Hansard

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

60th Parliament

Wednesday 30 July 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
Benham, Jade	Mildura	Nat	McLeish, Cindy	Eildon	Lib
Britnell, Roma	South-West Coast	Lib	Marchant, Alison	Bellarine	ALP
Brooks, Colin	Bundoora	ALP	Matthews-Ward, Kathleen	Broadmeadows	ALP
Bull, Josh	Sunbury	ALP	Mercurio, Paul	Hastings	ALP
Bull, Tim	Gippsland East	Nat	Mullahy, John	Glen Waverley	ALP
Cameron, Martin	Morwell	Nat	Newbury, James	Brighton	Lib
Carbines, Anthony	Ivanhoe	ALP	O'Brien, Danny	Gippsland South	Nat
Carroll, Ben	Niddrie	ALP	O'Brien, Michael	Malvern	Lib
Cheeseman, Darren[2]	South Barwon	Ind	O'Keeffe, 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

CONTENTS

BILLS

Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Amendment (Medication Administration in Residential Aged Care) Bill 2025 2659

Introduction and first reading 2659

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of motion and orders of the day 2659

DOCUMENTS

Documents 2659

BILLS

Transport Legislation Amendment (Vehicle Sharing Scheme Safety and Standards) Bill 2025 2660

Roads and Ports Legislation Amendment (Road Safety and Other Matters) Bill 2025 2660

Council's agreement 2660

MOTIONS

Motions by leave 2660

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

Bulleen electorate 2660

Esmond Julian Curnow 2661

Bairnsdale hospital 2661

Middle East conflict 2661

Esmond Julian Curnow 2662

Great forest national park 2662

Hilda Gracia Baylor AM 2662

Panton Hill Hotel 2662

Ivanhoe electorate housing 2663

Benambra electorate petitions 2663

North East Water 2663

Budget 2025–26 2663

Kokoda Track 2664

Cambodia–Thailand conflict 2664

Family violence 2664

Middle East conflict 2665

Broadmeadows electorate 2665

Atherton Gardens redevelopment 2665

Frankston basketball and gymnastics stadium 2666

Frankston Dolphins 2666

Early childhood education and care 2666

Melbourne International Film Festival 2666

James 'Jimmy' Mentor 2667

Youth in politics 2667

Point Cook football clubs 2667

Saltwater Reserve, Point Cook 2668

Laverton Magpies Football Netball Club 2668

Laverton Cricket Club 2668

Homestead Senior Secondary College 2668

Outdoor recreation 2668

Members for Mill Park and Thomastown 2668

STATEMENTS ON PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE REPORTS

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee 2669

Report on the 2024–25 Budget Estimates 2669

Economy and Infrastructure Committee 2670

Inquiry into Workplace Surveillance 2670

Integrity and Oversight Committee 2671

Performance of the Victorian Integrity Agencies 2022/23 2671

Economy and Infrastructure Committee 2672

Inquiry into Workplace Surveillance 2672

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee 2673

Report on the 2024–25 Budget Estimates 2673

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee 2674

Inquiry into Vaping and Tobacco Controls 2674

BILLS

Bail Further Amendment Bill 2025 2676

Statement of compatibility 2676

CONTENTS

Second reading....2686
Crimes Amendment (Performance Crime) Bill 2025....2689
Second reading....2689

MEMBERS
Minister for Government Services....2714
Minister for Emergency Services....2714
Absence....2714

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE AND MINISTERS STATEMENTS
Early childhood education and care....2714
Ministers statements: economic policy....2716
education and care....2716
Ministers statements: bail laws....2717
Early childhood education and care....2718
Ministers statements: major events....2719
State Electricity Commission....2719
Ministers statements: Metro Tunnel....2721
Government performance....2722
Ministers statements: NAPLAN results....2723

CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS
Caulfield electorate....2724
Mulgrave electorate....2724
Shepparton electorate....2724
Yan Yean electorate....2724
Sandringham electorate....2724
Bass electorate....2725
Melbourne electorate....2725
Glen Waverley electorate....2725
Rowville electorate....2726
Kororoit electorate....2726

BILLS
Crimes Amendment (Performance Crime) Bill 2025....2727
Second reading....2727

MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE
Economic policy....2738

BILLS
Crimes Amendment (Performance Crime) Bill 2025....2760
Second reading....2760
Local Jobs First Amendment Bill 2025....2760
Second reading....2760

ADJOURNMENT
Metro Tunnel....2772
Container deposit scheme....2773
Inverloch surf beach....2773
West Gippsland Hospital....2774
NAPLAN results....2774
Housing....2774
Newlands Primary School....2775
Trafalgar Road, Camberwell, road safety....2776
BATS Theatre Company....2776
Community safety....2777
Responses....2777

Wednesday 30 July 2025

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

Bills

Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Amendment (Medication Administration in Residential Aged Care) Bill 2025

Introduction and first reading

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services) (09:34): I move:

> That I introduce a bill for an act to amend the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981 to further provide for the administration of medication to residents in aged care and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

Emma KEALY (Lowan) (09:34): I ask the minister for a brief explanation of the bill.

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services) (09:34): This bill seeks to avoid medicine-related problems for people receiving residential aged care by placing an obligation on Victorian residential aged care providers to ensure that only registered and enrolled nurses administer certain medications; allowing regulations to provide for exemptions and how these circumstances should be managed; and modernising language and terminology, including to align with the new Commonwealth legislation.

Read first time.

Ordered to be read second time tomorrow.

Business of the house

Notices of motion and orders of the day

Notice given.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (09:36): General business, notices of motion 65 to 92 and order of the day 8, will be removed from the notice paper unless members wishing their matter to remain advise the Clerk in writing before 2 pm today.

Documents

Documents

Incorporated list as follows:

DOCUMENTS TABLED UNDER ACTS OF PARLIAMENT – The Clerk tabled:

Auditor-General – Delivering Savings Under the COVID Debt Repayment Plan – Ordered to be published

Interpretation of Legislation Act 1984 – Notice under s 32(3)(a)(iii) in relation to Statutory Rule 63 *(Gazette G30, 24 July 2025)*.

Bills

Transport Legislation Amendment (Vehicle Sharing Scheme Safety and Standards) Bill 2025

Roads and Ports Legislation Amendment (Road Safety and Other Matters) Bill 2025

Council's agreement

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (09:37): I have received messages from the Legislative Council agreeing to the following bills without amendment: the Transport Legislation Amendment (Vehicle Sharing Scheme Safety and Standards) Bill 2025 and the Roads and Ports Legislation Amendment (Road Safety and Other Matters) Bill 2025.

Motions

Motions by leave

Roma BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (09:37): I move, by leave:

> That this house condemns the Allan Labor government for ignoring the pleas of the children's commissioner two years ago, who warned children will be at risk if the government did not fund the reportable conduct scheme, leaving vulnerable children in reported abusive situations, resulting in hundreds of children being abused in our childcare system.

Leave refused.

Tim READ (Brunswick) (09:37): I move, by leave:

> That the genocide in Gaza is worsening, with Israel starving the population, and that this house calls on the federal Labor government to sanction Israel and to end all military ties with that country.

Leave refused.

Roma BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (09:38): I move, by leave:

> That this house condemns the Allan Labor government for allowing the children's commissioner's position to remain vacant without leadership even when this crisis was publicly exposed, leaving Victorian children at further risk of abuse. The position remains vacant.

Leave refused.

Roma BRITNELL: I move, by leave:

> That this house condemns the Premier and the Labor government for voting down the urgent reforms to Victoria's broken working with children check system, choosing to play politics rather than implementing the Ombudsman's recommendations from three years ago and strengthening child safety from three years ago.

Leave refused.

Bridget VALLENCE (Evelyn) (09:38): I move, by leave:

> That this house condemns the Leader of the House for not appointing an opposition member to the Privileges Committee despite the opposition complying with every one of her requests on this matter and defying a longstanding tradition of agreement on these matters.

Leave refused.

Members statements

Bulleen electorate

Matthew GUY (Bulleen) (09:39): I recently asked my constituents for their feedback on the biggest issues in the western area of Manningham. The 309 bus, the 905 bus and of course issues like land tax came back as big issues for people in the electorate of Bulleen. Kangaroo numbers and animal welfare issues of course are big issues. We have seen a rise in the number of strikes between vehicles and wildlife, particularly as we border the Yarra River in my electorate. Fallen trees are affecting a lot

of people's ability to move around. The North East Link is often raised by my constituents as a major issue of concern, given noise, dust and attenuation issues. The financial incompetence of the current Labor government cannot be ignored, and I have got that back from a number of members, as you can imagine, because members in my area are grossly upset about the financial incompetence of a woeful Labor government. The biggest issue, though, in the electorate of Bulleen and the biggest issue, I think, facing many areas of our state is crime – youth crime, knife crime and home invasions. At Westfield Doncaster where you park your car – a car is stolen every 17 minutes in Victoria – you have got more chance of coming back to an empty car space because your car has been stolen than you do of actually getting a car park in Westfield Doncaster. The government does not care.

Esmond Julian Curnow

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (09:41): I want to send my condolences to the friends and family of Esmond Curnow, a stalwart of the Labor Party and the union movement and a proud son of Bendigo. Esmond was born into a Labor family and grew up steeped in the values of fairness and social justice. His grandfather served as the member for Bendigo for a quarter of a century, and those values helped shape Esmond's life. As a boy he was out there letterboxing, handing out how-to-vote cards and turning up at rallies. By the age of 16 he had joined the Labor Party, and by 23, in what was supposed to be an unwinnable election, he won the seat of Kara Kara from the Country Party and at the time was the youngest MP ever elected. In recognition of that lifelong dedication, Esmond was awarded Labor Party life membership in 2002, a testament to more than five decades of active contribution.

Esmond and I shared more than a passion for the labour movement. With both of us being elected young and from Bendigo, we shared a patch. It is a community that instils a sense of fairness and a drive to make things better. Esmond served two terms before Kara Kara was abolished and was always a strong and vocal advocate for rural and regional communities. Even after Parliament, his commitment to the movement did not stop. He served Bendigo Trades Hall later with the storemen and packers union, ultimately as assistant secretary. Esmond was passionate, determined, opinionated and generous, and never afraid to stand up for what he believed in. I thank him for his legacy to our movement and the Parliament. Vale, Esmond Curnow.

Bairnsdale hospital

Tim BULL (Gippsland East) (09:42): The Bairnsdale hospital desperately needs a new lift, and I ask the Minister for Health to fund it. The lift fails frequently. It was inoperable 12 times in the last 12 months, and being 30 years old, it cannot even fit in a standard hospital-size bed. The hospital maternity ward is located on the first floor and the emergency operating theatre is on the ground floor, so when the lift is out, pregnant women in need of a caesarean have to be taken downstairs while in labour. I note that 91 caesareans were performed at the hospital last year. A funding application under the Regional Health Infrastructure Fund was rejected. I understand that the application for $1.65 million was rejected due to a criteria technicality, as it stated it needed a new lift rather than a replacement. The disappointing thing here is that no-one from the department bothered to pick up the phone so the application could be amended; it was simply refused. Minister, this needs funding, either inside or outside this grants process, before it costs a life, and I ask you to ensure the funds are allocated.

Middle East conflict

Tim RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) (09:44): This week also marks the one-year anniversary of the Majdal Shams tragedy, where 12 children in this Druze village in Israel were killed by a Hezbollah rocket while playing soccer. I visited those families and those parents earlier this year in an experience I will never forget, and I send my condolences to them all.

Esmond Julian Curnow

Danny PEARSON (Essendon – Minister for Economic Growth and Jobs, Minister for Finance) (09:44): I rise to remember the life of Esmond Curnow. Esmond was born at the end of the war years into a strong left-wing family in Bendigo, his grandfather Arthur Cook having been MLA for the seats of Bendigo and Bendigo West for 25 years. As the Premier said, Esmond was elected to the seat of Kara Kara at the age of 23, the youngest MP elected in Victoria at that time. He won the seat, which no-one except for Esmond himself thought was possible, and this off the back of Country Party preferences at the time when Labor was at its lowest ebb. He served two terms and was a strong and vocal advocate for regional and rural communities throughout this time, gaining the respect of his community while happily irritating the governing coalition parties.

The seat of Kara Kara was dissolved in a redistribution, and Esmond moved on with his life elsewhere in the labour movement. He was secretary of the Bendigo Trades Hall Council and then moved to Melbourne to work as a training officer with the Trade Union Training Authority, where he met his long-time partner Beth and went on to work for the storemen and packers union and the National Union of Workers, where he served in many roles, ultimately as assistant secretary. He was a man of integrity and conviction, never afraid to voice his opinion and to stand up for what he believed in. He was kind, compassionate and generous and had a wicked sense of humour. He did not suffer fools.

After retirement he had many interests – travel, gardening, horseracing – until the toll of living with Parkinson's disease resulted in him suffering a number of falls, ultimately leading to residence in an aged care facility. He was always appreciative of the kindness and care he received during his time. He died gently and peacefully with Beth, as always, by his side. Vale, Esmond Curnow.

Great forest national park

Cindy McLEISH (Eildon) (09:45): The future of the Central Highlands state forests is of great concern to many in my electorate who are active bush users, horse riders, prospectors, hunters, fishers and those who enjoy four-wheel driving. Minister Dimopoulos earlier this month told delegates at an Electrical Trades Union conference that the great forest national park was not Labor policy and that Labor would not implement it. I would like the minister to confirm this statement publicly. It is almost 2½ years since the government asked the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council to investigate the future use and management of the Central Highlands state forests, and we have heard nothing.

Hilda Gracia Baylor AM

Cindy McLEISH (Eildon) (09:46): Hilda Gracia Baylor AM, a former Liberal MP, passed away in May 2025, aged 95. A Healesville local, trailblazing politician, first female president of the Shire of Healesville, she was one of the first two women to be elected to the Victorian Legislative Council and was inducted into the Victorian Honour Roll of Women. Gracia was indeed a strong woman, referencing the storming of the Bastille in her maiden speech – a reference appropriate and symbolic for everything she achieved in her lifetime. She worked hard to improve women's rights, health and child safety. Importantly, she stopped John Cain selling off the Queen Victoria Hospital site, which is now the Queen Victoria Women's Centre. Gracia led the way and certainly shattered the glass ceiling for women entering politics.

Panton Hill Hotel

Cindy McLEISH (Eildon) (09:47): It comes as no surprise that the much-loved Panton Hill Hotel won Triple M's Best Pub of Melbourne award 2025. Whether you want a drink in the front bar with your mates or a meal with your family and friends, Panton Hill Hotel is the place to go – great atmosphere, great food and, most importantly, great staff. Well done to Michael and the team for this recognition.

Ivanhoe electorate housing

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Minister for Police, Minister for Community Safety, Minister for Victims, Minister for Racing) (09:47): I was with the Acting Premier in the other place Ms Symes and of course the Minister for Housing in the other place Ms Shing just recently in Beetham Parade, Rosanna, where we announced 45 new homes under construction as part of the first round of the Housing Australia Future Fund. What a great place for 45 new homes for people who need them in my electorate of Ivanhoe.

In Rosanna, right next to Rosanna station, we have removed the boom gates and there is a new station there. With $1.5 million from our government, the new Rosanna Library is being built in conjunction with Banyule City Council and alongside is the new Woolworths in Rosanna. Rosanna Village is a great spot. We have lived there for a very long time, and it is a great place to welcome new affordable homes for people in our community under this program.

I want to thank my local federal member Kate Thwaites, the member for Jagajaga. It is great teamwork with the Commonwealth to be able to deliver these homes under the Housing Australia Future Fund. Not only that, but there will be five new low-rise projects, including in Plunkett Street in Bellfield in my electorate. We are looking forward to that project kicking off as well. These are all about providing new homes to people in my electorate. The Bell-Bardia Estate is also coming up out of the ground as part of the Housing Australia Future Fund and contributions from our government. We have delivered the new housing estate in Tarakan Street, which has provided so many new homes for people in my community, and we will keep doing that work for those who need it.

Benambra electorate petitions

Bill TILLEY (Benambra) (09:48): This sitting week, there are two petitions from the Benambra district, one from Rutherglen and Wahgunyah, with 645 signatures from people who see the health crisis, which is public surgery waiting lists and ambulance ramping in Albury–Wodonga, impacting their lives, with ambulance response times from this area among the worst in the state. The nearest ambulance was dragged into the ramping black hole in Albury–Wodonga 462 times last year. It is great to see the Minister for Health in here, because we made her famous with the latest edition of the Fyfe cartoon, so we will have a chat about that later this week if we get an opportunity.

In the Legislative Council there is another petition, with 402 signatures, from people in Wodonga opposed to the planning exemption for rooming houses. This government has papered over the cracks in housing supply by stopping people objecting to these developments or having them need council approval. The government should be aware that the Municipal Association of Victoria has a solution, and this government would be wise to listen to it.

North East Water

Bill TILLEY (Benambra) (09:50): Last is a shout-out for North East Water's $74 million upgrade to its wastewater treatment plant. I paid a visit there, and it is on track and on budget for early next year. It will cater to Wodonga's growth for the next 20 years, will use biogases it generates to cut energy costs and will work with a nearby hydrogen plant to cut waste by using each other's byproducts. It is a great example of the ingenuity of regional Victorians.

Budget 2025–26

Kat THEOPHANOUS (Northcote) (09:50): Right across Northcote our incredible local schools, organisations and clubs have been making use of funding opportunities from our Labor government. In local sport, Darebin United secured $5000 for club wellbeing, while the Victorian Roller Derby League and Northcote United Cricket Club picked up grants for more uniforms and gear. We are boosting Thornbury High with $1.27 million to upgrade essential infrastructure, and at Alphington Grammar students will be leading an Indigenous habitat project along Darebin Creek with a $5000 grant. The Yarra Energy Foundation will receive $150,000 to continue driving climate action across

the inner north. Meanwhile, 11 brilliant local artists will receive $5000 each through our Uncovering Talent program, and seven creative projects will share over $140,000 to bring bold new ideas to life. We have also seen a major boost to our music scene with 24 Moons, Cactus Room, Piano on High and Wesley Anne receiving a combined $88,000 to deliver even more live gigs. The Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association will receive $180,000 for their powerful senior football and netball carnival and to support a workforce development program. The Irish Australian bureau in Northcote picked up $5000 to keep their cultural programming going strong. Twenty-four local seniors clubs are being supported through the multicultural seniors support program, and we just unveiled wonderful upgrades at McDonell Park in Northcote. From sports fields to schoolyards, seniors halls to stages, local creeks to climate action, we are working together for Northcote's future.

Kokoda Track

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (09:51): During the winter break the inaugural Farnsworth Lochhead Lowe Kokoda Track scholarship took place. Hannah Saunders from Red Cliffs Secondary College and Rhiannon Jack from Mildura Senior College proudly represented their schools and communities in the best way possible, and I am so proud of them. The journey ended in a deeply moving moment, with a visit to the final resting place of Rhiannon's great-grandfather Acting Warrant Officer John Lochhead at Bomana cemetery, making Rhiannon the first in her family to pay tribute in person. The group was led of course by the member for Gippsland East alongside four of our other National MPs, and the members' research and passion for this program have been instrumental to its success and how absolutely incredible an experience it has been for these students and for the MPs and the adults that go along as well. Thirty-two students from across regional Victoria took part, learning about one of the most significant Australian victories of World War II, the Kokoda campaign. The 39th Battalion, which was central to that campaign, included many young men recruited from Mildura, Red Cliffs, Merbein and the wider region. That local connection makes this now annual pilgrimage especially meaningful for our region, and I strongly encourage years 10, 11 and 12 students of next year to consider applying for the 2026 Farnsworth Lochhead Lowe Scholarship. Sincere thanks to the Mildura RSL, the Gateway hotel, Sunraysia Petroleum and the Wentworth military museum.

Cambodia–Thailand conflict

Meng Heang TAK (Clarinda) (09:53): I rise to express my utter heartbreak over the recent border clashes in Thailand and Cambodia. Dozens of soldiers and civilians have been killed and injured over the past week, with many thousands more displaced from their home as a result of the fighting. On Sunday thousands of Cambodians across the world in New Zealand, South Korea and right here on the steps of Parliament gathered to demand peace and justice, and I express my firm solidarity with them. Cambodia is a nation that has been ravaged by war. The vast majority of Cambodian Australians are here in Australia having fled genocide and war. Cambodia does not seek war, only peace, and I echo the call of so many Cambodian Australians to seek a long-lasting and sustainable peace. The proper place for resolution for this border dispute is at the International Court of Justice, through the Paris peace accord of 1991 or through bilateral negotiations. This dispute must be resolved through words but not weapons. As a result, I welcome the ceasefire agreement and express my sincere hope for long-lasting and sustainable peace. I am heartbroken for the dozens of lives lost and those injured as part of the conflict on both sides. I acknowledge the efforts of those gathering around the world to demand peace, and I call on the Australian government to take an active role in continuing to foster peace between Thailand and Cambodia.

Family violence

Kim O'KEEFFE (Shepparton) (09:54): Last week we had a community policing forum, and I want to thank the Shepparton police for connecting with the community, providing vital information and answering questions. Crime remains a significant community concern, and we have had a 20 per cent rise in crime to the end of March. An alarming 75 per cent of police resourcing at the Shepparton station is taken up with family violence incidents. This reduces significantly police capacity to attend

to other criminal matters. I recently met with Superintendent Kahan, who said that the station is struggling to cope, with an over 31 per cent increase in family violence, and that it is critical that the police have the resources that they need. They are urgently calling for a more dedicated family violence response team, which would require additional police.

How can the police protect our community when they do not have the resources and enough officers on the ground? I have heard of incidents where the police have been called and there have been significant delays in their responding or no response at all. This is a clear example of the Labor government significantly failing when it comes to crime. I want to thank our hardworking police, who are doing the best that they can. They deserve to have the resources that they need to meet the growing rates of crime. I also want to thank our community, who recently supported a young mother impacted by family violence and who needed urgent assistance. The community came together when the call went out, providing furniture and assisting with delivery. There have been too many lives lost when it comes to family violence, and we need to do more to address the dangerous, alarming rise in incidents.

Middle East conflict

Kathleen MATTHEWS-WARD (Broadmeadows) (09:56): Every time I speak in this place about the atrocities in Gaza I sincerely pray that I never have to speak on them again. But every time we return from a sitting break there has been another escalation in the horror and cruelty inflicted on innocent women, children, babies and men. I know Netanyahu does not care what I say, but as an elected leader and a voice for the many in my community who are as sickened and horrified as I am, I again implore leaders of every country, including Australia, to step up immediately and do everything they can to put an end to this misery and injustice.

Broadmeadows electorate

Kathleen MATTHEWS-WARD (Broadmeadows) (09:57): Today I also want to speak about the wonderful sports clubs and organisations in my electorate. I love the incredible diversity of Broadmeadows, where in the space of one weekend you can attend the Multicultural Mango Festival run by the Australian Pakistani Youth Association, a mass celebrating the feast of St Charbel and a lively afternoon at the Glenroy footy club. I have also had the pleasure of joining ladies days at both the Oak Park and Hadfield footy clubs, visiting the Moreland Eagles soccer club, attending presentation nights at the Glenroy Bowls Club and Fawkner Netball Club, meeting the coaches at the Glenroy Cricket Club, enjoying a fabulous Christmas in July hosted by the Broadmeadows Royal Children's Hospital Auxiliary, an interfaith Eid dinner and the 20th anniversary mass and celebration of Our Lady Guardian of Plants Chaldean Catholic Church in Campbellfield. Thank you to the incredible people who volunteer their time for the community. You are the lifeblood of Victoria.

Atherton Gardens redevelopment

Gabrielle DE VIETRI (Richmond) (09:57): Children at Dill-be-din and Kangaroo Paw kindergartens, both in Fitzroy, have asked me questions about the floodlights on top of the Atherton Gardens flats. In circle time they are learning about ideas of home and sustainability, so they are confused about why these floodlights are on 24 hours a day. Scarlett said:

> When the light is on we can't go to sleep, because it's too bright.

Hamza said:

> When it's night time. (it could be on) daytime I turn off the light.

Lois asked:

> Can your Mum turn it off?

Thoughtful questions also came from Georgia and Achut. Residents of the estate have told me that the light is so bright that it floods their bedrooms even when the blinds are drawn, and residents who live 800 metres away in the next suburbs have also told me that it bothers them at night. This is a problem

firstly from an energy and light pollution standpoint, as the kindy kids rightly point out, and secondly in terms of the disruption to residents. Why are these lights on 24 hours a day, and why are they so bright? What can be done so that residents near and far can sleep at night without bright lights flooding in through their windows?

Frankston basketball and gymnastics stadium

Paul EDBROOKE (Frankston) (09:59): What a tremendous week Frankston has had. First of all, we turned the sod on the new $60 million Frankston and District Basketball Association and Bayside Gymnastics stadium. It has been something in people's minds since 2016 when the first funding package was arranged but unfortunately fell through the cracks. But for more than 9000 basketballers who, every time they hear that basketball echoing off those walls, wonder when they will have enough room, when they will be able to not take their kids to basketball at 11:30 at night, this is great news. It is going to take two years to build. There will be four extra courts – just an amazing facility. For everyone who is involved, especially the FDBA and Bayside Gymnastics, Wayne and Tim, the brains and the force behind this in basketball, I say thank you – thank you for your patience, thank you for your trust. It is paying off now. And thank you to the parents and our future sporting stars for their patience as well.

Frankston Dolphins

Paul EDBROOKE (Frankston) (10:00): It would be remiss of me not to mention in this house the mighty Frankston Dolphins' win against VFL Collingwood with half their AFL list down at Frankston Park on Saturday night. That was a place to be – 5500 people. If you remember, it was not long ago, in 2018, that we got our licence back – we had lost our VFL licence. What a great comeback story. Go the Dolphs!

Early childhood education and care

Nicole WERNER (Warrandyte) (10:00): In 2022 Victoria's Ombudsman warned that our working with children check laws were amongst the weakest in the nation. They called for reforms to close loopholes that meant checks would only be reviewed upon criminal convictions and for no other reasons. The government ignored them. In 2023 Joshua Brown, alleged paedophile, was investigated for aggressively handling children. It was reported to police, it was reported to the regulator through the reportable conduct scheme and he was issued with a formal written warning, but no review of his working with children check was triggered. In 2023 I supported MPs calling for the strengthening of the working with children check process to close the loopholes and for mandatory training; again the government did nothing. Meanwhile, in January 2024 Joshua Brown was again reported for aggressively handling children. He was reported to the police, reported to the regulator and suspended indefinitely by the childcare centre he was at, but according to the ABC it is believed the Commission for Children and Young People, which oversees the reportable conduct scheme, used discretionary powers not to escalate Mr Brown's case as it was viewed as a lower level incident. He then resigned and went on to work at 10 different other centres where he went on to allegedly commit 70 offences – that we know of – against babies aged between five months and three years of age in childcare centres across Victoria. The government knew about this and did nothing.

Melbourne International Film Festival

Katie HALL (Footscray) (10:02): The Melbourne International Film Festival will once again be gracing screens across the state, from 7 to 24 August. Since 1952 MIFF has showcased the best of local and international filmmakers from Cannes to Carnegie, and this year's festival is of particular interest to me, both as the Parliamentary Secretary for Creative Industries and as the member for Footscray. One of my constituents, born and bred inner westie Adrian Ortega, is debuting his second feature film, titled *Westgate*. Based on his own experience growing up in Footscray, *Westgate* explores the profound impact the collapse of the West Gate Bridge had on the predominantly migrant families whose loved ones were lost. Filmed on location in Footscray, the film has already sold out its

screenings at MIFF, a remarkable accomplishment from a remarkable filmmaker. I am hoping that *Westgate* can make its way to more screens in the west once the festival run is over. This production, alongside the wonderful work happening at the Melbourne Screen Hub, highlights how Footscray is fast becoming a crucial part of Victoria's screen industry. Congratulations, Adrian. I cannot wait to watch.

James 'Jimmy' Mentor

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (10:03): It is with great sadness that I rise today to acknowledge the passing of and pay tribute to James Mentor, who was born on 16 October 1986 and passed away on 10 June 2025. James, or 'Jimmy' as he was known to many of us within the labour movement, was the truest of the true believers. I first met Jimmy in Victorian Young Labor when we attended our first Labor Unity caucus meeting upstairs over the road at the Imperial Hotel in around May 2008, just after he saw the light and defected from the National Union of Workers. The pub, politics, blended in with watching the Pies via the Melbourne Cricket Club – that was Jimmy in his element.

As described by Senator Raff Ciccone, Jimmy will be remembered for his warmth, wisdom and his love for a chat and a laugh over a cold beer, never seeking the spotlight yet always there to campaign and help advance the Labor cause and the Labor Unity cause. As described by good friend Xavier Williams, Jimmy joined everything and attended everything. He was always very generous with his time. For me, he never hesitated over the years in showing up, helping out and campaigning throughout Wills or Pascoe Vale. As a long-time local constituent, having lived in Woolacott Street in Coburg, he may have been raised in the south-east but his heart belonged in the north. He regularly raised his grievances with local councillors Lambros Tapinos and Annalivia Carli, and he was always the first to show up and last to leave many of our local fundraisers and events over the years – whether at the old Sollazzo Pizza Cafe on Sydney Road, the Reggio Calabria Club or the Vizzini Club, you could count on Jimmy to be there in support. As Xavier described, he was famous for driving an old 1980s Volvo station wagon. This was Jimmy to a tee: stable, reliable and solid as a rock. Jimmy's life was celebrated in a very moving ceremony held at the MCG on 26 June.

Youth in politics

Michaela SETTLE (Eureka) (10:05): I am so much looking forward to today. My wonderful youth-in-politics team are coming into Parliament. They are an amazing group of kids, and they come from wonderful schools in my electorate: Bacchus Marsh College, Mount Clear College and Woodmans Hill college. They have worked hard over the last few months to make the most of their day in Parliament. They will be meeting with the Minister for Police to ask about how he is tackling the issue of fascism in Victoria. They will meet with the minister for transport to talk about how important public transport is for kids in the region, which of course is even better now we will have free travel for under-18s. Then it is question time for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety about licensing and regional roads. I was so impressed by their consideration of who they wanted to talk to and what they wanted to talk about. Our future is in great hands when young people like these think about what they want from their government and can have their say. I want to thank their teachers and principals for supporting them to be here today. We need our young people engaged in politics, and I am so grateful that the schools came on board to give them this opportunity. What a day to be in here, when Victoria is topping the polls in the NAPLAN – not by just a little bit but by a whole lot. It is a testament to the students' hard work and the commitment of their schools and this government.

Point Cook football clubs

Mathew HILAKARI (Point Cook) (10:06): Last weekend the Sharks and the Bulldogs faced off for what looks like the last time this season. Congratulations to the Bulldogs, the Point Cook Football Club, on the win. Both teams have been hammered by injuries this season.

A member interjected.

Mathew HILAKARI: No, the Bulldogs took it away. While there are a few games left, we are all looking forward to 2026. Thank you to the volunteers and supporters of both clubs. Their efforts every week build a great community in our area.

Saltwater Reserve, Point Cook

Mathew HILAKARI (Point Cook) (10:07): I am very proud of supporting the Saltwater Reserve as part of this government with $1.4 million. The federal government are in for $5 million; the local councils, disappointingly, could only find $600,000 for a facility they will ultimately own. I welcome the club getting on with the job, and I ask for the council to support the work in haste as the club has waited long enough.

Laverton Magpies Football Netball Club

Mathew HILAKARI (Point Cook) (10:07): I am also happy to say that Laverton Magpies Football Netball Club have officially opened their upgraded facilities: a new change room, new deck and shiny new electronic scoreboard that works. Congratulations to president Tony Joffre, the committee, the players and especially the life members, who can build on this 101-year-old club's legacy and future.

Laverton Cricket Club

Mathew HILAKARI (Point Cook) (10:07): The Laverton Cricket Club was also there. President Rahul, your winter season is coming to a close. We play winter cricket in the western suburbs, and we are looking forward to a big summer ahead with the new facilities.

Homestead Senior Secondary College

Mathew HILAKARI (Point Cook) (10:08): Finally, Deputy Premier Ben Carroll came to Homestead Senior Secondary College to celebrate our opening up of schools to the community. It is a great thing in the western suburbs. We love it. We cannot wait to get on it.

Outdoor recreation

Luba GRIGOROVITCH (Kororoit) (10:08): I rise to update the house on the remarkable work underway to strengthen outdoor recreation and protect Victoria's natural environment. Since being appointed Parliamentary Secretary for Outdoor Recreation I have had the privilege to see firsthand the passion of our communities – from the volunteers at the native fish hatchery in Bundoora to the dedicated Parks Victoria team and long-time champions like Ken Harris at Morwell National Park.

Our government is investing in transforming the outdoors for all Victorians. We are building a new Macquarie perch recovery centre at Snobs Creek hatchery, which I had the great pleasure of visiting a few weeks ago. This will release 500,000 fingerlings a year alongside trout cod and Murray cod recovery efforts. We are also stocking 10 million fish at over 240 locations, upgrading piers and boat ramps and keeping boat ramp access free for all families. But it is not just about fishing. Across Victoria our parks and reserves – from the Dandenong Ranges to Lysterfield – are hubs for mountain biking, hiking, birdwatching and of course family picnics. Places like Lake Hyland in Churchill offer accessible fishing platforms, walking tracks and growing wildlife habitats, showing why continued investment matters. Outdoor recreation supports local jobs, strengthens regional tourism, improves public health and deepens our connection to nature, and above all it reminds us that when we invest in healthy rivers, lakes and landscapes we build healthier, more connected communities. I want to thank the Allan Labor government and the minister for their strong commitment, and I look forward to continuing this important work with our communities across Victoria.

Members for Mill Park and Thomastown

Belinda WILSON (Narre Warren North) (10:09): It is with pleasure that I wish the members for Mill Park and Thomastown a very happy birthday.

Statements on parliamentary committee reports

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee

Report on the 2024–25 Budget Estimates

Annabelle CLEELAND (Euroa) (10:10): I rise today to speak on the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee's 2024–25 budget estimates report. The report highlights several issues that are directly affecting our communities throughout the Euroa electorate, many of which were also raised by some very, very impressive year 5 and 6 students from Avenel Primary School who visited Parliament this week. They spoke with clarity, passion and real insight about the problems facing local communities – problems that adults across our region have been raising for many, many years. One section of the report covers the Department of Transport and Planning. Road safety and maintenance remain a glaring problem across regional Victoria. But I had the students of Avenel Primary write some notes for me, and Jameson, a student from Avenel, said:

> On Seymour Avenel road there are potholes … where the bend is. Someone spun out once and nearly crashed. Can you please fix this issue …

Oliver said that on the:

> Avenel-Nagambie Rd … there are potholes and … tree roots … under the road … making huge bumps … It is even worse on the Hume; people must change lanes … every 2 minutes to dodge potholes.

These are concerns echoed by people across the entire electorate, because roads are seriously dangerous.

I dropped in to visit Zoe and the awesome team at Tyrepower in Seymour, who have actually increased their staffing on a Monday because they have so much work from damaged cars and tyres throughout the weekend. Wire-rope barriers have huge problems. They are broken and lying on the ground along the Hume, and fatalities on regional roads have increased significantly in recent years. Local lives are lost every single week, and the government continues to gut funding for maintenance and road safety. This year we have seen a 93 per cent reduction in road patching and a further 14 per cent cut when it comes to resealing and rehabilitation of our roads. The budget papers also highlight massive shortcomings, with the repair target half of what was aimed at, a nearly 1 million-square-metre target. But what is more alarming is this year it was dramatically reduced to just 70,000 square metres. Tell me lives are not going to be the casualty in that absolutely appalling neglect of our roads. The report reveals that $1.13 billion has been taken from the Transport Accident Commission, money that should have gone straight back into improving our road conditions. But instead it is just plugging Labor's budget black hole.

The committee also examined emergency services in their report, and once again the picture for regional communities is really, really alarming. Tilly Eagles – Avenel Primary again – wrote that the fire service levy is:

> … more stress on to farmers … Are you trying to throw farmers off the land?

Aidan McMahon, her friend, raised the alarming impact on the CFA volunteers:

> CFA members that own properties are going on strike cause of how much money they must pay … I hope that we vote to … remove the new … Levy …

These are year 6 students, and even they can see the Allan Labor government is punishing regional Victoria. CFA funding has been cut by $42 million this year, there are no CFA tankers in the forward estimates and just $13.5 million has been allocated to regional CFA upgrades. Volunteer brigades like Strathbogie are still operating out of sheds with no toilets, no water and no changerooms. It is unacceptable. If this government can tax every landholder through the emergency services tax, it must ensure that funding actually goes to the front line.

The committee's analysis of the health portfolio is also very, very concerning. Ambulance Victoria's target to respond to code 1 emergencies within 15 minutes at least 85 per cent of the time is absolutely failing. In Benalla it sits at less than 60 per cent, Mitchell shire is 52.3 per cent and Strathbogie is less than 40 per cent. These are lives, people waiting too long, and in some cases we have seen it is fatal. Ambulance ramping has left just 4 per cent of the fleet available during critical periods. Locally we have seen cuts to mental health in Broadford, shrinking maternity services in Kilmore, Benalla still without dialysis treatment and no certainty around funding for patient transport services.

These outcomes are the result of years of neglect and mismanagement by the Allan Labor government. The young students from Avenel Primary School reminded all of us that these issues are not political talking points, they are the voices of children speaking plainly and honestly and with a wisdom that puts many in this place to shame. As the saying goes, out of the mouths of babes comes the truth, and these young students have shown us that the truth is crystal clear. Our roads are dangerous, our emergency services are under strain and our health system is failing too many people. This is what communities expect and deserve: a better government.

Economy and Infrastructure Committee

Inquiry into Workplace Surveillance

John MULLAHY (Glen Waverley) (10:15): I rise to speak on the Legislative Assembly Economy and Infrastructure Committee's report on the inquiry into workplace surveillance. I want to thank my fellow committee members: the chair, the member for Bellarine; the deputy chair, the member for Shepparton; the member for Pascoe Vale, the member for Tarneit, the member for South-West Coast and the member for Warrandyte. I would also like to thank the member for Narracan and the member for Kew for their time on our committee. To the secretariat of the committee – Kerryn Riseley, committee manager; Dr Marianna Stylianou, research officer; Abbey Battista, administration officer; and law student Patrick Horan – I would like to thank you for your dedicated support throughout this inquiry and for the preparation of the final report. Your professionalism and hard work have been invaluable.

The inquiry was initiated in response to growing concerns around the increasing use of surveillance technologies in Victorian workplaces. From GPS tracking and keystroke monitoring to facial recognition and AI-driven productivity tools, it is clear that workplace surveillance has evolved rapidly, often outpacing the regulatory framework designed to protect workers' rights and privacy. Over the course of the inquiry the committee received 44 written submissions and conducted four days of public hearings, hearing from workers, union representatives, legal experts, academics, employers and regulators. I want to sincerely thank everyone who contributed. In particular I want to acknowledge those workers who shared their personal experiences, often under difficult circumstances. This helped the committee to understand the real and human impacts of these practices.

The committee's report outlines the current state of workplace surveillance laws in Victoria and highlights several critical gaps. As it stands, Victoria does not have a dedicated, comprehensive legal framework that regulates workplace surveillance. What laws do exist are fragmented across state and Commonwealth jurisdictions and often fail to provide clear guidance or enforceable protections for workers. While there are certainly circumstances where some levels of surveillance are reasonable – for example, to protect safety, prevent theft or ensure compliance – there is a clear need to ensure that surveillance is conducted transparently, proportionately and with proper consultation. What we heard from witnesses was that too often workers are being monitored without adequate notice or consent and without any meaningful understanding of what data is being collected, how it is being used, whether it is secure or how long it will be held. A central concern raised throughout the inquiry was the power imbalance. Workers often feel that they have no choice but to accept invasive surveillance practices, even when they feel uncomfortable or unsure about them. This is particularly true for casual workers, young people and those in insecure employment. In some cases surveillance was described

as being used to monitor bathroom breaks, private conversations or actively well beyond what would be considered reasonable or necessary.

The report makes a number of key recommendations which I support. I will briefly speak to two of them. First, the committee recommends that Victoria introduce a dedicated workplace surveillance law, a modern, technology-neutral framework grounded in clear principles of necessity, proportionality and transparency. This would give both employers and workers greater clarity and confidence. It would also help ensure that emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence and biometric tracking, are covered by the law from the outset rather than being dealt with retrospectively. Importantly, it would provide a baseline of rights for Victorian workers, ensuring they are not left behind as surveillance capabilities continue to expand. Second, the committee recommended introducing a requirement for employers to provide two weeks written notice before implementing any new form of workplace surveillance. Employers would also be required to consult with their staff or their representatives and make surveillance policies publicly available. This basic transparency would go a long way towards improving trust, reducing confusion and giving workers a real opportunity to understand and respond to changes that may affect them. It also aligns with good employer practice and would provide a clear, fair standard across the state.

At the heart of the report is a simple idea that surveillance should not come at the cost of dignity, autonomy or fairness in the workplace. Just as we protect workers' rights to safe and respectful workplaces, we must also protect the right to privacy and fair treatment in the digital age. These protections are not about stifling productivity, they are about setting clear expectations and building respectful, transparent relationships between employers and employees.

Last but not least, I acknowledge all those from the Victorian community who took the time to contribute to this important inquiry. Your civic participation strengthens our democracy. I look forward to the government's consideration of the report's recommendations. It was disappointing that a minority report was written by those from the coalition; however, it is very understandable: they are very good at recording private conversations in a workplace.

Integrity and Oversight Committee

Performance of the Victorian Integrity Agencies 2022/23

Tim READ (Brunswick) (10:20): Today I will address the Integrity and Oversight Committee's recently tabled report, *Performance of the Victorian Integrity Agencies 2022/23*. A number of recommendations in the report concern the funding of integrity agencies. Recommendation 8, for example, calls for the Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner to be funded in a similar way to IBAC, Integrity Oversight Victoria and the Ombudsman, whereas in the same inquiry the Ombudsman explained to the committee that her office had taken on some new functions, such as conciliation, while still dealing with 18,000 complaints in a year, without a commensurate increase in funding. She also detailed the problems created by parliamentary referrals for inquiries, which require them to hire additional staff for the inquiry. This is funded by ad hoc Treasurer's advances, but hiring and training capable staff for episodic inquiries is difficult and disruptive. Recommendation 11 encourages the government to have another look at a joint report by the Ombudsman, IBAC and the Auditor-General that calls for an independent funding mechanism for these agencies. All governments should understand that they will not be in power forever, and at some future time they or their successors will wish we had powerful, well-funded independent integrity agencies.

Let us look at budgetary independence in a bit more detail. At present the Treasurer decides the funding level for integrity agencies like IBAC and the Ombudsman. These agencies investigate complaints about the government and its departments, but they rely on the same government for funding, which sets up a conflict of interest that operates in both directions: an agency may not want to upset its funder, the government, and a government angered, for example, by an integrity agency may be less generous with funding. That is why the Auditor-General, the Ombudsman and IBAC jointly called in 2022 for an independent body to make funding decisions, in a similar manner to the determination of MPs'

salaries. If the government does not feel like doing that, at least it could publish each agency's budget bid along with the final amount funded, allowing public scrutiny, as has been recently legislated in New South Wales. The New South Wales Treasurer must write to the head of each integrity agency and the relevant oversight committee with the amount to be appropriated for that agency. The oversight committee reviews the funding and reports back to Parliament. Integrity agencies are excluded from any demands for efficiency dividends, and there is a unit within Treasury that liaises with the agencies. To remove the obvious conflicts of interest, Victoria should set up an independent funding mechanism or at the very least adopt the New South Wales system. Well-funded, independent integrity agencies are an investment towards ensuring fair, efficient and transparent governments in the future.

I would like to thank my fellow committee members for their help in this inquiry, and I would like to acknowledge the hard work of the secretariat. I would like to thank the integrity agencies, who ensured our questions on notice were answered and who attended the public hearings. I would particularly like to single out Dr Stephen James, senior research officer of the Integrity and Oversight Committee, who will finish work on Friday when he retires. He has been with the committee and its predecessor, the IBAC committee, for nine years and is regarded as an authority on the legislation governing our work and the integrity agencies. Committee members past and present have been very grateful for his advice. Stephen's contributions have shaped the IOC's reports and recommendations and will be a permanent record of his scholarship and service to the Victorian public.

Economy and Infrastructure Committee

Inquiry into Workplace Surveillance

Ella GEORGE (Lara) (10:24): It is a great pleasure to rise and speak today on the Legislative Assembly Economy and Infrastructure Committee's report on the inquiry into workplace surveillance. I would like to begin by thanking the chair, the member for Bellarine; the deputy chair, the member for Shepparton; committee members; and the secretariat for their tremendous work in compiling this report. I would also like to thank all of those who attended hearings or made submissions to this important inquiry. Everyone in this place knows the importance of having a robust evidence base when we are working on inquiries like this and the value of lived experience, and to everyone who made a submission about their own experiences of workplace surveillance, I thank you.

Workplace surveillance is not new. In putting together my contribution for today I was reflecting on my own experiences of workplace surveillance across many different workplaces when I was younger, from the age of 18, including some more recent workplaces. These experiences ranged from cameras being put in kitchens to keep an eye on staff to more discreet ways of surveillance. So we know that this is not new and that employers have been using surveillance techniques for years, but what is concerning is that, particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic resulting in most workplaces transitioning to remote or hybrid work, there have been more concerns around how to monitor productivity in a modern workplace, and workplace surveillance has become more pervasive.

Workplace surveillance has also become more sophisticated with technology advances, yet the most recent major change to Victoria's workplace surveillance laws occurred in 2006, which is a very long time ago – I was in first-year university then – and since then we have seen smartphones, artificial intelligence and remote working arrangements become commonplace, but governments around Australia have not kept pace in updating privacy and surveillance laws. In fact only the ACT and New South Wales have workplace surveillance laws in place, and these laws require employers to give advance notice of how and when the surveillance will take place. The ACT also requires employers to alert employees of the purpose of the surveillance and to consult with employees on introducing surveillance into the workplace and protecting the data that has been collected. Even in these states the laws and regulations around workplace surveillance do not cover all technologies and scenarios, nor do they require workplace surveillance to be reasonable, necessary and proportionate.

Currently Australia has no legally binding international conventions regulating or prohibiting workplace surveillance it must adhere to. With no federal laws that address workplace surveillance

and a minimal framework for regulating workplace surveillance, reform in Victoria is needed, and what our Victorian workplaces deserve is a regulated, transparent system of surveillance that empowers employees, which Victoria indeed has the power to regulate under the Fair Work Act 2009. Technological advancements are inevitable and rapid, and as a state we need to keep up.

The first finding that this report makes is that workplace surveillance has now been made easier, cheaper and more pervasive in Victorian workplaces due to the pandemic-induced shift to hybrid and remote work arrangements. This report also finds that the current under-regulated mode for workplace surveillance does not meaningfully increase productivity; instead it fosters distrust, reduces job satisfaction and undermines organisational commitment. Constant monitoring pressures workers to skip breaks and work faster, creating serious health and safety risks. Further, surveillance that is tied to performance or discipline can lead to chronic stress. The report also makes a number of findings and recommendations around employee privacy, including nine recommendations in this area. The report finds that workplace surveillance infringes on privacy, extending beyond the workplace into homes and communities through vehicle and remote monitoring. Workers cannot genuinely consent when refusing surveillance risks their job. It deepens the power imbalances and discourages union engagement, undermining collective bargaining rights. We know that these harms fall hardest on those already marginalised groups, including women, migrant workers, young people, LGBTQIA+ workers and people with disabilities, whose bargaining power is already reduced and who are more likely to experience the harmful impacts of intense workplace surveillance.

I would like to commend the committee on the strong recommendations that they have made, starting with their first recommendation that the Victorian government introduce new principles-based workplace surveillance legislation. This is an excellent recommendation. The recommendations in this report are incredibly strong, and I look forward to seeing this work progress.

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee

Report on the 2024–25 Budget Estimates

Nicole WERNER (Warrandyte) (10:29): I rise to speak on the 2024–25 budget estimates Public Accounts and Estimates Committee report, and I would like to refer you to section 7.5.1, where it speaks to the Commission for Children and Young People's report. This is the same commission that oversees the reportable conduct scheme regulator and is the same one that Labor refused to capture in their independent review. Where do you begin? It is such a serious matter, yet the members opposite laugh at the matter at hand. I remember seeing the news break about this alleged paedophile abusing children. Over 70 offences he has been accused of against children between the ages of five months and three years old. My baby was five months old when I read that, when that news broke. To say it horrified me is to say the least. It has kept me up at night, and I know that it has kept other people in this chamber up at night reading these articles, poring over the news stories, poring over the details of things that you simply cannot fathom, you cannot make sense of, and I do not think you ever could. When you read about these atrocities that were committed against children, when you read about what has been done, it is sickening, to say the least.

I have been speaking to women, young mums in my community, who have since decided to quit their jobs, to give up their careers, so they can stay at home to look after their children. I was speaking to a young, first-time mum in my community just last night, and she said, 'I've decided to give up my career, and I know that we're actually going to be broke as a result of it. We're going to have to be poor, but I'd rather my baby be safe, even if that's going to cost us being poor.' That is what she said to me. That is how serious and how incredibly devastating all of this news is that we have had to bear witness to. I think it is just the most deplorable thing that we have to go through, that we have to help people go through testing their children, their babies, for STDs. My heart breaks for every one of the families that has had to go through this, that has had to test their babies, that has had to front up to the fact that their child, their baby, has been abused by an alleged paedophile. Our heart breaks for you.

As soon as that news came out, as soon as that knowledge was known, this side of the house, the coalition, acted. We called on the government to recall Parliament, because nothing was more serious and nothing was more urgent than protecting our babies, protecting our children. What we did was we called on the government. We said, 'We are happy to work constructively. We are happy to work with you. We are happy to recall Parliament so that we can protect our children.'

Members interjecting.

Nicole WERNER: You can interject all that you like, but it is serious. On this side of the house, we are serious about reform. We are serious about wanting to bring change here. When we asked them to recall Parliament, they said no. Instead what happened was we heard from that side of the house –

Belinda Wilson: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, whilst the member for Warrandyte is speaking about a very, very serious –

Cindy McLeish: Point of order being?

Belinda Wilson: Relevance. I am concerned about which committee report she is talking about, as we are in the midst of committee reports.

Cindy McLeish: On the point of order, Acting Speaker, the member on her feet, the member for Warrandyte, very clearly outlined the connection between her speech and –

Belinda Wilson interjected.

Cindy McLeish: She did. At the start she told you which section, which committee report that she was talking to, which page and the reference to the Commission for Children and Young People.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Daniela De Martino): I will rule on this. The member for Warrandyte did indicate which committee report this was linked to. Member for Warrandyte to continue, but please keep the connection to the committee report.

Nicole WERNER: Absolutely. Thank you, Acting Speaker. It speaks to the Commission for Children and Young People's report. I again refer you to section 7.5.1. Have a look. This then prompted from that side of the house a review of a review, a review that then excluded this very regulator, this very commissioner, in this very report that I speak to, and that – *(Time expired)*

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee

Inquiry into Vaping and Tobacco Controls

John LISTER (Werribee) (10:34): I rise today to talk about the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee inquiry into vaping and tobacco controls. I welcome the findings and recommendations of the inquiry, and I want to focus on some of the areas of concern particularly to my community in Werribee. Growing up I was part of a generation that saw the first real pushes to curb smoking. I remember the bans in pubs coming into effect and the strange gold packaging arriving as I stacked cigarettes at my newsagency job. I also remember the debate over exemptions for the top end of town, like Crown and cigar bars. Growing up in the outer suburbs, smoking was everywhere. I too have been known to sneak a dart or three, but after making a very conscious decision at university to stop, I find I reach for the old cancer sticks far less frequently.

For a time smoking was the exception amongst the young people I was teaching. In fact I was proud that the first time I caught someone smoking at the back of the oval – a once common sight at secondary schools – I was already three years into teaching. However, big ugly tobacco has found a new way to get into the lungs of the young people I was caring for: vapes. Finding 17 of the committee's report states:

> The increase in students vaping while at school has increased to such an extent that schools now spend resources on addiction education and counselling …

Not a recess or lunchtime went past without smelling watermelon from the toilets, and when I did catch kids vaping at school, some would rather be suspended than hand up their $30 or $40 piece. There is nothing more frightening than seeing a young person so dependent on nicotine, with the shakes and pale skin, that they are willing to run off and jump a fence rather than try and work with us to help them. Recommendation 3 calls for the Department of Education, in collaboration with the Department of Health, to examine the barriers schoolchildren face in accessing support for nicotine use and addiction.

I am happy to say in my last few months of teaching the resources on vaping substantially improved, with excellent materials from Quit called 'See Through the Haze' rolled out to my school. Some schools have even brought in nurses with backgrounds in alcohol and other drug rehabilitation, with amazing results. However, there is more that we can do, and I look forward to working with the government on further supporting our school staff and parents to help guide young people away from nicotine. When I drive into the city along the West Gate, there is a concrete plinth littered with vapes from passing trucks and cars. Have a look – it is on the right-hand side. Hundreds of the things litter the spot, and it seems to have become a gross tradition of passing puffers. Recommendation 5 in the report calls for the Victorian government to establish e-cigarette waste disposal guidelines and regulations.

Big tobacco has tried to destroy not only our health but also our environment. We need to send a clear message to stop sending our future up in smoke or vapour or whatever noxious way they find to deliver nicotine to us. This brings me to the most insidious part of how big tobacco is affecting my working-class community. The grip that these products have on people is causing crimes and fires, and I know this firsthand, having responded to multiple tobacco shop fires with the CFA. In fact my first time operating the heavy pumper was at a shop fire in the main street of Werribee. Finding 26 reflects that:

> The criminal activity associated with the illicit vaping and tobacco trade is affecting small … business owners.

This is why my community welcomes the work by the Allan Labor government to address this. Establishing a licensing scheme will make it clear who is selling legal, controlled nicotine products and who is not. It will help protect legitimate businesses like my first employer at the newsagency from getting undercut by criminal syndicates. A new tobacco regulator will be established with dedicated inspectors to hit the streets alongside Victoria Police. Inspectors will also support police with extra intelligence gathering in the fight against organised crime.

This is important not just to tackle criminal activity but also as a matter of social justice. Nicotine addiction is far more common in socially disadvantaged communities like mine. Finding 5 of the report observes that:

> North-Western Melbourne has both the highest rates of vaping in the state and amongst the highest percentage of metropolitan smokers.

This work is as much about protecting working-class communities from being exploited by criminal gangs and big tobacco companies. I commend the work by the committee, particularly the work of my electoral neighbours the member for Laverton and the member for Point Cook. The valuable thing about these statements on committee reports is that the Parliament can return to the findings and recommendations regularly as the government takes this action. This can expose new trends that may begin to have an impact – for example, how nicotine pouches are becoming increasingly consumed by young people. We need to continue to review this and adapt to the variety of ways that people seek to do harm to our community.

Bills

Bail Further Amendment Bill 2025

Statement of compatibility

Sonya KILKENNY (Carrum – Attorney-General, Minister for Planning) (10:41): In accordance with the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006, I table a statement of compatibility in relation to the Bail Further Amendment 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 Bail Further Amendment Bill 2025.

In my opinion, the Bail Further Amendment Bill 2025, as introduced to the Legislative Assembly, is compatible with human rights as set out in the Charter. I base my opinion on the reasons outlined in this statement.

Overview

The purpose of the Bail Further Amendment Bill 2025 (the Bill) is to deliver on the Government's commitment to introduce a second tranche of changes to bail laws in addition to the reforms made by the *Bail Amendment Act 2025*, to strengthen the response to repeat high harm offending and repeat indictable offending that endangers community safety and wellbeing. This is achieved through amendments to the *Bail Act 1977* (the Bail Act) to:

a. introduce a new 'high degree of probability' test for people charged with certain repeat, serious offences in Schedule 1 of the Bail Act alleged to have been committed while on bail for one of those specified Schedule 1 offences;

b. uplift the bail test for those accused of indictable offences while already on bail for indictable offences, subject to appropriate safeguards to ensure proportionality;

c. provide that where the Bail Act requires surrounding circumstances to be taken into account, this includes the accused being pregnant or having caring responsibilities;

d. prohibit electronic monitoring of bail conditions by private companies, subject to certain exceptions; and

e. make other consequential and technical changes to improve the operation of bail laws.

Human Rights Issues

The human rights protected by the Charter that are relevant to the Bill and the operation of the Bill, and the Bail Act more broadly, are:

- Right to liberty and security of the person (section 21), including the right not to be automatically detained (section 21(6));
- Right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law (section 25(1));
- Right to recognition and equality before the law (section 8);
- Children in the criminal process (sections 23 and 25(3));
- Protection of families and children (section 17); and
- Rights impacted as a result of detention, namely:
    - Freedom of movement (section 12)
    - The right to privacy (section 13(a))
    - The rights to practice religion and enjoy cultural rights (sections 14(1)(b) and 19)
    - Freedom of expression (section 15(2))
    - Peaceful assembly and freedom of association (section 16)
    - The protection of families (section 17), and
    - Property rights (section 20).

The operation of the Bail Act does limit Charter rights, and will continue to do so after these reforms, but in my opinion, these are reasonable limitations that can be demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society based on human dignity, equality and freedom taking into account relevant factors as outlined in section 7(2) of the Charter.

In Victoria, there is a presumption that a person accused of an offence who is held in custody shall be granted bail. This reflects section 25(1) of the Charter which states that a person has the right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty and supports an accused person to remain in the community pending the determination of charges. This presumption of bail is subject to a number of exceptions, directed at ensuring that an accused person does not commit offences while on bail, is not a danger to the public, does not obstruct the course of justice in any way, and appears at subsequent criminal hearings including their trial.

While matters relating to remand principally engage the right to liberty, the very nature of being remanded in custody necessarily involves the limitation of other rights, including freedom of movement (section 12), the right to privacy (section 13(a)), the rights to practice religion and enjoy cultural rights (sections 14(1)(b) and 19), freedom of expression (section 15(2)), right to peaceful assembly and freedom of association (section 16), the protection of families and children (section 17) and the right to property (section 20). This is the result of the deprivation of liberty and the powers held by police officers and officers in charge of custodial facilities that are necessary to maintain good order and security of the facilities and the welfare of detained persons. The family unit will also be affected when a family member is remanded. Therefore, the discussion in this statement of the rights affected by the Bill's impact on the right to liberty also encompasses the bundle of rights that are necessarily affected by the deprivation of liberty.

Right to liberty and security of the person

Section 21(1) of the Charter protects the right of every person to liberty and security. Section 21(3) provides that a person must not be deprived of their liberty except on grounds, and in accordance with procedures, established by law. Section 21(2) provides that a person must not be subject to arbitrary detention. Together, the effect of sub-sections 21(2) and (3) is that the right to liberty may legitimately be constrained only in circumstances where the deprivation of liberty by detention is both lawful, in that it is specifically authorised by law, and not arbitrary. In order for an interference not to be arbitrary, it must be predictable, just, and reasonable in the sense of being proportionate to a legitimate aim. In the context of bail reform, the right to liberty needs to be balanced with the right to security, specifically, the community's right to safety and security, which includes protection from being subject to criminal offending. Section 21(6) provides that a person awaiting trial must not be automatically detained in custody.

Right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law

Section 25(1) of the Charter provides that a person charged with a criminal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law. The right is relevant where a statutory provision shifts the burden of proof onto an accused in a criminal proceeding, so that the accused is required to prove matters to establish, or raise evidence to suggest, that they are not guilty of an offence.

Rights of children in the criminal process

Section 17(2) of the Charter provides that every child has the right, without discrimination, to such protection as is in their best interests and is needed by them by reason of being a child. This recognises the particular vulnerability of children due to their age and confers additional rights on them.

Section 23 of the Charter builds on the rights of the child protected by section 17(2) by specifying additional protections that are necessary for the humane treatment of a child who is detained or involved in a criminal process. These include that an accused child who is detained, or a child detained without charge, must be segregated from all detained adults (section 23(1)) and that an accused child must be brought to trial as quickly as possible (section 23(2)). Section 25(3) provides that a child charged with a criminal offence has the right to a procedure that takes account of that child's age and the desirability of promoting the child's rehabilitation. This recognises the need for special procedures for children charged with criminal offences.

Recognition and equality before the law

Section 8(3) of the Charter provides that every person is equal before the law and is entitled to the equal protection of the law without discrimination. The purpose of the right to equality is to ensure that all laws and policies are applied equally, without a discriminatory effect.

Section 3(1) of the Charter adopts the definition of 'discrimination' in the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*, which includes both direct and indirect discrimination on the basis of a protected attribute, including race, sex, disability, age, pregnancy and parental/caregiver status. Under section 9 of that Act, indirect discrimination occurs where a person imposes a requirement, condition or practice that is unreasonable and has, or is likely to have, the effect of disadvantaging persons with a protected attribute.

Protection of families and children

Section 17(1) of the Charter recognises that families are the fundamental group unit of society and are entitled to be protected by society and the State. The right is principally concerned with unity of family. 'Family' in this context has a broad meaning that encompasses the diversity of families living within Victoria, not only

those recognised by formal marriage or cohabitation. This right is related to section 13(a) of the Charter, which relevantly provides that every person has the right not to be subject to unlawful or arbitrary interferences with their family.

Introducing a new 'high degree of probability' bail test for repeat high-harm offending

The Bail Act provides a general presumption in favour of granting bail. However, the most serious offences, as listed in Schedule 1 of the Bail Act, attract the most stringent 'reverse-onus' bail test. For people accused of these offences, bail must not be granted unless:

- exceptional circumstances exist justifying the granting of bail ('exceptional circumstances' test), and
- there is no 'unacceptable risk' of the person: committing a Schedule 1 or Schedule 2 offence; otherwise endangering the safety or welfare of another person; interfering with a witness or otherwise obstructing the course of justice; or failing to surrender into custody ('unacceptable risk' test).

Where a person is already on bail for a Schedule 1 offence and is accused of committing another Schedule 1 offence while on bail, they continue to face the same two-step bail test – a more onerous test does not apply despite the alleged serious, repeat offending.

To better address the risks to community safety caused by repeat, serious offending, clause 5 of the Bill introduces new section 4F into the Bail Act which is a new 'high degree of probability' bail test (HDOP test) for people accused of committing certain specified Schedule 1 offences (a 'specified Schedule 1 offence') while on bail for another specified Schedule 1 offence.

New section 4F(1) outlines the six offences that will attract the HDOP test (specified Schedule 1 offences) if alleged to have been committed while on bail for one of these offences. These are:

(a) aggravated home invasion (section 77B of the *Crimes Act 1958* ('Crimes Act'))

(b) aggravated carjacking (section 79A of the Crimes Act)

(c) armed robbery (section 75A of the Crimes Act)

(d) aggravated burglary (section 77 of the Crimes Act)

(e) home invasion (section 77A of the Crimes Act), and

(f) carjacking (section 79 of the Crimes Act).

The offences listed in (a)–(b) above are already contained in Schedule 1, while those listed in (c)–(f) above will become Schedule 1 offences when the relevant amendments in the *Bail Amendment Act 2025* commence, which will occur by default on 29 September 2025, or earlier by proclamation.

The new HDOP test will form part of the existing unacceptable risk test in the Bail Act. An accused will present an 'unacceptable risk' and be refused bail (even if the bail decision maker is satisfied exceptional circumstances exist) unless the bail decision maker is satisfied there is a high degree of probability that the accused would not commit a specified Schedule 1 offence while on bail.

The Bill will not alter any other part of the 'unacceptable risk' test for the HDOP test cohort. This means that even if the bail decision maker finds there is a low probability the offender will commit a Schedule 1 or Schedule 2 offence on bail (such that the HDOP threshold has been met because the bail decision maker is satisfied there is a high degree of probability that the accused would not commit a specified Schedule 1 offence if released on bail), the gravity of that risk may lead to the conclusion that the risk is unacceptable and warrant the refusal of bail. Likewise, the bail decision maker may still be satisfied by the prosecution that another risk enumerated in section 4E(1)(a) is an unacceptable risk, and refuse bail.

The offences that will be subject to the HDOP test have been selected to address the heightened risks to community safety posed by this type of reoffending while on bail, given:

- these offences are more likely than other Schedule 1 offences to be charged while the accused is on bail
- these offences are charged in higher volumes than other Schedule 1 offences, and
- victims of these offences tend to be randomly targeted, meaning other legislative, policy and programmatic approaches to managing risks are limited.

Right to liberty and security of the person

The right to liberty, in particular the right not to be automatically detained in section 21(6) of the Charter, is engaged because the HDOP test increases the likelihood that an accused person will be remanded in custody. That is, an accused person may be an unacceptable risk of Schedule 1 or Schedule 2 reoffending due to the

bail decision maker not being satisfied there is a high degree of probability that the accused would not commit a specified Schedule 1 offence if released on bail, where prior to the introduction of the HDOP test, they may have satisfied the unacceptable risk threshold. This represents a further limitation on the right to liberty.

The right to liberty under section 21 is a right of fundamental importance, but it is not absolute. It may be constrained legitimately in circumstances where the deprivation by detention is both lawful and not arbitrary. In order for an interference not to be arbitrary, it must be predictable, just, and reasonable in the sense of being proportionate to a legitimate aim.

The pressing and substantial purpose of the HDOP test is to protect the community from an identified risk of serious harm to the community's safety or welfare. Having regard to that purpose, I consider the amendments are justified for the reasons outlined below.

The HDOP test will only apply to accused who are charged with a serious specified Schedule 1 offence that is alleged to have been committed while on bail for another serious specified Schedule 1 offence. The six specified Schedule 1 offences that attract the HDOP test have not been arbitrarily selected. They are all of a serious, high-harm nature which may cause serious risk to the safety of the community.

The selection of the specified Schedule 1 offences is informed by data indicating that accused persons are more likely to be charged with these offences while on bail than other Schedule 1 offences. Further, the data shows that these offences are more likely to be committed in a high volume as compared with other Schedule 1 offences. Finally, these offences often involve the targeting of random victims, usually where there is no pre-existing relationship between the accused and victim. This results in victims, and law enforcement, being unable to predict offending or increase precautions that may prevent offending. The random nature of these offences means there are limited other legislative, policy and programmatic approaches to managing risks attached to these offences.

Accordingly, the limitation is rationally connected and carefully designed to achieve the purpose of protecting the community from an identified risk of serious harm. Importantly, the HDOP test does not displace existing tests in the Bail Act, automatically deem certain offending to be an 'unacceptable risk', or automatically preclude the provision of bail.

One factor that guards against the HDOP test resulting in automatic detention, and which contributes to the proportionality of the HDOP test, is that it will only be applied by a court. This is because section 13(3)(a) of the Bail Act sets out that only a court may grant bail to a person accused of a Schedule 1 offence. In applying the HDOP test as part of the unacceptable risk test in section 4E of the Bail Act, the court must consider whether there are any conditions (or combination of conditions) available that will reduce the accused's risk profile to the extent that there is a high degree of probability that the accused will not engage in serious reoffending if released on bail.

In accordance with section 3AAA of the Bail Act, the court must also take into account all the surrounding circumstances that are relevant to the risk-based HDOP assessment. The narrow focus of the HDOP test on the probability of specified Schedule 1 serious reoffending means that certain circumstances in section 3AAA which may otherwise shift the balance towards a grant of bail, such as the likely sentence to be imposed if the accused is found guilty, may not be relevant to this determination.

When deciding whether to grant bail to an Aboriginal person or a child, the court must take into account the cohort-specific considerations in sections 3A and 3B of the Bail Act. This Bill and the HDOP test do not change the obligation on bail decision makers to consider the matters in these sections. While judicial officers continue to have discretion in respect of the relevance of these factors to each individual case, they will be required to apply the HDOP test, with its focus on the probability of serious reoffending. This may result in some of the cohort-specific factors being less relevant to the overall bail determination, but will be a matter for courts to consider on a case-by-case basis.

Further, the inclusion of the HDOP test does not affect a person's ability to respond to the allegations made against them, to advocate for why they should be released into the community, to make subsequent applications for bail or to have their matters determined consistently with criminal procedure. The HDOP test will not result in automatic or pre-determined denial of bail.

For the reasons outlined above, I consider that section 21(6) of the Charter which requires that a person awaiting trial must not automatically be detained is not limited. The limitations on a person's right to liberty in section 21 more generally – where they are assessed as presenting an unacceptable risk to community safety – are reasonable, when balanced against the right to security for members of the public. Consequently, it is my opinion that the HDOP test is an appropriately targeted and reasonably proportionate means to further the legitimate non-punitive purposes of these amendments, in particular the safety and security of the community.

Right to be presumed innocent

Bail is an ancillary criminal process and therefore is not directly relevant to a determination of guilt. However, the presumption of bail in the Bail Act reflects section 25(1) of the Charter by supporting an accused person to remain in the community pending the determination of charges. Therefore, the presumption of innocence may be described as the starting point for bail applications.

The inclusion of the HDOP test in the Bail Act will expose people accused of committing a specified Schedule 1 offence while on bail for another specified Schedule 1 offence to a more stringent test within the 'unacceptable risk' test. The new HDOP test is intended to make it easier for the prosecution to make out an unacceptable risk in relation to the accused, which would result in the denial of bail. This could be viewed as undermining the right to be presumed innocent.

It is my opinion that any additional limitation on the presumption of innocence due to the inclusion of the HDOP test in the unacceptable risk test is justified. As outlined in the discussion on the right to liberty and security, the limitation on section 25(1) of the Charter is justified based on the proportionality of the HDOP test, being that it is tailored to specified Schedule 1 offences that have been selected based on evidence relevant to the frequency of that type of reoffending while on bail and the known harm that it causes. It is also justified based on the purpose of the limitation, being the protection of the community from the significant risk of harm that the specified Schedule 1 offences pose, based on the repeated and randomised nature of that offending.

Furthermore, the Bill does not change the existing guiding principle in section 1B of the Bail Act which recognises the importance of the presumption of innocence (together with the right to liberty). Bail decision makers will continue to have regard to the significance of the presumption of innocence when determining bail applications.

Right to recognition and equality

The HDOP test is applicable to all accused, if they are alleged to have engaged in repeat offending of the specified Schedule 1 offences while on bail. Nevertheless, the HDOP test may indirectly limit the right to equality under section 8 of the Charter, if its application results in people with a protected attribute – such as children, Aboriginal people, persons with a disability or those who are pregnant or caregivers – being remanded in disproportionate numbers. As some cohorts with protected attributes are over-represented in the justice system, it is acknowledged that there may be disproportionate impacts of this reform.

Sections 3A and 3B of the Bail Act were introduced in 2018 to mitigate the over-representation of these cohorts. As previously noted, section 3A of the Bail Act requires a bail decision maker to consider specified factors in making a bail determination for an Aboriginal person and aims to acknowledge the unique circumstances for an Aboriginal person, including the historical and ongoing discriminatory systemic factors that have resulted in Aboriginal people being over-represented in the criminal justice system. Section 3B of the Bail Act requires a bail decision maker to consider specified factors in making a bail determination for a child, and was likewise introduced by this government in 2018. Section 3AAA does not relate specifically to one cohort, but requires a bail decision maker to consider special vulnerabilities of an accused including whether they have a disability.

It is noted that in the context of the HDOP test and its focus on an assessment of the risk of serious reoffending, not all of the factors in section 3AAA of the Bail Act will be relevant to assessing the accused person's reoffending risk. Further, while sections 3A and 3B must still be considered and applied (where appropriate), such consideration will only be relevant to the extent that it has a bearing on reoffending risk. This means that the mitigatory impacts of sections 3A and 3B will be reduced in the context of the HDOP test. Nevertheless, the HDOP test will not change the express obligation on a bail decision maker to incorporate the section 3AAA surrounding circumstances, and the cohort-specific considerations in sections 3A and 3B, into a bail decision relating to certain people, such as a person with a disability, an Aboriginal person or a child.

The application of the HDOP test to carefully selected, clearly specified, high-harm repeat offending is rationally connected and proportionate to achieve the purpose of protecting the community from an identified risk of serious harm. Consequently, any limitation on the right to equality is proportionate and justified in accordance with section 7(2) of the Charter.

Rights of children in the criminal process

The HDOP test will apply to both adults and children charged with repeat, specified Schedule 1 offences committed while on bail for a specified Schedule 1 offence. It is therefore likely that the rights of children in the criminal process will be limited by the HDOP test, given children are accused of the specified Schedule 1 offences to which the HDOP test will apply.

Section 25(3) of the Charter requires that a child charged with a criminal offence has the right to a procedure that takes account of the child's age and the desirability of promoting the child's rehabilitation. The HDOP

test may increase the likelihood that children accused of specified Schedule 1 offences committed while on bail for a specified Schedule 1 offence will be remanded due to its focus on assessing the risk of serious reoffending. As noted in respect of the right to equality, while section 3B continues to require consideration of factors otherwise generally relevant to the unique vulnerabilities of children (including the child's age, maturity and stage of development, and the importance of supporting the child to live at home or in safe, stable accommodation), such consideration will only be relevant to the extent it has a bearing on reoffending risk. While this may result in some of the child-specific factors being less relevant to the overall bail determination, their relevance to each individual case will be a matter for judicial discretion.

Where the reforms result in children being remanded as a result of the HDOP test, it is my view that any limitation on the rights of children in the criminal process is justified having regard to the purpose of the limitation being the need to protect the community from harm. This is also in view of the serious nature of the specified offences and the repeated and randomly targeted nature of the specified Schedule 1 offending. The limitation is mitigated by the requirement to consider child specific considerations in section 3B, to the extent they are relevant to reoffending risk in a particular case.

Rights impacted as a result of detention

Additional rights under the Charter will necessarily be limited when a person is detained. These include the rights to freedom of movement (section 12), the right to privacy (section 13(a)), the right to practice religion and enjoy cultural rights (sections 14(1)(b) and 19), the freedom of expression (section 15(2)), peaceful assembly and freedom of association (section 16), the protection of families (section 17) and property rights (section 20).

The application of the HDOP test increases the overall likelihood that a person who engages in the specified Schedule 1 offending while on bail for a specified Schedule 1 offence is remanded. Nevertheless, I do not consider that the HDOP test limits the rights impacted as a result of detention. This is because the HDOP test does not impose any new limitations or interfere with the existing consequences that flow from a person being remanded.

Uplifting those accused of an indictable offence while on bail for another indictable offence to a higher bail test

The Bill will apply a more stringent bail test when a person is accused of committing an indictable offence while on bail for another indictable offence by imposing the reverse-onus 'show compelling reason' test (a process referred to as 'uplift'). This uplift will be subject to exceptions so that lower-level or non-violent offending is excluded, particularly as these types of offending (such as theft of low-value items) occur in higher volumes and are often linked to vulnerability and disadvantage. This is intended to mitigate the impact on overrepresented and disadvantaged cohorts.

Reforms in the *Bail Amendment Act 2025* re-introduced the offence of 'committing an indictable offence while on bail for another indictable offence'. The offence, however, is subject to the standard 'unacceptable risk' test and not a stricter bail test, despite the fact that an accused is alleged to have engaged in further indictable offending on bail. Data indicates a significant amount of indictable offending occurs while on bail – this has a detrimental impact on community safety.

'Uplift' is a term used to describe situations where an accused becomes subject to a more stringent bail test due to the circumstances of their alleged offending. The uplift reform in the Bill (inserted by Division 2, Part 2) provides that a person accused of committing an indictable offence while on bail for another indictable offence will not be granted bail unless:

- a compelling reason exists to justify bail, and
- there is no unacceptable risk of the person committing a further Schedule 1 or Schedule 2 offence, otherwise endangering the safety or welfare of another person, interfering with the course of justice, or failing to surrender into custody ('unacceptable risk' test).

The uplift will apply to indictable offences allegedly committed while on bail for an indictable offence, and subject to numerous indictable offences being exempt or 'carved out' from the uplift. Schedules 4 and 5 of the Bill (inserted by clause 12) contain offences that are exempt or 'carved-out' from the uplift – Schedule 4 lists the indictable offences excluded from the uplift in their entirety, while Schedule 5 lists the offences excluded from uplift if specified threshold or quantities are not exceeded. These offences have been selected to be excluded from uplift because they are often higher-volume, lower-level indictable offences that are commonly associated with disadvantage, or non-violent offences. Examples of these offences include low-value theft and lower-level drug possession.

In selecting offences for inclusion in Schedules 4 and 5, consideration was given first to those indictable offences that are charged at higher volumes in relation to people on bail, according to available data. Consideration of the inherent nature of the offences (e.g. elements of violence or other serious harm) along

with information from the Sentencing Advisory Council (about the type of disposition and/or sentence length these offences typically attract) and available demographic data informed an overall assessment about the seriousness of these offences and their suitability for exclusion from uplift.

Other offences exempted from uplift were selected on the basis that they do not contain an element of force or violence and so pose a less direct threat to community safety. The offences excluded by reason of Schedules 4 and 5 therefore also capture many dishonesty or property offences, such as obtaining property by deception, handling stolen goods and giving false or misleading information.

This is to ensure the uplift is targeted to more serious offending and operates in a way that is proportionate to respond to the risk of harm to the safety and welfare of the community. Key offences that occur at greater rates than other offences, and which will be subject to the new uplift provisions include:

- burglary
- motor vehicle theft
- assaults
- robbery
- riot and affray
- firearms and controlled weapons offences
- theft, where the value of items are above $2,500, and
- criminal damage, where the value of damage is above $5,000, or where damage is caused by fire.

The carve-outs are an essential element of this reform, to ensure the uplift targets offending that most endangers community safety, while reducing the risk of people being remanded due to alleged lower-level offending associated with disadvantage. The scope of the uplift reform is also confined to people who are alleged to have reoffended while on bail (not those who are subject to other forms of conditional liberty).

Right to liberty

The uplift reform engages the right to liberty protected by section 21 of the Charter, as it expands the offences for which the presumption of bail is reversed and an accused person is required to satisfy a reverse-onus bail test such that they must satisfy the bail decision maker that a compelling reason exists to be granted bail. By expanding the reversal of the presumption of bail, the uplift reforms also engage section 21(6) of the Charter, which requires that a person awaiting trial must not be automatically detained.

The purpose of these reforms is to protect the community from repeat offending on bail that poses a risk to community safety and welfare. Subjecting people accused of this kind of repeat offending to a more stringent bail test makes it more likely that they will be refused bail, protecting the community from further potential harm.

Whilst noting the importance of community safety, significant consideration has been given to ensuring lower-level offending that does not have a direct and significant impact on community safety is excluded from the uplift reforms. This reduces the likelihood that the reform will constitute an unjustifiable limit on the right to liberty. To this end, only alleged indictable offending while on bail for previous indictable offending is captured: as set out in new sections 4AA(4A), (4B) and (4C) and inserted by clause 9, all summary offences (which carry lesser penalties) are excluded from these reforms, as well as certain indictable offending that is commonly associated with vulnerability and disadvantage.

The Victorian statute book contains many indictable offences, and there are many Commonwealth indictable offences. The approach taken to excluding indictable offences from the uplift reforms has been to focus on indictable offence types that are committed at a higher volume, whilst also being assessed as having a less significant impact on the safety and welfare of the community. Further, there are known correlations between many of the excluded offences and poverty, homelessness, vulnerability and disadvantage. Thresholds have been applied to the offences of theft, criminal damage and drug possession listed in new Schedule 5 (inserted by clause 12). This will mean that the reforms will apply only to higher-level offending and reduce the likelihood of vulnerable and disadvantaged cohorts being disproportionately impacted by the reforms. This approach has been taken because identifying and 'carving out' higher-volume, lower-level offences from the uplift is expected to have the greatest protective impact.

The development of the uplift reform has also been mindful of the unintended consequence of uplifting minor offending to the most onerous 'exceptional circumstances' test, as resulted from the 'double uplift' effected by the 2018 bail reforms, which was criticised in the findings of the coronial inquest into the passing of proud Gunditjmara, Dja Dja Wurrung, Wiradjuri and Yorta Yorta woman Veronica Nelson. The Bill avoids the 'double uplift' because the uplift will operate so that the accused person will face the 'show compelling reason' test, rather than the most onerous 'exceptional circumstances' test as occurred under the 2018 bail

reforms. It will be less difficult for an accused person to satisfy a bail decision maker that there are compelling reasons justifying the granting of bail than it would be if the accused was required to show exceptional circumstances.

Following the unintended impact of the 2018 reforms, the uplift of the previous 'commit indictable offence whist on bail' offence to the most onerous 'exceptional circumstances' test was removed from the Bail Act in 2023. Unfortunately, despite changes which came into effect in late 2024 to strengthen consideration of community safety in decisions relating to bail revocation, repeat serious offending remains a serious problem. This reform is necessary to ensure bail decision making is calibrated to reflect the seriousness of this kind of repeat indictable offending, while avoiding the disproportionate impacts of previous bail settings.

A key tenet of the Bail Act is tailored and individualised consideration of an accused's circumstances. The existing tests in the Bail Act, such as the unacceptable risk test, will continue to operate as they currently do, as will the existing (and enhanced) safeguards. One such safeguard is the requirement in section 3AAA of the Bail Act for the bail decision maker to consider all 'surrounding circumstances' relevant to a bail decision, such as the nature and seriousness of the alleged offending, including whether it is a serious example of the offence, and the likely sentence to be imposed should the accused be found guilty. While all indictable offending on bail will be included in these reforms unless specifically carved out, the tailored nature of bail decision making means that less serious conduct is more likely to meet the 'show compelling reason' test, providing a pathway for bail to be granted in appropriate circumstances (if such offending is not already carved out by operation of clause 9 of the Bill).

The list of surrounding circumstances in section 3AAA of the Bail Act also directs a bail decision maker to consider surrounding circumstances, including particular vulnerabilities, such as mental illness or disability. The Bill strengthens this list of considerations by adding a requirement for bail decision makers to expressly consider whether an accused is pregnant or has caring responsibilities. As discussed in the section on signposting pregnancy and caring responsibilities, previous bail decisions have considered pregnancy and caring responsibilities as important factors in favour of granting bail. Where relevant to an accused, bail decision makers will also continue to be required to consider Aboriginal-specific and child-specific factors set out in section 3A and 3B of the Bail Act respectively.

Additional safeguards include the requirement for a bail decision maker to take into account the guiding principles of the Act, including the importance of the presumption of innocence and right to liberty, and the need for bail decision makers to impose conditions that may mitigate the risk and probability of reoffending.

Noting the previous unintended and disproportionate impact of the 2018 uplift reforms, these uplift reforms (alongside other reforms in the Bill) will be subject to a statutory review in 2027 (clause 18 of the Bill). Importantly, the Bill requires that the statutory review specifically examine the impact of relevant reforms on Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders, without limiting the broader scope of the review.

These factors, in particular limiting the uplift of an accused to face the 'show compelling reason' test rather than the most onerous 'exceptional circumstances' test, contribute to my assessment that less restrictive means are not reasonably available to achieve the purpose of community safety that this reform is targeting. The Bill is clear as to which types of indictable offending are captured, and provides that certain types of offending are to be excluded from the uplift. This allows me to conclude that it does not infringe on the right of a person not to be subjected to arbitrary detention protected by section 21(2) of the Charter.

The extent of the limitation on the right to liberty is uplifting an accused to face the 'show compelling reason' test, in circumstances where the accused is alleged to have committed further, higher-harm indictable offending while on bail for indictable offending. The protection of the community in the face of repeat indictable offending that threatens community safety and welfare is pressing and substantial. As discussed above, the safeguards in the Bail Act mean that the reforms will not result in pre-determined detention contrary to section 21(6) of the Charter, because the accused will continue to have the right to present compelling reasons for their release on bail, with regard to the nature and seriousness of the alleged offending and their individual circumstances.

As outlined in relation to the HDOP test, while the right to liberty is of fundamental importance, it is not absolute and may be legitimately constrained if a deprivation of liberty is lawful and not arbitrary. In my view, the features of the uplift reform I have outlined demonstrate that any deprivation of an accused person's liberty will be predictable and reasonable in the sense of being proportionate to a legitimate aim. Accordingly, while the reform engages the right to liberty, I consider that the purpose and extent of the limitation on the right are demonstrably justified in accordance with section 7(2) of the Charter.

Right to be presumed innocent

As noted in the discussion of the HDOP test, the presumption of innocence may be described as the starting point for bail applications. In uplifting more cases to face a reverse-onus test, where the accused bears the

onus of demonstrating compelling reasons to justify a grant of bail, the reforms have the effect of creating a presumption against bail and thus limiting section 25(1) of the Charter.

In my opinion, the limitation on the right to be presumed innocent is justified. The uplift reforms do not make existing reverse-onus tests more difficult to satisfy, and do not preclude an accused from making submissions in support of their innocence or providing compelling reasons for why they should be released on bail. Furthermore, where an accused is charged with a threshold offence (listed in Schedule 5), the onus is on the prosecution to satisfy the bail decision maker that the threshold has been met and the uplift therefore applies. The Bill does not change the existing guiding principle in section 1B of the Bail Act which recognises the importance of the presumption of innocence, and bail decision makers will continue to have regard to the significance of the presumption of innocence when determining bail applications. As a result, the extent of the limitation caused by the reforms on this right is low. Having regard to this, in conjunction with the purpose of the limitation – to protect the community from repeat offending that poses a risk to its safety and welfare – I am satisfied that this reform is compatible with section 25(1) of the Charter.

Right to recognition and equality

The purpose of the right to recognition and equality in section 8 of the Charter is to ensure that all laws and policies are applied equally, without a discriminatory effect. The uplift reforms may indirectly engage the right to equality, given cohorts with a protected attribute such as children, Aboriginal people or persons with a disability are over-represented in the criminal justice system.

The uplift reforms specifically contemplate how to reduce the potential disproportionate impact on such cohorts. The reforms seek to achieve this outcome by excluding some offences from the application of uplift – in selecting these offences, consideration has been given to selecting offences commonly linked to offending by vulnerable and disadvantaged cohorts. Schedules 4 and 5 set out these offences in full, being primarily offences for low-value theft and criminal damage, non-violent deception offences and lower-level drug possession.

Section 3AAA of the Bail Act directs a bail decision maker to consider whether a person has any special vulnerability, including being an Aboriginal person, child, or having a disability. Where Aboriginal people and children are subject to the uplift, the cohort specific considerations in sections 3A and 3B of the Bail Act will apply. An accused who is pregnant or has caring responsibilities will also have these protected attributes considered by a bail decision maker, due to reforms introduced by this Bill. While it will be up to the bail decision maker to determine how much weight to give these factors, the express requirement for bail decision makers to consider these attributes will ensure they receive thorough consideration and go towards mitigating unintended consequences of the uplift reforms on these cohorts.

As such, it is my view that if the right to equality is engaged, there are sufficient mitigating features to justify any limitation.

Signposting pregnancy and caring responsibilities in bail applications

Section 3AAA of the Bail Act sets out a list of 'surrounding circumstances' that must be taken into account by the bail decision maker if they are relevant to the bail determination. Clause 17 of the Bill expands the list of surrounding circumstances, to include express consideration of whether an accused is pregnant or has caring responsibilities.

While bail decision makers must consider *all* relevant circumstances – not just those listed in the Bail Act – explicitly signposting pregnancy and caring responsibilities in the list of 'surrounding circumstances' will encourage bail decision makers to give particular consideration to these factors, if appropriate. Their inclusion in the legislation will also ensure that bail decision makers receive education and training on these specific factors, allowing them to increase their understanding of these factors and their salience in bail decisions, and to give thorough consideration to them.

Protection of families and children

The express inclusion of pregnancy and caring responsibilities promotes the protection of families and children in section 17 of the Charter.

While the consideration of these factors is not determinative of whether an accused will be granted bail, their inclusion highlights the known impact of remand on children, families and individuals who are pregnant. For instance, bail decisions such as *Re Ngo* [2024] VSC 474 and the *Application for bail by SP* [2022] VSC 626 have considered pregnancy and caring responsibilities including for the impending birth of a child, respectively, as important factors in favour of granting bail.

Right to recognition and equality

Section 8 of the Charter protects the right to enjoyment of human rights without discrimination, and the entitlement to equal protection of the law without discrimination.

Section 3(1) of the Charter adopts the definition of 'discrimination' in the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*, thereby protecting the attributes of breastfeeding, pregnancy and a person's parental status or status as a carer. Under the Charter, discrimination includes direct discrimination, which occurs if a person treats a person with a protected attribute unfavourably because of that attribute, and indirect discrimination, which occurs if a person imposes, or proposes to impose, a requirement, condition or practice that is not reasonable and that disadvantages people with a protected attribute.

Given the inclusion of pregnancy and caring responsibilities as factors a bail decision maker must consider in making a bail decision will not result in unfavourable treatment for people with the attributes listed above, I do not consider that this reform engages the right to equality. Nor do I consider that this reform would constitute discrimination against people not holding the attributes listed above, given pregnancy and caring responsibilities are among a non-exhaustive list of circumstances that bail decision makers must take into account.

Prohibiting privately provided electronic monitoring as a condition of bail

The Bill will ban bail decision makers from imposing privately provided electronic monitoring as a condition of bail. Once new sections 5AAA(7) and (8) (inserted by clause 14) commence, bail decision makers will be prohibited from imposing electronic monitoring conditions on bail orders, unless expressly permitted. The permitted reasons are where the monitoring is facilitated by a prescribed entity, or in accordance with the government-led trial of electronic monitoring of children on bail provided for in Part 2A of the Bail Act ('child EM trial'). The prohibition in new section 5AAA(7) will apply prospectively, leaving existing electronic monitoring conditions unaffected.

Currently, apart from the child EM trial, section 5AAA of the Bail Act gives bail decision makers the power to impose electronic monitoring in the same way as they may impose any other condition of bail, in order to mitigate risks an accused person may pose. Applicants for bail may obtain privately funded electronic monitoring services as a measure to increase a bail decision maker's confidence that the applicant will comply with other bail conditions.

The prohibition on privately provided electronically monitored bail follows the collapse of a private company, BailSafe Health Group Pty Ltd (BailSafe), which had offered electronic monitoring services to people on bail. As a result of BailSafe's failure, any person on bail subject to a bail condition that they be monitored by BailSafe was no longer monitored. While Victoria's prosecuting agencies took immediate steps to appropriately respond to the collapse of BailSafe to manage risks and promote community safety, this model lacks the rigorous oversight expected in the justice system. Prohibiting the use of electronic monitoring conditions, unless there is appropriate oversight of the provider, is required to promote the safety of the community.

Right to liberty

The right to liberty in section 21 of the Charter may be engaged by this reform, as the unavailability of an electronic monitoring condition (other than as part of the child EM trial) may result in a small number of persons being remanded, when they would otherwise have been granted bail.

In my view, the right under section 21 is not limited by the reform. Section 21(6) provides that a person awaiting trial must not be automatically detained in custody, but that person's release may be subject to guarantees to attend for trial or other stages of the proceeding. The Supreme Court's decision in *Woods v DPP (Vic)* [2014] VSC 1 noted that '[u]nder the *Bail Act*, there is no automatic detention'. Prohibiting a certain class of conduct condition does not affect that conclusion.

Prohibiting the use of private electronic monitoring conditions for bail does not oblige bail decision makers to consider factors that they are not already considering (for example, the non-exhaustive list of 'surrounding circumstances' in section 3AAA of the Bail Act), although the absence of the ability to attach a private electronic monitoring condition may result in bail decision makers having one less tool to mitigate the risks that an accused person may pose if released on bail.

The risk to community safety that arose from the failure of a private company providing electronic monitoring services for a fee was unacceptable and requires that private, unregulated electronic monitoring be prohibited. If the right to liberty is engaged, my view is that any limitation on the right is demonstrably justified.

Firstly, the amendment gives effect to a clear purpose of the Bail Act, namely the guiding principle in section 1B(1AA) regarding the overarching importance of maximising, to the greatest extent possible, the safety of the community and persons affected by crime. The community is safest when bail decision makers assess risk and impose conditions that they consider will mitigate risks posed by an accused person on bail. Electronic monitoring that is unregulated and not subject to quality assurance is not able to provide the additional assurance about compliance with bail conditions that a bail decision maker may expect.

Secondly, the extent of the limitation is a marginally higher risk of remand for persons who would not be granted bail except for the imposition of an electronic monitoring condition. It is proportionate to the legitimate aim of promoting community safety, and there are no less restrictive means reasonably available to respond to this identified risk.

The reforms do not operate retrospectively and permit existing electronic monitoring conditions of bail to continue. This provides protection to accused persons who are subject to private electronic monitoring conditions at the time these changes come into effect, as they will not face an increased risk of remand as a result of the banning of private electronic monitoring.

The reforms acknowledge the potential of electronic monitoring of bail provided there is adequate oversight. This is why the prohibition excludes the child EM trial, which commenced on 22 April 2025. In addition, the amendment allows flexibility for the future use of electronic monitoring conditions in the event government prescribes one or more entities to do so. This would allow for mechanisms to be developed to support a different approach in future, potentially to permit electronic monitoring by reputable and reliable private companies subject to appropriate regulatory oversight, while ensuring that what happened with BailSafe does not occur again.

For the reasons outlined above, in my view, the amendments to prohibit electronic monitoring of people on bail do not engage, nor are they incompatible with, any of the rights enshrined in the Charter.

Conclusion

In my opinion the Bill does not unreasonably limit any Charter rights. The amendments to the Bail Act achieve a proportionate balance between the rights protected under the Charter and the protection of the community.

I consider the Bill to be compatible with the Charter.

The Hon. Sonya Kilkenny MP
Attorney-General
Minister for Planning

Second reading

Sonya KILKENNY (Carrum – Attorney-General, Minister for Planning) (10:41): 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:

The Bail Further Amendment Bill 2025 (Bill) will amend the *Bail Act 1977* (Bail Act) to further protect community safety from the risk posed by repeat, serious offending while on bail.

This Bill builds upon the bail reforms passed by Parliament on 21 March 2025 in the *Bail Amendment Act 2025* (Tranche 1). This first tranche of reforms bolstered community safety by prioritising community safety in all bail decisions; strengthening bail tests for several serious crimes; reintroducing bail offences; and removing the principle of remand as a last resort for children. These changes followed earlier reforms in December 2024 which strengthened consideration of community safety in decisions around revoking bail.

Tranche 1 reforms – which will soon commence in full – were designed to jolt the system and send an unambiguous message: bail must be respected. The evidence shows that Tranche 1 is already having its intended effect. As of May 2025, there are 465 more people on remand in Victoria's prisons and 39 more young people on remand in Youth Justice, compared to April last year.

This Bill delivers on the Government's commitments to:

- introduce a new 'high degree of probability' test for people charged with certain repeat, serious offences in Schedule 1 of the Bail Act
- uplift the bail test for those accused of an indictable offence while already on bail for an indictable offence to the reverse-onus 'show compelling reasons' test, subject to safeguards to ensure proportionality
- prohibit privately-provided electronic monitoring as a condition of bail, subject to further regulation.

I will now explain the key features of the reforms in further detail.

Introducing a new 'high degree of probability' bail test for specified repeat, serious offending

The Bill introduces a new 'high degree of probability' bail test (HDOP test) that will apply to people accused of specified repeat, serious offences committed while they are on bail. The new HDOP test will be extremely hard to pass.

The Bail Act provides a general presumption in favour of granting bail. However, where somebody is charged with a serious offence listed in Schedule 1 or 2 to the Bail Act, more stringent 'reverse-onus' bail tests apply. These tests require the accused to satisfy the bail decision maker (BDM) they should be granted bail.

The most serious offences are listed in Schedule 1 of the Bail Act and attract the most onerous bail test. A person charged with a Schedule 1 offence must not be granted bail unless:

- exceptional circumstances exist justifying the granting of bail, and
- there is no 'unacceptable risk' of the accused committing a Schedule 1 or 2 offence; otherwise endangering the safety or welfare of another person; interfering with a witness or otherwise obstructing the course of justice; or failing to surrender into custody if they are released on bail.

Where a person is already on bail for a Schedule 1 offence and is accused of committing another Schedule 1 offence, they continue to face the same two-step bail test – no more onerous test applies despite the alleged repeat offending.

To better address the risks to community safety caused by repeat, serious offending, the Bill will introduce the stringent HDOP test for people accused of committing a specified Schedule 1 offence while already on bail for another specified Schedule 1 offence. The specified Schedule 1 offences that will be subject to the new HDOP test are:

- aggravated home invasion
- aggravated carjacking
- armed robbery
- aggravated burglary
- home invasion, and
- carjacking

The HDOP test has been targeted towards these six Schedule 1 offences to address the heightened risks to community safety posed by this type of reoffending while on bail, given these offences:

- are more likely than other Schedule 1 offences to be allegedly committed on bail
- are committed in higher volumes compared to other Schedule 1 offences, and
- tend to be randomly targeted, meaning other legislative, policy and programmatic approaches to managing risks are limited.

The new HDOP test will form part of the existing unacceptable risk test in the Bail Act. An accused will present an 'unacceptable risk' and be refused bail unless the BDM is satisfied there is a high degree of probability that the accused would not commit a specified Schedule 1 offence while on bail. As with the existing unacceptable risk test, the onus of establishing the HDOP test will rest with the prosecution.

The HDOP test will operate in a similar way as the 'high degree of confidence' test in NSW, but unlike NSW, the HDOP test will apply to both adults and children, will apply to a broader range of offending, and will not be subject to a sunset clause (but will instead be subject to statutory review).

The other ways in which an 'unacceptable risk' can be established will still apply to the HDOP test cohort. For example, even if a person 'passes' the HDOP test, they could still be refused bail if they pose an unacceptable risk of interfering with a witness.

Importantly, when applying the HDOP provisions, BDMs will still be required to consider existing factors in the Bail Act which ensure a risk-based, proportionate application of bail tests. These include consideration of whether there are any available bail conditions that may mitigate the risk of re-offending. BDMs will also still be required to consider any surrounding circumstances relevant to the risk-based focus of the HDOP test. Certain surrounding circumstances that do not go to risk of re-offending, such as the likely sentence if the accused were found guilty, will however be less relevant to determining the HDOP test. Aboriginal-specific and child-specific considerations will also continue to apply and inform the BDM's assessment of whether bail should be granted. However, some of the specific considerations are again likely to be less relevant. The HDOP test will be difficult to pass, but, it will be possible where re-offending risks can be appropriately mitigated and managed. This may be through the imposition of bail conditions, including conditions (or a combination of conditions) that had not previously been imposed on the accused person.

Uplifting the bail test for individuals accused of repeat indictable offending

The Bill will also uplift the bail test for people accused of committing an indictable offence while already on bail for an indictable offence, subject to safeguards to ensure proportionality.

The Tranche 1 reforms re-introduced the offence of committing an indictable offence while on bail.

To further protect the community from the risk of harm caused by repeat indictable offending, the Bill will 'uplift' the bail test – that is, those accused of committing an indictable offence while on bail for another indictable offence will face the reverse-onus 'show compelling reasons' bail test.

While the uplift will apply to a broad range of indictable offences – such as burglary, stalking, assaults and conduct endangering life or persons – a range of indictable offences will be exempt or 'carved out' from the uplift, to ensure proportionality.

Previous uplift reforms highlight the critical importance of these carve-outs in managing impacts on vulnerable and overrepresented cohorts in the criminal justice system. For example, 2018 reforms that resulted in a 'double-uplift' effect had disproportionate and detrimental impacts on Aboriginal people and women. The 'double-uplift' resulted in people accused of even minor repeat indictable offences – that are largely driven by disadvantage and do not have a significant impact on community safety – having to face the most onerous 'exceptional circumstances' bail test.

To avoid detrimental and unintended consequences of previous reforms, the Bill will 'carve-out' a range of lower-level indictable offences from the uplift. Key carve-outs include low-value theft and criminal damage; non-violent property and deception offences; and lower-level drug possession – offences that are often linked to disadvantage, homelessness, and other underlying factors.

The approach to what is included in the uplift and what is carved out is ultimately guided by which offences pose the biggest risk to community safety and welfare. Offences which are more likely to cause harm to the community, particularly when repeatedly engaged in, have been targeted. Conversely, offences that have been carved out of the uplift include those that are often driven by disadvantage, as well as other non-violent or low-level offences.

Importantly, the 'double-uplift' effect will also not be possible under the proposed reforms.

While carve-outs are the most important factor ensuring proportionality in the uplift, existing mechanisms in the Bail Act will provide an additional level of safeguarding. These include requirements for BDMs to consider circumstances surrounding a person's alleged offending, as well as Aboriginal-specific and child-specific factors where relevant. Consideration of these factors was bolstered through 2023 bail reforms and will be further strengthened through the Bill (see below).

Existing bail tests will also help ensure a proportionate, risk-based approach to bail decisions. For example, where an accused is charged with a minor indictable offence that is not captured by the uplift, the 'unacceptable risk' test will continue to apply. Where offences are captured by the uplift, the 'show compelling reason' test, in conjunction with the surrounding circumstances and Aboriginal and child-specific factors in the Bail Act, will also promote proportionality. Less serious alleged conduct is more likely to satisfy the 'show compelling reason' test, providing an opportunity for the granting of bail in appropriate circumstances.

Signposting pregnancy and caring responsibilities in bail applications

The Bill will specifically list pregnancy and caring responsibilities as 'surrounding circumstances' to be considered in bail decisions.

Section 3AAA of the Bail Act lists a broad range of circumstances that BDMs need to consider in every bail decision. While BDMs must consider all relevant circumstances – not just those listed in the Bail Act – signposting factors in legislation can encourage thorough consideration by BDMs and ensures BDMs receive education and training on each of them.

For these reasons, the Bill will add pregnancy and caring responsibilities into the list of surrounding circumstances. More thorough and well-informed consideration of these factors will in turn help mitigate unintended consequences of reforms on people who are pregnant or have caring responsibilities.

The amendments will be particularly helpful in mitigating any disproportionate and detrimental impacts of the uplift on women and children. While the scope of uplift carve-outs is the most critical factor for managing these risks, the reforms to surrounding circumstances will provide an additional level of safeguarding.

To support implementation of the Bill, government will ensure affected stakeholders – such as Victoria Police, the Courts and Office of Public Prosecutions – are provided with training on key elements such as the HDOP test and uplift.

Statutory review of Bail Act amendments

Importantly, the Bill will also amend the existing statutory review provision in the Bail Act to specifically require that review to examine the impact of bail reform on Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander people. The Department of Justice and Community Safety will work with Aboriginal Justice Caucus on the design of the statutory review, which must start no later than two years after the commencement of the *Bail Amendment Act 2025*. I have also asked my Department to engage with Aboriginal Justice Caucus and relevant agencies on training and related materials, particularly around the surrounding circumstances and related factors BDMs must take into account.

Prohibiting the use of electronic monitoring as a condition of bail

The Bill will prohibit BDMs from imposing electronic monitoring as a bail condition – including any electronic monitoring by private companies – unless the service is provided by an entity prescribed in regulations.

This reform responds to community safety concerns that arise where the viability of private companies providing electronic monitoring of bail (EM) cannot be assured. While the Bill will ban such private electronic monitoring of bail, the reform provides flexibility for EM to be delivered by reliable, reputable organisations if government prescribes them in regulations. This ability to prescribe providers recognises that a regulatory approach to private EM could in future be an effective way to manage risks of releasing an accused on bail.

Other changes to improve the operation of bail laws

The Bill will include further amendments to improve the operation of bail laws, including:

- ensuring individuals released on bail pending family violence intervention order proceedings can be charged with contravening their bail conditions, and
- providing for reforms in the Bill to be captured in the scheduled statutory review of the Bail Act.

Conclusion

Tranche 1 reforms passed earlier this year have ensured community safety is at the centre of bail laws in line with Victorians' expectations. The Bill will bolster community safety further, by targeting repeat serious offending and repeat indictable offending. However, learning from past bail reforms, the Bill will also include critical safeguards, to help minimise any unintended consequences on vulnerable and overrepresented cohorts.

Importantly, enduring community safety requires more than bail reform. That is why the government is investing in bail support and interventions alongside the Bill, and has a range of policy settings to tackle the underlying causes of crime.

This complementary work recognises that the best outcome is for people to avoid contact with the criminal justice system altogether and, when people do engage with the system, to provide timely and effective supports to get their lives back on track.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Michael O'BRIEN (Malvern) (10:41): I move:

That the debate be now adjourned.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.

Ordered that debate be adjourned for two weeks. Debate adjourned until Wednesday 13 August.

Crimes Amendment (Performance Crime) Bill 2025

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Sonya Kilkenny:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Michael O'BRIEN (Malvern) (10:43): I am pleased to rise to speak on the Crimes Amendment (Performance Crime) Bill 2025. This is a bill the government is seeking to bring in to tackle the phenomenon of post-and-boast offending. This is where a person commits an offence and then adds insult to injury by promoting their commission of the offence by posting material, usually video, of the offending online. People do this in order to draw attention to themselves; to gain notoriety for themselves; to try and enhance, as they would see it, their reputations. But of course in doing so not

only are they glorifying criminal actions, they are literally adding insult to the injury of those who are the victims of the offending. So it is timely – in fact arguably it is over time – for the government to introduce legislation to tackle the rise of post-and-boast offending.

The concern of the opposition is that this bill does not do it particularly well. This government has introduced legislation which has loopholes in it. It is almost as though the government does not want this bill to be particularly effective. I will take the house through where I see this government has fallen very short with this bill, because it simply will not do the job it is supposed to do. I think a lot of Victorians, probably a lot of Australians, remember in January last year there was footage that was posted online – and it received a lot of attention in the news – of an elderly person fishing on a pier down on the Mornington Peninsula.

A gang of youths surrounded the person and one of the youths pushed this person into the water, off the pier – assaulted them. It was terrible. It was shocking, absolutely shocking. As I said, to add insult to injury, they then posted this footage of them having done that, presumably to try and gain notoriety for themselves but also to humiliate the victim of this offending. It was disgraceful. That was probably one of the offences that we saw in Victoria which were the impetus for this bill to come forward. The trouble is, the way this bill is drafted, that offending would not be subject to post and boast, so you have to ask yourself, 'Why the hell not?'

The way the bill is structured is that only certain relevant offences can be the subject of post and boast, and these are set out in new section 195U. The first of the relevant offences for the purposes of new section 195U, which is an exhaustive list, is theft but only if the property stolen is a motor vehicle. I am not quite sure why the government is limiting it to that. Why shouldn't any theft be the subject of post and boast? We do not want people stealing from other people and then glorifying it, but theft only applies to post and boast if it is theft of a motor vehicle. Perhaps the government can explain why it thinks that other sorts of theft are okay to post and boast about. Then there is robbery, armed robbery, burglary, aggravated burglary, home invasion, aggravated home invasion, carjacking, aggravated carjacking, affray, violent disorder and incitement or attempts. They are the only offences for which post and boast can apply.

Do you know what is not in there? Assault. Assault is not a relevant offence for the purpose of this bill. Do you know what else is not a relevant offence? Dangerous driving. How many times have we seen hoon driving behaviour glorified online? But dangerous driving is not a post-and-boast offence under this bill. Why not is my question. Destroying or damaging property, including through arson, is not a post-and-boast offence. Why not? Does the government think it is okay for people to glorify destroying property, damaging property or committing arson? Apparently so, because the government has said you can post and boast about that all you like and you will not be picked up by this bill. How about causing serious injury intentionally in circumstances of gross violence or causing serious injury recklessly in circumstances of gross violence? They are pretty horrible offences, and unfortunately we have seen instances of that sort of offending being the subject of post and boast, but again the Labor government says that is fine – you can post and boast about that all you like, because that is not a relevant offence under this bill. Why not? As I say, it is almost as though the government does not want this bill to succeed. It wants to be seen to be doing something, but it is not prepared to actually do something serious, so the government has dropped the ball quite badly on this.

It has also dropped the ball in terms of its definition of 'publish'. In other states, notably Queensland, any person who publishes the footage of the offending can be held criminally liable under their post-and-boast laws. In Victoria only the person who commits the crime and then posts about it themselves can be liable. Somebody can have a mate standing beside them filming and that mate can put it online, and as long as they did not commit the offence, they have got a clear pass under post and boast. Even providing it to one other person is okay under this bill. The definition of 'publish' excludes where that material is transmitted to one other person. Why? Isn't publishing it to anybody sufficient? Why shouldn't that be sufficient to invoke post-and-boast offending? As I say, it is almost as though the government wants to be seen to be doing something but has drafted the bill in such a way that it is

going to be very difficult to ever apply. I am very interested to hear what the government says about that.

Also, the concern is that this is a summary offence. While the underlying offences, if I can call it that – thefts, robberies, burglaries, home invasions, carjackings – are serious offences, indictable offences, this post-and-boast defence is only a summary offence, with a maximum of two years imprisonment. But there is nothing in the bill that says that any sentence for the post-and-boast element needs to be in addition to the sentence for the underlying offence. For example, if somebody was to be sentenced to two years jail for an aggravated home invasion and then six months jail for the posting and boasting about that, there is nothing to stop a judge saying, 'You know what, do your six months concurrently with the two years, not a single extra day in jail.' Again, I think that undermines the purpose of this bill. If the purpose of the bill is to say, 'If you commit a crime and then you post and boast about it, you're going to have an extra penalty,' let us make sure the penalty is in fact extra – in addition. Let us make sure that any extra sentence must be served consecutively, not concurrently. So under standing orders I wish to advise the house of amendments to this bill and request that they be circulated.

I know that the government will not look seriously at these amendments in this house, because that is the nature of this government. It is the arrogant way they go about things. But I do hope in the other place – where there is some opportunity for some more mature reflection and there is some opportunity for other parties who, combined, can actually agree to amendments – they take these amendments seriously. If the government are actually serious about wanting this to be an effective bill and an effective response to post and boast, they should take it seriously too. I am not proud. If you want to take up any of these amendments yourselves, members of the government, I would be delighted for you to do it.

Let me tell you what these amendments are. Number 1, we will remove the loophole that says that if you transmit the video or the footage to one other person that does not count as publishing. We will remove that. This amendment removes that loophole which the government is creating in this bill. There is no argument for that loophole to exist – only if you are not serious about tackling post and boast. The first amendment will remove that loophole. If you transmit that footage or video to any person, that is publishing.

Other amendments will add additional offences to the list of relevant offences for the purposes of post and boast. We will add the offence of causing serious injury intentionally in circumstances of gross violence. We will add the offence of causing serious injury recklessly in circumstances of gross violence. We will add the offence of assaults, so that people or the person who pushed that poor elderly fisherman into the water off the pier would be caught. We will add the offence of destroying or damaging property, including by arson, and we will add the offence of dangerous driving. Every one of these offences that I have put in these amendments is the type of offending which has been the subject of post-and-boast behaviour – every single one of them. It should be subject to post-and-boast laws.

I urge the government to take these amendments seriously, because this is about trying to make this bill better. I agree with the intent of the bill, and I agree with the government's intent in bringing it forward, I just do not think it is a very well-drafted bill. It is almost as though the government wants it to fail. Well, we do not want it to fail; we want it to succeed. That is why we are putting forward constructive amendments to strengthen it, to improve it, to actually tackle the sort of post-and-boast offending that the community is rightly so outraged by.

At amendment 6 we also change the bill so that in imposing a penalty for an offence under post and boast, the court must direct that any term of imprisonment imposed be served cumulatively on any term of imprisonment imposed for the relevant offence. In other words, the post-and-boast term will be on top of any sentence you get for the underlying offence. You will not get a two-for-one deal. You will not be able to serve the sentences concurrently; they will have to be done cumulatively. It will be an additional penalty for the additional offence.

There is precedent for this in the Crimes Act 1958, so I do not particularly want to hear any complaints from the government about limiting judicial discretion. This is something the Parliament has done in the past. We have amended the Crimes Act to say that in certain circumstances certain offences must have the penalty served cumulatively – and this is exactly the sort of thing the community wants to see. I would urge the government to take these amendments seriously and strengthen the bill to allow it to live to its potential.

One of the reasons we have included the offences of assault and causing serious injury in circumstances of gross violence, either intentionally or recklessly, is that we have also seen some horrific behaviour in recent months and years. The rise of dating apps has unfortunately and very sadly seen the gay community targeted for homophobic bashing. We have seen gay men lured into places through these dating apps and then being the subject of assaults and attacks simply for being gay. It is horrific. It is homophobic. It is disgraceful. This is exactly the sort of thing which we need to take a stand against as a Parliament, and one of the ways we can do that is to send a clear message, through this post-and-boast law, that if you commit assaults or you commit serious injury in circumstances of gross violence and you then boast about it – you boast about your horrific deeds online, to add insult to injury – we will not cop it as a Parliament and you will be punished in addition to your penalty for the underlying gross act that you have committed.

I do urge the government to take these amendments seriously. They are about trying to protect a vulnerable part of our community who have been subject to horrific homophobic attacks. We do need to send a message that that is not on in this state. Here is an opportunity for the government to work with the opposition to strengthen this bill, to improve it, to send a message that that sort of offending is absolutely not on; it is abhorrent. I do urge the government, whether in this place or the other, to take these amendments seriously and to see if we cannot actually work together as a Parliament to strengthen this bill.

In Queensland, as I mentioned, in the way their post-and-boast offending is dealt with, we see things done a little bit differently. In Queensland there is a broader range of offences: any offence involving driving or operating a vehicle; any offence involving violence or a threat of violence; any offence involving a weapon; and any offence involving taking, damaging, destroying, removing, using, interfering with or entering property. All in that category of offending is caught by Queensland's post-and-boast law. By contrast, Victoria's relevant offences list is tiny, it is so limited, and I do wonder: what is the government's rationale for that? Why has the government limited it so much when we know that a broad range of offending can be subject to post and boast? In Queensland we see as well that the law applies to anybody who publishes the material:

> … for the purpose of –
>
> glorifying the conduct; or
>
> increasing the person's reputation, or another person's reputation, because of their involvement in the conduct.

Whereas in Victoria under this bill you have to both commit the relevant offence and then publish or cause it to be published yourself, in Queensland anybody can be caught if the effect of what they are doing is glorifying the criminal activity. Again, we are not talking about stopping journalists or citizen journalists from doing their jobs of drawing attention, for example, to where there might be an offender on the loose in the community. Clearly the purpose of publishing footage of a crime is to try and track that person down to assist police. Nobody is talking about making that an offence, and Queensland's law does not provide for that to be an offence. Queensland's law specifically has exemptions for journalists as well, which is entirely appropriate. But again, it is almost as though the government thinks you have to steal a car on one hand and then film yourself with the other, and unless you do the two together that is the only thing that counts as post and boast. That is not the way the real world works. The real world works where you have got gangs of people, one person might commit the crime and then their mate takes the footage, and their mate puts it up online. Well, under that scenario where one person commits the offence and their mate films it, that is okay under Labor's laws; that is okay

under post and boast. It does not count as an offence. It makes no sense. It makes no sense, so we do think the government has not drafted this particularly well.

Certainly if we were in office we would have adopted the Queensland approach, and should that occur next year I think we will be adopting the Queensland approach, but in the meantime we can make this fairly weak bill much stronger with the amendments that I have circulated to the house today. We can make it stronger by removing the loophole on publishing to one other person. We can make it stronger by adding to the list of relevant offences caught by post and boast the sort of offending which is actually the subject of post and boast in the real world. Let us have that reflected in the law, and we can make it stronger by ensuring that any sentence for post and boast is in addition to the sentence for the underlying offending, not served concurrently with it.

There have been some concerns about how effective these sorts of laws are around the country, and I note that the *Courier Mail* reported on 12 May this year that 195 offenders had been charged in Queensland with the offence since August 2024. Well, that would seem to indicate that their law has been effective. It has been capturing the bad behaviour, and it has been leading to additional penalties for those who have been committing it.

Tim Bull interjected.

Michael O'BRIEN: It works, as the member for Gippsland East says. As part of my consultation as Shadow Attorney-General, I always consult with legal industry stakeholders on these matters, and I am very grateful to Louisa Gibbs, the chief executive officer of the Federation of Community Legal Centres Victoria. I did ask for the FCLC's view, and they do not support the bill. They believe it will effectively double punish some offenders who will be charged with a substantive offence and the new performance crime offence. Well, I would say it is not double punishment; it is punishment for two separate offences. One is the underlying offence and the second offence is adding insult to injury for the victim by going online and posting and boasting about it. So it is not double punishing; they are two separate offences, and the punishment should reflect that.

Ms Gibbs goes on to say in practice the new offence will disproportionately impact certain types of offenders, particularly young people from marginalised communities who are more likely to post on social media without fully understanding the consequences and impacts of this behaviour. Well, part of the purpose of the law is to send a message to the community or to reflect what the community believes about what is and is not acceptable behaviour; that is why we have laws. Young people do need to be sent a message that to add insult to injury to a victim by not only, for example, committing an aggravated burglary or an aggravated carjacking but then going online and gloating about it is something that, as a society, we say is out of bounds, and as a Parliament we need to change the law to reflect that. So I am very grateful to the federation for their views, but on this particular occasion I do not find myself in agreement with them. Nonetheless, it is very helpful for me as Shadow Attorney-General to get the feedback from these different stakeholders.

Similarly, I was very pleased to consult with the Law Institute of Victoria on this bill and received correspondence from Adam Awty, the chief executive of the LIV, and can I just put on the record my thanks to Adam and to the policy team at the LIV. They always provide exceptionally informative and thoughtful and considered responses to legislation when I ask for their views, and we are very grateful. We agree at times, we disagree on other occasions, but they do a power of work, and I want to place that on the record because it is an extremely valuable addition to parliamentary debates.

The LIV does not support post and boast for not dissimilar reasons to those put forward by the Federation of Community Legal Centres – they say there is no evidence from New South Wales or Queensland, no evidence from these jurisdictions to suggest that it has deterred this behaviour. As I said, the *Courier Mail* reported there have been 195 charges as of May this year for an offence which has only been on the books since 2024. That would seem to indicate that it is catching the behaviour. Whether it is deterring it I suppose only time will tell, but it is certainly catching the behaviour because

those charges are being laid. The LIV make some points about not wanting to see young people entrenched in the criminal justice system. They say:

> The LIV has concerns that this new offence will primarily target youth offending and will only serve to further entrench young people in the criminal justice system.

Given the relevant offences under the bill are pretty serious offences – as I say, robberies, home invasions, burglaries, carjackings – I think that this, the post-and-boast aspect, is a relatively small aspect when we are considering the underlying offence. If we have a young person out there who is committing aggravated burglaries, aggravated carjackings, aggravated home invasions, they should not be videoing that and putting it online – that is what this bill is about – but really the main problem is they are committing those serious offences in the first place. Obviously we need to have a good think as a Parliament and as a society about how we are tackling youth offending.

I see the government has just second read its bail bill, although I notice it has still got an enormous amount of loopholes and in many senses will still be far weaker than even the bail laws they replaced two years ago. We have still got 1100 vacancies in Victoria Police. We still have 43 police stations that are closed or have reduced hours in that status, including my local one in Malvern. There is a lot of work to be done to tackle youth crime, but I do not think that ignoring the phenomenon of post and boast is a way to help us get there. On this particular occasion I do not share the concerns of the LIV and the Federation of Community Legal Centres, but I am very grateful for their views and I put those on the record.

This is a bill which the opposition will not be opposing because it does a little to tackle post and boast, but it does not do nearly enough. If we are serious about standing up against homophobic attacks on gay men in this state who are using dating apps, who get lured to places and bashed and then have insult added to injury by having it filmed and put online to further humiliate them, if we are serious about tackling that sort of offending, then the government should seriously consider adopting my amendments and adding those offences in – adding assault in, adding offences such as causing serious injury in circumstances of gross violence. Let us add that in. Let us add dangerous driving, let us add destroying or damaging property, including through arson. Let us let us give this bill some teeth.

The opposition will not be opposing the bill, but we do put forward three sets of amendments designed to improve it: adding to the list of relevant offences to include those sorts of offences which we know in the real world are the subject of post and boast; removing the loophole in the bill that publishing the footage to one other person is not really publishing – let us take that loophole out; and let us ensure that a penalty for post and boast is a real penalty, one that is served in addition to the penalty for the underlying offence, not a two-for-one freebie. Those amendments will make this a better bill, and we urge the government to seriously consider taking them up in this place or in the other place.

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (11:09): I am pleased to rise to speak on the Crimes Amendment (Performance Crime) Bill 2025. Really the government is responding to a disturbing trend on the rise among young people who are using platforms such as TikTok, Instagram and Snapchat to gain clout and fame for engaging in dangerous and criminal behaviour – on the one hand committing very serious and troubling offences, but on the other hand retraumatising victims and unnecessarily punishing the victims by reminding them of something which is in all likelihood one of the most traumatic events of their lives. It is heartless and it is completely unacceptable behaviour, and hence we are cracking down on this cowardly behaviour that is deeply disturbing to the community.

The bill is introducing a new offence into the Crimes Act 1958 that criminalises a person publishing material like photos and videos depicting their involvement in a serious offence. The offence will apply to a person who has been found guilty of specific crimes, including affray, burglary and aggravated burglary, robbery and armed robbery, car theft, home invasion and violent disorder. I would like to think that everyone would agree that these are indeed serious and disturbing offences. To suggest that we are not wholeheartedly committed to clamping down on this behaviour I think is

unwarranted and unfair when you look at the list of offences that this specific legislation is targeting. The new offence will also capture anyone involved in promoting or facilitating these crimes.

I will go a bit further in unpacking some of the elements, because broadly speaking when you say 'post' and 'boast' those concepts are probably well understood by most in the community. However, as is always the case when you are looking at offences, you have to be very precise in order to ensure a fair trial but also a proper outcome in terms of meeting community standards. I should say it includes those who are complicit in or who incite the offending – again, important nuances that must be taken into account with this legislation. Offenders will face an additional two years jail on top of the penalties for the substantive physical offences they have been charged with.

I do want to proceed to some further elements because that is obviously really important when we are looking at introducing these important reforms. One of the greatest concerns for the community, and certainly for the government, is that when people do post and boast about serious offences that they have committed, this has the grave danger of normalising completely unacceptable behaviour – almost conditioning the observer in some sense to think that this may somehow be acceptable or in some way tolerated – and also fostering a toxic level of competitiveness. It is hard to fathom, when you think of it logically and objectively, that anyone could be excited or inspired by witnessing such horrific behaviour. Nevertheless, this is what this disturbing trend is showing, and hence we are taking strong action in order to curb and stamp out this very bad behaviour. Of course that is a critical element when we are looking at enforceability of the offences being discussed.

The relevant offences to which the new performance crime will apply are listed, as has been stated, in new section 195U of the bill: theft of a motor vehicle, burglary or aggravated burglary, home invasion or aggravated home invasion, carjacking or aggravated carjacking, robbery or armed robbery, affray and violent disorder. These are serious offences that are increasingly being shared online through videos or social media posts. Capturing these offences ensures that the law will directly address the criminal behaviour which is escalating and causing the greatest concern in the community. As I was trying to be really clear about from the outset, the new offence will also apply where a person attempts, is complicit in – for example, encourages or directs – or incites commission of the relevant offence.

Why does this new offence only apply to certain offences rather than all serious crimes? By targeting performance crime in relation to specific offences, the new offence responds to serious high-risk and high-impact crimes that are increasing in prevalence, particularly among young offenders, and anecdotally are increasingly being boasted about on social media. I hope that goes some way to explaining the rationale behind the particular offences that are being targeted through this legislation. By limiting the scope of these serious offences of concern, the government is making sure the new laws are proportionate, effective and enforceable. At the end of the day we do want to achieve appropriate outcomes.

There were questions raised regarding comparisons to New South Wales and Queensland. Let us start with comparing with New South Wales. The bill is broadly modelled on the New South Wales approach, as it requires the offender to have committed an underlying serious offence and is punishable by up to two years imprisonment. However, unlike New South Wales, the bill creates a separate offence. This is because the New South Wales model may not result in higher sentences. A single offence which encompasses a substantive offence and advertising that offending will not necessarily lead to increased sentences for the criminal behaviour or reflect the additional aggravating component of posting and boasting about the criminal behaviour. It does not align with existing Victorian legislation and would have impacts on Victorian criminal law and procedure as well as laws relating to bail, sentencing, court jurisdiction and presumptions and requirements for the relevant offence – for example, minimum non-parole period for aggravated home invasion – and may result in inaccurate crime statistics that do not reflect the actual crime rate of substantive serious offences. Like the New South Wales legislation, the bill will capture theft of a motor vehicle and breaking and entering offences. However, unlike New South Wales, the Victorian performance crime offence will also apply to these additional offences – and forgive me for the repetition, but to be clear: robbery, armed robbery,

affray, violent disorder, inciting one of the relevant offences and attempting one of the relevant offences.

Why does the bill take a different approach to Queensland and the Northern Territory? The Queensland and Northern Territory model is quite different to the bill and the New South Wales model as it applies to anyone, even if they are not found guilty of the offence depicted. The risks of this model include: it would not increase sentencing for serious offences – for example, carjacking, home invasion et cetera – which are of the most concern to the community; and it would likely result in lengthy and complex prosecutions, because the prosecution would have to show that the published material advertises offending conduct without necessarily having any proof of the substantive offence. There are further issues there, but I just wanted to shed some light on why we have gone with the pathway that we have.

I did also wish to speak to the matter of specific attacks on the LGBTIQA+ community. The performance crime offence may apply if the offending includes a relevant offence, depending on the facts and circumstances of the case – granted. For example, some recent examples of horrific behaviour which has targeted members of the LGBTIQA+ community have involved serious offences, including robbery and affray, which are relevant offences. In such a scenario if no relevant offence is committed a court sentencing an offender is required by the Sentencing Act 1991 to consider whether the offending was motivated by hatred or prejudice against a group of people with common characteristics, such as the LGBTIQA+ community, and may consider the filming and or publication as an aggravated sentencing factor. Furthermore, I will say that homophobia is completely unacceptable, and I would stand on the record of our government when it comes to advancing protections with regard to the LGBTIQA+ community, certainly with our *Pride in Our Future* strategy. I am going on a tangent that does deviate from the bill, but just to be clear, if you are looking for a record when it comes to equality in this state, I am not sure that the opposition are shining in that regard. They may wish to be cautious about bestowing some sort of higher moral standing when it comes to protections for the LGBTIQA+ community.

Martin CAMERON (Morwell) (11:19): I rise today to talk on the Crimes Amendment (Performance Crime) Bill 2025. I thank the Shadow Attorney-General for highlighting what the bill includes but also what the bill does not include. I think we in the chamber today stand with the government bringing this bill in, because as we are going to talk about, this is an attempt to tackle the rise of post-and-boast offending on social media. Who would have thought that five or 10 years ago we would have to be bringing in laws to stamp this out? Unfortunately, these days our younger fraternity, who seem to get away with a lot more than what we did back in the day, have options where, as the member on her feet just before said, they are trying to outdo each other, to elevate what they can get away with and what crime they can get away with by posting it to social media and embarrassing the poor person that the offences may have happened against. It happens right across Victoria, whether it is here in Melbourne, in the city, or whether it is around regional Victoria.

I think if we are bringing a bill in to stamp this out it makes sense to make sure, as the member for Malvern said before, that we cover the loopholes that are glaring in this bill that is in the chamber right now. So why aren't we passing a law? The amendments that have been put up do close a lot of those loopholes. You have only got to have a look at some of the stuff that is posted. I am sure members will talk about what is in the bill, but it is about what we are leaving out. So if we post and boast that we are stealing a car, that is sort of in, but not the dangerous driving which then follows if you steal that car. I think we have all probably seen it as we travel down the Monash on our way home in the car when we are sitting on 100 kilometres an hour and a car goes past doing 150 or 160 kilometres an hour. That is a deadly missile that is going past you, and most of the time there is probably someone in there filming how fast that speedo is showing. I know we do see it with motorbikes that get stolen and also cars that get stolen. I know myself, in my home town of Traralgon, that you have to keep your wits about you coming up to a roundabout or an intersection, as we all should do, not because of what you may cause but because of what may be coming at you from all different sides, because

unfortunately these people that we are trying to stamp out with this post-and-boast legislation just do not give a stuff about what they do on the roads and what lives they put at risk.

Assault is not in this post-and-boast legislation, as the member for Malvern said. Arson – setting a car alight or setting something alight – is not in it. A certain element of our community – and these are the particular people that are doing this – do not play within the rules, so why do we give them the scope where they have got options with this bill coming in? Why don't we just cover every single loophole that we can so they do not have an option? If they get caught posting and boasting on social media, they know they have to face consequences. At the moment unfortunately with our legal system our youth crime participants these days – these are the ones that mostly use the post and boast for a little bit of one-upmanship with their mates – do not have consequences for what they decide to do in our community, so it does not make sense. We are only capturing the person who is committing the crime. As the member for Malvern said, if he has got a mate or a group of people that are there that are filming, it is not on them and they get to walk free. They are not going to be able to be brought in under these new amendments that are coming in. I want to say that we need legislation coming in about this posting and boasting, so I am in agreement with the government bringing it in. But we are standing here, we are talking about it, and I have got to go back to my community and look them in the eye and say, 'Look, we voted for this bill today. We could have made it better, but there are loopholes in it.'

They know full well that the local fraternity down in the Latrobe Valley are going to use those loopholes; 100 per cent they are going to use those loopholes to step aside and not be captured in the legal system. We need to make sure that anyone that is doing this can be captured, because at the end of the day they should not be doing it. They should not be posting, traumatising victims of crime, because of something that we had the opportunity in the chamber to change and make a stand on but we did not go far enough on. I hope the government do look at the amendments that the member for Malvern has put up, because they are going to go a little bit more of a way to stamping it out.

Local crime in my area is put up on social media. I have not got my head in the sand thinking that the Latrobe Valley is immune. Our local crime rate across the Latrobe local government area, in the last crime stats that came up, was up 11.5 per cent. In Churchill, which is one of the townships in my patch – we had the local station there come online with reduced hours, and that is a separate issue; the police throughout the Latrobe Valley are striving and doing the best job that they can, and we fully support them in their efforts – the crime rate was up 38 per cent, so this is what we are dealing with. We look at these percentages. These are issues where people committing crime have the opportunity to video it, and most of them do. I am sure if the police apprehended someone and went through their phone, they would see what had happened on a video or on social media. Crime in Moe is up 26 per cent. We are not missing out on any crime stats in the Latrobe Valley.

Unfortunately, and this is one of the ones which I am not happy about and I do not think anyone would be happy about, in the LGA down at Latrobe we have the second-highest rate of family violence incidents in the state. I see that the member for Gippsland East has just left the chamber. I think Gippsland East is number 1 and Latrobe Valley is number 2. We need to be able to make sure that those numbers are going down. Unfortunately, right across the state family violence incidents are taking up so much time of our police, who are trying to deal with this issue. Theft across retail stores – this is where you see the kids in the shopping centres filming what they are doing – jumped 86 per cent. The kids that we are talking about probably will not look at the legislation, because they know that they are going to be able to get away with it, because they think they are bulletproof.

As I said, we are not opposing the bill. We know as a community we need these laws coming in. But I do ask the government, as they sit down, to have a look at the sensible amendments that have been put forward by the member for Malvern, because they will make a change not only here in Melbourne but in regional Victoria, in my patch. Let us get on with the job and make sure we can make the laws as tough as possible.

John LISTER (Werribee) (11:29): Community safety is one of our priorities. It is the responsibility of the state to continue to change and adapt to our changing society, and our criminal law is no exception to this. Australians are more online now than ever before, and it is incumbent on us here in Parliament to ensure our laws acknowledge this. People in my community, particularly young people, are no longer looking to old-fashioned media like the *Herald Sun* for news and updates on our community. Young people are producing and consuming content themselves, a lot for positive reasons, but some produce content to boast about the serious criminal behaviour they are involved in. I regularly meet with police at the Werribee police complex. In a meeting with me, my fellow Wyndham MPs and the Minister for Police the proactive policing unit described the challenge of social media being used as a tool to promote crimes in the community and encourage one-upmanship of escalating violence. They are seeing issues like aggravated burglary and robberies broadcast on these social media platforms as self-promotion by these offenders. Unlike the Liberal and National parties, we do not just bleat about crime and try to stir fear in communities like mine. We meet and listen to police and develop well-considered laws that will meet the challenges our police face daily. This legislation responds to an horrific trend that is on the rise among young people who are using platforms like TikTok, Instagram and Snapchat to gain clout and fame for engaging in dangerous and criminal behaviour.

Before reflecting on the specifics of the bill, I want to take a moment to explore the behaviour it is targeting. There was a time when as a teacher you knew about a potential fight at or outside of school based on whispers and rumours; this just is not the case anymore. Social media platforms are being used to create beefs between young people and encourage them to commit serious crimes. While work is underway federally to control access to these platforms, which I welcome, we need to continue to adapt to changing crime trends. These laws build on our 2022 laws around grossly offensive public conduct. I used to dread coming into school and having a line of good-conscience students at my door ready to show me the screenshots and grabs of serious criminal behaviour by other young people posted on Snapchat. Often police would be well aware of these incidents and be actively working to convict the perpetrators, but as for boasting about these serious offences, there was no clear way to hold them to account. Young people may be increasingly plugged into these platforms, but it does not mean they want to see this sort of behaviour, and I commend them for when they call it out and report it. This is one of the many reasons why it is imperative that this Parliament passes these laws.

The bill introduces a new offence to the Crimes Act 1958 that criminalises a person publishing material like photos and videos depicting their involvement in a serious offence. The offence will apply to a person who has been found guilty of specific crimes, including affray, burglary and aggravated burglary, robbery and armed robbery, car theft, home invasions and violent disorder – offences that my local police have told us and the intelligence tells us are being increasingly displayed and promoted online. This new offence will also capture anyone involved in promoting or facilitating these crimes, including those who are complicit in or incite that offending. Offenders will face an additional two years jail for the substantive physical offence they are charged for.

I do want to go to the amendments circulated by the member for Malvern briefly. There are accusations of this bill not necessarily being thorough with the list of offences that are there, but the amendment that is proposed could replicate offences that already exist, like grossly offensive public conduct or using a carriage service, the Commonwealth offence, to cause offence. These laws that we are proposing here are targeted, and they are based on intelligence from police. It is targeting the behaviour we are seeing, particularly among young people. You cannot look at this bill and these offences in a vacuum, as if this is the first and only way we have outlawed this conduct.

This bill builds on the Allan Labor government's work to crack down on crime. We have seen our tough bail laws for repeat and violent offending start to have that effect. We have $1.6 billion in this last budget to strengthen our justice system and keep communities safe. We have our landmark anti-vilification and social cohesion reforms to protect Victorians from hate, which I do note the Liberals

and Nationals opposed for so long, and we are working on further improvements to stalking and family violence intervention order laws.

Reflecting on this, particularly from my experience as an educator, we know that when it comes to making sure Victorians have access to better opportunities and lives away from crime it is only this Labor government that invests in those opportunities, like free TAFE, like cheaper health care and like getting kids through school through our vocational major and our VCE senior pathways. If we are not engaging them in this way, we will not see a reduction in this kind of behaviour. We cannot see this bill in a vacuum.

I recently met with residents from the Savana estate, including Aravind, and thank you for organising it. They are concerned about crime in their community, and we spoke about the different ways we are supporting our local police to hold offenders to account. I spoke about these laws that were coming up this week, and they were very excited to hear about how they are an innovative way to continue to address the changing crime trends in our community. We have also built the largest police complex outside of the CBD in Werribee, boosted the number of police in the West Gate division and rolled out new resources like mobile technology – ironically – to our frontline police, as well as a raft of new laws. When we really drilled down in our meeting and conversation, they felt that it was actually the services that young people have in Manor Lakes that were the real cause of their concerns. That is why I fought to secure funding to increase youth services spaces there, as well as working with our local schools to open up more programs to keep young people engaged and encouraging our schools, who do great work with our local police, to share that intelligence and meet regularly with the principals and proactive policing unit. Thank you to those people from the estate for meeting with me.

This is about taking a targeted, sensible approach to a novel area of law. Our bill will introduce a crime that is very similar to the one that was introduced in New South Wales, except we go further by adding violent disorder and affray. The list of offences covered ensures the law is focused, proportionate and directly addresses criminal behaviour causing the greatest concern in the community. The laws will send a clear message to anyone thinking of using their criminal actions to gain a following or to encourage others to offend. You will be held for distributing this vile content.

It is really important to also reflect on the fact that this bill is trying to address a novel area of law and a trend that we are seeing in society that has increasingly become more disturbing. It is part of a whole gamut of changes that we have done recently, changes that people particularly out in the Werribee electorate have come to me to speak about, whether that is ensuring that young offenders who are out on bail are held to account for that offending while they are on bail. It is also for the laws that we have passed around making sure that those different categories of offences – and we will be looking at this soon – apply with a stricter bail test. In meeting with my local police recently, I asked them about the laws' effectiveness and what they are seeing, and they are seeing more of those people who were on their rap sheet – around 150 people on this regular sheet that they keep updated – getting kept on remand and being denied bail. As much as we want to try and support people to make sure that they do not offend, and that if they do offend they get the supports around them to make sure they do not do it again, we also have to remember that one of the obligations of government is to protect those people in the community who are victims of crime. These victims of crime are ordinary Victorians, and my heart does go out to them, and I do speak to many victims of crime every day in my job and throughout the community.

It is important to remember these particular reforms are all about changing and adapting to our society. It is one of our top priorities, and it is the responsibility of the state to continue to change and adapt to our changing society. Crime prevention is not only about these sorts of laws but about providing people with opportunities, whether that is better health care, education, training, transport, housing or community services. The work we are doing to create better opportunities for people is whole-of-government work, and it is the bread and butter of this Labor government. I commend this bill to the house.

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (11:39): I rise to make some comments on the Crimes Amendment (Performance Crime) Bill 2025, and I say at the outset that we all know that Victoria is in a crime crisis. Unfortunately, the crime crisis did not happen yesterday; it has been happening for over 10 years, because the Allan Labor government has failed to keep the community safe. Just about every single time in this particular Parliament when we see issues, Victoria seems to be last to the party. In other states when there are issues in crime, in community safety, we see premiers jump on it. Even in New South Wales, where you have a Labor Premier, that Labor Premier just jumps up and about and says, 'You know what, we're going to tackle it.' We have seen it in so many different instances.

With this particular bill it seems like it is groundhog day and the same applies. Post and boast, as many of us would refer to this as, is a huge problem in Australia. Certainly federally the Liberal–Nationals took to the election a commitment that there would be a national set of laws to ensure that we tackle this real issue. Why is it an issue? It is an issue because we know that young people are influenced by the behaviour of other young people. When you have a young person that takes out their phone and records a victim that they are assaulting, abusing or attacking or takes images of themselves hooning or stealing a car and burning the car and then posting that, all that does is influence other people to do bad things. This government is late to the party to tackle these issues. Even when we have finally got there, after Queensland, the Northern Territory and New South Wales all have these laws, the government still has botched it and has not provided enough coverage to do things.

Nina Taylor interjected.

David SOUTHWICK: I know the member for Albert Park keeps interjecting, but the member for Albert Park needs to know that even things like driving, which is a big part of post and boast, are not covered. That is why the member for Malvern has got some really good amendments, which I hope the member for Albert Park will support, because we know there are many hoon drivers. Victoria Police tell me the majority of carjackings used to be for the purpose of selling those cars and making money for those people that really need it. Now we are seeing half or more of cars stolen being done for glory, for exactly what we are talking about here: post and boast. We know that a big part of this, dangerous driving, is not part of it. We are not talking about that and catching that up as part of these things. There are a number of amendments that have been put forward by the member for Malvern that are, unfortunately, where this government has not got it right. They could have gone to Queensland and seen what the Queensland government have done and said, 'Yes, that works really well. Let's just take it off the shelf and implement it here.' The member for Albert Park can keep interjecting, but only yesterday we saw crime stats come out in Queensland that have seen a massive reduction in youth crime, whereas in Victoria we see an 18 per cent increase in youth crime.

Members interjecting.

David SOUTHWICK: Labor talks about fudging numbers. The backbench are jumping up about fudging numbers. The Allan Labor government would know a lot about fudging numbers. It is all a big fudge when it comes to the Allan Labor government. Everything is just a big black hole, a big mystery. But at the end of the day Victorians are not safe. You can scream as much as you like, but you only have to talk to Victorians on the streets and victims, who unfortunately the Allan Labor government has put last. Talk to the victims. Talk to the guy that had his hand chopped off with a machete. What did he say yesterday? He said it was the Allan Labor government's failure that enabled that machete attack. Do you want to argue with him? Do not argue with me, argue with the man that had his hand chopped off. You are a disgrace. You should be quiet, all of you, because at the end of the day you have failed – you have absolutely failed. We see youth crime up in huge numbers, 18 per cent up on last year, 42 per cent up over 10 years under the Allan Labor government. Every 1.1 hours there is a crime committed against a person, up 5 per cent on last year. Every 36 minutes property offences occur. Every 5 hours we see public order and security offences, and we see drug offences up 600 per cent.

The list goes on. Everything is up, up, up at a time when we need to ensure that community safety must be first, and it is not. The amendments that the member for Malvern is proposing, firstly, add the following offences to the list of relevant offences, which includes new section 15A 'Causing serious injury intentionally in circumstances of gross violence', new section 15B 'Causing serious injury recklessly in circumstances of gross violence' and new section 31 'Assaults'. I would have thought it would be pretty obvious that if somebody assaults someone and videos it and puts it online you would reckon that would be outlawed – that would be something that we would be tackling. But no, the government says assaults are okay. You can video those. That needs to be an amendment this government should be supporting if they were serious – big question mark. Section 197, 'Destroying or damaging property', is what a lot of this is about. We see cars being driven as fast as they possibly can, put on the side of the road, set fire to, videoed and then posted about. Is that covered?

Finally, there is section 64 of the Road Safety Act 1986, which is 'Dangerous driving', and we see it all the time. We see young people driving cars as fast as they can, videoing it with a GoPro or, even worse, with one hand on the wheel and the other on a phone and then posting it. You would reckon you would want to be tackling that. You would reckon you would want to be able to try and keep people safe and have that as part of the legislation. If the government are serious, they will back the member for Malvern's amendments and, on top of that, the second lot of amendments in terms of who is actually posting, because it is not good enough for a young person to video it and send it to a mate and say, 'You post it for me.' If that is the case, the person videoing it might be a problem, but they are not the one posting it. The one that they then send it on to – the mate – they get off scot-free. So let us get serious about this. This is a serious problem that needs a serious solution. If this government were serious about it, they would back the member for Malvern's amendments.

Then finally, if somebody is caught posting and boasting on top of other offences, the ultimate sentence must be served cumulatively, not as part of the initial sentence. You do not want to say, 'Right, well, okay, you've got 12 months for a home invasion but also you've posted it and everything else, which is another three months, but you've already got 12 months so forget about the three months.' No, it is a separate offence, and it needs to be treated as such. The government has a real choice here. If the government was serious about tackling youth crime, if the government was ensuring that young people do not influence other people by posting horrific attacks against Victorians – the victims – it would back our amendments. This is a real opportunity for this government to say, 'Well, we haven't done all of our homework. The opposition have found some flaws. They've looked at Queensland; we haven't. Queensland have got it right; we haven't. Let's pick up the amendments. Let's take them, let's make the legislation better and let's protect all Victorians and put victims first.' The government will either do that or again they will put their head in the sand and they will say, 'You know what, near enough is good enough. We've ticked the box. We move on.'

Well, I tell you what, Victorians do not think that is good enough. If this government are just going to tick boxes and say they have had a little bit of a say, but ultimately Victorians are not kept safe, then this government have failed. Ten years of a crime crisis; 10 years of failure by the Allan Labor government, and now they are trying to play catch-up, but unfortunately it is all too late. Victorians deserve community safety. Victims deserve to be put first. This is a huge failure. It is an important part of legislation, but please get it right and support the member for Malvern's amendments.

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (11:49): I rise to support the Crimes Amendment (Performance Crime) Bill 2025, and what a performance that was by the member for Caulfield, who is leaving the chamber now. He wants to talk about and get on his high horse about posting and boasting. I mean, the biggest poster and boaster in the Liberal opposition is the member for Caulfield. This is the guy that boasted about being a 'fake' adjunct professor. He went around waving his fake CV around saying he was a 'fake' adjunct professor.

Tim McCurdy: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, could we get back to the bill, please?

The ACTING SPEAKER (Daniela De Martino): Member for Pascoe Vale, please return to the bill.

Anthony CIANFLONE: I welcome your guidance, Acting Speaker. I acknowledge the member for Ovens Valley's point of order, but it was very relevant to the bill because this is all about posting and boasting. Whether you are posting and boasting about being a 'fake' adjunct professor or whether you are tape-recording colleagues and promoting that through the Federal Court system – this is what this bill is all about.

I acknowledge the work of the Minister for Police, the Attorney-General and the Minister for Corrections, who have helped bring this bill to the chamber, because every Victorian deserves the right to feel safe in their homes, their communities, their streets, their neighbourhoods and their workplaces. That is why we have been continuing to prioritise community safety through a wide range of investments and reforms, including continuing to provide Victoria Police with all the powers, tools and resources they need to keep us safe – that annual $4.5 billion investment into Victoria Police, the appointment of new Chief Commissioner of Police Mike Bush. We have recruited 3600 extra police since 2015. Victoria is home to the largest sworn police force in the nation. In Merri-bek in my community an extra 180 police have been recruited since 2015, including 21 extra dedicated family violence prevention officers. The new Victoria Police EBA has been progressed, with a 4.5 per cent annual increase and a 0.5 per cent increase for general duties officers, along with other improved standards and conditions.

We are continuing to progress the stronger bail laws by placing community safety first, cracking down on that dangerous, violent and repeat offending, including home invasions, carjackings, aggravated home invasions, gun offences, arson offences and other serious knife and weapons offences. $1.6 billion has been provided in the current 2025–26 state budget to improve our corrections and justice system's capacity to remand and house offenders and keep corrections staff safe. But it is also about those other wide powers and reforms that we have pursued to keep our community safe: the tobacco licensing and illicit tobacco trade reforms, the crackdown on organised crime and outlaw motorcycle gangs; unexplained wealth; the crackdown on machetes; the passage of the Youth Justice Act 2024; and the electronic monitoring trial for young at-risk offenders. We have introduced landmark and expanded anti-vilification laws; the Royal Commission into Family Violence – we are now working on further improvements around family violence and intervention orders and stalking; the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System – the first of its kind in the country; we have more recently established the rapid review to identify immediate actions to improve the safety of children in early childhood education and care settings; and much more.

But it is also about tackling those root causes of crime through free TAFE and the Education State – the sensational NAPLAN results that have been released today are testament to our ongoing commitment to improving our education system across the state; free public transport for young people; cheaper health care; and more housing. But we must continue, along with all of these things, doing more than ever before to keep deterring further criminal activity and deterring people away from a life of crime. When all combined, these measures and this bill will help make our community safer.

In this respect one of the challenges confronting our community is the rise of posting and boasting about criminal offending, where people commit serious crimes and then share content, advertise or draw attention to their conduct on the internet, primarily via social media – a disturbing trend on the rise among some young people using platforms like TikTok, Instagram and Snapchat to gain clout and fame for engaging in dangerous criminal behaviour. This cowardly behaviour is deeply, deeply disturbing to the community, retraumatising for victims and encourages copycat offending, all for likes and shares on social media.

The performative nature of these offences introduces a new layer of harm, particularly for the victims and the community members impacted by such crimes. It glorifies unacceptable criminal behaviour, encourages others to emulate such activity, exacerbates community concerns and fear and erodes

public confidence in the justice system. It may also publicly identify and retraumatise victims, as I said. Essentially it is about committing a crime and then seeking to rub salt in the wounds of victims and the community. That is why this bill will introduce a new offence of performance crime into the Crimes Act 1958 that recognises the additional criminality associated with publishing materials that advertise serious criminal offending. While existing laws cover the underlying conduct, such as motor vehicle theft or burglary, they do not specifically criminalise the act of turning crime into content. Such behaviour can be considered during sentencing of an offender. However, the new offence will provide additional accountability, denounce the publication of this content and acknowledge the further trauma it can cause for victims of these crimes.

The new offence criminalises the publication of material that draws attention to someone's own involvement in the following serious offences, and they include theft of a motor vehicle, carjacking and aggravated carjacking, burglary and aggravated burglary, home invasion and aggravated home invasion, robbery and armed robbery, affray and violent disorder and inciting or attempting to commit one of the above offences or being complicit in such offending – for example, encouraging or directing a robbery. The performance crime offence will carry a maximum two-year penalty. This is in addition to the penalty for the underlying serious offence. For example, if a person is found guilty of a home invasion and also a new performance crime offence, they may be sentenced to a maximum of 25 years imprisonment in relation to the home invasion and up to two years further imprisonment for the performance crime offence. The new offence targets serious confrontational theft and violent gross offences of concern to the community, which are increasing overall in frequency or becoming more prevalent among young offenders, who are most likely to post and boast about their conduct. The offence will capture a broad range of conduct.

There are also respective definitions around material and publication in this bill, which are defined broadly again. Material is defined to mean any film, audio, photograph, printed matter, image, computer game or text or any electronic material or any other thing which depicts or describes anything done in the course of committing the relevant offence, property obtained or damage or harm caused. Publishing is defined as including exhibiting, communicating, sending, supplying or transmitting the material and making it available for other people. These definitions are consistent with the existing definitions in the Crimes Act, and introducing a targeted offence sends a clear message that publishing material that advertises or draws attention to such criminal conduct will result in serious consequences. Communities, as I have said, have the right to feel safe, and this reform here today will continue to make our community even safer and deter such activities going forward.

I draw the house's attention to the member for Malvern's amendments that were recently circulated and to quite a few queries that I just want to go back through and rebut, including why we are not making it a crime to post and boast about pretty much every crime – I think that is what they are getting at – or most crimes. The reality is that this is a targeted, proportionate, balanced approach that is informed by Victoria Police intelligence. It is modelled on the approach that New South Wales has taken. It will focus on the areas of greatest concern amongst the community. Why aren't we including assault, the member for Malvern and others opposite asked. Well, if they actually read the bill, affray and violent disorder are actually included and captured in the bill. Furthermore, anyone who seeks to incite or attempt to commit such offences is also covered. Again, this is modelled on the New South Wales approach and Victoria Police intelligence. Why don't we include dangerous driving? It is a fair comment – I get it – but if we actually again look at the bill and look at the work that has informed the bill, often these individuals, these alleged offenders or offenders, have stolen the very vehicle that they are posting and boasting about. Again, we have included in this bill theft of a motor vehicle, carjacking and robbery. As currently designed, the bill largely captures the very things that the Liberals are claiming it does not capture.

On amendments around additional time or additional offences that must be served cumulatively, again our bill provides court discretion on these matters, because courts are best placed to consider the facts of every individual case. It will be up to a court to decide if such a sentence is served cumulatively or

concurrently. We have made it very clear as a government in passing this bill that we expect this to be treated as a standalone offence, and we expect sentencing standards to reflect this. In other words, serving the additional two years is almost inherent in this bill being considered and progressed, because we want to make sure we do not see such crimes amplifying the impact on victims and their families. There was also a query around homophobic attacks, but I find it ironic that the Liberals will be claiming that we are not doing enough for the LGBTIQA+ community when it was that side, the Liberals, who opposed our anti-vilification reforms, which cracked down on such hate and incitement speech towards such members of our community. In essence, I commend this bill because it will make our community safer.

Gabrielle DE VIETRI (Richmond) (11:59): I rise to speak to the Crimes Amendment (Performance Crime) Bill 2025, which creates a separate standalone offence for sharing footage or photos of crimes like carjacking, affray and burglary. After careful consideration and consultation, the Greens will not support this bill. As the Law Institute of Victoria has pointed out, the legal tools already exist to prosecute offenders for the crimes they commit, including when they share evidence of those crimes online. Offences such as robbery, burglary and carjacking already carry significant maximum penalties, including imprisonment. A magistrate or judge already has the discretion to take into account factors such as filming and publishing an offence. This bill is unlikely to deter criminal behaviour; it simply introduces another layer of punishment.

Under this bill, people found guilty of both committing a crime and posting about it could face an additional two years imprisonment. The Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service has rightly raised concerns that this bill will disproportionately impact marginalised youth, particularly Aboriginal children who are already grossly over-represented in our justice system. Legal experts across the board, from the Law Institute of Victoria, the Justice Reform Initiative and the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service, all agree this bill is performative and unnecessary. It distracts us from the real solutions that we need to invest in. The government should be prioritising investment in wraparound services in First Nations led, community led, culturally appropriate programs. Instead, this bill will increase and perpetuate cycles of incarceration rather than breaking them, and it contradicts the government's own stated commitment to youth justice reform. The Labor government claims to support diversion, rehabilitation and reducing youth incarceration. In fact they spoke about it at length. They spoke about the vital importance of this last year when they, with the support of the Greens, passed the Youth Justice Amendment Bill 2024.

This Labor bill introduces new criminal offences for children. This bill is not the solution to the problems that we face, but we have a problem with online-inspired and tech-enabled offending. In particular there is a concerning rise in homophobic violence in Victoria, which is often filmed and shared. Emboldened through online platforms, offenders have lured gay and bisexual men through online dating sites like Grindr into secluded places only for them to be beaten, robbed or extorted by groups of young men, sometimes teenagers. These attacks have been shared online to humiliate victims, glorify violence against gay men, to coerce or to blackmail them. It is cowardly, it is disgusting and it is unacceptable. These crimes are worryingly widespread even though they are typically under-reported. There have been 35 arrests in recent months in Victoria. We want to and we must work as a community and with the government to address and prevent these ongoing attacks from continuing any longer.

Unfortunately, this bill is unlikely to affect the severity and frequency of these attacks. These young men who commit these violent attacks are already committing a crime. They know that assault and extortion are illegal; they know that they carry severe penalties. Filming and sharing a crime is already considered an aggravating factor when sentencing, and as abhorrent as it is, making a separate crime for filming the attack would be unlikely to be a further deterrent, and that is also only if the incident is considered a relevant crime under this bill – most of these attacks are actually physical assaults, which is not considered a relevant offence and so would not be captured by this bill. The bill also does not offer any direction what rehabilitation looks like for this type of ideological, hate-fuelled offending.

The courts are not empowered to treat publication as a sign of deeper community risk or ideological harm, and therefore they cannot follow up with the rehabilitative needs that an offender might have.

While the bill criminalises some publication, it provides absolutely no protection for victims whose assaults are filmed and circulated. Victims of these crimes are often subjected to ongoing digital harm that the government could be preventing through better regulation of online platforms and victim notification mechanisms. We also have really poor tracking of prejudice-motivated crimes here in Victoria, which means that we cannot properly analyse and respond to rising trends in our community before they get out of hand.

Speaking with members of my community, which is beautifully diverse and proud and unapologetically queer, the victims of these crimes really want these crimes to be stopped before they happen in the first place by addressing the root causes, because these attacks have not happened in a vacuum; they are part of a coordinated rise in homophobic, neo-Nazi, racist activity across the state. These far-right extremists have targeted trans people, gay people, black people, Muslims, Jews and refugees. From the Grampians to Preston, from Ballarat to the CBD, we have seen this rise in aggression coming from afar, and that is why back in 2019 the Greens put up an inquiry to investigate this rise of far-right extremism so we could stop it at its source. And yet as these attacks become more frequent and more brazen, we are still to see meaningful action from the government in response to that inquiry, which recommended investment in youth work designed to prevent the radicalisation of young men and teenage boys that leads to this kind of hate-fuelled offending; and statewide anti-racism, inclusion and diversity education across schools – the kind of investment in social support and education that could have stopped these crimes from happening in the first place.

The government claims that these post-and-boast laws will deter people, and it is not backed up by any evidence. There is no clear evidence that prosecuting people for what they post online prevents crime or improves community safety. Similar laws in New South Wales and Queensland have not provided any proof to date that these laws stop people from committing, filming and posting about crimes. What the existing evidence does show, and we have decades of evidence for it, is that pushing people, and particularly young people, into the criminal justice system sets them up to be further enmeshed in crime and the criminal system. Early interaction with the criminal system significantly increases the likelihood of reoffending. It does not help them break the cycle, and it does not help make this community safer. Rather than deterring young people from committing crimes, this bill risks pushing them deeper into the system, which further criminalises them and retraumatises them.

The Greens are committed to an evidence-based justice system that focuses on reducing crimes and improving safety by raising the age of criminal responsibility and investing in prevention, education and rehabilitation, reforms that tackle the root causes of poverty, trauma, unstable housing, lack of education and social disconnection. Criminalising young people for posting their actions online does nothing to address these root causes, and that is why the Greens oppose the Crimes Amendment (Performance Crime) Bill 2025. This proposed legislation is nothing more than a tough-on-crime theatre. It distracts from real reforms backed by research and frontline experts. It will do nothing to improve community safety. Instead it will further criminalise young people, disproportionately impact Aboriginal communities and undermine the government's own stated goal of reducing youth incarceration.

While we oppose this bill, we know that it will likely pass, because Labor here in Victoria are working in close partnership with the Liberals when it comes to locking up kids and feeding our already overinflated prison system. This is just one in a suite of performative, undemocratic, downright dangerous changes from this Victorian Labor government – regressive reforms like new bail and anti-protest laws – that go against the grain of justice. We call on the Victorian Labor government to reconsider this ill-conceived bill and focus on real, evidence-based solutions to prevent crime and to support young people in their rehabilitation. The Greens will continue to fight for a justice system that focuses on care and support, not punishment.

Meng Heang TAK (Clarinda) (12:09): I am thankful for the opportunity to rise today to make contributions on the Crimes Amendment (Performance Crime) Bill 2025. I do so in support of this bill and following my lead speaker the member for Albert Park and having listened carefully to the contribution made by the previous speaker on this side. This is another important bill, one that will introduce a standalone performance crimes offence into the Crimes Act 1958. What we are talking about here is prohibiting a person from publishing material to draw attention to their involvement in certain serious offences, The relevant offences that are captured here are theft of a motor vehicle, burglary or aggravated burglary, home invasion or aggravated home invasion, carjacking or aggravated carjacking, robbery or armed robbery, affray or violent disorder and inciting or attempting to commit one of the above offences or being complicit in such offending.

These are serious offences that the government is putting a great deal of work into combating, as we can see here in this bill. We can see recent happenings here in this place regarding our justice system and keeping our community safe. We have seen from some really significant legislation and changes, particularly around community safety, that this is a very important priority for this government, and we can see that again in this bill here today.

I was happy to be involved in the debate on our tough bail bill, a bill to put community safety first and above all in bail decisions by removing the principle of remand as the last resort, creating the toughest bail laws ever for serious offenders, including new bail tests which are extremely hard to pass, and targeting repeat offenders for those worst crimes. It is a really important measure that we are seeing the results of in the remand rate. That is really important because there was and is a really clear expectation from the community on this. It is one of the most common concerns in my community and is still a major concern for many, along with the importance of quality public health care, major infrastructure projects, local development and ensuring amenity for local residents, which is really important. We will keep working in particular around community safety, and we will continue to work around the government's new tough bail laws to keep Victorians safe by putting community safety above all and creating the toughest bail laws ever for serious offenders, targeting repeat offenders for the worst crimes.

Again, I would like to say thankyou to all of my constituents for raising community safety with me in my time doorknocking, at my mobile office or at my electorate office and, most importantly, as we all do, attending community events. Community members come to me and say that we need to do something with repeat offenders, such as today, so the feedback is very important to me and also very important to the Allan Labor government. Those were positive changes which sent a clear message that community safety must be placed above all, and we will keep working to make sure that is the case. We have legislation to keep our community safety and to keep our justice system operating efficiently and effectively.

We continue to do that important work here today through the changes in this bill, the Crimes Amendment (Performance Crime) Bill 2025, a standalone amendment. I commend the Attorney-General for bringing this bill forward. This sends another strong message that community safety comes first. These changes will prohibit a person from publishing material to draw attention to their involvement in certain serious offences, such as theft of a motor vehicle, burglary, home invasion and carjacking, along with other offences as mentioned previously.

I heard the other side are also concerned about this material being shared online, and it can be rebutted by having this amendment here today. As such, a person can be charged with the new performance crime offence if they are found guilty of a relevant offence that is the subject of the material. We have heard from this side of the house the lead speaker and the members for Werribee and Pascoe Vale talk about this. The new performance crime offence is a summary offence that carries a maximum of two years imprisonment, and this is in addition to the penalty for the relevant offence. This is a serious penalty for anyone, let alone any young reoffender, to face in our criminal justice system. Finally, the bill will also provide Victoria Police with search warrant powers pursuant to section 465 of the Crimes

Act to investigate the offence. These are strong changes that will send a strong message that these are serious offences and publishing material around these offences will not be tolerated.

Again, I would like to thank all my constituents for raising community safety with me because of their concerns, and that feedback is driving change. Like you, Acting Speaker, I saw a lot in my own activity out and about, doorknocking, attending community events or at a mobile office and certainly heard that, clearly, we had to do something. This bill will respond to community concern about certain serious offending such as motor vehicle theft and home invasion when that offending is depicted in material that offenders share online. That is despicable behaviour, and it has been called out by the community and is being called out by this government once again here.

The proposed new offence increases criminal culpability, denounces and deters the publication of material drawing attention to offending and acknowledges that victims may experience further trauma from publication of material depicting their experience. This behaviour is completely unacceptable to me and unacceptable to this government. I am also happy to support these changes that introduce a performance crime offence to address this behaviour similar to a new offence in our neighbouring state, New South Wales.

Key legal stakeholders have been consulted, namely Victoria Police, the Office of Public Prosecutions, Victoria Legal Aid and the Magistrates' and County courts. All were provided a draft bill and consulted on the technicality and practical issues of the proposed offences, so the bill has broad support from stakeholders, and I am happy to support this bill here today.

We have seen the government's commitment to community safety in introducing Australia's toughest bail laws to protect people in our community from the risk of serious crime, and now more serious and repeat alleged offenders are going to jail, not getting bail. We have seen that commitment in the most recent budget – backing it up with significant investment, namely $727 million to ramp up capacity in Victorian prisons and youth justice centres, bringing more prison beds online to deal with the increasing number of alleged offenders being denied bail. As I have said, that commitment continues here today with the Crimes Amendment (Performance Crime) Bill 2025. This is an important bill, one that introduces a standalone performance crime offence into the Crimes Act and sends a strong and clear message that this behaviour will not be tolerated.

We will keep working on community safety, and we will continue to work around the government's new, tough bail laws to keep Victorians safe by putting our community safety above all else. I commend the Attorney-General for bringing this bill forward, and I commend the bill to the house.

Will FOWLES (Ringwood) (12:19): It is my pleasure to make a contribution today on this post-and-boast bill, the Crimes Amendment (Performance Crime) Bill 2025. I want to make a few points in particular around scope and talk a bit about the things that are captured and perhaps are not captured or things that ought to be captured by this bill. I want to talk a little bit about judicial discretion and then more generally about the particulars of the youth crime wave we find ourselves in and the government's approach and response to that particular crime wave. I think the speakers prior to me have canvassed quite broadly the amendments to the Crimes Act 1958 that this bill proposes. I am not going to go through those in any great detail, save to say that I think it is a point of significance that the definition will not capture the making available of material to one person – that is, it is not a crime to share the material with one person only. It only becomes a crime under this bill to share that material more broadly, so it excludes private one-to-one communication. It is about wider publication. I think there is a scope difficulty with that, I think there is a scope difficulty with needing to prove intention to publish and I think there is a scope problem with what crimes are captured.

Some of these issues are addressed by the textual amendments moved by the member for Malvern, because they go to the scope, the number of crimes that can be captured by this additional crime, the performance crime element. But what the member for Malvern's amendments do not do is capture or seek to amend in any way the intention to publish component of this, which I think is troubling. I have

not heard much in this debate about the importance of judicial discretion and to what extent we as parliamentarians, we as this Parliament, would attempt to fetter that discretion.

In relation to the breadth or the scope of this publication, I do not think that narrowing it so that one-to-one communication is excluded is the appropriate public policy response – far better, in my submission, that we actually lower the threshold around intention to publish and make it reckless and broaden that test to include one-to-one communication, because what we see at the moment is a very, very, very difficult bar to establish. For a prosecution to establish that you intended to cause the publication they have to be able to demonstrate through circumstantial evidence that it was always your intention to have it published more broadly. If you simply share a video with someone with no commentary, if you simply share that video with one other person, it is going to be almost impossible for a prosecution to demonstrate beyond reasonable doubt that it was your intention to cause that to be published. But if you lower that threshold to a threshold of recklessness and you include the sharing of one-to-one, then it becomes much easier to outlaw that kind of behaviour. I do not think we need people sharing this material unless they have got a genuine reason for it, a public purpose for it.

I do not think it is important to protect the right of people to share video evidence of crimes. If we lower the threshold to recklessness, if we broaden the scope of publication to include that to one person, then that means if Fred Nerk, Joe Smith or whatever you want to call them – an individual offender – sends a video to someone, you may be able to capture that under this legislation. As the bill currently stands, you would not be able to capture that behaviour of just sending a video without commentary. There is no chance you will ever get that up in a criminal prosecution. But if you lower the threshold to reckless rather than intentional, if you are reckless as to whether it will be published and it includes the transmission to one person, then you have half a chance of being able to capture that behaviour in this new crime, which I think is the appropriate response, because what we do not want is to create the easiest of loopholes, the easiest out imaginable, for people who are intending to engage in post-and-boast behaviour either themselves or by proxy. That I think is what the intention of this bill ought to be, and the only way it will fairly achieve that deterrent, as well as hopefully reform that behaviour, is to make sure that those who transmit material as it is defined in this bill to one person and are reckless as to whether it is published or not come into the ambit, come into the reach of this bill. That is the appropriate response. I would urge the government in the other place to consider whether lowering the threshold to reckless and broadening the transmission rule so that one-to-one transmission is covered can indeed be captured by this bill.

The other issue as to scope is the issue that is addressed by the member for Malvern's amendments, and that is what crimes are covered. This bill, as it stands, fails to capture a range of lower-level offences which are frequently filmed and distributed and which are frequently 'posted and boasted' about, including common assault and threats and vilification. Indeed the attaching of those lower-order crimes would give this bill far more meat – would make it a far more substantial intervention into the behaviours that we are trying to outlaw. Particularly in the threats and vilification space, what we have seen is a very disturbing uptick in antisemitism, as you well know, Acting Speaker Hamer, and the ability of people, as it currently stands in Victoria, to disseminate instances of those particular hate crimes with abandon and to disseminate them without consequence. I think the broadening of the crimes that are captured here would make sure that the intended behavioural change that this bill seeks to achieve actually occurs in that class of crimes that is so much broader, particularly common assault and threats and vilification, and even perhaps offensive behaviour and public nuisance. I do not say that we ought to forever criminalise all material attached to all crimes. I think that creates a burdensome set of legislation and intervenes far too deeply into private communications between citizens, but clearly in matters of assault and with threats and vilification, we are seeing a pattern of post-and-boast behaviour, and that is exactly the sort of behaviour that ought to be curtailed. For that reason, I do support the albeit textual amendments put forward by the member for Malvern.

I want to make a general point about judicial discretion. As I understand it, some of the speakers prior to me said that the amendment proposed by the member for Malvern regarding jail sentences being

cumulative fetters judicial discretion. I would generally say that we ought to support judicial discretion in these matters. I would generally say that when Parliament seeks to fetter judicial discretion, they often do so in a blunt way that does not necessarily achieve the public policy outcomes they seek. But clearly, in this circumstance, this is almost always going to be charged as a tangential charge – an additional charge to the substantive crime. If you allow concurrency, you simply render this new performance crime completely pointless, so it needs to have a cumulative sentencing provision. Whilst I accept the general ideal about fettering judicial discretion, clearly here, because this will almost always be an additional charge to a charge for the substantive crime – be it assault, be it whatever – I think you do have to lay out that any sentencing does need to be cumulative because if you allow for concurrent sentencing, all that will happen is there will be an additional conviction with no additional sanction. What we need here is the additional sanction, not just because we are trying to ensure that punishment is appropriate and proportionate but also because we want to create deterrence. What we want is for this behaviour to actually be stopped, and that ought to be the goal of the legislation. For that reason, I would encourage the government to give serious consideration to the amendments from the member for Malvern and also to deal with the scope issues I have raised.

Josh BULL (Sunbury) (12:29): I am pleased to have an opportunity to make a contribution on the Crimes Amendment (Performance Crime) Bill 2025 and to make some observations and some reflections on the bill that is before the house but to also, before I go to some of the specific changes that are contained within the legislation that we have been debating for the last couple of hours, just make some broader comments about what are the changing dynamics and the changing nature of local communities due to some significant advances in technology and to make some reflections on the changes that are required within legislation to ensure that governments are responding to those changes, working with local communities and working with agencies to ensure that that indeed happens. Apologies for the voice; I am running a bit of a cold, as many are in this last week in July. I want to take the opportunity to thank everyone that has played a significant role in bringing this piece of legislation before the Parliament, making sure that the response that has been provided for is led by community but also making sure that we are doing everything we can to keep community safe. I also want to take the opportunity to acknowledge the appointment of the new Chief Commissioner of Police. I think the reflections and comments that have been made by the new chief commissioner publicly, particularly over the last week, are something that is very warmly welcomed within my community and communities right across the state.

I want to go back to those changing dynamics when it comes to tech from listening to other members' contributions and thinking about perhaps what society and community would have been like just a couple of decades ago. In the course of just 20 years, two decades, the changes that we have seen due to technology – due to software, apps, social media and of course the changes to the way in which we communicate – are something that of course the government is live to and responding to and go to some of the changes that are within this legislation.

What we know and understand of course is that rapid change to the way particularly smartphones and other devices are used has led to many changes within society and within community. Not wanting to cast any aspersions on you, Acting Speaker Hamer, but I imagine we are of similar age, and certainly when I was in year 12, all the way back in 2002, with the smartphones and the rollout of technology, there were not many smartphones when I was in year 12. Going back to primary school, and I graduated primary school in 1996, I think the internet at that point was either just starting or in its very infancy, and to know and understand that in that time, within 20 years, the fact that now each and every one of us in this place has a smartphone, is connected to the internet, has a whole range of apps, uses social media in all sorts of different ways, and now we are looking at obviously AI and what AI brings, that in itself, as a reflection in just a couple of decades, is an extraordinary thing. It is something that we, I think, often do not take the time to step back and reflect on, and it is something that is vitally important for communities and societies. There have obviously been the changes to federal legislation around the use of technology and iPhones and smartphones and the way that our devices are used, and I think that as we, as members of Parliament, move through school groups and community groups we

get a real sense of how people feel when they are connected, when they are online, but that basic interaction of human connection, that ability to care for one another and be supported by each other is something that is very, very important. What we need to do – and it is where this legislation is primarily targeted – is make sure that when social media technology and our devices that I have talked about are used for harm, the government is responding.

Other members have mentioned a whole range of initiatives, programs and allocations from the budget that go to provisions for corrections and our changes to bail, which have been really well canvassed. What the Crimes Amendment (Performance Crime) Bill does is introduce a new offence into the Crimes Act 1958 that criminalises a person publishing material, like photos and videos, depicting their involvement in a serious offence. As has been mentioned, the offence will apply to a person who has been found guilty of specific crimes, including affray, burglary, aggravated burglary, robbery, armed robbery, car theft, home invasions and violent disorder, and a new offence will also capture anyone promoting or facilitating these crimes, including those who are complicit or incite the offending. Offenders will face an additional two years in jail, on top of penalties for the substantive physical offence that they are charged for. As mentioned, this builds upon the tough bail law reforms that we have introduced, the $1.6 billion in the 2025–26 budget that I mentioned earlier, those significant and important landmark anti-vilification and social cohesion reforms to protect Victorians from hate, the electronic monitoring trial systems that we have brought in and the landmark Youth Justice Act 2024.

What this goes to is providing for a range of changes that go to responding to community safety. As other members have done, I want to take the opportunity to thank the incredibly hardworking members of Victoria Police, those people who put themselves on the line each and every day to respond to very challenging circumstances within local communities but also do that really important outreach work that I think we as local members of Parliament get to see. I certainly take that as a great privilege to be able to talk with local members of the Sunbury police and local emergency service workers, who are doing wonderful work within communities, very challenging and tough work as well.

What we need to do each and every day that we have got the opportunity – and indeed it is a great privilege to be on this side of the house and to be in government – is make sure that we are working with and responding to local communities at a time when there is significant change underway. I go back to that significant change, because I think it is something that, in the high-paced environment we operate in, is not going to go away. If you look at investment, AI investment, the money that is being spent in places like San Francisco, Silicon Valley and throughout South-East Asia, if you look at all of the projections that go to technology, semiconductors, everything that goes into manufacturing components, AI generation and software, this is only going to accelerate. What that means is that we need to respond accordingly. But this comes down to people doing the right thing, people looking after each other within the community, and it comes down to making sure that we are providing appropriate and adequate responses to challenges that are within our community.

We know and understand that that is what each and every Victorian deserves, an opportunity to make sure that they can move about their daily lives and remain safe, that they can be their best to be able to look after their family, to be able to enjoy time with friends and to be able to enjoy all of the wonderful things that local communities and indeed this great state offer. What we need to do is make sure that we are working very, very hard to listen to our agencies, to understand the complexity and the changing dynamics of communities and to make sure that when those that want to do the wrong thing want to post and boast about it, we respond, and that is exactly what this piece of legislation will do. I want to take the opportunity, as I did at the start, to thank everyone who has played an important role in bringing this to the house. With those relatively short comments, I commend the bill to the house.

Cindy McLEISH (Eildon) (12:39): I too join the debate on the Crimes Amendment (Performance Crime) Bill 2025. I must say that I thought the title itself was quite interesting, calling it 'performance crime'. I was not exactly sure why that was chosen. But the term 'posting and boasting' is a new term, and we have all very quickly got to understand what it means. It is committing a crime and then posting

it on your social media and boasting about it. The boasting is the fact that you have posted it on social media, letting everybody know what you have done and drawing attention to you.

We certainly do need legislation that keeps up with changes to technology. Over the last decade or so technology has changed dramatically from what it might have been 20 years ago to what we have now, because access to technology is in everybody's pockets. It does not matter what background they come from; everybody seems to have some sort of smartphone that allows them to very quickly capture video of any situation and then post it and share it among their mates to really try and get themselves a little bit of a reputation. When somebody actually takes that footage, they are taking it for a reason, and then they are posting it on social media also for a reason. The thing that they might be doing that for is to enhance their own reputation – 'Look at me. Aren't I fabulous?' It can be seen to encourage other people to do the same to match them, or in fact even to outdo them. You can get a competition between different people within a group of trying to outdo each other with what they do and what they record, and then how they post it. It can be said that this glorifies criminal behaviour as they try and outdo each other. We have also got the other element here of the victims and the community. In each of these situations there is a victim, there is something that has happened to somebody, and the community feels less and less safe.

The bill itself is fairly short and sharp. It could be sharper. The government would argue it is short and strong, but it could be stronger. I think the government have probably not done enough work in this space and enough thinking about the sorts of things that should and should not be part of this bill. The purpose is fairly simple. The purpose is about creating the new offence in relation to the publication – this is the important thing – about the commission of certain offences. I want to just draw your attention to the intent which is outlined in the explanatory memorandum. There are probably three key points here. The first point is that the bill is intended to recognise that this conduct increases criminal culpability, and that it is intended to denounce and deter the publication of material drawing attention to offending. It also tries to acknowledge that the victims may experience further trauma from the publication of the material.

Just thinking for a moment of victims, we did have a situation earlier this year where an older gentleman was fishing on a pier and was pushed into the water, and it was all recorded, which was just horrible. That is not an offence that is picked up here at all. Think about that victim. That image was shown time and time again. It was posted, it was boasted about, it was talked about in other forms of social media and in general in the news. There was a person at the end of this, and that can be quite humiliating for that person, but it can also be very fearful for him and his friends and other people doing the same sorts of recreational activity. You are sitting there thinking you are doing something quite safe, but anything can happen if a group of delinquents or thugs comes along. I think it is important that this is outlined there, because it would give us a bit of an insight into what the government is intending to do.

The bill outlines pretty well what is a relevant offence. It has theft down – if the property stolen is a motor vehicle, not other forms – and robbery, armed robbery, burglary, aggravated burglary, home invasion, aggravated home invasion, carjacking, aggravated carjacking, affray, violent disorder, and incitement or attempt in relation to any of the above offences. There are a number of things that we think are missing here, which the Shadow Attorney-General has put forward to try and broaden it a little bit based on things that have been seen. I know that the government are a little bit unsure how to do this, because they are trying to say, 'Oh no, it is already covered.' I am not entirely sure that is the case.

What is sought to be added through the amendment been put forward by the Shadow Attorney-General is 'causing serious injury intentionally in circumstances of gross violence' and 'causing serious injury recklessly in circumstances of gross violence'. The amendment also includes assault, destroying or damaging property and dangerous driving. I think all of us in this place would have seen many, many examples of dangerous driving that has resulted in some pretty horrible outcomes where people have been killed or injured and there have been accidents, cars have flipped and damaged other stationary

vehicles, running red lights. There has been so much that has been documented and recorded not just through social media but also through dash cams and red-light cameras and things like that. We see a lot of these sorts of things, and I think it is important that the legislation does pick up the things that worry the community.

Another area that is concerning is around the definition of 'publishing' and what that actually means. It is all right for me to publish that and send it to a mate, but it is not all right for me to post that more generally. I am worried – and I know others on this side of the house are worried – that I know that I will get done if I publish something on social media, so I can send to one of my friends and say, 'Hey, listen, I can't do this, but how about you pop it up for me?' and that is okay. I do not think it would be the intent of the government to make that okay, but you have got to wonder about the definition of 'publishing' and why they have done it like that, because that makes no sense. We would look at that as a loophole: more than one other person publishing it. The amendment removes that loophole and makes it a lot tighter and stronger as a result.

One of the elements in the second-reading speech is communities having a right to feel safe. It is a clear comment in the second-reading speech. I can tell you right now that communities are not feeling safe. I think if this was a little bit stronger – it goes a little bit of the way, but it does not go all the way, because we have seen already that the bail laws have been weakened and weakened and then the government –

James Newbury interjected.

Cindy McLEISH: And delayed. The government tries to say, 'We've got really tough laws, we've got strong laws,' and they had to introduce legislation to strengthen them, but they were still weaker than they had previously been. We have put a number of amendments to this place and in fact policies around 'breach bail, face jail', because people are breaching bail and they are getting away with it in a whole lot of areas.

Communities should feel safe, and they are not feeling safe. They are not feeling safe knowing how quick and easy it is for their motor vehicles to be taken and how many instances there are of carjackings. I think it is so important that as technology changes legislation does keep up with it. But as the government tries to keep up with the legislation, they have got to make it so that you do in fact go back to that community safety lens. The government would like to be looking at this as a crime prevention measure because, as I said at the outset, posting it makes other people might want to outdo you or at least match what you have done. We need to prevent that, and if this is one element that can go to preventing some of this delinquent behaviour that we see more and more, that is not a bad thing. The opposition are not opposing this bill, but we do have amendments that we would like to see get up. I know the Greens are certainly opposing it for reasons sometimes that are a little bit beyond me.

We are also very keen to have these penalties where if you get a conviction, they are served on top of each other, that they are not concurrent, because too often somebody will get a sentence and it is like, 'Oh, you get six months additional, but you can serve it at the same time.' That is not on. We want to see that changed as well through our amendments.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (12:49): I rise to speak on the Crimes Amendment (Performance Crime) Bill 2025. I would like to make a number of comments about this bill. As the previous speaker, the member for Eildon, quite eloquently said, the community does not feel safe because the community is not safe. It is not just that they do not feel safe – they are not safe. When you look at this bill, which is intended to deal with post-and-boast issues, you can see as you look around Australia that this government has realised that it is behind the rest of the country when it comes to these types of very aggravated crimes. We have a crime problem, there is no doubt. I do not think anyone questions there being a crime problem. But what this bill tries to do is deal with the aggravated nature of some of these most vicious crimes that are not only occurring but people are then boasting about them afterwards,

they are posting on their social media with joy and with glee the damage they are causing people, the hurt they are causing people.

I know that the member for Eildon spoke about the incident of the poor man on the pier who could not swim and who was pushed off that pier; that video was shared many, many times, not just by the offender, which was obviously shocking, a shocking case, but then the media – rightly, to expose the damage of the weak laws – posted it again, completely understandably, to make the case. But the poor victim. I mean, you can just imagine what he went through knowing that everyone he knew would have seen that video. He would have known that almost every Victorian would have seen that video. Of course we understand the media was trying to make the point that we need action. But what I think it reinforced was that we did not have action in Victoria. We did not have protections. But more than that, what this bill does not do is help him. This bill at its core exhaustively lists the types of crimes that are captured by this bill; it specifically lists at proposed section 195U the crimes that are included – crimes like robbery, armed robbery, burglary, aggravated burglary, home invasion. You hear from the government that it should not be every single crime, it does not need to be every crime. But what has been forgotten is assault. Assault, you would argue, would probably be one of the most common causes of crime in relation to post and boast. When post and boast occurs, you would imagine that in many of the circumstances an assault has occurred. Not every case, but in many; I would argue that potentially even in most cases assault would have occurred – enough that it is wrong for it to not be in this bill.

I will acknowledge the Greens spoke before about a matter that I would like to raise and have spoken about in media interviews recently, the incidents of gay men, members of the rainbow community, who have been bashed – lured through social media and assaulted, to use the legal term that we were just speaking about. In fact since October last year 35 arrests have taken place where a young person, in most cases, has been lured and then attacked, assaulted – and that is not covered by this bill. How could it not be? We know that 35 arrests have occurred where gay people have been lured and bashed, and there has been a boasting on social media about that crime – and that crime is not covered by this bill. 'How could that be?', I say to the government. I have spoken directly to police about this issue, and they have said to me what they are hoping to do is work out a way, when that occurs, to use affray, which is listed in the bill – to somehow use affray to work around the loophole in the bill. Why should police on the job be trying to find a workaround because of a loophole in a bill?

The member for Malvern, the shadow Attorney, as he does with every bill, has looked at this closely and in this case developed a very, very strong set of amendments. I would say to the government: look at the member for Malvern's amendments, because they are very, very clever amendments. They enhance the bill. Clearly the Attorney does not have enough time to commit 100 per cent of her focus to the drafting of a good and proper bill, so use the amendments that the member for Malvern, on behalf of the coalition, has come up with. They include the inclusion of assault in the bill to ensure that the list is more robust, and things like causing serious injury intentionally in circumstances of gross violence – clearly the type of crime we know has occurred in relation to post and boast – and destroying or damaging property. The member has put forward a number of very important suggestions, just as he has also proposed the deletion of the one-person-sharing rule. Under this bill, if a criminal passes the video to another person and asks them to post it, they have not committed any offence. Straightaway they have got a loophole out of this bill. If you commit assault, we know that this bill is not going to touch you, and we know that if you share it one to one, guess what, you are out again. This bill is full of loopholes.

The third proposition put forward by the member for Malvern is to ensure that any penalty in relation to this crime is served differently than the core crime in and of itself. Why does that make sense? Of course it makes sense, and there will be arguments as to whether or not the judiciary should have capacity to consider these issues, but we know that when you post and boast you are committing an aggravating offence. You are not only in many cases hurting someone; you are then deciding to take a video and aggravate that crime by boasting about it on social media, so it only makes sense that that

different crime be dealt with differently and that a punishment be attached to that behaviour. That is the problem in this state: we do not have proper consequences for crimes, and that is why crimes are increasing.

We heard the government today talking about extending the implementation of the new bail bill they introduced this week and not operating it before the end of March next year. Imagine introducing a bill in July and saying, 'I'm not going to bring it in until April the year after.' What a joke. There must be some 15 sitting weeks until then, so we know that the bail bill is nothing more than a stunt. But the point I am trying to make is that we need to do more than introduce bills that do not fix problems. Though we are not opposing this bill, we are saying strongly to the government: consider the coalition's amendments. The member for Malvern has done a power of work, and the amendments he has proposed will not allow the loopholes that clearly exist and will ensure that consequences are delivered to the people who are committing these most aggravating crimes and that a message is sent out to those criminals that it is not good enough and they are going to be punished for their behaviour.

Paul MERCURIO (Hastings) (12:59): I rise to give my contribution on the Crimes Amendment (Performance Crime) Bill 2025, simply known as post and boast. I know I have probably got 40 seconds and there are quite a few different things I want to talk about. I am not sure if it is because I am a storyteller and a performer that I look at different things that come to us with a bit of humour and a bit of tragedy. Humour and tragedy in theatre are very close bedfellows, and sometimes I am not sure which is which, but I look at this bill – post and boast – and the slightly humorous side is that everyone in this chamber posts and boasts every day. We lead by example, and I find some kind of conflict in this idea that we are here to talk about the negativities. And I most certainly will talk about the negativities after lunch, which is coming.

Sitting suspended 1:01 pm until 2:02 pm.

Business interrupted under standing orders.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I would like to acknowledge in the gallery the Honourable Monica Gould, a former President of the Legislative Council, and Cr Jack Kowarzik, the mayor of Cardinia shire. Welcome, and welcome back.

Members

Minister for Government Services

Minister for Emergency Services

Absence

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:02): I wish to advise the house that for the purposes of question time today and tomorrow the Minister for Consumer Affairs will answer questions for the portfolio of government services, the Minister for Health will answer questions for the portfolios of women and prevention of family violence and I will answer questions for the portfolio of treaty and First Peoples. For the purposes of question time today, the Minister for Environment will answer questions for the portfolios of emergency services, natural disaster recovery and equality.

Questions without notice and ministers statements

Early childhood education and care

Brad BATTIN (Berwick – Leader of the Opposition) (14:03): My question is to the Premier. A training student at one of the childcare centres where alleged abuser Joshua Brown worked reported there were concerns to the regulator. Afterwards they said that:

> I feel sick … The department never followed up and when they called me they turned it around on me and asked why I didn't do anything.

Premier, what action did the Victorian government regulator take following this complaint?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:04): In thanking the Leader of the Opposition for his question, I wish to reiterate what I said to the house yesterday and have said previously: that the horrific allegations that we have seen reported by Victoria Police and are now being investigated have shocked and sickened all of us. I think it is important that we let Victoria Police do their important work. Building on that, we are taking further action that does involve the urgent review that is being undertaken, where, as I have said, if further changes need to be made, we will –

Bridget Vallence: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, the Premier is required to be direct and relevant. This is about the action the Victorian government department took in relation to a complaint, not in relation to a prospective review.

Mary-Anne Thomas: Deputy Speaker, on the point of order, there is no point of order. The Premier has been on her feet for just over 40 seconds. She is being directly responsive to the question. I ask that you rule the point of order out of order and let the Premier get on with answering the question.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I do not uphold the point of order. The Premier was referring to actions being taken.

Jacinta ALLAN: And on that point of taking action, I have been clear that if there is further action and further change that need to be made then we stand ready to make them to keep children safe. The question from the Leader of the Opposition went to –

Brad Battin interjected.

Jacinta ALLAN: Do you want me to answer your question?

Brad Battin: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, I know the Premier is outlining the things that they want to do in the future, including a review. This question, in relation to relevance, was very specific on what action was taken. If no action was taken, the Premier should admit that and just sit down.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I cannot instruct the Premier or ministers how to answer the question. The Premier was being relevant to the question asked.

Jacinta ALLAN: The question from the Leader of the Opposition, as I have understood the question, went to allegations that were made to the regulator. The question did not detail the substance of those allegations, and I think it is important that we do not present assumptions about allegations that may interfere with the work of Victoria Police in bringing justice for the families that are affected by these allegations of shocking abuse. Secondly, on the question asked by the Leader of the Opposition –

Bridget Vallence: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, on relevance, the complaint was made to the Department of Education, and I would ask you to ask the Premier to be relevant to the very narrow question.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Premier is being relevant to answering the question as before. The Premier to come back to the question.

Jacinta ALLAN: Again, in answering the second part of the question, I will go back to what I have said. I think it is important to remember that there may be many different matters brought before the authority responsible for the regulation of early childhood settings. There may be many different cases that are brought to that independent regulator, so it is important that we should not make assumptions. Secondly, too, in answering the question about the action taken, the regulator is empowered to take its actions as it sees fit in response to the evidence and the information that is presented to it. Again, as members of Parliament, we should not be cutting across the actions of those independent regulators. In terms of future work, I will say it again: it is clear that the system does need to be strengthened, and if changes need to be made they will be made to keep children safe.

Brad BATTIN (Berwick – Leader of the Opposition) (14:08): Premier, how can parents trust the government when whistleblowers are gaslit and treated as the problem while the regulator tasked with keeping children safe fails to take action?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:08): Again, I think it is important and incumbent upon all of us who have the opportunity to make public commentary and use platforms like the Parliament to address this serious issue to do so in a way that is factual, is based on evidence and does not cause further concern, because I understand that parents are concerned. I am concerned, which is why I have taken the urgent action that I have taken. There may be many reasons why a matter has been referred to the regulator for early childhood settings. We should not be casting assumptions, particularly when those assumptions are cast in the context of the horrific allegations that Victoria Police are investigating.

Ministers statements: economic policy

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:10): It was a great delight – a Turkish delight, you could say – to join the Minister for Economic Growth and Jobs and the member for Kororoit last week to open Mondelēz International's new world-class distribution centre in Truganina. It was most certainly impressive. It is the biggest distribution centre in the world for this company. It is twice the size of the MCG, and there were 17 levels of Cadbury's chocolates and lollies stacked up – enough snakes to wrap around the world 1½ times a year. I know he is not here, but I am going to borrow a line from the Minister for Economic Growth and Jobs. He said that we now know that the home of the Easter Bunny is officially in Truganina.

The sweetest part of this opening of the largest distribution centre in Mondelēz's company around the globe was not the chocolate, it was the jobs – more than 200 secure jobs. Ninety per cent of these new jobs are going to people who live in the western suburbs – 200 families with new opportunities right in the heart of Melbourne's west. That is what you get – a $130 million investment is what you get – when you have the economic settings right, and we have them right here in Victoria.

We are the state that is creating more jobs than any other state, building more homes and attracting new business investment. Our exports grew by a record $19.4 billion in the March quarter. We are working to lift the payroll tax free threshold, replace stamp duty on commercial property and cut business regulators. This is what you get – this investment and, importantly, these jobs – when you have the settings right.

education and care

Jess WILSON (Kew) (14:12): My question is to the Premier. A childcare centre where alleged childcare abuser Joshua Brown worked was on a high-risk watchlist in the months before he worked there. After Joshua Brown was employed, the centre was taken off the high-risk watchlist because it was compliant. Premier, why did the government take this centre off the high-risk watchlist?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:12): In answering the question from the member for Kew, I again say it is important that we speak to these matters based on evidence and fact and not assumption, and not cast assumptions that only –

Members interjecting.

Jacinta ALLAN: I remind the member for Kew, although I do feel that I perhaps do not need to remind the member for Kew, because I am sure she is well aware, that this is an independent regulator who regulates the early childhood setting. Of course it is –

Members interjecting.

Jacinta ALLAN: I will remind those opposite that government regulators are often found within government, and the work of those regulators, particularly in the early childhood setting, covers many, many centres across both the not-for-profit and the for-profit childcare settings. They work incredibly

hard across all of those settings. As for why there was a change in the decision made by the regulator, that is a matter for the regulator in terms of how they consider it. But I have acknowledged in terms of the broader issues here that the system does need to be strengthened, that there is more work that needs to be done and that work has been underway in these national profit and not-for-profit childcare and early childhood settings, which is why in Victoria we are not waiting for the national frameworks to be strengthened.

Bridget Vallence: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, the Premier is debating the question. This is a government department, and we would ask the Premier to come back to that very narrow question.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Premier was being relevant to the question.

Jacinta ALLAN: As I was saying, as these centres operate under the regulation that is enacted by the state, that sits in that national framework, we are not waiting for that national framework to be strengthened. It is why we have already moved to have the register of early childhood workers established in this state. It is why we are moving to ban personal devices. Again I will make it clear to the house: as a result of the urgent review that is being undertaken, if further changes need to be made, we stand ready to make them to keep children safe.

Bridget Vallence: Deputy Speaker, I renew the point of order that the Premier is debating the question. This is about why the centre was taken off the watchlist. I would ask you to ask the Premier to come back to that question.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Premier to come back to the question. The Premier has finished her answer.

Jess WILSON (Kew) (14:15): Does the Premier have full confidence in her government's childcare regulator?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:15): Taking all the politics and the different views, I can understand why the member for Kew has asked this question, because I know parents are asking this question. It is a deeply legitimate question. It is a challenging role of the –

Members interjecting.

Jacinta ALLAN: Because as a parent I have asked that question as well.

Members interjecting.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Serious questions should be listened to if you want to hear answers.

Jacinta ALLAN: Again, out of respect to the member for Kew's question, it is a legitimate question that many parents are asking and as members of Parliament we are asking as well. The work that the regulator is doing is in a very challenging environment across the profit and not-for-profit sectors. That is why we are having a review, and we will take the actions out of that review.

Ministers statements: bail laws

Sonya KILKENNY (Carrum – Attorney-General, Minister for Planning) (14:17): I am very pleased to update the house on how the Allan Labor government is keeping our community safe with Australia's toughest bail laws. Our position is crystal clear: community safety must come first and the rules must be respected.

In March we passed our first tranche of changes to strengthen our bail laws, and they have already sent a jolt right through the system. Remand numbers for adults and young offenders are up by more than 20 per cent and bail revocations are increasing. We have made it crystal clear to bail decision makers that community safety is the overarching principle in every bail decision. We have removed remand as a last resort for young offenders and we have introduced two bail offences, because there

must be consequences for people who do not respect the rules. If you commit another crime while already on bail, you will be charged with a further and separate offence and bail should be much harder to get again. We are making it harder for people to get bail for serious high-harm offences. People charged with armed robbery, aggravated burglary, home invasion, carjacking, serious arson, firearms and weapons offences, stealing a motor vehicle and endangering life will face tougher bail tests the first time around. Our laws are the toughest in the country as we continue to crack down on the crimes we know are driving fear, anger and distress in our communities, and we are listening to our communities and we are responding.

Community safety should also never be driven by profit, and nor should people be able to buy bail. That is why we have been clear: private unregistered companies must be banned from providing electronic monitoring services of people on bail. With more people held to account and more action taken when bail is breached, our government could not be clearer or firmer: the safety of all Victorians comes first.

Early childhood education and care

Brad BATTIN (Berwick – Leader of the Opposition) (14:19): My question is to the Premier. Premier, in 2022 a student on placement at a childcare centre where alleged childcare abuser Joshua Brown worked reported serious supervision failures to the government, including educators being left alone with over 20 children. In fact four of the six days on which Joshua Brown is charged with abusing children were after the complaint was made. Why did your government fail to take action –

Jacinta Allan interjected.

Brad BATTIN: Why did you fail to take action when this warning was raised –

Members interjecting.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Members at the table, through the Chair, please. Leader of the Opposition, repeat your question.

Brad BATTIN: Why did your government fail to take action when this warning was raised, at the very time this man was allegedly abusing children at the same centre?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:20): I do appreciate that, based on my advice, the Leader of the Opposition rephrased his question, because –

Members interjecting.

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

Member for Yan Yean withdrew from chamber.

Jacinta ALLAN: I will not be reckless, like the Leader of the Opposition is in his commentary. I will not be reckless like the Leader of the Opposition has been in his commentary, because there are serious, horrific abuse allegations that Victoria Police is currently investigating, and we should let Victoria Police do this work without jeopardising its case and bring justice to these families. The Leader of the Opposition refers to allegations that were allegedly made to the regulator back in 2022. Given that the Leader of the Opposition has a habit of concealing information from his own colleagues, I think the Leader of the Opposition will understand that I will not take on face value –

Bridget Vallence: Deputy Speaker, I hate to raise this point of order on such a serious matter. The Premier herself has outlined how serious the matter is, yet the Premier is using the opportunity to attack the opposition in this very serious question. Parents and children deserve an answer, and we would ask, on relevance, for the Premier to come back to that.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I ask the Premier to continue on the question.

Jacinta ALLAN: The Leader of the Opposition made claims about matters that were raised in 2022, so we can assume three or so years ago. I will go and seek advice on those matters because it is important that any response is a response based on fact and evidence, not assumption or hearsay, because I will do nothing to jeopardise the good work of Victoria Police in investigating these horrific allegations.

Brad BATTIN (Berwick – Leader of the Opposition) (14:23): Given the alleged abuse of children that has occurred under the Minister for Children's watch, why does the Premier continue to have full confidence in her?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:23): I make it absolutely clear to the Leader of the Opposition: I have full confidence in the Minister for Children. There is no-one who works harder.

Members interjecting.

Jacinta ALLAN: I will tell you why, and I hope you ask for an extension of time so I can tell you why. I will say that the Minister for Children is so deeply committed in one of the most difficult portfolio areas of government, and anyone who has served in the child protection portfolio knows just how important and challenging and difficult the work of that minister is. Lizzie Blandthorn, the minister in the other place, is of the highest quality with significant intellect and commitment to this task. And I say this: we have called the urgent review, we will implement the recommendations of this review and Minister Blandthorn will be responsible for it.

Ministers statements: major events

Steve DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh – Minister for Environment, Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, Minister for Outdoor Recreation) (14:24): We on this side of the house know Victoria is the best place to live and visit. We do not talk down the only city in the world to have a grand prix, a grand slam and, from next year, because of this Premier, regular season NFL matches. Let us take a minute to reflect on what happened just this weekend gone. On Saturday you could walk down to Marvel Stadium and watch Jeremy Cameron kick 11 in a dominant performance against the Deputy Premier's team. On Sunday those present witnessed the greatest comeback in AFL history when St Kilda stormed home to defeat Melbourne. Or you could head down to the Regent Theatre and watch the Australian exclusive of *Beetlejuice the Musical* right here in Collins Street. Or you could join 90,000 other people and watch the British and Irish Lions tour of Australia, with its most important match right here in Melbourne.

It is important to take a moment to note what this investment was worth. Forty thousand people from the UK came to Victoria. Hotel occupancy rates were the biggest they had been since the F1. Accor Hotels, who have many properties in Melbourne, say, 'massive year-on-year increase and another great example of the importance of events for the hotel sector'. Bars and pubs saw a 94 per cent increase on the week before in sales – 94 per cent in one week in uplift in spend. The Wellington pub, right here in the CBD, said it has been one of the busiest weeks on record in Melbourne in Victoria. But these visitors do not just stay in Melbourne, as the members for Eureka, Wendouree and Ripon know. They met some of those international visitors at Sovereign Hill. They go out and explore the regions. The Bendigo Art Gallery just finished the Frida Kahlo exhibition – 100,000 people through the doors – and of course Lenny Kravitz will sing a personal tribute to the member for Mildura later this year. Under this Premier, Victoria remains the cultural power of this country.

State Electricity Commission

Darren CHEESEMAN (South Barwon) (14:26): My question is to the Premier. Why is the re-establishment of the State Electricity Commission great for regional jobs, and will it lower the costs of energy bills for everyday Victorians?

Members interjecting.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I could not hear the end of that question, member for South Barwon. The member for South Barwon without assistance.

Darren CHEESEMAN: My question is to the Premier. Why is the re-establishment of the State Electricity Commission great for regional jobs, and will it lower the costs of energy bills for everyday Victorians?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:28): I can say very clearly that the SEC is back, and the only reason why we can talk about the SEC being back –

James Newbury interjected.

Jacinta ALLAN: We all know what the member for Brighton has been up to.

Emma Kealy: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, the independent member for South Barwon in his Dorothy Dixer appears to have asked two questions, which I believe is against the standing orders.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I have only got one that I can see here. The Premier was answering it.

Jacinta ALLAN: I appreciate the assistance of the Minister for the SEC. I have got a bit of information in front of me to now share with the member for South Barwon on how the SEC is back and it is driving our investment in renewable energy that is about securing our state's future. But you cannot talk about our state's future without giving the Deputy Premier and me a moment to reflect on how we got here, because we are the children of fathers who lost their jobs because the SEC was privatised by the former Liberal–National government.

Wayne Farnham: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, on relevance, it is not an opportunity to mislead Victorians. Joan Kirner privatised the SEC; we all know it.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I am fairly sure the member for Narracan knows that is not a point of order. I ask him to behave on the standing orders that he knows so well.

Jacinta ALLAN: The member for Narracan represents part of that great Gippsland community that was devastated by the impacts of privatisation. I admire the member for Narracan in other forms. We all admire his apparent life-saving efforts over the last few weeks, but the member for Narracan and his colleagues are just flat out wrong.

Paul Edbrooke interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Frankston – 30 minutes.

Member for Frankston withdrew from chamber.

Jacinta ALLAN: The Kennett Liberal–National government privatised the SEC, and the Labor government is bringing it back. Not only are we bringing it back, but it is well and truly back. There have been the investments in the Melbourne renewable energy hub, a fantastic project, but also I know the member for Lowan is pretty fond of the Horsham renewable energy park, because she turned up the day the minister and I were there. To be fair to the member for Lowan, she did turn up, but she was not really a fan of what we are announcing, because what we were announcing was investment in renewable energy – investment in jobs in Horsham – and that is what goes to the heart of the SEC. It is driving our renewable energy future and it is driving jobs. For those of us who are so proud to represent regional and rural Victoria, the SEC is driving our renewable energy future and it is driving our economic future because it means jobs, and behind each one of those jobs is a worker and a family who is relying on that work.

Darren CHEESEMAN (South Barwon) (14:32): My question of course is to the Premier. Will you rule out selling the SEC?

Members interjecting.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Warrandyte – 30 minutes.

Member for Warrandyte withdrew from chamber.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: If I cannot hear a member on their feet, I am sure others cannot hear down this end.

Richard Riordan interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Polwarth, see ya – 30 minutes.

Member for Polwarth withdrew from chamber.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for South Barwon, please repeat your question, in silence. We will be struggling for a quorum soon.

Darren CHEESEMAN: My question of course is to the Premier. Will you rule out selling the SEC?

Tim Richardson interjected.

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:33): You are stealing my lines, member for Mordialloc, in anticipation. Who said this: 'The SEC is gone if we win'? Who said this? The Leader of the Opposition. Therefore, in answering the member for South Barwon's question, the contrast could not be clearer – those who want to go back to the future, jump in the DeLorean, go back to the 1990s and sell off Victoria's renewable energy future. Only Labor is committed to the SEC. Only Labor is driving the investment in the SEC and only Labor is driving the investment in those jobs for those workers and those families who need a government that is on their side, that is backing them in every day, not going to cut the knees from under them and their family's future, like the Leader of the Opposition would.

Ministers statements: Metro Tunnel

Gabrielle WILLIAMS (Dandenong – Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for Public and Active Transport) (14:34): I rise to update the house on just a few of the many reasons it is so very easy to talk up the great state of Victoria. On Sunday the Premier and I headed down to the newly renovated Campbell Arcade to announce that it will be reopening to the community this week. The Minister for Tourism and Sport will be pleased to know that Degraves Street was pumping following the rugby earlier that weekend. The arcade, people may know, was first opened in 1955 in the lead-up to the 1956 Melbourne Olympic Games, and since 2022 we have been restoring this pink-faced beauty, replacing the ceiling, upgrading the lighting and preserving those heritage features that make the arcade so very iconic – the pink-tiled shopfronts and of course those beautiful curved walls as well. This work was made possible because of the Metro Tunnel project. Campbell Arcade will be a key access point for those travelling into and out of Melbourne, connecting Flinders Street to the brand new Town Hall station.

You cannot talk up how great Victoria is at the moment without talking about the Metro Tunnel project. It will open later this year. It will take the three busiest lines out of the city loop, freeing up capacity for more services right across our rail network – a futureproofing project that those opposite cut because they were always too busy looking in the rear-view mirror. Not only did they cut the Metro Tunnel when they had a chance to build it, but earlier this year they also opposed the extra services that it enables. On this side of the house we have spent the last decade investing in rail projects and making our state better, so far removing 87 level crossings and upgrading every regional rail line. Building for the future takes courage and vision, and we have that on this side of the chamber in spades. The Liberals cut and closed, and they short-changed Victoria when they could have been investing every single day at every single opportunity. You cannot trust them.

Government performance

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (14:37): My question is to the Premier. The government claims its energy and transmission line policies are about fairness. Regional Victorians face crumbling roads, a massive new emergency services tax, cuts to the CFA and SES, merged hospitals and spiralling energy bills. Now they have to protest on the steps of Parliament to defend their own property rights. How is this fair?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:37): Well, let me tell the Leader of the National Party just how wrong he is on each of those measures that he has provided to the house – let me tell him how wrong. This year's budget invested $976 million – the highest amount invested in regional road maintenance, matching last year's investment –

Danny O'Brien: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, on the question of debating, I just want the Premier to say publicly that our roads are not crumbling.

Members interjecting.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Mordialloc, warned. That was not quite a point of order. The Premier is being relevant to the question.

Jacinta ALLAN: I was asked about roads – two years in a row, nearly $2 billion of investment in road maintenance. In terms of investment in our emergency services, what is not fair are the lies that are being told to regional communities by those opposite. Every dollar raised through the existing levy is going back into our emergency services, which means we are investing more, not less – more trucks, more equipment for our emergency services. On the reference to hospitals, I remember a time when we were talking about hospitals being closed by those opposite – 12 country hospitals that were closed by those opposite. There has been more money going into hospitals in rural and regional Victoria. There is work underway in Ballarat, there is work underway in Warrnambool, there is the new hospital in Maryborough and there is the work going on in Swan Hill as well, just to name a few of the investments that we are making in health and hospitals in rural and regional Victoria.

Members interjecting.

Jacinta ALLAN: The Leader of the National Party asks me to come back to that bit of the question where he asked about energy bills. I will tell this to the Leader of the National Party: here in Victoria we have the lowest energy prices in the wholesale market. The default offer here in Victoria –

Members interjecting.

Jacinta ALLAN: On each of the issues that was raised by the Leader of the National Party, I have demonstrated how Labor is investing, and the contrast could not be clearer on two measures. When those opposite had the opportunity, they cut funding to road maintenance, they closed country hospitals and they cut funding to the CFA.

Danny O'Brien: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, on the question of relevance, the Premier still has not got to the part about regional Victorians having to defend their own property rights on the steps of Parliament.

Members interjecting.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Tarneit – 30 minutes, again.

Member for Tarneit withdrew from chamber.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Premier was being relevant to the question asked, and I cannot dictate to a minister or Premier how to answer the question, as you know.

Jacinta ALLAN: On the second point I was going to make, what is not fair for rural and regional communities are the misinformation and the lies that continue to be peddled by the National Party in

concert with the Liberal Party. But we know that that is their form, and what country people also know is that Labor governments reopen train lines, build country hospitals and schools and invest in the future of country communities that were abandoned and cut when the Liberal–National parties had the privilege of being in government.

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (14:42): Labor MPs are now seeking to have their communities shielded from Labor's flawed energy policies. When will the Premier admit her government has got it wrong and begin treating regional Victorians with respect?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:42): I am going to take a punt: I do not think the former Leader of the National Party would have asked that question. I do not reckon he would have asked that question, because he would know that I would answer it in the following terms. Who remembers who called regional Victoria the toenails of the state?

Members interjecting.

Jacinta ALLAN: They get defensive. I say this: country Victorians have seen this not once but twice in the last couple of decades. Every time the Liberal and National parties have the privilege of being in government, it is regional Victorians that suffer from cuts and closures.

Danny O'Brien: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, on the question of relevance, the question was about the government's current policies. I ask you to bring her back to it.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question was about regional Victorians, and the Premier was being relevant to the question.

Jacinta ALLAN: This is what respect looks like. Respect looks like a young 16-year-old in Maryborough who next year will be able to catch the train for free because we have made public transport free for kids under 18 and we opened the train line to Maryborough that was closed by those opposite.

Ministers statements: NAPLAN results

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Minister for Education, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC) (14:44): I rise to update the house on Victoria's incredible NAPLAN results for 2025. I am proud to report that Victoria not only had the best result in the country, we had the best result in our history. Last year we were first or second on 11 out of 20 NAPLAN measures; this year we are 18 out of 20. Let us drill down on the data. Which state for writing was the best in years 5, 7 and 9? Victoria. Which state was the best for numeracy in years 3, 5 and 9? Victoria. For years 3 and 5 grammar and punctuation, which state was the best? Victoria. For year 3 reading, which state was the best? Victoria. This is what happens when you make record investment in funding. These results are no accident. These results are $38 billion, a long track record of investment by a Labor government and a dual focus on equity and access in every classroom right across our state.

We say to the hungry, thirsty student out there that Jacinta Allan and Labor have your back through our school breakfast program. For the child who is struggling because they cannot see the whiteboard, we have our free kids glasses program. For the child that is in pain because they need a dentist, we have our Smile Squad program. On our side of the house we know the value of every teacher, of every parent and of every student in our state. We know on this side of the chamber education is not just a nice thing to do, it is the single most important public investment in our future. When they were last in office we fell a third in our NAPLAN data; we went backwards. We also had a billion dollars cut out of education. When it comes to education, Jacinta Allan and Labor have your back.

Constituency questions

Caulfield electorate

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (14:47): (1200) My question is to the Minister for Education, and I note the Minister for Education spoke about the importance of access to school. When it comes to access to schools, every kid deserves access to schools, and that includes kids with a disability. Selena, a student at Caulfield Junior College, lives with a disability that prevents her from accessing key areas of the school. Her mother Natalie has tirelessly advocated for a lift at the school. This child Selena has to wait and cannot access key elements of the classrooms, of the library, and she does not have the accessibility that other kids have. This is an important issue. Despite raising it three times, including back in March 2024, the minister has done nothing. The only option that we have been given is attaching a chair to a 100-year-old staircase. We need a lift, and when will the minister provide one?

Mulgrave electorate

Eden FOSTER (Mulgrave) (14:48): (1201) My constituency question is to the Minister for Planning. What work is being done to create more diverse and affordable housing in Springvale? The Allan Labor government has been relentless in fighting for more affordable housing in Victoria, and I was fortunate late last year to have the minister and the Premier in my electorate of Mulgrave to share news of the exciting launch of even more train and tram zones, building more homes for young people, families and downsizers where people want to live, the place where I grew up. As part of this announcement, Noble Park and Springvale were successful in becoming selected as part of the program. These changes will open doors to so many and complement the suite of housing policies that this government has, including land releases, stamp duty discounts and working with the Commonwealth government on the Housing Australia Future Fund. I am proud to be part of a government which continues to fight for housing affordability.

Shepparton electorate

Kim O'KEEFFE (Shepparton) (14:49): (1202) My question is to the Minister for Police. The information that I seek is: what is being done to address the significant police shortages currently impacted by the rise in family violence at the Shepparton station? I recently met with Superintendent Brett Kahan, who raised his concerns, with an alarming 31 per cent increase of family violence incidents, which he said is significantly impacting on local policing resources, with an astounding 75 per cent of Shepparton police officers' time taken up attending to family violence incidents and the follow-up requirements. This means that there are not enough police to attend to other policing matters in the community when needed. This is putting enormous pressure on our police and impacting on community safety.

Yan Yean electorate

Lauren KATHAGE (Yan Yean) (14:49): (1203) My question is for the Minister for Government Services. We are really excited that soon we will have additional reception in Donnybrook thanks to a partnership the government has entered into with Telstra to provide additional services there. Minister, when I shared news with my community that those services will soon be switched on and reception improved in Donnybrook, I was overwhelmed to hear feedback from community members on reception in Mernda, including from Natasha, who contacted me to say:

> I work from home, and clients get really angry, as it cuts out or they can't hear properly.

Minister, I know we have got two more partnerships for towers coming in Mernda, but I ask: when will they be switched on so that people in Mernda have improved phone reception?

Sandringham electorate

Brad ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (14:50): (1204) My constituency question is to the Minister for Education, and I ask: when will the government finally commit to delivering the school upgrades

my local community deserves? For too long the government has relied on its planned maintenance program to provide limited support to local schools, offering small grants that in my view fail to address the real and long-term infrastructure needs that our local schools require. Sandringham College is still waiting on stage 2 of its master plan to be delivered. Beaumaris Primary School is urgently in need of fit-for-purpose toilet upgrades and a new multipurpose gym. Beaumaris North Primary School needs a dedicated space for sport and performing arts, and what a great tribute to retiring principal Sherril Duffy a commitment from the government to deliver that would be. These are just a few of the projects in my electorate that need urgent funding, and I urge the minister to seriously consider this request.

Bass electorate

Jordan CRUGNALE (Bass) (14:51): (1205) My question is to the Minister for Health. How will the community pharmacist program expansion benefit my Bass electorate community members seeking medical assistance? The news of our $18 million investment to make this program permanent has been well received, as it speaks to the professional care experienced, convenient access and range of treatments offered. In Bass we are fortunate to have so many participating pharmacies: Terry White pharmacies in Cowes and Inverloch; discount pharmacies in Koo Wee Rup and Pearcedale; the Miners' Dispensary and Amcal, both in Wonthaggi; San Remo and Lang Lang; and Tooradin pharmacy, where I recently caught up with guild representative Brendan Green. I want to thank him and all our local pharmacists for their time, continued advocacy and participation with this program. They have showcased the benefits and spoken to the uptake of the pilot program. This now permanent program stands alongside the Victorian virtual ED and nurse-on-call services, which are helping so many, especially in our region. I look forward to the minister's response.

Melbourne electorate

Ellen SANDELL (Melbourne) (14:52): (1206) My question is to the Minister for Housing. Labor is demolishing all 44 high-rise public housing towers across the state, including several in my electorate. Residents who are relocated are promised that they have the right to return once new housing is built. My question is: is this just a false promise from this Labor government that will never be delivered? I ask this because I have several examples in my own electorate from previous public housing demolitions where residents have been promised the right of return, but when they try they are told it is not possible. In March I wrote to the housing minister about a family of five – two parents with three children who are now young adults. Their public homes in North Melbourne were redeveloped seven years ago. They are eligible to return to a four-bedroom apartment, but all they were offered were two two-bedroom units on different floors, because no four-bedroom units were ever built on this estate. So the children would have to live in one apartment and the parents in another one two floors down. This is a ridiculous situation, and I think the government well knows the thousands of families who are currently being displaced will never actually be able to return to these estates.

Glen Waverley electorate

John MULLAHY (Glen Waverley) (14:53): (1207) My question is to the Deputy Premier and Minister for Education. How is the Victorian Labor government supporting infrastructure investment in my community, particularly in high-demand education precincts like Glen Waverley? Glen Waverley is experiencing rapid growth, driven in part by our outstanding local public schools such as Glen Waverley Secondary College. Glenny consistently ranks among Victoria's top public schools. In 2024 it again ranked in the top 10, a continued trend in academic excellence. This success reflects the leadership of principal Suzanne Plant, her dedicated team and the committed school council. The school's 2022–26 strategic plan prioritises modernising facilities to support contemporary learning. However, with no new facilities delivered in the past 15 years the school has had to install portable classrooms on the edge of its oval to accommodate enrolment growth. At a recent school council meeting infrastructure needs were raised as a major concern. With enrolments currently at 2410 and

projected to be more than 2500 next year, it is clear that Glen Waverley Secondary College needs further support.

Rowville electorate

Kim WELLS (Rowville) (14:54): (1208) My question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. When will the minister and the Department of Transport and Planning fix the disturbing and cruel kangaroo deaths currently occurring along Wellington Road in Lysterfield and Rowville? The kangaroo carnage is causing immense distress among the local Rowville–Lysterfield community from an animal welfare, road safety and motor vehicle damage perspective. According to Sue Johnston of Sue's Roos Kangaroo Rescue, up until last Thursday 24 July there have been 73 recorded kangaroo deaths, or three kangaroo deaths per day, for the month of July, and over 160 kangaroos have been killed on Wellington Road since January. Wellington Road cuts directly through important kangaroo habitat between the main body of Lysterfield Park and its northern extension. The main area of concern runs 5 kilometres from the Wellington–Lysterfield roads intersection through to Gearon Avenue in Rowville.

Kororoit electorate

Luba GRIGOROVITCH (Kororoit) (14:55): (1209) My question is for the Minister for Carers and Volunteers, and I want to start by welcoming my local Rotary club, the Caroline Springs Rotary Club, here today. I want to ask the minister: how is the Victorian government supporting service organisations to continue their work and foster stronger, more connected communities across Kororoit? Community service organisations across Victoria have long played a vital role in strengthening our communities through service, leadership and civic engagement. In my own electorate of Kororoit these organisations provide essential support through local projects, youth programs and charitable initiatives that make a real difference in people's lives. I have seen firsthand the incredible impact that these groups have at the grassroots level. It is truly a privilege to welcome representatives of the Caroline Springs Rotary to Parliament today and to also acknowledge their ongoing commitment and support to our communities. Thank you to the Caroline Springs Rotary for all of the work that you do. And again, welcome to Parliament House.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I remind members not to acknowledge the gallery, and as I do not know who is in the gallery, we will leave it there.

Will Fowles: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, on some overdue questions, if I can, please: for the Minister for Transport Infrastructure, questions 2413, 2496, 2497, 2498, 2499 and 2500; for the Treasurer, 2454; for the Minister for Emergency Services, 2473 and 2501; for the Minister for Finance, 2481 and 2482; for the Minister for Mental Health, 2483; for the Minister for Housing and Building, 2484, 2485, 2486, 2487, 2488, 2589, 2490 and 2491; and for the Minister for Industry and Advanced Manufacturing, 2492, 2493, 2494 and 2495. Deputy Speaker, I would be grateful if you could pass those on and perhaps also share with the house what the consequences of not answering questions are other than being reminded yet again to answer questions.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Can you give the list to the Clerk, and you are welcome to come and see me outside the chamber to discuss any matter.

Annabelle Cleeland: I would also like to raise a point of order about the response times from ministers, and they are getting quite extensive. These are really important to my community. I currently have 13 overdue questions on notice, and I am awaiting responses from the ministers for government services, roads and road safety, children, veterans, public and active transport, health, emergency services and environment. My oldest question is 76 days old now. I must note we have just had an extensive winter break, so I hope the ministers enjoyed their holiday and I hope they return to work. The questions needing answering are 2415, 2416, 2417, 2418, 2456, 2457, 2463, 2464, 2472, 2502, 2503, 2510 and 2511, and my community certainly looks forward to the ministers doing their job.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Please give the list to the Clerk.

Bills

Crimes Amendment (Performance Crime) Bill 2025

Second reading

Debate resumed.

Paul MERCURIO (Hastings) (14:59): It is good to be back after lunch and to continue on with whatever it was I had begun to say. What I did start talking about was the irony that this bill is about post and boast. Obviously there are some tragic consequences and there is some real negativity about it. But we are leaders by example, and we post and boast about ourselves every day. The irony of that is pretty interesting. I do not mind when I post and boast, because I use it to talk about community benefits. I use it to talk about how we can help people with power saving bonuses, discounts for veterans, school saving bonuses, school breakfast clubs and the like. When I post and boast it is talking to my community about where they can get the assistance they need, such as free pharmacy care, free dental for kids, free glasses for kids, free school breakfasts, discounted school uniforms, priority primary care centres and the like.

These are really important things, and using social media in all its forms in this way is absolutely fantastic, because people will not necessarily know what they can do. Unfortunately, they do not tune into Hansard, for which I do not really blame them. But they can come on to my socials and indeed our socials and listen to us post and boast about free secondary school degrees, free nursing and midwifery degrees, free urgent care clinics, free rego for Victorian apprenticeships, free PT for under-18s, helping more people get into first homes, capping council rates and more security for renters. There is lots of great news out there, and I think that is a really good thing for us to remember.

I have boasted a little bit on a few things that the Labor government is doing for our community and the hard work that each of us – and I include everyone in the chamber – does for our community, which is really important. But there is the negative side of social media. I would certainly love to get off social media if I could. I get a sense of anxiety when I wake up in the morning and look at who is saying what on Facebook, and whilst 95 per cent of it is pretty positive, there is the other side of it. People choose to weaponise it and only say negative things.

I started talking before lunch about the relationship between humour and tragedy when we tell our stories, and I am looking at this slightly humorous side of how we post and boast. But the tragic side is having to bring in a law like this to stop people denigrating other people, to stop people harming other people. We need to bring in a law like this, but people should know better. I do not understand why generally young people, but not always young people, think posting and boasting on social media is a good idea. They obviously think it is fun. I cannot see how it is fun. It is tragic. The consequences are tragic. I think about a lot of people that I have met that were career criminals in their younger days, and they came to the realisation that they wanted to be part of a group. They wanted to run with a team. They wanted support; they wanted likes. They wanted to belong to some sort of family, and unfortunately that family had criminal history and implications. But as they got older they realised that it was not fun, that doing things just to get likes was pretty pointless. I wonder too if they realised how stupid they were, and I have got to say people posting and boasting are gloriously stupid, because at the end of the day they are just giving the police all the evidence they need. They do not have to do all that work and can just take them into the courts. They will get charged, go through the court system and hopefully be dealt with.

Do we actually need post-and-boast laws? I think it is a great idea because I love the idea that someone who is so stupid as to post and boast about their criminal activity will get caught, get charged and go to jail for it and then get another two years on top because they were so stupid as to post what they were doing. I just love the irony in that. Shakespeare would be rolling over in his grave and wanting to write a whole play about that. I do not know how it works. But the other side of it is: will post-and-boast laws stop crimes being committed? Sadly, no. That is another thing. We can talk about

prevention, and that is one of the things that I think this Labor government is doing really well. The idea of this reform is just one part of a broader effort to keep Victorians safe, but it is also about trying to prevent these things. How can we do that? New bail laws to deal with repeat offenders – we can do that. But we can also help people get away from wanting to join these sorts of organisations. We can do this, and we can do it hopefully through free TAFE; free public transport, so that people can get around so they are not stuck in bad areas; as well as affordable health care, so that if people need that help they can get it rather than act up and play up; assistance in school camps, sports and excursions; and help with rising household bills and groceries. All of these things are there to help people and prevent them, one would hope, from going down the path of getting into criminal activity, and I think that is a really important thing.

A lot of talk from the opposition has mentioned the young kid that pushed the old man off the pier in Mornington. I just went online at lunchtime, and that footage is still up on the news. It is horrific. It is terrible. I do not know how anyone can be so callous and cruel and basically not care about someone else's health or wellbeing, whether it be their physical wellbeing or their mental health and wellbeing. I also want to point out that there has been a lot of uproar from the other side about that, but that kid was 14. He was charged, he went to court, he was dealt with. Do we want someone like that, doing a stupid act, going to jail for two years? No, because we are talking about trying to keep people out of that system, which is going to make them hardened. They are going to come out of that system, and they are going to have more friends who want to post and boast and talk about all this stuff. They are going to come out and go, 'Well, I'm going to become more famous now and do more of that stuff.' We do not want those kids in prison. This post and boast does not cover that situation, and I think it is fair enough that they get caught and they get treated and they are dealt with appropriately.

There is one thing I just want to talk about quickly as we run out of time. To those thinking about filming crime for likes, know this: you will face serious consequences. This is not just a matter of bad taste, it is a crime. I find it difficult that people are doing this for fame. I would like to think I know a little bit about fame. It is a pretty vacuous thing. People would ask me a lot of times how I felt about being famous, and I would say, 'Well, you know, I would go to the film festival and I would be photographed and people would scream at me and I would do autographs,' although this was quite a few years ago. I would then go to the event, I might present and then go to the party and hobnob with everyone. But then at the end I would go out the back entrance and catch the train home.

People see it as they want, but the fact is this: if you post and boast because you think you are going to get fame, you are a stupid person, because you have just posted your criminal activity and you will be sitting in jail for five, 10, 15 years, plus two years for posting, and no-one will remember you. There is no such thing as fame in that sense. So do not destroy your life by being stupid. I think this is a good bill. It is not going to solve all the issues with crime, but I think hopefully it might get people to think a little bit more about what they are doing. I commend the bill to the house.

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (15:08): I am more than happy to make a contribution to the Crimes Amendment (Performance Crime) Bill 2025, or as it has become known, the post-and-boast bill. This is something that I have worked on at length since it became a real issue in the electorate of Mildura. The Leader of the Opposition has visited Mildura a couple of times based on the issues that we have had in our electorate, where the posting of crimes, usually crimes committed by young people, have been circulated on different social media platforms, predominantly Snapchat. But we know once it is out there on the old internet it spreads very, very quickly and ends up everywhere. And I agree with the member for Hastings that if you are posting these videos for fame, it is incredibly stupid.

It used to be that you would worry where cameras are. Well, cameras are everywhere now and people film everything, so why would you post your own evidence against you? I will tell you why they do, and it is because these young people in particular know that not only are there no consequences for the crimes that they are committing – they might get a slap on the wrist, if that – but they can post it, they can get away with it and they get huge amounts of likes, they get shares and they get no consequences in the youth justice system. That is why they do it. Will this bill stop that? No. Some of the videos that

I have seen locally include numerous public places that children frequent. I saw one yesterday where the two children involved were eight and 11. I have a 10- and a seven-year-old. I can tell you that if I saw one of my children having that sort of act committed upon them it would be my wrath they would have to face because there are no consequences, especially when it gets posted on Snapchat for everyone to see and then ends up on Instagram and can sometimes end up on the nightly news.

About 18 months ago there was another incident where this happened. They were teenagers in this case, but the PTSD that was suffered by the victim in that crime is still there. There is still the fear of going into these public places now because those that committed the crime have faced absolutely zero consequences. Guess what the crimes committed were – assault. Guess what is not included in this bill – assault, which just makes the mind boggle. And we see this all the time. The news channels have featured this numerous times, and the videos that are most predominant in this area are kids beating up other kids – it is assault, so why on earth is that not covered in this bill? We support the Shadow Attorney-General in his amendments, which would add the following offences to the list of relevant offences: causing serious injury intentionally in circumstances of gross violence, causing serious injury recklessly in circumstances of gross violence, assault, destroying or damaging property and under the Road Safety Act 1986 dangerous driving. People hooning in their cars are not included in this bill when that conduct is in the videos that I have seen and that community members have presented to me. Assault and hoon driving is the content that gets the shares, and that is why they get posted, so why on earth they have not been included in this bill is beyond me.

I want to talk about again – I bring this up every chance I get in this chamber, and it seems like it is on a weekly basis recently – the police that work incredibly hard to arrest some of the offenders. They call it a rinse-and-repeat style of justice because they will arrest the offenders, because they know who they are, especially in small regional towns; often it is very, very small groups of repeat offenders that know that there are no consequences for their actions. But you have police members who are run off their feet doing this kind of stuff. It is a rinse and repeat: they come in through the station, out through justice and they are back out on the street in 24 hours. Those offenders, let me remind you, are then offered every support service that they can possibly be offered – mind you, I have had a couple of police members say that when you lift that veil there is nothing there. I have had contact in the last week that the western region health and wellbeing hub, which has had mental health clinicians embedded within Victoria Police stations – this has only been there for 12 months – has been defunded. For any of that mental health support that was supposed to help with WorkCover claims – these were the reasons that it was implemented in the first place: return to work, WorkCover claims, mental health support – there was a recognition initially that these health and wellbeing hubs would be able to support Victoria Police members, both sworn and unsworn, with the mental health support that they needed after having to deal with crimes such as these, like I said, sometimes with children as young as eight years old, sometimes younger than that.

That support has been ripped out over the winter break, and it is absolutely disgusting. How on earth can we offer all of the support services to these offenders that are causing the trauma and the PTSD and causing Victoria Police members to need that mental health support? It has been there for 12 months, and not only was it recommended in the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System, it was also covered off in a Victoria Police review in 2018 and an IBAC and a Victorian Ombudsman report before that. So three different reports and reviews have recommended embedded mental health clinicians in Victoria Police stations, particularly in the regions. It gets implemented for 12 months so they can tick that box, and all of a sudden, with six weeks notice, the mental health clinicians and the injury management consultants that have been employed and embedded into those stations are now out of a job. There are 20-plus people now in the regions that offer support to Victoria Police that have lost their job in the last six weeks. How is that supporting Victoria Police to do their job?

We hear in this place from the other side how much is being invested into Victoria Police and how well they are supported. I can tell you that is utter rubbish, utter rot. Again, we see Victoria Police

getting the raw end of the stick, with the health and wellbeing hubs, the mental health clinicians and injury management consultants being ripped out of stations after only 12 months. And within those 12 months in relation to the improvements and the support that these mental health clinicians have offered and the results they have seen, I have been presented with a proposal and some case studies and testimonials from Victoria Police members about why they should remain, but there is silence – complete, utter silence – from this government, who just refuse to support Victoria Police members.

These post-and-boast laws that we are debating this afternoon do not go far enough. Once again, this is repeat behaviour by the Allan Labor government – it simply does not go far enough. Of course we support the Shadow Attorney-General in some pretty simple amendments to add those offences that are the most commonly seen published across digital platforms and across the mainstream media, such as assault, such as dangerous driving, such as destroying and damaging property and such as causing serious injury intentionally and recklessly in circumstances of gross violence. I will say it again: why on earth were they not included in this bill in the first place? I have a mantra which I am sure you have heard me say plenty of times before: if you are going to do something, do it right the first time.

Katie HALL (Footscray) (15:18): I am really pleased to make a contribution to the Crimes Amendment (Performance Crime) Bill 2025, and I would like to take this opportunity at the commencement of my contribution to respond to some of the things raised by those opposite, including the Shadow Attorney-General's hideous example of the young people who filmed themselves pushing an elderly man off the pier on the Mornington Peninsula and his claims that those offenders would not be captured by these reforms. They were charged with affray, not section 31 assault, and therefore they would be covered by this amendment. I would also like to comment on the contribution of the Greens. It is extraordinarily hypocritical for the Greens political party to come into this place to simultaneously condemn –

Paul Edbrooke interjected.

Katie HALL: Well, they turned up – it is not a Friday – to condemn the recent attacks against the LGBTI community that have been egregiously posted about and at the same time oppose a bill that would deliver consequences to those people. The community that you seek to speak on behalf of have specifically asked for this reform, so it is disappointing but not surprising to see this sort of grandstanding from the Greens yet again.

Performance crime, or posting and boasting, as has been mentioned, refers to people posting, usually via social media, their involvement in serious and violent offences such as armed robbery, theft of a motor vehicle, home invasion or affray. I find this sort of thing sickening. I think about when I worked for Victoria Police in their media unit. This was early on, I suppose, in terms of the evolution of social media, and at that time it was police who used the footage that we had available to us from CCTV to try and find offenders, not offenders outing themselves for some sort of added sick validation that they get through the attention they get for committing these crimes. Performance crime can create an environment for aspirational crime. It can encourage others to offend, particularly amongst young people. It can invite competition and escalate dangerous offending behaviour. The use of social media to boast about crime of course – and this has been mentioned numerous times – can trivialise the harm caused to victims and the community and really does retraumatise victims. In recognising these harms, the Allan Labor government is seeking to outlaw this behaviour by introducing a new standalone offence into the Crimes Act 1958. The offence will carry a maximum penalty of two years in prison and will require that the offender be found guilty of the underlying serious offence before they can be found guilty of a performance crime. Criminal behaviour, particularly violent crimes, should be condemned in the strongest possible terms. There is never an excuse for inflicting harm on others.

I know some challenging times locally have been well documented in my community of Footscray, and I want to reiterate my very strong support for Footscray police and the work of our police officers. Because everyone has a camera in their pocket now, I know that the filming of these incidents can often have a really adverse effect on the mental health and wellbeing of the police officers as well that

are involved in these matters. Recording your crimes for social media shows an absolute lack of remorse. It humiliates victims and generates unnecessary fear in our community. It must be stated that this offence only applies to perpetrators or direct accomplices to the crime; bystanders, journalists or victims recording a crime taking place are not subject to this offence. This offence applies very specifically to offenders recording their crimes for the purpose of drawing attention to their involvement.

We know that crime is an issue that many Victorians and indeed many in my community are worried about. We want to send a clear message that this sort of unapologetic and brazen offending is not tolerated in Victoria. Victims should not have one of the most traumatic moments of their lives spread across social media. These laws have been introduced in response to a clear trend surrounding youth offending, particularly in relation to certain offences. This is a novel law responding to novel crimes. The Allan Labor government has sought to apply performance crime to specific offences rather than all offences to ensure that the new laws are proportionate, effective and enforceable. The crimes applicable are high-risk and high-impact crimes that are increasing in prevalence, particularly among young offenders, and are increasingly being boasted about on social media.

Posting and boasting about offences that are not relevant offences may be covered by existing Victorian and Commonwealth laws, including grossly offensive public conduct or using a carriage service like social media to menace, harass or cause offence. As is the case currently, this conduct may also be treated as an aggravating factor in sentencing for the substantive offending. Queensland, New South Wales and the Northern Territory have also introduced performance crime offences. This reflects a worrying trend that young offenders are using social media across the country to glorify their crimes. Our government wants to be crystal clear: this is unacceptable and absolutely deserves punishment.

The impact that crime, particularly violent crime, can have on individuals, families and communities cannot be understated. Victims of crime also have the right to expect privacy. Having your trauma blasted over the internet is the furthest thing from that. Importantly, crime should never be seen as trendy or an opportunity to go viral. Carjacking, home invasion, aggravated robbery – these are all horrific offences. Offenders are imprisoned because their actions merit punishment, not likes or views. Behaviour that minimises or seeks to minimise the impact of that crime should absolutely be punished. A society that revels in the suffering of others is no society at all, and any person who thinks it is appropriate to inflict suffering or brag about it on social media undoubtedly belongs in a cell, for the protection of everyone else in the community. This is a pretty reasonable position and one that most Victorians would hold.

I would expect this bill to have an easy passage through this place into the other with those opposite, and particularly the Greens. I was appalled by the position of the Greens on this matter. In my community I have seen members of the Greens political party out protesting police. They like to pretend that they are on the side of victims of crime, but by opposing this bill they have shown their true colours. As usual, the Allan Labor government are sending a clear message that we are on the side of Victorians and victims of crime. Let us hope that everyone in this place practises what they preach and provides passage for a commonsense bill addressing crime in this state and a worrying trend of performance crime that we have all seen and we have all found to be abhorrent. I commend the bill to the house.

Jess WILSON (Kew) (15:28): I too rise to speak on the Crimes Amendment (Performance Crime) Bill 2025. As has been discussed in the chamber today, this is a bill that seeks to deal with the alarming rise in what is known as performance crime, or posting and boasting – a type of crime that encourages others, and particularly young people, to undertake a crime and then put that on social media, in many

instances, to share with others and encourage others to do similar acts and commit similar crimes, boasting about it amongst their cohort. The bill makes it a summary offence to:

> publish or cause to be published material that depicts, describes or otherwise indicates the commission of a relevant offence by the person; and
>
> undertake or cause that publication with the intention of attracting attention to the commission of that offence.

The bill includes an exhaustive list of relevant offences, which include theft of a motor vehicle, robbery, armed robbery, burglary, aggravated burglary, home invasion, aggravated home invasion, carjacking, aggravated carjacking, affray, violent disorder, incitement or attempt in relation to the above offences.

I should note from the outset that the Liberals and Nationals, the coalition, support the intent behind the bill before us today. This is, as I said, an area in which we are seeing an alarming rise in the number of incidents when it comes to posting and boasting about crime, particularly among youth offenders. It is something that is very important when it comes to the broader crime issues that we are seeing rise in this state. I commend the member for Malvern for his extensive work in bringing forward to this chamber a number of important amendments that seek to actually strengthen the bill that the government has brought before us here today.

Victoria is in the midst of a crime crisis. Every single time we have the crime statistics released we see another rise in crime across this state. We are seeing there has been an alarming rise when it comes to the statewide 17 per cent rise in crime over the past 12 months and at the same time an 18 per cent increase in youth crime, with a 42 per cent increase over the past decade as we have had the Labor government here in Victoria. Can I just touch briefly on the impact this has on my own local community. Not a day goes by where I do not have someone contact me about a crime that has been committed against them, their family or their property. If I look at the statistics in my local community, in Boroondara total criminal incidents are up 29.6 per cent over the past 12 months. That is higher than the state average. If you look at residential aggravated burglary, it is up 66.8 per cent. Motor vehicle theft is up a staggering 152 per cent, and retail theft is up 65.3 per cent.

It should be no surprise that crime has reached the highest level on record in Victoria since statistics began to be collected in this state. This is the consequence of not dealing with the surge in crime for years under the Allan Labor government. The Allan Labor government had to be dragged to the table to even admit there was a crime crisis in this state, for years refusing to acknowledge that so many Victorians were being impacted by crime and by the fact that in many cases youth offenders have a revolving door when it comes to bail in this state. Why is that the case? Because this government, the Labor government, weakened Victoria's bail laws two years ago. And then what did they do? They realised the consequences of the weakening of those laws – they had ignored at the time the Liberals and Nationals amendments to that legislation to ensure that those laws would not be weakened and we would not see the consequences that we are seeing today – and then they brought in another raft of legislation to strengthen their own weakened bail laws, claiming that they are the toughest bail laws in the country. Yet they are weaker than the very laws that they changed two years ago. This week they bring in more laws to strengthen the so-called toughest bail laws in the country to once again make them the toughest bail laws in the country.

This is a government that has let the crime crisis in Victoria get out of control, and no further do we need to look than the bill before us here today. This is a bill that does not provide the important protections that Victorians would expect to see when it comes to this sort of crime, when it comes to posting and boasting. There are obvious loopholes under this bill where an offender could commit the relevant offence and, if they do not publish that material themselves, the offender could ask their friend to post material, which would have the exact same effect in glorifying criminal conduct without attracting the criminal liability that this bill is supposed to deal with. This is a bill that is weaker than laws that have come in in New South Wales or in Queensland. That is why the member for Malvern has moved a raft of amendments to this bill to ensure that it is strengthened and that it can actually

achieve the purpose that it seeks to achieve. Those amendments will add the offences of assault, causing serious injury in circumstances of gross violence, destroying or damaging property and dangerous driving as relevant offences for the purposes of the new law. Many of the instances that we see when it comes to posting and boasting are in relation to dangerous driving – in relation to hooning. Yet under the piece of legislation we are debating today that is not covered. It is the same when it comes to assault.

If we just look to the example of the teenage offender who pushed a man who was innocently going about fishing on a pier into the water, under this piece of legislation they are free to post and boast about that. How does this legislation deal with the very issue that it is meant to try and deal with? It has glaring loopholes, and that is why the member for Malvern moved the amendment to tighten the definition of 'publication' to include where the offender publishes the material to even a single person. Further to that we see that under this piece of legislation it is essential that any imprisonment under the post-and-boast laws must be served cumulatively with any sentence for the offence which is being publicised, so the penalty will be an additional consequence. If an offender does not believe that posting about the offence that they have undertaken will be an additional offence, then where is the deterrent? What is the purpose of this piece of legislation? That is why the member for Malvern has moved the raft of amendments today, done the work and worked with stakeholders to ensure that the piece of legislation before us actually achieves the purpose that I think all of us in this place want to achieve.

But once again we are in a situation where this government will ignore the warnings from the Liberals and Nationals. They will not want to work constructively with us. They will not want to deal with the actual issue in this state. We saw it on the bail laws. We have seen it time and time again where we have warned the government about the consequences of certain pieces of legislation they have brought before us. We have moved amendments, and time and time again they have been ignored – the same when it comes to machetes in this state. We have moved legislation brought before this place, legislation that the government have then picked up and mirrored down the track when they realised it was a crisis, that it is impacting people, that Victorians do not feel safe, that they do not feel safe in their own homes and in their businesses. But it takes rising crime rates year on year, month on month, day on day for this government to actually realise that this is an issue that Victorians want prioritised. This is an issue that the Allan Labor government has failed Victorians on; it has failed to keep them safe. It should be the number one duty of any government to keep people safe and to ensure that when they go home they feel safe in their homes, but under this government we have seen crime rates surge, and the legislation we have before us today is just one more example where they are failing to put in place strong laws – laws that will actually deter and prevent people from continuing to commit crime and crime again and actually ensure that Victorians are safe and are not put at risk – because this government, time and time again, fails to prioritise the safety of the Victorian people.

Kat THEOPHANOUS (Northcote) (15:38): I am speaking in strong support of the Crimes Amendment (Performance Crime) Bill 2025, and I thank the Attorney-General for her extensive work on this and for bringing it to the chamber. Keeping people safe is the first duty of a civil society and the first priority of us as legislators. One of the challenges that faces us in the modern world is that harm has become more complex, leveraging online platforms in a way and at a scale not seen before. So it is that a new kind of harm has crept into our streets and onto our screens: serious offending staged, filmed and shared for clicks; crime as content; pain as entertainment; fear as a sinister badge of honour. We are seeing this far too often now: cases where people are committing serious crimes and then sharing them online, posting and boasting. The performative nature of this is sickening, and it adds a whole new element to the trauma of offending. It glorifies it, it encourages others to emulate it and it prolongs the exposure of victims to the offence itself; in some cases it publicly identifies victims too, another compounding element that has an impact that we may never truly understand. This is serious behaviour with serious consequences.

Most of us as MPs have at least some experience of the sense of disempowerment and anguish that can occur when we are on the receiving end of some ridicule or other in the online world. There is a particular awfulness associated with something that gets put online and exists out of your control and strips you of your sense of ownership, of your own identity. It is deeply dehumanising. As public figures, we weather this kind of thing. But imagine if it was not just online trolling; imagine it was a home invasion put up online for the anonymous, unforgiving gaze of the internet. That is something no-one should have to endure. That is why we have brought this performance crime amendment to the house. This bill says, clearly and calmly, that Victoria will not stand for it. As the Minister for Police put it, crime is not content, it is not entertainment, and it will not be tolerated.

The amendment creates a targeted standalone summary offence for posting and boasting about specific serious crimes. Acknowledging what I said before, it gives the courts the ability to recognise the additional harm and the additional culpability of offenders who publicise their crimes. A person who publishes material that is intended to attract attention to their involvement in a relevant offence, such as robbery, aggravated burglary, home invasion, carjacking, theft of a motor vehicle, affray or violent disorder, can face up to two years imprisonment in addition to the penalty for the underlying crime. So, for example, if a person is found guilty of a home invasion and also the new performance crime offence, they may be sentenced to a maximum term of 25 years imprisonment in relation to the home invasion and up to two years imprisonment for the performance crime offence. To be liable, the person must first be found guilty of the underlying serious offence, which is important, because this is not about bystanders or journalists. The bill defines 'publish' broadly to capture the real ways content is shared online, making material available to the public or a section of the public, while excluding one-to-one private communications. It also captures situations where an offender causes someone else to publish on their behalf. There are, of course, important guardrails. It will not apply retrospectively, and it does not capture journalists, victims, concerned community members or witnesses who report or share material about crimes committed by others.

We know what is driving this abhorrent behaviour: a race for notoriety that normalises offending, invites copycat behaviour, trivialises harm and retraumatises victims. This targeted offence recognises that additional culpability and signals serious consequences. It is a clear deterrent message to would-be copycats, and it is a measure of respect to victims whose suffering should never be a backdrop for likes and clicks.

It is important to note that the rise of post-and-boost offending is not theoretical. In the past year gay and bisexual men around Australia have been lured via dating apps, assaulted, robbed and filmed, with footage then posted to social media. Police in multiple states have investigated these patterns. In Victoria the numbers are sobering. Media interviews with Victoria Police and community health leaders describe dozens of attacks, many perpetrated by teenagers, some involving weapons, with victims traumatised twice, first by the assault, then by the online humiliation. Equality Australia has also confirmed that attacks on the queer community have escalated in recent years, and harassment, discrimination and violence shockingly remain a lived experience for many. That goes to the heart of what we are debating – not just crime but the amplification of harm and repetition through publication. Let me be unequivocal: these homophobic attacks are vile, cowardly and unacceptable. To film and publish them is to compound the cruelty. This bill draws a clear line: if you weaponise the internet to glorify your offending there will be consequences.

I know some have argued that these hateful crimes would not be encapsulated by the new laws, and I dispute that. I invite those opposite to go back and take a look at the actual charges laid for many of these crimes, including for the 35 individuals that Victoria Police have arrested in recent months for luring men into violent attacks. They include armed robbery, they include violent disorder, they include affray. What we are capturing here, what we are targeting, is the kind of dangerous and violent public offending that is of growing community concern and increasing in prevalence, particularly among young offenders.

This bill does not stand alone; it sits within a wider community safety agenda. In the 2025–26 budget the government invested $176 million to address the drivers of crime, including $135 million for rehabilitation and reintegration programs for young people, early intervention, diversion, education, training and employment, because the best outcome is a crime that never happens in the first place. We have also modernised youth justice law, trialled electronic monitoring for young people on bail, strengthened anti-vilification and social cohesion reforms and progressed improvements to stalking and family violence intervention order law. Importantly, we have acted to choke off weapons that turn dangerous ideas into deadly acts, with a ban on machete sales and strict possession frameworks. The message is consistent: smart prevention, fair accountability and community safety first.

For Northcote this is not abstract: our high streets buzz late; our artists, hospo workers and shift workers head home on foot, on bikes, on the last tram. Recently right on our doorstep at Northland in Preston, families and workers witnessed a machete-laden brawl that led to hospitalisation, arrests and a full centre lockdown. Those scenes and the footage that followed magnified fear well beyond the incident itself. Our government has since moved to choke off access to these weapons, including fast-tracking machete controls. And because community safety is not just policing – I want Northcote to hear this – we are pairing accountability with prevention, backing diversion, mentoring and education. We will keep working with Victoria Police, local schools, youth services and traders so that people feel safer on the street, safer at the shops, safer on the tram and safer online.

Some legal stakeholders have raised concerns. The Law Institute of Victoria cautions that evidence of deterrence is still emerging and notes that courts can already treat posting as an aggravating factor. They stress the importance of diversion. We hear that, and it is precisely why our approach is targeted, proportionate, non-retrospective and paired with investment in prevention. I do acknowledge the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service has voiced broader concerns about overcriminalisation and the risk of disproportionate impacts. We respect this advocacy too, and balance is key here. This bill is practical, proportionate reform that will help police and courts deal with a very contemporary harm. The offence is carefully drawn; it applies only where the offender has been found guilty of the other serious offence, it excludes one-to-one communication and it does not capture journalists, bystanders or victims.

Victims of these broadcast crimes, often women, queer Victorians and multicultural communities, deserve the dignity of knowing their suffering will not be used as social media currency. That is exactly what this bill is doing. I have to mention that it is very disappointing and frankly deeply hypocritical that the Greens political party have spoken against this bill today. In one breath they have cited the recent attacks on the gay community and in the next they have opposed this bill and the law changes that this very community have explicitly sought from us. I think it is woeful and they need to do better. The test for any law is simple: does it make people safer and is it fair? This bill is both, and I do commend it to the house.

Wayne FARNHAM (Narracan) (15:48): I am pleased to rise today to talk on the Crimes Amendment (Performance Crime) Bill 2025. It has been an interesting debate today. I give the member for Malvern credit on his contribution and the work that he has done and the amendments he has actually put forward on this bill. I think it has been long overdue, around crimes around social media. I have spoken in this chamber before on this topic. We have seen changes federally. The federal government have now made changes to protect children, which I think are good changes. But I also firmly believe that all social media accounts should be verified, and therefore if you have a troll or someone with pretty bad intentions you know who that person is. That has probably got to happen at a federal level, I imagine. I do not think it will happen at a state level. But I think every jurisdiction across this country should be looking at those things.

It is interesting that the government has put this forward. I will speak to a few topics that have been raised today. I am not going to talk too much about the Greens, but let us just say this: thank goodness that lot are not in charge, because the contribution from the Greens was amazingly stupid. I have never heard so much rubbish. Their solution is: do nothing and everything will be okay. That is

phenomenally stupid. I have never heard so much rubbish in all my life, and I have heard a bit of rubbish in this chamber. But that was right up there, and I actually agree with the comments from the member for Northcote in what she said about the Greens. I think it was fairly accurate. What we basically have here is a bill that is coming into play that is meant to punish people that post stuff online, especially around theft, robbery, burglary, home invasion, carjacking, affray, violent disorder, incitement or attempt.

The problem, though, is that the government is missing a few things, and this goes to the member for Malvern and his amendments. I think the government should actually take note of these because quite often over this side of the chamber we will put forward amendments not through malice, not to belittle the government, but to help the legislation, and I think it is very important. We have heard quite a few things today, but I will just go to the amendments. Basically the member for Malvern's amendments are about causing serious injury intentionally in circumstances of gross violence, causing serious injury recklessly in circumstances of gross violence, assaults, destroying and damaging property and dangerous driving, and I do not see why the government will not include these in the post-and-boast legislation. I really do not. Today quite a few people have spoken about members of the public that have lured the gay community somewhere and then assaulted them or done various pretty violent acts against them.

I just take up the point that the member for Northcote made – that there were various offences that do apply to this bill, and I accept that. But there are probably offences that do not apply to this bill, like assault. I think the government should actually take this on board, because we see these assaults all the time, and I think the government needs to really consider this and say that expanding it to these other offences is not a bad thing. It is going to make the bill a better bill, and I think that is really important. We have seen it time and time again in this chamber. We come into this chamber and we see bills come forward, and maybe we put bills forward and the government knocks them back. But there are times in this chamber where we need to work together and we need to make bills better, and this is one of those times. The member for Malvern is not doing this because he thinks he is the smartest person in the room or anything like that; he is doing this because it strengthens the bill and makes it a better bill, and there is nothing wrong with that. We do not want to have to come back. We have seen it in this chamber a few times now.

I will just mention the Denyer bill and machetes. We introduced machetes bills four times, we introduced the Denyer bill and the government knocked those back and had to come back. Why don't we actually get on the front foot and work on the amendments that the member for Malvern has put forward? They are actually good commonsense amendments. I hate seeing things online where people are videoing people being assaulted. I think the person videoing should actually be charged as well.

Paul Edbrooke interjected.

Wayne FARNHAM: The member for Frankston, the member for superheroes over the other side there, flies out of a plane. But we are talking about a serious topic, and maybe if there were more superheroes, member for Frankston, they would not be videoing assaults; they would actually help people out, and I think that is the point I am trying to make. Even the person videoing the person that is committing the assault should be charged as far as I am concerned. I grew up in a different era. We did not video stuff, we helped people, and I think society is seriously lacking that today. We have a bill in front of us today that we can make better. This can be a better bill, and there is no doubt that the member for Malvern has actually put forward some very, very good amendments.

One problem with the bill that the member for Malvern spoke to and I will speak to as well is the fact that if you get charged it does not extend your sentence. That is nuts. Why would it not extend the sentence if it is an actual offence? I am not a lawyer – I am not going to pretend to be a lawyer – but common sense would tell me that if we are introducing a bill to punish people, then surely there has to be some extension of the term that they are given. To me it does not make sense. It has got to be a deterrent. If you get charged with one of these offences and you get two years for the offence but

nothing for the post to boast, then why have the law? Why don't we actually extend that? That is a really, really important point. To me it makes no sense. If you want to clean up crime and you want these things to stop, and we do want these things to stop online, then you have to have some repercussions for the actions. To have no repercussions for the actions, to me, seems a little bit silly.

This comes into some of the amendments – the dangerous driving offence – that the member for Malvern has put forward. We all saw the video of the guys driving down Beach Road and someone was on their bicycle and they just turned into him. That is dangerous driving. That was posted online. It was disgusting it was posted online. But that comes into these amendments, and that is what we should be focused on. That is what the government should work with the opposition on, and I hope they do. I would love to see on Thursday when we have divisions that this actually gets through. It would be a nice change, I think, if Victorians sat back and looked at a whole chamber and said, 'Yep, they all agree.' It would be a nice change for Victorians to see that. I mentioned earlier the old fellow that was pushed off the pier – there is no consequence for that action, and that was sickening. You just heard those kids laughing when the fellow got pushed off the pier. A lot of these things, a lot of the amendments that the member for Malvern has put forward, the government should seriously consider, because they are commonsense amendments. They are not here belittling the government. They are here to strengthen the bill, a bill that I believe is important for all Victorians. I think we need to get it right at the start. The government have had their side on it. The opposition have put through our side on it, through the amendments, and I think the government really needs to listen. It will strengthen the bill. It will make it a better bill. It will make it better for all Victorians. And goodness knows we need to really clamp down on online behaviour. The amount of things we see online today is frankly disgusting, and I think this is a step in the right direction. But the member for Malvern has put forward the amendments for good reason, because the bill does not go far enough.

Dylan WIGHT (Tarneit) (15:58): It gives me great pleasure to rise this afternoon and make a contribution in favour of the Crimes Amendment (Performance Crime) Bill 2025. It is always a pleasure to follow the contribution of the future leader of the Liberal Party, the member for Narracan. He is the only one of them that can string a sentence together, so I reckon he will not be far off. I do think it is important –

A member: Poor Matthew Guy. He's right here. He's the best they've got.

Dylan WIGHT: Sorry, Matty – yesterday's news. I do think it is important, though, to pick the member for Narracan up on one point, and I know the member for Footscray picked up the member for Malvern on the same point. On the young offenders that have been spoken about down on the Mornington Peninsula, who filmed that absolutely horrendous act of pushing an old man off a pier, it has been said that those young offenders would not be captured by this legislation. I would never accuse the member for Malvern, nor the member for Narracan, of purposely misleading people. I will just assume that they got this one wrong. Those young offenders were charged with affray, so that means that they would absolutely be captured under this piece of legislation, as they should be, because that act was absolutely abhorrent and those young offenders deserved to be dealt with with the full force of the law.

Getting to the contents of the bill, one of the uglier trends that we are now seeing with certain offenders here in Victoria committing serious crimes is them posting about it and boasting about it online, filming their despicable acts and posting them online. Whether it be their ridiculous fight porn, assaults, break-ins, it is all turned into content.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

Matters of public importance

Economic policy

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (16:01): I have accepted a statement from the member for Narre Warren South proposing the following matter of public importance for discussion:

> That this house notes the importance of investing in projects and government services that:
>
> (a) do not just create more jobs, but provide well-paid and secure jobs;
>
> (b) give families the flexibility they deserve while supporting work–life balance; and
>
> (c) strengthen workers rights so workers and their families can build a better future.

Gary MAAS (Narre Warren South) (16:02): It gives me enormous pleasure to speak to this matter of public importance (MPI). In submitting this matter of public importance for the house to consider today it made me reflect upon the values of not only this government but indeed the values of the Australian Labor Party. I thought about the many great speeches that have been recognised by the leaders of our party. In our most recent history there was of course the misogyny speech, which was a wonderful speech given by our then Prime Minister Julia Gillard. It spoke to matters of gender equity, gender equality, gender parity and everything that goes with that – a speech which has gone down in the annals of history. We also had a fabulous speech, the Redfern speech by Prime Minister Paul Keating, a speech which was well and truly at the forefront of reconciliation with our Indigenous peoples.

There was also that great speech which was given by Prime Minister Ben Chifley to a state conference, and we here in the Labor Party in Victoria have a state conference coming up very soon. It made me realise that the light on the hill speech that was given by Ben Chifley is in many ways the mission statement and the reason of being of all Labor MPs in this place and federally and certainly of the values that we all espouse. Really, towards the end of his reign back in 1949, what Prime Minister Chifley said was that the success of the Labor Party depended entirely, as it always has done, on the people who work. But he spoke to a movement coming together of all people, bringing something better to people – better standards of living, greater happiness to the mass of people. He summed up the objective like this:

> We have a great objective – the light on the hill – which we aim to reach by working the betterment of mankind not only here but anywhere we may give a helping hand. If it were not for that, the Labour movement would not be worth fighting for.

Those words said back in 1949 were no truer then than they are now. I reflect on what it must have been like for Prime Minister Chifley to have spoken to that state conference, looking at all of the people on the conference floor and knowing that he was speaking to a microcosm of the society that he was a part of in New South Wales, speaking to people who were looking to Labor for hope, looking for someone who was on their side. He knew that he was speaking to those people. I know when our Premier and our Prime Minister get up this weekend to speak to the state Labor conference they will be doing exactly the same thing. They will be speaking to people of all cultures. They will be speaking to people of all faiths. They will be speaking to people who are very proud members of the Australian union movement. They will be speaking to our LGBTIQ+ community. They will be speaking to men and women of Victoria who share the values of this great party. In terms of that wonderful mission statement that was provided, that guiding principle, that notion of the light on the hill, it is something that all of us in Labor still aspire to today.

So when we speak to the importance of government investment in projects, government investment in services, it is about exactly that betterment, that thing that we are providing to all Australians. The Allan Labor government is well and truly a part of that. We have stood and we always will stand with workers and families, and we will champion their rights. We will protect their livelihoods and we will ensure fair conditions for all. We will always make sure that jobs open the doors to opportunity, providing the means to support a family, to save for retirement and to focus on the things that matter

most in life. We know that behind every job is a worker and behind every worker is their family. While those opposite fight for each other's jobs, while the only jobs they support are those of the legal profession, our Labor government is fighting to create more jobs for Victorians and ensure that workers are protected.

Our Labor government is delivering more than 180 major road and rail projects, which employ Victorian skills and Victorian people and help create Victorian jobs. Whether it is the Metro Tunnel, level crossing removals, major road upgrades or the suburban rail link, all of these are transforming the way that Victorians work and play in Victoria, and we are ensuring that Victorian workers are the ones that are building them. It is only under this Victorian government that workers rights are not only protected but prioritised. The only jobs the opposition seem to be supporting and investing in are those in the legal profession, quite frankly.

For my community in Narre Warren South and for the people across the state, I know what they prefer. They want a government that is focused on working for Victorians. They want someone that is on their side. They do not want to be out there by themselves; they want a government that understands that a job is an important key to opportunity and security, and they know that we are a government that invests in TAFE and training and schools and a government that backs Victorian industry.

We are lucky that we have support from a very strong federal partner through the Albanese government. It is terrific that this state government can work very, very closely with the federal government. But of course not all federal governments are of that persuasion. History has shown us that Liberal governments just simply do not care about workers. We saw it through the Howard government after it was re-elected in 2004 with the introduction of WorkChoices, one of the biggest blows to workers rights in our history. It was aimed at reducing union influence and made it more difficult for workers to come together to negotiate with employers through their union. I am not really sure that the Liberals ever understood that the union movement has been responsible for the very basic work rights that all of us enjoy here, things such as the eight-hour workday, sick and annual leave and penalty rates.

The Australian public sent a strong message back then to the Howard government, with many mass protests that I can remember. They were opposed to that, and that opposition of course saw then Prime Minister Howard lose his seat. But history often repeats itself, and we saw Dutton – a love that dare not say his name since 3 May this year – follow suit. There were archaic public policy practices. Public policy positions were put forward on public servants and flexible work arrangements, which would have meant those big buildings in the city closing the envelope on their rent but not really helping the average person in the street – helping mums, helping dads. Dutton's position would have seen restrictions to working-from-home arrangements. He also committed to repealing Labor's right to disconnect laws and rights for casual workers. These moves would have limited flexible work, in turn limiting workforce participation, particularly of women, and reducing work–life balance and productivity.

The absence of flexible work is shown as a key contributor to the gender pay gap and drives women out of the paid workforce. Women continue to perform the bulk of unpaid work and care duties. That is a fact. That means women lose out on higher paying and secure roles that do not offer the flexibility that they need to juggle unpaid work with paid work. Normalising and valuing flexible work also encourages more men to take up the option. If men are supported to work flexibly, it can encourage them to share the burden of unpaid work with women more equally. But it seems, unfortunately, that the leader of this state opposition is following Dutton's lead. The question has to be asked: 'Just why won't he rule out a five-day return-to-work mandate?'

The first thing he did as Liberal leader was announce his plan to cut waste in government services. We know what that means. The nurses who care for your loved ones, the teachers shaping your kids' futures and the workers who keep your community safe – there will be cuts in those areas. Under the Liberals, you are on your own. With Labor, we are on your side. Just as the Australian public made it

clear that they did not agree with Dutton and the Liberals' position way back on 3 May, Victorians have made it clear time and time again they just do not trust the opposition to lead. They look for leadership. They look to the adults. They look for people who are on their side. They want something that is fair, and they want hope for the future.

I have always been a very proud member of the Australian labour movement, and in particular the Australian union movement. As a former union secretary, as a former organiser and as a former industrial lawyer, I have walked on many shop floors – many of the same shop floors that my family used to proudly work on in providing a very safe and secure upbringing for me. I have seen the importance of union in helping workers level the bargaining playing field with employers and big businesses and helping in the crucial protection of workers rights, and it is in this work that I have seen the importance of government in legislating and upholding these rights.

The Allan Labor government will continue to boost jobs around the state, as it did under its predecessor government, and help to make work more flexible to boost workforce participation, close the gender pay gap and help all Victorians have a better balance in work and in life. We are doing this through major projects, which are building Victoria and building our state's workforce. These are projects which those opposite are just adamant on stopping, halting or just opposing. We have the Suburban Rail Loop. It will slash travel times and cut congestion for busy families, delivering 70,000 more jobs closer to home in healthcare precincts and around Australia's largest universities. It is the biggest housing project that this Victorian government is putting together.

We hear so much about the SEC. I certainly hear about it from constituents, and boy, don't they love it. We have brought it back, and it is enshrined in Victoria's constitution to protect it from future Liberal governments, especially the member for Narracan. The SEC will not only drive down power bills for Victorians but it will also create jobs. Brad Battin said, 'The SEC is gone if we win.' We know what that would mean: higher power prices for families, bigger profits for overseas corporations and some 59,000 jobs lost in the state. But this government will continue to invest. It will continue to invest in transport infrastructure. We have seen recent investments with many big multinational companies coming into our great state. Most recently I can think of Mondelēz, who has opened their new state-of-the-art national distribution centre in Truganina. More than 200 jobs have been created there. They are a huge multinational company, with a partnership with the United Workers Union, I might add. Their investment is a vote of confidence in Victorian Labor, in our workforce and in our world-leading food manufacturing sector.

In closing on this MPI, the Allan government will keep moving forward, keep changing, keep updating and keep responding to the issues of the day. We will keep being progressive and keep accepting and understanding and building fairness and respect into our society through legislation. Just as the Light on the Hill speech gave purpose to a party, it gives purpose to the Allan Labor government, which is doing the best that it can for all people of Victoria.

Roma BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (16:17): This matter of public importance is about the government boasting about what they think is success. This matter tries to claim Labor are doing a great job investing in projects and government services for the benefit of families. Well, evidence says otherwise, particularly if you live in regional Victoria. This Labor government has been in power for 11 years. Over this time 62 taxes have been introduced. Victoria has the most taxes of any state in Australia. Victoria has the most debt – more than New South Wales, South Australia and Tasmania combined. Every project is late, and cost overruns are the norm, to the tune at this point of $40 billion of waste, simply because Labor cannot manage projects, taking our debt, just for the state of Victoria, to $194 billion. That is $29 million in interest payments alone every single day. Some of these figures are too big for people to even reconcile.

To enable this huge debt and to pay the interest bill the government has introduced more taxes on Victorians, with no plan to pay back the debt. There are so many taxes. Taxes on houses make up, on new builds, nearly half the cost of a new home. Home owners cannot opt to rent out their properties,

because they cannot afford the tax. Houses are being sold, resulting in less rentals. In a housing crisis, how is this an effective way to govern? The solution from this Allan Labor government is to tax holiday houses – a holiday tax, a tourism tax. There is no modelling or economic rationale behind this that can support their determination that this will work. It is just an easy grab and run.

I have had so many complaints in my office from hardworking Victorians about the land tax. People are absolutely shocked at the bills they are getting from this government, who think they can just tax land and make this the way that they can get revenue. I had an older couple in my office recently in tears. They were battlers. They had worked in normal income jobs all their life. They had saved up and bought a bush block, and they cannot afford the land tax. They were in tears because they have to sell the one luxury in their life. The government just keeps taking more money out of hardworking families' pockets.

This tax on tourism, one of the many taxes, will be repealed by us when we are in government, which will happen in November 2026. Tourism in the regions is a huge contributor to the economy, but the government does not seem to understand this or even appreciate it. When we talk about tourism and the regions, the Commonwealth Games was an opportunity supposedly put forward by this government to bring vibrancy and visitors to our great regions – an opportunity to showcase what makes our state extraordinary. But no, they cancelled that – too hard – and that $580 million they have paid to Scotland to fund the games there just grates on every Victorian's nerves and particularly regional Victorians' nerves. We were promised infrastructure to soften the blow of this absolute waste of government money by sending it over to Scotland to fund the games. We could have the Warrnambool Surf Lifesaving Club, which is literally disintegrating, funded from this, but we have not seen any of these regional promises that were supposed to come after the cancellation of the Commonwealth Games come to fruition in regional Victoria. The surf lifesaving club is desperate for an upgrade and restoration, but this volunteer organisation that keeps both locals and tourists safe is completely ignored by the Allan Labor government.

All the while the Allan Labor government keeps spewing money into projects that do not have business cases and have no end costing, and higher taxes, in the end, hurt families. But we will repeal taxes, and the five we have already announced are the education tax – we will repeal it and restore choices for Victorian parents; the emergency services volunteer tax – we will repeal it and stop punishing the volunteers, who desperately want the government to listen to them and who go out and fight for our safety against fires, and the SES, who protect us during storms. This emergency services volunteer tax – do not be surprised or have the wool pulled over your eyes – will affect every home owner from border to border into metropolitan Melbourne and every renter along the way. But we will axe that tax. We will completely abolish Labor's regressive health tax. Fancy putting a tax on sick people when we are in a health crisis. We will reform stamp duty, making it easier for home ownership and bringing affordable housing back for Victorians. That has been the dream, and that is the dream that we will restore. And of course, as I said, we will repeal the holiday and tourism tax. We will repeal these taxes, and we have already announced, 14 months out, 27 election policies through which we will reform and abolish taxes and make life easier for Victorians.

In South-West Coast I speak to business owners every week who are struggling, not because they lack vision or dedication or capability but because they are weighed down by government red tape, rising costs and delayed support, and those taxes sit at the base of all those problems. From Warrnambool to Portland, Heywood to Port Fairy, family businesses are making the heartbreaking decisions to scale back, lay off staff or close altogether. Businesses that have closed or are closing in my electorate make up a long list, but some of them are the Phillips' Monkey Cafe in Koroit Street, SportsPower, Cheap as Chips –

A member interjected.

Roma BRITNELL: Yes, in Warrnambool. They are shutting down SportsPower, Rauerts Shoex, Phinc, Cotton On Kids, Just Jeans, Boolistic, Darrian Office & Art Supplies, Millers, Godfreys, Rivers

and Katies. That is an enormous amount in a small town of 35,000. These are the very businesses that provide jobs, sponsor the local football club and support our schools, and their decline is a warning sign. ASIC's recent figures show 4242 businesses collapsed in Victoria during the last financial year. The Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry said the figures were 'deeply concerning but sadly not surprising'. The state has never been in a worse situation socially and economically, and the sad reality is that the Allan Labor government's high-taxing and heavily regulated environment causes small businesses to fail in record numbers. This Labor government is nation leading at driving businesses out of business. Families own businesses. If they were being supported, we would not have businesses closing.

The government boast about their infrastructure investment and investment in health, but that in itself is something we are still waiting for in south-west Victoria. In 2020 we were promised a $384 million hospital. Already, because the budget has been overrun – because the Allan Labor government cannot manage projects, they have blown the budget out – they have cut vital services out of the scope of the original project. The promises they gave us in 2020 have not been delivered because they have not even started. They have cut from the project pathology, biomedicine, medical record facilities, a morgue, kitchens and car parking spaces. Why should the community have to endure that? This is a project that is a once-in-a-lifetime project, and we are going to have a hospital without those facilities up to a standard that is needed to attract staff and to make the hospital able to service the community. That is what the scope was put forward for in the first place, and we are not going to get that delivered. It beggars belief, and I do not understand why that is even slightly acceptable.

The Portland hospital is a very important hospital for an industrial centre – we have got an operating port and an aluminium smelter, so heavy industry – yet the services from Portland are diminishing before our eyes. We have got the theatres often on bypass and maternity services cannot always be offered, with maternity services on bypass. We are struggling to have enough anaesthetists and general surgeons. Now, this is a government's responsibility. We can hear the government making excuses about attracting and retaining staff and how difficult it is, yes – well, that is every business's challenge, but that is the role of government. So what are they doing? No, they are not doing that. And, do you know what, I can prove it, because the ophthalmologist that used to serve Portland is still in Mount Gambier but cannot work in Portland and wants to. How does a blind man get himself to a service in Mount Gambier if he cannot drive, there is no public transport and he has to go interstate to get a service? These are just absurdities.

You would think that a person should be able to get services, but if they cannot you would think the priority would be the helipad, but this government has even closed down the helipad. We do not know why, because the government told us it was the Civil Aviation Safety Authority, the civil aviation responsible body. We wrote to them, I wrote to them, and sure enough they said, 'No, it's got nothing to do with us.' The minister refuses to disclose the rationale behind it, but these are life-and-death situations. So if they are going to cut services they absolutely should provide the helipad that the community funded through hard work and fundraising and that Denis Napthine, my predecessor, worked very hard to get there, and now we do not have it. So if you are 5 hours away from Melbourne and your hospital that you have had for many years servicing you cannot service you the way it used to, you would think that would be a no-brainer. We are talking about life and death, so why isn't the government prioritising this? They do not care about the regions. We actually do not even know why the helipad was closed, and the government will not disclose the reasons why, let alone work on a solution. The community is owed an answer on that.

The backbenchers are clearly puppets for the Premier's spin doctors, and we hear it all the time. The rhetoric I hear about communities doing well is all orchestrated and misinformed. The member for Ripon was in the paper this morning misleading her community, writing to VicGrid about getting her community spared from the renewable energy zone. I mean, VicGrid has not even been set up. This is her government's policy, her government's action, so will she be in the chamber to vote or will she

hide? These are the things our communities should be looking for. We will see on Thursday when that bill has been debated and voted upon.

This is a government claiming they are helping families, but families are struggling. They are working hard. As someone who has raised a family and run a business, I understand this. On child care, often an essential part of family operations, the Allan Labor government has let down families. They have let them down terribly, and I have been spoken to a lot in the last few weeks by women who tell me they have lost confidence in the childcare system, and this is the government's fault, because on the table for the last three years, after a review was completed, have been the Ombudsman's recommendations. For three years they have sat on the table unresponded to by this government. I cannot believe the government, when they heard the despicable alleged child abuse that has taken place by Joshua Brown in childcare centres, has not acted. What they have done, though, is call for a review. That is not an action. A review is not an action when it is a review on a review, because those recommendations are sitting on the table waiting to be adopted, recommended by the Ombudsman three years ago.

The government is reckless here. The Liberals introduced yesterday, in a bipartisan way, legislation that had those recommendations in it that the government could have looked at. We could have debated the bill if they wanted to amend it. We could have done that. But they did nothing. In fact they voted against the bill and said they have got a rapid review. A rapid review – it has been three years. This is a disgrace. Then we had the government today in question time talk about the money they are spending on roads. This is a government which just continually spins. Our roads are in a shocking state, and if the government is spending millions on them, it is either a shocking waste of money or it is all going into the tunnels in Melbourne. Just this morning my office was contacted by people going down the Princes Highway in Warrnambool, right through the main thoroughfare of our town, and the description was that people were weaving to miss the potholes. That is dangerous. One car was so badly damaged from the size of these potholes that the driver had to pull into a business on the side of the highway and leave it there because it was undrivable. The government is shocking. It is delinquent in its responsibilities to our roads. They are crumbling. If that is responsible governing, if that is helping families – it is not. It is costing families incredibly.

We see businesses in Portland closing down, like Mibus Bros, the business that would fix our roads. It is not because they could not manage their business, it is because the government kept slamming down barriers in front of them. This government is irresponsible, and our roads show it. We see their irresponsibility to our most vulnerable, the children. Businesses closing demonstrate it. Balance for families is not something this government can claim. It cannot even engineer it. True balance comes from freedom of choice, not rigid government formulas or one-size-fits-all programs, which is what this government uses. I stand for a South-West Coast that is resilient, free to grow and driven by local energy and initiative, not government constraints and control.

Eden FOSTER (Mulgrave) (16:32): I am proud to stand here in support of the matter of public importance that was put forward by the member for Narre Warren South, and what a wonderful contribution by the member. In particular his passion for workers and workers rights resonates with me. I am proud to be in this chamber with him, but I am equally proud to stand here today to speak to this. The history of the Labor Party is one of fighting for the rights of marginalised communities to have dignified employment, whether it is on class, ethno-religious or gender lines. This fight is an ongoing one, with the encroachment of the gig economy and insecure work, de-industrialisation and the housing crisis representing just some of the many challenges that working-class communities are currently going through.

Many people within my electorate of Mulgrave have had to work hard to achieve a prosperous life. The Mulgrave electorate, similar to other areas in south-eastern Melbourne, has a large population of recent migrants, asylum seekers and refugees and others facing systemic discrimination. Unlike those opposite, this government is on the side of working people and working-class communities. The dignity of secure employment is a priority of the Allan Labor government. Without secure work, one

cannot plan for the future effectively. Building a family, purchasing a home and getting married are all decisions that become more difficult with the re-emergence of insecure work and the gig economy in particular. The Local Jobs First framework, which has been discussed in this chamber just this week, is a key part of this priority. It ensures that government investment in communities not only provides benefits such as increases in productivity and improved public services but also provides long-term employment opportunities through quotas for trainees and apprentices and employment to workers in Victorian enterprises. Maybe quotas are a bit unusual for those on the other side, but we are bringing them in. Through this framework and state investment in communities like mine, Victoria has seen some of the largest employment growth in the last decade compared to other subnational governments.

The coalition, on the other hand, has a long history of cutting jobs throughout all corners of the state, particularly jobs that have historically seen secure employment for working-class communities. Schools, hospitals, the public service and the SEC have all been gutted at different points in this state's history by the Liberal–National coalition. It is not inaccurate to say that the right of working-class communities to have secure employment is abhorrent to a coalition government. More recently, the opposition leader has announced his plan to cut 'waste' in government services. Of course we know which communities get hurt the most from this; it is working-class communities such as mine and those that this side of the chamber represent. We all know that it is not the communities of those opposite, particularly maybe the members for Brighton or Sandringham, that see an outsized amount of pain from these brutal cuts. In their last time in government those opposite cut more than $100 million from the annual nursing budget, replacing qualified nurses who had worked hard to achieve stable and well-paying employment that benefits our state with low-paid, insecure health assistants. Of course it was marginalised communities without the luxury of private health insurance and the private hospital system that saw the biggest pain from these brutal cuts.

But secure employment is also about providing additional opportunities for workers to re-skill and upskill, ensuring that they have the talents that we need in a modern and changing economy. The reality is a transition from a fossil fuel dominated grid to a renewable, emissions-free alternative provides new opportunities for long-term employment but also risks the existing employment of many workers in traditionally secure fossil fuel dominated sectors. This is why the government's priorities around free TAFE, even for those with existing qualifications, is so important. The revival of the State Electricity Commission is also key to that. Those opposite have no plan to navigate this essential transition. The Leader of the Opposition has declared that the SEC is gone if he wins government in November 2026, and the 59,000 jobs lost when the SEC was killed in the 1990s and the pain that caused families around the state should be a reminder of the risk if those opposite get their way.

But secure employment is not the only aspect that is necessary for dignified employment. In a modern economy there is no reason why workers cannot demand greater flexibility from employers. This is a matter of not only greater choice but also greater freedom – the freedom to have a family with paid parental leave, the freedom to spend time with your family without sacrificing your employment or remuneration with the choice to work from home. We in this place have that privilege. We have a great working environment for parents. Unfortunately there are people in our state that perhaps do not have that privilege. The reality is that this flexibility provides important opportunities to women in particular, who still today are forced to choose between work and family, and nobody should have to make that decision.

I speak from personal experience growing up, when my mum was a single parent raising me and working a full-time job and was told if she wanted to change her hours to come in an hour earlier and leave an hour earlier so she could get home to me in time, she would have to choose between her job and her family. This is what we on this side of the chamber fight for. We fight for workers rights. Those on the other side will often scoff at it. Without the right of workers to demand greater flexibility during the first few years of a child being raised, just like my own experience, women are often relegated to domestic labour akin to indentured servitude, with little to no direct remuneration for their labour. Those opposite clearly do not respect the right of workers to make these demands. Just a few

months ago the Shadow Treasurer called on this government to mandate the return to the office for public servants, claiming that they are not delivering any services for Victorians.

I would like to ask the member for Brighton why disadvantaged communities like mine, who have far fewer opportunities for stable and flexible work in the private sector, should have one of the few pathways to such a lifestyle completely removed from them. Why should women, who see the largest benefits of this flexibility, continue to be forced to make the choice between home life and their career prospects? Of course this reminds me of the comments made by the member for Brighton's federal counterpart, the federal member for Goldstein – the current one – who has made similar statements regarding paid parental leave, saying, 'That is not my choice that women have children.' Just let that sit with you: 'That is not my choice that women have children.' For the benefit of *Hansard*, I just rolled my eyes. It is clear that the Liberal Party is anti-family: no working from home, no paid parental leave, worse basic services that parents rely on – the list goes on. This flexibility is only part of a broader fight for women's rights in Labor.

When I graduated high school, the share of national income that went to female employees was 34.8 per cent, with men conversely making up 65.2 per cent of the national income – close to double the remuneration of women, according to the World Inequality Database. This ratio has improved over the last three decades to 41.6 per cent of national income going to female employees as of 2023, although still representing men as having almost a 50 per cent-high share of national income at close to 60 per cent. This government has made great strides in this field as well, such as the Building Equality Policy to create additional opportunities for women in construction, a commitment to halve the gender pay gap – I could go on and on, but I do not have enough time to continue.

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (16:42): I am so happy to be able to rise and speak on this matter of public importance today. It is a curious thing, though, that the matter of public importance (MPI) claims to support well-paid, secure jobs, work–life balance, et cetera. Those workers – 'Sure, we'll support them as long as they are working in the city under a union job.' But I will tell you what, if you are working the land out in the country, farming food and fibre, there is no respect there, there is no support there, is there? And they are some of the hardest workers ever. If they are a member of the Victorian Farmers Federation or they are driving a tractor and working the land, what about support and respect for those workers? Because without them, you are going to really struggle to get that almond latte and avocado on toast, or a pot of beer actually. In my electorate, Deputy Speaker – I am not sure if you know this – we grow beer.

Wayne Farnham interjected.

Jade BENHAM: Yes, we grow beer, member for Narracan, because beer comes from barley. We grow a lot of barley, particularly around Beulah. What about some respect from this Allan Labor government for those workers so they do not have to repeatedly come to the front steps of this Parliament to be heard or to at least even be considered. We talk about workers rights. What about the rights of those workers that are working the land to be able to say who comes onto that property and who does not. If they refuse entry to VicGrid, then they get fined $12,000.

I know some of the members on the other side just plead ignorance to this and pretend it is not happening. Well, it is, and this will be the straw that breaks the camel's back for a lot of those farmers. They have been resilient now for generations, and they have had enough. After nearly an inch of rain in our region they should be out there spraying, but they are not. They have had to come to the city to try and be heard by an Allan Labor government that just turns a blind eye and wants to industrialise their land, with more union jobs, rolling out a reckless renewables plan through all of that productive agricultural land. How is that respect for workers? So this MPI is actually incorrect in its very context and needs to define exactly what workers we are talking about, because we are certainly not talking about workers in regional Victoria, and heaven forbid should you own a business or a small business in regional Victoria. What about the rights and responsibilities there? They have been demonised for years now by this Allan Labor government. Let us talk about well-paid, secure jobs for other workers

that are not farmers. As a farmer, as the daughter of a farmer, as the wife of a farmer, this is obviously a very big bugbear of mine right now, and it really grinds my gears.

However, I was also a small business owner and I have worked two or three jobs my entire life. I tell you what, under Labor Victorians are working harder than ever and keeping less in their pockets. The cost of living is absolutely soaring, and why wouldn't it be now, with 62 new or increased taxes? Those taxes lead to higher costs. It is simple arithmetic. Power bills are going up. Mortgage stress is rampant. Business confidence is flatlining. I had a meeting this afternoon with some tourism boards and businesspeople, and they were talking about – I say this often as well – how hard it is to do business in this state and offer local jobs for local businesses. In my region they can simply go across the river to Wentworth shire. I tell you what, the Wentworth shire mayor has seen that opportunity, has absolutely seized it and has opened the Wentworth shire up for business. They are booming, and that is because businesses are being pushed across the river by the Allan Labor government in Victoria.

Businesses in my electorate and all of regional Victoria are being crushed by the lack of infrastructure, the red tape, the absolute indifference, the lack of respect and the lack of care that we get from this government. How secure are those jobs when businesses cannot afford to keep running anymore? Work–life balance? What an absolute fantasy. Families in my electorate do not have time to enjoy work–life balance when they are having to commute for hours on unsafe roads and when they are having to travel for so long to access basic health care because they cannot get it at the local public hospital because of a lack of beds and infrastructure investment. We are struggling to attract a healthcare workforce because they know that they are under so much pressure, while still doing an absolutely stellar job. Try balancing anything when you are waiting months to see a GP, you may be waiting months to see a specialist and you may have to be flown out of town for treatment that used to be local, mind you.

This government talks a big game about workers rights, but again, what about the workers that are working the land in this state? The government is more interested, like I said, in helping its union mates than standing up for all workers. This MPI is not definitive enough in whom we are actually talking about. Let us not forget about the SEC. There are four employees at the SEC in Morwell. The member for Morwell talks about that all the time. There are four jobs. While we are at it, let us talk about the other workers that the government has sacked in the last six weeks. I spoke about this in my last contribution. This government has closed down and defunded the mental health and wellbeing hubs that were embedded in Victorian police stations. Twelve months this ran. It was part of recommendations from the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System, from the Victoria Police review and from other reviews going back as far as 2018. They embedded these mental health clinicians in stations, which had an incredible benefit, particularly for those in the regions that cannot access that centralised referral system in the city, because (a) they do not have time and (b) a phone call is not what is needed. They need someone in the station. They had that in Mildura, and her last day is today – absolutely disgusting. There are 20 of those jobs around the state that are finishing up today. Not only are those workers losing their jobs but the workers from Victoria Police, both sworn and unsworn, that were able to access that support, those workers and employees of the government, are now without that support. How is that having respect for workers in this state? It is absolutely disgusting.

This MPI is full of platitudes but lacks any substance, and it is really grinding my gears today. If this government truly cared about jobs, cared about families and cared about rights, they would stop treating regional Victoria as not even an afterthought anymore. We cannot even say we are an afterthought, because we feel like we are just not even thought about, particularly when we are told that decisions have been made based on desktop studies. Decisions are being made without even visiting the regions. Give me a break. This government needs to stop treating regional Victorians like we do not matter, because honestly – and I say this all the time – you should be thanking a farmer three times a day at least every single day, because you need a farmer every single day. So, you know what, stop treating us and the people that work the land with utter contempt and disrespect and stop

pontificating about respecting workers rights when it is simply not true. Start delivering some outcomes, not just these ridiculous slogans. We believe in real solutions at the Nationals – lowering the cost of living, empowering small businesses that offer local jobs, investing in local infrastructure, making sure every Victorian, not just those within the tram tracks, gets a fair go. Just to finish, if this Labor government want to talk about a better future, it is time to stop selling fake hope and start delivering some actual results for those of us that are growing your food.

Lauren KATHAGE (Yan Yean) (16:52): I am really pleased to rise to speak on this matter of public importance, but before I do, I would like to address some of the assertions by the member for Mildura, who seeks less talk and real action. There was certainly a lot of talk about farmers just then, but I can say that the real and humble action of walking with farmers through drought and working with them collaboratively to design a drought package to support them through those hard times is something that the Minister for Agriculture, supported by the Premier and the broader team, has worked hard on, and I am proud of them for that work. We have had some recent announcements about deer reduction programs, and I know farmers in my area are talking about the excessive amounts of deer and kangaroos at the moment, and I am really proud to be part of a government that is acting, not just talking, when it comes to farmers. We talk about small businesses in regional areas. This is the government that has reduced payroll tax for regional businesses. These are the actions that people are interested in and these are the actions that make a difference to people's lives rather than just talk.

When I talk about the matter of public importance around investing in projects and government services that create secure jobs and give families flexibility and work–life balance, I think about this topic in the sense of my children, which I think a lot of people do when they get to a certain age. When they think about the job market, when they think about the economy, they think of it through the lens of how something is going to affect their children. That is what I have done, thinking about my nearly eight-year-old, who wants to be a hairdresser, and my preppy, who wants to be a dentist. Together they could have me looking really good hopefully in the future if I give them a couple of decades. At their local state school they are absolutely thriving. We are looking forward to the 100 Days of School event on Friday. It will be gorgeous to see my daughter dressed up as a hundred-year-old. Not in a hundred years have we had such good school results as were announced today in the NAPLAN, the best ever results for Victoria, being first or second in 18 of the 20 measures. What a fantastic result for Victoria. This is peace of mind for parents who are sending their kids off to school knowing that they are going to get a great education. So whether they want to be a dentist or whether they want to be a hairdresser, their local school will provide them with the education that allows for it.

When we speak of peace of mind there are increasing concerns around the mental health of children. Similarly, the mental health menu that we rolled out in schools means that schools can bring in that support for students and can have a choice of what works best for their school community. That is another thing that brings peace of mind and supports families through the services that this government is providing.

But it is not all just happy rainbows; there are also happy elephants. My nearly eight-year old-daughter went on an excursion – I am getting there, Deputy Speaker; it is a long arc – to Werribee zoo to see the elephants last week, which was very exciting, but more exciting for me was the knowledge that every kid in her class at that little state school had the opportunity to go, because we have provided the Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund. No-one is going to miss out on seeing the elephants; no-one is going to miss out on seeing the new enclosure, which I am always proud of, having a brother-in-law who worked on the fencing there. So whether it is good school results, care for mental health or the ability to participate in extracurricular activities, the government is providing those important services.

Health is not forgotten. We know that the dental program and the eye health program in schools are picking up kids that maybe would have fallen through the cracks otherwise health-wise. It is interesting because it is a health initiative, but for families it is also a work–life balance issue. For people who work long hours or whose job is a long way from home, having their children's teeth seen to at school and having their eyes checked at school without the running around and trying to find appointments

and the after-work hustle is a fabulous way that this government, through its services, is supporting families with their work–life balance, and I am absolutely here for it.

Whittlesea Secondary College, down the road from my daughter's primary school, is having an upgrade. The builder has been appointed, and they will be kicking off. They are absolutely ready to go, and some of the work they are doing includes the construction of a STEAM building, which will have science and trades training happening there. I think of my daughters and I think of how, if they go to Whittlesea and if one wants to be a dentist and one wants to be a hairdresser, both of them can find that support at that local state school, whichever path they are taking. It is that balance and that flexibility that supports families and gives them peace of mind in sending them to their local school. My local secondary college happens to be an excellent one, so I thank Kathy Mourkakos and the team, and I join with them in remembering and acknowledging the service of Sian.

To have that work–life balance requires you to be at home, and we want to get families home faster and safer. In my community the Yan Yean Road stage 2 upgrade, which is kicking off major works in November, married with the North East Link, which we know is tunnelling ahead – and particularly the works at the end of the M80, taking away those traffic lights – is going to mean that people can get home faster to their families and will be able to have that work–life balance. This is an incredible government infrastructure project that not only provides that benefit for families but also provides jobs. I think there are something like 12,000 direct jobs through the North East Link project, and of course we know that with supply chains there is an extraordinary amount of jobs that are also being created.

We are happy to say that, whether it is through the services we provide or whether it is through the infrastructure projects of this government, we are creating the opportunity for families to have peace of mind, to have flexibility and to have work–life balance. But things do not always go to plan, and when that work–life balance is off kilter – when things are not working out, when the stresses of life are too much, which they can easily be – the government is there as well to support families. In my community what that looks like is an early parenting centre to support young families who may be having issues with sleep or settling, located in South Morang – the fantastic member for Mill Park is here now – and the staff there take extraordinary care of families.

Other ways that government services are there to help families when the wheels might be starting to fall off is through the mental health hubs – pun intended. With no GP referral, with no money, with no Medicare card, you can rock up and be greeted by someone who is there to listen and to care and who wants to support you through what can be challenging years with a young family. Another way that this government is supporting the work–life balance of families and ensuring peace of mind is the construction of the Mernda Community Hospital. Our community hospital, which will be open by Christmas, is going to provide so many health services close to home for families, which will mean that families do not have to trudge to the emergency department at the Northern and they do not have to head off to far-flung suburbs for specialist appointments. They will be able to receive so much care close to home. That is another example of how the infrastructure project, plus the services we will be providing through that hospital, provide that work–life balance for families. It means that this government continues to be the government of families in Victoria. This government understands families, this government is on the side of families, and we will continue to do this important work for as long as we are able.

Wayne FARNHAM (Narracan) (17:02): I am pleased to rise today on the matter of public importance (MPI) and the contribution that I am going to do now. Let us get straight into it. Part of this matter of public importance today is about jobs. It states it clearly here: 'We are creating jobs, it is workers rights' – it is all that in the matter of public importance today. I have heard time and time again from those opposite how much Labor care about jobs: 'We are for the worker, that's what we are about, this is what we do.' What they fail to mention is at this point in time they are trying to cut 3000 jobs out of the public service, 3000 jobs that the CPSU are fighting for at the moment. There are about 57,000 public servants in this state. How many of those 57,000 are going home tonight thinking,

'Is that job mine? Is it going to be my job that this government cuts?' And we get this all the time from the government – 'You cut, you cut, you cut'. Well, the government is cutting.

I just heard the member for Yan Yean talking about mental health support for parents. Guess what the government has cut that I will be doing an adjournment on tonight – Parentline, which has been around for 25 years. They have cut funding to that, another cut. In this debate today we have heard about the economic management of the government and how good they are on projects; $40 billion in budget blowouts is not good management at all, ever. The difference between the government and those on this side is that we will do infrastructure projects, but we will not be held to account by the CFMEU.

Peter Walsh interjected.

Wayne FARNHAM: Ransom. Thank you, member for Murray Plains. We will not be held to ransom by the CFMEU. When we do a project, we will do it on time, on budget. It is a different concept for the government. I know that is why the member for Yan Yean is giggling over there, because she cannot believe that those words actually make sense – on time, on budget. We will not be held to ransom by the CFMEU and the thugs that are employed in the CFMEU standing over workers.

Here is another thing. The government say, 'We're about the workers.' Bulldust. We tried to introduce a bill into the Parliament for police checks to get criminals off government worksites. The government did not support it. 'Oh, but we're for the workers,' they say. Rubbish – you are not. The government had an opportunity in this chamber to get rid of the criminal element of the CFMEU to protect the workers that they so stand up for – 'We care about workers. We're about the workers.' Well, why didn't you take the opportunity to protect them, especially the women in the CFMEU? We saw the violent assaults on television. The government did not want to stick up for them. No, it is only selective, isn't it – 'We'll keep the organisers in, but we won't worry about the workers.' Disgraceful.

If we are talking about work–life balance, oh my goodness, do any members on that side actually talk to people? People are working harder now than they have ever done before. People are doing it tougher now than they have ever done in the history of this state. This is worse than Cain and Kirner, and that was a disaster. Oh my goodness, you sit there and you say, 'Work–life balance – we're doing this, we're doing that.' But in most households two people are working and they are working extraordinary hours just to survive. Do you know why that is? Here is an indication of what this government is about: just before the last election, in 2022, there had been 43 new taxes introduced into this state – 43 new or increased taxes. In 2025, three years on from that election, we are at 62 – nearly another 20 new taxes in three years. And what do you think happens when you tax and tax and tax? People struggle. Businesses struggle. And what happens when businesses struggle? We lose jobs. I have got a contractor in my area, a road contractor, and because of the cuts to road funding, 30 people lost their jobs. The government does not want to talk about that. They do not want to talk about their absolute mismanagement of this economy – and it is. They are the worst fiscal managers in the history of this state, and that is proven. It is simply proven by the fact that in the 159 years up to 2014 this state only accumulated $21 billion worth of debt, and what is our forecast debt going to be now? $194 billion. That is a $173 billion increase in the time this government has been in this place, paying up to, I think the figure is going to be, $29 million a day in interest when we hit it. That is not fiscal management. That is not creating jobs. That is creating a state of disaster that this government does not want to talk about. It is a budget bomb.

The member for Mildura rightly pointed out regional Victoria, talking about infrastructure projects and creating jobs and everything else. Probably the biggest infrastructure project that will happen in my electorate is the West Gippsland Hospital, and it would create jobs. And how is that going? It is not. The cows are still on the paddock. The cows are back there again. They come off, they come back, they go off, they come back. It is not creating jobs, delaying the hospital. What is worse is that my community do not get the decent health care they need. We have got a hospital that is absolutely falling apart, and I would invite the Premier to go and have a look at it. The Minister for Health has been there. I want the Premier to go and have a look at this hospital and tell me that it is acceptable in 2025

that you have got holes in ceilings and that people are put into the maternity ward after operations for recovery. At what point in time is that acceptable? At what point in time does the community of West Gippsland become less important than the community of Melton, where a hospital is starting, or any other hospital over that side? I am sick and tired of the pork-barrelling of this government – sick and tired of it. We hear it all the time: 'My hospital.' What about ours? What about this side of the chamber? You said you were going to govern for all Victorians. Well, that is a load of rubbish. You are only looking after your own. You are not looking after Victorians, definitely not in my area. As I said, the fiscal management of this government is absolutely useless. A two-year-old could manage this state better than what they are doing at the moment.

And they talk about the SEC – 'The SEC is back, we're going to bring back the SEC, it's great.' Where are the 59,000 jobs? That is what they quoted. Where are they? The town of Morwell, the heart and soul of the SEC, lost jobs when they lost Hazelwood. A thousand jobs went. Only about 300 people got re-employed. How many jobs have been created in Morwell to date? The government will tell you from last year it is a 400 per cent increase. Do you want to know why? Because they went from one job to four jobs. That is the spin of this government – 'Oh, we've created 400 per cent more jobs in Morwell in the SEC.' Yes, four people. Big deal. How about you do what you said you were going to do? The people of Morwell have been unhappy for a very long time, and rightly so. This government have treated Gippsland and the Latrobe Valley and East Gippsland appallingly for a very long time, and they continue to do it.

We are the highest taxed state in the nation. I hear every now and again those opposite say this side runs Victoria down. No, we do not. We love Victoria. That is why we are in this chamber. We do not run Victoria down. We run the government down, because they are absolutely useless when it comes to managing this state. That is what we run down. We do not run down the people of Victoria, we run down the incompetent Allan Labor government and the budget blowouts and the state of debt. This state is in so much trouble, and they do not acknowledge it. It is just tax after tax after tax. This MPI is a load of rubbish.

Sarah CONNOLLY (Laverton) (17:12): I have to say westies are tired of those opposite trying to run us down. I cannot wait to speak and give a contribution on this matter raised by the member for Narre Warren South. I absolutely support this matter. It is fantastic and it is well timed, and that is because well-paid and secure jobs go to the very heart of what it means to be Labor in this place. That is why those opposite do not understand this matter and why time and time again when they come into this place as soon as they have to talk about the economy or jobs they start trashing Victoria. You would think that these people not only hate Victorians but cannot wait to exit the state. I would like to be able to wave them off on the border as they head north. Go to New South Wales. Go to Queensland. Go to another state.

Victorians want people here in this place that believe in them, that support them and that are here to govern for them and not just govern for certain sections and certain suburbs here in this state. They want people to be leaders for everyone, looking after every single person, regardless of their postcode. I would say to those opposite that westies are well and truly sick of you trashing and talking down folks in the western suburbs, whether you are talking about crime, you are talking about the economy, you are talking about schools or you are talking about roads. You tried to prevent us from having Melbourne Airport rail and the Sunshine superhub. We saw what happened to you in the federal election when you tried that on. They voted in droves for a federal Labor government. As I said, we are the party for working families right across this state. That is something that all of us here on this side of the house feel extremely proud of, because it is not just good for workers, it is great for our economy as well.

I note that on the previous matter of public importance (MPI) that was debated in this place those opposite sought to talk down Victoria's economy and paint a picture of a state that does not at all match reality. I have to say I do not think Victorians believe one word that comes out of their mouths. When you look at the data, Victoria leads the nation as an economic powerhouse – 'economic

powerhouse', two words that the Shadow Treasurer absolutely recoils from. If you put 'Victoria' in that sentence, that is exactly what Labor has done in this state. When you look at the data over the past 10 years that this government has been in power, more than 870,000 jobs have been created and supported. That is almost a million jobs. You talk to people about that on the street. That is so many jobs. I might even have to put it on a graph to contrast it with when those opposite spent their four years in government and how many jobs they created; I am not even sure if it clocked in the hundreds of thousands – 870,000 jobs in 10 years.

As a member of Parliament representing so many of the working families in Melbourne's western suburbs, I have to say that one of my biggest ambitions for them is to support local jobs closer to home. Time and time again I am speaking to ministers here in this place and I am out in my local community talking to big companies that have just moved into the very, very big warehouses that are being built in Laverton North and in Trug North, talking about them coming with their companies and employing locals because they want jobs closer to home. That is because in the outer west we have this alarming statistic, particularly in Wyndham, where seven out of 10 people have to leave the municipality to go to work. When we are talking about our roads being clogged with cars, we are not just pointing fingers at Geelong as they are heading into the city and coming through our municipality; we are talking about locals having to get up in the morning and brave that traffic on the freeway and local roads. People want jobs closer to home, and that is exactly what this government has done.

I am going to give a very specific example. I feel like the Premier has stolen my thunder, because I am doing a visit in a couple of weeks to the very place that she was talking about in question time as part of her ministers statement – that is, heightening the awareness around Mondelēz, which has recently opened its newest state-of-the-art national distribution centre right in the middle of my electorate in Truganina. Folks listening and a lot of locals listening in my electorate might not recognise the trading name Mondelēz. In fact when I first heard it I thought, 'Who is this?' But they might recognise some of the brands they own, such as Cadbury – I think everyone here in this place might recognise that little brand – or the Natural Confectionery Company, iconic chocolates and sweets that are now enjoyed by folks all across Australia. I do have to say during budget estimates we were eating packets of snakes that came from that company. I digress, but I will say I was there on the weekend with a whole lot of snakes for my kid's soccer team at half-time. These are iconic brands that we are so used to seeing and reaching for on the shelves when we go shopping and looking for sweet treats.

They have built their brand new national distribution centre right there in Truganina, and now that means our community in the west is home to the most advanced food manufacturing and distribution facility not just in Victoria, not just in Australia, but in the world, a $130 million investment in my local community that, more importantly – and this is where the good stuff is really coming forward for locals – has created over 200 jobs. For so many of those people that will work there they will be great jobs, secure jobs. They will have long-term successful careers there in that distribution centre. They will be able to work closer to home, and working closer to home means less time in the car commuting and more time doing things that you like doing with the people that you love.

Of course this is part of a wider story about Melbourne's west. Truganina and her neighbour Laverton North are home to what can only be described as a burgeoning warehouse and industrial precinct that is driving the creation of local jobs. Earlier this year, in February, I had the privilege of turning the sod in Laverton North for a new data management facility operated by CDC. When I got the invite to this sod-turn I thought, 'CDC – you mean the bus company?' and my staff said to me, 'No, it's not the bus company,' because they have one of their transport hubs there in Truganina as well, along Leakes Road. CDC is one of the largest private data management companies in this country.

They have invested more than $2.7 million or billion – I cannot remember – into setting up this facility, creating thousands of local jobs not just in construction but also in IT. We think about the centre being up and running and the jobs in IT, but building these facilities creates hundreds of local jobs in construction. These are just fantastic signs that, despite the challenges that those opposite might like to illustrate, highlight and constantly talk about as they try to drag down Victoria as being the worst

place to live and the worst place to do business in the country, our economy is booming and we are turbocharging the creation of well-paid and well-loved local jobs close to home. Major businesses like Mondelēz and CDC are placing a vote of confidence in our workforce and advanced manufacturing, logistics and information technology.

Of course it is not just up to the private sector to support job creation. Governments at all levels play such an important role in supporting Victorians and ensuring that they have quality employment. The public sector plays a really important role in this, because we all need to believe that our frontline services, our teachers, our nurses, our police and more should earn a decent wage and be able to support themselves and their families, and our record in that space continues to speak for itself. There is so much that I want to say as part of my contribution to this MPI around the jobs we are creating in education, including the 1400 new teachers that have joined the Victorian government school teaching workforce – in just over a year, by the way – as well as the amount of investment in health – the 40,000 new nurses, midwives, doctors, allied health professionals and hospital staff that have been created. There is so much good stuff to speak about here. Then we get on to transport. Do not even get me started on our Big Build and how many jobs we are creating through those projects. As someone who has the Sunshine superhub at the heart of their community as part of Melbourne Airport rail, which is now underway, this is a great topic for an MPI. Our economy is absolutely booming, and Victoria is the powerhouse of the nation. I commend the MPI to the house.

Peter WALSH (Murray Plains) (17:22): It might surprise the previous speakers and others on the other side, but I think we would all be in heated agreement with the aspirations in this matter of public importance (MPI). We want to have well-paid and secure jobs here in Victoria, we want to support families with their work–life balance and we want families to have a better future. I think most of us enter Parliament with that aspiration very much in mind, so for those on the other side to say that somehow this side of the Parliament is against the workers is just plainly wrong.

We all have the aspirations being talked about in this MPI. The issue I take with it is that self-praise is no praise. You need external validation as to whether you are doing a good job of achieving those aspirations that we are talking about. That is where we come to the discussion about how well taxpayers money is spent here in Victoria. We all want major projects and we all want upgrades to our schools, our roads or whatever the government infrastructure is in our electorates. If you think about the $48 billion in cost overruns on major projects in the life of the Labor governments here in Victoria, that would create so much more infrastructure and it would fix so many more roads if those projects had been done on budget rather than generating $48 billion in cost overruns.

There are 23,000 kilometres of highways and freeways here in Victoria. If you spent $1 million on every one of those 23,000 kilometres of highways and freeways in this state fixing the deplorable state of those roads, it would only cost $23 billion. It would not even get to half the cost overruns on the major projects. If you think about creating secure jobs and delivering for Victorian taxpayers, we could have secure jobs for the next five or 10 years right across regional Victoria by spending that $23 billion in cost overruns on fixing all our highways and byways, let alone the local government roads.

If you think about that cost overrun, I have got an issue in my electorate at the moment where the toilets at Swan Hill secondary college are an absolute disgrace. The parents of the current students are saying they were a disgrace when they were at school there. We need $1.4 million to rebuild those toilets. We have got a situation where students are making a point of not going to the toilet during recesses and lunches but going out of the classroom to use the toilets that are closer to the principal's office because the ones that they have to use are an absolute disgrace. Of that $48 billion, I would just like $1.4 million to come to Swan Hill College to build them a new toilet – a toilet that is probably 30 years overdue. When I went there and had a look at it with the school captains before the July school holidays, you could see why the students are complaining. You could see why the student leadership have actually put out their own video about the condition of those toilets, have put up a petition about it, have written to the Minister for Education asking him to personally come and have a look at them. I raised the issue with the Minister for Education on the adjournment in the last sitting week in June –

still to get a response about that. But think about all those cost overruns. We all have things like that in our electorates where that money could have been so much better spent over that time.

We also have aspirations for all Victorians to build a better future. One of the great Australian dreams, for as long as I can remember, is home ownership. Most people aspire to build their own home. If you think about their life, when they own a home they are secure in retirement because they are not paying rent. They are building a capital asset. It is a great thing to do. But the gap between aspiration and home ownership is getting further and further apart. That is because of the increased taxes that are being put on the property market here in Victoria. If you think about all the add-ons that this government has done, of the 60 new and increased taxes, nearly half those are property-based taxes. Everyone says, 'Well, it doesn't matter. We're just putting it on landlords.' But landlords actually pass that through to their renters. It is an issue for the cost for a renter into the future, because the landlord has to make a return on investment. They have got a bank loan they have to pay for that particular investment. All those costs have gone into making that gap between home aspiration and home ownership so much wider there. We would like to see all families have an opportunity to have a home – not just those workers but all Victorians – to build a better future and have the opportunity to own a home.

The member for Mildura talked about the issues for regional Victoria. We have got an aspiration that for people that live in regional Victoria their property rights should be sacrosanct. We should not be discussing a bill here in the future where a government department can forcibly enter their land, can cut the locks on their gates and then can fine them $12,000 for the pleasure of doing that. That is just flying in the face of a fair and just Australia, that we have got to the situation where we have got a government that is now going to legislate that they can forcibly enter your property, they can forcibly make things happen on your property that you have got no say over – that is just so un-Australian. If you go back to the Southern Cross flag and the miners riot at Ballarat, this is effectively a repeat of those sorts of things happening, by a Labor government that supposedly says it aspires to actually support Victorians into the future.

A lot of people have talked about jobs and the creation of jobs here in Victoria. Like I said, we have all got aspirations for the things that are set out in this matter of public importance. If you think about who actually creates jobs in Victoria, it is private enterprise. Government does create some jobs, particularly through infrastructure build, but that is paid for by taxpayers. If you think about a strong, active economy that creates those well-paid jobs, secure jobs that we have talked about, that have a work–life balance for those employees and give those employees an opportunity to have a better future, it is actually private enterprise jobs. It is employers that create jobs, particularly small businesses. If you go through the statistics, yes, there are big businesses investing, as has been talked about by some of the previous contributors, in major warehouse projects and that. They are great, and it is great that they are coming to Victoria. But it is small business that actually drives a lot of the employment here in Victoria, and at the moment we have a government that just seems so anti-employers, anti-small business with the increases in taxes – not only the property taxes I have talked about but the other taxes that go with employing people. Yes, there have been some cuts to payroll tax for regional businesses, but employers constantly say to me, 'Why should I pay a tax to employ more people?'

It just seems so wrong. It seems so counterproductive. There are far too many of the state's taxes, and even of the new taxes that have been introduced over the life of this government, that are regressive taxes. They actually slow the economy down. They do not speed the economy up. I would urge the government to rethink the whole 'Let's tax, tax, tax' philosophy, and we will spend the money doing a better job for Victorians than private enterprise can do.

The best way to get value for money for government projects is to break them down to bite-sized chunks, particularly in regional Victoria, where regional businesses actually get the opportunity to bid on those projects. One of the challenges that regional businesses have is, under the current government's rules, they do not have the opportunity to bid for those particular projects. So a big

Melbourne company comes in, bids for those projects and then employs locals and subbies to do it and takes 20 to 30 per cent off the top back to Melbourne. Let us get a system of contracting out government projects here in Victoria where local businesses, regional businesses, can actually have the opportunity to bid for them. It is only a matter of a change of government policy around the turnover of that business and the value of a government project that they can actually bid for. So if we have got a school project in our electorates or if we have got a hospital project – and they are fairly rare when they come around – a local builder can never qualify for those particular projects because they are ruled out by the current government's rules. Let us change some of those rules where those regional businesses can build capacity and build the jobs they aspire to, like in this particular MPI, and have a real opportunity for country communities, for country workers, to have a benefit out of those projects, not the city taking away 20 or 30 per cent to manage the project and then screwing down the subbies in those particular areas.

We all aspire to create more jobs, better-paid jobs and better working conditions for people, but it is about how you do it. I would put it to you that this side of politics would be able to manage those major projects so there are not the cost overruns we have seen – there is not $48 billion that has gone west in cost overruns; there are just so many noughts that no-one can comprehend it – and actually would deliver value for Victorians.

Dylan WIGHT (Tarneit) (17:32): It gives me great pleasure to rise and contribute to this matter of public importance this evening, because it is an absolute ripper of an MPI. I have listened to some previous contributions – fantastic from this side of the house, absolutely amazing. Mainly garbage from that side of the house. I mean, mainly garbage. I was pretty relaxed before I came in here, but then I had to listen to some of the dross that was stumped up, which seems like a pretty regular occurrence, particularly in MPI debates. I tell you what, if there was one person in that Liberal party room with a brain, it would be a lonely brain, because it would be the only one.

We look at this MPI this evening – and I spoke about this earlier in the week; I spoke about it on Tuesday when speaking in support of the government business program. Those opposite, and previous iterations of Liberal governments, never met a Victorian worker that they do not want to sack. And frontline workers – we are talking about nurses, we are talking about teachers and we are talking about going to war with firefighters and with paramedics. I could stand here and continue this contribution until the end of this parliamentary term, and I would not cover every atrocity and every crime to Victorian workers that those opposite and those that came before them have committed. I would not be able –

Richard Riordan: Acting Speaker, just bringing a point of order to the member for Tarneit, who seems to be enjoying sort of his own Philomena Cunk style history of the Liberal Party.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Paul Edbrooke): That is not a point of order. Get to it or sit down, please.

Richard Riordan: I draw his attention back to the matter of public importance.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Paul Edbrooke): That is not a point of order. The member for Tarneit will continue.

Dylan WIGHT: Let me tell you, Acting Speaker, it most certainly would not be the brain of the member for Polwarth, who just comes in here shouting at clouds every day.

When we came to government in 2014 we made a commitment to Victorians: we were going to be a government that built things, and we were not just going to be a government that built things, we were going to be a government that provided secure, well-paid jobs for Victorians in several industries, and that is exactly what we have done over the previous 11 years. The previous speaker spoke about the fact that you cannot just pat yourself on the back, you have got to have outside validation for what you are saying. I would say to the previous speaker: is the best economic growth of any state all across the

nation enough outside validation? What about the hundreds of thousands of jobs that we have created for working Victorians since we came to government? Creating jobs, putting food on the tables of Victorian workers and turbocharging economic growth with the projects that we have undertaken, two of the largest of which are going to be opened towards the end of this year and towards the end of the term – level crossing removals, new train stations; there is going to be a brand new train station in West Tarneit which is going to employ locals and help put food on the tables of residents in Tarneit.

I said at the outset of this that the contrast between what we do as a government, what we have done as a government since 2014 and what they have done when given the chance, when given that precious gift of government, could not be starker –

Richard Riordan interjected.

Dylan WIGHT: good on you – the hundreds of thousands of jobs that we have created, as opposed to the cuts, the closures, the sackings of local teachers, the closing of hospitals, the sacking of nurses. It was not even the situation with the previous Premier Jeff Kennett that you might get redeployed or something. Your school got closed, you were a teacher and you got sacked. If they really want to come in here and contrast between us and them, I think that is a conversation and an argument that we will have any day of the week. As you could imagine – I have mentioned a few, but I have also brought some more receipts just here that perhaps I will go through during the rest of my contribution.

We had the previous Baillieu government, which attempted to – and did – bring in its own iteration of the Australian Building and Construction Commission. They got a little bit of inspiration from their federal mates and they thought as a government what might be a fantastic thing for them to stand for was going to war with workers in the construction industry and going to war with unions. And they talk about government expenditure – in what world is it responsible government expenditure to employ people to go around and check if they have got union logos on their hats? They want to talk about responsible economic management; why don't we have a conversation about that? Absolutely ridiculous, and it shows their true colours. I will continue to repeat: they never met a Victorian worker that they did not want to sack. I have spoken about this guy McCracken that is in the other place before. He has already come out and said the quiet things out loud: if they were to get elected, cuts, cuts, cuts. What that means is that Victorians will lose their jobs and working Victorians will not be able to put food on the table.

What we have also seen, and I do not know if they come up with this position at their weird national conference when they sit around a fire and sing – well, they do not sing *Kumbaya* because they try and kill each other most of the time at their conferences. An attack on Victorians being able to work from home, an attack on Victorians trying to have flexible working arrangements so perhaps they can meet their caring responsibilities easier – flexible working arrangements have really been a thing in modern awards for a long time. But that has really been I think a positive thing that we could say has come out of the pandemic, employers being more open to those flexible working arrangements.

In February the member for Brighton, old winter glow-up himself, came in here and called on the state government to mandate a return to the office for public servants, claiming this government is expert in paying hundreds of thousands of dollars to back-office bureaucrats who are not delivering any services for Victorians. Battin later said that he shared Newbury's concerns but was not convinced the mandate was the right approach. We see some tension there, don't we? Given the winter glow-up, I think the member for Brighton may have some aspirations, perhaps of a higher position. They have gone quiet on it now because we saw this absolute dross get rolled out during the federal campaign by then leader of the Liberal Party Peter Dutton. They had to reverse their position, because basically no woman in Australia decided they were going to vote for them. So they have gone pretty quiet on that, but this sort of stuff, this sort of garbage, is in their DNA. They might just be smart enough to zip it and not say this sort of ridiculous stuff leading into an election, but given the incompetence I doubt it. We have seen a complete attack on Victorians who work from home.

They have got some new mates in union land, and we have seen that, I think, over the last couple of sitting weeks. But I would remind their new mates of their absolute opposition to the Firefighters' Presumptive Rights Compensation and Fire Services Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2019. They care so much about firefighters, but if they get cancer they do not want them to be insured. They should remind their new mates about that. What else did they do? They voted against the Workplace Safety Legislation Amendment (Workplace Manslaughter and Other Matters) Bill 2019. They also voted against our Wage Theft Bill 2020. At every single turn those opposite endeavour to commit crimes against Victorian workers and to come in here and try to contrast themselves with us. Give me a break.

Rachel WESTAWAY (Prahran) (17:42): I would like to rise today to speak on the matter of public importance submitted by the member for Narre Warren South. It is a really important topic that I am delighted to be speaking on, and I am also delighted to be up earlier than I expected. I understand that the Greens have not even bothered to turn up and speak in their speaking spot on an issue that is vital as far as I am concerned. We may disagree with approach, but the Greens cannot even contribute to the debate – the debate in regard to the importance of investing in projects and government services that do not just create jobs but actually go to providing well-paid and secure jobs, giving families the opportunities that they deserve to have a flexible working environment, and strengthening workers rights. Well, I am afraid the Greens have not even bothered to represent their electorates in this particular instance, but I am delighted to speak to it.

I rise to speak today on this, and at the outset I want to say wholeheartedly that I agree with the member for Narre Warren South on the importance of investing in projects and government services. I would like to say that I do disagree with the member for Tarneit, in the sense that governments set the landscape to create jobs; they do not create them per se. Unfortunately, after more than a decade in government, it is clear that Labor, in my view, have let Victorians down. In the most recent state budget, there was not a single cent of funding dedicated specifically to my electorate, the seat of Prahran. It is outrageous that a seat that is a jewel in Melbourne's crown is totally disregarded. Prahran boasts a significant trading strip, the beautiful botanical gardens, an arts precinct, tourism hotspots and a significant medical precinct. But in my view, the Allan Labor government simply does not care. This is an opportunity to create jobs, to support Victorians and to ensure that their lifestyles are better and that they have a quality of life that they deserve.

With state government debt hurtling towards $194 billion and major projects blowing out by more than $40 billion since Labor came to office, the people in my electorate of Prahran and in Victoria more broadly are paying the price. When it comes to government services, nothing highlights the failure of the Allan Labor government more than the seat of Prahran, where we have got persistent problems of crime and homelessness, mental health issues, drug use and the poor condition of our roads and the Chapel Street precinct. Local police in my area are at their wits' end. We desperately need investment. Prahran police station is still in need of an upgrade to the more modern, purpose-built facility that the community are still waiting for. Prahran police are 20 headcount down and simply do not have the numbers to maintain a presence in key areas across the electorate to deter antisocial behaviour and be able to respond to crime when it occurs. Week after week we hear about aggravated burglaries, home invasions, car thefts, arson attacks and stabbings. In the 12 months to March 2025, criminal offences increased by up to 18 per cent, while the crime rate per 100,000 is over 20 per cent in Stonnington, Melbourne and Port Phillip. Investment in our police station is desperately needed – more police and an updated facility. This creates jobs and it improves everyday life, and this is what we are after.

Since being elected the member for Prahran, I have asked the Allan Labor government for more police, more CCTV and more drug and mental health facilities, and we just have not seen anything at all. We need more to deal with crime and antisocial behaviour, and we need to make quality of life for the people of Prahran and the people of Victoria better. So far these requests have not been met, and there is no indication that they will be. Similarly, I have been advocating for the crumbling roads to be fixed.

Commuters have a right to expect decent roads as a key service responsibility of government when they drive to the jobs that Labor so desperately want them to have, with a better lifestyle and better quality of living with a home- and work-based scenario. You cannot even drive without hitting the potholes. In my local area people are telling me that they are simply getting car tyre problems time and time again and paying for more tyres because the roads are crumbling.

When it comes to jobs, as the member for Narre Warren South talked at length about in his contribution, I note with sadness that 181,000 Victorians are now unemployed as Victoria stretches to a record 16 months as the state with the highest unemployment in the country. The most recent Australian Bureau of Statistics data released shows Victoria's unemployment rate worsened by 0.2 points to 4.6. For the 16th consecutive month Victoria has held the highest or equal highest unemployment rate in the nation, and that is a shame on the Allan Labor government. This 16-month streak is the longest in almost 50 years of ABS collection of comparable monthly labour force data, and it has a direct impact on my electorate of Prahran, where cost-of-living pressures bite and unemployment remains an ongoing concern.

Cost-of-living pressures have been exacerbated by the Allan Labor government's taxes and charges, including the expanded and increased congestion levy, which has had a direct impact on the seat of Prahran. This has already caused rising parking costs across Stonnington as their costs increase, resulting in increased parking costs to constituents and businesses of up to 79 per cent per hour. Whilst it would be great to think people can walk or catch public transport to work or the shops, for those that live outside of my electorate that are looking to go to the seat of Prahran to work – and it does have a lot of hospitality workers – they may not necessarily be able to walk or catch public transport. We absolutely need more cost-effective parking, not this ridiculous congestion levy.

Since Labor took office, they have introduced or increased 61 taxes, fees or charges. This blows my mind: can I say very clearly that overall tax revenue has increased by 183 per cent since Labor was elected, whereas workers' incomes have only risen by 38.5 per cent. And what are we seeing for it? This has been overseen by a party that claims to be for workers and for their pay conditions. I am sorry, but I do not see it, and the people of Prahran do not see it. Victoria now leads the nation in tax collection, particularly the property taxes that are strangling investment in seats like mine. When a single person or couple is looking to buy their first apartment in Prahran, what are they facing? More and more taxes and charges imposed by the government. Stamp duty, land tax, development levies – this government has turned home ownership into a luxury that fewer and fewer can afford. Working from home – if you cannot afford a home, you cannot work from home.

The major problem facing Prahran and all of Victoria remains Labor's addiction to taxation and not to investment. Labor's taxes are driving up the cost of living as it attempts to paper over its financial mismanagement, meaning meaningful investment in projects and government services simply suffers. There are more taxes being collected but no investment in services that are desperately needed in my electorate. And when it comes to failures to deliver local services, not even our schools are spared. St Kilda Primary School does not even have a school hall for assemblies or sporting facilities since the previous one was demolished for works on the ground many years ago. And this basic responsibility of government is not a luxury; it is a basic responsibility to fund schools. If you want educated Victorians to actually go into employment, then you need to fund a state school. This is a basic thing in my view, and this is not happening.

While I am talking about schools, I do want to acknowledge the Inner Eastern Local Learning and Employment Network because their vital school-to-work program operating in my electorate does a fantastic job. It has forged partnerships with secondary schools in Prahran, creating genuine pathways from education to employment. I want to acknowledge that there are nine employers in the seat of Prahran who are making a real difference in this space in young people's lives. They offer a committed structure for work-based learning and a work experience program, and these are the sorts of investments that we need to see in the seat of Prahran. However, this organisation still has not had

confirmation of whether or not it will get funding for next year. These are the sorts of investments that lead to jobs and a better quality of life for the people not just of Prahran but of Victoria.

I remind the house of some points I made recently. The Business Council of Australia's review of taxes and regulations released in December found the Victorian Labor government had the nation's worst business setting and the most work to do in improving its business fundamentals. It is a shame on this government. You talk about investment, you talk about wanting a better work–life balance for people, but if we cannot even be rated by external organisations as a great economy, then what is left for the state of Victoria?

Tim RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) (17:52): It is a pleasure to rise and speak on a matter of public importance (MPI) that the government is making and to hear in this place who puts Victorians first, while those opposite whinge and carry on and scream at the clouds about how bad Victoria is, talking down our great state and the jobs and engine room of this nation's economy. Nothing can be further from the truth than some of the rantings that we have heard today.

Let us just go through the shopping list. Here we go: 870,000 jobs created since Labor came in. Guess the number of major projects of those opposite – strategic projects that required local content. Those opposite, including the member for Narracan and the member for Murray Plains – what did they say? 'We managed projects better and to budget.' Oh, really? Let us just go through the eight strategic projects that had local content requirements in the four years that they were in government. If you look at the record of the Andrews and Allan Labor government: 396. One of those eight strategic projects was the commissioning of the stickers they put at Southern Cross to find the airport rail that was coming in 50 years. I heard that they were printed by some of the Liberal headquarter printers to make sure the jobs for their Liberal printers were guaranteed. Remember when Premier Napthine put out the stickers? He just laid them all out with the little arrow. It was just absolutely extraordinary. That was one of the strategic projects, and the rest were just absolutely atrocious because they were in a state of paralysis. Yes, you can manage to budget projects when you do not deliver a project. You just do not have a project.

Lauren Kathage interjected.

Tim RICHARDSON: As the member for Yan Yean says with a score assist, 100 per cent of nothing. That is exactly what they have got right over there. And what do we see when they talk about debt and deficit? They have got a curious way of just forgetting about the history. The member for Sandringham had the former Premier and Treasurer of New South Wales down for a powwow fundraiser a little while ago. What did that great leader of New South Wales Dom Perrottet – you know the bipartisan approach that they had with Chris Minns, the Premier there. They both rode a train together. What did they say about the billions of dollars of cost escalations they confronted? 'This is a symptom of the eastern seaboard, and when you are underway with projects, you have to push through, because these are the intergenerational projects that will define our communities and a nation.'

You never hear them talk about that. They get Dom along for a little fundraiser every now and then and a bit of a powwow chat. I am sure when they have their national celebration Dom gives a bit of a speech and they all roar with applause. But he had an important characteristic: that when states are competing, like Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria have, some of these big intergenerational government projects see challenges over that time. They have add-ons, like we have seen on the level crossing removal projects. But one thing is always true – that is not true of Liberals in this state or in New South Wales: local content is critical. Job creation is critical, making sure that we have the trainees and cadets supported on these major infrastructure projects so we can build the Victoria of tomorrow and the next generation of workers, and there was never a truer example than standing out at the Suburban Rail Loop Clayton station site the other day. A guy who I know from the level crossing removals at Parkdale, which was an extremely great project, was one of the managers there. We were having a bit of a yarn, and we love a gasbag. We love a bit of a chat, this chap and I. He said to me,

with a four- or five-week-old baby, 'You know what, I reckon I can see my lad on this project in the future.'

Intergenerational infrastructure projects that look into the future are what our community needs and what create that investment pipeline, not those opposite, whose major projects were sticking stickers on asphalt – no, that is not our legacy – or opposing the Metro Tunnel. We literally lobbed them up a score assist. They could have claimed Metro Tunnel. John Brumby had it packaged up, the former Premier – '$50 million, there you go.' Baillieu could have come in, without even any intellect or thought at all, and gone, 'That's our project now,' and claimed it all. We literally gave them a score assist, and they opposed it. They completely opposed it because it was something that came out of a Labor government. That is why they opposed it – because it was absolutely the top-flight priority for our state. Now we are a few months away from opening one of the biggest transport projects in our state, with few rivals across the nation. Former Premier Daniel Andrews said, when he announced that project, that he might not actually open it. He was right. He will not have the opportunity to open that. That will be Premier Allan. I am sure he will get an invite, because it was his great work and legacy. But you look at that and you go, 'You've got to make those decisions, not just in the short term.'

This is the critical thing for those opposite: when they oppose such significant infrastructure projects, what they are saying is they do not have a plan in the alternative, because they have not come up with any alternative. There is literally nothing. I can narrate this in our community, where they oppose extra housing, where they oppose the Suburban Rail Loop, and then they try to con our communities to say, 'We'll just oppose it, stop everything, stop growth and turn everything down.' That is basically their policy – or they do not answer the question. We put out the question and we ask, 'What else would you do?' There was one alternative. Remember that Peter Dutton moment in state politics? Remember when Peter Dutton announced nuclear and then did not talk about it – $650 billion. We have got a contemporary example. The member for Caufield might know this, because he was in shadow cabinet at the time. I do not know if he promoted this, but remember in the lead-up to 2018 the intersection removal policy. Do you remember that little nugget? That was extraordinary, that one. Were you there, member for Murray Plains? No, they did not have the Nationals along for that one, because they would have known how mad that was. Remember that policy where you get 200 metres down the road to get to another traffic light intersection? It would have cost like $25 billion to do. For the one in my area we estimated that they would have had to acquire maybe a thousand homes just to get the width of roads, the off-ramps and the freeway-level detail. The member for Bulleen announced it, and we were like, 'Okay. How's this going to drop in the community, this infrastructure that no-one's ever talked about or ever asked about?' It had just come up as an alternative to level crossings.

But they did not know either. They never talked about it during the campaign again. They had this transport infrastructure project, intersection removals, these economic wizards over there who know so much about managing projects. They had it costed at something like $7 billion when the real cost was $25 billion. Then they never talked about it during the campaign again. There were a lot of reasons for the Danslide, but goodness me this one was an absolute ripper, where they had to put it on their budget line and then say that was their project. I cannot cop and none of us will cop that those opposite are anywhere near economic credentialed or managers – when I saw that policy rolled out, when we saw the former opposition leader nationally Peter Dutton announce a $650 billion project and then not talk about it, besides some 2004 clip art vision of what that project would be.

That is not serious governing. That is not serious accountability in what we need from our leaders in this state, and nothing has changed. We see the backgrounding that is going on by those opposite. They are getting a bit anxious. I know the numbers man for the Leader of the Opposition is at the table here; he looks very comfy in the big seat. It suits you, member for Polwarth; you have just got a bit of an aura about you. Do not doubt yourself. Do not always be the numbers person, member for Polwarth, you have got so much more to give. But we know all the backgrounding that is going on. There is a bit of angst, there is a bit of feeling, and one of those things is the deficit of ideas and policies. At least the member for Hawthorn, who was liked by himself – he had one vote going, and maybe the member

for Caufield, that is it – had some ideas. This one out of Berwick has not had an original thought. All you had to do was listen to how he talked about John Howard and Jeff Kennett. When asked about why John Howard was his hero, he fumbled this thing about economic management that any Young Lib would say on the first day that they ever found a script to the Liberal Party. There is no depth to the member for Berwick. There is no thinking whatsoever. He is a see-ball, hit-ball populist. He will read the *Herald Sun* clips at 5 am, and his policy thought is there by 8 am. That is literally what we get from the member for Berwick. At least the member for Bulleen, who is a bit of a gunzel, has some sort of policy cred, even though the intersection policy was a blunder.

It is coming up to the end of July in the year before an election; it is time to reheat the east–west link. Christmas in July comes through; it is time to bring the east–west link roll in. Yes, it is like, 'Here we go.' Remember those little drops that they do into the *Herald Sun*: 'Oh, we need one of those east–west links,' that people have denied for three terms over and over and over again. Then you get the member for Bulleen. He just gets up and about, he gets on MPIs and you see the momentum – it is time. And whoever backgrounded to Shannon Deery at the *Herald Sun* that it is Matthew Guy's time and it could be third time coming – and I am sure he does not do his own backgrounding, the member for Bulleen – well, we are up for it, because someone has already started the momentum. The member for Berwick does not have an original thought. The member for Bulleen has millions of thoughts – some of them cannot be confined. We know then that those over the other side have no thought for Victorians. It is a Labor government that continues to deliver.

Bills

Crimes Amendment (Performance Crime) Bill 2025

Second reading

Debate resumed.

Danny PEARSON (Essendon – Minister for Economic Growth and Jobs, Minister for Finance) (18:02): I move:

> That the debate be now adjourned.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.

Ordered that debate be adjourned until later this day.

Local Jobs First Amendment Bill 2025

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Colin Brooks:

> That this bill be now read a second time.

And Jess Wilson'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:
>
> (1) addresses the potential financial impact on Victorian businesses, particularly small operators in rural and regional areas; and
>
> (2) provides a forecast of the budget impact of the measures contained in this bill.'

Alison MARCHANT (Bellarine) (18:03): It is hard to follow the member for Mordialloc in this place at the best of times, but it is a very similar topic which we will be debating today with the Local Jobs First Amendment Bill 2025. I started this debate yesterday talking about the actual personal experiences and effects on everyday lives in our state when we debate a bill in this house. I was talking particularly about the dignity of having a job, and a job is not just a pay cheque at the end of the day, it is actually the foundation of a life lived with dignity and security and stability and the pride that

comes with that, particularly as we are a state and a government that has invested heavily into our major projects in this state to build our state. Behind each project is thousands of jobs, and that means thousands of workers and thousands of families that have had the pride of building this state.

I talked a little bit about my husband. He is a plumber, and he has been on construction sites over his time. We kind of play a little bit of bingo when we drive around the state, because he will point to the projects that he has been on and sort of nudge the kids and say, 'Hey, I helped build that,' with pride. He now does that as a teacher at a TAFE, and he instils that pride into the apprentices. He says, 'You are contributing to building this state.' In a local sense, in our own region, in the Geelong region – I am born and bred in Geelong – I have seen the significant change across the landscape not just in a physical sense but in how Geelong has grown.

With the amount of infrastructure that we have invested in and we have provided for the Geelong region it is an incredible transformation that we see. I have got some projects that I would like to talk about that are in the Geelong region. They have been strategic projects under the Local Jobs First strategic project initiative that we have, making sure that local content is centre of those projects. We have evolved in the Geelong region from manufacturing roots in our city, with Ford and Alcoa having been in our city. Now that we are a really diverse economy we still have manufacturing and advanced manufacturing, very much linked to our institutions of the Gordon TAFE and our Deakin University, and we are one of the fastest growing regions in the country.

Recently there was a report commissioned by KPMG, the *Geelong Risk Landscape* report, and I just want to talk a little bit about the changes that we have seen in that. They say:

> … Geelong's economic landscape has evolved significantly …
>
> One of the main indicators of this economic evolution is the growth in the Gross Regional Product … of Greater Geelong, which in 2024 was $21.9 billion, marking a 152% increase since 2008.
>
> Manufacturing continues to be the greatest contributor …
>
> …
>
> Construction, which has risen to the second-largest employer in 2021 after being the fourth … in 2011, continues to grow and now represents almost 18 per cent of the GRP.

This is an absolute transformation for our region. Of the projects that have been part of the Local Jobs First strategic projects in our region, some have been completed over time and some are still underway. We have had the Drysdale bypass construction, which was a bit before my time as the member for Bellarine. That is an absolutely incredible project. I remember the previous member, Lisa Neville, said that people used to say, 'That will never happen,' and it absolutely did. We have had Kardinia Park stage 5, which the mighty Cats are at. That redevelopment means a regional stadium that is going to be able to hold a whole lot more than just AFL and bring a whole lot of economic growth to our region. We have had the Geelong Arts Centre stage 3 redevelopment. We have the women and children's hospital currently underway. We have just had completed a dedicated children's emergency department at the hospital. We have got the Barwon Heads Road duplication stage 2, and I have visited with the Treasurer recently the Geelong convention and exhibition centre. I hate using the word game changer, but it is an absolute game changer for our region.

International eyes are now on Geelong to come to for a convention but also to experience the wonderful offerings we have on both the Bellarine and the Great Ocean Road. Our region has so much to offer, and people from all over the world will be coming to Geelong for that. What that means in a Local Jobs First sense is that that convention centre was quite unique in that we provided, under Local Jobs First, 28 trainees and apprentices who were experiencing barriers to employment. They were able to receive 12 weeks of fully funded training onsite at the convention centre towards a certificate II in construction pathways. That was through the Gordon TAFE as well. It was co-designed between Development Victoria and the Give Where You Live Foundation, who have a GROW initiative, which is a jobs initiative; social enterprise Gforce; and the project deliverer Built as the head contractor. That program and that initiative, with all those stakeholders coming together, changed the lives of these

apprentices. They had never had these opportunities before. Like I just said, they will be able to drive past that and in many, many years time point and say, 'I helped build that.' That is absolutely incredible and life changing for those apprentices and what that will lead to for their future. This is exactly what this bill is about and what our government stands for. It is about changing lives, is about giving the security of a job, and it does ensure that Victorians are building our state – built by Victorians, for Victorians.

In conclusion, I want to talk a little bit about how we know that having a job and having employment is giving people security, dignity and stability and means they can support their families. It means creating a state that makes things, grows things, builds things and looks after its people, and that is how we ensure Victoria's prosperity. It is shared, and it is proudly Victorian – made here. We have got an amazing story to tell. This government has made an incredible investment in building this state, and we are not going to stop. We heard through the matter of public importance a little bit earlier about the contrast between this government and what the other side offers, which is nothing. We continue to look forward to a bright future where we are backing every worker, we are backing families and we are giving young people who are going into the workforce opportunities for them to also be part of that bright future.

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (18:11): I rise to make some comments on the Local Jobs First Amendment Bill 2025. The background to this bill is that the program was first introduced in 2003 and requires contractors on government-funded projects to actively support local businesses, workers, apprentices and trainees. It has two main components. The first one is a partnership program, and that is largely for small to medium operators. It deals with projects both in regional areas and then also in the metropolitan areas – regional areas up to $1 million, and over $3 million in Melbourne metro areas. Then the second part of this is the major projects skills guarantee. That deals with major construction projects. In principle it is absolutely always important that we should be backing local jobs, and I do not think you will get much argument about that. There are a number of people in the chamber from both sides that will talk about their various electorates, what is happening in those electorates and how we can back local jobs and local industry. But we have got to do more than talk about this. You cannot fix the problem just by adding more red tape, and that is the problem with what this government continues to do, especially at a time when we are seeing thousands of small businesses actually close their doors because they cannot sustain the economic conditions that this government has put them in after 10 years of waste and mismanagement.

We know that in Victoria we are approaching $200 billion worth of debt. That means each and every day Victorians are spending $27 million just to pay the interest bill – over a million dollars an hour just to pay the interest bill. When you think about that as a cost, somebody is paying that, and ultimately it gets pushed down the road to the economic drivers of industry. That is business and that is small businesses, and that is where most of the jobs that sustain our great state come from – in those small businesses. Absolutely we should be doing as much as we can to ensure that small businesses can be competitive and can get an opening into government contracts and broader contracts and work. However, to do what this bill is intending to do – and that is to apply a whole lot of red tape and regulation just to administer this – is actually a huge oxymoron, because what that does is it puts more pressure on small businesses and in many cases sends them to the wall.

If you look at what has happened in Victoria, we have got just recently a report that indicated, according to the Australian Securities and Investments Commission, that 4242 Victorian companies collapsed or had a financial controller appointed in the 2024–25 financial year – that is 48 per cent compared to 2022–23. It is the largest percentage increase of any Australian state. The government will have you believe that in Victoria we are kicking goals, but if that is kicking goals then I would hate to see what the other means, because for me it is not even kicking a point. We are so far behind in terms of the economic drivers of our state. We see issues in terms of waste and mismanagement. We have the Big Build that is nothing more than a big bill.

We have got more than $50 billion worth of budget blowouts on all of the major projects, and every time the government cuts another ribbon on a major project announcement, it comes with a whole lot of additional waste on the project. Then you have got the government's Suburban Rail Loop, which in the budget is a 'to be advised' in terms of how much that is going to cost taxpayers. So we are in a real mess in Victoria, and Victorians are paying for it. You just cannot expect, again, Victorians to foot the bill in a cost-of-living crisis. Every single thing this government touches – everything, especially when it comes to financial management – absolutely fails, completely fails. Even today we find that Victoria Police have been overpaid by close to $1 million, and they are being required to pay it back. A government failure in terms of managing the basic salaries and wages of our hardworking men and women of Victoria Police, and now, because of a government mistake, Victorian police have to actually pay for a government bungle. You are talking about creating local jobs when you cannot even support the jobs that we have. I mean, this is a government that fails at every single point – at every single point, nothing but a failure.

When you have got a bill like this, which is about local jobs and local industry, and that is important, what are we going to do to support it? We have a small business commissioner who is tasked with reducing red tape, and every single time we talk about how we can reduce red tape. You cannot reduce red tape by creating more red tape, and that is what we have done here: create more red tape. I note that the member for Kew has suggested a number of amendments, and I support those amendments. The main thing here is we should not be imposing more costs on small businesses; there should not be more of a cost, absolutely. What we should be doing is encouraging small businesses to participate in more local industries and in more government contracts.

How can we get small businesses a better look-in in these government contracts? I know on some of the Big Build projects, especially when it comes to the level crossing removals, that you have government ordering a whole lot of steel, you would think from Australia, but much of it has come from China into Australia. Then when you go and talk to the contractors, you see that much of it has been overordered and it ends up in the scrap yard. When the Glen Huntly level crossing removal was done, I went down and visited some of the contractors and I saw a whole lot of steel sitting in the holding yard. I said, 'Hang on a minute, hasn't the project been completed?' And they said, 'Yeah, that's just the overrun.' I said, 'What happens to that overrun?' 'It just goes back in the scrap heap.' Seriously, we are investing in a whole lot of this steel that is over and above – wouldn't you think after however many level crossings – I am sure the government would be quick to tell me how many level crossings that they have –

A member interjected.

David SOUTHWICK: Thank you – 85. Thank you for that. So we have got –

A member interjected.

David SOUTHWICK: 86 level crossings. You would reckon after 80 you would get it right. You would reckon you would be able to budget rather than saying you will just put in an order for a whole lot of steel and hope that you have got enough, and you will just have this extra that ends up in the scrap heap.

Mathew Hilakari interjected.

David SOUTHWICK: Guess who pays for that, member for Point Cook. My good friend the member for Point Cook, guess who pays for that. The member for Point Cook can carry on all he likes, but he is not supporting his hardworking constituents that are dealing with a cost-of-living crisis. I would ask the member for Point Cook –

Sarah Connolly interjected.

David SOUTHWICK: Now the member for Laverton is chiming in – the member for Laverton, who got up before in her contribution and did not know the difference between millions and billions,

who could not get millions and billions right. I would ask the member for Laverton – who has not got an economic bone in her body, who does not even understand the difference between millions and billions – to listen to the contribution that she made, because we can make her realise that in that contribution, which I am sure we will replay for her, she could not understand the difference between millions and billions. No wonder we are broke in Victoria. No wonder we are broke when we have got a clown up the back, the member for Point Cook, who does not know the difference between himself –

Mathew Hilakari: On a point of order, Acting Speaker: relevance.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Nathan Lambert): Members have taken the opportunity to raise employment projects and industry generally, and I ask the member on his feet to come back to those topics.

David SOUTHWICK: I am really looking forward to hearing from the member for Point Cook, because I know he does not do a lot in standing up for his constituency. Many of them are really struggling in a cost-of-living crisis and are desperate for a job, and this is a jobs bill.

Mathew Hilakari: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, the last time the member for Caufield went across the West Gate, he could not find Point Cook. He was in Williams Landing in the seat of Laverton and he thought he was in Point Cook, the poor bugger. I will send you a map soon, I promise.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Nathan Lambert): There is no point of order.

David SOUTHWICK: In concluding, it is very, very important for us to be focused on local jobs. That is a key element, but I would remind the member for Point Cook to do his job and look out for his constituents rather than grandstanding, because I can tell you he has failed his community big time. We need to start focusing on the people that are struggling to pay their bills in a cost-of-living crisis.

Steve McGHIE (Melton) (18:21): What a great time to get up and speak on this bill. I certainly rise to support the Allan Labor government's Local Jobs First Amendment Bill 2025. As a western MP, I can only commend my colleagues in the west for the great work that they do and the advocacy that they do for their constituents. I know the member for Point Cook is here, the member for Laverton is here, the member for Kororoit is in the chamber and the great member for Werribee. You see the work that they do and you see what is coming out of the ground in the west, and I know all of our constituents are grateful for the great work that we do.

A lot of the projects are these local projects – Local Jobs First, Big Build constructions. Billions of dollars have been spent in the west, from schools, hospitals and community centres to level crossing removals – 87 level crossing removals across the state. The opposition spruik about failures of our government. I would love to see them remove one level crossing if they ever got the opportunity, but it probably would take them four years anyway, because I think it has already been referred to that they only committed to eight projects in four years. That is only two a year, but I suppose it takes a bit of time to manage eight projects in four years. For the first two years of that term they sat on their hands. They did nothing. To do only eight projects over four years must be quite embarrassing for them. You can understand why at the last three elections we have got greater majorities, given what we have been delivering.

David Southwick: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, on relevance, I would ask you to bring the member back to the bill. This is the government's bill, and I would have expected them to be talking about their own projects, not spending their time attacking the opposition.

Paul Edbrooke: On the point of order, Acting Speaker, it is entirely relevant. If the members opposite cannot draw the relationship between projects and jobs, that is up to them.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Nathan Lambert): Many members have taken the opportunity to talk about employment projects and industry generally. There is no point of order.

Steve McGHIE: Just in response to that, I thought I was talking about Big Build projects and level crossing removals. Probably the opposition get embarrassed because we are talking about 87 moving to 110. And, guess what, there are four in Melton: three in my direct electorate of Melton and one in my great colleague's electorate of Kororoit. I can tell you the locals love it, and they cannot wait for these projects to be completed. It is amazing work. I have got to give a shout-out to the construction workers working on those sites. They do an amazing job. It is fantastic to see these level crossing removals in both of those electorates, and it is so important to our local communities.

I will get on to this bill. This bill delivers on our 2022 election commitment to strengthen our Local Jobs First Act 2003 by enhancing the powers of the Local Jobs First commissioner and strengthening our commitment to Victorian workers, Victorian businesses and our communities that rely on the jobs and those businesses to deliver those jobs. It is a clear demonstration of this government's unwavering belief that when we invest in public works they should be for the benefit of all Victorians from the conceptual stage right through to completion and beyond – for the future generations – and we are seeing that right across the state.

I will go to some projects in my electorate shortly. The Local Jobs First Act 2003 was previously known as the Victorian Industry Participation Policy Act 2003, which was delivered under the Bracks Labor government – the great Bracks Labor government that started to rebuild this state after the devastation of the 1990s. We can thank the previous Premier Steve Bracks for starting this process. Local Jobs First has been applied to over 3000 projects – not eight but 3000 since 2014. That is amazing, and the total value of that has been about $197 billion just over the last 10 to 11 years of government investment, supporting around about 60,000 local jobs, jobs that are really strong, well-paid jobs for people in our local communities, and in particular in construction and in particular during the COVID period, where we kept the Big Build going, kept people in employment and kept them having a wage coming in during that terrible time across the state, the nation and around the world. It puts workers first, it puts our businesses first and of course it puts our futures first. That is just what this bill is all about. It is about ensuring that money is invested and stays here, creating more jobs and supporting our local businesses, and that is fantastic. It shows great commitment to using local content, down to uniforms and PPE worn by the workers of course; to supporting our First Nations workers in the construction industry; and to creating opportunities for our apprentices, our trainees and our cadets, which are the future of our workforces. There have been many, many supports for our apprentices in regard to cost-of-living provisions.

I just want to touch on a bit of the reasoned amendment from the member for Kew. I remind her, because I think she made reference to hiring workers and whether they would be local or overseas workers. The thing I want to point out to her is that it does not matter which employees you employ; whether they be local or overseas, they still have to be paid. That is one thing that we will ensure as a government – that workers are paid, paid well and supported in their jobs and hopefully supported with being in a unionised situation in their jobs, strengthening their position on wages and entitlements. Under the 2025–26 state budget, in addition to funding hundreds of projects across the state, $6.3 million has been allocated over one year for administration and delivery of the current Local Jobs First scheme, and this bill is about enabling local solutions, improving equity and creating the infrastructure that the community needs.

Those opposite are all talk in regard to infrastructure projects, and I keep coming back to their history around that. Again I make reference to what happened during the Baillieu–Napthine years. Only eight projects were declared as strategic with mandatory local content set, and this was raised in the previous matter of public importance session that we had just before we came back to this debate. While the opposition only care about cutting, closing and cancelling, we have invested in projects that create jobs and will bring benefit to future generations. It is great to see the Minister for Economic Growth and Jobs at the table, and I had him out at Melton only a week ago talking with the progressive Melton City Council about jobs, economic growth and investment in Melton. Our population is going to

double over the next 25 years. We are going to build another 109,000 houses in Melton over the next 25 years.

Danny Pearson interjected.

Steve McGHIE: Epic station? I made reference to the level crossings, but we are going to get a new Melton railway station. It is going to be incredible, so we are really looking forward to that, and the construction workers are doing a great job. I thank the minister for coming out last week to talk to the council and me. A big project is happening in Melton, and everyone knows about it. I had the Premier out there, the Minister for Health, the Minister for Health Infrastructure and of course the Minister for Mental Health out there only a week ago to turn the sod of the soil for the major construction to the fantastic hospital that we are building in Melton that will be completed by 2029. This will treat 130,000 patients per year and 60,000 patients through the emergency department. It will deliver major health infrastructure in that western corridor.

It will be managed by Western Health. It will complete the health infrastructure for the west along that whole corridor with the beautiful new Footscray Hospital. Then we have got Sunshine Hospital, Joan Kirner, the Melton hospital, the Bacchus Marsh Hospital, and then of course we are also upgrading the Ballarat hospital. So you have got that whole corridor with great health infrastructure, dealing with the health needs in the western suburbs and the surrounding areas. It is going to create, during construction, 2400 jobs – local jobs. I have had many people come to me, saying, 'How do I get on the job site for the Melton hospital?' and we have pointed them in the right direction. I have had people come to me about wanting to work at the hospital, which will create 4000 jobs, and the younger generation at our secondary schools now should start to think about looking at nursing and allied health courses, and we can start gearing them into that to prepare them for the workforce in 2029 at the Melton hospital.

But they are not the only things. We are building schools – two new schools that will be open next year. That is five schools in seven years being built in the Melton electorate, and of course the TAFE college where we will turn the sod of soil in only a few months time for a new TAFE college to come to Melton. This bill is a really important bill in regard to Local Jobs First and continued construction. It is not about jobs; it is about infrastructure and about supporting the community. I commend this bill to the house.

Rachel WESTAWAY (Prahran) (18:31): I rise today to comment and express my concerns regarding the Local Jobs First Amendment Bill 2025. The legislation represents everything that is wrong with this Labor government's approach to public administration: more bureaucracy, more penalties, more costs and absolutely no accountability for their own spectacular mismanagement and failures in regard to project delivery and financial management. I urge them to consider the member for Kew's amendments in regard to this bill.

Let me begin with the facts that this government would rather just forget. Just this February the Victorian Auditor-General delivered a damning assessment of this government's major project performance. The numbers are staggering. They represent real money – taxpayer money – and it could have been spent on hospitals, schools and essential services. The Auditor-General found that 113 major projects will now cost Victorians a combined $145.55 billion – that is an $11.66 billion jump in, what, just one financial year. Let me repeat that – an $11.66 billion cost overrun in a single year. To put this into perspective, that is enough money to build the much-needed multipurpose school hall in St Kilda Primary, provide police at the Prahran police station, invest in much-needed outreach services for homeless people and still have billions of dollars left over for hospitals, schools and essential services across our state.

We talk about affordable housing: the people of Prahran do want affordable housing. The average age of the people in my constituency is 35 years of age, and they cannot afford to buy into our area in the seat of Prahran. We have seen these sorts of overruns, the cost blowouts already, that are just eye-

watering. Half of the projects reviewed had significant cost changes, meaning blowouts of more than 20 per cent. Fifty-three projects alone will cost an extra $14.9 billion, and these are not minor budget adjustments – this is a systematic failure in terms of financial mismanagement on an industrial scale.

No discussion of this government's project failures would be complete without mentioning the West Gate Tunnel Project. It is a project that has become synonymous with cost overruns, delays and broken promises. This project exemplifies exactly why we cannot trust this government with more bureaucratic powers and penalties when they cannot even manage their own commitments. The West Gate Tunnel Project demonstrates that Labor's problem is not with contractors failing to meet local content requirements, it is with Labor's fundamental inability to plan, to budget and to deliver a major infrastructure program on time and on budget.

The Auditor-General did not mince words with this government's transparency and accountability. The report states clearly:

> The information public entities provide Parliament and the community is not meaningful.

That is a direct quote. It found that the public cannot understand major project performance against expected time, cost, scope and benefit, and that is because the blowouts are so big and the debt so high that normal Victorians just are bewildered. Furthermore, the Auditor-General concluded that public entities do not consistently and transparently report major project performance information in a way that is useful to the Parliament or the general public. We have got to get real here: this is just incompetency at its highest level. This is the same government that now want to impose civil penalties of up to $101,000 on private contractors while refusing to be transparent about their own performance or even provide basic budget impact assessments for this very legislation. The irony is breathtaking.

Here we have a government that has presided over $11.6 billion in cost overruns in a single year lecturing the private sector about meeting commitments and threatening penalties for noncompliance. When questioned during the bill briefing about the budget impact of these new measures, department and ministerial office staff were unable or unwilling to provide any detail at all. This is not what Victorians deserve, and I am telling you the people of Prahran are telling me this is not on. They could not even tell us what this expanded bureaucracy will cost or how many additional public servants will be required. This is the same government, when asked about data on previous breaches that supposedly justified this policy response, that admitted through the department that it was not aware of any breaches or inaction in relation to specific Local Jobs First deliverables. Whilst this government refuses to account for its own failures, it seeks to burden Victorians and Victorian businesses with more red tape, more compliance costs and the threat of financial penalties. Master Builders Victoria has described these measures as 'an all stick and no carrot approach' and, you know what, they are absolutely right.

The deprioritisation civil penalty schemes will unfairly penalise businesses and particularly small operators in regional and rural areas, who may be unable to meet the local content requirements due to circumstances that are absolutely beyond their control. Skills shortages in regional areas, supply chain disruptions and market conditions are all real challenges that businesses face, yet this legislation offers no meaningful consideration in regard to those factors. The increased compliance burden will disproportionately impact smaller businesses that lack the administrative capacity of larger contractors. While big corporations can absorb these costs and hire compliance officers, small and medium enterprises are going to struggle under the weight of this additional bureaucracy.

This legislation is part of a broader pattern of this government's approach: create more bureaucracy to distract from their own failures, impose penalties on others while avoiding accountability themselves and spend taxpayer money without transparent reporting or meaningful oversight. We see this pattern repeated across government, with major projects that blow out by billions, programs that fail to deliver promised outcomes and a consistent refusal to provide Parliament and the public with meaningful information about performance and costs.

The Local Jobs First program has been operating since 2003. If there were systematic compliance issues requiring these draconian measures, surely the government would have evidence to present. Instead they admit to being unaware of breaches while simultaneously arguing for tougher penalties than are needed. Supporting local jobs in Victorian businesses should not require threatening them with financial penalties and bureaucratic punishment. A competent government would focus on creating conditions for business success, skills training, infrastructure investment, lower taxation and regulatory certainty. Instead of expanding the enforcement bureaucracy, this government should focus on delivering projects on time and on budget. Instead of threatening contractors with penalties, they should demonstrate their own competence in project management.

The amendments we propose recognise that businesses should not face enforcement action or financial penalties when they cannot meet local content requirements due to circumstances outside of their control. At the end of the day this is basic fairness, something apparently foreign to this government's approach. We cannot support legislation that expands bureaucratic powers and imposes new penalties when the government promoting it demonstrates such spectacular incompetence in managing public money and delivering projects – $11.66 billion in cost overruns in a single year, projects with cost increases of more than 20 per cent as a matter of routine, a refusal to provide transparent reporting to Parliament and the public, an inability to provide budget impact assessments for their own legislation. Really? This is not a government that has earned the right to impose additional penalties on the private sector. This is a government that needs to be accountable for its own failures before it seeks to punish others. We will support amendments that protect businesses from unfair penalties while opposing this expansion of bureaucratic powers and costs. Victorian taxpayers deserve better financial management, and Victorian businesses deserve better. They deserve better than threats and penalties from a government that cannot manage its own budget.

I urge members to consider whether they can in good conscience support an expanded enforcement of powers for a government that has demonstrated such consistent financial mismanagement. The people of Victoria deserve better. They deserve accountability. They deserve transparency and a competent administration, not more bureaucratic red tape, not more costs imposed, not more barriers to entry and not more barriers to our local businesses to actually perform in this environment. What we are looking for is a release of these sorts of issues, not more bureaucracy and not more penalties.

Kathleen MATTHEWS-WARD (Broadmeadows) (18:41): I am proud to stand here today to support the Local Jobs First Amendment Bill 2025. This bill is about more than just how we spend government money. It is about ensuring that spending leads to jobs, stronger communities and fair opportunities for everyone. It sends a clear message: when the Victorian government invests in infrastructure, services and development it expects that investment to create local jobs, build local skills and support local futures, especially in communities like mine in Broadmeadows. I understand how important local jobs are, and I have seen the damage caused when industry is allowed to fail in a community. I have witnessed devastation, poverty and the waste of potential and human capital. I have seen firsthand the difference that jobs make, especially for young people. Having work and purpose is a foundation of a life of dignity, economic independence, pride and most importantly opportunity.

Procurement is a really powerful tool for equality. Every dollar spent by government is an opportunity to build something bigger than a bridge, a school or a hospital. It is an opportunity to build skills, to build small business and to build people up. This bill recognises that. It embeds social value at the heart of procurement by encouraging the hiring of local workers, especially those facing disadvantage; engagement with small and medium enterprises; and support for social enterprises, Aboriginal businesses and disability employment providers. Crucially, it ensures that these commitments are not optional, they are enforceable.

We have made strong progress through the existing Local Jobs First framework, but this bill takes that commitment further. The Local Jobs First Amendment Bill 2025 introduces key changes to the Local Jobs First Act 2003, and these changes are not cosmetic. They are substantial, practical reforms designed to ensure that when the Victorian government spends public money it delivers real value to

the people of Victoria. The bill will clarify obligations for both suppliers and government agencies so everyone knows exactly what is expected when it comes to creating local jobs and using local businesses. It will introduce civil penalties for companies that fail to meet their commitments. It will give the Local Jobs First commissioner stronger powers to investigate, monitor and enforce compliance, and it will ensure that poor past performance is taken into account when awarding future contracts so companies that do not deliver are not rewarded. It will strengthen reporting requirements so there is more transparency, more accountability and greater trust in the system.

We can pass all the legislation we like and develop rules and regulations until the cows come home, but without enforcement or penalties they are merely words. I am pleased to see penalties increased and the teeth of the regulator sharpened. A cornerstone of this bill is the new authority it grants to the Local Jobs First commissioner. These powers are not symbolic. They are practical, enforceable tools that will uphold community expectations. The commissioner will now be able to conduct investigations into supply performance, undertake site inspections and audits, report directly to the minister on noncompliance and recommend civil penalties where obligations have been breached.

This bill is about fairness. It is about ensuring that companies that win public contracts live up to their responsibilities and that those doing the right thing are not undermined by those who cut corners. In a place like Broadmeadows, where every opportunity for jobs matters, this oversight can make a real difference. The bill also strengthens reporting requirements. Agencies and suppliers will be required to provide clear, consistent data on employment outcomes – data that can be reviewed by Parliament and shared with the public. This transparency is vital. It builds trust, it enables scrutiny and it allows us to track what is working and where we need to improve.

Communities deserve to know how government investment is being used and whether it is delivering what was promised. The bill is all about using the power of government spending to build communities, grow local industries and create pathways into work for people who need it most: young people, women returning to work, migrants and those who have faced long-term unemployment. It is about ensuring that when we build a road, a school or a hospital we are also building skills, careers and competence in our communities. That is how we make every dollar count not just in the budget but in people's lives.

Broadmeadows is more than a name on the map. It is a proud resilient community built by generations of working families, many of them migrants who brought their homes, their skills and their dreams to Melbourne's north. But for too long Broadmeadows has borne the burden of systemic disadvantage and high levels of unemployment. Despite these challenges the spirit of Broadmeadows has never faded. Our people are resourceful, our community is united and our ambition is boundless. This is why initiatives like the Broadmeadows jobs hub are so important. It links local people with real opportunities. Since it was launched the jobs hub has facilitated hundreds of job placements in key industries such as construction, logistics and community services; partnered with TAFEs and local training providers to deliver accredited job-ready courses; and supported major state projects in our region, level crossing removals, social housing and road upgrades.

The Local Jobs First Amendment Bill will strengthen the impact of the jobs hub by ensuring that companies delivering these projects are accountable for their commitments to local employment. I take this opportunity to thank Basem Abdo for his work and advocacy and for recently bringing the federal employment minister to Broadmeadows to meet the incredible organisations who work cooperatively in partnership to improve opportunities for local people. I also wish to acknowledge the outstanding work of the Brotherhood of St Laurence, a long-time leader in employment services and a true partner in Broadmeadows' future. BSL has been a trusted presence in our community for years, delivering jobs and Victorian employment services and, more recently, leading the federal jobs hub pilot in Broadmeadows.

The pilot, supported by the Commonwealth government, is a new kind of employment service. It is place based, people centred and collaborative, and it is based on the Victorian model. It brings together

employers, educators, service providers and locals to design solutions that work for our community. In Broadmeadows this pilot has focused on matching jobseekers in real time to vacancies in growth industries; providing wraparound supports such as transport assistance, digital literacy and career coaching; engaging employees in co-designing recruitment and training pathways; and tracking outcomes to inform smarter national policy. Early results have been incredibly promising. We have seen stronger engagement from business, increased job placements and a real sense of momentum.

The bill supports that progress by requiring contractors to work with trusted local services such as BSL and the jobs hub, ensuring government investment drives local outcomes. One of the most powerful aspects of this legislation is how it aligns with our long-term economic goals. It does not merely place people into jobs; it places them into industries that are growing, future facing and resilient. The target sectors include construction and infrastructure, health and aged care, advanced manufacturing, logistics and warehousing, the green economy and circular industries and digital and tech-enabled services. In Broadmeadows we are already training workers for these sectors through the jobs hub, through TAFE and through strong partnerships with industry.

The bill ensures those efforts are matched by genuine demand and real employment pathways, and the bill is not a one-off. It is part of a broader policy framework designed to embed social and economic value across government procurement. At its core the Local Jobs First policy ensures Victorian businesses, especially small and medium enterprises, have a full and fair opportunity to compete for government contracts. Through the strategic procurement framework we are prioritising employment outcomes in disadvantaged communities, supporting social procurement and inclusive economic participation and advancing the circular economy goals and the creation of green jobs.

These policies are working in Broadmeadows. For example, the 'buy recycled' sustainable procurement toolkit has helped local suppliers in Hume access new markets by offering recycled and remanufactured products, creating jobs in waste recovery, manufacturing and logistics. The bill strengthens that ecosystem. It ensures compliance is not voluntary; it is expected, monitored and enforced. Procurement is one of the most powerful levers government holds and should be used to the fullest extent to bring about social good. At the heart of this bill is a simple but powerful idea that the benefits of government spending must be shared fairly across suburbs, across sectors and across society. Joe Perri, president of the Fawkner Residents Association, introduced me to Patrizia Torelli, CEO of the Australian Furniture Association, and I spoke to her again on Monday.

Victorian companies make up the largest cohort of furniture manufacturing in Australia and supply the nation across all procurement and consumer segments. Government procurement is the single most important trigger for ongoing economic viability of local manufacturers. Patrizia was very pleased with Labor's legislation, as it delivers everything they have been asking for and will significantly support local manufacturing of furniture in Australia. I thank her for her continued work and advocacy. The Australian Furniture Association will also support local manufacturers to meet accreditation and certification requirements. Local manufacturing of furniture will also assist in reducing fast furniture waste from imported furniture, which second only to construction materials is the largest waste stream in bulk terms to landfill and produces toxic chemical waste, including PFAS forever chemicals which leach into our land waterways, posing a significant public health concern.

This bill is not just about growing the economy; it is about making sure that growth includes everyone, and it is about making sure that no-one gets left behind. Local jobs mean more than just numbers. They mean families can put food on the table, young people can learn new skills and communities can grow stronger. This bill is about real people and real lives. When we support local jobs we are investing in people's futures. Think about that young apprentice getting their first job on a government-funded project. That is not just a job, it is a life-changing moment. It is the start of a career, a boost in confidence and a chance to build something meaningful.

Martin CAMERON (Morwell) (18:51): I rise to talk on the Local Jobs First Amendment Bill 2025. It is great to look across the chamber and see the glow on the member for Frankston's face.

I am not sure if he is waiting with anticipation for my contribution on this or whether it is the fact that he has been rubbing shoulders with Hawthorn footballers upstairs from the chamber. I am putting it down to the latter – that it might be that the Hawks are in town tonight in Parliament.

On the Local Jobs First Amendment Bill 2025, the actual program was introduced in 2003. Being involved with local procurement policy, with contracts that I used to engage with in my plumbing business, was a bit of a two-edged sword sometimes. It was great to know that when you were getting contracts, and mine were through our local council, you were employing locals in the area – which I did; I employed qualified plumbers – and also giving the opportunity for apprentices to come through, knowing that you were servicing people that lived in the area by supplying them with a job and that moneys made inside that contract actually stayed in the region. It was always great to know that that was where it was going. That became the norm, probably for the last 15 or 20 years of my working life. And every time you went for a contract you had a list of items that you had to work through. I spoke about the double-edged sword, and being a small business and having to sit down and work through that it was probably me out there working during the daytime on the tools but then sitting down at night and working through the checklist of what was needed.

With what the government is bringing forward, I hope that the more work that is going to need to be done by smaller businesses – the bigger businesses have people that actually do this for a living and work their way through it – and the other triggers put in this bill do not put smaller business owners on the back foot and make them think it is all too hard, because it is great to know that local businesses can put their hand up and their hat in the ring and apply for tenders that the government put up. It is one of the great things to get security for a business, and you do know that they are going to be employing those local trades that go along with it. Sometimes it is very hard to only be able to get the local trades at the moment because of the drain, especially in regional areas, and trying to get other trades to come in if you are lucky enough to win a contract. It is a really big effort by the contractor to make sure that it does flow. When they are bigger contracts here in Melbourne, we know it is the bigger firms that do them.

We do need regulations around that to make sure that it is going, because one of the things that you do see is you may be able to sign it off in a contract that you are going to have that local content and you are going to make sure that you are purchasing your materials at the local level and the money is going back into the community. But how do you actually make sure if you do not have certain regulations? How do you know that that money is staying locally? If you have got a contractor that comes in from outside the area, you can tell that they may be getting their materials and supplies from a local store. But how do you know that all the people that are working on that site are coming up to the percentages that they do need for that local content? So we do need balances and checks and regulations, but on the flip side we do not want the impost on people and them not wanting to put their hand up because there is so much work to comply with what is going on.

Down in the valley we have had the circumstances of the timber industry over the journey shutting, with losses of jobs. We are going through the transition now of our energy grids, where the biggest employers down throughout Gippsland in the valley have been our coal-fired power stations. We need to make sure that we are getting jobs and manufacturing coming back into the Latrobe Valley so we can service the people that live there at the moment, so they have good paying, secure jobs, not just for five years but for generations into the future. We need like-for-like paying jobs and jobs that people are happy and proud to be able to do. So we need to make sure that is going.

We have been very lucky down in the Latrobe Valley with a couple of projects, and they have been massive projects throughout the Latrobe Valley. I did have the Latrobe City Council here today – my council – that came in and were speaking with shadow ministers, and they were also speaking with ministers on the other side, government ministers. They are pushing for more manufacturing to come into the region, because we know that we are going to be losing a certain amount of jobs moving forward. I would hope that members and ministers on the other side take them on face value and have that goodwill that they know that you cannot finish and wind jobs up in the power industry and also

the timber industry and then not think ahead and say, 'Hey, we need another outlet,' so that the current people that work there – the mums and dads that are currently working in those industries – have the opportunity for their children to actually have good jobs as well.

The performing arts centre in Traralgon is one of the great performing arts centres in regional Australia. We have people and bands and theatregoers that do come and are blown away by what we can, at a local level, build. We know that we have the people on the ground that can actually make these projects work, using the local workforce. To have companies and also bands that do come through and stand on the stage and look out into the crowd and then comment on just how wonderful that facility is is great. We have swimming pools that have been built across the area. Some of our sporting facilities have had major upgrades, and it is great that we can also have local input on that. And some of the sporting fraternities have been lucky enough that people that are embedded in those sporting fraternities and racing clubs do build stuff and do have that manufacturing arm and can put their hand up to say, 'Hey, this is what we want to do.'

It is a great situation that we can have that local input into our local jobs, and we want to make sure that that does continue. But as I said, on the flip side we do not want to be having the fact that small businesses do not have the opportunity –

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I am required by sessional orders to interrupt business now. The member will have the call should the matter return to the house.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

Adjournment

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

Metro Tunnel

Sarah CONNOLLY (Laverton) (19:00): (1221) My adjournment is for the Minister for Transport Infrastructure, and the action I seek is that the minister brief me on debunking some of the ridiculous pieces of information that have been spread about the Metro Tunnel project. I have spoken in this place so many times about the benefits that this project will deliver for folks right across Melbourne but especially for my community in Melbourne's west. I will continue to do so as the project tracks along for completion by the end of this year. As I said to my husband, it is probably only a couple of months away.

People said it could not be done. Those opposite called this project a hoax and pulled out all the stops to try and stop this project. Never once did they back it in, and the misinformation that has been spread about this project by so many out in the community is I think incredibly disappointing. I think the most ridiculous myth that has been spread about the tunnel is the line about trains not fitting into the tunnel. We have specific high-capacity Metro trains that have been designed and built specifically for these train lines. Would you believe they are now operating today along the Sunbury, Pakenham and Cranbourne corridors, which will be connected, yes, by the tunnel. Some people cannot even grasp that these stations have been built with the latest in platform safety equipment, with platform screen doors that will line up with these trains, which I will add is so that people cannot fall off the platforms or, worse, throw themselves in front of a train. We have seen what happens when these tragedies happen and the impact they have on our network, so it is incredible that the Metro Tunnel has been built with safeguards to manage these types of risks.

But do you know why misinformation about projects like the Metro Tunnel is so frustrating? Because it undermines their importance and the overwhelming benefits that they will deliver to our city, like the fact that folks will be able to catch a train from Sunshine and be six train stops away from Melbourne Uni for the first time in Melbourne's history, that our veterans will be able to catch a train to the Shrine of Remembrance at Anzac station or that in about 10 years, thanks to this tunnel, students

will be able to catch a train from Albion station all the way to Monash University in Clayton, which will be part of the Suburban Rail Loop and save 15 minutes on their travel time. As well, there is this fact – and this is my favourite fact actually: the Metro Tunnel will enable anyone in Melbourne, whether they are from the north, the east or the south-east, to catch a train to Sunshine station, which will soon become a major transport hub, and continue on towards Melbourne Airport as part of the airport rail link without having to change trains at Sunshine. It is so important to call this stuff out, and I invite the minister to join me in setting the record straight on this fantastic project as we approach the opening of this tunnel very, very soon.

Container deposit scheme

Cindy McLEISH (Eildon) (19:03): (1222) I have a matter for the Minister for Environment, and the action I seek is for the minister to work with Visy to ensure that the container deposit scheme operating in Eildon township is approved at a new location. I am particularly grumpy about this, and the Eildon community are as well, and rightly so, because it seems to be almost out of the blue that this program, this scheme, was halted, and they want it back up and running pronto.

Visy have not approved the scheme to continue operating at a different but commonly thought better location. Jason Lodge, the operator, has done everything right, and the community, extending well beyond the township, are right behind him. Local councillor Anita Carr is also right behind him. It sounds to me that Visy do not want this successful scheme operating. They will not even respond to Jason's emails, which he sends every second day, or his phone calls, since they sent him a letter to say they will not approve this new location. I have been to Jason's previous location. I have witnessed him in operation, and he has managed very well. He has been there from the start, and he had this over-the-counter scheme operating at the back of his business, Nanny Jan's.

It was very popular, very successful. He collected nearly 2 million containers, and that returned almost $200,000 to local groups and clubs and to the broader community, the Buxton CFA and the Alexandra football club. He has met all of the compliance requirements through the Visy audits. He has done a great job. This is so popular during the tourist season that people flood there from all of the neighbouring caravan parks and campgrounds with their containers. Mr Lodge – Jason – needed to change the location of the site when the lease on the current premises was up. It was out of his control, and he found a new location and notified Visy as required. The site was previously a hardware store. There is ample storage, it is secure, it is under cover and it is easy for trucks to come in and turn around. After having to wait six weeks, Visy declined approval of that new site, citing lack of adequate amenities – goodness knows what that means – and close proximity to residential dwellings. It is in a farming zone, and it has previously operated as a hardware and electrical outlet. Visy has suggested, and I cannot believe this, that people go to one of three other locations in the Murrindindi shire – Pheasant Creek, an hour and 20 minutes drive from Eildon, and Kinglake pub and pantry, an hour and 12 minutes. Alexandra is closer, but the reason this was so successful was because everybody in and around Eildon supported it at that location. The minister needs to fix this ASAP. The community is fuming.

Inverloch surf beach

Jordan CRUGNALE (Bass) (19:06): (1223) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Environment, and the action I seek is for the minister to provide an update on the timing of the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action's community engagement activities regarding the Inverloch surf beach erosion and dune reconstruction project and the release of the final cape-to-cape resilience plan report. The need for further engagement is clear. A recent public meeting organised and hosted by active local residents attracted over 350 attendees. This is strong evidence that the community is seeking information, transparency, meaningful involvement and practical ways to help best protect our beach and public assets. In addition to my now two update letters to every household, as to ongoing communication through my office, my team and I this week established an information stand at the Inverloch hub to help keep locals updated and informed and to disseminate

the most relevant of DEECA's cape-to-cape resources. The South Gippsland Conservation Society is also planning two additional engagement activities to support community understanding.

This is a community that wants to be involved. It wants to hear from and have conversations with DEECA. It wants to hear from the coastal engineer experts. It wants to hear why the large-scale dune reconstruction engineering project, planned to start this spring, is the first adaptation pathway recommended and chosen, and it wants to hear, learn and have the opportunity to ask questions. The science, data, modelling and technical assessment studies have all been done and have informed water technologies experts and coastal engineers. Locals have consistently voiced their wish to retain sandy beaches for as long as possible, which in turn helps to protect both public and private assets. I look forward to sharing this update with my local community.

West Gippsland Hospital

Wayne FARNHAM (Narracan) (19:08): (1224) My adjournment this evening is for the Minister for Health Infrastructure, and the action I seek is a firm date on when the West Gippsland Hospital will start. I am sorry to put you through this again, Acting Speaker, but tonight I have the opportunity with the minister at the table, so I will repeat it. I asked this question on 12 November, after my father died, to the previous minister, who did not have enough respect for me and my community to give us an answer on that, so I am hoping tonight that the minister is at the table and she will treat my community with a bit more respect than the Minister for Health has done in the past. This hospital, we need a date on it. It is so important for my community. The hospital is in very bad disrepair, and no-one should have to go into this hospital at this point in time. I am asking the minister tonight, while she is at the table: could you please give us an indication of when the hospital will start.

NAPLAN results

Luba GRIGOROVITCH (Kororoit) (19:09): (1225) The matter I raise is for the Minister for Education. The action I seek is for the minister to provide an update on how Victoria's performance in the 2025 NAPLAN results compares to 2024 and what this indicates about the impact of the Allan Labor government's investment in education. Across Victoria, students, teachers and school communities have benefited from record investments in new and upgraded school infrastructure as well as reforms to embed evidence-based teaching practices. These include funding for the tutor learning initiative, the rollout of the school improvement framework and expanded professional development for teachers. With the release of the latest NAPLAN data, now is a timely opportunity to assess the effectiveness of these investments in lifting student achievement, and I therefore make the request of the Minister for Education.

Housing

Will FOWLES (Ringwood) (19:10): (1226) My adjournment this evening is directed to the Premier. The action I seek is for the Premier to fix the government's short-term housing programs to ensure no Victorian is faced with homelessness at the hands of a failed and failing housing system. Victoria's housing support system has collapsed under the twin problems of unprecedented demand and an appalling lack of funding. Every part of the system is stretched, and the lack of follow-on housing options means people are remaining in short-term or inappropriate accommodation far longer than intended. In many cases they are being left with no housing at all. Crisis accommodation is at capacity. Vulnerable people in urgent need are being turned away. Transitional housing is swamped and artificially constrained by the government's nonsensical time-limited leases.

I recently heard from a constituent in transitional housing whose 12-month lease is ending. Despite doing everything right, they have received a notice to vacate with no offer of long-term housing. They are now at risk of homelessness with nowhere else to go. Frontline workers have made it clear to me that this is not an isolated incident. The wait for social housing continues to grow. As of March 2025 there were over 65,000 applications on the Victorian housing register. Meanwhile, a lack of affordable rentals in the private market places further pressure on the system. Exit pathways are limited, trapping

people in temporary solutions that were simply never designed for long-term living, and the result is a bottleneck. Even those engaging with services and maintaining tenancies are still being left stranded. Victoria continues to experience some of the highest demand for homelessness services in the country. At the last census some 30,000-odd Victorians were without a home, almost a third of the national total. My office is contacted weekly by people caught in this system – people who want stability but are denied the housing options they need. This is no longer a matter of people falling through the cracks. The cracks are chasms.

The housing system is fundamentally and fatally under-resourced and misaligned with the needs of Victorians, and I call on the Premier to fix her short-term housing programs and ensure that there are clear, supported pathways that get you from crisis to stability and into permanent housing. It is the government's responsibility today and every day to ensure that every Victorian has access to a safe and secure home.

Newlands Primary School

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (19:12): (1227) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Education, and the action I seek is for the minister to provide an update on the ongoing investments the Victorian Labor government is making to deliver the Education State across my community, including for families of Newlands Primary School. Located on the corner of Elizabeth Street and Murphy Street, Newlands Primary was first opened in 1951 to service a rapidly growing urban fringe at the time following the end of World War II. Following the opening of the iconic Kodak Coburg factory complex just over the road, which was officially opened by Prime Minister Sir Robert Menzies on 14 April 1961, Newlands Primary enrolments only continued to burgeon as the community around it continued to attract more industry, jobs and families, many of whom were from migrant backgrounds. For over 75 years the school has continued to welcome and educate students from a diverse range of backgrounds, fostering a supportive, caring and nurturing learning environment for all, with wellbeing and inclusivity at its heart.

That is why it was a pleasure, with my colleague the member for Preston, to have recently visited on 27 June to catch up with newly appointed principal Luke Cripps and deputy principal Graeme and learn about the contributions of Sonya O'Brien, who has been an integral member of the school community for 35 years. Sonya began her journey at Newlands in 1990 and witnessed and helped shape the school through significant change, including periods of the 1990s when there were only about 90 students year on year throughout the school. Her contribution has been invaluable. We commended student leaders Millie, Abigail, Florence and Charlie. We heard more about the school's unique Spanish immersion program – Australia's only Spanish bilingual primary school, a unique education model that is supporting students through dual-language learning. Fantastico! And we were briefed on the school's growing enrolments. They are preparing to welcome 80 foundation students in 2026, with over 470 enrolments for 2026 in total, a world away from the 90 enrolments in the 1990s. We also thanked the students, the teachers, the families and the volunteers who make the school community the great place that it is.

That is why as part of the visit we were delighted to inspect the $20 million school redevelopment works that we were proud to deliver – the biggest investment and uplift in the school's history since 1951, providing for a new competition-grade indoor gym and basketball court already being utilised outside hours by the Coburg and Darebin basketball associations. There is a brand new school library, two modern classroom buildings with accompanying amenities and a state-of-the-art administration building for school leaders, teachers, staff and families. I thank my predecessors the member for Pascoe Vale Lizzie Blandthorn and member for Preston Robin Scott for their efforts in that project. And of course with the new facilities we are also helping Newlands and other primary families in our community with other supports: the $400 schoolkids bonus, free vision screening and glasses program, free dental and oral health services, the free school breakfast program, free mental health and wellbeing resources and free public transport for young people from 2026 onwards.

But it is also outside the school gates that we are helping through free kinder, saving local families $2500 a year, including through the Barry Beckett Children's Centre and Newlands community hub, the $200 Get Active Kids vouchers, the $17.8 million Coburg High School technology hub, the Coburg North sports plan with the campaign to save the Coburg athletics track, the new 40-kilometre speed zone on Murray Road, and over $570,000 to protect and preserve the Merri Creek and Edgars Creek corridor. Newlands Primary is a great place to send your child to school.

Trafalgar Road, Camberwell, road safety

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn) (19:16): (1228) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. The action I seek is for the minister to accompany me to the Camberwell Kindergarten and Childcare Centre to investigate the current road safety conditions on Trafalgar Road in Camberwell, particularly the section outside the Camberwell Kindergarten and Childcare Centre, and to work constructively with VicRoads and other relevant stakeholders to explore opportunities to improve safety. This may include reviewing the speed limit and assessing the feasibility of additional physical safety measures. The kindergarten centre, located at 25 Trafalgar Road, sits along a high-traffic corridor. The centre's outdoor yard and car park are positioned directly next to the roadway, where vehicles often travel at speed along a section where they are often also merging. The physical separation between the road and the areas used daily by young children is minimal. Fencing is modest, and the narrow nature strip offers little in the way of a buffer.

Understandably, in light of recent tragedies across Melbourne, the kindergarten community are eager to see proactive steps taken to ensure the safety of their children, staff and families. After conducting their own internal safety review the centre approached Boroondara council to request the installation of bollards along the verge. Council advised that Trafalgar Road falls under state jurisdiction and that such decisions lie with VicRoads. In turn, VicRoads assessed the request and advised that bollards were unlikely to be effective in the event of a vehicle travelling at 60 kilometres per hour, the current posted limit. The kindergarten subsequently requested the reduction of the speed limit to 40 kilometres per hour during peak times, but unfortunately this request was also declined, with advice that a change was not deemed necessary at this time.

This is a good opportunity to take a fresh look at this section of road and assess whether current arrangements best reflect the needs and safety expectations of the local community. In many parts of the state we have rightly adopted lower speed limits near primary schools, particularly during morning and afternoon pick-up times. There is a clear logic to applying a similar approach to kindergartens, where young children are equally if not more vulnerable, and traffic volumes at peak times can be high. When I visited the centre last week and met with Matt, Lindy and Diksha, I heard firsthand from staff and parents. Their concerns were genuine and expressed in good faith. They are simply asking for reasonable preventative measures to ensure children are as safe as possible in a busy urban environment. I respectfully urge the minister to consider this matter seriously in partnership with the kindergarten centre and with VicRoads. A considered review can identify practical, achievable improvements, whether through speed reduction, upgraded fencing or other safety infrastructure.

BATS Theatre Company

Pauline RICHARDS (Cranbourne) (19:18): (1229) My adjournment matter is to the Minister for Creative Industries, and the action I seek is for the minister to join me in visiting the fabulous BATS Theatre Company in my electorate of Cranbourne. BATS is 36 years old and has been supporting young performers since 1989. Funded and run by volunteers since its inception, BATS has alumni who have furthered their careers in performing arts. Their president, retired Broadway performer Bridie Clark, brings the world's greatest performing arts experience to BATS with every production that they put on.

Forget the Logies and do not worry about the Academy Awards, the Oliviers or the Tony Awards; I was at BATS Theatre Company's night of nights. I would like to congratulate the winners of their productions. *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* was the best overall production. The best director was

Bridie Clark, the best musical director was Kent Ross, the best choreographers were Georgia Neilson and Bridie Clark, the best dancers were Georgia Neilson and Sofia Kiseleva, the best new talent were Jake Christie, Maggie Ogden, Lilly Harvey and Matt Pines, the best actors were Ella Chapman and Chloe Harbour, the best costume design was Debbie Jenkins for *Hunchback*, the best youth show was *Moana Jr*, and the best kids show was *Seussical Kids*.

Pippin is their up-and-coming musical, and it is opening on 6 November and closing on 16 November. For the first time it will be held at a circus tent at Westfield in Narre Warren, so I am sure the member for Narre Warren North will be there. This is an industry first. They have a cast of all abilities, all walks of life and are represented by a great diversity throughout their cast. I will be putting the details about how to get your tickets on my Facebook page. I can absolutely commend the BATS Theatre Company. Check them out at www.batstheatre.org.au. I am very fortunate to have the best of the best in my community, and I am looking forward to showcasing them to the minister.

Community safety

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (19:20): (1230) My adjournment tonight is to the Minister for Police, and the action that I seek is that the minister urgently brings in some stronger protest powers and a permit system to ensure that Victorians can feel safe on our streets. Seven months ago, after the Adass firebombing, the government responded, suggesting there would be additional powers to ensure that Victorians could feel safe. Some of those included masking powers so those who would be wearing a mask and deliberately trying to antagonise people would be outed, and it would be illegal. Also, extremists that attended these protests to again intimidate Victorians would be called out, and there would be stronger laws. Thirdly, there would be protest powers that would exclude those people from deliberately targeting places of faith and worship. None of that has happened – we have seen zero. It is now more than ever so critical that this government responds with urgent powers.

The opposition have suggested a permit registration system similar to that happening in every other state in Australia. This would certainly go a long way in helping to fix the system. I would suggest that the Minister for Police call up the Premier of New South Wales Chris Minns, who has a very good system. In fact at the moment, where there are protesters that want to close down the Sydney Harbour Bridge, that system was enacted to ensure that there would be a proper protocol to still allow people to protest but do it in an orderly manner that would not hijack the whole city. That is what we desperately need here. I know that the new Chief Commissioner of Police has come out and has not supported a permit registration system, one of which is just about to be looked at in New Zealand, where he has come from. Every other state in Australia has one. This is the time for the Minister for Police to act.

I will draw attention, just finally, to what happened at the National Gallery of Victoria, which was an utter disgrace, where we had a protest targeting those at the gallery simply because the gallery gets funded by a Jewish philanthropist. If we had a permit system, you could direct people in an orderly manner and not the way that they have been. I urgently ask the Minister for Police to do something. He has had seven months to do something now. He has done nothing. The time to act is now. We would support urgent action to ensure the community of all people feel safe in Victoria.

Responses

Melissa HORNE (Williamstown – Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Roads and Road Safety, Minister for Health Infrastructure) (19:23): First and foremost, in relation to the question that the member for Narracan asked, my sincere condolences to you for the loss of your father. Unfortunately, I am not in a position to be able to give you a date right here and now. However, what I can do is tell you the work that has been undertaken to be able to fulfil that commitment in terms of the Warragul hospital. The Victorian Health Building Authority has undertaken master planning activities and reviewed the asset condition of the existing infrastructure that is there. We are continuing with that detailed planning work. As you would appreciate, there were four hospitals that were part of that $320 million commitment that was in the 2023–24 budget. We are continuing to work with the

Department of Health to be able to prioritise what those needs are, but we need to actually work out what the existing asset is and what the planning is that needs to be done. That is the work that is underway, and I am really happy to have a further conversation with the member about that as that work proceeds.

In relation to the question that the member for Hawthorn asked, road safety, I have got to say, is the thing that keeps me awake at night. It is the most important thing that we can focus on in a bipartisan way across the government, because we are seeing the worst road toll statistics in more than two decades. I am more than happy to ask the department to review those speed limits. I appreciate that infrastructure like bollards may not necessarily be an appropriate treatment, but I think it is incumbent on government to look at what we can do to improve road safety outcomes, particularly as we are seeing at this point in time in the calendar a disproportionate cohort of vulnerable road users – your pedestrians but also your motorcyclists – losing their lives on the road network. My thoughts go out to everyone in that situation.

In relation to other matters, we had the member for Laverton raise a matter for the Minister for Transport Infrastructure. We had the members for Eildon and Bass raise matters for the Minister for Environment. We had the member for Kororoit raise a matter for the Minister for Education. The member for Ringwood, who I understand has gone through significant family trauma today in terms of the road toll, and my thoughts are with him and his family, raised a matter for the Premier. We had the member for Pascoe Vale raise a matter for the Minister for Education. We had the member for Cranbourne raise a very exciting matter for the Minister for Creative Industries, and the member for Caulfield raised a matter for the Minister for Police. I will refer them accordingly.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. The house stands adjourned until tomorrow morning.

House adjourned 7:27 pm.