability of such agreements.

In relation to any deprivation of property, the Bill clearly sets out the circumstances in which an NDA is unenforceable, and is not arbitrary, for the reasons outlined above.

Hon. Danny Pearson
Minister for Finance

Second reading

Danny PEARSON (Essendon – Minister for Economic Growth and Jobs, Minister for Finance) (10:12): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I ask that my second-reading speech be incorporated into *Hansard*.

Incorporated speech as follows:

Non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) were meant to protect trade secrets. These days they have become an entrenched practice in settling workplace sexual harassment complaints.

These victims – overwhelmingly women – are being asked to sign NDAs, as part of the settlement of their complaint. What is actually being bought is their silence – compelling victim-survivors to stay silent, even to their family and friends. Sometimes, even their doctor or psychologist.

This culture of secrecy hides serial offending and prioritises employer reputations over prevention of workplace sexual harassment and victim recovery.

That is why I am introducing a Bill to restrict the use of NDAs in workplace sexual harassment cases. The Bill does not place a blanket ban on NDAs, recognising that in some instances these can be the preference of a complainant; rather the Bill places restrictions on the circumstances in which workplace NDAs can be entered into.

The Bill will acquit recommendation 10 of the report of the Victorian Ministerial Taskforce on Workplace Sexual Harassment and contribute to Government action to improve prevention of workplace sexual harassment and assist in keeping Victorian workers and workplaces safe.

Background

In 2021, the Victorian Government established the Victorian Ministerial Taskforce on Workplace Sexual Harassment to develop reforms that will better prevent and respond to sexual harassment in workplaces. In July 2022, the Victorian Government published its response to the Taskforce's report, accepting in-part, in full or in principle 21 of the 26 recommendations. The Victorian Government provided in principle support for recommendation 10 – to introduce legislative amendments to restrict the use of NDAs in relation to workplace sexual harassment cases. The Taskforce noted that NDAs are often misused to silence victims, protect employer reputations, and avoid full liability. The Taskforce also noted that NDAs can be used to hide serial offending and offenders. The Australian Human Rights Commission has also recommended legislating to restrict the use of non-disclosure agreements in workplace sexual harassment cases.

NDAs have become an accepted practice in settling workplace sexual harassment complaints out of court. Confidentiality and non-disparagement terms are considered standard terms of settlement agreements. In such cases, NDAs are used to keep the details of the settlement arrangement confidential, and importantly often include keeping the existence of the complaint and the alleged harassment confidential. This means perpetrators often face no consequences and may continue their behaviour, a trend which is exacerbated by the fact that the public and government are unable to understand the extent of the problem. The use of NDAs also creates a disincentive for employers to engage in measures to prevent workplace sexual harassment.

NDAs are largely unregulated in Australia, either in workplace sexual harassment or more generally. Best practice for the use of NDAs in workplace sexual harassment matters is currently outlined in guidance materials.

Internationally, several jurisdictions have moved to regulate the use of NDAs. Examples of leading approaches include those enacted in Ireland and Canada's Prince Edward Island. These jurisdictions have regulated the use of NDAs by creating a model centred on complainant choice. This effectively means that an employer and a worker cannot enter an NDA unless it is requested by the worker. A number of American states have also legislated to regulate NDAs, with approaches ranging from complete bans to a range of limitations regulating aspects of NDA use. The United Kingdom has recently introduced legislative amendments to ban NDAs related to certain forms of work-related harassment and discrimination.

In developing this Bill, the Government has undertaken wide-ranging consultation including hearing directly from workers who have signed NDAs.

The Bill in detailRequirements for workplace non-disclosure agreements

There are significant power imbalances in the NDA process which often leave victim- survivors of workplace sexual harassment feeling intimidated and forcibly silenced.

The Bill sets out preconditions which must be met prior to entering a workplace NDA, including that the NDA is requested by a complainant and it is their express wish and preference to enter into one. In practice, this means that an employer or respondent can not propose an NDA which requires a complainant to keep confidential material information about an incident of workplace sexual harassment, unless this is requested by the complainant. The Bill will not prevent employers settling a workplace sexual harassment claim in exchange for a complainant agreeing to legally release the employer from liability and further action, and settlement amounts can still be kept confidential at the request of the employer. In circumstances where the respondent is under 18 years of age, an employer can also request an NDA to keep their identity confidential. This is in recognition of a child's cognitive and emotional immaturity and increased vulnerability compared to adults.

Complainant choice is a core component of other leading international approaches such as those in Canada and Ireland, and is a critical element in addressing power imbalances and ending the practice of using NDAs as the default solution to addressing sexual harassment in the workplace. It shifts the focus to first considering whether the NDA is beneficial to the complainant and helps them to recover – as opposed to the current approach where the first consideration is the employer's interests and reputation.

The Australian Human Rights Commission *Guidelines on the Use of Confidentiality Clauses in the Resolution of Workplace Sexual Harassment Complaints* and the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission Guideline *Preventing and responding to workplace sexual harassment* both note that as a matter of best practice consideration should be given to whether confidentiality is requested by the complainant, and whether there is a clear reason why it is required.

To ensure that a workplace NDA is only entered into where the complainant wants to enter into one, it is also a precondition that the employer or respondent (or someone acting on their behalf) must not exert undue influence or pressure on a complainant in relation to their decision to enter into a workplace NDA. This might include, for example, an employer suggesting that a complainant 'won't get a job' in the industry again if they do not request an NDA; or an employer proposing a lower settlement amount without an NDA, and a higher settlement amount with an NDA in an attempt to influence a complainant to request an NDA.

If a complainant has requested an NDA, the Bill requires as a precondition that a complainant is provided with a 'workplace non-disclosure agreement information

statement' and a review period during which time the complainant can consider the NDA and seek legal advice if they wish. The review period must be at least 21 days but a complainant can request a lesser period or waive the review period if they wish. For example, if a complainant does not wish to delay settlement and is confident they understand the terms and implications of an NDA. The complainant must also sign a form to acknowledge and evidence that certain preconditions have been met.

These preconditions will ensure that NDAs are not being used as a matter of course in the resolution of sexual harassment matters and complainants have the opportunity to consider and understand the implications of entering an NDA.

If a complainant enters a workplace NDA, it is important that they are still able to make disclosures to certain persons and bodies to support their recovery and engagement with relevant authorities. The Bill provides a comprehensive list of persons to whom a 'permitted disclosure' can be made, despite the existence of an NDA. Broadly, this includes Victoria Police, health professionals, legal professionals, government authorities and investigation bodies. A complainant will be able to make disclosures to family members, and friends for the purposes of personal support and providing they agree to keep any material information disclosed confidential.

The Bill also requires that an NDA be written in plain language and that the complainant is provided with a signed copy of the NDA.

If the preconditions to entering a workplace NDA have not been met, the Bill provides that a complainant cannot be prevented from disclosing material information about the sexual harassment. If the preconditions have been met, an employer or respondent can enter into a workplace NDA with a complainant to keep confidential information about the workplace sexual harassment. However, a complainant will be able to disclose information about the sexual harassment to specified persons or bodies (for example, police, medical and legal professionals, and government authorities). This is to ensure that workers are not prohibited from reporting to relevant authorities and to enable access to proper support.

Termination of non-disclosure agreement

During consultation many victim-survivors who had signed an NDA spoke about wanting to end their NDAs given the impact it was having on their mental health, including preventing them from processing trauma. A survey on Engage Victoria asked respondents whether, having signed an NDA, if they had later wanted to end it – 93 per cent said yes.

Evidence suggests that complainants often sign NDAs in a state of distress, and do not comprehend at the time the long-lasting implications of confidentiality. It is only after they have had time to process their experience that they comprehend what they have agreed to do and realise how important their ability to speak out is.

To address this, the Bill will enable a complainant to elect to terminate an NDA after a minimum of 12 months from signing. If a mutual NDA has been entered into which imposes confidentiality obligations on both an employer and worker, this would end the confidentiality obligations imposed on both parties (unless the parties agree that the employer retains their confidentiality obligations, for example to protect the worker's privacy).

If a complainant elects to end the NDA they must give the other party a minimum of seven days' notice, and the notice must be in an approved form. If a complainant does terminate an NDA this would not affect the validity and enforceability of a settlement agreement or any financial compensation that has been paid.

This is not intended to prevent employers resolving workplace sexual harassment claims out of court if they wish. An employer may wish to agree to settle a claim in exchange for a complainant agreeing to legally release the employer from liability and further action, and avoidance of a costly and public trial.

Application of the Bill

To establish the relevant connection to Victoria the Bill will apply to complainants who are usually based in Victoria with respect to their work. This is similar to the approach adopted for Victoria's workers compensation laws.

The Bill will also apply if any part of a complaint relates to workplace sexual harassment. For example, if a complainant entered an NDA in settlement of discrimination and sexual harassment, that NDA would be unenforceable to the extent that it had the purpose or effect of preventing the complainant from disclosing material information about the sexual harassment. This will avoid confusion for complainants about what can and cannot be disclosed where workplace sexual harassment intersects with other forms of misconduct.

The Bill also provides that non-disclosure terms in employment contracts which have the purpose or effect of preventing a worker from disclosing material information about workplace sexual harassment will not be enforceable. This provision will ensure that employment contracts are not misused to avoid compliance with the Act.

Agreements between an employer and the respondent

As part of the terms of a respondent's departure from an organisation, employers will sometimes agree that a finding of sexual harassment is kept confidential. This can enable repeat offenders to continue misconduct in a new workplace. The Bill provides that a complainant's employer cannot enter into an NDA with a respondent that prevents an investigation into workplace sexual harassment or prevents the employer from disclosing material information about the workplace sexual harassment to a prospective employer of the respondent. This disclosure to prospective employers would be at the employer's discretion and limited to where the allegations of workplace sexual harassment have been substantiated by the employer.

Breach notice and compliance orders

To provide a means for a complainant to action a breach of the legislation, the Bill establishes procedures for a complainant to give the other party to the workplace NDA a 'breach notice' if any of the preconditions have not been met. The notice must state the reason for the notice, advise the other party of their right to challenge the notice, and be in an approved form. Once an employer receives such a notice, they will have 30 days to make an application to the Industrial Division of the Magistrates' Court of Victoria for an order that the preconditions were met. If an application is not made within 30 days, then the preconditions are taken to have been met and an NDA would not be binding on the complainant.

The breach notice regime reduces the burden on a complainant to issue proceedings in cases of non-compliance, whilst also providing an employer or respondent with the opportunity to challenge a breach notice in the Magistrates' Court.

Commencement

The Act will commence six months after passage of the Bill. This will enable time to prepare supporting regulations, guidance materials, and the mandatory information statement and to communicate the reforms to employers, legal practitioners and workers.

I commend the Bill to the house.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (10:12): I move:

That the debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.

Ordered that debate be adjourned for two weeks. Debate adjourned until Thursday 13 November.

Consumer Legislation Amendment Bill 2025

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Nick Staikos:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Gabrielle WILLIAMS (Dandenong – Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for Public and Active Transport) (10:13): Under standing orders I wish to advise the house of amendments to this bill and request that they be circulated.

Tim McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (10:15): I appreciate the opportunity to have a look at that amendment. I am delighted to rise and speak on the Consumer Legislation Amendment Bill 2025, which brings together a broad range of reforms, from fuel price reporting to rental bond transfers and professional development requirements for the real estate sector. It also includes some other requirements for rental providers, and I will go into that in due course. Can I say there are some very sensible measures within this bill, particularly those designed to help renters and to lift professional standards. There are also a couple of aspects that deserve closer scrutiny, and that is particularly the so-called fair fuel plan, which I have some concerns about. It sounds great, but only time will tell whether it will save motorists the \$330 that has been suggested by the government. Although it was the ACCC who first said that, there are also concerns around that from the Commonwealth Treasury.

I can put on record from the outset that we will not be opposing this bill, and I will begin by touching on a few of the main provisions, which set out the legislative framework, before I get into the main part of the bill. Clause 1 – the bill amends the Residential Tenancies Act 1997 to introduce a transfer of bond scheme; strengthen evidence requirements for bond repayment claims, which is a good thing; and broaden the prohibition on certain application and rent payment fees. It will also enhance gas and electrical safety checks – another good thing – and expand record-keeping requirements for rental minimum standards. It will also amend the Australian Consumer Law and Fair Trading Act 2012 to confirm fuel retailers and mandate the reporting of their fuel prices on a daily basis. It makes amendments to the Estate Agents Act 1980, Owners Corporations Act 2006 and Conveyancers Act 2006 to establish mandatory CPD – continuing professional development – for relevant professionals and provide regulation-making powers for CPD providers, in this case, the BLA, the Business Licensing Authority.

The bill includes minor amendments to support reforms. Clause 2 talks about the commencement coming into operation the day after royal assent, with the remaining provisions commencing on 13 October 2026. So we are nearly 12 months out from that. Part 2 amends the Residential Tenancies Act, with division 1 amendments in relation to the transfer of the bond scheme. Division 1 introduces a transfer of bond scheme under Victoria's housing statement, enabling renters to transfer a single bond between residential rental agreements to reduce that financial burden of paying two separate bonds, or what is known as the double bond, which I will go into in a little while. Clause 4 amends the

existing definition of a renter. Clause 5 inserts new division 3A into part 10 of the act, setting out the transfer of bond scheme, and subdivision 1 defines the functions and powers of the secretary and the Residential Tenancies Bond Authority.

In terms of the main provisions that relate to the fair fuel component, there are a couple of those. Part 3 amends the Australian Consumer Law and Fair Trading Act 2012 to establish a fuel price reporting scheme for fuel retailers, and as I say, I will go into that shortly. This scheme allows that retailers may sell below the maximum price at any time, but they have to put their price in by 4 in the afternoon and that will then come online at 6 the next morning. Can I also mention I have spoken to the minister this morning already, and between houses we can have a discussion about whether 6 am is the appropriate time to start the 24-hour period. I have got concerns from the fuel companies and certainly tradies that say that 6 am is not the right time to start this 24-hour period; it should be 4 am. It actually links in with a lot of shift changes. It links in with a lot of things, and 4 am may be a more suitable time to start this 24-hour period than 6 am. But as I said, I will discuss that with the minister between houses.

The government has presented this plan, in terms of the fair fuel plan, as a way to try and stabilise fuel prices and save Victorians money. We know what happens with fuel prices around weekends and public holidays. On the surface it sounds like a great idea, because everybody wants cheap fuel, there is no doubt about that. Nobody likes when they have just driven past fuel at a certain price and then they come back an hour later and find that the price has gone through the roof because we are getting closer to a long weekend. But when you scratch the surface of this scheme and look a little deeper, there are some questions about whether this plan will achieve what the government wants to achieve with this fair fuel plan. The government want to be seen to be supporting motorists, and that is fine, but will it really do what they want it to do or is it just driving more people to the Service Victoria app and some data collection? Time will tell, in the next 12 months, whether Victorians save money out of this process, because other states have tried and clearly it has not worked. In fact the Commonwealth Treasury said states need to be very careful going down this path because it has a greater chance of distorting the market than supporting the market. But again, as happens in Victoria, they want to reinvent the wheel and do it their own way instead of learning from other states. We know from experience in places like Western Australia that when governments interfere in the fuel markets volatility may go down but the average fuel price often goes up. This is what happened in Western Australia and, as I mentioned, the Commonwealth Treasury has warned against this kind of intervention, saying it can distort competition and lead to unintended consequences. We will watch this space to see what happens over the next 12 months.

Under this bill every fuel retailer in Victoria will be required to report what their maximum daily price for the next 24 hours will be. That happens at 4 o'clock in the afternoon for a start time of 6 am. We may have a discussion about whether that changes, but for the sake of this bill it is 6 am for the next 24 hours. In that time a retailer can reduce the price. They have to report that they have reduced the price, but they cannot increase it. If you drive past a servo at 8 o'clock in the morning on your way to work, you know that at 5:30 in the afternoon on your way home, or at whatever time that night, you are still going to get the fuel at that price. But again, saving \$330 a year, or what they claim the savings will be, is like trying to buy shares at the bottom of the stock market. Every time there is a dip you get to buy the share at the lowest price. It just does not happen that way. As I say, it helps people in their daily grind to try and work out where they are going to buy fuel, but they are not necessarily going to get the fuel at the cheapest price, because it could very well go down the next day.

I have heard some fuel retailers and those in the market say that 30 per cent of Victorian motorists buy their fuel from the same servo week in, week out. It does not alter. A further 60 per cent of Victorian motorists buy from either one, two or three servos in their general area. It is not as though they are going to be driving miles out of their way to buy fuel at a cheaper price elsewhere. Evidence suggests that they are just going to rotate around their local ones, the majority of people anyway.

Larger corporations and the large fuel chains will have no trouble meeting these reporting requirements. It is pretty straightforward, and they have got the staff, they have got the systems in

place and they have got the resources to manage it. But I am concerned for small, family-run fuel outlets across regional Victoria and how they will manage this extra administration. It does not sound like much, but they are already running on thin margins and long hours, and this will be another layer of red tape and compliance. And it will cost them money. Nobody has put a figure on it yet, but I understand people are saying by the time there is labour input and different things that have to happen, it will be somewhere between \$3000 and \$5000 that it could cost each retailer. Again, in the major corporates they will have somebody doing that overarching work for many different fuel stations, but the family operator has got to continue to be on board right from the word go.

As I say, some of these small business operators are already battling higher energy costs, rising freight prices and tighter margins. They do not need another administrative burden handed down to them from Spring Street. I will give you an example of a service station in a small town in my patch, like Katamatite. The truck comes in, fills up their bowsers, the fuel is at call it \$1.60. They are going to put \$1.80 on it, make a 20-cent margin or whatever margin they make off it, and that is it. They will set that same margin, and that is all they want until that tank is empty. It could be two weeks or it could be a month when that tank gets emptied. So there is an administration burden for them that they really do not want to get too far involved with, because the price is not going to change for them.

The other concern is the chance of distorting the market when there are apps in place already – I know of MotorMouth and Petrol Spy. There are apps available now for people who are diligent and want to seek a better price for fuel when they fill up every week or whenever they fill up. Again, we are now delving into the private enterprise that is already in existence, and I just struggle with why we need to go into that level, because I have spoken with local retailers and they support the transparency but they question the value of the measure. Many of them are already relying on private fuel company comparison apps that are faster and easier and better designed than the government system. So time will tell how this pans out in the coming 12 months. The plan is tied to the Service Victoria app, as I mentioned, and it is an app that has certainly struggled to prove its value. This will be something else that people can use this app for, but let us see how much it is used. Beyond a few things like fishing licences and a few other things, the app is rarely used, and this might be an opportunity for people to do that.

The government claims that this plan could save motorists up to \$330 a year, as I mentioned. But again, it is hard to believe it is going to be the case that people will get to buy at the bottom of the fuel cycle every time they fill up, because that is simply not how it works. Another major flaw is that the fuel pricing is locked in for 24 hours. Other states have real time. So if you do want to change your price the next day, you can do it and you have a timeframe that you can do it in, and people can change their fuel price. This is where the concerns come in. I am worried that some retail outlets will actually factor in a margin, knowing they can always drop the price the next day. They cannot increase it, so if they are at all concerned, they may put a higher price in, and if they think they want \$1.75, they might put \$1.80 in knowing they can drop it at 8 o'clock the next morning but they cannot increase it. I fear that sometimes this will get built into the price. That is what I said about the Western Australian side of things – the volatility might change, but certainly the price that you pay overall in the 12 months may actually go up rather than down.

While I support the goal of giving consumers clear information, I do question whether this model will deliver genuine value, especially when there are already those alternatives in the marketplace out there. As I say, retailers can drop the price. If a retailer runs out of fuel, they must report that to Consumer Affairs Victoria, because you cannot advertise cheap fuel knowing you are going to run out by 10 o'clock tomorrow morning, but people still come and then they may purchase an alternative fuel. If they are coming to buy 91, they might buy 95 or 98 because they have run out of 91. Again, if the retailer runs out of fuel, they have got to report that. It is not much, but it is still just more and more administration when we are already a very highly regulated state as we are. Time will tell if motorists really save money or whether it is just a great stunt.

I want to move to portable rental bonds and those provisions. This initiative will give genuine financial support and really will make a difference for renters who are under pressure and even renters who are not under pressure. Just to clarify the point, when you are renting a property you have got money tied up in a bond. It is somewhere between \$2000 and \$2500 these days for a month's rent in advance in a bond. Then if you decide you want to move out of that premises and go to another one, you have to find another \$2500 as the bond for the next property. What this scheme does is allow your bond to be portable, and then you can use what your existing bond is and move it to your new property.

For that to happen, the government is underwriting, basically, the bond that you currently have in the property you are in, because you do not get that bond back until obviously it has been cleared – once you have left the premises – that there is no maintenance, there is no painting that needs to be done or there is not any impingement of that bond, to make sure that you can still get that bond or whatever portion of it back. That has not been calculated or modelled – from my discussions with the department last week, and I do appreciate the briefing – and we are unclear about what that will cost, the overall cost. I do not think anybody really knows, but I am sure there must have been some modelling to say, 'If X amount of renters have money taken out of their bond, how much will that cost in interest?' The government has got to carry that until the renter then pays that back to the government over an eight-week period. Again, it is a very fair bill in that respect, as the renter has eight weeks to then pay the government back. For example, if it was a \$2500 bond and \$1000 came out for painting and maintenance that had to be done to the property once you left, you would then get eight weeks to pay that back. As I say, the government is going to underwrite that \$1000, or be guarantor for that \$1,000, while you pay it back. I have no vision about how many renters this would be over a period of 12 months and what sort of money that might be going forward.

It is a fair and sensible reform. It certainly eases financial strain for renters. Again, the most important part is it is not putting unreasonable pressure or burden on the rental providers. We have seen time and time again where changes get made in the rental system. Supporting renters is great, as long as it does not come at the expense of the rental provider, because we are running out of rental providers in Victoria. They are looking elsewhere. It is important that we do not always do things that support the renter but that come at the expense of the rental provider, because that is shifting the pendulum too far, and I think we are going to find we will continue to run out of rental providers if we are not careful. In this situation, I commend the government, because this particular part of it does not cost the rental provider any more while also helping renters, which is a significant step forward. I have mentioned the modelling and that we do not know what that cost will be. Hopefully, a good government, at the end of each 12-month period, would actually put on record what that actually does cost Victorians. I think taxpayers have a right to know what that will cost each year going forward, and obviously there has got to be an estimate in the budget to say, 'We expect it is going to cost X amount of money next year or going forward.'

The bill also includes provisions to tighten the bond claim process. That is another good step forward. Landlords and property managers now need to provide evidence. They cannot just come along and say to the renter that was in their property 'I am going to make an ambit claim that we need all the rooms painted' or 'The dog scratched the carpet and has done something to it.' They need proof, and under this bill, they will need to have proof, whether it is a quote or whether it is a bill or whatever it might be. We know, particularly when VCAT was the only opportunity to go and discuss any disputes – now with the RDRV that will speed things up, I grant that – under the old system, it could be 12 months or it could be 18 months before you actually got your bond back. I think having to provide evidence is a terrific move forward because it will stop those ambit claims, and with disputes now being able to go through Rental Dispute Resolution Victoria, that will speed things up as well. Again, I think it is a significant step forward.

This government usually supports the renter. As I have said, as long as it does not come at the expense of the rental provider. When this claim is made on a bond, they have got eight weeks to pay the

government back. It is important that the government reviews that cost so we have transparency on what it costs in the coming years.

Another change, although much smaller than the two I have just spoken about, is in rental safety and compliance. When I say smaller, that is in terms of change and assistance to renters or people seeking cheaper fuel. This mandates that gas and electricity safety checks will occur every two years in rental properties. No-one can argue with safety. No-one can argue that this is not a good thing. Rental providers might say it is another impost on them, another cost. But it is an investment, it is not a cost. Anything to do with safety with electrical and gas is all about safety for the renter. Many, many rental providers already do this, but for those who do not, this legislation will make sure that they do. I think two years is a timely number to make sure that they do that. As I say, some rental providers will complain that it is another cost, but safety should always come first.

One of the final elements of the bill is the introduction of mandatory continuing professional development, CPD, to the real estate sector. This will apply to estate agents, owners corporations managers and conveyancers. It allows the Business Licensing Authority, BLA, to approve and publish CPD activities to ensure consistency and accountability across the industry. That is a welcome reform. It is about lifting professional standards, ensuring staff remain up to date and giving consumers more confidence in the people that they are dealing with. The Real Estate Institute of Victoria supports this direction, and rightly so. Ongoing training is a cornerstone of any profession, and we certainly support the opportunity for more CPD. As long as the system remains practical and not overly bureaucratic or expensive, it will strengthen the industry.

Finally, the bill will stamp out or attempt to stamp out unfair practices in the rental market. It will prohibit rental providers or their agents from charging prospective tenants for background checks. We understand that some applicants are being upsold a background check – ‘For \$30 you can get a background check to make your application more competitive.’ This is not on, and it has to be stamped out. This brings in legislation to stop this practice.

In consultation and stakeholder feedback, neither the Real Estate Institute of Victoria nor the many fuel retailers I have spoken to about this bill have raised major objections to the overall direction of the reforms. They do share some concerns, certainly around the growing amount of red tape that continues to weigh down small businesses across Victoria. That is particularly in this fair fuel plan. Again I say, on paper, on face value, it sounds good, but let us wait and see over the next four to six months as it rolls out whether it achieves what it sets out to do. We hear time and time again that well-intentioned policies that look great on paper can create headaches in real practice. That is what we will deal with as we move forward if there are any concerns.

In summary, the bill contains a mixture of solid commonsense reforms. For some projects, the fair fuel stuff, we will wait and see how that rolls out. In the rental changes, the CPD provisions are a positive step forward. I think that is a terrific part of this bill to ensure renters get better opportunities and opportunities to move from where they are. Quite often, particularly in a cost-of-living crisis but at any time really, what stops you moving out of a property that you are not happy being in – because of the neighbour, because of the smell, because of the neighbourhood or whatever – is finding that extra \$2000 or \$2500 as a bond to move to another property to make your family feel safer or whatever that change might be. This removes that concern, and I think that is a significant step forward to help renters.

Just going back to the fair fuel plan, I am unconvinced about that. I think I have convinced you that I am unconvinced about that. We will see how that goes. Victorians are certainly crying out for relief from soaring costs, and we need practical solutions to make sure we get those savings.

As I stated at the outset, we are not opposing the bill. We do urge the government to ensure transparency; to reduce red tape where possible to deliver outcomes that actually make life easier for Victorians, particularly for those living and working in regional areas; and to make the costs that are

set up transparent – the actual costs year in, year out in the first, second and third years – to see exactly what they are so the Victorian public can understand how much this will be costing Victorians. Let us be the judge of that once we know what the costs are and decide whether they are viable. As I said, with the fair fuel plan we will see whether that is viable or not, and I think the portable rental bond will be a good thing going forward, but I would like to know what the cost of that modelling is. All Victorians need reform. We do not want red tape and empty promises – we just want reform. Anything that can save a dollar, whether it is in a rental circumstance or a fuel circumstance, is a positive step forward. I commend the bill to the house.

Dylan WIGHT (Tarneit) (10:41): It is a pleasure to rise this morning to make a contribution in favour of the Consumer Legislation Amendment Bill 2025. I note that the minister at the table, the Minister for Transport Infrastructure, circulated an amendment at the beginning of this debate, and I will just touch on that amendment quickly before I get to the substantive part of the bill.

The Consumer Legislation Amendment Bill 2025 includes further amendments to the Residential Tenancies Act 1997 to address power imbalances between renters and rental providers and to enable renters to better challenge unfair bond claims. Part 2, division 2 of the bill will amend the Residential Tenancies Act to strengthen requirements around claims made against a bond to ensure that they are genuine and supported by evidence. Clause 11 of the bill will insert new subsection (1A) into section 419A of the Residential Tenancies Act to provide that a residential rental provider or their agent must not make an application to the Residential Tenancies Bond Authority for repayment of an amount of bond to the residential rental provider unless the application is accompanied by evidence to support the bond claim and that evidence is not in conflict with the original condition report of the renter's premises.

The introduction print of the bill inadvertently omitted a single word from paragraph (b) in proposed new subsection 419A(1A). The house amendment will insert the word 'not' into new subsection 419A(1A)(b) so that it will read:

the bond claim evidence does not conflict with a statement in a condition report.

Really it is just an amendment to clean up and rectify one small error in the bill, which we love because that means that we do not have to come back and do statute law amendments in 10 years time.

It gives me great pleasure to rise and speak on this legislation this morning, because what this legislation is all about is making things fairer for Victorians, helping them with those tricky cost-of-living pressures that we know so many working Victorians – all Victorians – have been under over the last few years in particular. Earlier this year we launched the Servo Saver feature on the Service Victoria app, and today we are going to build on that with mandatory price reporting and caps on the maximum price of fuel in any given 24-hour period. The member for Melton has touched on this several times in this term. We know there have been some – not all – unscrupulous businesses and service station owners that have been really taking the micky out of Victorians for some time on this.

The Servo Saver app is obviously about trying to help with those cost-of-living pressures but also just making sure that we are keeping those owners accountable. To that point, it is all about competition. You can get on the Service Victoria app, you can look around your home, or wherever you may be, and you can shop for the lowest price. I acknowledge that there have been apps that have had this function in the past. But obviously it was not mandatory, so the owner of the fuel station would have to sign up to that and would have to provide the pricing information on their own accord. Some had been, but a lot had not. What this piece of legislation and the mandatory reporting requirements will do is make sure that every service station everywhere is required to do that. Diligent people and families that are going to fuel up can jump onto that app and find the lowest price.

I will just go to some of the comments from the member for Ovens Valley, who spoke about how some fuel stations may just build the margin in and then lower the price in coming days. I think a part of this is that competition aspect. Particularly if you are a service station in a metropolitan area with a

lot of other service stations around, it is a real competition piece as well. If you sit there and you build that margin in and you have the highest price in a 10-kilometre radius where there might be 10 service stations, you know that you are probably pretty unlikely to receive the lion's share of business in that area. I do acknowledge the challenges in regional communities around that competition piece. You may have a smaller town in a regional area that only has one service station in a 30, 40-kilometre sort of radius. I understand that competition piece is more challenging in regional areas, but I think that in more densely populated areas that competition piece is a really, really important part of this. I think that the concept of the app is fantastic, but also the mandatory reporting for all of those service stations is fantastic. I hope the competition that it creates has the capacity to drive down prices.

As part of this piece of legislation we have the rental reforms with the portable bond scheme as well. It is a fantastic piece of legislation, as I said, to help with cost-of-living pressures, and this is the second piece of that. As somebody who up until quite recently was a renter, I can understand how this can be tricky. We know that in Victoria we have been leading the nation on rental reforms now for some time. Since we have come to government the amount of reforms that we have made in the rental space, just to make renting fairer and easier for Victorians, has been significant. But there are still challenges, and one of those challenges has been, for some time, that bond component of renting. You may very well be able to afford the \$400 a week or whatever it may be for a private rental, but at times it can be really difficult to come up with the bond. Four weeks rent up-front can be incredibly difficult. You know, \$1600, \$2000 is pretty standard in most areas for a rental bond, and that can be difficult. So you have worked your butt off or you have borrowed or you have done whatever you have had to do to be able to come up with that initial bond – and then, for whatever reason, you need to move rental properties.

You may need to move areas. You may just need to move because the property is going up for sale, or whatever it may be. Some of the complexity and some of the delay in getting that bond back from the real estate agent or the landlord can mean that there is that lag there. You have had to move houses, you have got the bond sitting there, you know that it is going to be okay to get it back because you have treated the rental property fantastically and you have been a model tenant, but there is just that lag of three or four weeks there where you cannot get access to that bond to be able to put it up for the next property. I know that that has been really difficult. There have been people in my community that have come and spoken to me about this piece of legislation and have used that exact example, and I have had troubles with that myself. Having this portable bond scheme so you have got that initial investment that you have been able to come up with for your initial rental I think is a landmark change and will markedly improve the lives of renters here in Victoria.

I said at the outset that this piece of legislation was about making things fairer for all Victorians, helping with those tricky cost-of-living pressures that we know people have been dealing with over the last few months. I commend it to the house.

Roma BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (10:51): The Allan Labor government's latest bill, the Consumer Legislation Amendment Bill 2025, is yet another example of the Allan Labor government overpromising and underdelivering. This so-called fair fuel plan promises to reduce spikes during holidays, but similar schemes elsewhere have shown mixed results at best and hardly the savings that Victorians are being promised. Meanwhile, their rental bond reform, while well intentioned, is a bandaid solution to a housing crisis that Labor helped create. Renters are still struggling under skyrocketing costs, and this measure does little to address the root cause of that problem. Let us not forget the real estate industry – Labor's answer is more bureaucracy, handing power to the Business Licensing Authority to enforce professional development. Whilst it might sound good, I am sure it will be fraught with more layers of red tape and cost. It is a classic Labor move – more regulation, more red tape, no real relief for everyday Victorians and it is certainly not fair, as was mentioned by the last contributor to this debate. It is certainly not fair for Victorians.

This bill is a distraction from the government's failure to tackle the cost-of-living crisis head-on and its failure to fix the rental availability crisis and the housing crisis. The Allan Labor government continues to appear to campaign – championing for renters and working families. But once again the

reality does not match the rhetoric. Their latest legislation, while dressed up as relief for renters, adds more complexity and cost to an already strained rental market. By underwriting rental bonds the government is inserting itself into private agreements, creating a bureaucratic maze that risks pushing more costs onto rental providers, which ultimately affects renters themselves. It hurts renters. It does not help this crisis that has been created. Portable rental bonds may ease a short-term cash flow problem, but they do nothing to address the deeper crisis of affordability.

This also shifts the financial risk to taxpayers. The government will underwrite bonds during property transitions, but it has not explained how much this exposure will cost. While dispute resolution reform aims to speed up VCAT's notoriously slow process, a patch on a patch of a broken system that Labor has failed to fix for years is not an effective process. Requiring receipts and quotes to prevent bogus claims is basic accountability, not bold reform. The fair fuel plan, touted as money saving for motorists, is built on fantasy economics, assuming consumers can always buy fuel at the lowest pricepoint. The Service Victoria app central to this scheme is a digital dud. Believe me, I was trying to do something on it in the last couple of weeks and I was tearing my hair out. It is rarely used, poorly maintained and lacking transparency around its costs. Forcing every fuel retailer to participate and report prices daily is a heavy-handed move that reeks of control, not consumer empowerment.

Worse, the government ignored Treasury's advice, warning that meddling with the fuel price will distort competition and actually risks raising the average price – the exact opposite to what the intention is, but it is good spin from the government.

Small family-run outlets, like the many in the region of South-West Coast that I work with, will bear the brunt of daily reporting requirements buried under red tape, while the government refuses to disclose the true cost of this scheme. I have spoken to some of these operators, who tell me that this will minimise competition and actually push prices up. We will see. The reality will be available to see soon. They will also have to employ another full-time person to administer the scheme, especially during the set-up stage, they are telling me, and for the ongoing compliance component.

A key independent retailer in south-west Victoria said the government's consultation was a joke – which is very consistently what I hear. They said the government was just telling stakeholders what they were doing. That is not consultation, but it is very typical of the Allan Labor government. They asked the government for the data, research and modelling to show how this new program would benefit the consumer to be able to get this supposed \$320 to \$330 annually in savings. But, guess what, the government would not provide it. One wonders whether this modelling was ever done, but plucking a figure out is an easy thing to do. Putting some evidence behind it is not what the government is prepared to do. They went on to say that the government just wanted consistency of pricing, minimising elasticity and higher prices – great headlines. But the cost of this program has not been disclosed. Let us be honest, it is not about helping Victorians, it is about harvesting data and propping up a failing app. Victorians really do deserve better than this political dance. They deserve real solutions in a cost-of-living crisis where the pricing of things really does hurt families, and these things could help but will do the exact opposite.

I have been recently assisting a constituent in my electorate who is struggling with housing. The bill mandating gas and electrical safety checks every two years, whilst a good thing, is particularly ironic because Emma, who is in my electorate, is living in a public housing nightmare. She moved into her home in 2014, just after it had been cleaned for black mould. Since then the mould has returned time and again, most recently in the last few weeks, and each time the department sends a cleaner. But Emma does not want a superficial wipe-down, she wants the cause found and addressed. Emma has a 16-month-old baby who has been hospitalised recently with respiratory issues, and a doctor has confirmed in writing that the mould exposure could be contributing to the child's condition. To protect her baby, Emma is now living in a cramped unit with her mother and children because her public housing home is unsafe. She applied for a transfer to a safer, more suitable home two years ago. It was approved, but she is still waiting. Why does the government get away with these double standards. If this legislation truly reflects the government's concern for the safety of its citizens, then let us have

that concern shown to Emma – not next month, not next year, but today. This is not just bureaucracy, it is neglect. It is a failure of duty. While Emma's story is heartbreaking, it is not unique, but it is unacceptable.

The government is responsible for public housing that it provides, but there are so many people living in unsafe conditions in their public housing homes. I spend literally hours making representations to the government, and the government just leaves them in these unsafe and unprotected government-provided homes. Women – who the government claims to understand – some of them in some cases are terrified in their public housing homes of other tenants in public housing as their neighbours. I have provided examples of these very terrifying experiences – death threats, extremely worrying events – even evidenced on CCTV, which I have provided, yet the minister does nothing. In fact Minister Shing gave me a long spiel about how everyone deserves to feel safe in their own home, but there are no consequences. These people are terrified, and they are being threatened. They are absolutely expecting better, as I think we should. How is that fair, as the government are actually talking about it today. How is that fair.

In short, this bill is a mixed bag of half-measures, unrealistic assumptions and hidden liabilities. It is more about optics than outcomes. It is another attempt by Labor to look busy while dodging the real challenges facing Victorians – like the housing crisis and the fact that people cannot get a rental property – and actually addressing the problem in the pipeline of housing by addressing the root cause, not tinkering around the edges. This certainly might make great headlines, but it makes no difference to those people who are terrified and living in their homes in a situation that is completely unacceptable and that the government has the responsibility to fix.

Lauren KATHAGE (Yan Yean) (11:00): I rise to speak on this fantastic bill, and in doing so I want to get straight to the point and help out the member for South-West Coast with some modelling information about the fair fuel plan. Firstly, can I just say at the outset, on her concern that there is no modelling and that it is all secret, that I will just let her know that there is public, published monitoring by the ACCC on this. I am happy to tell you about G-O-O-G-L-E.com.au, which can assist you further with that. Can I give you some localised modelling as well? I am happy to provide the member with some localised modelling, because just last week I brought up Servo Saver on my phone and I looked at the areas of Mernda and Doreen, and at the same time I brought up the Petrol Spy page. Can I tell you that the Servo Saver showed us that just down the road there was petrol available 50 cents a litre cheaper. It was \$2.63 at all the servos except for one, where it was \$2.13 – a 50-cents-a-litre saving.

What does that mean? All right, here we are, say, in Mernda. A lot of people travel a long way for work, and a lot of people drive larger vehicles because they often have a trade. If you took advantage, if you checked the app, you could, for example, with a Ford Ranger, save about \$40 in one hit filling up your tank. As I said, there are long distances for people living in the outer suburbs, so if you fill up your tank every week and a half, if you check the prices first, you could get a saving of around \$1200 a year. The \$300 is an average. I am giving you a local example, member, of ways that people can save with that. I note that the member is not interested in hearing about the actual real information that is available, but hopefully one day she will get a chance to read *Hansard*. And if she wants to correct the record, she is very welcome to.

This change means that families can save money, and it also helps them plan into their day how they can make sure they are getting the best deal for petrol. The changes that are coming in, with a published maximum price for the next day from 4 pm, mean, for example, if you are going to make a decision about if you should fill up tonight on the way to netball practice or if you should fill up tomorrow morning on the way to work, you can have a look and see where the cheaper one is going to be – on the way to netball or on the way to work the next day – and you can make your decisions accordingly. That means that people have got power back, and they have got the ability to put some control around making sure they are not paying the highest price in the area but paying the lowest price. I am a little bit envious, for example, of my brother-in-law Wayne. Because he is a fencer, he drives his big ute all over Melbourne. He proudly was involved, member for Point Cook, with the construction of the

elephant enclosure at the zoo. He used to drive each day from the inner north all the way out to Werribee, so he had lots of opportunities to find the cheapest petrol. That is something I encourage all tradies to do.

In the outer suburbs, this family understands people who do not live in town and who live in the outer suburbs, and this is supporting them to save money. We have got the fair fuel plan here, which gives people power and choice, and we have also got free public transport starting for under-18s next year. If you think of the average family in our area, these are huge savings for them from next year. If you add in the public transport for the under-18s, if you have got two teenagers at home catching the bus or the train each day and you have got mum and dad driving to town for work, you are looking at thousands of dollars of savings from next year under this government, because we are about real support and real change for families in the outer suburbs. We listen and we understand what the experience is like, and we are there to support them.

I have noticed, for example, a real difference between our Servo Saver app and those that are available commercially. Just the other day I compared two apps around the Donnybrook–Kalkallo–Mickleham area, and I saw that the commercially available petrol app, because it does not have the same requirement for 30-minute or real-time reporting, can have outdated prices. I saw that across the bridge, over the highway and into Mickleham the commercial provider was showing that petrol was available 40 cents a litre cheaper. If you looked at the real-time information on our app, you could see that that was wrong. The price there was the same as the one around the corner for people in Donnybrook. If people had looked at the commercial app, they would have had to go all the way down Donnybrook Road, across the highway, down into Mickleham. They would have got there on the way to work and said, ‘Oh, you’re kidding – the price isn’t any different here than it was at home’. Whereas if you look at the Servo Saver app, the government-provided information, you will see the real prices.

Can I also correct the record. The member for South-West Coast and the member for Ovens Valley both have a very obvious misunderstanding, because they kept talking about servos having to provide daily reporting to the government on petrol prices, and that is incorrect. I make it very clear to those opposite – and I hope that their subsequent speakers will not repeat this error – that service stations report fuel price changes. It is not a requirement to report the price every single day. I hope that eases the worries of those opposite, and I am sure they will not raise it in their subsequent contributions, but the member for Point Cook stands ready to correct them again if they do seek to do so. I hope that shows that this is a well-thought-out plan by the government that is being implemented in multiple stages. This is just one of the ways that this government is seeking to support people across all parts of their lives and to understand reality for families.

Another one is this absolutely groundbreaking change of the portable bond scheme. This is going to have such an amazing impact for renters in my community. I would like to take a moment to focus on people living in Wallara Waters and the Newbridge estate in Wallan. This is an area with a high number of renters. I have spoken with the Council of Single Mothers and their Children about the supports and the needs of people renting in that area, as well as the Compassion North Foodbank who service a lot of single-parent households in that area. People are doing it tough, and for people who are counting every dollar, who are saving up over multiple weeks to buy their children shoes for school, the prospect of having to find \$2500 if they have to change their rental property – or if there if there are troubles at home, if home is no longer safe with the partner they are with and they are seeking to find safer accommodation – how terrible that something as simple as a bond could stand in the way of them seeking that safety.

This portable bond scheme really helps those who are looking for support from this government. This government is there, ready and willing to support people through all facets of their life. Those opposite are concerned with the cost of administration of this scheme, and work is underway regarding the charges involved and ensuring that the scheme is of good value. But you know what is good value? Supporting the household budget of every Victorian family. That is what this government is about. We are about making sure that in all aspects of a family’s life they receive support from the

government if they need it. If they want it, we are there, ready to provide support. There are two massive changes in this one bill, and this bill is just one of a whole raft of reforms that this government has introduced to support families in cost-of-living pressure. I commend this bill to the house.

Peter WALSH (Murray Plains) (11:10): It is my chance to make a contribution on the Consumer Legislation Amendment Bill 2025, which is around a number of things, particularly around the issue of the bond transfer scheme. I suppose a lot of people this week in Parliament have talked about their lived experiences. I have got a stepdaughter that is really challenged in trying to find a flat here in Melbourne, and the issues she has had bring home to you this whole issue around the housing crisis in Victoria and the challenges they face as renters – all the rules that are there and how difficult it is to get into the market. Resolving this issue about having to find another bond when you have not got the bond back from the other one and all those things is an important way of actually getting people into properties.

One of the things I have spoken about in the house before is that we need to reignite the great Australian dream of actually owning your own property. It is so important, I think, because too many people now see it almost as beyond them. We need to make sure that people can actually aspire to that. The first step is obviously when people first move out from home. A lot of parents would like their kids to move out a bit sooner these days, but they are staying home because that is the most economical place to live into the future. I see some laughs from the other side of the house; people are probably having that lived experience as well. But it is important that the next generation of home owners have the opportunity and can see that they can get their foot on the ladder by buying a unit, then trading up to a house, and the progression goes on. There is very good research about the fact that when you get to retirement age, if you do not own your own home you find retirement a lot more difficult because you are stuck paying rent on not necessarily as much income as you have had in the past. So it is important that we actually make sure that people can afford to get into a unit at least and make things easier for them to get into that and then have opportunities in the future so they can actually buy their own home.

On the issues of gas and electricity safety checks, again there is an issue there, and we need to make sure it is appropriate. A number of years ago we saw the issue in Shepparton where a family was tragically killed because their gas appliance was not up to scratch and they were actually asphyxiated by a faulty gas heater in that particular house. It is just so important that we make sure, particularly in units where there is not a lot of natural air getting through, that the appliances are applicable and that people are safe into the future.

One thing I would like to spend a little bit of time on is the issue around the fair fuel plan. I suppose from our side of the house there are some concerns that people are not necessarily going to save the amount of money that the government say they are going to save into the future. We had the member for Laverton making some comments about how someone had actually texted her and said, ‘I’m at this fuel station because I saw what you put on your Facebook.’ That is great; it is great that people are taking advantage of that. But I suppose we would have some concerns that people may not save as much money as the government is actually saying they are going to save. I know when I go through Bendigo there is one fuel station there that amazes me with how busy it is, out near Golden Square – the APCO fuel station. Obviously the market works. Not that I go through Bendigo all that often, because there is such a long distance of speed restrictions, but if I have need to go to Bendigo on the way to Melbourne I go through there. That fuel station always has a queue at the fuel pumps, so it has obviously got a better price.

Belinda Wilson interjected.

Peter WALSH: They might be very nice people, but most people when they go to buy fuel do not have time to interact with the person behind the counter, because – in this one particularly, I imagine – there is a queue there. You are in and out and you want to get going. So the market needs to work. The government is saying this will help the market work better, but there is a concern that people may not get the savings that they say they will have in the future. There are some comments being made by the

Commonwealth about this particular idea and whether that may distort the market into the future. But I think anything that we can do to help consumers in a cost-of-living crisis to make sure that they can make their dollar go as far as possible is very, very important.

We all know from our electorates that people are suffering with the cost-of-living crisis. We all have issues with crime in our electorates, but I think the next biggest issue presenting in various ways is the cost-of-living crisis for people. That presents in many ways, but mostly around the cost of energy – the cost of gas and the cost of electricity. But fuel for your car is also a very important part of that cost-of-living issue that they have. Whether we like it or not, we are slaves to our motor vehicles. Most of us do not have the opportunity to have public transport where we live. Those that live in inner Melbourne who have the opportunity with public transport, with trams and with trains, are blessed that they are not necessarily slaves to their motor vehicles. But most of us are because we just have to get places. So if we can save some money on the price of fuel, that would be fantastic. But the caution from the shadow minister's work is that we are not sure that the government is going to have the savings there for people that they are actually subscribing to with this fuel-saving program. So after that contribution, I thank the house's indulgence. As I understand it, we are not opposing this legislation. I will leave it to the next person to make a contribution.

Michaela SETTLE (Eureka) (11:18): I am delighted to follow the contribution from the member for Murray Plains and very pleased that those on the other side are going to support us on this bill. Before I talk directly to the bill I just want to acknowledge the wonderful Minister for Consumer Affairs. I think it speaks to his vision and commitment that we have a bill before the house that is going to make a real difference to Victorian lives – and it is not just on one matter. The minister and his wonderful staff have managed to look at a range of ways that they can help Victorians with the cost-of-living difficulties that we are facing. So I do think that we need to acknowledge the minister for his fabulous work on this.

I am really delighted to stand to speak on the Consumer Legislation Amendment Bill 2025. It says everything about the values of this government and this minister and all that we believe in. It is a bill that speaks directly to fairness, transparency and dignity for everyday Victorians. The bill tackles, at its heart, the most pressing cost-of-living pressures facing families, and they really are the two big ones, I think: the cost of fuel and of course the cost of renting a home. I would say as a regional member of Parliament that this bill really benefits us in the regions. We do use more petrol, we do have to rely on our car a lot more as we travel greater distances, and I think that this fuel policy will make a real difference to regional Victorian lives.

For renters, this bill is probably one of the most significant reforms in recent years. I am delighted that this government has brought through a whole raft of reforms – really, really good reforms. One of my dearest friends Michael is a renter. He and his partner Greg have two fur babies, and the change to the legislation about being able to have pets was really fundamental to them. They said to me at the time that no-one would deny me renting because I have children so why should they be denied their fur babies. I am very proud of all that this government has done, but I have to say, in terms of really substantive reform, this is the big one.

We have heard lots of stories from other people, and certainly I have my own story. When I had to leave my marriage I was renting as a single mum with two boys. We needed to move, and it really was a struggle to try and find that extra bond. It was a really difficult time for us. Thankfully my mother is ever loving and ever kind, and we were all right. But the other element of this is around keeping an eye on what people do with those bonds. In that instance I was really distressed because I worked very, very hard to clean the house and so forth when I left the place. In my naivety I knew I had done such a good job that I signed in advance the real estate agent's document and he then claimed \$300 for an oven clean off me, which at that stage, as a single mum, was pretty reprehensible. The fact that this bill is going to have oversight of bonds is fantastic, but the real one is the difference in being able to transfer it over and not having to find that extra bond – the double bond, as it were.

This is our 150th reform in the renters space but, as I say, it is probably the most fundamental. The double-bond dilemma is very real. We know that the average bond is somewhere around \$2300, and not many people have that to spare – it is really difficult to find. In some ways the best pieces of legislation are those simple ones that make such a difference, and this is one of those. It is a simple, fair and practical solution, but by golly it is going to make a difference to a lot of people's lives. It will be administered by the Department of Government Services, with the government acting as a guarantor for transferred bonds and any claims made against them. When a renter moves, their existing bond can be transferred directly to the new property provided they meet eligibility criteria and pay any difference if the bond is higher. It is really, really simple but really, really effective.

The scheme has obviously been built with compassion and accountability at its heart. I admit that the minister who constructed this is one of my dearer friends, and I know those are at his very heart; compassion, accountability, transparency and fairness are marks of the minister who has brought this to us. There are also hardship guidelines, and the bill maintains protections for victim-survivors of family violence. To guarantee transparency, the minister will review the scheme within three years of its commencement and table a report. That is so important. I know that there are concerns on the other side about whether the scheme will work and save people money. I am confident enough in this bill to say absolutely we are going to have a report in Parliament just to confirm that it has worked as well as I hope. I have no doubt that it will. In my electorate, in the regions, we have a growing number of renters across Ballarat, across Bacchus Marsh. We are seeing the number of renters increase, so I think this will be very well received within my electorate.

But the bill does not stop there. It goes further to make renting fairer and safer. It introduces new requirements for evidence in bond claims, meaning landlords must provide documentary proof like photos, receipts or quotes. I told you the story of basically losing \$300 as a single mum for something that really was not fair, but I had no evidence to stand on, and there was the thought of trying to prosecute that argument. This will mean that people will have those protections, so those landlords are going to have to provide that information.

Also we are on to the fair fuel plan, and I know we use this word too much in this house, but this really is a game changer, particularly for regional Victorians. We cannot just sort of flit around as much as city folk to find petrol stations, so it gives us that advance notice and we know where we can go and reliably have that price. The two of them together really are part of a broad vision that this government has, and it is a Victoria where consumers, renters and workers are protected from unfair practices. I think if you look across this government's agenda over many years, that becomes very, very clear. That sense of equity for working people and for Victorian families sits at the heart of every bill that we put together. With us you know it is not a slogan; it is a standard that we live by. We are not just making up slogans for Instagram, like perhaps some of those on the other side do. We actually come up with real and effective policy that improves the lives of Victorians. This bill is just a stand-out in those terms.

This legislation builds on our long legacy of consumer protection, from product safety and tenancy reform to financial fairness and professional accountability in the property industry. It is a space that there has been a lot of work done in. I am very, very grateful as the mother of two sons, 24 and 21, who are both going to be out there in the rental market, to know that there are some real protections out there for them thanks to this Allan Labor government, but also I know that they will not be coming to me for a double-dip bond. I can tell them that there is legislation in place there for them.

I want to end my contribution by saying that this is a fantastic bill because it speaks to everything that the Allan Labor government is. We are here backing Victorians. We are not bagging them like those on the other side. We are backing Victorians.

Gabrielle DE VIETRI (Richmond) (11:28): I rise to speak in support of the Consumer Legislation Amendment Bill 2025. Thanks to the relentless efforts of renters and the community standing up for the rights of renters and demanding better and the sustained pressure on the government from the

Greens and the community, we are finally seeing long-overdue reforms that will make life just a little bit easier for renters in Victoria. For years the Greens have been calling for a fairer deal for renters, for action to address that extreme power imbalance between renters, landlords and real estate agents and for policies that treat housing as a human right, not a speculative asset.

This bill contains some modest but important reforms that respond to the growing movement for renters rights. One of the key reforms in this bill is the introduction of a portable bond scheme. It is a long-awaited change, first promised by the Labor government in the 2023 housing statement. The scheme will finally allow eligible renters to transfer their bond from one property to the next instead of having to pay a new bond up-front while waiting for the old one to be refunded. Any renter knows how hard that double bond period can be. It is an impossible burden for people already struggling with skyrocketing rents and the rising cost of living. A portable bond scheme will mean that renters do not have to fork out thousands of dollars just to move home. They can transfer the old one over to the new one. This bill also introduces new rules that require landlords and agents to provide actual, real evidence – receipt evidence – before making a claim on a renter's bond. That seems like it should be absolutely obvious, because for too long renters have lost all or part of their bond to unfair or exaggerated claims, often for damage that amounts to normal wear and tear or just from a landlord trying it on and relying on a renter's lack of time and headspace to be able to fight for what is rightfully theirs.

Laura in my electorate had her bond deposit withheld from her for almost two years, waiting for a VCAT hearing after her landlord had made a bond claim saying that she had left items at the property. It was furniture the landlord owned that had been there before she moved in. Under these reforms the landlord would need to bring receipts and show evidence to back up their claims. This requirement adds a layer of transparency and accountability to a system that has long been tilted against renters. It will help stop landlords from using bond claims as just another way to profit off renters, and it will discourage them from making claims that they know will not stand up to scrutiny. The bill also extends gas and electrical safety requirements to all leases, regardless of when they were signed, and mandates gas checks within six months before draughtproofing work is done. These are practical, life-saving measures, and we are really pleased to support them today. This will help prevent carbon monoxide poisoning and other hazards and ensure that renters are not living in unsafe homes while landlords cut corners.

Earlier this year the commissioner for residential tenancies' *Renting in Victoria: 2024 Snapshot* reminded us of just how bad the situation still is. From a 'mystery shop' of Victorian rental listings 9 per cent of properties had visible mould, 10 per cent had inadequate window coverings and 15 per cent failed to meet even the basic standards for heating. Half the agents at those inspections could not answer basic questions about safety compliance, energy efficiency or mould history, and 13 could not provide any information at all. That is unacceptable. Every person deserves to live in a home that is safe, habitable and healthy. That is why the fact that this bill strengthens mandatory training for real estate professionals is a welcome move. Having compulsory professional development requirements and enabling the government to prohibit or approve training providers based on quality standards means that professional standards will improve, and we all know they really need to. For too long renters have faced invasive, discriminatory and misleading behaviour from property managers, with very little accountability. Mandatory continuing education is an important step towards fixing that culture and ensuring that renters are treated with the respect that they deserve.

The bill also makes it an offence to charge renters for background checks as part of rental applications – a small but meaningful protection against exploitation. It empowers Consumer Affairs Victoria to publish clear guidelines on the records that landlords and rooming house operators must keep to prove compliance with minimum rental standards. These are welcome reforms. They are practical and they are long overdue, but they do not go far enough. Let us be honest: they are small steps in the face of a much larger crisis. The fundamental problem remains. Rents are rising far, far faster than wages, rental stress is exploding and renters have very little power to assert their rights.

Tenants Victoria's *Setting the Price* report from last month shows that 80 per cent of landlords raised their rents in the past two years, with an average rental increase of 17 per cent. In contrast, CPI increased by just 2.4 per cent in the last year. The Everybody's Home *Priced Out* report from March this year found that Victorians earning \$40,000 a year are spending up to 82 per cent of their income on rent. Even those on average incomes are spending over half of their income – 52 per cent – on rent. These are impossible numbers. People are being forced to skip meals, delay medical care or move further and further from their communities because their rent has become unaffordable.

Like for Travis, who moved from share house to share house, never lasting more than a year as every landlord either wanted them out or hiked up the rent so much at the end of the first 12 months that they could not afford to stay. He has had 15 homes in 15 years, moving further and further away from his community and from his workplace each time. He has couch surfed and he has lived in his car. The stats show it and the stories show it. This government has to address that looming problem that just continues to persist despite the tinkering around the edges that they are doing. Anglicare's *Rental Affordability Snapshot* from April this year shows that not a single rental in Victoria is affordable for someone on JobSeeker or youth allowance – not one. That includes rooms in share houses. That is an indictment of this Labor government's housing policy and their failure to protect renters.

We are hearing from renters across the state about being hit with increases of hundreds of dollars a week. They are often just asking for basic repairs, and their landlord retaliates with a massive, astronomical rent hike. These rent hikes are being used to intimidate and silence renters, and these unlimited rent rises are being used as de facto evictions. Parliamentary Budget Office modelling earlier this year showed that if rents keep rising at the current rate, it will take the average renter 66 years to save for a home deposit – 66 years.

The glaring omission in this bill is any form of rent control that limits how much rents can go up at once, because right now landlords can raise the rent by any amount they choose to, no matter how extreme, and it is pushing people out of their homes and fuelling homelessness. Until unlimited rent rises are made illegal, renters will continue to live in fear of retaliation if they try to enforce even the most basic protections in this or any other bill. Across the world, from the ACT to Spain, Germany to Singapore, governments have introduced rent controls to stabilise housing markets and keep people in their homes. This is not a radical idea, it is common sense, and three in four Australians support it. The Greens will keep fighting to make unlimited rent increases illegal and will keep calling for a massive investment in public housing to bring down the cost of renting and buying a home so every Victorian has a secure and affordable place to call home.

Everyone deserves a roof over their head. Everyone deserves the safety and dignity and stability that comes with a home they can afford. This bill is a positive step, but until we rein in rent increases, the rental crisis will only deepen. The Greens support the Consumer Legislation Amendment Bill 2025, and we will continue to fight to make renting fair, safe and secure for everyone.

Alison MARCHANT (Bellarine) (11:38): It is a pleasure to rise and speak on the Consumer Legislation Amendment Bill 2025. In my notes to start off I had to thank the minister for all of his work on this legislation coming forward, but I did not have in there to thank the Greens political party for the work that they have done. This side of the house has done the most incredible amount of reforms in the housing space, in the renter space and now also with this legislation supporting Victorians in the cost-of-living challenges we have at the moment with the fuel saving app. There has been an absolutely incredible amount of work that this government has done on this side of the house. I am really proud to be part of the government that is doing the policy work that makes a difference on the ground for Victorians, particularly those in the electorate of the Bellarine.

As regional MPs in this place we do quite a few k's in regional Victoria, and as we travel around we do not always have service stations as readily available as maybe those in Melbourne might have. We are driving to drop the kids off at school, we might be running a small business, we are going to work and seeing family and friends, and all of that running around adds up when you go to the bowser. We

know that it can cost quite a bit to fill up your car, and that is why we are making this fairer by having our fair fuel plan. We have already delivered the first phase of this plan: we have launched the Servo Saver in the Service Victoria app. I have opened it. I have used it. I am a bit of a creature of habit and I usually go to the same service station each time, but I am fairly confident that they are the cheapest in my region as I am going to work or moving around the Bellarine.

The app actually has confirmed this, and the app has shown me where I can make those savings each time I go to the bowser. I had a look at the app this morning, and there was a 20-cent difference across the Bellarine. If you travelled from one side to the other, you could find a difference, and that makes a difference to when you go to fill up – hence it also means you are saving money. For the first time, fuel retailers in Victoria will now be required by law to report their fuel prices in real time, and it will be an offence if they fail to make those changes within 30 minutes. This is making sure that you have reliable information that is transparent, accurate and live across all the service stations in the state. This is where you can see where you can get the best deal in your area and make choices.

The real savings have been modelled. I have heard about not having modelling and things like that, which is ridiculous. They have found that motorists who shop around and then fill up at the lowest point can save over \$300 a year, and that is a lot of money for a family. That is money back in the pockets of families and drivers, and that is what this Servo Saver is designed to do. This is to align also with other states and territories that have similar mandatory fuel price reporting schemes. Victorians are no longer missing out, and we can do this now here in Victoria.

There is another phase to come, though. We will go even further, as we are going to introduce a daily fuel price cap. That is really to bring fairness, transparency and predictability to fuel costs. Under this new legislation, fuel retailers will be required to report their maximum price for the following day, and that price will be published at 4 pm. From 6 am the next day it becomes the maximum cap for the 24-hour period. From that moment that is the most it can be, and it can only go down, so retailers will not be able to hike prices during the day. We have all experienced that – where you can be driving around and it was one price in the morning, and you go past at lunchtime or in the afternoon and it is a different price again, and it can be significantly different. This will allow people to plan ahead. You can check your area wherever you are driving, and you do not get any of those nasty surprises or curse yourself when you drive past and say, ‘I wish I’d filled up earlier in the morning.’

This will be backed up with some penalties, because we want to make sure that this is fair and accountable, and those who fail to comply can face fines as well. The fuel price cap is scheduled to commence next year, marking another big step in our government’s commitment to supporting and backing Victorians and putting people first. It is a sensible reform, it is practical and it is about delivering those savings, as I have explained. We are making sure our policies make a difference on the ground.

The second part of this bill amends the Residential Tenancies Act 1997. This is another suite of rental reforms that we have introduced in this place. This is the 150th rental reform, about making things fairer for renters. I certainly have been a renter in the past, and I have had incredible, supportive and responsive landlords, and it has been a great relationship that I have had with my landlords. But not everyone has that same relationship, either as a renter or a landlord. I think when that relationship is good, it goes really well, but if it is not good, then it can also go horribly wrong.

This is a landmark reform also, where we are going to initiate and address the issue of double bonds. For too long – and it has been quite a stressful situation for many – when moving house you needed to pay the new bond before your old one might have been released or returned, and that can obviously build up to quite a significant amount of money. That is something this bill is going to fix. Under the reforms this is going to affect quite a number of Victorians who rent across our state. They are not going to have to find those thousands of dollars. We know that moving is stressful enough – I have done it a few times – and when you are packing boxes and changing schools or you are having to

adjust to a new move, this should be one less thing you need to worry about. It is going to ease that financial burden and emotional strain on renters.

I have talked a little bit about the benefit for renters, but this also benefits the rental providers as well, the landlords, because this is a win for them as well. It will mean spending less time managing that bond paperwork and a bit of peace of mind that the bond is guaranteed by the Victorian government under this scheme. It will be administered through the Secretary of the Department of Government Services. With the government acting somewhat as a guarantor for those transfers of bonds and any claims that are made, we can ensure that the scheme runs smoothly for both the landlord and the renter. Renters simply will need to meet the eligibility criteria. They will pay a small administration fee and cover any shortfall if their new bond is higher than the old one.

This is going to look fairly familiar to rental providers. For new rental providers, they will be notified of that bond transfer and lodge a bond lodgement with the authority, as they do now. When there is a claim on the first bond, once it is agreed to by the renter or determined by VCAT, the government can step in to pay it. If a renter then owes money to the state as a result, there are options to have multiple repayment options, ensuring that there are those hardship guidelines in place and that renters are treated fairly and given the time and support that they need.

Once these laws are passed, we will continue to work on finalising the online portable bond scheme, as I have indicated, for next year. This is making sure that there will be transparency and accountability, and the Minister for Consumer Affairs will review the operation of this scheme within three years of its commencement and also table a report in Parliament. It means that we can then, as we do with lots of legislation, review it, track it, see if it is working as intended and make sure it is delivering as we have promised. That is really about making a simpler, fairer and more affordable renting experience for Victorians.

I have talked a little bit today about what this bill will do. It is about standing with renters. It is about fairness. It is about a system that is going to work for everyone. I have talked about the fuel saving scheme as well and the Servo Saver app. This is about making sure it is easier and fairer for drivers and families who are watching their family budget and watching their spend. This is going to make sure they have money coming back into their pockets. The reforms that we do in this place are significant, and the reforms that we do clearly show that we are always on the side of Victorians. I commend the bill to the house.

Richard RIORDAN (Polwarth) (11:48): This Parliament has been filled in recent years with lazy, lazy legislation, and I am afraid to say that this just joins the long queue. The government has been forced to do something about bond transfers because the housing crisis we are experiencing at the moment has seen the devastation of the property rental market here in the state of Victoria. Landlords are fleeing. They are not just running and are not just occasionally selling up; the private rental market is evaporating quicker than a pan of water in the middle of the Sahara. It is just a nightmare in Victoria at the moment. This government has been forced to bring in what can be described as a useful measure, but it has no costings and it has no allowances. We do not know who is ultimately going to be picking up the bill for it. On the current track record and policy direction from this government, we can only assume the next piece of lazy legislation that comes forward will see some new fee levied against property owners to help pick up any shortfalls in the government's new bond transfer system.

The bond transfer system is indeed a useful mechanism for the thousands of Victorians, particularly vulnerable Victorians and low-income Victorians, who are trapped in the rental spiral, who are now at an increasingly rapid rate finding themselves being evicted from private rentals because the landlords and property owners are being forced to sell up here in the state of Victoria because it is such a costly nightmare for them to provide private rental in Victoria – like no other state. We are the least desirable state to rent private property in, with a 40 per cent reduction over the last couple of years in private rentals in Victoria. That is just a disgrace. That is a message to the community that this government has an absolute obsession with penalising property owners in Victoria through regulation,

taxation, new emergency services and volunteers levies, vacant property taxes, everything. In Victoria now, if your range hood was perfectly legal 20 years ago and is 10 centimetres – this much, a tiny little bit – too low, you cannot rent a property in Victoria. If you do not want to completely renovate a kitchen, you have got to kick the poor tenant out – no options – and that property gets lost to the rental market. This government is unable to understand that when they wage war against property owners, they wage war against the most vulnerable in Victoria. They make life increasingly more difficult. At the end of the day the property owner can cash out, go and buy some BHP shares or invest in the big four banks or just go and get a lazy income and put their money to work for the big end of town rather than keeping their money in the system that helps Victorians.

This legislation has been forced upon this government because of the cry – we get them, and I am sure even Labor MPs have – from poor tenants, the people forced into the rental market who just cannot find that extra bond. People are increasingly finding they get into a tenancy and they are kicked out after 12 months; they have got to move on. It is not the evil landlords; it is not the evil property owners. It is this out-of-control, lazy government that has got a debt problem that is so massive that they just continually have to pick on the only real option they have for raising revenue, and that is property owners. This is a response to that. Let the Victorian people be under no illusion. This is not a government acting out of the goodness of its heart; this is a lazy government, an incompetent government, that is doing its bit to try and rectify yet another problem it has caused through its mismanagement of the state's finances here in Victoria. That is what this legislation is about. It is about trying to patch up and put bandaids on a massive problem, a massive own goal that they have created through their attack on property owners.

The opposition can see why this legislation is being proposed today. We certainly do not oppose it, because what it seeks to do is try and help out the poor people that this government is punishing every day. In every budget since they have been in office they have attacked property owners and tenants. They have attacked them through higher and higher costs and regulations. We can only imagine that when next May rocks around it will be more grief for tenants as more taxes and charges will most likely be levied. What is going to stop them coming up with more taxes and charges against properties? They have attacked cats and dogs at the moment with extra fees and charges, the fire services levy and on and on it goes against property. We can only imagine there will be more, and this piece of legislation will be even more required as more property and more tenants get put out to market to try and find an ever-decreasing amount of accommodation in Victoria.

We know this because in every single reporting period since this government started talking about housing the urgent priority housing waiting list in this state has continued to grow. Can you imagine adding 8000 families in just 12 months to the priority waiting list because you are so incompetent at encouraging people to invest in property to provide good, stable, long-term housing? This government has been incapable of doing that. What they have done instead is they have blamed councils; they have blamed local neighbourhoods and local communities. They have blamed everybody for the housing crisis except their own ridiculous, out-of-control taxation policies, and so it goes. That is why this Consumer Legislation Amendment Bill has been put forward.

I will point to the other little side trick in this piece of legislation. We have got the main piece, which is the guarantee of the bond transfer – as we said, the opposition can see why that is needed; it is useful cost-of-living assistance for many Victorians, one that is picking up their own mistakes – and the other one is the fuel app. This is a curious little bit to tap in. As a country MP, there are probably very few other MPs, particularly on the government side, that have to go to a servo as much as country MPs and our constituents, who regularly frequent a servo. The simple fact is there are already many, many apps that are doing this. My question would be: how much money are we diverting from the state to provide this app for a service that already exists? The service already exists. For those of us fortunate enough to listen to the public broadcaster early in the morning with Sharnelle and Bob, they give petrol updates every morning, as much as the ABC can promote servos. That sits there.

Quite frankly I want my servo app to tell me where I can get the best pies, the freshest dim sims and something other than a Diet Coke – I mean, I love an iced tea. As someone who drives many tens of thousands of kilometres a year on the road, I am going for the freshest pie and the pie bain-marie that has some choice in it. If I am sitting there at the taxpayers expense looking at an app to see whether I am going to drive another 200 kilometres to the next country town to save 1 cent when I have missed out on the best pie at the best servo – with the cleanest toilets I might add – these would be really useful additions to a servo app. But this government is so out of touch with the travelling voter that they think this is the bee's knees, when it already exists. Give us something we have not got, government. Give us something that the consumer might actually enjoy and want. Make it a little bit innovative. But of course you do not rely on innovation from this government, let me tell you. We have got a government, as the rest of this bill speaks to, that has to bring legislation to the Parliament that is bandaging its own goals, its own mistakes. It is bandaging issues that this government has created, problems that it has created of its own volition.

While I commend this bill and its little bit of sprinkling of ‘we’re going to somehow make petrol cheaper’, which is just a nonsense, it speaks to the fact that you have got a government who seriously thinks it can intervene in the market and make a positive difference for Victorians when it simply cannot. The problem in housing is 100 per cent an own goal by this government – a problem that gets worse by the week under this government. We have now got them trying to dabble in petrol prices. Based on its reputation, I can only imagine this intervention will probably make petrol prices worse for most people, because whenever they get involved they tend to have a habit of doing that. We welcome the bill to the extent that it will help relieve the pressure on so many vulnerable Victorians who have been thrown to the wolves under this government with its lousy, lousy housing policies and its lousy, lousy endless attack on property owners in the state of Victoria.

Mathew HILAKARI (Point Cook) (11:58): I very much appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak in support of this bill. Well, wasn’t that an extraordinary contribution by the member for Polwarth. One of the things that is wonderful about the Service Victoria app is that you can check out those fuels that are cheaper across Victoria. If you are travelling from Geelong, for example –

Richard Riordan interjected.

Mathew HILAKARI: I will get to the pies in a moment; I will get to that. If you are coming down from Geelong, you could go to – your namesake – Riordan Fuels in Geelong. You could head to them and pick up some diesel, but you could just go that little bit further down the road and get it more than 10 cents a litre cheaper. I do acknowledge that the member for Polwarth is more interested in the pies in the bain-marie and more interested in the chocky milk. This government is more interested in those things that will cause cheaper cost of living for those people in Victoria, and fuel is a very good example of it. While the opposition is considering what is for lunch, we are considering how we can improve the lives of all Victorians.

On the fact-free zone that was the member for Polwarth’s contribution, about the only thing that he said that I agree with is that they do not oppose the bill, but you would not have believed it, because he said that landlords are fleeing the state – that is his claim. But 736,000 bonds are held by the Residential Tenancies Bond Authority this year, and it is up from last year.

Richard Riordan interjected.

Mathew HILAKARI: He says ‘massive reduction’, and that is what I mean by a fact-free zone. He is simply wrong and wrong and wrong again. The fact is that if he felt this was such a terrible piece of legislation – that it was a useless piece of legislation – you would think he and his colleagues would have the courage of their convictions and simply get up and oppose it. He walks out of the chamber because he is not willing to defend it. He is not willing to defend the position. He is back; I have wound him in. He will not even stand up and say, ‘I oppose this. I don’t think it’s any good.’ And the reason he does not oppose it is because it is good for –

Richard Riordan: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I bring to the chamber's attention the endless goading in the member's contribution, requesting me to respond to his comments. I just remind the house and the member that I am unable to speak again on this bill. As much as I would like to, I am unable to do that.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Wayne Farnham): Member for Polwarth, that is not a point of order.

Mathew HILAKARI: He had 10 minutes, and he did not say much. What I would like to say is that there is a great deal of concern, and there is more to do around rental reforms in this state and more to do to support people into homes. That is something that this government openly acknowledges, and that is why we have put in 150 reforms that support renters over the term of this government. I should say 149 so far; should this bill pass, it will be 150.

We are having a real effect in the market. I note that the *Guardian* put forward an article – I think it was earlier this week – and they talked a little bit about first home buyers in Victoria. Over the period since March 2022, when 24.5 per cent were first home buyers in this state, it has risen to 27.84 per cent, which does not sound like a lot, but it is a lot for all those people who are seeking their first home. I bought my first flat – in fact the member for Dandenong has just walked in the room – in the centre of Dandenong, and it was a very modest little apartment. But I went to sleep that night with such pride, knowing that I had my own place. It was a wonderful thing, and I know that many other members will remember that first night in the place that they own. I am so glad that this government is able to provide that to so many other people across this state. The reason I do not say 'across this country' is because the first home buyer percentages across the country have flatlined, as opposed to Victoria. Victoria keeps growing.

There is a great deal of concern from those opposite, particularly in terms of being very vocal supporters of landlords, against the rights of renters and against first home buyers, and the member for Ovens Valley demonstrated that earlier on. But I should say that there is a fairly stable rate of investment in Victoria. In March 2022, the same period, 32.75 per cent of the market was made up of investors, and they are at 32.48 per cent today. So it is a very stable set of numbers. The idea that investors are fleeing the state is just completely wrong. It actually goes to a misunderstanding by those opposite of what is going on in Victoria, which is that we are building more houses, and we are building more houses at a substantial rate, as opposed to those other states around the country. In fact there has only been one time over the course of this government that another state has built more homes than Victoria, and that was New South Wales in 2019. In every single other year we have built more homes than any other state in the country – above 50,000 homes every single year. In the last year we were 13,000 homes above New South Wales and 22,000 homes above Queensland. So investors have more opportunity to invest in Victoria but, more importantly, people have an opportunity to have a home in Victoria, and we are supporting those first home buyers in this way.

I would like to align myself with the member for South-West Coast's words in this chamber a little while ago, because she said it is a classic Labor move. It is a classic Labor move to support first home buyers – that is exactly what we will support. It is a classic Labor move to support those people who are seeking to invest in Victoria. So I agree with those words, but there was not much else that I had in agreement with her. Again I do ask the member for South-West Coast, if she really is oppositional to this bill, to stand up and oppose it – have the courage of her conviction. Your rhetoric in this place should, by rights, then lead to what you do when it comes to a vote. But clearly there has been some whipping going on, and they have not been able to get there.

The member for Yan Yean talked about a 50-cents-a-litre difference across Doreen and other parts of the electorate that she represents, and I too have looked at the Service Victoria app and seen those substantial savings, of just a little bit under 50 cents – over 40 cents but a little bit under 50 cents – in the areas around Point Cook. So it is a really great thing that we have introduced that first phase, which is already having a significant effect and providing that opportunity for those people who are driving.

From the electorate that I represent, it is truly at least an hour each way, each day. That has a real impact in terms of your cost of living and the amount that you spend on petrol each week.

We are a government which look fully at the lives of Victorians. I do want to just mention on the way through that supporting work from home is one of those things that we are doing to support those people in the community that I represent with the cost of living. It is another thing that the opposition actually oppose, work from home, and I am not sure why this is the case, because for members of the community that I represent, it just makes their lives better. It allows them to spend more time with their family and more time in their community building great places like Point Cook. The one thing that I just want to bring out from the survey that we recently did, which I understand is the largest survey that has been done in Victoria by the Victorian government, is that participants said they were more productive working from home, and 39 per cent of participants said that their one-way trip to work takes more than an hour. We know that many of the participants in that survey were from Point Cook. I understand the highest participation was from members of the community in Point Cook. We know just how good work from home is, and members of the community support that.

Now I will go back to the legislation in front of us. We are putting forward the second phase of the fair fuel plan, and I am really pleased that this will lock in prices from 6 am. It will give that certainty. Of course if you own a petrol station, I do encourage you to go below that number, and you are always entitled to go below the number. But we have got it locked in so people can work out whether they are going to get petrol in the morning on the way in or maybe just go a little bit out of their way on the way home to get the best price possible.

We have also had members talk about those important changes to rental reforms in terms of electricity and gas plumbing being checked every two years. To me, that is one of the most important things about this bill, because it means that those places that people are living in that have not been checked for some time will be checked, and they will have a safe home to go to. Minister, I thank you. I thank your team for all the effort in putting together this bill. It is a great set of reforms. I hope the speaker that follows me will reflect on the benefits of this bill – or if they cannot, vote against it.

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn) (12:08): I rise to speak on today's bill, noting that the opposition will not be opposing the measures proposed. But like a lot of things that come from this government, the measures are masking inherent and underlying failures, particularly in relation to those who are renting a home. We all want people, in Victoria and everywhere, to be able to access a home that they can afford, to live there and raise a family if they have one and to do so in a way where the rents they have to pay are not making life even harder for them.

But the reality in Victoria is something else. We know from data that has been published that renters are doing it harder and harder as time goes by in Victoria. We see that from the data. Unlike the previous speaker, I think the true facts indicate that rental bond data has been going backwards in Victoria, whereas in comparison rental bond data has been going up at a rapid rate of knots in New South Wales and Queensland, and that is one of the more definitive indicators of rental availability. We know that investors have been fleeing Victoria. We know that, in the 18 months to September, at least some 20,000 properties came off the rental market, and that is consistent with the rental bond data that we are seeing. We know from stakeholder groups that their own members are reporting that businesses that invest in property and property development are looking to leave and are leaving Victoria to go to other jurisdictions to invest their capital. Who suffers at the end of the day? Investors suffer, sure. Businesses suffer, sure. But ultimately renters suffer more than anyone else.

The government claims that it is addressing the problem through its housing plan and that it is going to deliver 800,000 new homes in 10 years. We know that is simply not true. For two years running the government has fallen at least 20,000 properties short of its own target. It gets even worse when you look at the Commonwealth target for Victoria, noting the target of 1.2 million homes by 2029 that the Albanese government has. Victoria is not delivering on that either. Whether it is the Victorian measure of completed homes or the Commonwealth measure of completed homes, we are falling behind. What

that means is that the Allan Labor government is failing renters. It is failing other people as well, but it is failing renters because we need more people to invest in property. We need more people to have the confidence in this state that they can acquire property, apply for permits, know that they are not going to be delayed by state government regulations as well as council regulations and deliver the homes that will put Victorians in a place where they have a roof over their heads.

The government says that not enough homes are coming online because councils do not approve permits quickly enough. There might be some truth to that, to be fair, but I do not think it is fair to assume that applies to all councils. In Boroondara, for example, nine out of 10 permits have been approved, and the only reason those properties have not been constructed is that the developers cannot contend with the rising costs of doing business in Victoria. Bear in mind that a delay of one or two years on a major development costs developers millions of dollars – not hundreds of thousands or tens of thousands, but millions of dollars. You will know this, Acting Speaker Farnham. You were accomplished in your previous life as a builder; you know these things. Most permits are not proceeding. When I say most, in the case of Boroondara and similar-type councils, nine out of 10 are not proceeding because of high taxes and charges and delays caused by the Allan Labor government – things that can be fixed but will not be, because this government has not brought any legislation forward.

I say this as an important backdrop to today's bill. A bond transfer scheme will help renters. It will, and that is why we are not opposing it. But it is a measure when you have got circumstances where nothing else is going to come in its place. The things I spoke about in my opening remarks would make life so much easier for renters in Victoria, but if the government – as it clearly is not – is not going to implement the changes that you, Acting Speaker, I and our other colleagues have been contending for, then this is what you end up with, measures like these kinds of interventions. We will not oppose them. I do have some questions for the government about whether it can share with this Parliament at some point – if not in this Assembly debate, maybe in the other chamber – what costs it forecasts it will bear as a result of this scheme. For example, how will it deal with disputes with tenants who are shifting between properties? Who will bear that cost? What are the holding costs of those debts that are not realised? How will its supposed reforms to dispute resolution work to expedite the outcome of disputes with rental providers and disputes with tenants? A departing tenant may well dispute the government's position in a particular dispute over, say, property damage or rental arrears. Those things should be shared with this house and the upper house as well.

I just want to speak briefly on the fuel pricing plan in the few minutes I have left. Again, we are not opposing this measure, but it is always interesting when you have market interventions by governments. To be fair, over the years our side of politics has intervened in markets as well. As much as we do not oppose this measure, I do have some concerns about the game theory aspect of these changes. What will fuel retailers do to hedge against movements in fuel prices in their areas? Is it in the interests, for example, of a fuel retailer to notify the regulator of a very high maximum price so that it has room to reduce prices?

A reduction would be welcome, but my point is rather: will this intervention actually induce the very behaviour we want to discourage, which is the notification of high maximum prices for fuels right across the board, so that all you are really doing in the end is running the risk that you are lifting the range of prices amongst a precinct of fuel retailers to a much higher level, because they all want to hedge? For any rational operator – when I say rational, an operator who is operating economically and thinking about the price and revenue impacts and profitability over time – what is their behavioural response to the notification requirement going to be? Well, I am never going to be a fuel retailer, but if I am trying to simulate the rationalisation of how I would respond to that, I would be inclined to think that as a fuel retailer it is in my business's interests to notify the regulator of a higher price. I can foresee, on the back of that, that the government will have to return to this issue, because there is no indication that it is going to drive down prices. Transparency we have no problem with, and it does not look like the notification requirements are so bureaucratically onerous that they themselves will

have price impacts – I doubt it; so that is a good thing – but I do have a concern about whether over the longer haul this runs the risk of actually pushing prices up, because no-one will quite know what their competitor is going to do. Giving yourself maximum flexibility to lower your prices during the day does not necessarily mean that you are going to see, on average, over time, lower prices.

My point on both of those measures – which are not the only two things in the bill, but those two sets of reflections bring us back full circle to what I started out with – is that if a government were focusing on its basic responsibilities and obligations it would actually create the ecosystems we need which give investors, renters, fuel retailers and consumers certainty and as much predictability as a market can provide. Markets are not perfect, but we know from our own life experiences that people will respond. There are behavioural responses that people have to these sorts of things. I lament that the government has not done enough – not nearly enough – to set up either the housing market or the fuel retailing market in a way which maximises consumer and rental benefits. But we will not be opposing this legislation.

Sarah CONNOLLY (Laverton) (12:18): I can tell you I am so excited to get up and talk about the Consumer Legislation Amendment Bill 2025. I have been thinking about this bill all week, because we sort of had –

Cindy McLeish interjected.

Sarah CONNOLLY: No. I have been so excited and I have had a really good sleep, so I am totally pumped to speak about this. Those opposite struggled, I think it was at question time – it feels like a long week – on Tuesday, when the Minister for Consumer Affairs got up to talk about the fair fuel plan and he got up to talk about the Servo Saver app. I know exactly what he got up to talk about in his ministers statement, but those opposite jumped in to interrupt him because they actually did not know about the Servo Saver announcement that was recently made and about the fair fuel plan that came through as part of that – which I thought was amazing, because I have a story to tell. This actually happened, and I think I need to tell it here in this place. And I am going to look into the camera, because this is for the guy at the service station at about 7:30 in the morning last Thursday. I do not know his name, but for the sake of this story I am going to call him Joe. Now, it is 7:30 in the morning and I am dressed in a fluoro yellow jacket on my way to a press conference with the Premier at the Joan Kirner hospital. As happens to me on a regular basis, I do not fill up till the car is on empty and I probably have 200 metres left of fuel. So I turned up to a service station because it was the closest to my house, sweating heavily, thinking I would not make it. And at \$1.59 I thought, ‘Jeez, I haven’t seen petrol this cheap for ages.’

Literally I am thinking this as I have plugged in and I am filling up the car. I thought, ‘Oh, I probably need to do some social media around this Servo Saver announcement we’ve done that’s on the Service Victoria app.’ And as I was thinking this, I could see this bloke staring at me, and I instantly thought, ‘Well, it must be the yellow high-vis jacket that looks totally crazy at 7:30 in the morning, or he’s recognised something. He’s seen something on social media.’ And I thought, ‘Here we go.’ I am just waiting for it. Anyway, I finish filling up, I go to pay and Joe finishes filling up and he goes, ‘Oh my God, are you Sarah?’ And I said yes. And he said, ‘Are you Sarah Connolly?’ And I said yes, I am. And he goes to me, ‘Oh my God; I literally was at home this morning and I saw you on my Facebook page and I saw’ – get ready for this – ‘your announcement about the Servo Saver.’ I am literally in the service station at 7:30 in the morning going, ‘That was a bad post. That was a bad graphic, and you saw that?’ And he goes to me, ‘I have come here to this service station to fill up my car because it is the cheapest in the area,’ and I am standing there going, ‘Oh my God,’ and he says to me, ‘Thank you so much for putting up that announcement on your Facebook page, and thank you so much and your government for all the work that it does. This has saved me money this morning.’

Isn’t that a great story? I really hope the Premier and the minister are listening to this. This is a great story. This actually happened. I am calling this guy Joe, because there will be plenty of Joes out there that get onto the Servo Saver, their car empty, and they will save some money that day. \$1.59 was

really cheap to fill up on. That was a great start to the day, and I headed off to join the Premier at the Joan Kirner hospital in Sunshine. So when the member for Polwarth stands here and says, 'No-one uses this; this is rubbish,' that is completely untrue. This is a real story. So I will look in the camera and say to Joe: 'You are welcome; you are very much welcome, and you should use that Servo Saver every time you go to fill up and you should tell your family and tell your friends because it will save you money.'

That is what we are talking about here in this bill. That is real life. That is real-life politics. That is about doing what is right and what is fair and tackling what we know is a huge contribution to the cost of living for regular folks like Joe. So I am particularly proud about that. God, that puts me in a good mood even thinking about it. That is all I want to say on this bill in relation to the fair fuel plan. It works. Victorians use it and they love it, and I would encourage those opposite that think it is nonsense to get on there and have a play around. Have a look. It works.

I do want to talk about the rental reforms, because I know those opposite struggle with the rental reforms that we have put through this house. We have done reforms for renters. We have done them for landlords. It is about protections. It is about a fairer, more equitable Victoria for all Victorians even if you are a renter – and I have spoken in this house a lot about spending years here in Melbourne renting. It is really tough, and I do think there was a gross inequality between the landlord and the renter. I think the rental reforms we have put through this place in the time that we have been in government have been really important. They have been productive, and it is totally about fairness and equality. To our renters out there who have benefited from these rental reforms, including the rental reform that is part of this bill: you are welcome, because you deserve to have the roof over your head and have the same protected rights that any one of us has.

The amount of work that has gone into rental reforms over the past couple of years in designing the government's housing statement – that was back in 2023. I was here in this place when we rolled it out. There is a huge power of work that has gone into that and a huge amount of consultation with renters, with landlords and everyone in between about what we needed to do to afford better protection, better rights for everyone – every single person involved. One of the big issues we know about is that for a lot of households, including my household – this was a real-life experience for me – you need to pay a new bond. When you have to move house, you have got the bond that is held up in your current property and you need to then put in another bond. That actually ends up being a lot of money. Often the bond for where you currently are has not been returned when you are paying the bond for the house you need to move into. It takes a while, and that creates a very real financial barrier. The average cost of a bond – and our bond was a lot more than this – is about 2360 bucks, we know that. So if you already have that tied up and then you need to pay another \$2360, that is a lot of money to be putting down on a new rental before you even get the bond back from your previous one. That is something that we have tried to fix in this house, and this change also goes to making it fairer for folks who are renting and having to undergo this. That is why we have introduced the new portable bond scheme. It is just making things a bit easier and a bit fairer for everyone – not just for renters but everyone involved – when it comes to renters or landlords involved in this type of contractual arrangement. That is what the portable bond scheme is about. It is going to allow the government to act as a guarantor for all transferred bonds as well as any claims made against bonds that end up happening. We know it is not just going to benefit renters but also going to benefit landlords, because they also deserve protection afforded to them. They will also benefit from it.

I think it is really important to remember why this government introduces bills like this. This is not a frivolous, ridiculous bill. There is great stuff in this. This is the kind of stuff that matters to Victorians. This is what they tell us; this is what we hear on the streets. I heard it last Thursday in my fluoro yellow jacket with Joe. This is what he told me: this stuff matters to people. It helps with the cost of living. It makes these cost-of-living arrangements and daily transactions, like rental transactions, fairer and more equitable for everyone involved. I am really proud of this bill. I think it is tremendous work from

the minister. He should feel really proud and know that Joe in Melbourne's west is so happy with his Servo Saver. I commend the bill to the house.

Ros SPENCE (Kalkallo – Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Community Sport, Minister for Carers and Volunteers) (12:28): I move:

That debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.

Ordered that debate be adjourned until later this day.

Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2025

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Gabrielle Williams:

That this bill be now read a second time.

And Sam Groth's amendment:

That all the words after 'That' be omitted and replaced with the words 'this house refuses to read this bill a second time until the government publishes a comprehensive privacy impact assessment relating to the introduction and retention of audio recording, seeks legal advice about the bill's compatibility with the Surveillance Devices Act 1999, and ensures that appropriate privacy, data security, and legislative consistency safeguards are put in place.'

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (12:28): I am not going to take too long on this particular debate. We have got a fair bit to get through this afternoon, and I know there are many other speakers on this side of the house that would like to contribute to all of those bills. The Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2025 gives me a chance to talk about once again public transport – or the lack thereof – in the great north-west of this state and to clear up a few things.

I have been banging on and banging on about the return of the passenger train to Mildura since I came into this place, and I will continue to do that. There has been a lot of talk, and I cop it from the other side all the time, saying that Kennett took it away in 1993. I want to clear up some misinformation. The overnight train, which was the Vinelander – the last time that ran was in 1993. The train that ran during the day was taken away by Labor in 1990. So that clears that up. We have not had a train for well over 30 years. I have been meeting with many stakeholders over the last few weeks, particularly in this place. I am not a train expert – the member for Bulleen is. I do enjoy our conversations until he really goes down the track – pun intended – with his expertise, and I have to glaze over.

Luba Grigorovitch: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I just want the speaker on her feet to be factual. The passenger train to Mildura was abolished by the Liberal Premier Jeff Kennett in 1993.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Wayne Farnham): That is not a point of order.

Jade BENHAM: If we are talking about facts, I will read you some facts. There is a photo posted online of the Sunraysia from Mildura after arrival at Melbourne's Spencer Street station. That was in 1987. It commenced operations as a parallel road coach in 1987 and only ran for three years. It was withdrawn in 1990. The Vinelander, which was a sleeper carriage train, used the same carriage set. That was the one that ran for the last time in 1990. Now we have got that cleared up with facts, although facts certainly never get in the way of a good story for those on the other side.

I have been meeting with many stakeholders in the rail game and having many conversations. In fact it was the member for Bulleen that filled me in on a deeper history of the passenger train to Mildura. I met with the Rail Freight Alliance yesterday. I met with the Rail Revival Alliance last week, who the member for Bulleen and the member for Nepean, the shadow minister, also met with. The Northwest Rail Alliance, though, have not contacted me, despite launching a parliamentary petition. The Northwest Rail Alliance claim to be an apolitical organisation. Headed up by their president – a former

deputy mayor and a former independent member in this place – they have launched a parliamentary petition, not via their local member, nor via any of the members for Northern Victoria in the other place, but by the member for Melbourne from the Greens. The former independent member has been a Labor candidate and an independent, she joined the Sex Party – or the Reason coalition – went back to being an independent and is now aligning herself with the Greens. It certainly appears to be an apolitical organisation.

A member interjected.

Jade BENHAM: She did her school days in Mildura; you could also say she is from Alice Springs. I just thought it would have been proper, maybe, to at least meet with your local MP, who is also doing a fair bit of campaigning to bring back the passenger train to Mildura.

Anyway, we are cooking up some plans, potentially, or at least some solutions, because you know what the best scenario is when someone comes to you with a problem? I love when people come to us with a problem but also offer a solution, not just political grandstanding. That is actually what the Rail Revival Alliance and the Rail Freight Alliance have done, so I thank them for their contribution, and we will keep those lines of communication open. I will be true to my word today and keep this contribution short.

Meng Heang TAK (Clarinda) (12:34): I am delighted to rise today to make a contribution on the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2025. This is another important bill, one that will make changes to the Commercial Passenger Vehicle Industry Act 2017 and the Bus Safety Act 2009, as well as the Transport (Compliance and Miscellaneous) Act 1983. I commend the minister for bringing this bill forward and for all of the work that is happening across public and active transport. It has been a big, exciting month, with the announcement that the Metro Tunnel will be open in early December, which is fantastic news for my community, with hundreds of new services a week.

I had the great privilege of joining many of my colleagues here to see firsthand the Metro Tunnel train stations – the Arden train station, the State Library train station and the rest. The summer program means more than 240 extra services a week for passengers along the Cranbourne–Pakenham to Sunbury corridor, all running through the Metro Tunnel, in addition to the existing services. Then in February the overhaul of the entire Victorian train network and the integration of the Metro Tunnel into the wider transport network will mean more than 1000 new weekly train services. The Cranbourne and Pakenham lines will travel exclusively through the new tunnel. These lines are the backbone of our train system and will transform with 1000 new weekly services – a turn-up-and-go network on the Cranbourne and Pakenham lines. There is more to come, but I would just like to come back to this fantastic announcement and come back to the member for Laverton, who talked about Joe and what benefit it brings to Joe.

I would like to put on record, in terms of the tunnel, a story. Twenty years ago when I travelled from Springvale train station to Footscray to attend university at Victoria University it took at least 1½ hours, sometimes more if I missed a train. But now when I see the timetable, with the opening of the tunnel, for young Joe from Springvale travelling from Springvale station to Footscray to attend Victoria University would take only 40 minutes. Where it was 1½ hours 20 years ago, now young Joe can attend his class at university –

A member interjected.

Meng Heang TAK: Joe from Springvale – Joe and Mary. This is fantastic for my community and for many communities here. It is great for our community – the biggest transformation of the Melbourne rail network for more than 40 years, freeing up space to run more trains more often on more lines. It is also great news that from the day the Metro Tunnel opens in early December public transport in Victoria will be free for everyone everywhere every weekend until 1 February. This is another bit of fantastic news; I cannot wait. All of our trams, every bus, every Melbourne train for

every passenger – it is a fantastic initiative and a great celebration of the opening of the Metro Tunnel. Thanks to Victorians for their patience while thousands worked to build it.

This great initiative builds on the free public transport announcements in the budget, which were extremely well received in my electorate. Cost of living is always front of mind in my community and for parents in Clarinda every dollar counts. Free public transport for every Victorian under 18, with savings of up to \$755 per year per child, has been an extremely popular announcement and one that I was very proud of because it means cheaper school trips, more affordable weekends and it is one less thing for families to worry about. I am very proud that Victoria will be the first state to introduce free public transport for kids and teens from 1 January next year.

There is good news for our seniors, with statewide public transport free for Victorians aged 60 and over on weekends from 1 January 2026. I have been trying to get around to many of our seniors groups over the last few months just to check in and catch up but also to chat about free PT for seniors on weekends, the \$100 power saving bonus and many other things. There has been a great response, I can tell you. We have the Evergreen Seniors Group coming in for a visit next sitting week. They are a fantastic local community group. President Ms Mary D'Silva and the wonderful committee, many of them are volunteer members and all of them are active in our community, do an amazing job supporting and celebrating our multicultural citizens in Keysborough and the surrounding area. I am really looking forward to that. They have been really excited about the public transport announcements. They toured the Metro Tunnel recently.

There are some exciting announcements and changes in transport, and we have more change to come here today on public transport, regarding contactless payment with debit and credit cards. We have made changes to support the introduction of account-based ticketing technology in Victoria by amending the Transport (Compliance and Miscellaneous) Act 1983 to enable passengers to use new methods as valid entitlements to use public transport services. These require the introduction of new definitions and amendments to existing definitions and provide for the power to make regulations and publish notices for the purpose of supporting the introduction of account-based ticketing technology in Victoria. It is another exciting development and another step forward towards enabling public transport passengers to use the new method. I am looking forward to that technology. There are also amendments to the Transport (Compliance and Miscellaneous) Act 1983 to provide for prescribing of a computer system for the process for validating concession entitlements.

We have heard from colleagues here about the host of changes to the Commercial Passenger Vehicle Industry Act 2017. They are aimed at strengthening commercial passenger vehicle industry laws and improving industry transparency to address the issues the vehicle industry faces with overcharging and other driver misconduct. These are positive changes which include, here in this bill, again, a very positive change for passenger safety. This comes together with the requirement for Safe Transport Victoria to publish disciplinary action taken against industry participants on their public register as well as to strengthen the public care objective applicable to drivers to better reflect the standards and expectations of the community in relation to commercial passenger vehicles.

These are broad changes, positive changes, across three acts – changes that I am very happy to support to strengthen commercial vehicle industry laws and to improve industry transparency, as well as to support the introduction of account-based ticketing technology here in Victoria. I commend the minister for bringing these amendments before the house today, and I commend her for the exciting work taking place in public and active transport here. I commend the bill to the house.

Matthew GUY (Bulleen) (12:43): I rise to make a contribution on the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2025 and in doing so would like to talk a bit about the riveting topic of rail tickets, which feature quite a bit in this piece of legislation. Riveting topic as it is, with my father being a longstanding member of the Signalling Record Society, I know, sadly, quite a bit about it, so you are about to get it. Hang around.

Rail ticketing, as riveting as I know my colleagues from all sides of this chamber think it is, is a big deal. Of course it is a big deal, because it is not just about the revenue for the network and who is on the system and how your systems are devised in terms of the structure of them that sits behind it; it is obviously a very integral part of the system in terms of staff and collection and enforcement et cetera. For years and years and years we had the old paper tickets, which were from the old Edmondson ticket machines, and you stuck in a small ticket – which you will get if you go to Puffing Billy; you will see one of those – and that was the backbone of our network for about 100 years in rail ticketing. They moved into an electronic form in the early 1980s, late 1970s, in what was the new deal for country passengers, initiated by the Liberal government back in the late 1970s. This was the emergence of V/Line, with the tangerine-coloured carriages and the new N-sets. There were refurbished locomotives as well as new locomotives that were to haul them with head-end power. So that started to revolutionise the change.

I am also very interested when Labor governments bring in stuff in relation to tickets, because I am old enough to remember scratch tickets.

Belinda Wilson: Pretty old.

Matthew GUY: I know it is, but when members opposite talk about previous governments, they seem to not want to talk about their own. They want to talk about the Kennett government, but they do not want to talk about the governments of theirs at the same time, so let me do that. Scratch tickets were a monumental disaster. If you go to a newsagent today, you go in and you might win the 20 grand or you might match three rockets and get a free paddle-pop or something. But they were the days when the Labor government brought in that as the primary method of ticketing for Melbourne's metropolitan rail network, and it was a financial disaster, it was an enforcement disaster – it was literally seen as a complete joke of a system. I went to a state government school. I did not get the train to school, but I know kids who went to private schools and who got the train from Montmorency station. They would look out for the guys who were always dressed in blue slacks and a grey jacket. They knew that was a transport enforcement officer, and they would scratch the date in. So fare evasion was massive. Then of course it had to be completely changed.

Belinda Wilson interjected.

Matthew GUY: I said I did not do that because I went to a state government school and I did not get the train to school. I rode my bike, and I came home and did a paper round. I still get the bus in. I do not see many other members on the bus with me in the morning, but that is another point. What I do know is that in the mid-1990s that system had to be cleaned up, and the Kennett government did clean it up. We brought in Metcard, and Metcard did clean the system up. We had to. We were losing tens of millions of dollars, and that is a lot of course in early 1990s money. We had to redo the system and bring in Metcard to actually bring it into what was then an analog technology system for digital payments. It was an electronic stripe, if you like. But that was the first stage of electronic ticketing in the metropolitan Melbourne system. It was modelled off a system that – with credit – I think the Unsworth government brought in in New South Wales in 1986 to 88. We brought in something similar a few years later because we had to pick up what was the disaster of scratch tickets. So we did do that, and Metcard was, for the time, quite successful.

Then of course we fast forward a little bit to, after the end of the Bracks government, the Brumby government, who then devised the Myki system, which is what we are still on the tail end of, if you like, today. I remember the press conference – in fact I was a member of Parliament – with the then Minister for Public Transport and the then Premier doing a presser. The machine – it is always terrible when you do these things at press conferences – broke apart, fell apart and hit the deck and splattered everywhere. It was great for the TV fodder; they loved it. What it did show was that the system was not ready – and it was not ready. We were told we would be able to buy a hot dog with our Myki and pay our car parking with our Myki. Unfortunately today you can hardly buy the ticket with it. The system was not ready, and it was hastily introduced for the 2010 election. It did not work, but it was

brought in, and the system has been plagued with some faults ever since. Now we are getting told Myki cannot be developed for electronic ticketing like in Sydney or Brisbane or other cities – where I have indeed been with you, Acting Speaker Farnham – where we have used tap-on, tap-off technology. Some of those cities have used it for the best part of a decade.

This bill will now enable that technology to take place. While I would say it is 10, 12 years late, we do not oppose it, because we know that that system needs to be introduced not just to the Melbourne metropolitan network but statewide, particularly on our regional system and also the country network. Some would say, and I have noticed previous ministers say, ‘Melbourne’s ticketing structure is too complex to bring this system in because we’ve got trains, trams and buses.’ Well, that is not true, because Sydney has got trains, trams and buses. They have also got ferries, so Sydney has one extra mode than Melbourne does, and they have managed it for the best part of now 10 years. And Sydney’s heavy rail network is about the same size as the Melbourne rail network in kilometres and similar in station numbers but carries 50 per cent more people. You can say, ‘Well, yeah, topographically Sydney is a different city’ – it is. ‘It’s harder to get around’ – it can be. Maybe that is debateable today. But it carries 50 per cent more people, which has particularly spiked in the last 10 or so years, I believe because ticketing is so easy. It is easy to use. It is a very user-friendly system, and it has been for a long time.

When we had family come out some years ago from Eastern Europe, my parents took them out and they were going to get the train to the city. There were five of them; my parents had a Myki, but they needed to buy some Mykis. It was going to end up being something like \$70 to buy Mykis, top them up to the minimum amount and then go into the city and come back. What is the point? That is not ease of use and that is not attracting people to use your metropolitan rail network; that is actually a discouragement to using the rail network. So what did they do? They drove.

You can find these examples, but what we should have had 10 or so years ago, I would argue, was tap-on, tap-off technology, which has been trialled in Sydney and been a success and which has been implemented in Brisbane and has been a success. Rather than reinventing the wheel as this legislation does today, we should have worked with PT systems in other states to actually enable this into Melbourne’s public transport system, particularly coming out of COVID, to encourage people to use the network to come back into the city on a user-friendly public transport system. That could have been, I would argue, much better for government revenue in terms of people using the network, ease of tapping on and off and also for V/Line. I am constantly in the north-east and southern New South Wales. One of my sons is always getting the train, and he prefers to get the XPT up and back because it is easier. The V/Line train, as the member for Benambra will tell you, with three carriages is full – 222 seats. It is a reduction from the five-car N-set, which had 380. But it is not just that; there is no Myki available up in the north-east, so it becomes a discouragement to using the system if you have to go into the New South Wales station to then buy a ticket from the Albury station to get back down into Victoria. So there are ways to make our system more user-friendly.

I talked about the XPT, and again, much maligned as the Liberals are, it was the Liberal Party that brought the XPT in after a decade of Labor promises in the mid 1990s. It was a Liberal government that upped rail passenger speeds in the mid-1990s for the first time since 1937 to 130 k’s an hour when Sprinters were brought in. It was a Liberal government that in the contracts in 1998 and then 1999, which were then in force when Steve Bracks came in, required rail passenger speeds to again go upwards to 160 kilometres an hour. It was the Labor government that scrapped the order for what were going to be the replacement to the N-sets, which were R-set carriages, to then look at a cheaper alternative, which was VLocities, to obtain 160-k-an-hour running.

I pick up the member for Mildura’s earlier point. There were two trains to Mildura; there was a day train and a sleeper train. In fact the day train was called the Sunraysia, and the sleeper train was called the Vinelander. The day train was removed by a Labor government. The night train, which was the Vinelander, was removed by a coalition government. But if we are going to come in here and talk about why these trains do not exist or work on the Mildura line, one cannot go past the track condition

that deteriorated greatly from the new deal in the late 1970s to the early 1980s when the maximum rail passenger speeds on that line went from a constant 80 or 90 k's an hour, in some stretches, down to as little as 40, particularly going north of Wycheproof. It is not feasible to run a passenger train at 40 kilometres an hour next to a road of 110 kilometres an hour – no-one is going to get it. So we need to look at infrastructure before we look at what is operating on that infrastructure.

We do not oppose this bill. I hope you enjoyed some discussion of rail ticketing. I am sure any member who would like to talk about rail ticketing is more than welcome to come and have that conversation, but I do not expect anyone to.

Gary MAAS (Narre Warren South) (12:53): What a shame I did not buckle myself in before that contribution from the member for Bulleen. I too would like to make a somewhat truncated contribution to the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2025, speaking to the two major amendments in the bill, the amendments to taxis and ridesharing and those to the ticketing system. It all goes to show how this government is committed to delivering improvements that make sure that our state's transport system is safe and that the amenities are up to date so that Victorians can keep moving and get to where they need to be faster and more safely.

As to those amendments in the taxi and the ridesharing industry, the bill will strengthen transparency within the taxi and rideshare industry to address fare overcharging as well as driver misconduct. Many of us rely upon taxis or rideshare to get around, and no-one should feel unsafe or uncomfortable when they are using these services. While the majority of taxi or rideshare drivers do the right thing and are incredibly hardworking, as all workers in the gig economy are, some do not follow those rules, whether that is through robbing, scamming or abuse. Many in this chamber would know someone who has experienced overcharging in a taxi service or unfortunately has felt unsafe in rideshare. It is often some of the most vulnerable community members who utilise these services. That could be an older person or someone with a disability who relies on these services to get around each and every day, but parents as well who have teenage children. As a parent of two teenage girls – let us call them Mary and Daffodil – I know that those two teens, like many older teens or young adults, also use rideshare services to make sure that they get home safely. It is great to know that they have the ability to book a ride for someone else, or I can even keep track of their location, and it is really handy. What I do not like is the credit card statement that comes back to me at the end of that, but it is good to know that that can be tracked. It is not right that anyone, particularly those who use these services for safety and convenience reasons, is taken advantage of.

To protect users this bill amends the Commercial Passenger Vehicle Industry Act 2017 and will make the following changes. The bill allows for security cameras and specific recording devices to be installed in taxi and rideshare vehicles to record audio. Currently that lack of audio limits the evidence that the regulator and Victoria Police can gather when investigating a complaint or incident that occurs in a rideshare or taxi service. Importantly, this change will protect both drivers and passengers, and we know that it is not just passengers but drivers too who can experience issues within a trip, so this change assists in protecting their rights at work as well. The bill balances the need to improve the safety of Victorians with the rights of people's privacy and puts strict safeguards in place to make sure the footage and the audio are protected from misuse.

Just a quick few words about the ticketing system – the bill really gets us moving on bringing the Myki system right up to date. It gives everyone the option to use credit and debit cards in place of Myki cards when travelling on public transport, and that really is an exciting change which will improve accessibility and usability for trains, trams and buses. It also means an easier trip for parents in my electorate, for instance, taking the kids if they are heading to the zoo or to see one of the many fabulous shows that we have in the city. It will mean that a student heading to TAFE on a local bus or someone heading to work in the city by train will not have to worry about finding a machine to top up their Myki card. Instead they can pay their way back by a quick tap of their credit card or their debit card, which many have on their phones as well. It will make it much easier for everyone, and we know that

the Myki system is integral to guaranteeing we are all paying our way and travelling on the great public transport that runs smoothly and that is well maintained in Victoria.

The bill will introduce new definitions and amend existing definitions relevant to public transport ticketing offences, defences and evidentiary provisions. I know that my constituents in Narre Warren South are really excited to get to use the Metro Tunnel when that opens in early December. It will change the way that passengers utilise the Cranbourne and Pakenham lines and get them where they need to go faster than ever before. It will open up access to key precincts throughout the CBD and inner city through those five brand new stations.

I think I will conclude just by saying that this is an excellent bill and it represents the Victorian government's continued commitment to improving access within our broader transport network, whether that is taxi or rideshare services or our public transport system. We want to make it safe, we want to make it reliable and we want to make it accessible for everyone to utilise. I commend the bill to the house.

Sitting suspended 1:00 pm until 2:03 pm.

The SPEAKER: I would like to acknowledge in the gallery a delegation from the National Assembly of France: Pascale Got, Mereana Reid Arbelot and Emmanuel Fouquart.

Questions without notice and ministers statements

Crime

Brad BATTIN (Berwick – Leader of the Opposition) (14:03): My question is to the Premier. The Premier has stood in this chamber and admitted on at least six occasions that there is 'more to do' to fix the crime crisis in Victoria. Yesterday the Premier said 'more needs to be done'. When will the Premier finally do more?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:04): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. Of course in answering the question in terms of the further work that the government is doing and will do in recognising that we have to work with Victoria Police to continue to address the increased incidence of violent, brazen offending, it is increasingly being undertaken by children and it is something that, as Victoria Police have told us, requires new responses, and that is exactly the work that we are undertaking.

Brad Battin interjected.

Jacinta ALLAN: But also I do note – I know it is disorderly to respond to interjections across the table, but I was actually getting to this point that the Leader of the Opposition is interjecting on – that it does of course come in that context where, over the course of the last year, we have toughened the bail laws here in Victoria, which has seen an increase in the number of both young people and adults on remand, in jail, not being released on bail. I know it is inconvenient to remind the Leader of the Opposition that he opposed the toughening of these bail laws, but we did introduce them.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, Victorians want more than simplistic 'Mary and Joe' lines. They want action and they want answers, not 'Mary and Joe' lines.

Mary-Anne Thomas: Speaker, on the point of order, there is no point of order. The Premier, on her feet, was being entirely relevant to the Leader of the Opposition's question. Meanwhile the Manager of Opposition business does not like hearing the truth about the Liberals' position when it comes to their actions in this chamber.

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind the member for Brighton and the Leader of the House that points of order are not an opportunity to make a statement to the house. If you cannot raise a point of order in the correct format, please do not stand.

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Jacinta ALLAN: As I was saying, in the context of the further work we are undertaking, it sits against that backdrop where we have toughened the bail laws. We have seen an increase in the number of people on remand. Evidence of that is in both the budget announcements this year, where we are funding additional prison officers and opening an additional number of prison beds, and the announcement this week of the opening of Malmsbury. We have introduced electronic monitoring to provide that intensive supervision for people on bail. We have strengthened the laws around organised crime.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Member for Nepean, last warning.

Jacinta ALLAN: We have also introduced tough new stop-and-search powers for Victoria Police. That, plus the machete ban, has seen over 20,000 of these dangerous weapons –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Member for Nepean, continue to defy my rulings and I will remove you from the chamber.

Danny O'Brien: On a point of order, Speaker, on the question of relevance, the question was clearly about what more needs to be done. The Premier has been talking about what has been done in the past, which is clearly not working.

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

Jacinta ALLAN: In terms of the further work that we are undertaking, it is from listening to people like Mark and Tenille, who I met with this week, who clearly understood the work that had been undertaken to strengthen bail, but also did talk to the government. They spoke with me and the Attorney, and I again thank the member for Hawthorn for his assistance in arranging that meeting. It is from listening to victims of crime like Mark and Tenille that we understand not only that there is more work to be done to deal with this brazen, violent offending and that there need to be consequences around those who undertake this sort of violent, brazen offending but also that we do need to look at the root cause of crime and understand that. Whether it is the work to break the cycle of family violence or keeping kids connected to school, that is exactly the work that we will do.

Mary-Anne Thomas: On a point of order, Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition during the Premier's contribution was continually defying your rulings. You have asked him to stop interjecting; he continues to defy your rulings.

The SPEAKER: I remind members that I am here to enforce the standing orders, and if I ask members to cease interjecting, the expectation is that they will do so.

Brad BATTIN (Berwick – Leader of the Opposition) (14:09): Yesterday the Premier said, in relation to Victoria's crime crisis:

... more needs to be done to address this repeat pattern of brazen, violent offending – offending that is increasingly being undertaken by children ...

Will the Premier finally admit that Victoria is in the middle of a crime crisis?

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, you asked your question. I again ask members to cease interjecting. You will be removed from the chamber without warning.

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:10): The Leader of the Opposition, in quoting me directly here in the house today, is for his own convenience – you could say in his ongoing deliberate campaign of misinformation – not referring to those times where I have exactly acknowledged that we have to tackle this ongoing, repeat pattern of brazen offending. I have said this on a number of

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occasions. And not only have I said it and acknowledged it; we are doing something about it. We have toughened the bail laws. We have increased police powers. We have given police additional resources.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, the question was very specific, and the Premier is debating the matter rather than addressing whether Victoria is in the middle of a crime crisis. It is a simple question.

The SPEAKER: I do not uphold the point of order.

Jacinta Allan: Again this question exposes that you are all not about the answer and not about doing the work, which is what we are focused on. It is about making sure that we give police the tools, resources and powers they need. We have banned machetes, but also we continue to invest in our schools and our TAFEs and our health system to keep kids connected to those important spaces.

Ministers statements: cost of living

Jacinta Allan (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:11): I am proud that my Labor government is delivering for Victorians, and we will always fight for working people – people with jobs to do and with kids to raise, like the working parents who raised me. They are the people I meet every single day when I am out and about in this great state. Clearly I cannot know all their names. They might be Mia and Jake from Morwell. They might be Myra and Jamal from Mentone. They could even be Mary and Joe from Maryborough. You will not meet these people in a boardroom, but I will tell you where you do meet them: you meet them in the staffroom. They are the parents battling the cost of living, with mortgage, school and fuel on top. They are the ones who need access to that vital health care that is fast and affordable, whether it is through the chemist or at the virtual emergency department, who appreciate the help with school breakfasts, sports and excursions. They are not the ones sitting on 16 properties; they are working hard to pay off one.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Member for Croydon, off you go for an hour.

Member for Croydon withdrew from chamber.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, ministers statements are not an opportunity for the Premier to attack the Minister for Environment.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Jacinta Allan: Again, I will go back. This is about focusing on parents who need help with school, help with costs and help to get a roof over their head. Also what they want is more public transport, and they want their kids to be able to travel for free as well. They also want the choice to work from home because it works for them. They are proud of our great state, and I will tell you what they also tell me: they hate the way that there are some who like to keep talking down the great state of Victoria. They also particularly hate cuts to frontline services – cuts to hospitals, schools and police, like the \$10 billion cuts that are coming that have been flagged by the member for Kew. I will continue to fight every day for working parents like Mary and Joe. They deserve good stable jobs, strong frontline services and a great future for their kids.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: The member for Tarneit can leave the chamber for an hour and a half.

Member for Tarneit withdrew from chamber.

Retail crime

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (14:14): My question is to the Premier. Eighteen months ago the Premier promised to introduce new laws to protect retail workers. Coles general manager for Victoria Chris McKellar said today:

Threatening situations across our stores are at their worst in Victoria and continue to escalate.

He went on to say:

... every day the Victorian Government delays urgent action means the crime epidemic affecting retail will get worse, not better.

Why has the Premier failed to protect retail workers in Victoria?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:15): In answering the member for Caulfield's question, I reject the claim that he made at the end of his statement, because as a former retail worker myself, we are all shocked and angered by the way that retail workers who are simply going there to do their job – we want to all see an end to this shocking level of offending, which is why we have committed to strengthening the protections for retail workers. It would be wrong for the member for Caulfield to present that in the absence of the work that Victoria Police are undertaking. Victoria Police, through Operation Stand, are already targeting those, whether they be thieves or people who use aggression, intimidation and violence towards retail staff. I want to thank Victoria Police for the work that they are doing to support our frontline workers. We will be bringing to this Parliament very soon those laws to strengthen the protections for retail workers, because they deserve to be safe in their workplace.

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (14:16): Woolworths state director of operations for Victoria Sarah Gooding today said:

Violence and aggression is rising across the country, but Victoria accounts for more than 40% of all ... reported cases – we need this to change.

She went on to say:

We've seen great steps taken by the ACT, NSW and SA with these laws ...

Premier, when will we finally see the changes happen in Victoria? When?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:17): I answered the conclusion of that question. The answer was provided to the substantive question. We are doing this work now. We are consulting with retailers and consulting with the union as well, the proud representative of retail workers – a union I was once a member of a long, long time ago. We are doing this work –

David Southwick: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, the Premier promised this 18 months ago and has done nothing. When will she finally introduce these laws to protect workers?

The SPEAKER: Member for Caulfield, that is not a point of order. A point of order is not an opportunity to make a comment or a statement to the house.

Jacinta ALLAN: I reject the statement that has just been made by the member for Caulfield, because I would like to acknowledge the work of our colleague Michael Galea in the other place, who has been undertaking that consultation. We have been looking at what other states have been doing in terms of strengthening protections for retail workers, because this is indeed an issue that is being faced by retail workers across the nation. As I said, we will be introducing these laws to the Parliament very, very soon. It comes in that context of the good work from Victoria Police, and I thank them for the work that they are doing to keep retail workers safe.

Mary-Anne Thomas: On a point of order, Speaker, I want to draw your attention to the fact that the member for Caulfield was consistently defying your rulings when you asked him to stop interjecting while the Premier was on her feet.

James Newbury: On the point of order, Speaker, it is my understanding that when a matter needs to be raised it needs to be raised at the time that the member has an issue. I appreciate the Leader of the House may have been slow on the uptake, but I am not sure that after the question is the appropriate time to raise some perceived issue.

The SPEAKER: I remind members, when other members are on their feet, to show some respect to those members and that interjections on both sides of the house are disorderly.

Ministers statements: health system

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services) (14:19): I rise to update the house on how the Allan Labor government is backing Victorian families with the health care that they need and deserve. There are those who say that on this side of the house we are spending too much time thinking about the needs of working families, but we make no apology for backing our nurses – women like Mary, who may well be juggling long shifts and a young family, or Joe, a tradie getting up early every day, working hard to pay his mortgage and support his kids. They are the people who keep this state running and they are the people who our party, the Labor Party, has been proud to represent for more than 100 years.

That is why we are absolutely committed to building the healthcare facilities that they need, whether that is in Geelong or Frankston, Ballarat, Werribee, Footscray, Melton, Sunbury, Phillip Island, Cranbourne or Craigieburn. And of course we are developing and building a new hospital, as I said, in Melton. It is why we are delivering more accessible care through our urgent care clinics or our Victorian Virtual Emergency Department. It is why we are going to deliver Victoria's first ever virtual hospital. It is also why we are reforming the way in which women's health care is delivered in this state, because Mary's, Maria's, Marianne's or Miriam's voice has never been heard by those on the other side – never. We are prioritising the needs of women who are living with endometriosis, period pain, pelvic pain, incontinence, the symptoms of menopause. So, yes, we do think about Mary and Joe every single day, because on this side of the house we will always back hardworking Victorian families. It is what Labor governments do, and we have no shame in relation to that. Every single day we stand by those hardworking people.

Crime

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (14:22): My question is to the Attorney. The Deputy Premier has called for 'sentencing that actually gives the opportunity to give these ... kids time'. Given the Attorney said yesterday, 'We on this side are unified in our approach,' when does the government intend to introduce legislation to implement the Deputy Premier's tougher sentencing policy?

Sonya KILKENNY (Carrum – Attorney-General, Minister for Planning) (14:22): Can I say the question from the member for Brighton goes to the very point about why those opposite could never be trusted to address what we are seeing at the moment, and that is an increasing number of children committing some very violent offences. I say that because all I have heard from those opposite in relation to this issue is reckless ideas, slogans –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker: relevance.

The SPEAKER: Attorney, come back to the question.

Sonya KILKENNY: We on this side of the house are looking at consequences for children. We are also looking at the root causes of crime. It is absolutely imperative that we address those issues – things like education, things like jobs, things like services. It is important to look at the whole community. It is important to recognise that what we are dealing with here is something we have never seen before. We have never seen this type of offending before – very violent, very brazen crimes being committed more and more by young children. We know, from listening to victims, the voices of victims, how traumatic and how terrifying these incidents can be. It is working with victims. It is working with communities. It is working with Victoria Police.

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James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, the Attorney is commentating, not dealing with the question that was put to her.

The SPEAKER: I do not uphold the point of order.

Sonya KILKENNY: This is about addressing those root causes of crime. This is about addressing consequences and ensuring that, when we are dealing with some of these very brazen and violent offences being increasingly committed by children, we are approaching this in a new way. We are working with Victoria Police, and as a good Labor government we are focused on those things, those protective factors, that are so important particularly in young children – education, schools and the protective factors of community and culture. Let me bring you to culture and remind everyone in here that it was this government that earlier this year introduced nation-leading anti-vilification laws – laws that those opposite opposed. And I remind everyone here –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, the Attorney is debating the question and not dealing with Labor's catch-and-release bail policy.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Sonya KILKENNY: The member for Brighton again reinforced the point I was making. Those opposite are reckless and they are simplistic in their approach to this issue. This is a new form of offending that we are seeing that needs a new form of response and intervention. That is exactly the action that we are taking.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (14:26): The Deputy Premier also called for 'a zero-tolerance approach to violent crime, in particular knife crime'. Given the Attorney said on Tuesday that 'we are aligned', when will the government introduce legislation to implement the Deputy Premier's tougher knife crime policy?

Sonya KILKENNY (Carrum – Attorney-General, Minister for Planning) (14:27): I thank the member for his supplementary question. As I said on Tuesday and on Wednesday, no-one should be committing crimes in this state. No-one should be committing violent crimes, and that is exactly why earlier this year we introduced the toughest bail reforms, the toughest changes to our bail laws. We know that they are having a meaningful impact. We know that because the facts are telling us – a 46 per cent increase in the number of young people on remand, a 100 per cent increase in the number of refusals for bail and the number of bail revocation applications. These are big numbers, which means our bail reforms are having an impact. But as you have heard, we have gone much further than that. We have also introduced the first national machete ban, stop-and-search powers for police and landmark anti-vilification laws.

Ministers statements: cost of living

Lily D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park – Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for the State Electricity Commission) (14:28): I am absolutely pleased to inform the house about how this government is helping Victorians like Mary and Joe – the Marys and Joes and the families that they support – as they go out to work or work from home, bring home their pay and deal with their bills. This Victorian government is helping them with the cost of living every single day. That is our number one focus every day. Our priority is helping those hardworking Victorians and their families to deal with the cost of living. How do we do that? In real, tangible ways that deliver results. It is not just talking about the problems but actually going to the heart of the problems and helping them every day to deal with the cost of living.

Our build in renewable energy, accelerated by the SEC, means we consistently have the lowest wholesale prices in the country. Let me just reflect on the matter. In the last calendar year the build of our renewables projects has delivered 42.4 per cent of renewable electricity. How does this translate to those hardworking Victorians, those Marys and Joes? Well, I will tell you. Eleven per cent of all of the electricity generated in Victoria was from the rooftops of every Mary and every Joe in Victoria,

delivering on average \$1000 of savings in their pockets every year to support those hardworking families.

We are doing it also by creating the jobs that the Marys and Joes and their families rely on every day. Those 67,000 jobs that we are creating by 2040 through the energy transition are about real jobs, real skills, real bill savings and real lower power prices for Victorians every single day. This is what you get when you have an Allan Labor government that is absolutely focused on Victorian families, rather than those that would simply close it all down to help cover their \$10 billion black hole and kill off every single project that supports the Marys and Joes of Victoria.

Cohealth

Gabrielle DE VIETRI (Richmond) (14:30): My question is for the health minister. Last night in the upper house the government, the crossbench and the opposition all passed a motion agreeing to an emergency funding package to save Cohealth in Collingwood, Fitzroy and Kensington. Will the government now honour the resolution and deliver the funding?

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services) (14:31): I thank the member for Richmond for her question. Rather than debating motions in Parliament, I actually met today with the CEO of Cohealth. My office continues to engage with the federal health minister's office on this very matter to understand the actual challenge. We need to be clear, because I do not want people spreading misinformation in the community. The challenge that Cohealth are facing at the moment is in relation to the delivery of primary care – primary care that is funded by Medicare – and their unique challenge is the fact that they serve the needs of very complex patients who take longer to deliver care for. My conversations with the federal minister Mark Butler have been about the need to recognise this particular challenge that Cohealth faces.

Here on this side of the house we have always backed in our community health services. I made the point the other day, when asked this, that it was a Labor Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam, who established community health here, and I have been a champion of community health at every opportunity that I have got. Our community health centres, which are independent organisations, governed by their own boards and managing their own facilities, rely on funding from a range of sources. That includes the state government through my own department, and indeed we are very pleased to be able to back Cohealth with \$68 million in grant funding for programs this year; the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing; of course the federal government, through Medicare; local government; and indeed philanthropy. I will continue to fight for Cohealth, but I will do it not by empty words in the Parliament but by engaging with the federal minister and engaging with Cohealth. I have a longstanding relationship with Cohealth and the CEO Nicole Bartholomeusz.

I might say it is a bit hypocritical of the Liberals to be standing up and trying to suggest that they support Cohealth when they have attacked their models of care every single day as we have been seeking to deliver alcohol and drug care in Flinders Street in the city. That has been attacked consistently by those on the other side.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, I do not know if the minister is confused. This was a question from the Greens, and she is sledging the opposition.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order. The Minister for Health has concluded.

Gabrielle DE VIETRI (Richmond) (14:34): I really do appreciate the minister's attention and advocacy on this matter. But it is not just about primary care; it is also about infrastructure, and health infrastructure funding is firmly in the state government's responsibility. The government would know that Cohealth have been sounding the alarm for years about their crumbling Collingwood building. Back in 2022 the health minister then told Cohealth that Victorian Labor would contribute \$25 million to upgrade their building. When it was not in the budget, they assured Cohealth it would be an election

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promise. Three years on, still nothing. This cannot actually wait for another election promise that does not get delivered. Something as important as the health of our community should not be pork-barrelled. Will the minister commit to the infrastructure funding to save Collingwood Cohealth before it is forced to shut its doors?

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services) (14:35): I thank the member for Richmond for her question. The member for Richmond should know – indeed I spoke to this question just the other day – that there have been a range of programs initiated by our government, both the Regional Health Infrastructure Fund and the Metropolitan Health Infrastructure Fund, both of which have been available over many years for community health services to access. But we continue to work with our community health sector to understand their infrastructure needs. But I will make the point again, as I have already done, that this is a responsibility that is shared not just by the state government but with the federal government. Of course we saw complete neglect by the previous federal Liberal–National government, who had no regard whatsoever for community health indeed –

Gabrielle de Vietri: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, the minister's statement about the federal government being responsible for health infrastructure funding is clearly not accurate.

The SPEAKER: The minister was being relevant.

Mary-Anne THOMAS: I just make the point that there are plenty of cases where the federal government has provided funding to community health.

Ministers statements: TAFE funding

Colin BROOKS (Bundoora – Minister for Industry and Advanced Manufacturing, Minister for Creative Industries) (14:36): Everyone knows that Victoria is an industrial powerhouse. One of our strengths identified in our industry policy is our highly skilled workforce. That does not happen by accident; that is down to years of investment in TAFE and skills development. The Allan Labor government is proud to back our TAFE and training sector and every Victorian looking to boost their skills – the Marys and Joes of every suburb and every region.

But that has not always been the way. In that dark period between 2010 and 2014 we saw savage cuts to TAFE – more than 2000 TAFE teachers sacked, a billion dollars ripped out of TAFE courses, 22 TAFE campuses closed across the state. Who will forget the padlocks locking the gates at Lilydale TAFE campus? The member for Eltham, the member for Yan Yean and I will never forget Greensborough TAFE being shut down shamefully during that time.

Thankfully the Allan Labor government has rebuilt TAFE and opened up opportunities – free TAFE is a great example – in vital industry areas. It is critical to maintain a highly skilled workforce for industry and for people's futures. This year's state budget, as an example, invests \$459 million in the skills and TAFE portfolio. But there are some who we know will take an axe to TAFE if they have the chance. There are some who are planning \$10.8 billion worth of cuts to the very services that Victorians rely on.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, ministers statements are not an opportunity to sledge the opposition.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Eureka can leave the chamber for half an hour, and the member for Sunbury is warned. I did not hear the minister mention the opposition.

Member for Eureka withdrew from chamber.

James Newbury: On a further point of order, Speaker, I think I took some 10 points of order yesterday in relation to this very issue. If you have forgotten, I am happy to go through it.

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The SPEAKER: Are you reflecting on the Chair?

James Newbury: Not at all.

The SPEAKER: It is not a point of order. The minister did not refer to the opposition.

Colin BROOKS: There are some who are planning \$10.8 billion in cuts to the very services that Victorians rely on. They have done it before; they will do it again. It is in their DNA. We all know that if they get the chance the Liberals and Nationals will gut TAFE.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, clearly now the minister is misusing the ministers statement to create more fictions in his response.

The SPEAKER: That is not a point of order.

Road maintenance

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (14:40): My question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. The Department of Transport and Planning annual report today reveals that last financial year major patching works on regional roads fell 45 per cent short of target, and in outer-metro areas the target was missed by a whopping 73 per cent. Why has the Labor government given up on fixing our roads?

Melissa HORNE (Williamstown – Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Roads and Road Safety, Minister for Health Infrastructure) (14:40): I thank the member for his question. It is a bit like Pavlov's dog. You know, the *Weekly Times* writes an article and the member asks a question. However, patching was introduced – and I have explained this to the member before – as a short-term measure in order to be able to deal with the flood events that occurred. As a result –

Members interjecting.

Melissa HORNE: It is very inconvenient, isn't it? But what we have done subsequently is do more rehabilitations. These are bigger pieces of work. In fact I was just recently with the member for Macedon on the Heathcote-Kyneton Road announcing the start of the maintenance season to be doing that big rehabilitation work out there. After all, we are the government that is investing nearly \$1 billion in our road maintenance program, and much of that is in our road rehabilitation projects. I appreciate that whilst the *Weekly Times* consistently – you know, 'Always on time, always getting it wrong' – is always misreporting the facts and then is always being –

Danny O'Brien: On a point of order on the question of relevance, Speaker, this was not in the *Weekly Times*; it is in the minister's department's annual report today.

The SPEAKER: That is not a point of order, Leader of the Nationals.

Members interjecting.

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

Member for Bulleen withdrew from chamber.

Melissa HORNE: The facts of the matter are that this is a government that is investing nearly a billion dollars last year and nearly a billion dollars this year on fixing our roads across the state.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Member for South-West Coast, this is your last warning.

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (14:43): The government claims its road maintenance budget for last year was \$964 million, and the minister has just repeated that claim. Yet the annual report today shows the total spending on road asset management was just \$692 million. Why is the

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government cutting budgets and slashing road maintenance works when the state of our roads has never been worse?

Melissa HORNE (Williamstown – Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Roads and Road Safety, Minister for Health Infrastructure) (14:44): I have explained this to the Leader of the National Party time and time again. You need to take the asset funding and you need to take the output funding and put them together, because it is like a noun and a verb. Yes, you do that. But let us go for a little bit of a wander back in time. In August 2012 Clay Lucas – a very good journalist, he was – wrote that drivers should prepare for more road potholes, cracking asphalt and patched surfaces after a dramatic slashing of the state's maintenance plan.

Members interjecting.

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

Member for Narracan withdrew from chamber.

Melissa HORNE: Now, who was that? I believe it was Terry Mulder who did that. And then in September 2012 he wrote that job cuts would leave the roads authority unable to do its job properly. Unlike those on the other side, we invest in our roads.

Ministers statements: Victoria's Big Build

Gabrielle WILLIAMS (Dandenong – Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for Public and Active Transport) (14:45): On this side of the house our focus is crystal clear: delivering the projects and the services that working Victorians need, because we are a party that builds, not blocks. More than 50,000 jobs have been supported across our transport projects, and these jobs belong to everyday working people like Mary and Joe, Victorians who get up early, they work hard and they want a fair go. The Metro Tunnel alone has supported about 7000 jobs during construction, and from early December it will support hundreds more train drivers and station staff as well. For Mary it means getting from Sunbury to Parkville faster for her nursing shift. For Joe it means less time commuting and more time spent with the kids before bed. The West Gate Tunnel will open in December, giving families in the west more ways to get where they need to go, taking trucks off local roads and getting them home sooner and safer. For Mary and Joe it is time back in their day, every single day. We have removed 87 level crossings since 2014, saving people time on their commute and of course at school drop-offs and pick-ups. There are 23 more to go, and they are well underway. That means Mary and Joe can get the kids to school and still make it to work on time. Then there is the Sunshine superhub, delivering more jobs and more trains to the booming western suburbs and of course regional Victoria too, because Mary and Joe deserve infrastructure that grows with them and does not leave them behind. While we are building for Mary and Joe, those opposite are cutting. They are cutting services, hospitals, schools, police – over \$10 billion in frontline cuts. While we fight for families like Mary's and Joe's, they are too busy fighting amongst themselves.

The SPEAKER: I acknowledge in the gallery the Lebanese delegation to the Parliament of Victoria: Consul-General Rami Hamidi and MP Elias Estephan.

Brad Battin: On a point of order, Speaker, in relation to the minister for energy's answer, I know that answers must be honest when you come into this place. When the minister answered that the lowest wholesale prices are here in Victoria, the Australian Energy Regulator has come out today and clearly stated that the wholesale energy prices here in Victoria have gone up by 21 per cent. That means now they are the fourth most expensive here in the country, meaning Mary and Joe have to pay more for their energy each and every day. I seek your guidance on the honesty of that answer and ask the minister for an explanation.

The SPEAKER: I will take that point of order on notice.

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Constituency questions

Brighton electorate

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (14:49): (1359) My constituency question is to the Premier. I ask: when will the state Labor government stop pocketing federal funding delivered for a proper pedestrian crossing upgrade at Glen Huntly Road in Elwood and deliver the project? In 2022 the federal government provided 50 per cent of the costs required to build a proper crossing over Glen Huntly Road near Elster Creek. The community has been calling for a crossing for years because the site is dangerous. Initially the department bizarrely proposed to build a crossing 200 metres away from where it was needed. It was just in the wrong spot. For two years the government has blamed the local school for a delay in the crossing being built. Well, I can reveal the truth. The government has been trying to force the local school to sign off on a cheap sign instead of delivering a pedestrian-operated crossing, as promised. Rightly, the school refused to budge. I have raised that the state is brooding on the funding with the federal Treasurer. Premier, stop being a cheapskate. When are we getting the crossing?

Pascoe Vale electorate

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (14:50): (1360) My constituency question is for the Minister for Development Victoria and Precincts. Why is the Victorian Labor government undertaking community consultation around the future possible opportunities associated with the former Kangan Batman TAFE site in Coburg North? Following significant community advocacy and engagement alongside locals, I was delighted to have announced that Development Victoria is now seeking feedback to inform the future uses of this 1.83 hectares of land that was formerly occupied by the TAFE in Coburg North. Located within the Coburg North core industry and employment area, the site is approximately 500 metres from Batman station, adjacent to the rear of the Lincoln Mills Homemaker Centre and Bunnings in Coburg and strategically placed to support future socio-economic outcomes for the northern suburbs. As part of unlocking the surplus government land for economic development, we are now seeking community views on future opportunities and welcoming feedback on possible future jobs, skills and cultural, creative, community and social enterprise outcomes. I have doorknocked and spoken to many locals, including through two local pop-ups, and all feedback will be collated for development of a new land use strategy that will help inform and guide the future uses. This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to help shape the future of this strategic site for Melbourne's north and Merri-bek as part of our central Coburg revitalisation.

Gippsland East electorate

Tim BULL (Gippsland East) (14:51): (1361) My question is to the Minister for Emergency Services. The information I am seeking is whether there are plans to change the criteria for access to the emergency services levy exemption. I have got one CFA captain who owns a block of land. It is the only property he owns, and he is saving to buy a home, so he is currently renting. Because that block of land, which is the only property he owns, is not his primary place of residence, he is not allowed to claim the exemption. This young fella is the backbone of his local brigade. We need the minister to change the criteria so that he and the many others who would be in his situation around the state are not disadvantaged and can actually claim the emergency services levy exemption against the one property that they own. In its present form it is very, very unfair on these young CFA volunteers.

Tarneit electorate

Dylan WIGHT (Tarneit) (14:52): (1362) My question is to the Minister for Community Sport. How have investments in local sport facilities and the clubs that use them supported community outcomes in Tarneit and Hoppers Crossing? Last week we opened the community club grants program, where clubs can apply for up to \$5000 in funding to improve the skills and knowledge of their volunteers, coaches and officials, as well as grants of up to \$4000 to help clubs deliver new programs to the community. Clubs can also apply for grants of up to \$1000 to purchase uniforms and equipment, and \$750 travel grants are also available to participate in competitions away from home.

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The Local Sports Infrastructure Fund is also open for local government authorities to apply for upgrades to community facilities, sports lighting and planning. Tarneit is home to a number of fantastic sporting clubs who make use of local facilities for training and games. From cricket to netball and football, this government has been investing in the programs, lighting and scoreboards that make game day even better.

Croydon electorate

David HODGETT (Croydon) (14:53): (1363) My question is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. I ask: when will the Department of Transport and Planning paint traffic lane arrows on Main Street at the intersection of Main Street, Lacey Street and Kent Avenue, Croydon. Minister, the Croydon railway level crossing was removed at this intersection last year. Presently when a vehicle travels from Coolstore Road into Main Street and then turns right to go under the new railway bridge, the only arrow line markings on the road at the intersection are for the left turn into Lacey Street. This results in drivers sitting in the far-right lane to turn right, which in fact is the through lane for vehicles travelling in the opposite direction on Main Street. This is incredibly dangerous and confusing for road users. The addition of lane markings of a through arrow and right-turn arrow in the centre lane would provide clarity for drivers and improve the safety of this intersection.

Albert Park electorate

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (14:54): (1364) My question is for Minister Shing, the Minister for Housing and Building in the other place. Can the minister provide a progress report on the Barak Beacon development? The Allan Labor government is committed to providing more homes for Victorians through our construction of more social and affordable housing. One example of this, our Barak Beacon development, will provide a 46 per cent uplift in social housing at the site to accommodate previous social housing renters as well as others on the Victorian housing register. The 87 social homes that were no longer fit for purpose are being replaced with 408 new social, affordable rental, market rental and specialist disability accommodation homes. The Barak Beacon development will not only ease housing supply but also provide better opportunities for Victorians in need of secure, high-quality homes. The new homes will be bright, modern and energy efficient and have been carefully designed to complement the Port Melbourne area. The buildings will be tenure blind, meaning that all social, affordable and private rental homes will be built to the same standard and look the same. The design includes a playground, community gardens and outdoor spaces, all while increasing the housing supply dramatically. I look forward to the minister's answer.

Ringwood electorate

Will FOWLES (Ringwood) (14:55): (1365) My constituency question is for the Minister for Police. My constituents in Ringwood have raised concerns about an individual engaging in unauthorised or attention-seeking activities in public spaces. These include impersonating an elected public official, attending live emergency incidents, the illegal capture and transport of native wildlife such as budgerigars and using dangerous machinery on median strips for the purpose of photo opportunities. What enforcement powers does Victoria Police have in relation to unauthorised public conduct of this nature, particularly where it may cause safety risks, nuisance, nausea or confusion for the community?

Kororoit electorate

Luba GRIGOROVITCH (Kororoit) (14:55): (1366) My question is to the Minister for Community Sport. What support is available for Brimbank City Council to improve facilities for Balmoral Football Club in Derrimut so that this growing multicultural club can continue to thrive and provide opportunities for men, women and young people in the west? Balmoral Football Club is a proud Bosnian community club that has been part of the Brimbank community for more than 30 years. Over that time it has grown into a diverse and inclusive club, with over 300 players, 500 members and more than 20 teams across both juniors and seniors. The club has made significant progress in

promoting women's participation in sport, growing from just a handful of female players in 2023 to three girls-only junior teams and a senior women's side now in 2025. It has also worked hard to keep football accessible for families from low socio-economic backgrounds. Despite these achievements the club's progress is being held back by inadequate facilities. The club has ambitions to compete in higher leagues and is set to host the 2026 Australian Bosnian Cup.

Hawthorn electorate

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn) (14:56): (1367) My question is to the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events. Next month I will be attending one of Melbourne's best sporting events, the Head of the Yarra, which is proudly run by the Hawthorn Rowing Club. It was inaugurated in 1957, and it brings together thousands of rowers and supporting teams from across Australia and increasingly across the Asia-Pacific. The race ranks amongst the top three head races in the world, alongside the Head of the Charles in Boston and the Tideway heads on the Thames. It should be a source of pride for our state and city. Rowing is a great sport that embodies many of the values we Victorians hold dear: mateship, having a go, giving your all, commitment and having fun. Head of the Yarra is a major event for Melbourne, and I ask that the minister and the government investigate how we can better support this great event, growing it to maximise its social, sporting and economic benefits for Victoria.

The SPEAKER: Member for Hawthorn, what is your question?

John PESUTTO: That the minister investigates the funding options for Head of the Yarra.

Narre Warren North electorate

Belinda WILSON (Narre Warren North) (14:57): (1368) My constituency question is for the Minister for Energy and Resources. How many members of the Narre Warren North electorate have taken up the \$100 power saving bonus? The current power saving bonus has been a huge success and has made a huge difference to the cost of living for my constituents. I look forward to hearing from the minister to see how many people have taken up this amazing offer.

Tim Bull: On a point of order, Speaker, I would like to raise four overdue questions, if I may, for the attention of the house: question 2071 to the Treasurer on land tax, in relation to the Boisdale and District Progress Association facility, known as the stables; question 2890 to the Minister for Environment on firewood collection and expansion; question 2891, again on firewood but this time in the areas of Lakes Entrance and Nowa Nowa; and question 2892 on behalf of the Moogji Aboriginal land council and its liaisons with Parks Victoria. If I could have those answered given they are outside the timeframes, that would be much appreciated.

Bills

Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2025

Second reading

Debate resumed.

Colin BROOKS (Bundoora – Minister for Industry and Advanced Manufacturing, Minister for Creative Industries) (14:59): I move:

That debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.

Ordered that debate be adjourned until later this day.

State Taxation Further Amendment Bill 2025

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Danny Pearson:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Jess WILSON (Kew) (15:01): I rise to speak on the State Taxation Further Amendment Bill 2025. I note it is 3 o'clock on Thursday afternoon and we will have very, very little time to debate a state taxation bill that will see Victorians slugged with a further \$100 million a year in tax by the Allan Labor government. Because we have so little time to debate this piece of legislation, I will keep my contribution shorter than what it would have been so that my colleagues have an opportunity to talk about the impact of the Allan Labor government's taxation regime on their constituents and on all Victorians.

This bill, like so many bills before it, is little more than a tax grab by a cash-strapped Labor government desperate to find revenue to plug its ever-growing debt in this space. The government may try to present this bill as a clerical bill, tinkering around the edges of Victoria's taxation system. But buried within it are two significant tax increases that illustrate just how bereft of ideas this government has become when managing finances in this state. The first is the completely unjustifiable hike in the congestion levy, payable on car parks in the CBD and surrounding suburbs, and the second is the completely shameless tax grab that increases pet registration fees on dogs and cats and greyhounds in this state. This is a tax that will be passed on to pet owners or have to be absorbed by already stretched local councils.

I will give a very brief overview of some of the more uncontroversial measures in this bill before delving into these significant cash grabs in more detail. First, the bill makes some changes to the Land Tax Act 2005 that will affect the application of the vacant residential land tax, exempting residential properties in Dinner Plain from the VRLT in a belated recognition of the area's alpine conditions and seasonal use. When the government expanded the VRLT from 1 January this year, they exempted all alpine resort areas, but for some reason they forgot about Dinner Plain, which is the only Victorian village located at a similar altitude to the alpine resorts. The properties at Dinner Plain are largely under freehold ownership, and the VRLT has been applied to properties in this area which are largely not occupied outside the winter season. I note this amendment will apply retrospectively from 1 January 2025, and the State Revenue Office will identify and contact Dinner Plain owners who paid the vacant residential land tax to arrange refunds.

I will flag here that I intend to move textual amendments to this bill. This measure in particular is an appropriate step in fixing what was the government's stuff-up in the first place, seeing Dinner Plain property owners slugged with this tax unfairly and now having to seek refunds. I take this opportunity to congratulate a number of coalition members who have been fighting for residents in Dinner Plain, fighting for them to have this vacant residential land tax removed so that these residents do not have to pay the tax when other alpine resorts do not have to do so.

This bill also clarifies how foreign purchaser duties, absentee owner surcharges and the first home owner grant apply to New Zealand citizens, ensuring that to qualify for exemptions New Zealanders must show they ordinarily reside in Australia for at least six months. But these amendments align these particular measures to the taxation conditions that generally apply to special category visas, which are exclusive to New Zealand citizens.

Another change this bill makes to the Land Tax Act is the creation of a new land tax exemption. The exemption will apply to land valued under \$300,000 where the owner lives on that land in a non-permanent dwelling such as a caravan or a tent. Currently these people are subject to land tax, but this will mean that vulnerable people who do not yet have the means to build a more permanent home on their land are no longer being penalised by the tax system. The bill also makes changes to the application of the commercial and industrial property tax, the CIPT, clarifying that properties only

enter the scheme where duty is paid on 50 per cent or more of the property's value. It introduces a duty exemption for transfers between trustees and custodians to simplify administration.

The bill also amends a number of acts to simplify various taxation processes, including allowing electronic service of documents under the first home owners grant and raising the land tax hardship relief threshold from \$1000 to \$5000 to allow more cases to be heard by the State Revenue Office commissioner rather than the Land Tax Hardship Relief Board in order to speed up decision times. And finally, I note the bill clarifies how building permit levies are calculated, establishing a formula for how construction costs are to be determined for the purposes of the building permit levy.

I now want to turn to the really substantive parts of the bill, and I want to be very, very clear about the significant increase to the congestion levy that this bill proposes to implement. The bill will increase the category 1 area rate levy from \$1750 to \$3030 per leivable parking space. It will increase the category 2 area rate levy from \$1240 to \$2150 per parking space. This represents a 73 per cent increase on both category 1 and category 2 levies. But to make matters worse, the bill expands the category 2 area east into parts of Burnley, Cremorne, South Yarra, Windsor, Richmond, Abbotsford and Prahran. That means that car parks for the first time in the City of Yarra and the City of Stonnington that have not been previously liable for the congestion levy are now being hit with more than \$2000 per space. This is a blatant tax grab by the Allan Labor government that will be passed on to Victorians, who are already feeling cost-of-living pressures.

The proposed levy increase will impose an additional average cost of \$13 per day plus GST on car park spaces in the CBD. This cost will be passed on to everyday Victorians. Regional Victorians coming into the CBD to see a medical specialist will pay more. Victorians living in the suburbs who want to go to see a show or watch a game of footy will be slugged. Victorians living with a disability, for whom public transport is not always an option, will pay more to get into the city. Not everyone can take public transport, and for many reasons people need to drive into the CBD. But under the Allan Labor government once again that just got more expensive. If you are heading into the city to go to dinner or to go to the theatre or you want to go to another cultural activity that Melbourne has to offer, you may not want to take public transport home at night. Driving in and parking in the city should be an option that is available to everyday Victorians and is not so expensive that it is out of reach. But under these changes once again that is going to change, because the Allan Labor government cannot manage the finances in this state.

But it is not just people wanting to come into the city that will pay for this tax hike. It is now people who want to go into Prahran. It is people who want to go into Albert Park or Fitzroy. All of these suburbs for the first time are going to be hit with the congestion levy – for the first time. It will be the small business owners and operators on Bridge Road, on Chapel Street, in Albert Park and in Fitzroy that will suffer under the Allan Labor government's tax hike, because this is a blatant tax grab from a government that cannot manage the finances and is seeing net debt soar in this state. It will result in fewer customers and less foot traffic. Many small businesses in this state are already struggling to keep their heads above water because of the dire economic conditions under the Labor government. They have already been slugged with COVID debt levies and all manner of Labor fees and charges. There have been more than 60 tax increases, fee increases, levy increases over the past decade under the Labor government.

The reality is that this tax hike goes to the very heart of the decline of Melbourne. The CBD and its surrounding suburbs were once thriving and dynamic centres of culture and enterprise. But the impacts of COVID lockdowns and Labor's debt have beaten down people and the traders of Melbourne. We hear it every single day, we feel it on the streets and you just have to talk to any business owner in this state to hear the pressure they are under under the Allan Labor government. In fact in the words of a former Labor member in the other place, Philip Dalidakis:

Melbourne now feels angrier, edgier, more brittle.

In his column in the *Age* last week he had many heads nodding around Melbourne that know that feeling and that sadness when it comes to what has happened to Melbourne under the Labor government. This is just another example of how it is going to be harder to revitalise the CBD. Instead of working to revitalise our capital city, making it a global destination, what is the government doing? It is taxing.

This is not about congestion, because we asked the Treasurer's office what modelling had been done to inform the increases.

Tim Richardson interjected.

Jess WILSON: Infrastructure Victoria in 2017.

BrIDGET VALLENCE interjected.

Jess WILSON: Ten years ago – that is right, member for Evelyn. What modelling has been done to inform how much these taxes have increased by? None, the Treasurer's office told us – absolutely no work had been done. Maybe they might do some data analysis after the fact, but no modelling had been undertaken to inform the increase in the tax hike under this change.

This is a government that has lost control of the finances. Everywhere you turn, they are looking for an opportunity to tax Victorians more – \$85 million a year from this, the congestion levy. For the first time they are expanding it into suburbs that are desperate to get the foot traffic up. Small businesses that are looking –

A member: They're pedestrians.

Jess WILSON: Who use cars to get to these places, to go to restaurants. Every single day Victorian restaurants, Victorian small businesses, are seeing the decline of consumer confidence in this state, and it is this government and tax hikes like this that make it impossible to revitalise this city and this CBD.

I just want to finish on the other tax hike in this bill. The congestion levy increase is 73 per cent, but there is a 100 per cent increase on another tax in this bill, and that is the levy that the state government puts on every cat and dog and greyhound registration in this state. This bill will double the amounts payable to the state government from cat and dog registration fees collected by councils – a 100 per cent increase. If it woofs, if it purrs, Labor will tax it. That is the reality of where the finances are at in this state – not even your pet dog or your pet cat is safe from the Allan Labor government. When asked 'How will this be passed on to consumers? Will it be passed on to pet owners?', the Treasurer's office said, 'Oh, well, they might pass it on, or councils could just try to absorb it.' Once again, this is cost shifting onto local councils, just like the emergency services tax. This is the reality of the Labor government: every opportunity it gets, it cost shifts to someone else – put a tax on the pet dog or the pet cat. This is one of those taxes that will resonate with Victorians, because if you own a dog or a cat, like over 1 million households do in this state, you do not expect the Allan Labor government to come after you with a new tax.

This just highlights how desperate this government is for tax revenue. Why? Because under this government we have the highest debt in the country, soaring towards \$200 billion in coming years. What will that mean? That every day Victorians will be paying an interest bill of over \$29 million, or \$1.2 million an hour. As we see that net debt soar, what is the answer from the Allan Labor government? That they are going to put up taxes at every opportunity to make it harder in this state to do business, to cut the cost of living or to even own your own pet dog or pet cat.

Tim RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) (15:16): It is a pleasure to rise and follow the member for Kew on the State Taxation Further Amendment Bill 2025. I was listening to the range of contradictions in that contribution around no-one coming into the CBD but then the congestion levy that will stop the mountain of people coming into the CBD to access all kinds of things that make Melbourne one of the

top-rated cities in the world. I just want to take the member for Kew through the September figures. Melbourne remains ahead of Sydney as the top interstate overnight destination for trips, for nights and for visitor spends, with international travellers staying 3 million nights in the June 2025 quarter. Those opposite might narrate doom and gloom, but the figures tell a very different story.

The member for Kew in her first speech made a very eloquent reflection when she said:

Improving financial literacy will be a priority for me.

Well, goodness me, with an \$11 billion black hole and cuts to services and now narrating more opposition to a revenue source, this is an extraordinary prism that we find ourselves in. The Shadow Treasurer is wanting to preside over substantial cuts to services, and when you see that first speech it makes the member David Limbrick in the other place blush. It is the libertarian nature of very small government: ‘Governments don’t create any jobs; just leave it to the free market and let market failure run ragged on Victorians.’ This is the new Liberal Party: small government, smashing services and cuts to frontline services that Victorians rely on.

Let me go to the congestion levy and the member for Kew’s points about this. The member for Kew called out an Infrastructure Victoria reference. We know that congestion alone costs Victoria some \$10 billion per year. We know that is disproportionate. When you jump on Punt Road and you are rolling in at 35 minutes for a few-k journey, you know that the congestion is building up. We need to diversify the way we get into our city and into our essential areas. You know those opposite get the former Premier Dom Perrottet for their fundraisers. Remember that? They roll him out. He is that bastion of wisdom. He was such a great economic manager. Well, guess what, we are aligning the levies to the same circumstances as Sydney. There we go. It is so revolutionary this; it is so disastrous. Those opposite love that. They want to go back to the colony of New South Wales. That is how desperate they are to talk down Victoria. If they could make it New South Wales and name half the things after colonial leaders, they would in a second. In a second, they would be back there. But the congestion levy is on the same merits and terms as Sydney. So they lord it over us with Premier Berejiklian and they lord it over us with Premier Perrottet, but these are similar measures to what we find in the northern state, in New South Wales.

So where do we get to? There is an economic reference, a justification, for this. By way of comparison and to give the member for Kew that context, in 2018 Infrastructure Victoria, the state’s independent infrastructure adviser, as we know – there are those that hold it up to huge standards when it suits them but then will not when it comes to issues that do not suit their narrative – conducted a review of the last time the levy was increased and the boundaries were expanded in 2015. They concluded that the levy had been successful at reducing the supply of leviable car parking in the leviable areas off the morning peak by 3900 vehicles. So we are supporting those communities to get to where they need to go. When the member for Kew talks about getting to essential appointments and services, you cannot – for an hour – with some of the congestion that is going on. We are building the major infrastructure projects that those opposite are abundantly opposed to.

Remember their major congestion buster. It was their big major infrastructure project. The member for Evelyn might remember this because it was of such state significance that they contracted out the stickers being put up at Southern Cross station. Remember that? It said airport rail was just down there. Tourists came into Melbourne – the very limited numbers during the Napthine–Baillieu years – and walked to the edge of the platform, looking for the airport rail, and there was nothing there. All those opposite contributed to reducing congestion in Victoria at that time were stickers at the end of platform 14 on the way to Geelong. That was literally their contribution.

We have got an infrastructure agenda that is the envy of the nation. It is no thanks to the work of the federal Liberal coalition, which the member for Kew – a massive fan of the former Treasurer, a fellow Victorian and a fellow person from her area – talks about. The fandom for the former member for Kooyong and the federal Treasurer was extraordinary in the member for Kew’s speech, because she talked about economic management and how great he was. He took it up to \$1 trillion debt – I do not

know if you saw. The chart is so big it goes off. You have to increase the chart, and it keeps going. That was before COVID. They just kept going. Guess how much funding Victorians got? Zero. Economic infrastructure, congestion-busting infrastructure funding – zero. I know that the Leader of the Nationals got a few bits and bobs from Chester down the road in Gippsland, but nothing from the Liberals – nothing whatsoever.

Danny O'Brien: Nothing from the Labor government here in Victoria.

Tim RICHARDSON: He says nothing. The Metro Tunnel – any danger? Any danger for the Suburban Rail Loop? Those opposite – no contribution; there was nothing. I was hoping there would be a bit more of an intellectual discussion here around how we respond to it, because we know the member for Kew is the number one seed. We know once the member for Brighton nicked off, the concession prize was knocking off the member for Evelyn as the Manager of Opposition Business, who was doing a great job, had us on the ropes and made us a bit nervous at the time, but that was the concession.

Danny O'Brien: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I believe the member has strayed dramatically from the bill, and I ask you to bring him back to it.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Alison Marchant): I ask the member to come back to the bill.

Tim RICHARDSON: Significant sensitivity there. From the member for Kew I was hoping just for some sort of eloquent display of understanding congestion and how we eradicate this and how we respond to this into the future. We got nothing. We got no leadership there. We got no narration, just again more opposition, more division and more talking down Victoria and the CBD once again.

I go back to that. The economics of this stack up. By way of comparison, the reference that I made to reducing 3900 vehicles off the morning peak means the last increase in the levy saved around two lanes of freeway worth of congestion off our roads. In today's money that would be around \$1.6 billion in avoided freeway expanded costs. That is an extraordinary number. The member for Kew and member for Evelyn interjected at the time and said, 'Well, that was based in 2017.' Well, yes, if you were basing the Liberals' infrastructure policies and the do-nothing of their approach to congestion busting, yes, it might have been worse. The inverse of that is that congestion has not gotten worse, that the population has not grown and that the 2017 number was not a worse point than where we find ourselves now because congestion has gone backwards. That is not comparable whatsoever. What we see is that the economics of that would be substantially better.

What we find here is it is again the Shadow Treasurer's perspective that is reaffirmed by the Leader of the Opposition. It is a do-nothing, no-solutions-based approach to a bill once again to say, 'The government's bad. The government's always bad. Victoria's bad,' but then the stats again stack up. We are outstripping Sydney in our visitor economy. Melbourne is the absolute engine room of the nation's economy, and that has played out time and time again. We see that in business growth in our area. We see that in investment across our state. We see it in jobs creation – nearly 900,000 jobs have been created by this government. The narrative does not stack up over there whatsoever.

When we see \$11 billion as the gap, we know what that means for Victorians in our state. That means congestion will not be busted, because services will be cut. That means the workers that are building the essential projects that are stripping back congestion will not be delivered in the future. There will be no pipeline of works. Everything will come to a grinding halt. We have seen that before by those opposite. The notion in the shadow minister's response around where the debt profile is as 24 per cent of gross state product – it is far less than when the federal government left us, in the mid-30s of GDP.

This is a really interesting narrative, that it is all doom and gloom in Victoria, but those opposite charmed over those who took it up to \$1 trillion in debt. \$1 trillion in debt was what they left federally. That is in a comparable sense. We have all the economic markers pointing towards Victoria still being a great place to invest and thrive into the future. What we do not need right now is \$11.1 billion in cuts

in opposition to this; just add that to the ticket. The member for Kew, and maybe the Leader of the Nationals – because I know he has got form for wanting to break the coalition; he got admonished and then rolled the former leader, and now he is at the main table – might want to reassess. Maybe he wants to think about telling them not to make those cuts. Regional and rural areas would suffer from those \$11 billion in cuts to teachers, to nurses, to child support workers and to police and emergency services, because that is what is coming if the member for Kew, the Shadow Treasurer, ever got in charge of the finances.

Jess WILSON (Kew) (15:26): Under standing orders, I wish to advise the house of amendments to this bill and request that they be circulated.

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (15:26): Well, it is always a pleasure to follow the member for Mordialloc and to speak on the State Taxation Further Amendment Bill 2025, which is the living, breathing embodiment of the old Maggie Thatcher line that when socialists run out of money they come after yours, because this is what is happening again under this government. They have run out of money, and they just keep coming for more taxes every step of the way, every opportunity they get: ‘What can we tax?’ Who would have thought, after all the noise that this government has made about puppies and about dog parks – and the member for Mordialloc knows; he is smiling because he remembers doing entire Public Accounts and Estimates Committee sessions on dog parks – it took this long for the boffins in the Treasurer’s office to go, ‘Puppies and kittens – we can tax them too.’ They are doubling the tax on kittens and puppies. What sort of government does that? It is outrageous.

Jess Wilson interjected.

Danny O'BRIEN: It is a desperate government, member for Kew, that would increase the dog and cat registration by 100 per cent. And it reminds me, member for Kew, of other things that the government is increasing taxes on to a level of 100 per cent, like every household in the state under the new emergency services tax – a 100 per cent increase in the rate that every single household is paying. They will have all probably got their rates notices by now with the extra little bit in red highlighting the state government’s 100 per cent increase under the emergency services levy. And not only that, every commercial business as well has got a 100 per cent increase across the state and there is a 64 per cent increase for every industrial customer. If you are a farmer, you are paying the same as you were last year, but we know that the sword of Damocles is hanging over your heads for next year, when a 150 per cent charge is awaiting every single primary producer in the state. That is because this government is so desperate for money.

Fancy the member for Mordialloc talking about the federal government’s debt levels when so much of that debt incurred by the federal government was to bail out businesses in Victoria who were repeatedly locked down during COVID by this Labor government. It was the former Treasurer Mr Frydenberg who came to the rescue of Dan Andrews and this Labor government by actually bailing out the businesses here, and now they are complaining about the debt they have got. Seriously? To complain about the debt – \$194 billion you are heading for. That is \$29 million a day in interest this government is incurring on behalf of Victorians. That would fund the Sale College rebuild in two days – in two days it would get funded. But that is \$29 million a day in interest that Victorians are paying because this profligate lot on the other side are not able to manage money.

We are seeing that as well in the tax increase in this legislation on the congestion charge – a massive increase there, which as the member for Kew says, will impact people coming to the city. This government likes to say that it governs for all Victorians. This is an extra tax on regional Victorians who are wanting to come to the city. They want to come to the city if they can – to see a show, go to the footy, go to the basketball or netball – but they are going to be taxed extra to do so if they have to go and find a car park.

I also want to pick up the member for Mordialloc on the, frankly, laughable modelling that the government is supposedly putting around there. It is one thing to stuff up your own numbers, but only

this government could get the modelling wrong on the opposition's numbers as well. It explains everything you need to know about this government. We are hearing, 'Oh, these nasty cuts. There are going to be terrible cuts that the Liberals and Nationals do.' We have a quote that I think is relevant to this:

... Victoria has over 500 entities and 3400 public boards and committees ... You can't tell me that there's not some **fat** in there.

It sounds like a terrible, nasty, Liberal thing, doesn't it? Who was it? That was the current Treasurer Jaclyn Symes when she announced 3000 jobs will be cut under the Silver review, and this mob is now trying to scream that we are the problem on this side. It is unbelievable that they think this; it is just a disgrace. It is a government that cannot manage money. Victorians are paying the price because these people on the other side are looking for tax increases every step of the way.

This bill has been curtailed deliberately by a government that does not want to talk about more tax increases – on puppies and kittens, for God's sake. As a result, I want my colleagues to be able to have their say, so I will leave it there. But Labor cannot manage money, and Victorians are paying the price.

Nathan LAMBERT (Preston) (15:31): I am slightly surprised to have two opposition speakers finish well short of time. I might take the opportunity to speak about the State Taxation Further Amendment Bill 2025 at some greater length than the Leader of the Nationals. I would like to begin by going back to April 2023, when the member for Sandringham was the Shadow Treasurer. Back at the time – the Leader of the Nationals is gesturing wildly. Does the Leader of the Nationals have an interjection? The member for Sandringham, when he was the Shadow Treasurer, back in April 2023, stood up in this place and made a claim regarding taxes. He said very boldly that:

... under the Liberal–Nationals you will be literally thousands of dollars better off every single year.

At face value of course that would be a good thing, but naturally you cannot just wave a magic wand and achieve that. Immediately the Shadow Treasurer was asked what services he was going to cut to fund what appeared to be about a \$5 billion black hole, which his various comments implied. Here we are now in 2025, 2½ years later, and the black hole has grown. The Treasurer now has it at about \$10.8 billion a year. I heard that the member for Mordialloc had it at \$11.1 billion. He has, to his credit, very adroitly added in the effect of the textual amendments that the member for Kew has just circulated in the house. He has calculated on the fly that they are knocking back the congestion levy changes and thus adding another \$340 million to the black hole. I can see him nodding. I think if we were to actually tack on the cats and dogs changes, that might even be \$11.2 billion. Whichever way it is calculated, it is a very large hole in revenue that the Liberal and National parties need to explain.

We did hear in fact during question time that the Minister for Economic Growth and Jobs speculated as to what the black hole related cuts in services might look like. He talked about 18,000 nurses, 9000 teachers and 4500 police officers losing their jobs.

Danny O'Brien: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, similar to my point of order before, this contribution at this point is nowhere near the legislation before us.

Nathan LAMBERT: On the point of order, Acting Speaker, this is a bill that goes directly to the fiscal arrangements and taxation arrangements of the government, and that is what we are discussing.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Alison Marchant): I will rule on the point of order. I will bring the member back to the bill, but other members have raised taxation in this state, on both sides.

Nathan LAMBERT: For the further benefit of the Leader of the Nationals, the member for Kew has just circulated textual amendments that seek to adjust the revenue arrangements of the government, and all members here have every right to ask what other adjustments might be made, including on the expenditure side, in relation to services, as a result of those amendments circulated by the member for Kew. As I said, the minister speculated that this might involve losing teachers, losing nurses, losing police officers. As I heard it in the chamber, opposition MPs denied that. The only thing I have ever

heard, by way of explanation, for how the Liberals or Nationals will fill their \$11.2 billion black hole, is that they will apparently 'address project blowouts'. I do know that some businesspeople who attend lunches with the Liberal Party members cringe a little when they hear this project blowouts explanation, and that is because many of our good business leaders understand basic accounting.

The member for Mordialloc was talking about the importance of financial literacy, and I could not agree more. Perhaps for the benefit of the Liberal and National members, we will just step through those basics again. When you have a budget that is balanced, and this government has a budget that is balanced, that means your cash flows are roughly the same – your revenue and your expenditure, your operating result is balanced – if you take \$11.2 billion out of the revenue side, you have a deficit. You have very significant deficit – you have got \$11.2 billion worth of deficit. You cannot fix that deficit by de-scoping or cancelling capital projects. They are, for the most part, balance sheet transactions. You could, at a very long stretch, try and fix the problem by reducing your depreciation, as accountants know, but that would require cancelling \$100 billion worth of capital projects.

It is very confusing trying to work out where the Liberals and Nationals are on any of our capital projects. Many will remember they of course opposed the West Gate Tunnel. They ganged up with the Greens to try and defeat it. They opposed the West Gate Freeway update. I think they also ganged up with the Greens to try and defeat it. I do remember that their federal counterparts pulled several billion dollars, from memory, or tried to pull it out of the Sunshine station upgrade. But now that we arrive here in late 2025, I think they actually support the entirety of the government's capital expenditures across the forward estimates – I have certainly never heard anything to the contrary. So if they are doing that, it brings us back to this very central question: how are they going to pay for their black hole? To which the only answer must be cuts in services.

Danny O'Brien: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, while we are all loving that we are living rent free in the government's head, I renew my point of order that this is not related to the legislation before us.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Alison Marchant): I bring the member back to the bill.

Nathan LAMBERT: Acting Speaker, on the point of order, in the debate in this house the member for Kew has circulated textual amendments that roughly remove \$390 million from the revenues of this government. We have every right in a debate to ask what the impact of that is. The Treasurer put out a media release, I think yesterday, that went exactly to these questions, and I might just quote some of the key questions that that media release asked of the Liberals and Nationals:

Will you commit to publishing your costings each time you make a promise to the Victorian people?

The Treasurer also asked:

Will you support the congestion levy changes this week, or add \$85 million a year to your billion-dollar blackhole?

That is very much to the topic of the bill. We have heard today, looking at those textual amendments, as I said, that the answer to that is no. But her final question, and perhaps the most important, is:

When will you detail the cuts to fill the growing \$10.8 billion blackhole?

I come back to that point because it is the single most important question to ask about the fiscal program of the alternative government in this state.

Then turning further to the details of the bill that we have in front of us, I do just want to spend a moment dealing with the commercial and industrial property tax changes, and that is because I think that is a very important and still underrated reform. I remember the opposition actually tried to block this important reform, and the member for Sandringham, who was then the Shadow Treasurer, moved a reasoned amendment to that effect. Those of us who were here in the chamber at the time argued that it was an important reform to get on with, and that if we needed to make some of the adjustments

that he was talking about, we would do so through legislative measures. Of course that is exactly what we are doing here today, and I will not repeat further comments from that second-reading speech.

I will note the very strong support, including in Preston and Reservoir, for the way that this reform and our vacant residential land tax reforms, which are touched upon in part 6 of this bill, discourage land banking and encourage people to make good use of any land or property that they own. It is very frustrating for people in Preston and Reservoir when they understand that there is pressure on our housing and the need to get more housing built, which of course this government is doing, to have some people sitting there with fantastic properties that are empty or sitting on land that could be properties and doing nothing with it, sometimes for decades. I can give you a couple of examples. There was a vacant property at 233 Gower Street, which was actually sitting within the Preston High grounds, that was not tenanted out, with no-one resident in it. I am very pleased to inform the house that the government have now purchased that property, and we will be putting it to good use as a further part of Preston High's grounds. Similarly, there is an infamous burnt-out property next to the Preston Hotel that has not been addressed in years. There is a property up at 1C Macartney Street that has been unfinished now since 2010 – so for over 15 years. These reforms are helping make sure that people who do nothing with these properties and leave them sitting there will be compelled to or will at least face a financial disincentive for continuing to do so.

Finally, very briefly in the time we have got left, I would just like to echo the remarks of the member for Mordialloc about the congestion levy and the how that it is a really well-designed levy for the kind of things we are trying to do with the city. We do have to deal with growth. We do have to deal with peak-hour congestion, which is one of the hardest things to do with growth. That is exactly what this levy does. I agree with him that the adjusting of things to the Dom Perrottet levels that he referred to is a good change. I support the rest of the bill and commend it to the house.

Bridget VALLENCE (Evelyn) (15:41): I rise to make a contribution on the State Taxation Further Amendment Bill 2025. As sure as night follows day, this tired Labor government will always find a new way to tax Victorians more, and that is simply because Labor is addicted to tax. Labor is spend and tax, spend and tax, spend and tax, and as debt levels skyrocket, Labor's taxes go up, up and up. All this news is bad for Victorians in a cost-of-living crisis. At its heart, this bill is nothing more than a device to tax Victorian families more, because Labor are running out of money and they will not do anything to fix their financial incompetence, their wasteful spending and their skyrocketing debt. This latest grab for cash will do nothing to improve the lives of Victorians. Instead, as I said, it will only make the cost of living for Victorians that much harder.

After promising no new taxes back at the 2014 election, and even the Treasurer promising no new taxes before her last state budget only a few months ago, this Labor government over 10 long years has added 65 new or increased taxes. Under this Labor government, the proposal in this bill is to significantly increase the so-called congestion levy, but it is nothing more than a tax imposed on Victorians who are visiting the city from out of town, from out of the suburbs or at odd hours or who might be working in a cafe making food or coffee, cleaning offices, going to a show or dining at a restaurant. We should be doing much more to attract people to our city, whether for work or for recreation, and doing much more to revitalise our city and boost Melbourne's economy. Yet with this new law, Labor will increase the car park tax by over 70 per cent. That is not going to encourage people to go to shows in the city, to shop in the shops at Chapel Street or to go to the cafes in Richmond.

Congestion is not the problem to solve that it once was. City office occupancy has plummeted since the COVID pandemic lockdowns by this Labor government and the work-from-home changes. Visitation is down. City traders are absolutely on their knees under this Labor government, as a result of Labor's longest lockdowns and, more recently, the never-ending violent protests under the watch of this Labor government, week in and week out. Under Labor's new tax plan, for car parks in the category 1 area, which includes the Melbourne CBD, the car park tax will increase from \$1750 to \$3030, and for the category 2 area of the inner suburbs, the car park tax will increase from \$1750 to

\$2150. Further, Labor is expanding the category 2 area to hit even more Victorians with their car park tax.

This is an illogical tax. Residents in Prahran, South Yarra, Richmond will now be forced to pay this new car park tax. Local residents and visitors who need to drive to the Prahran market to buy their fruit and veg and shop on Chapel Street will now be forced to pay for this new car parking tax, which will hurt the already suffering small and family businesses in these inner suburban areas and in the city. Labor government MPs will say that people can ride a bike or catch public transport, but if you are a mum with little kids, perhaps someone with a disability or elderly or someone coming from the outer suburbs – like in my area, Coldstream or Mount Evelyn – from where you literally just cannot catch public transport to go to the iconic Chapel Street to shop; you will need to drive. But with this tax, people probably will just not do that. It is a disincentive to come in and frequent the shops in our inner city and suburbs.

When we sought clarification from the Treasurer's office in the bill briefing about what analysis or modelling had been undertaken in relation to this 73 per cent tax hike on car parks and how that would actually improve congestion, we were told that the modelling that this Labor government was relying on was done back in 2016, 10 years ago. That is simply out of date. How lazy it is for this Labor government to use modelling from 10 years ago, well before the city landscape completely changed through the COVID pandemic, lockdowns and work from home. Visitation to the city has dropped. The latest financial report delivered by the Treasurer earlier this month recorded that \$123 million was collected from Victorians under this car parking tax. Under this new tax hike, in this law, Labor expects to reap almost double the amount, with \$222 million expected revenue from Victorians as a result of this car park tax hike. Over the forward estimates, Labor predicts the tax will increase to \$228 million for the 2026–27 year, \$234 million for the 2027–28 year and \$240 million for the 2028–29 year. So in total, over the forward estimates, Labor expects to gain an additional incremental revenue of \$924 million – nearly \$1 billion from Victorians over the next four years with this car park tax.

We have established that this Labor government are addicted to taxes, to taxing hardworking Victorians more to plug their budget blowouts and their skyrocketing debt. And like any addict, this Labor government is looking for its next hit – now it is the family pet: the pet tax. That is right, in this legislation, under Labor's new tax plan, they will tax Victorians more for their dogs and cats, as this bill doubles the state government levy from pet registration. The clip on the ticket that this Labor government wants to take from pet registration is going to double under this new law by Labor. Seriously, the tired Labor government has absolutely no shame left. They have run out of ideas, and the only idea they have is to spend more and tax Victorians more.

The Treasurer only said back in May this year, before the last budget, that there would be no new taxes, and yet in a spectacular failed promise, this law we are debating today introduces two new taxes on Victorians. The pet tax will impact over a million households in Victoria. They have no shame. Detailed specifically in this legislation and in the minister's second reading speech, Labor's new pet tax hike proves how much of a dog's breakfast the state Labor government's budget has become and how desperate Premier Jacinta Allan and her government have become with the skyrocketing debt, how they are going to pay that down and how they are going to deal with the unfunded Suburban Rail Loop pet project of theirs. Again, under Labor's new tax plan in this bill, the clip on the ticket in relation to pet registration will double.

Labor cannot manage money and they cannot manage the budget, and it is Victorians that will pay the price. Labor are taxing Victorians more because they have reached unsustainable levels in terms of the debt. It is clear that Labor's addiction to taxes clearly will not stop. Victorians are paying double the tax that they were 10 years ago. In the 2014–15 financial year the total state tax revenue of the government was \$18.3 billion. Ten years later the state tax revenue for the 2024–25 financial year is \$38.9 billion. Victorians are paying double the amount of tax after 10 years of this Labor government. It is time for a fresh start. It is time for a fresh start to restore sound financial practices, to lower taxes

and to help ease the cost of living for Victorians. We oppose this bill and the unfair new tax grabs in this bill.

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (15:50): We know that this legislation will make a range of amendments to various taxation acts to – I will just give the overview to start with – keep our tax system fair for struggling property owners living on their property, make sure the community of Dinner Plain is treated like any other alpine resort, make reforms to tackle the spiralling cost of congestion in our city and make amendments to make sure Victoria has an efficient and fair tax code. I do not pretend I can cover all of that, but I will seek to cover a fair whack of the bill.

When it comes to that first element, keeping our tax fair for struggling property owners living on their property, what am I talking about? We know that there are a lot of people struggling out there. There are Victorians that are living on their parcels of land, and they will have saved very hard to be able to get to that point. Sometimes those people might fall on hard times and need to live on the property, even though they do not have a permanent structure. They might be living in a caravan or some other type of non-permanent building, and they are just trying to get by. But because the principal place of residence exemption for land tax only applies to land with an occupancy certificate, they may end up getting a land tax bill in the mail – that is pre these amendments coming through. We of course think that is unfair, and that is why we are exempting properties with a value under \$300,000 with non-permanent shelters from land tax. It is important that those Victorians, who are just trying to get by and only have one property that they live on, do not face unnecessary and burdensome bills. It is a very nuanced element but one that is certainly tackling a direct cost-of-living issue. We trust that with the good passage of this bill, that can help to alleviate that burden for those Victorians.

I want to now proceed to another significant element of this bill, namely the congestion levy. Fundamentally, when talking about congestion levies, they are seeking to change behaviours with a very good and sound rationale. If you simply sit on your hands and hope that change will happen, we know it does not. In fact we need to foster good and positive ways to make people have less burdensome commutes, commutes that are actually more efficient. If we are talking about specifically, say, people with a disability or mothers with prams and other things that have been mentioned, although they certainly can travel on public transport, that is all the more incentive to reduce congestion on the road so that they have shorter lengths of commutes in terms of duration. Simply hoping for a change is not the way forward. We have seen this globally; we are not only relying on data that we have to date. We see in other parts of the world, not least the UK, that they have significant congestion levies imposed. Less people in cars will also help to reduce emissions fundamentally, subject to them being electric or otherwise. But even so, even an electric vehicle, as admirable as that can be, is still an object on the road; it still creates congestion.

It is always going to be better the more people we get onto public transport or active transport as the case may be. Certainly we will see that with the Metro Tunnel coming on board. I note the opposition did suggest it was a hoax. But of course being a Labor government, as we do, we are delivering, and I am very excited about that. I had the great pleasure of joining colleagues to see the seamless connection between the stations, and it is really going to be transformative for our state. We are not only imposing certain elements to curb and to change behaviours of Victorians, but we are also facilitating much easier ways to get around our city.

We know that there will be an increase in services in terms of additional services with the Metro Tunnel in December, and then of course the full uplift in February which will be a thousand extra services. I also want to note that since 2022 there has been an uplift with both the Metro Tunnel and certainly Anzac station, which is very close, right on the edge of my seat of Albert Park. Also for commutes in and out of Fishermans Bend there has been an uplift of 1500 services and a significant uplift in patronage, none the least on weekends.

I was at a book launch the other day and there were so many locals there who were really so excited about the fact that the uplift in the 237 bus has really made a personal difference to them. I also have

had really positive feedback on other bus services, such as the 606. I know people want even more – great. The more advocacy we have for more uplift, even better. But there was significant uplift on that, which actually had a significant benefit for a lot of school students. I am excited whenever we have community talking about public transport and wanting more of it or more access ways for cycling. This is a good thing for our state. We know along St Kilda Road that we have the properly segregated bike lanes and the uptake there has been absolutely fantastic, really providing a much easier transit, a much healthier transit for so many Victorians along St Kilda Road. It is a very busy part of our state. It was certainly a very complicated upgrade to make, but it has been well worth it.

I should say that we do tackle this from a holistic perspective. Obviously this bill is specifically about state taxation, but nevertheless it is not in a vacuum. It is built around all the other factors and all the other elements that we are implementing or have already been implemented to help Victorians get where they need to go. A couple of weeks ago I had a traffic and pedestrian safety forum in Southbank. I certainly was not controlling, for want of a better word, who turned up to that particular forum. I was very pleased to see if people were talking about parking or talking about increasing lanes on freeways. No, what they were talking about was how much they love public transport and active transport, and they wanted further enhancements in that space, which was absolute music to my ears. Contrary to the sort of the rhetoric we hear from those opposite, I think that through really positive uplift in terms of public transport and major infrastructure developments that the Labor government has rolled out, we can see that Victorians are very keen to take them on and to enjoy the benefits of them.

Further still, we know that we also have really significant investments through the SEC to ensure that with our public transport also that we are really cutting or slashing our emissions. I know that we certainly are upgrading our bus fleet. Having ridden on an electric bus a couple of times, I must say it is fantastic. You no longer get that diesel sort of inhalation, but it is also much quieter and a much more pleasant ride. Really when we are talking about disincentivising people to schlep with their cars into the city – and let me tell you, it is not much fun. As somebody who lives right on the city, it is so much more pleasant to hop on a tram or to even use your legs, I must say. Obviously we are allowing for the different needs of different people, so I am not wanting to reflect on people with disabilities or otherwise who might need other forms of transport. But it must be said, the more of us that can use public transport or active transport, the better it will be for everyone in terms of reducing congestion.

We also know it would be a significant saving for the economy as well. In fact Infrastructure Victoria has modelled the congestion cost to the Victorian economy at over \$10 billion per year from 2030 alone. You can see there is a very clear economic imperative to put in place very strategic but transparent measures to ensure that we continue to press down and to tackle and to curtail congestion for our state, because all Victorians will no doubt be better off.

Even going back a little further, in 2018 Infrastructure Victoria, the state's independent infrastructure adviser, conducted a review of the last time the levy was increased and boundaries expanded, which was in 2015. They concluded that the levy had been successful in reducing the supply of leivable car parking in the leivable area, which led to 3900 fewer vehicles in the morning peak period. In anyone's language, that is a significant benefit in terms of reducing the burden of having to sit – how boring, let alone cumbersome – in traffic and having less time for you for your extracurricular activities or to spend time with your family. There is another incentive to reduce congestion and to improve the ability of Victorians to get around our great state of Victoria.

Rachel WESTAWAY (Prahran) (16:01): I rise to speak on the State Taxation Further Amendment Bill 2025. Whilst this is an omnibus bill containing many technical amendments, some of which I support, I must focus my remarks today on the provisions that will directly harm the community I represent: the expansion of the category 2 congestion levy into Prahran, South Yarra and the City of Stonnington. I speak today not only as the member for Prahran but as the new Shadow Assistant Minister for Small Business and Shadow Assistant Minister for Hospitality. This issue sits at the heart of both these portfolios and, more importantly, at the heart of my community. Under standing orders, I wish to advise the house of amendments to this bill, and I request that they be distributed.

I am circulating an amendment to clause 19 that would remove Stonnington from this expansion. Specifically my amendment removes references to Dandenong Road and Queens Way as boundary markers and adjusts the geographic description to exclude the Stonnington municipality while maintaining the boundary at Punt Road. This is not a wholesale rejection of the levy system. This is a surgical amendment to protect a precinct that is fundamentally different to the CBD.

Let me be clear: we are facing in my community government taxes that will put parking up by 73 per cent in my electorate. Chapel Street in Prahran has a vacancy rate of 15.87 per cent. Chapel Street in South Yarra sits at 13.12 per cent and Toorak Road in South Yarra is at 8.33 per cent vacancy. It will have a significant impact on my area if we have this tax included. I listened to the member for Albert Park, and while she states that this congestion levy is going to save the environment, let us be clear here: this is a parking tax. What I am hearing from local residents and shoppers in my area is that they will just drive to Chadstone, which is not helping the environment – it means people will have less money in their pockets and emissions will be greater.

Nearly one in six shopfronts on Chapel Street in Prahran stands empty. These are former cafes, boutiques and local businesses that have closed their doors. These are the small businesses that I represent. These are the hospitality venues that once made Chapel Street famous. I walk Chapel Street daily – at least when I am not in this place – and I talk to traders. I hear from the cafe owners that are struggling with rising costs. I meet with the boutique retailers trying to compete with online shopping, and I am in regular contact with the management at Prahran Market. Local traders, the Stonnington council, business associations and the broader community have been investing time, energy and resources into revitalising this precinct, and we have seen green shoots – real, tangible signs of recovery. The private sector is leaning in, taking real risks and investing real money in our community. Look at the magnificent Prahran Arcade that has just been done up – private investors are restoring a heritage icon. Look at the Cecil Place precinct – new investment, new energy. Look at the Jam Factory precinct – billions of dollars invested in these areas to create part of Chapel Street, as well as the small businesses seeking to find a precinct that gives them an edge on the megamalls and online shopping that they are currently facing.

These are private businesses and developers backing Chapel Street's future with their own capital and hard work. They believe in this precinct, and they are willing to take the risk. What does the Labor government do? They find a new and innovative way to make it harder. At every turn the private sector leans in, invests and takes risks, and this government slaps a 73 per cent increase on the parking tax on its customers on top of all the other taxes and charges that they are currently facing. It is not just bad policy but sabotage. This government wants to make it harder and more expensive for customers to visit these revitalised spaces; to shop in these beautiful, restored heritage buildings; to dine in existing and new venues; and to support the small businesses and hospitality venues in my electorate.

As the Shadow Assistant Minister for Small Business and the Shadow Assistant Minister for Hospitality, let me share what is at risk. Prahran and South Yarra combined represent 4267 businesses generating \$1.02 billion in annual turnover, \$971 million in visitor spend and critical employment for thousands of Victorians. And the crucial detail: 64 to 65 per cent of visitor spending comes from people outside of the precinct. These are destination shoppers coming from across Melbourne for independent traders, for cafes, for restaurants. Chapel Street represents the absolute best, and this government and this levy are going to kill it. We absolutely need to carve it off.

My amendment offers a solution: remove Stonnington from this expansion and protect Prahran, South Yarra and the surrounding areas that were never intended to be captured by the CBD congestion levy. This does not undermine the levy's purpose for genuine CBD locations; it simply recognises that the destination shopping strips facing 16 per cent vacancy rates need support and not additional tax burdens. I urge all members to support this amendment – support Chapel Street, support South Yarra, support small business, support hospitality, support a community that has been fighting very hard and deserves better than to be treated as collateral damage in a revenue grab. I call on the government to

work with the opposition to fix this, whether it be here or in the upper house, before it is too late for the businesses and the workers in my electorate.

Eden FOSTER (Mulgrave) (16:07): I rise today to speak in favour of the State Taxation Further Amendment Bill 2025. This bill, while technical in its nature, is profoundly rooted in the core values of fairness, equity and the unwavering belief that government must work for every Victorian. My focus is shaped by growing up in a diverse working-class community, which has instilled in me a profound sense of compassion for those facing adversity. It has shaped my focus on mental health, education and social justice. This is a government that understands the essential contract between citizen and the state: we pay our taxes, and in return we expect world-class services, a strong social safety net and a government that plans for the future. The amendments contained here are the machinery of that contract, ensuring its smooth, fair and responsible operation.

This bill, a collection of administrative and legislative amendments, might seem far removed from those social concerns, yet I argue it is an integral piece of the puzzle. An equitable and robust state taxation system is not an end in itself; it is the essential means by which we fund things like the rollout of the royal commission reforms in mental health, deliver world-class schools and health facilities, build the critical infrastructure our community needs and deserves, and ensure that no Victorian is left behind. The bill before us is a package of commonsense, necessary and targeted reforms. It seeks to achieve a number of key outcomes, shoring up the state's financial bedrock against unexpected legal challenges, ensuring the fair and intended application of our taxes, supporting local economies and reducing administrative burdens for everyday Victorians.

Moving now to some of the amendments, I would like to talk about the Congestion Levy Act 2005. Since its inception this levy has served a dual purpose of managing congestion in our central areas and providing a dedicated, sustainable revenue source for vital public transport and road projects. Our government is delivering the largest transport investment program in the state's history, and to sustain that level of investment for projects like the Suburban Rail Loop, the Metro Tunnel and major level crossing removals, a stable funding base is non-negotiable.

This bill makes the necessary adjustments to increase the category 1 area rate to \$3030 and the category 2 area rate to \$2150 from the 2026 calendar year, as committed to in the budget update. Critically, we are also expanding the category 2 area to include suburbs that are now experiencing the kind of commuter pressure the levy was designed to manage, whether it be Burnley, Cremorne, South Yarra, Windsor or targeted parts of Richmond, Abbotsford and Prahran. The expansion of the category 2 area is simply a reflection of the success and growth of our city. Areas like Cremorne and South Yarra are no longer just fringe suburbs. They are major employment and commercial hubs, generating significant traffic and demand for infrastructure. It is only equitable that where congestion occurs the levy designed to manage it applies. This is commonsense recognition of how our city has grown and how congestion has spread.

However, we are also being flexible and fair. This is where community consultation, which I value highly and this government values highly, delivers a practical outcome. The bill provides a significant 50 per cent concession for conditional free retail parking spaces in the expanded category 2 area. This means that local shopping centres and retail strips will not be unduly penalised. This exemption applies to spaces available to customers free of charge for at least 1 hour or for those who make a purchase. Critically, the 50 per cent concession for conditional free retail parking demonstrates our balanced approach. We are committed to urban planning that supports public transport and discourages unnecessary car use in dense areas, but we are equally committed to supporting the small business owner who relies on convenient customer parking for their shopfront. This is a targeted measure to protect local economies from unintended consequences while fulfilling the primary policy objective. It supports local jobs, encourages local commerce and ensures that the economic engine of our inner suburbs continues to thrive.

Furthermore, we are reducing complexity and red tape by formally excluding exclusively residential parking spaces from the levy framework entirely. This is a sensible administrative fix that ensures the levy serves its intended purpose and does not target the resident who simply parks their car at home. And when you have public transport as good as we do in Victoria, with the soon-to-be-open Metro Tunnel and greater services across the network, who needs to bring the car? You can hop on a train, tram or bus and do what you need to do in those suburbs.

My next point focuses on the amendments to the Land Tax Act 2005, particularly the vacant residential land tax. This tax was designed to encourage the efficient use of housing stock, but we must ensure its application is not punitive to everyday Victorians facing genuine unforeseen life circumstances. We have listened to home owners. The VRLT amendments introduce a crucial exemption for properties undergoing major renovations or repairs, where the work starts and finishes within the same calendar year. We all know that renovating a family home is a complex and often delayed process, and this decision to exempt properties undergoing major renovations that start and finish within the year is a direct response to real-world feedback. We want people to improve their homes. We should not punish them for a construction timeline. To hit a family with a vacant land tax while they are investing in their property and upgrading their housing is counterproductive and unfair. This amendment prevents the VRLT from becoming an accidental renovation penalty, ensuring it focuses exclusively on its original policy intent – activating genuinely vacant housing supply. This amendment applies a much-needed dose of common sense, ensuring the VRLT is used to capture genuinely neglected properties, not properties that are simply under improvement.

In a similar vein, the bill corrects a historical anomaly by introducing a land tax exemption for low-value land with non-permanent shelters. This is a measure of dignity and recognition. The exemption for low-value land with non-permanent shelters is a small but powerful act of recognition. It acknowledges that not everyone lives in conventional housing and that our tax system must be flexible and compassionate enough to respect the dignity of every resident, regardless of their living situation. We are ensuring that people who are living on low-value land in temporary or non-permanent structures, often due to financial necessity or unique circumstances, are not subjected to an unfair tax burden.

This reflects a deep commitment of this government to social justice and supporting all Victorians, no matter how or where they live. To the beautiful alpine community of Dinner Plain, the bill retrospectively excludes land within this unique village from the imposition of vacant residential land tax. This is a clear demonstration that our government is listening to the specific needs of regional Victoria and correcting an anomalous application of the tax that did not reflect the unique purpose and seasonal use of property in that location.

I would also like to speak on other amendments, including those to do with Domestic Animals Act 1994 and the changes to pet registration made in this bill. Currently when a family registers their pet with their local council, a small amount of that registration cost goes to the state government to be distributed to a number of animal-related welfare programs such as education for institutions that race greyhounds and support for groups like the RSPCA that coordinate adoptions of domestic animals and provide other forms of animal welfare. I want to make it crystal clear that this money is used to support causes that are about as universally loved and admired as you can get. I doubt you will find a member of this chamber that dislikes the RSPCA, for example. Yet the reaction to this change from those opposite has been completely disproportionate. I have seen social media posts from multiple members opposite saying that the government is introducing a pet tax. When the RSPCA come out and say that they are expecting a sharp rise in animal cruelty reports and that they do not get extra resources to continue investigations to do with livestock, those opposite shrug their shoulders. But we listen. We do what we can to make sure that they can continue their work. Let us be clear about what this change actually means: it is an increase in the portion of money that goes to the state government to support animal welfare, of \$3.50 for greyhounds and \$4.64 for domestic cats and dogs per year. That is less

than a cup of coffee per year going to animal welfare. With my now probably 10 seconds left, I want to congratulate the minister for this bill and commend the bill to the house.

Ellen SANDELL (Melbourne) (16:17): I rise to speak on behalf of the Victorian Greens on the State Taxation Further Amendments Bill 2025. The bill includes a number of measures that can broadly be grouped into three categories: some property tax changes, the congestion levy changes and changes to animal fees. I will deal with each of those in that order.

The bill proposes some relatively straightforward changes to a number of the state's property taxation acts, including the Land Tax Act 2005 and the vacant residential land tax, the Duties Act 2000, the Commercial and Industrial Property Tax Reform Act 2024 and the Building Act 1993. The Greens are happy with these minor amendments. It is worth noting that this year's budget papers show that the reforms to the vacant residential land tax, which were actually a result of negotiations with the Greens and the Treasurer and include better enforcement of the tax, will roughly double the expected revenue from unoccupied housing in the 2025–26 financial year. It is a really significant change and one that we were really proud to be a part of, because it provides millions more dollars year on year to build social and affordable homes in the context where we have a once-in-a-generation housing affordability crisis.

More importantly, it will help to minimise land banking and bring thousands of currently unoccupied homes into the rental market and the housing market. That provides houses that will actually be lived in – homes for Victorians – rather than empty houses that serve only as speculative assets for investors. Beyond all the political talk – I know that Labor talks a lot about housing – the simple fact is that the government's own economic modelling shows that the growth in house prices will be at least double that of wages year on year. To put that another way, even Victorians earning a decent wage will find it increasingly hard to afford to buy a home under the state and federal Labor governments. That is why the Victorian Greens passed amendments to reform the Victorian vacant land tax. That is also why the Victorian Greens passed amendments to regulate Airbnbs, including the right for people who live in apartments to ban Airbnbs in their own buildings. We did these things and we advocated for these things because the Greens are the only party in Australia who believe that the government should provide housing as a basic human right.

Everyone needs a place to live. Shelter is a basic human right. Without a home, you cannot get a job, you cannot get an education and you cannot stay healthy. You cannot live a good life if you have nowhere to live. So why do Australian governments still give more taxpayer handouts to investors to buy their seventh, eighth or ninth house, rather than investing in and making it easier for young people to buy their first house? It does not make any sense. It is not fair for young people – actually, it is not fair full stop. We need to radically change the way that we think about housing in this country. Every single person deserves a safe home, and that right to a safe home should trump an investor's desire to make more profits from buying up multiple homes. We in the Greens believe that affordable housing means making housing less expensive relative to a person's income, whether that person rents, lives in public housing or is paying a mortgage on their home.

Beyond the amendments to property taxes, the bill also proposes changes to the Congestion Levy Act 2005 to expand the congestion levy into inner eastern suburbs, as well as increase the applicable levy rates. Congestion charges have long been used in cities around the world to change people's transport choices from motor vehicles to cleaner, healthier, cheaper options in areas where there are good active and public transport alternatives. Road congestion alone costs the City of Melbourne – which is in my electorate – \$4.6 billion every year, and this is estimated to grow to \$10 billion by 2030 as the city grows. We simply cannot afford the financial costs of traffic.

The transport sector is responsible for almost a quarter of Victoria's total carbon emissions as well, second only to electricity generation, and transport is actually the fastest growing source of emissions, with private cars being responsible for around about half of all transport emissions. Air pollution – which is separate to carbon emissions but related – from motor vehicles is also responsible for around

1800 premature deaths in Australia every year, which is notably a higher number of deaths than the national road toll. Australian medical studies have also found that commuting by cars is associated with cardiovascular disease, diabetes – conditions considered among the leading causes of preventable deaths in the nation. Of course there is the improved amenity, livability and commercial activity in areas where roads prioritise active and public transport over noisy and polluting traffic. It is simply nicer to live on a road with active transport rather than a lot of traffic.

More than half of Melbourne's vehicle trips are already less than 6 kilometres, meaning there is massive potential to further lower traffic congestion in the CBD and inner suburbs. But the thing is, a congestion levy in and of itself will not be effective to realise these benefits if people are not also provided with safe and efficient active and public transport infrastructure alternatives. The state government has invested in some major public transport projects for the CBD and inner suburbs, notably the Metro Tunnel project due to open later in the year. At the same time it has built a private toll road, the West Gate toll road, through an unsolicited proposal from Transurban, which is going to funnel thousands of cars into our CBD and inner suburbs, especially in my electorate in North Melbourne and West Melbourne, making our streets less safe and creating more traffic and pollution.

Of course the state government over many years has grossly neglected investing in other essential public transport infrastructure. Perhaps nowhere is this neglect more apparent than in the accessibility of the inner-city tram network. In 2020, five years ago, the Auditor-General found that only 15 per cent of tram services were fully disability accessible, and this pitiful figure has barely improved in the last five years under this Labor government. Ten per cent of the population has mobility issues, and up to 40 per cent of the population over 70 has mobility issues, and that is estimated to grow, as we have an ageing population. So we are talking about hundreds of thousands of Melburnians who simply do not have the option of stepping onto a tram in our inner city. I have heard from so many of those people in wheelchairs who are frustrated that the tram goes straight past their door and they simply cannot get on or off it.

Labor promised to make our tram network accessible. The deadline came and went a couple of years ago, and that promise remains unfulfilled. The state Labor government has a fairly poor record on active transport infrastructure like bike lanes, where nearly all the heavy lifting has been left to local councils, especially in terms of building separated bike lanes. But underfunded councils are limited in what they can achieve on their own without state assistance. Ten per cent of people living in the inner city already ride to work, with a similar proportion walking, yet Infrastructure Victoria reports that 200,000 more active transport trips would occur every day if the state government invested in dedicated bike lanes and pedestrian infrastructure. That is a huge increase that could be achieved.

Safety fears – being hit by a car – are the number one reason why people do not ride their bikes, and tragedies are still far too common. Just last week and again today in this place I paid tribute to a young man in my electorate William Richter, who at just 19 years old was tragically killed on Macaulay Road in Kensington, near my house, hit by a truck while riding his bike and heading to a class at the University of Melbourne. His family lives just a few streets away from me in Kensington. The thing is, he is only one of several young people killed while riding their bikes in my electorate just in the last few years. Many of them have been hit by trucks in tragic and preventable circumstances where the infrastructure played a big role in those crashes, either lights that let trucks and cyclists go at the same time onto a collision course or separated bike lanes that should have been built and were not built that could have prevented those tragedies. The evidence clearly shows that the presence and quality of dedicated cycling infrastructure significantly improve safety, and where bikes are separated from cars by separated lanes far more people feel safe to ride, in particular far more women feel safe to ride. Women are under-represented in our cycling data at the moment for that reason.

We know that encouraging active transport is also great for the climate. It reduces air pollution as well as carbon emissions, it benefits people's health, it reduces traffic congestion and it increases available parking for people who do have to drive. There are some people who do have to drive. That is exactly why even the peak motoring organisation, the RACV, is among the most vociferous advocates for

more separated bike lanes across inner-city Melbourne. You would not think so, but they can see the benefits – where you get more people onto bikes and more people walking, there is more space for people who do need to use their cars.

The Greens believe that a congestion levy, if it is to be introduced or expanded, must be accompanied by greater investment in active transport infrastructure in the areas that it covers. We must also ensure that both state and local governments are required to invest revenue raised from the levy into the essential public and active transport infrastructure that is still so lacking in the CBD and inner suburbs. Infrastructure Victoria, an independent body, has also called for this, saying that if a congestion levy was to be expanded or increased, that money must go into dedicated active transport projects. This system already exists in the current congestion levy when it comes to the City of Melbourne. A portion of the revenue raised from the City of Melbourne due to the existing levy goes back to the City of Melbourne for sustainable active transport infrastructure through an MOU, but with an expanded levy the active transport investment must be significantly expanded and cover the other local government areas that are covered by the expanded levy.

I have also been concerned about the impacts of the levy on the Queen Victoria Market in my electorate. They have had a rough time of late, but they are an incredible, historic market in my electorate that all of us are so passionate about protecting. Our community is very much connected to and has a great love for the Queen Vic market. I have been in conversation with the Treasurer about reducing those impacts on our beloved local market.

At this stage the Greens will not oppose the passage of this bill through the lower house, but we will not simply wave it through the upper house unless it is accompanied by significant increases in funding for local councils to build active transport infrastructure to improve and protect the lives of all those who live, work and travel in the city and the inner suburbs. The other part of –

Mathew Hilakari interjected.

Ellen Sandell: I have got more; do not worry. I could do another 25 minutes. Is that what you are here for? Great. Okay, let me go. What topic? You give me one and I will –

The ACTING SPEAKER (Nathan Lambert): Order! Through the Chair, member for Melbourne.

Ellen Sandell: Sorry, Acting Speaker. Thirdly, the bill covers some fees to do with pets and greyhound racing. The bill proposes to increase the tax on registration of racing greyhounds paid to Greyhound Racing Victoria in the next financial year from \$3.50 to \$7 per dog. The greyhound racing industry involves the state-sanctioned murder of hundreds of healthy dogs every single year here in Victoria. According to last year's Greyhound Racing Victoria annual report, 415 dogs were 'wasted' in 2023 and 2024, up 26 from the previous year – more dogs killed every year. And let us be clear – very clear – that 'wasted' in the greyhound racing industry means dogs are killed, and far more dogs are killed after greyhound racing than rehomed. Many of these dogs are euthanised due to experiencing excruciating pain from serious racing injuries, while other healthy dogs are killed simply because they do not run fast enough.

This is cruel. This is a supposed commercial industry that is built on cruelty to animals – cruelty to dogs – through overbreeding, live baiting, drug use and any number of baroque torture techniques employed to try and make dogs run faster than they are naturally capable of. And I say 'supposed commercial industry' because all this cruelty and all this killing of dogs does not actually generate any commercial profit but incredibly is only kept alive by the Labor state government's subsidies, which amount to around \$40 million a year – \$40 million a year that the taxpayer is giving to the greyhound racing industry to kill dogs and engage in animal cruelty, largely at the behest of the gambling industry if we are being honest about it.

Despite this \$40 million annual handout, last year's Greyhound Racing Victoria annual report indicated a \$22.7 million industry loss, requiring an additional emergency loan from the state

government of \$3 million to cover their urgent liabilities. Why is the state Labor government bailing out the greyhound racing industry in Victoria, when it has been banned in so many other states? It just does not make any sense. Let us put greyhound racing's annual subsidy in its proper perspective: this is a state Labor government that is currently refusing to provide just \$4 million to save our local community health centres from shutting down, but they can bail out the greyhound racing industry to the tune of the same amount. When it comes to the entrenched cruelty and senseless killing of hundreds of greyhounds every year, state Labor, incredibly, appears to provide a blank cheque to the greyhound racing industry of taxpayer money.

The Victorian Greens say that the state-subsidised cruelty and senseless killing of dogs simply must end. We will introduce an amendment in the coming weeks to raise the tax on greyhounds that is proposed in this bill. It is proposed at \$7; I think it should be \$1000. It should maybe be \$10,000 – whatever it takes to shut down the greyhound racing industry in Victoria, because that is what they have done in other states, and that is what we should do here in Victoria. I have got 3 minutes and 42 seconds left. I think the member for Werribee would like me to go further, but I might leave it there.

Paul HAMER (Box Hill) (16:34): I rise to talk about the State Taxation Further Amendment Bill 2025. There is quite a lot in this bill, but before I get started I do want to acknowledge the member for Albert Park's contribution, in particular her ability to weave some Yiddish vernacular into *Hansard*, which would be I think a first in this place, and I commend her for that effort. There are a number of acts which are proposed to be amended through the State Taxation Further Amendment Bill 2025, these being the Congestion Levy Act 2005, the Land Tax Act 2005, the Domestic Animals Act 1994, the Duties and Land Tax Acts (Amendment) Act 2005, the Building Act 1993, the Commercial and Industrial Property Tax Reform Act 2024 and again the Duties Act 2000.

I want to spend most of my time on the Congestion Levy Act, which I would like to think that I have a fair bit of an understanding of, having done some research on this topic way back when in a completely different life. I think a few members have touched on it, up to now: what the purpose is of introducing a tax like this. This tax has been in place in Melbourne for approximately 20 years. It has been in place in other jurisdictions for even longer than that.

I am sure this will interest you, Acting Speaker Lambert. As I am sure you know, the congestion tax is a form of Pigouvian tax. Approximately 100 years ago the English economist Arthur Pigou proposed the notion of negative externalities and proposed a system in terms of how they could actually be priced so that the individual that was deriving the benefit from them would have to potentially bear the cost of the externality that they were creating. We see this externality play out particularly in the cost of congestion, but we also see this in many other ways. It is a large reason why we have taxes like the so-called sin taxes on alcohol and on cigarettes, because we see the health impacts that they create. By having those taxed, it is not just about the product and what somebody is willing to pay for that product, and it is not just about raising revenue, but it is about trying to send a signal to the market about the negative impacts that it is creating. That is exactly what the congestion levy is proposed to do and has been effective in doing over 20 years.

We see that in various forms across the world. Sydney obviously has a very similar system to what the system is in Melbourne. We see London has had their form of congestion charge, which is much more of a direct user charge on drivers coming into the city. Singapore also has a similar charge, where you almost cannot move anywhere in Singapore without having your licence plate recognised and then being charged for the benefit of driving into the city centre. That has all been predicated or premised on the basis that by having a charge on those who are entering the city or those who are opting to park in the city that is obviously having an impact on all other users. In return for that there is a cost-benefit balance.

There have been a number of points raised by both opposition and crossbench members about the taxation and levy element of the bill versus how you address the supply and the supply of alternatives.

I cannot think of one government in the history of this state that has done more to increase the supply of infrastructure, particularly to those inner-city areas where the congestion levy applies.

I had the opportunity a few weeks ago to go to the new State Library station – a wonderful, wonderful facility. I cannot believe the ease with which people will be able to transfer and travel from Melbourne Central station, where people can get off from travelling from the east on the Belgrave–Lilydale line, just walk up to the concourse and then cross over. Then you are straight into State Library station, and you can go off to Anzac station, or you can go up to the university precinct. It will be a real game changer. The capacity increases from that additional infrastructure supply are absolutely amazing.

The previous member talked about bicycle facilities. There has been an enormous increase in bicycle facilities right across the inner city. I appreciate that some of that has been developed by the councils, who have been recipients of part of the money from the congestion levy, specifically for this purpose. They have invested some of that money into active transport corridors.

We also see as part of the West Gate Tunnel Project the new veloway, a wonderful new access path for cyclists to come into the city. On the North East Link, which is happening in my patch, they are also upgrading the bike trail there, as there have been to date a couple of areas of significant gradients. I know when I used to try and ride in I would probably conk out halfway up the hill and have to push my way up to the top and then get a bit of an easier ride down. But there are a lot of improvements that are happening on active transport, and that happens when we are doing any major infrastructure project, and the councils are doing the same.

I just want to go into a bit more detail on the Congestion Levy Act and some of the impacts and changes that will happen when the congestion levy is imposed. My understanding and knowledge of the act is particularly in relation to the first iteration of the act, which was passed in 2005, and how parking providers – because the parking providers are the ones that will receive the bill notification from the State Revenue Office – responded. Interestingly, and probably not surprisingly, a lot of them sought to change the way that their parking was provided, so they would be looking to provide those spaces in a way that did not attract the tax, which is not surprising in any way. You would expect that that would be the way that a rational person would operate. This did actually have an impact on travel behaviour, because at the time the levy was only operating on long-term spaces. Predominantly I think it was spaces which were available for use for 4 hours or more, so spaces that were available for a shorter time did not attract the levy and also if they were available after a certain time. So if they were available just sort of during the day for a short period of time, then they did not attract the levy. By changing their offering it actually meant that consumers also changed their behaviour. There were more offerings for people to come in, for example, after 9:30 am or after 10 am, when the early bird long-stay parking no longer applied. Drivers then responded with their feet, the market changed, and the consumers then said, ‘Well, I’m actually going to come in after that period of time because it’s going to be cheaper for me to take advantage of that.’ Through that, they were no longer travelling into that car park between 8 and 9 and adding to the congestion.

So it was possible to spread the peak traffic through the operation of the pricing mechanism, which is exactly what the purpose was, to get back to my original point about the whole notion of externalities and introducing a Pigouvian tax such as this, which is to try and change behaviours, and it is generally changing behaviours at the margin. I know there is the talk about congestion. No-one is under any illusion that you apply the tax and suddenly the congestion disappears in its entirety, but it does have an effect, and I commend the bill to the house.

Tim McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (16:44): I am delighted to rise and make a contribution. It will be brief because I am trying to get another colleague up on this side for a few moments. I certainly have heard on our side the discussion around this: the congestion tax, the dogs and cats tax and all those other awful components of this bill. However, I would like to talk about the positive side of this bill and clause 33, which amends section 3 of the Land Tax Act 2005 to expand the definition of ‘alpine resort’ to include land located within the boundary of the locality of Dinner Plain. Dinner Plain

is in my electorate. We all know Victorians have been unfairly hit by many of these taxes, but Dinner Plain residents have been more unfairly hit by the vacant residential land tax (VRLT). They have been charged land tax, while other residents in alpine resorts have not been – they have been excluded, and for good reason. It is just that Dinner Plain is actually situated in the Alpine shire and is technically not an alpine resort. However, we have all heard the saying 'If it walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, it is probably a duck.'

Alpine resorts are all similar. They have all got winter snow-making, they have got winter recreation and they have got skiing and tobogganing – all that sort of thing. Dinner Plain is no exception. It is just that it is actually technically in the Alpine shire, and they are unfairly getting the vacant residential land tax, which makes them uncompetitive against other like properties in alpine regions. If you have got a property in Hotham, Falls Creek, Lake Mountain, Baw Baw, Bulla or Mount Sterling, you are exempt; but if you have got a property in Dinner Plain, you are not exempt, and this bill will correct that anomaly. I am very grateful to the Treasurer for making this change, because it makes those properties competitive again with other properties that are like for like.

I was contacted by Steve Belli – he is the chamber of commerce chair up in that region – and also Alan Taylor, the president of the Dinner Plain Community Association, just telling me how unfair it was. They have explained and gone through the characteristics. It is 1570 metres high, which is actually higher than Baw Baw and Lake Mountain, and still has only the four months of recreational use in the winter, like all the others. Furthermore, Dinner Plain is intrinsically linked to Hotham – they really are one community – and as I say, if a community like Dinner Plain has VRLT and other communities do not, then who is going to want to buy in Dinner Plain? If you are looking for a property up in the snow, you will go to Hotham, you will go to Falls – you will go to any other place but Dinner Plain, because they are hit with a vacant residential land tax. So this certainly squares the ledger. As I say, I am very grateful to the Treasurer for assisting us through that. My colleague in the upper house Gaelle Broad has prosecuted this case and fought very hard with the Treasurer. Although we are concerned about the other taxes that other members have spoken about – nobody is surprised with the debt that Victoria is in; we just keep getting more taxes – in this one instance for Dinner Plain, I am grateful. It is great to see this tax reversed for the people and the residents of Dinner Plain.

Dylan WIGHT (Tarneit) (16:47): You did not have a few more minutes in you? Jesus. It gives me great pleasure to rise this afternoon and make a full 10-minute contribution on the bill.

Richard Riordan interjected.

Dylan WIGHT: Settle down. He has been yelling at clouds all day. I thought he might be worn out by now.

This bill does several important things, and indeed one of those is to increase the category 1 area levy rate up to \$3000 – this is around the Congestion Levy Act 2005 – but also, incredibly importantly, to expand the category 2 area to include the new suburbs of Burnley, Cremorne, South Yarra, Windsor, parts of Richmond, Abbotsford and Prahran, which is entirely appropriate. These are central locations, central suburbs, that have a number of events where people are coming in and out of the suburb via whatever transport means that they use, but they are also suburbs with an abundance of amenity and an abundance of public transport options. If we look at the other inner-city locations that are included in this levy, which I will get to shortly, including Collingwood and Fitzroy, they are incredibly similar. They have an abundance of public transport options. So it is entirely appropriate that they are included in this levy. Because the evidence says that this levy works. It is a layered approach. The levy is not a silver bullet to congestion, but we know that it plays its role, and in those areas in Prahran, South Yarra and Abbotsford we know that it can play a significant role in trying to clear up some of that congestion.

I briefly listened to the member for Prahran's suggestion, and she was referencing local businesses in the area. I would just like to point out that there is a 50 per cent concession for conditional free retail parking spaces within a category 2 area, which are located on or adjacent to retail premises and retail

shopping centres. That is obviously incredibly important as well, so if there are people in the locality that are going to do perhaps grocery shopping – which is far easier to do by car given the significant amount of goods that you would take from a supermarket – there are concessions to make that easier on locals.

The member for Box Hill referenced healthy communities. We know that crippling congestion contributes to a community's health and it contributes to the livability of a community. When you have people from outside of that community coming in and out of it consistently, as these inner-city suburbs do – because they have so much to offer, whether it be sports, the arts or anything else – we know that that congestion contributes to poorer health outcomes for people that live there. The expansion of and increase in the congestion levy is a layered approach and will play a role in the health of those communities.

But this is not the only thing that we are doing to help congestion. Like I said, it is a layered approach, and there are several levers that you need to pull. The member for Melbourne referenced some of the infrastructure projects that this government is undertaking to also help with that. We have the Metro Tunnel, a once in a generation – the city loop was another generation; the member for Melton was around, but I was not. It is a generational transport project that will allow for ease of movement around our city like we have never seen before. For folks out my way, to be able to get on the train at Werribee or Hoppers Crossing and get straight into the city loop, which will stop that very annoying changeover at Southern Cross or Flinders Street, is an absolute game changer. It makes it easier for those people to get in and around the city without having to use their motor vehicle. If they did want to use their motor vehicle, of course the West Gate Tunnel is opening soon, so that will be far easier for them as well. It will cut 20 minutes off their travel time, which means that they can spend more time at home with their families, with their children, or more time in the community doing the things that they love.

A member interjected.

Dylan WIGHT: I have got a full 10 minutes in me. It will also allow for several new services on the Werribee line so people in my community can get to work easier, can get into the city easier and can get to the football, can get to arts precincts and can do the things that they want to do far easier. There are several more infrastructure projects. We can reference the West Tarneit station, which means that people in West Tarneit and Riverdale will be able to get on the train far easier and get into the city – or indeed get down to Geelong, but we are talking about the city here in respect to the legislation. They can get on the train and get into the city to go to work or to go to events without having to use their cars. We are doing so well that the West Gate Tunnel might be empty by the time we are done.

On the congestion levy and the opposition's opposition to it, I did a little bit of research before coming in here, and I thought it was appropriate to take a quick trip down memory lane. The reaction to this from opposite has been somewhat hysterical over the past 48 hours and certainly during debate today.

Members interjecting.

Dylan WIGHT: Well, we know that Joe and Mary do not vote for any of you lot. Those opposite may be starkly opposed to this congestion levy now, but let me remind them that in 2014 the Liberal–National government, headed by then Premier Napthine, amended the congestion levy to actually create the existing category 2 areas. It was a former Liberal government that extended this levy into Fitzroy, into Collingwood, into Carlton North and into St Kilda. If you want to have a go at us for extending this, you guys gave us the answer to the test 10 years ago. They are opposed to it now, but let me tell you, they sing a very different tune when they are in government. It was those opposite whilst in government that extended this congestion levy and created the existing category 2.

In the finite amount of time that I have left, I would just like to reiterate that this measure is part of a layered approach to tackling congestion here in the great city of Melbourne. It will play a role in building healthier communities. It will play a role in busting that congestion that we see in the city, particularly on days of major events and art exhibitions. But what we have also done as a government

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is made sure that we are building those critical infrastructure projects to be able to get Victorians in and out of our central business district and surrounds as efficiently as we possibly can. In a short month or two we are going to see the opening of the Metro Tunnel, a transformational transport project that will change the face of our city. I commend the bill to the house.

Tim BULL (Gippsland East) (16:57): I want to make a few quick comments on the State Taxation Further Amendment Bill 2025, and I want to very quickly focus on the element that doubles the fees for greyhounds. I am very, very interested to see how the minister votes when he comes in here, because he has not spoken on this, and this is a direct impost of \$50,000 a year on the greyhound racing industry in Victoria. It will double their contribution to \$200,000. The minister stands up in front of the greyhound crowd very regularly, and he talks about how important it is to the sector. He talks about the economic impacts and he talks about the employment all the time. We know that the three racing codes, including the greyhounds, are facing very tough financial challenges at the moment. The annual report released by Greyhound Racing Victoria this very week indicates the challenges that they face financially. Now here is a bill that is doubling the cost to GRV for the registration of racing greyhounds.

I certainly hope that when the minister comes into this chamber to vote in a few moments time he is not running with the foxes and hunting with the hounds – that he actually stands up and supports the greyhound racing industry by opposing this additional impost on them at a time when they are really facing a challenging financial period. They have put off 25 staff in the last two years, GRV, such are the challenges they are facing. The last thing they need is another \$50,000 annual impost on their coffers from this government going on a money-chasing grab. Not only that, but those who want to adopt a greyhound and do the right thing are now having their little registration fees doubled. I see the minister in the chamber. Let us hope he votes against this bill and supports the industry that he promotes in public and does not support the doubling of the financial impost on them.

The SPEAKER: The time set down for consideration of items on the government business program has arrived, and I am required to interrupt business.

Assembly divided on motion:

Ayes (54): Jacinta Allan, Colin Brooks, Josh Bull, Anthony Carbines, Ben Carroll, Anthony Cianflone, Sarah Connolly, Chris Couzens, Jordan Crugnale, Lily D'Ambrosio, Daniela De Martino, Gabrielle de Vietri, Steve Dimopoulos, Eden Foster, Will Fowles, Matt Fregon, Ella George, Luba Grigorovitch, Bronwyn Halfpenny, Katie Hall, Paul Hamer, Martha Haylett, Mathew Hilakari, Melissa Horne, Natalie Hutchins, Lauren Kathage, Sonya Kilkenny, Nathan Lambert, John Lister, Gary Maas, Alison Merchant, Kathleen Matthews-Ward, Steve McGhie, John Mullahy, Danny Pearson, Tim Read, Pauline Richards, Tim Richardson, Ellen Sandell, Michaela Settle, Ros Spence, Nick Staikos, Natalie Suleyman, Meng Heang Tak, Jackson Taylor, Nina Taylor, Kat Theophanous, Mary-Anne Thomas, Emma Vulin, Iwan Walters, Vicki Ward, Dylan Wight, Gabrielle Williams, Belinda Wilson

Noes (28): Brad Battin, Jade Benham, Roma Britnell, Tim Bull, Martin Cameron, Annabelle Cleeland, Chris Crewther, Wayne Farnham, Sam Groth, Matthew Guy, David Hodgett, Emma Kealy, Tim McCurdy, Cindy McLeish, James Newbury, Danny O'Brien, Michael O'Brien, Kim O'Keeffe, John Pesutto, Richard Riordan, Brad Rowswell, David Southwick, Bridget Vallence, Peter Walsh, Kim Wells, Nicole Werner, Rachel Westaway, Jess Wilson

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

The SPEAKER: The question is:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Assembly divided on question:

Ayes (54): Jacinta Allan, Colin Brooks, Josh Bull, Anthony Carbines, Ben Carroll, Anthony Cianflone, Sarah Connolly, Chris Couzens, Jordan Crugnale, Lily D'Ambrosio, Daniela De Martino, Gabrielle de Vietri, Steve Dimopoulos, Eden Foster, Will Fowles, Matt Fregon, Ella George, Luba Grigorovitch, Bronwyn Halfpenny, Katie Hall, Paul Hamer, Martha Haylett, Mathew Hilakari, Melissa Horne, Natalie Hutchins, Lauren Kathage, Sonya Kilkenny, Nathan Lambert, John Lister, Gary Maas, Alison Marchant, Kathleen Matthews-Ward, Steve McGhie, John Mullahy, Danny Pearson, Tim Read, Pauline Richards, Tim Richardson, Ellen Sandell, Michaela Settle, Ros Spence, Nick Staikos, Natalie Suleyman, Meng Heang Tak, Jackson Taylor, Nina Taylor, Kat Theophanous, Mary-Anne Thomas, Emma Vulin, Iwan Walters, Vicki Ward, Dylan Wight, Gabrielle Williams, Belinda Wilson

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Question agreed to.

Read third time.

The SPEAKER: The bill will now be sent to the Legislative Council and their agreement requested.

Consumer Legislation Amendment Bill 2025

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Nick Staikos:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Circulated amendments

Circulated government amendment as follows agreed to:

1. Clause 11, line 24, after “does” insert “not”.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

The SPEAKER: The bill will now be sent to the Legislative Council and their agreement requested.

Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2025

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Gabrielle Williams:

That this bill be now read a second time.

And Sam Groth's amendment:

That all the words after ‘That’ be omitted and replaced with the words ‘this house refuses to read this bill a second time until the government publishes a comprehensive privacy impact assessment relating to the introduction and retention of audio recording, seeks legal advice about the bill’s compatibility with the Surveillance Devices Act 1999, and ensures that appropriate privacy, data security, and legislative consistency safeguards are put in place.’

ADJOURNMENT

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The SPEAKER: The minister has moved that the bill be now read a second time. The member for Nepean has moved a reasoned amendment to this motion. He has proposed to omit all the words after 'That' and replace them with the words that appear on the notice paper. The question is:

That the words proposed to be omitted stand part of the question.

Those supporting the member for Nepean should vote no.

Assembly divided on question:

Ayes (54): Jacinta Allan, Colin Brooks, Josh Bull, Anthony Carbines, Ben Carroll, Anthony Cianfalone, Sarah Connolly, Chris Couzens, Jordan Crugnale, Lily D'Ambrosio, Daniela De Martino, Gabrielle de Vietri, Steve Dimopoulos, Eden Foster, Will Fowles, Matt Fregon, Ella George, Luba Grigorovitch, Bronwyn Halfpenny, Katie Hall, Paul Hamer, Martha Haylett, Mathew Hilakari, Melissa Horne, Natalie Hutchins, Lauren Kathage, Sonya Kilkenny, Nathan Lambert, John Lister, Gary Maas, Alison Merchant, Kathleen Matthews-Ward, Steve McGhie, John Mullahy, Danny Pearson, Tim Read, Pauline Richards, Tim Richardson, Ellen Sandell, Michaela Settle, Ros Spence, Nick Staikos, Natalie Suleyman, Meng Heang Tak, Jackson Taylor, Nina Taylor, Kat Theophanous, Mary-Anne Thomas, Emma Vulin, Iwan Walters, Vicki Ward, Dylan Wight, Gabrielle Williams, Belinda Wilson

Noes (28): Brad Battin, Jade Benham, Roma Britnell, Tim Bull, Martin Cameron, Annabelle Cleeland, Chris Crewther, Wayne Farnham, Sam Groth, Matthew Guy, David Hodgett, Emma Kealy, Tim McCurdy, Cindy McLeish, James Newbury, Danny O'Brien, Michael O'Brien, Kim O'Keeffe, John Pesutto, Richard Riordan, Brad Rowsell, David Southwick, Bridget Vallence, Peter Walsh, Kim Wells, Nicole Werner, Rachel Westaway, Jess Wilson

Question agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Circulated amendments

Circulated government amendments as follows agreed to:

1. Clause 19, line 21, omit "Part 2" and insert "section 6".
2. Clause 19, line 29, omit "Part 2" and insert "section 8".

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

The SPEAKER: The bill will now be sent to the Legislative Council and their agreement requested.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

Adjournment

The SPEAKER: The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

Speed limit

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (17:12): (1379) My adjournment matter this evening is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and the action I seek is for the minister to make a submission to the Commonwealth's regulatory impact analysis to reduce the open road default speed limit. What I would like to see is the minister assure Victorians that the government will not be supporting a default reduction in speed limits on country roads. The regulatory impact analysis, which is out there from the federal government, would inform updates to the Australian road rules, and those Australian road rules

can then provide guidelines to state and territory governments. So this is only one step in a process, but I am concerned, and I am sure my colleagues are concerned, at the prospect of a reduction in default road speed limits, particularly on country roads but effectively on roads outside built-up areas. These are the areas where there is no speed limit actually posted. We understand the issue that speed kills, and we understand that there are a significant number of fatalities and serious injury incidents that are caused by speed, but we do not believe that the solution to that is actually simply setting a further reduced default speed limit on those roads.

There is already a level of concern, particularly in regional Victoria, about the current state government's approach to this, which has been – not only in practice but also in principle in response to a parliamentary inquiry a few years ago – that where the road is not in good condition, the speed limit should be reduced. The very strong will of the people that I speak to in regional Victoria is to say, 'Where the road's not in good condition, fix the road. Don't reduce the speed limit.' While we appreciate there are capacity constraints, funding constraints and all of those things, we would not like to see a standard change to this under the proposed federal Australian road rules. I think the people of rural and regional Victoria would like to hear the minister stand up on this and give a position. It may well be that the government has already made a submission; I am not privy to that. But we do not believe that simply reducing default speed limits is an appropriate solution.

There are many things that can be done to ensure that we are reducing speed accidents. We know that our vehicles are getting safer. The governments over the previous 20 or 30 years have spent a lot of money on road infrastructure to make it safer, but the roads themselves, particularly in the last four or five years, have deteriorated dramatically. That should not be a reason in itself to reduce speed limits, and I do not think most regional Victorians would support the Victorian government supporting a reduction in the default speed limit under these new proposed Australian road rules.

Cohealth

Ellen SANDELL (Melbourne) (17:15): (1380) My adjournment today is to the Minister for Health, and it is good to see her in the chamber today. Today I am asking for the Victorian Labor government to commit funding to save Cohealth's GP and counselling services in inner Melbourne. Ten days ago our community was devastated when Cohealth announced that they were going to close their community health GP clinics in Kensington, Collingwood and Fitzroy, citing insufficient state and federal government funding. Twelve thousand patients, some of the most vulnerable in our community, will be left stranded. Where will they go? Bulk-billing GP rates in the City of Melbourne are already some of the lowest in the country, and our privatised GP system, subsidised by insufficient Medicare funding, is largely set up to incentivise short, simple appointments, not the more intensive care that community health provides.

Community health care is unique. It often provides doctors who are paid a set salary so they are able to prioritise longer appointments and wraparound care for complex cases, rather than being pushed by the Medicare system to churn through patients every 10 minutes in order to make ends meet – because not every health issue can be dealt with in 10 minutes, and not everyone can afford to pay hundreds of dollars to see a private GP. But over the years governments have moved to privatise the way that GP primary health care is delivered, moving away from funding truly public GP services like community health, forcing them to compete in a privatised system. This is neoliberalism plain and simple, and it is not working. Health care is a public good, and it should be publicly funded and funded properly.

What will happen to the 12,000 patients left stranded? Many will simply not get the early intervention that they need and will end up in our public hospitals and the emergency departments, and the state will end up paying more for this, much more than if they supported Cohealth to continue treating them locally. It makes no sense. Community health services have been sounding the alarm about this for years, warning that without a different funding model, community health centres would go under. And now we are seeing the consequences. Let us be clear: this is not just a federal government responsibility. The state government is to blame here too and can solve this issue.

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Technically, community health is actually a state government responsibility. Since 2019 Cohealth has been requesting state funding for rebuilding their crumbling Collingwood centre, without success. Infrastructure Victoria, the Strengthening Medicare Taskforce, Community Health First and the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation union have all in the past few years advocated for increased funding for community health from state and federal governments. They were all ignored. When state and federal governments fail to invest adequate funding in public services like community health, the need does not just go away; it gets heaped on crowded emergency waiting rooms and overrun social services while vulnerable people fall through ever-widening cracks.

Last week we had two community meetings, in Kensington and Richmond, with over 500 locals turning up to show their opposition to these closures. Over 5000 people – and growing – have signed a petition against the closures. Community outcry has shown Victorians want community health clinics saved, and I implore the Victorian Labor government and the federal government to listen to them and step in now before it is simply too late.

Ramsden Street, Clifton Hill, level crossing

Matthew GUY (Bulleen) (17:18): (1381) My adjournment tonight is for the Minister for Public and Active Transport. It is a bit of a hangover from my previous portfolio, but it has to do with the level crossing at Ramsden Street in Clifton Hill. I am raising this matter for the minister for public transport. Metro Trains recently upgraded the pitch and the volume of the electronic bells at that level crossing, which starts at 4:40 in the morning.

Mary-Anne Thomas interjected.

Matthew GUY: Yes, I am sure you have, Minister. It starts at 4:40 in the morning, with up to 20 trains an hour, and concludes at 12:30 at night. Ramsden Street is on the southern side of Clifton Hill station. It has got an old interlocked set of gates, which are there as a feature, and a signal box, but of course there is now an electronic set of boom barriers that are there and warning bells and flashing lights. As I said two months ago, in August Metro upgraded the level crossing and modernised the electronic lights and the bells, but in doing so they increased the volume and the pitch.

Some residents who have been there nearly 30 years just cannot stand this. It is, they say, like living with torture. It is much, much louder. Metro have turned off the eastern-side electronic bells, but they are still exceptionally loud. This is disrupting kids' sleeping patterns. It is disrupting locals. It is obviously very, very annoying to have that made louder than what it was. Metro and the state government's answer to date has been that they are abiding by Australian standards. But I submit this in my adjournment matter to the minister: in country New South Wales along Australian Rail Track Corporation lines – where the XPT trains run past at 160 kilometres an hour, or freight trains on interstate lines at 115 kilometres an hour – they turn off the electronic bells on the level crossings at night so as not to interfere with residents' sleep patterns. I know that, for instance, in Baird Street in Culcairn they do this, and in a number of other areas. In the state of Queensland they have never – for vehicles, not necessarily for pedestrians – installed bells along with gates and flashing lights as part of their electronic boom barrier program since 1913. There is no epidemic of safety problems in Queensland. There is no safety problem in country New South Wales. So tonight I ask the minister to intervene in Metro Trains' decision to not lower the pitch and volume and frequency of this level crossing in Ramsden Street, Clifton Hill. It is clearly disruptive. I ask the minister: please intervene, help these residents. It is clearly louder than what it should be, and it should be returned to what it was before.

CommUnity+

Luba GRIGOROVITCH (Kororoit) (17:21): (1382) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Carers and Volunteers. The action I seek is for the minister to provide an update on the government's ongoing community funding and support for neighbourhood houses. Strong communities start in shared spaces and shared moments. CommUnity+ in Deer Park is a key provider

of exactly this in my electorate and connects the community in a way like no other. Last Thursday I met with commUnity+ at their grassroots neighbourhood house in Deer Park. The passionate team shared information about the fantastic programs, services and activities that they have on offer, ranging from support groups to health and wellbeing programs for people experiencing disadvantage or hardship in communities rich in cultural diversity. It saddened me to hear that by necessity they are looking at the option to start charging a fee for some of their traditionally free programs, due to increased costs or lack of funding.

Whilst I was there each staff member shared stories where the local community have found their programs to be absolutely invaluable. For many they have said that it is life changing. I know this because commUnity+ provided me with over 100 letters of support for further funding for their beloved neighbourhood house. Included in the common themes were free educational classes and workshops, free activities – some did say that they were struggling financially – as well as the neighbourhood house providing happiness and being their safe place. It was really lovely to read all these letters. When the world can feel scary for some people and for many community members, it is essential to keep their safe space stronger than ever. I am committed to supporting an increase in funding for commUnity+ to ensure this occurs. It is important that these crucial services are funded adequately so they are accessible to everybody in need.

Polwarth electorate housing

Richard RIORDAN (Polwarth) (17:23): (1383) My adjournment this evening is for the Minister for Housing and Building in the other place, and the action I seek is for the minister to immediately intervene in the Homes Victoria decision to go against its earlier commitments to the Colac Otway shire and the community – to not build 50 small Homes Victoria homes on the one site in Pound Road and in fact to listen to the community and build 40, with some open space, and find other locations in the community, in consultation with the Colac Otway shire, to build the balance of the 10 units.

This is really important because, like all regional communities, Colac Otway shire and the township of Colac are in fact desperate for some more public housing homes, having been neglected now for so long in the provision of affordable social housing. However, despite decades of evidence that says concentrating disadvantage in one small spot with no outdoor space, no car parking, no green space and not close to public transport is not a good idea, this government has decided to inflict that model for no good reason on this country community.

More disturbingly, in a meeting only today with the CEO of the Colac Otway Shire Council and council representatives, the government had the gall to tell the local representatives, upon the news of the reversal of their decision to build 40 homes with open space, ‘We’re no longer going ahead with the open space, because it’s too dangerous.’ What a terrible, terrible thing to tell a community – that we cannot provide some dignity and open space to the most vulnerable, who we seek to house, because it is too unsafe. If that is not a sign of a government giving up on good planning, giving up on suitable housing, giving up on properly supporting regional and country communities, then I do not know what is.

Minister, I plead with you to talk to your Homes Victoria representatives to demand, quite frankly, that they treat regional communities with respect. They need to talk to the local councils. This is a project where the quantum of housing is greatly supported by the community. The decision and the application of that decision are up for great contest. It is not supported by the mayor, it is not supported by the council, it is not supported by the neighbours, it is not supported by the Salvation Army, it is not supported by the local community. No-one agrees with the tack this government taking – to think that your department, Minister, went through a sham community consultation process where they undertook to do some difference but now, at the 11th hour, have decided to take away that consultation, take away that community input and to go ahead with their original plan regardless of the community.

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Port Phillip Men's Shed

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (17:26): (1384) My adjournment is for the Minister for Carers and Volunteers, Minister Ros Spence, and the ask is for the minister to visit my electorate to see Port Phillip Men's Shed. The Port Phillip Men's Shed has become a vital hub for social inclusion, providing a space where men of all ages and backgrounds can come together, share their skills and support one another. The men's shed plays an important role in reducing social isolation and improving men's mental health within our community. A visit from the minister would be a good opportunity to acknowledge the dedication of the volunteers who keep the shed running and to acknowledge the good that the shed brings to the community. The men's shed welcomes members of all genders and skill levels, offering three main spaces for creativity and mateship to flourish. These spaces include a woodworking shed as well as a metal shed and a garden that incorporates local bush tucker plants with an accompanying kitchen. This not-for-profit organisation allows members to build connections and give back to the community, like building toys for a toy library, creating items for Parks Victoria and crafting furniture for local housing groups. The men's shed is a crucial space for fostering connection, purpose and wellbeing within the Port Phillip community, making it a shining example of how local initiatives can strengthen social ties and improve lives.

I do want to thank Aliina from Albert Park College and Daisy from Port Melbourne Secondary College, work experience students who have assisted with this adjournment today.

Sandringham electorate road safety

Brad ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (17:28): (1385) My matter is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and the action that I seek is that the minister instruct their department to undertake a comprehensive traffic and safety study of Bay Road in relation to safety and traffic flow within my electorate. Bay Road is a key route through the heart of my community, linking Sandringham to Highett and Cheltenham, running from the rotunda at Sandringham beach at Beach Road through Sandringham village down to the Southland shopping centre, carrying quite literally tens of thousands of vehicles every day. Unfortunately the experience of members of my community is that along Bay Road in 2025 it has become increasingly hazardous, with more accidents taking place, and it is harder to find a local who has not experienced some sort of traffic incident on Bay Road than one that is on the other side of that. I am quite clearly tired. You have clearly pulled the short straw as well, Minister.

As our population grows, it is important for us to consider the traffic flow along Bay Road. We have got developments at the former CSIRO site in Highett. The government's – in my view and the community's view – aggressive planning strategy to allow 12-storey buildings in the Sandringham village will only increase congestion on Bay Road, and this will only worsen. At the end of Bay Road is the start of the government's Suburban Rail Loop project as well, and that will add further congestion to Bay Road if in fact the Suburban Rail Loop goes ahead. My community is expected to grow by more than 32,000 people over the next little while, so I ask the minister to direct their department in relation to this matter. Finally, Middleton Street, Advantage Road, Miller Street, Graham Road, Jack Road, Mernda Avenue and Highland Avenue are just some of the intersecting roads along Bay Road that have been raised with me as concerns. I urge the minister's department to undertake this study and to make things just a little bit easier and a little bit safer for members of my community.

Wyndham City Council

Mathew HILAKARI (Point Cook) (17:30): (1386) My adjournment is for the Minister for Local Government, and my ask tonight is to call on him to meet with Wyndham council around their use of ratepayer funds, in particular their use of developer contributions related to Point Cook. I am unsure whether it is a lack of imagination or a lack of competency at Wyndham council. Recently they ripped \$24.4 million away from the ratepayers of Point Cook, who have provided developer contributions that have not been spent for almost three decades – three decades sitting in their coffers doing nothing. Now they have found an opportunity to use it, but not in Point Cook. The recommendation they have

put forward is a 750-person venue with a commercial kitchen and onsite parking, and why I say they have a lack of imagination or a lack of competency down there at Wyndham council is because just down the road is the Encore Events Centre – a centre managed, run and owned by Wyndham council which fits a thousand people, has a commercial kitchen and has onsite parking – and yet the community do not use it, because it is too expensive and you cannot bring in your own food. What a disgrace. Just down the road from there are the council offices, again a massive space. It fits hundreds of people, has lots of parking and has kitchens. But they do not hire it out to the community, and the community has been suffering because of this. It is a disgrace.

The council should build what we need and they should make use of what we already have. We know that the council should be building 12 basketball courts in Point Cook. Why? Because they tell us that is what is needed. Down the road we have 500 kids on the waiting list at Eagle Stadium. This is a community who need these facilities. That is just the kids who are on the waiting list. Down the road at Altona Sports Centre they are doing double byes and they are shortening games, all because Wyndham council cannot get their act together. They have not been able to do it for decades. Minister, I call on you to take a look at this council and what they are getting up to, because it is just wrong.

St Martins Youth Arts Centre

Rachel WESTAWAY (Prahran) (17:33): (1387) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Creative Industries, and it concerns the urgent need for increased and sustainable funding for St Martins Youth Arts Centre, a treasured creative institution located in my electorate of Prahran, in St Martins Lane in South Yarra near the beautiful botanical gardens. I was delighted to have the chance to visit it last week.

For more than 40 years St Martins has given young Victorians opportunities. It is a place where young people of all backgrounds can explore who they are and tell their stories through the creative arts and theatre. After founding the Melbourne Little Theatre in 1934, Brett Randall and Hal Percy opened a theatre on the site in 1956, together with the great Irene Mitchell MBE. The site was later purchased by the Victorian government, with the St Martins Youth Arts Centre company and charitable institution established in 1980 and the complex officially opened in 1982. Since then thousands of children and teenagers have found confidence, belonging and purpose through St Martins. Many go on to work in the arts, and some notable alumni include Catherine McClements, Ben Mendelsohn, Gina Riley, Noah Taylor, Jane Turner, Madeleine West and Julia Zemiro. St Martins' work reaches far beyond South Yarra. Their outreach programs connect with schools and communities across the state, providing access to high-quality arts education that many young people would never otherwise experience. This is exactly the kind of organisation that you would be supporting – one that builds social connections, promotes inclusion and strengthens Victoria's cultural future.

Despite their proven track record, St Martins is operating with an uncertain future, relying on short-term government grants and philanthropic contributions, with some revenue from venue hire. They are doing the heavy lifting of creative youth development on a small budget while navigating short-term grants that make it almost impossible to plan for the future. At the same time, their costs have increased, demand for their programs has grown and government support is simply not keeping pace. The action I seek tonight is that the Minister for Creative Industries review and establish core funding for St Martins Youth Arts Centre, ensuring long-term stability and recognising the essential role it plays in youth engagement in the arts.

At the moment, sadly, the Randall Stage, which can seat over 300 people, can no longer be used for performances due to noncompliance. My three children used to do musical performances at that theatre 10 years ago, and then they had to stop because there was no air conditioning and no disability access. It still has not been fixed. There is a real opportunity that more people could use this theatre. At the moment it just stands in complete disarray. I am very keen to see this situation recognised and addressed.

Blackburn activity centre

Paul HAMER (Box Hill) (17:36): (1388) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Planning, and the action that I seek is for the minister to ensure that draft and final planning zones and boundaries for the Blackburn activity centre are consistent with the SLO1 and SLO2 significant landscape overlay areas. Recently the minister joined me, the local ward councillor and the president of the Bellbird Residents Advocacy Group for a walk through this magnificent part of Melbourne. I want to thank the minister for visiting this area and getting a firsthand appreciation of its unique environment. Blackburn is not just another suburb; it is a place of heritage, character and natural beauty. The Bellbird area, protected under the SLO1 and SLO2 overlays, is living testament to the community's commitment to environmental stewardship over many years. Indeed many of the mature trees that contribute to this landscape were planted decades ago by residents who still live in this area.

These overlays are not arbitrary. They were established to safeguard the unique tree canopy, streetscape and ambience that define Blackburn's identity. The overlays include strict development controls that prioritise vegetation protection and low-rise homes. I and the Blackburn community welcome the minister's commitment to me that the significant landscape overlays that protect these areas will not be removed or amended as part of the activity centre planning work that is currently underway. At the moment the zoning complements these development controls to ensure that the environment remains protected. If the zoning were to allow more intensive development, it may be inconsistent with the overlays and undermine decades of careful planning and community advocacy.

Let me be clear: most people that I have spoken to in Blackburn recognise and support the need for additional housing in appropriate parts of their suburb. They do not buy into the scare campaigns run by the opposition that there should be no activity centre in Blackburn, which completely ignores the fact that Blackburn was identified as an activity centre more than 20 years ago. However, many in my community are concerned that any changes in zoning within the SLO1 and SLO2 areas could undermine the existing protections, including the loss of mature trees. Such a change would also be at odds with the government's stated policy of increasing tree canopy cover and the sustainability goals of increasing new housing close to existing infrastructure. I look forward to the minister's response.

Responses

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services) (17:38): While I thank the member for Melbourne for her question, the fact that I have been asked the same question by the Greens three times this week suggests that the motivation is more about generating social media content than actually wanting to know the answer. The answer that I gave in question time today to the same question still stands.

Other members have raised matters for the attention of various ministers, and I will ensure that they are referred to them.

The SPEAKER: After a number of days of long hours and challenging work this week, I would like to particularly thank and acknowledge a few people, including the parliamentary staff. Firstly, I would like to thank the Deputy Speaker for his efforts during consideration in detail. I would like to acknowledge the work of the clerks; the Office of the Chief Parliamentary Counsel; the table and procedures office; the tours and customer service unit team; the kitchen, catering and dining room staff; Hansard; the office of the Serjeant-at-Arms; and all of the advisers and MP staff. Thank you to all for your very profound efforts this week in supporting us as members. The house now stands adjourned.

House adjourned 5:40 pm.