



Hansard

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

60th Parliament

Tuesday 4 March 2025

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

Brad Battin (from 27 December 2024)

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

Bridget Vallence (from 7 January 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

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Tuesday 4 March 2025

The SPEAKER (Maree Edwards) took the chair at 12:03 pm, read the prayer and made an acknowledgement of country.

Members

Member for Prahran

Member for Werribee

Swearing in

The SPEAKER (12:04): I advise the house that I have received returns to the writs issued on 20 December 2024 and 6 January 2025, which state that Rachel Westaway has been elected for the electoral district of Prahran and John Lister has been elected for the electoral district of Werribee.

Rachel Westaway introduced and sworn.

John Lister introduced and affirmed.

Bills

Workplace Injury Rehabilitation and Compensation Amendment Bill 2025

Introduction and first reading

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Minister for Education, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC) (12:08): I move:

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

Motion agreed to.

Bridget VALLENCE (Evelyn) (12:08): I ask for a brief explanation of the bill.

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Minister for Education, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC) (12:09): In response to the shadow minister, this legislation will improve the work experiences and the experience of injured workers who have access to the WorkCover scheme. It will also enhance support provided to family members who have had a family member who has lost their life in a workplace injury or an accident. It will also improve the operations of the Accident Compensation Conciliation Service, which trades as the Workplace Injury Commission, and it will streamline administrative arrangements relating to the WorkSafe board and chief executive officer as well as the hearing loss assessors.

Read first time.

Ordered to be read second time tomorrow.

Superannuation Legislation Amendment Bill 2025

Introduction and first reading

Danny PEARSON (Essendon – Minister for Economic Growth and Jobs, Minister for Finance) (12:09): I move:

That I introduce a bill for an act to amend the Emergency Services Superannuation Act 1986, the State Superannuation Act 1988 and the Transport Superannuation Act 1988 and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

Bridget VALLENCE (Evelyn) (12:10): I ask for a brief explanation of the bill.

Danny PEARSON (Essendon – Minister for Economic Growth and Jobs, Minister for Finance) (12:10): The bill will amend the Emergency Services Superannuation Act 1986 to (a) legislate the superable salary policy for executive officers and contract employees who are members of the Emergency Services Superannuation Scheme, (b) extend the period available to allow spouses following the death of a member to apply to become a member of the Emergency Services and State Super's accumulation scheme, (c) increase the number of times a member can change their contribution rate each year, including amendments to both the State Superannuation Act 1988 and the Transport Superannuation Act 1988 to achieve the same purpose and (d) introduce various amendments to support the efficient operation of the ESSSuper board.

Read first time.

Ordered to be read second time tomorrow.

Building Legislation Amendment (Buyer Protections) Bill 2025

Introduction and first reading

Nick STAIKOS (Bentleigh – Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Local Government) (12:11): I move:

That I introduce a bill for an act to amend the Building Act 1993, the Domestic Building Contracts Act 1995, the Sale of Land Act 1962, the Subdivision Act 1988 and the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 1998 and for other purposes.

Tim McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (12:12): I request a brief explanation of the bill.

Nick STAIKOS (Bentleigh – Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Local Government) (12:12): The bill will deliver more protections for Victorian homebuyers by establishing the Building and Plumbing Commission, with new powers to order the rectification of building defects, establish a developer bond scheme and introduce a first-resort domestic building warranty scheme.

Read first time.

Ordered to be read second time tomorrow.

Business of the house

Notices of motion and orders of the day

The SPEAKER (12:12): General business, notices of motion 7, 8 and 32 and orders of the day 5 to 8, will be removed from the notice paper unless members wishing their matter to remain advise the Clerk in writing before 5 pm today.

Committees

Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee

Alert Digest No. 3

Gary MAAS (Narre Warren South) (12:13): I have the honour to present to the house a report from the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee, being *Alert Digest* No. 3 of 2025, on the following bills:

Help to Buy (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2025

Justice Legislation Amendment (Anti-vilification and Social Cohesion) Bill 2024 – house amendments

Safe Patient Care (Nurse to Patient and Midwife to Patient Ratios) Amendment Bill 2025

Terrorism (Community Protection) and Control of Weapons Amendment Bill 2024

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

together with appendices.

Ordered to be published.

*Documents***Documents****Incorporated list as follows:****DOCUMENTS TABLED UNDER ACTS OF PARLIAMENT** – The Clerk tabled:

Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978 – Order under ss 17B and 17D granting a license and a lease over Daylesford Court House and Residence Reserve

Interpretation of Legislation Act 1984 – Notice under s 32(3)(a)(iii) in relation to Statutory Rule 81/2024 (*Gazette S78, 27 February 2025*)

Planning and Environment Act 1987 – Notices of approval of amendments to the following Planning Schemes:

Boroondara – C414

Cardinia – C274

Knox – C191

Victoria Planning Provisions – VC257, VC266, VC274

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 – Documents under s 16B in relation to *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* – Ministerial Order No 1472 – Order Amending Structured Workplace Learning and Work Experience Arrangements Ministerial Orders (Ministerial Order No 1412 and Ministerial Order No 1413).

*Bills***Inquiries Amendment (Yoorrook Justice Commission Records and Other Matters) Bill 2024****Justice Legislation Amendment (Committals) Bill 2024***Royal assent*

The SPEAKER (12:14): I inform the house that the Governor has given royal assent to the Inquiries Amendment (Yoorrook Justice Commission Records and Other Matters) Bill 2024 and the Justice Legislation Amendment (Committals) Bill 2024.

*Announcements***Commission to administer oath or affirmation to members**

The SPEAKER (12:14): The Deputy Speaker has received a commission from the Governor to administer the oath or affirmation to members during any period in which the Speaker is absent or unable to perform the duties of their office, given on 4 March.

*Business of the house***Standing and sessional orders**

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services) (12:15): I move, by leave:

That so much of standing and sessional orders be suspended:

- (1) on Wednesday 5 March 2025 to allow the member for Werribee to make an inaugural speech for a maximum of 15 minutes immediately after the matter of public importance; and
- (2) on Wednesday 19 March 2025 to allow the member for Prahran to make an inaugural speech for a maximum of 15 minutes immediately after the grievance debate.

Motion agreed to.

*Motions***Motions by leave**

Gabrielle DE VIETRI (Richmond) (12:15): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the Shadow Attorney-General, the member for Malvern, for his public comments that exploited Islamic beliefs for political pointscoring and presumed to know what members of the Muslim community would find offensive.

Leave refused.

*Business of the house***Program**

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services) (12:16): I move:

That, under standing order 94(2), the orders of the day, government business, relating to the following bills be considered and completed by 5 pm on 6 March 2025:

Terrorism (Community Protection) and Control of Weapons Amendment Bill 2024

Safe Patient Care (Nurse to Patient and Midwife to Patient Ratios) Amendment Bill 2025

Help to Buy (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2025.

What a delight it is to be in the Parliament this week welcoming two new members to this place. I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the member for Prahran on her election and on her joining us in this chamber today and also to congratulate the member for Werribee, a person who is well known to those of us on this side for all the great contributions that he has made in various roles, including for a time as an adviser to the Honourable Lisa Neville but more recently as a teacher in one of our fantastic government schools supported by the Allan Labor government.

With this government business program today there are some very important bills on the agenda, but you will forgive me for perhaps highlighting nurse-to-patient and midwife-to-patient ratios as a significant topic that will be being debated. I know that on this side of the house our members are champing at the bit to get up on their feet and talk to this bill, which of course only further strengthens nurse-to-patient and midwife-to-patient ratios in this state. We were the first state to introduce nurse-to-patient and midwife-to-patient ratios, and we were able to legislate those when we came to office in 2014. This bill, as I said, delivers on our commitments that were made in 2022 to the nurses and midwives through the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation, their union.

We will also be talking to the terrorism bill, which will be debated today. Our government recognises the need for therapeutic intervention to address the vulnerabilities that underpin an individual trajectory towards a life of crime, because no-one wants to see that. We are all agreed on that. We are particularly going to work to ensure that people have every opportunity to get on the right track to live a purposeful life here in this state. The bill notably expands the eligibility criteria for programs helping Victorians who are at risk of radicalising towards violent extremism. This is absolutely, vitally important, particularly in this age in which we currently live of instability right around the world. Further, our government has committed to getting knives out of the hands of criminals and off the streets, because there is no excuse for anyone to be carrying knives around in everyday life – absolutely no excuse. It is not acceptable, so we will be debating that bill.

Help to Buy – everyone knows that right now this government has a steadfast focus on building more homes so that more Victorians have the opportunity to realise the Australian dream of owning their own home or being able to rent an affordable property. We are doing everything in our power to ensure that we can deliver more homes for more Victorians despite the unrelenting opposition of those on the other side. It is for this reason, this steadfast commitment, that our government introduced the Victorian Homebuyer Fund in 2021, four years ago, and our vision to deliver 800,000 homes over the

next decade. We have more recently announced a number of measures to assist more people into housing. I think they are well known, and there will be opportunities, I suspect, to ventilate those during this debate. But the Commonwealth have stepped in and introduced their own Help to Buy scheme, yet one more example of where Victoria leads the way and other jurisdictions follow. We are very proud to have established this, as I said, to lead the way. But now it is time to pass that mantle on, and I welcome the Commonwealth government's establishment of Help to Buy, which is making a big difference, particularly for young people. I am sure we have all got stories of young people who are accessing this very important scheme.

It is a very important government business program. Let us see if those on the other side will support it or whether they will do what they often do, which is oppose.

Bridget VALLENCE (Evelyn) (12:21): I rise to make my contribution on the government business program and also take the opportunity to welcome the two new members joining us in the chamber today, the member for Werribee and the member for Prahran. I wish to congratulate particularly the new member for Prahran and note how determined she is to be such a strong advocate for her community. I look forward to her inaugural speech on 19 March and her contributions in this chamber going forward.

I thank the Leader of the House for her explanation of the government business program, but I regret to inform the Leader of the House that we do not share the same level of enthusiasm as the Leader of the House and we will be opposing the government business program. The principal reason why we will be opposing the government business program is because we sought to go into consideration in detail on some very important bills in the program. Regrettably, the Labor government have again declined our very reasonable request, limiting transparency and hiding from scrutiny in terms of their proposed legislation. As I have said previously, we on this side of the house believe there is considerable merit in having the opportunity to scrutinise the bills put before this house. We do not think that this Parliament should be treated by the Labor government just as a rubberstamping exercise.

As we saw in the last sitting week, the government was forced to backflip on its Justice Legislation Amendment (Anti-vilification and Social Cohesion) Bill 2024 after the public outrage it provoked and the advocacy by the Victorian Liberals and Nationals, led by our Shadow Attorney-General, which resulted in the Labor government introducing house amendments. Perhaps if the government had provided this house with the opportunity to consider bills in detail, as we seek each week, it would have become clear to the government that there were problems at a much earlier stage in that particular bill, which is precisely why we have asked to do so on the bills this week. It should be remembered that we do have very limited time as opposition members to consult with our communities.

We have got the Safe Patient Care (Nurse to Patient and Midwife to Patient Ratios) Amendment Bill 2025, Help to Buy (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2025 and Terrorism (Community Protection) and Control of Weapons Amendment Bill 2024 up this week. In relation to the Help to Buy bill, we are curious as to why the government is seeking to ram through this legislation so quickly, especially given a federal election is looming and will likely be called whilst this bill is still up for debate in this Parliament, in the Legislative Council. We know that this scheme was subject to considerable opposition in the federal Parliament, and there are real question marks as to whether this scheme will continue after the federal election. Additionally, the Help to Buy scheme is intended to assist around 10,000 Victorians to become homeowners, a small figure, but we are concerned whether the government can deliver on this amount, because we all know the Allan Labor government is going to break another promise and fail to build 80,000 new homes this year. We also know the Albanese government has failed to build one additional new home under its failed Housing Australia Future Fund. As we saw last week, it tried to cook the books and pass off existing houses it had acquired as new homes.

In relation to the Terrorism (Community Protection) and Control of Weapons Amendment Bill 2024, while this bill appears to have some features that have merit, we have significant concerns as to

whether there is sufficient funding available for the voluntary case management scheme. Given a number of other concerns in the bill, the Victorian Liberals and Nationals did request to go into consideration in detail on this bill, but sadly, the Labor government are so reluctant to be scrutinised on any bill that they put before this house they denied that very reasonable request.

Finally, there is the Safe Patient Care (Nurse to Patient and Midwife to Patient Ratios) Amendment Bill 2025. I take this opportunity on behalf of the Victorian Liberals and Nationals to acknowledge and thank our nurses, our midwives and all healthcare workers, who work incredibly hard on the front line, for what they do each and every day. However, there are legitimate concerns about whether public health providers actually have the ability to meet the new staffing requirements given the current workplace shortages in our hospitals. We are keen to understand further from the Labor government how it plans to tackle this workforce shortage, especially after it cut Skills First funding for health and hospital care training in December last year.

The important item for Thursday is that it is my son's birthday. It is an indulgence, I know, but I want to wish my son Emanuel a very happy birthday for this Thursday.

Pauline RICHARDS (Cranbourne) (12:26): I also wish the member for Evelyn's son a happy birthday. I am very pleased to have the opportunity to contribute to the debate on the government business program. This is going to be a really important week for us. We already have two new members who have come in here to play a really important role in representing their communities. I do congratulate the member for Prahran on her election and also of course the member for Werribee. I am very much looking forward to their inaugural speeches. This week the member for Werribee's inaugural speech will be a great opportunity for us to all come together as a chamber, and then in the following sitting week I will be looking forward to hearing the contribution from the newly elected member for Prahran. I am conscious that these are hard-fought-for roles which were rightly and vigorously contested.

This is a classic Labor government business program this week: keeping people safe, keeping our communities safe and focusing on housing affordability and of course nurse-to-patient ratios. The Leader of the House in her role as the Minister for Health will not be surprised that I am particularly excited about the nurse-to-patient ratio legislation. I have had some nurses from the electorate of Cranbourne asking me, 'When is it coming? When is it coming? When is it coming?' and I was able to tell them last week that it is going to be debated this week. Some of the nurses did offer by way of a bit of a history lesson that they had sat in the chamber a few Parliaments ago and had been quite vigorous in making sure that the Liberal Party – in fact Mrs Wooldridge – understood what they felt about nurse-to-patient ratios. Some of the nurses that I was speaking to were retired, and they had been fighting for this legislation and had been so relieved each time our government tightened and strengthened our commitment to making sure that this was embedded in legislation.

The bill is introducing staffing ratios into intensive care units through the introduction of one-on-one ratios for ICU on all shifts in level 1 and level 2 hospitals. Improving staff ratios is something that is incredibly important to any Labor government, and we have certainly done more than pay lip-service to that in this government. I am absolutely delighted that safe and high-quality care in a range of clinical settings will be the fixture of the debate this week. I will have some nurses here. I might even name some of them. Hannah Spanswick I think is certainly planning on coming in – somebody who fought very hard for this legislation – and Liz Barton as well. They are both very enthusiastic retired nurses. Both had very important roles in the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation and fought long and hard to have this introduced and then of course to have it strengthened. We know, they know and I have had plenty of nurses on polling booths tell me that they know that when it comes to recognising who has the focus on the workforce they trust the Labor government to be able to enshrine in legislation the sorts of changes that make it very hard for any other government to undo, so I am very pleased that I will be having an opportunity to contribute to that debate.

The other legislation of course is making amendments to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the voluntary case management scheme under the Terrorism (Community Protection) Act 2003 to make sure that we have community safety at the top of our agenda, and that is as it has always been, whether it is responding to the causes of crime or responding to people who are experiencing crime.

The Victorian Homebuyer Fund will have 18,000 households going into home ownership. So many people in our community know that buying a house – having the dignity of a home – is an absolute priority, and certainly when I am speaking to people they trust that it will be Labor governments in Canberra and in Victoria that will have that focus. I am very much looking forward to the debate. In terms of transparency there are plenty of opportunities for debate. I look forward to hearing the contributions.

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (12:31): I am very happy to rise to speak on this government business program today also. The member for Cranbourne is right: this is a classic Labor government business program. We have got some bills on the program that are of the utmost importance to communities right around the state – health, housing – and they make for great media releases, but will they actually do anything to help Victorians, particularly in the space of the Terrorism (Community Protection) and Control of Weapons Amendment Bill 2024, on which, as the member for Evelyn pointed out earlier, we have requested to go into consideration in detail? Obviously there are a couple of glaring omissions as far as community safety goes. As was discussed by the member for Morwell earlier, making machetes a prohibited weapon has still not occurred. We know from speaking to community members all over the state, including particularly the member for Morwell, who is very close to this issue, it is of the utmost importance.

As the member for Evelyn also stated, we are opposed to this government business program, mainly because the scrutiny and consideration we would have had by going into consideration in detail, allowing us to scrutinise each and every clause of the bills, have again not been granted by the government. The lack of transparency continues to be mind-boggling; it really does.

The Safe Patient Care (Nurse to Patient and Midwife to Patient Ratios) Amendment Bill 2025 is great, fantastic for health care in general and great for patient care. However, there are holes again and practicalities on the ground. I am a very practical person. We love a good theory, but how is this going to work practically on the ground? For those of us – and the Nationals will attest to this – in regional areas there are workforce shortages. Even though greater nurse and midwife ratios are a great thing, obviously, for safer patient care, how is that going to work in regions where we cannot fill the vacancies that we have got and we have a workforce that is predominantly agency nurses, which in small communities causes a whole host of issues? When you have got a workforce that is dominated by agency staff who are working next to permanent staff, for the morale of those permanent staff who are often on a lot less money – they are working very long hours with no regulation in this space – it just creates frustration. Morale is low among those permanent staff, and we want to hold on to them. If we could get some of the agency workforce and make them permanent in our hospitals, it would be incredible; they could work as a cohesive team. But at the moment, unfortunately, we simply do not have that.

Then we have the Help to Buy (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2025. We love to talk about housing in the Nationals, we absolutely do, because housing is one of the top issues that we talk to our constituents about each and every week – housing, health, community safety and roads. Again, I bang on about this all the time: when you are living in a border town you can literally physically see developers jumping the river, and those that are buying homes are jumping the river to buy homes because of the ease with which they can get planning approval and there are less taxes. Mind you, they are still coming back over the river to use our health care, all of our infrastructure, our schools et cetera. So we are opposed to this government business program. It is, as the member for Cranbourne said, a classic Labor business program this week.

Before the end of my time, I do want to congratulate the member for Prahran on being sworn in today, and the member for Werribee. Let us look forward to a week where the Nationals again are all over the business program, ready to speak and represent our communities, because that is what the Nats do best.

Daniela DE MARTINO (Monbulk) (12:36): It is a pleasure to rise and discuss the government business program today. Before I launch into that I would like to also extend a hearty welcome to the new members for Prahran and Werribee. Seeing them being escorted in – not dragged in, like they once were – was a reminder to all of us about the robustness and the strength of our democracy. At this time in the world I think it is actually a really good reminder to us all of how wonderfully fortunate we are that we have free and safe elections and our democracy is strong. It relies on good, robust debate and discussions coming into this chamber, where we all represent our constituencies. We bring our stories and our values in here, and we are safe to do so. So it is a moment I just want to reflect upon and be grateful for. I also really look forward to their inaugural speeches, because I think they are such an insight into each person and what they bring here. So I am looking forward to the member for Werribee's inaugural speech tomorrow and to the member for Prahran's the following sitting week. I am sure that we will all gain much from hearing their contributions.

Legislation is at the core of our function; that is what we are here to do. We are the legislature, and our government have made use of each and every day that we have had the privilege and honour to be entrusted with the governing of this incredible, wonderful state of Victoria. But before I touch upon that legislation I do want to make one comment about the opposition's position on our government business program. I am a bit of a nerd, self-confessed, and I did wonder whether they would support or oppose us. Statistics can be quite helpful, so I did wonder how many times they have supported our government business program in the 60th Parliament. Last night I sat and went through *Hansard* and looked at every position the opposition had taken on our government business program, and the number of times they have supported us has been four since we started this term of government. There have been four times, so on one hand we can count them. I was hoping we might make a whole handful, but that time may yet come. It would be nice. The last time was actually over a year ago, on 6 February 2024, so it might come again. I was not surprised, but it was a bit disappointing to unearth those statistics.

As the member for Cranbourne pointed out, this is a classic Labor government business program, and we state that with absolutely unabashed pride. There are three bills that we will be discussing at length, and the lists are long on our side. Everyone is clamouring to contribute on these pieces of legislation: the Terrorism (Community Protection) and Control of Weapons Amendment Bill 2024, the Safe Patient Care (Nurse to Patient and Midwife to Patient Ratios) Amendment Bill 2025 and the Help to Buy (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2025. I note the time on the clock, so I am not going to get to speak about all of them, but I am hoping, if the time allows, to contribute on two of those later on.

I do want to call out and just reiterate the importance of the Help to Buy (Commonwealth Powers) Bill. They say that the best form of flattery is imitation, and we clearly have led the nation when it comes to our homebuyer scheme. Has it been effective? Yes, it has. I know people who have made use of it who otherwise would not have been able to purchase a home. They have done so through our scheme. I am thrilled, as we all are, that the Commonwealth is now adopting this, but it was very interesting to note the Manager of Opposition Business's comments at the beginning, which maybe foreshadowed the federal opposition's position on the Commonwealth legislation here. Watch this space, I say.

I do want to touch on the Safe Patient Care (Nurse to Patient and Midwife to Patient Ratios) Amendment Bill, because nurses really are some of the best of us. They tend to us when we are at our most vulnerable, when we are at our most ill, at times of injury and in times of need. They truly are amazing, amazing people. I do want to give a shout-out to the nurses in my electorate at the Angliss Hospital, who work tirelessly to ensure that anyone who needs them has them there and can enjoy

their incredible care. The more support we give them the better. It is a wonderful program ahead of us. I am looking forward to the debates that will ensue.

Chris CREWITHER (Mornington) (12:41): I rise today to speak on the government business program, and firstly I would like to join with my colleagues – including the member for Evelyn and the member for Mildura, who spoke before – to congratulate and welcome the new member for Prahran. Well done. You did a terrific job during the campaign, and it is great to have you here in Parliament with us. I would also like to welcome the member for Werribee. I note with the member for Prahran we have a both enthusiastic and intelligent member who I know will contribute greatly to this Parliament, and I know that many of us were out there to support her. I also note that she will be giving her maiden speech on 19 March, and I look forward as the whip to hopefully soon being able to declare not only 19 members but 20 members on divisions. I also acknowledge your work with the swearing in this morning, Speaker.

I would also like to give a compliment to the government to start with. This was one of the few times, if only time, that the government business program was distributed before 5 pm on a Thursday since this new Premier has come in. It is good to see that the government has finally listened to our debates over the last couple of sitting weeks calling on the government to send this out a little earlier.

During this week we will be talking about bills on terrorism as well safe patient care and the Help to Buy (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2025. As the member for Evelyn pointed out, we will be opposing the government business program this week. In particular we will be opposing it because the government has denied us going into consideration in detail on the Terrorism (Community Protection) and Control of Weapons Amendment Bill 2024. This is of course a key reason to oppose the government business program, because this, as the member for Evelyn said, limits transparency from this government once again. While we are not opposing this bill and we do support tackling violent extremism, we do have a number of concerns about this bill. We note that the government briefing suggested cuts have been made to the countering violent extremism program despite the extended mandate. We note that the Law Institute of Victoria raised serious reservations about repeated designated area declarations and whether or not there is good data to suggest that they would deter weapons-based crimes. We are, during this bill debate, moving a reasoned amendment that will be reintroducing move-on laws and addressing the issue of machetes being excluded from existing schedules. However, like with our private members bill a few weeks ago, this will likely again be opposed by the government and be blocked by the government. We do, though, need stronger bail laws, we do need move-on laws and we do need to ban machetes, and the government should be listening not just to us but to the community, who are continuing to cry out more and more on those issues.

Going to the next bill on the government business program we have the Safe Patient Care (Nurse to Patient and Midwife to Patient Ratios) Amendment Bill 2025. Again, we are not opposing this, because of course the opposition supports improving patient care; however, we do have concerns. We have concerns that under this government hospitals are going more and more broke, and there are budgetary concerns. Can they find staff to meet the new ratios? Will hospitals have to divert funds away from other important things? The government's own briefing suggests there has been no firm modelling for the additional staff required. With the member for Evelyn and other colleagues, I also thank nurses, midwives and other hospital staff, but I do note that already there has not been a safe working environment, given the shortages and budget issues under this government. That is why there are many nurses, both retired and current, who have been out helping and campaigning with the Liberal opposition, including people like Kerry, Jan, Emma and others.

Now let us move to the Help to Buy (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2025. We are not opposing this, because we do want people to have homes and do want to help people to buy and so forth. It is ironic this is called 'Help to Buy' because under this Labor government we have seen increased cost-of-living pressures, more taxes and increased taxes and red tape making it harder to buy. The federal Liberals have pledged to repeal the scheme if they win, so why is Labor legislating this now? Another

point is that the scheme's thresholds for income and price gaps remain in draft, and there is a lack of detail. Thirdly, if Labor loses the federal election, there could well be a repeal of this soon. So we have a reasoned amendment that this bill be paused until after the federal election outcome.

Once again, this government has not listened with respect to this government business program. They should be more transparent and listen to the public. That is why we are opposing this government business program. Please listen to the community.

Assembly divided on motion:

Ayes (51): Juliana Addison, Jacinta Allan, Colin Brooks, Josh Bull, Anthony Carbines, Ben Carroll, Darren Cheeseman, Anthony Cianflone, Sarah Connolly, Chris Couzens, Jordan Crugnale, Lily D'Ambrosio, Daniela De Martino, Steve Dimopoulos, Paul Edbrooke, Eden Foster, Matt Fregon, Ella George, Luba Grigorovitch, Bronwyn Halfpenny, Katie Hall, Paul Hamer, Mathew Hilakari, Melissa Horne, Natalie Hutchins, Sonya Kilkenny, Nathan Lambert, John Lister, Gary Maas, Alison Marchant, Kathleen Matthews-Ward, Steve McGhie, Paul Mercurio, John Mullahy, Danny Pearson, Pauline Richards, Tim Richardson, Ros Spence, Nick Staikos, Natalie Suleyman, Meng Heang Tak, Jackson Taylor, Nina Taylor, Kat Theophanous, Mary-Anne Thomas, Emma Vulin, Iwan Walters, Vicki Ward, Dylan Wight, Gabrielle Williams, Belinda Wilson

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

Motion agreed to.

Members statements

Global Ethnic Dance Festival

Eden FOSTER (Mulgrave) (12:53): Recently I attended the Sree Narayana Mission Melbourne Global Ethnic Dance Festival at the Springvale City Hall. This is an event that celebrates our state's multiculturalism and promotes cultural diversity through dance, food and a greater understanding of the rich cultural heritage that makes our community so vibrant. I also wish to thank the Minister for Multicultural Affairs for attending this wonderful event.

Sandown Scout hall

Eden FOSTER (Mulgrave) (12:53): Last week I attended the official opening of the newly upgraded Sandown Scout hall in Springvale with the Minister for Youth. The Allan Labor government provided \$200,000 to support the upgrades, which include a new kitchen, a new bathroom and new windows and flooring. This upgraded facility will accommodate their growing membership and will provide a more accessible environment for Scout activities. I strongly encourage young people in my community to take up scouting as it offers opportunities for connections, skills and confidence.

Ramadan

Eden FOSTER (Mulgrave) (12:54): Last weekend saw the beginning of Ramadan for many in my electorate of Mulgrave and across our state. I had the pleasure of attending a wonderful iftar dinner with many of my colleagues and had the honour of sharing in the breaking of the fast with many Muslims in our community. Ramadan is the time for fasting, self-reflection and giving. I acknowledge that this is a difficult time for many Muslims across Victoria. I would like to wish all those celebrating Ramadan a blessed and peaceful time. Ramadan Mubarak.

Sentencing reform

Michael O'BRIEN (Malvern) (12:54): Seemingly on the fly, the Premier announced last week that the review of Victoria's weakened bail laws would also look at Victoria's weak sentencing laws. This will be cold comfort for the family of Deborah Markey and the Chin, Wang, Lam and Chen families. All five of these innocent people had their lives taken because of one offender's dangerous driving. Despite pleading guilty to five counts of dangerous driving causing death, Christopher Joannides was sentenced to a non-parole period of just three years imprisonment – three years for five innocent lives. Is that justice in Victoria? The Premier must ensure that Labor's weak sentencing laws are not just reviewed but fixed as a matter of urgency.

Housing

Michael O'BRIEN (Malvern) (12:55): One in five of Labor's new high-rise, high-density development zones – a dozen of them – are being stacked into my Malvern electorate. There has been no consultation with my community, no voice and no choice under Labor. Labor wants to give their developer mates and political donors the red carpet while taking away the rights of local families to have their say by stripping away the right to object. It is not on. Unlike Labor, I will work with Stonnington council to encourage more housing where it is needed. We want genuine housing options that offer choice and amenity, not Labor's high-rise, high-density dog boxes.

International Women's Day

Tim RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) (12:56): This month we recognise and celebrate International Women's Day, and the theme this year is 'Accelerate Action'. It is an important theme around the outcomes that we need to see to support women and girls in our community. We see across the community more representation in this place, in workplaces and in the Victorian government's policy around 50 per cent of board representations. We have seen audiences around the world captivated by the Matildas and their incredible success. As we see sporting prowess across the way, celebrating women and girls across our communities, we need to reflect on how we become upstanders and support women and girls, as men and boys in our community, to call out concerning behaviour and to call out disparaging comments that are made towards women and girls. We all have a role to play; we all need to be upstanders. When women talk about the impact of endometriosis and the one in seven women that experience that, some 1.5 million women in Australia, we do not say that it is not real. We understand and validate medical evidence and research, and we support women into the future. That is why the women's pain inquiry forum that this government set about was so very important. When we think about accelerating action, it is not just words – as much as those statements are important – but it is in policy and it is in action in every single hour in every single day that we exist to make sure that women and girls in our community are supported, and men and boys have a role to play in being upstanders in our community.

Patient transport

Tim McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (12:57): I want to take this opportunity to highlight Brendan Ralph, a 71-year-old Rosewhite man who was admitted to Northeast Health Wangaratta with stroke symptoms, only to be transferred to the Royal Melbourne Hospital. After a two-day stay he was kicked out of hospital and told to take the train home in 40-degree temperatures. This is not ideal for a patient who has no way of getting transport back to the north-east. Mr Ralph spent \$400 on a taxi fare, which is hard to swallow when patient transport vehicles travel the Hume Highway daily. I call on the Minister for Health to make contact with Mr Ralph for reimbursement and to assist in returning patients to the regions.

Road maintenance

Tim McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (12:58): Kevin Keenan, a truck driver from Yarrawonga, has pointed out the trees growing through the Armco railings at Cobram East on the Murray Valley Highway. He said in this crazy world of Victorian Labor we need the trees removed before they are

claimed as native vegetation or heritage listed and make our roadsides even more dangerous than they already are. Our regional roads are dangerous, and now the roadsides are becoming just as treacherous.

Renewable energy infrastructure

Tim McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (12:58): On behalf of the Dederang community I want to take the opportunity to thank Cr Dave Byrne and the four courageous councillors from the Alpine shire who last week voted down the battery energy storage system application at the proposal at last week's meeting at Mount Beauty. Over 250 people turned up to send a clear message to the Victorian government that Dederang have already done the heavy lifting for over six decades for Victoria's renewable requirements, and it is time to look elsewhere. Now it is up to the Minister for Planning to support this community so they can maintain the lifestyles that they choose and locate the BESS closer to Melbourne, the end user of this power.

The Basin Bakery

Jackson TAYLOR (Bayswater) (12:59): I just want to give a very hearty shout-out for a happy 21st birthday to the Basin Bakery, an absolute ripper, an institution in the Basin – 21 years young. Here's to 21 years and many, many more for the Basin Bakery and every fantastic local business like it out my way.

Bayswater electorate school leaders

Jackson TAYLOR (Bayswater) (12:59): It was great to have the principals breakfast, my seventh annual principals breakfast, at the famous Hatter & the Hare, featured on every show you could possibly think of on free-to-air and probably streamed and in a whole bunch of Broadsheet-type things. All the local principals in my electorate were invited for a fantastic brioche bun and a latte, cappuccino, lactose-free almond – whatever you like. It was really a great opportunity to thank the wonderful educators, the leaders of our schools, for the hard work they do and a great opportunity for them to network and to catch up with their friends, colleagues and peers. Thank you to Pat in my team for helping to put that together and to the team from Hatter & the Hare, as always.

Boronia revitalisation

Jackson TAYLOR (Bayswater) (13:00): We are getting on and working with Knox council to redo the shared network path along Chandler Road from Tormore Reserve through to Albert Avenue. It is a new shared pathway, better for local cyclists and pedestrians and better for cars as well, and we are going to be doing some important landscaping works over stage 2 and stage 3. It is all part of the Boronia revitalisation. The state government, the Allan Labor government, is getting on and getting things done in Boronia, which is a true vote of confidence in Boronia.

Mooroolbark Cricket Club

David HODGETT (Croydon) (13:00): With cricket season approaching finals, I want to speak on the success of one of my local clubs, the Mooroolbark Cricket Club, also known as the Barkers. Co-presidents for the 2024–25 season Shane Osborn and Briony Polkinghorne are passionate about the success and growth of the club, working hard for a positive culture and embracing the inclusivity of the club. The women's cricket program they offer has gone from strength to strength, with the club introducing an all-female leadership group this season. Participation in the women's teams has also grown for the season, so much so that the club is considering adding a third women's side for the 2025–26 season. The primary challenge the cricket club faces is outdated small clubrooms and facilities that are insufficient to meet the demands of the club's growth. In partnership with the Mooroolbark Football Club, they have been working hard fighting for funding for the long-overdue upgrades to the clubrooms that are desperately needed. I cannot emphasise enough the importance of this level of sport and how investment in local sport benefits the whole local community.

The federal member for Casey Aaron Violi and I have been strong advocates for the upgrades to the Mooroolbark Heights clubrooms and in our support for these local clubs. It was terrific news recently

to hear Aaron's announcement that an elected Liberal federal government would provide \$4 million towards an upgraded pavilion at the Mooroolbark Heights Reserve, supporting growth in grassroots sports. This investment would ensure an inclusive space which supports the growth of both cricket and football clubs for years to come and would be a true asset for the local community. I congratulate Aaron Violi on this announcement and the cricket and football clubs on their ongoing work and efforts.

Werribee Mercy Hospital

Dylan WIGHT (Tarneit) (13:02): Last week I had the pleasure of joining the Minister for Health Infrastructure and the fantastic new member for Werribee at the Werribee Mercy Hospital. This hospital is the main service provider for families in my area of Tarneit and Hoppers Crossing and has been the receiver of a major upgrade to its emergency department by the Allan Labor government. If you have been to the Werribee Mercy yourself, you would know just how hard the staff work to treat as many people as they possibly can. Nobody should have to sit in a waiting room for hours on end, which is why this expansion is so important to the people of Tarneit and Hoppers Crossing. This expansion is part of a \$280 million investment into two emergency department expansion projects and will provide 34 new treatment spaces at the Mercy. These new spaces will allow 25,000 more patients to be treated every single year. That is almost double the capacity. With four new resuscitation bays, 16 short-stay beds and 36 emergency care cubicles, we are making sure that every person can see high-quality healthcare providers as quickly as possible. This project is building on the government's past \$120 million expansion of the Werribee Mercy Hospital in 2018, which delivered new inpatient beds, new critical care beds, new operating theatres and 54 new mental health beds. The Allan Labor government is committed to ensuring that everybody can access critical care, and I cannot wait to see this new expansion up and running very soon.

Caulfield electorate planning

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (13:03): I rise today to stand with residents around Caulfield, Elsternwick, Ormond and Glen Huntly who have been blindsided by the Allan Labor government's reckless push for high-rise development under the so-called activity centre project. Our community has had enough, and we do not need more skyscrapers in our area. We need sensible, appropriate development, not a government that is running roughshod over the community and roughshod over the local council. This government is all about allowing no voice and no choice. They have taken away the voice of communities, they have taken away the voice of council and ultimately our community has been left high and dry. There will be no high-rise in Caulfield if this Allan Labor government is defeated next year, and that is what we need to do – send a message to this government that it is not on. It is time to ensure that communities finally have their say. I will be fighting each and every day for my community.

Zinovy Savin

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (13:04): I want to congratulate Zinovy Savin, who has turned 100. Congratulations to Zinovy, a great person who has come here and really made Australia his home.

Chabad Youth

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (13:04): Chabad Youth have had their giving day. They lost their camp during the recent bushfires, and I want to particularly recognise Rabbi Moshe and Dina Kahn, who have done an absolutely terrific job, particularly for young people at the moment that are really suffering through a traumatic time in the Jewish community. These camps are really important, and I urge the government to provide some funding so we can rebuild this campsite.

Officer Specialist School

Emma VULIN (Pakenham) (13:05): The Premier joined me last week on a lovely visit to Officer Specialist School. We went on a tour led by student leaders Callum, Aiden and Mukoch to see the brand new senior school buildings. I want to thank Principal Rowe, staff and students for having us.

Officer Primary School

Emma VULIN (Pakenham) (13:05): Speaking of schools, I was pleased to visit Officer Primary School to see the magnificent new learning spaces that have been an addition to this school, which is almost 140 years old. There are new classrooms, administration buildings and toilets – and a basketball court to come.

Motor neurone disease

Emma VULIN (Pakenham) (13:05): Last week I was also absolutely privileged to be a guest on *The Brain Matters Podcast* with the Florey Institute, which is airing on 9 March. Dr Shane Huntington OAM, Professor Brad Turner and Dr Thanuja Dharmadasa taught me more in an hour about motor neurone disease than I have ever known. I also attended a decade of FightMND at the MCG. It was an opportunity to congratulate our Australian of the Year, Neale Daniher, in person and hear from inspirational MND sufferers and some of the best medical researchers and medical minds in the world dedicated to finding treatments for MND and one day a cure.

Orchard Park Primary School

Emma VULIN (Pakenham) (13:06): I attended the Orchard Park carnival at the Orchard Park Primary School. It was beautiful weather, and the children loved dunking their principal in the water tank. I went there again yesterday to present our flags.

The 444 Run

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (13:06): As we speak, Ben ‘Mino’ Welch is running from Mildura to Echuca in a tribute to his lost brothers Jai and Zac in the 444 Run. It is a 380-kilometre journey, and Ben is aiming to run it in four days, 4 hours and 44 minutes – 444, Zac’s favourite number. So far Ben has raised over \$280,000, which will go to three Headspace centres in Mildura, Swan Hill and Echuca. Ben, your dedication and commitment to your brothers’ memory and this incredible run are beyond comprehension and words, and I wish you and your family all the very best.

Berriwillock Rodeo

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (13:07): Last weekend the town of Berriwillock’s population, which normally hovers around 180 people, exploded to around 4000, as people descended for the Berriwillock Rodeo. It was an amazing family event, and I want to take a minute to recognise the committee and locals from all over the district, who have done a lot more than just put on a massive event; they have reunited the entire community. They had been fighting amongst themselves – families against families and neighbours against neighbours. Generational farmers have had their voices taken away because of Labor’s reckless road to renewable energy targets, with renewable energy zones and projects like VNI West, wind farms, mineral sand mines and exclusion zones and zero transparency, consultation or right of appeal. Last weekend was an opportunity for everyone to come together, and I hope it is not lost on the committee exactly what they have done.

Ramadan and Lent

Iwan WALTERS (Greenvale) (13:08): Ramadan Mubarak. Since last Friday night Muslims in my community and all around the world have been observing the holiest month of Ramadan, a sacred journey of compassion, community, spiritual reflection and self-discipline. It is a profound privilege to join with so many groups across my community and in so many different forums for iftar dinners and to celebrate this journey of faith. Thank you to all who have generously invited and hosted me. Thank you too to each of the mosque communities in Greenvale as well as our Muslim schools and charitable organisations like Hasene Australia and Islamic Community Milli Gorus, who live their faith through charity, good works, community service and altruism while building a community founded on harmony and mutual respect. To all Muslims in Greenvale and across our world, I wish you a peaceful and fulfilling holy month. Ramadan Mubarak.

This is a profoundly important time for people of faith across Greenvale, with Ramadan again aligning in 2025 with the Christian Lenten period. For tens of thousands in Greenvale's Eastern Christian, Catholic and Orthodox communities, Great Lent began yesterday with Clean Monday, while the Western Christian liturgical year will see thousands more, including me, observing Ash Wednesday and the start of Lent tomorrow. Regardless of doctrine or theology, Christians across Greenvale are united in fasting and contemplation during this special time of peace, renewal and spiritual sustenance, and I wish them all well in their Lenten observance. It is a profound honour to represent a community in which faith is so deeply important to so many, and this alignment of Lent and Ramadan underscores that significance and the values of charity, compassion, peace and love, which are common to us all.

Mount Duneed schools

Darren CHEESEMAN (South Barwon) (13:09): South Barwon is one of the fastest growing seats in this place, and the Armstrong Creek growth corridor is Australia's fastest growing regional growth corridor. Currently, Geelong Lutheran College and Iona Catholic college are the two private secondary school options available to the Mount Duneed community. Unfortunately, as we speak right now there is no secondary school option available in Mount Duneed. I am therefore calling on the Allan Labor government to prioritise the land purchase to enable a public school option to be available in Australia's fastest growing regional growth corridor. I think it is important. That community have been calling for it, and I support their call. I want to see a public school option available to the Mount Duneed community within the Armstrong Creek growth corridor.

Killara Primary School

Josh BULL (Sunbury) (13:10): There are some terrific local leaders within my community. It was wonderful to be at Killara Primary School last week with principal Sue Muir and mayor Jarrod Bell to present some badges. A very big congratulations to school captains Ellyse and Henry as well as house captains Lilleth and Willow, Jack and Ace, Brax and Tayte, and Luc and Juliet. Congratulations to these students and of course the wider school community. Killara is a terrific school within my electorate, and I want to acknowledge the hard work of teachers, families, parents and friends.

Ottimo Bakery

Josh BULL (Sunbury) (13:11): It was also wonderful to be down at Ottimo Bakery at 57 Oshanassy Street, Sunbury, with Bec and Matt to help them open their doors. It is a terrific new bakery in our community, and I wish the team down at Ottimo all the very best as they go forward to produce what will be some terrific treats for the community.

Diggers Rest level crossing removals

Josh BULL (Sunbury) (13:12): Finally, a very big thankyou to the Minister for Transport Infrastructure for last week joining me in Diggers Rest, as we get on and remove dangerous level crossings at Watsons Road and the Old Calder Highway, reducing congestion and improving safety.

Ruyton Girls' School

Jess WILSON (Kew) (13:12): It has been a pleasure to host grade 6 students from Ruyton Girls' School at Parliament recently. I give a shout-out to all of the school leaders at the Ruyton junior school. Throughout the year they have leadership teams, and I wish them the very best in their endeavours this year. We know grade 6 students have a big job to do in terms of leading the primary school and inspiring other students, so a big shout-out to all the girls at Ruyton. I am sure that you will do your best to lead the school this year.

1st Deepdene Scout group

Jess WILSON (Kew) (13:13): I had a ball on Sunday morning for Clean Up Australia Day with the 1st Deepdene Scout group along the Anniversary Trail in Canterbury and Deepdene. We all know that local Scouts play a terrific role in our local communities, and it is really important how Scouts

teach young people the value of living a life of service. They certainly demonstrated that on Sunday morning as they picked up litter, finding things like tyres and pipes. They are a very enthusiastic bunch, and I thank them all for helping clean up our local community.

Maling Heritage Centre

Jess WILSON (Kew) (13:13): Finally, I thank Susan Barnett and her team at the Surrey Hills Historical Society and Neil Curry at the Canterbury History Group for all the work that they do preserving the local history and heritage of our area. It was fascinating to visit their local centre at Maling Road and even dig up some records from my family over the past few decades. Thank you for all you do in our local community.

Maribyrnong Creative Places

Katie HALL (Footscray) (13:13): On Friday I had the pleasure of visiting some local artists who have set up shop in the heart of Footscray. The City of Maribyrnong, with \$90,000 in funding from Creative Victoria, have embarked on a fantastic urban renewal program, bringing vibrancy to our CBD. Creative Places activates empty shopfronts by temporarily transforming them into studios, galleries and workshops, showcasing amazing talent from Melbourne's inner west. Instead of empty shopfronts attracting rubbish or graffiti, activated spaces bring community together to make, learn, watch and share. This program brings together two of my favourite things: urban renewal and the arts. I commend the City of Maribyrnong for their work and thank Creative Victoria for their contribution. Liew Ceramics, The Rest of Us, Debris Facility and World's Worst Wagga Guild are just some of the artists taking residency in the heart of Footscray until 31 March. Residents can pop in whilst doing their shopping or look online for specific workshops and events. Although it is a pilot program, I look forward to seeing innovative approaches to urban renewal, especially ones that activate local creative workforces and promote the creativity and wonder of the inner west.

Clean Up Australia Day

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn) (13:15): Last weekend I was proud to join the dedicated volunteers at Clean Up Australia Day in Hawthorn East, where the Glenferrie Rotary Club led a fantastic local effort. Clean Up Australia Day is more than just picking up litter; it is about fostering a sense of responsibility for our environment and ensuring that future generations inherit a cleaner and greener Australia. That spirit was on full display on Sunday with volunteers led by Thelma Hutchison coming together to make a tangible difference. Litter is not just an eyesore; it affects our local wildlife, clogs our waterways and contributes to pollution. Whether it is reducing plastic waste, recycling responsibly or participating in community clean-ups, we all have a role to play, and I thank Glenferrie Rotary Club for the fantastic example they continue to set year on year.

Aspect Hawthorn

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn) (13:16): Every Thursday from 1 pm to 3 pm the Black Sheep Hawthorn brews something special: coffee and the power of connection and inclusion in our community. Last Thursday I visited. This initiative, a part of Aspect's adult community services, has been a cornerstone of Hawthorn for over 20 years. It empowers people with autism with hands-on training in hospitality, building confidence, teaching skills and opening doors to independence. As one participant put it, this program has been life changing. A big shout-out to Christine Edwards, Aspect's regional coordinator, who shared, 'Every cup of coffee served tells a story of growth and determination.' A big shout-out and thanks to Christine and to Luke. Keep up the brilliant work.

Cloud Concert Youth Orchestra

John MULLAHY (Glen Waverley) (13:17): Last sitting week I had the pleasure of welcoming the Cloud Concert Youth Orchestra to Parliament. They lit up Queen's Hall with beautiful renditions of *Voices of Spring* and *Spring Festival*. It was a fitting performance for the occasion as we gathered to celebrate Chinese New Year. I thank the Premier, colleagues, parents and Mr Fang Xinwen, consul

general of the People's Republic of China in Melbourne, for their attendance. Congratulations to director Gyula Cseszko and the musicians for their incredible efforts.

Glen Waverley electorate school leaders

John MULLAHY (Glen Waverley) (13:17): Attending school leadership badge presentations is always a highlight. Congratulations to the 2025 Camelot Rise Primary School captains Tiara Grover, Aiden Suraweera, Andrew Trinh and Emily Shim and a shout-out to the leadership team at Wheelers Hill Primary School and the school captains Naomi Ball and Viaan Bhat and vice-captains Arundi Palipana and Stanley Yao. In the week that we are celebrating International Women's Day I would like to congratulate the first all-female leadership team at Glenallen. A big congratulations to school captains Hamta Ansari and Ruby Gough and school vice-captains Maddison Whitney-Hamilton and Ashlee Teo. I wish all the young leaders at the schools in the Glen Waverley district all the best in their representative roles this year. I know you will do a wonderful job.

Legend Park Tennis Club

John MULLAHY (Glen Waverley) (13:18): Lastly, a belated happy birthday to the legends at Legend Park Tennis Club. This wonderful club was formed over 50 years ago when Beryl Polhill, a local resident, realised the need for tennis facilities near the newly developed area of Glen Waverley known as Legends Park. Thank you to president Geoff Dumsday, vice-president Penny Draper and club secretary Diane Turnbull. Here is to another 50 years.

Turbans 4 Australia

Gary MAAS (Narre Warren South) (13:18): I recently joined the charity organisation Turbans 4 Australia in Thomastown to check out their head office site and meet with president Amar Singh. Turbans 4 Australia undertake incredible work throughout Victoria and New South Wales, including in the south-east and particularly in my electorate of Narre Warren South. From providing hot meals, delivering essentials to those impacted by natural disasters and supporting those in precarious situations from homelessness to unemployment, their service is there for so many people who are in need. The service provides a platform for connection and relationships as well to be formed while breaking down the barriers of prejudice. Community, kindness, inclusion and equality are all markers of the Sikh faith, and it is demonstrated through this service.

It was a privilege to meet with Amar and the incredible volunteers and hear more about Amar's story. Amar's faith and appearance were the target of discrimination. Facing that adversity he established Turbans 4 Australia to help and teach others about the Sikh community through charitable work and charitable acts. What tremendous work that organisation does. I know how special our Sikh community is, and I know as many in this chamber know that they deserve the recognition that they receive. Thanks, Amar.

International Women's Day

Alison MARCHANT (Bellarine) (13:20): This Saturday we will recognise International Women's Day, acknowledging the trailblazers who shattered the barriers, the quiet achievers who shape our communities and the everyday woman who inspires change through courage and determination. We acknowledge the progress made while committing to the work still ahead, because equality benefits all.

I am very proud to have three Bellarine women visit Parliament on Thursday for the Speaker's International Women's Day event: Nicole, Rachel and Emma – three incredible first responders and members of the Bellarine SES unit. They dedicate their time and their skills to the Bellarine SES unit with such passion and professionalism. They do it because they believe in something greater than themselves. They embody the SES spirit of generosity, compassion and community service. It is important to acknowledge the work of Rachel, Nicole and Emma and also of many of the first-responder women who have taken on voluntary roles or work in emergency services. Day in and day

out, not only do they perform life-saving, vital roles and turn up in challenging circumstances on top of their busy lives and careers, but they inspire the next generation of volunteers.

We know statistically that women are more likely to volunteer in our community, and in the lead-up to International Women's Day I would like to thank the many women who make our Bellarine community a better place, whether it is at a women's workshop, at a sporting club or in emergency services, education, the arts or food relief. I want to thank you and express my gratitude to you today. Happy International Women's Day.

Pascoe Vale electorate community safety

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (13:21): Further to my adjournment on 20 February on community safety and the discussions I have continued to have locally, my constituents continue to welcome stronger criminal justice and bail reforms; a further crackdown on serious, dangerous, violent and repeat offenders; ongoing support to help Victoria Police increase its powers, resources, presence and patrols across the community, namely through central Coburg; more flexible consideration of the deployment of protective services officers, PSOs, so they can patrol beyond local train stations to potentially include adjacent locations, such as Victoria Street Mall, Sydney Road and even Pentridge Village; opportunities for new CCTV and lighting; more assertive community outreach, social services, housing services and crime prevention measures to help better identify and support local people in need or at risk whilst tackling the root causes of crime; working to uplift our local amenity ambience, including through new activations, artworks and events; and more support for our hardworking small business owners, local traders, retail workers, local shoppers, families, residents and local social workers as we work to revitalise central Coburg whilst enhancing community safety for all. We can be tough on crime, but we need to be tougher on the root causes of crime. I welcome the ongoing attention of the Attorney-General, the Minister for Police and Minister for Community Safety and the Minister for Youth Justice and Minister for Corrections to continue responding to these issues.

Centorrino Technologies

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (13:22): On 27 February I welcomed the Minister for Economic Growth and Jobs to visit Centorrino Technologies at the corner of Sydney Road and Deans Street in Coburg. Centorrino Technologies was founded by the proud local boy and very hardworking CEO Adam Centorrino, who has grown his business from just a local IT company to a nationally based 400 people strong IT service provider that services people across the country.

Kyema Drive, Lara

Ella GEORGE (Lara) (13:23): Last week I visited residents at Kyema Drive in Lara. Over the past couple of decades they have experienced several flooding events when floodwaters have risen above street level and, sadly, flooded their homes. Residents have been advocating to the City of Greater Geelong for years on this issue for rectification works, and I am pleased to join them in their advocacy. I want to thank John Winkler and his neighbours for showing me around and showing me this issue and for their ongoing advocacy for their community.

Bills

Terrorism (Community Protection) and Control of Weapons Amendment Bill 2024

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Anthony Carbines:

That this bill be now read a second time.

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (13:23): I rise to make some comments on the Terrorism (Community Protection) and Control of Weapons Amendment Bill 2024. Could I also just at the outset thank Ben Howard, who has been interning in my office, from the US, who has helped put some notes

together on this bill, and also the department for the briefing that we had on this bill. There are two main components to this bill. One is dealing with the Terrorism (Community Protection) Act 2003, and the other is dealing with the Control of Weapons Act 1990. They are very distinct, with no overlay, and I will treat them both separately as we go through the discussion today. In the first part I want to offer up some textual amendments, which I will go through shortly.

Firstly, on the Terrorism (Community Protection) Act changes, there is provision for two therapeutic intervention pathways for Victorians who are at risk of radicalising towards violent extremism. These pathways are voluntary, and there is a voluntary case management scheme that actually manages the participants of the scheme. As part of it, the justice area gives a support and engagement order as part of the program that they go on.

The bill also establishes the Countering Violent Extremism Multi-agency Panel. This provides advice and case management oversight to the Secretary of the Department of Justice and Community Safety regarding coordinating the services and case management of individuals subject to the voluntary case management scheme, which has been operational since September 2022. Currently the eligibility criteria for the scheme prevents individuals who may benefit from therapeutic intervention from being eligible for and participating in the program. This includes individuals who are at an early stage of their trajectory towards final extremism through to those who may have previously engaged in countering violent extremism programs.

The bill proposes to amend the Terrorism (Community Protection) Act 2003 to further provide for the functions of the secretary under part 4A of the act; further provide for the Countering Violent Extremism Multi-agency Panel; further provide for voluntary case management; make minor amendments as a consequence of the amendment of the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation Act 1979, a Commonwealth act; and amend the Control of Weapons Act 1990, which we will talk about later.

One of the elements with this is that this is obviously a program that is trying to deradicalise young people or certainly ensure that hopefully young people particularly do not end up on a pathway that would lead them into extremism. This is very important, and we certainly support any mechanisms that will try to deradicalise people in any way, shape or form. We see that we have had real issues in Victoria and Australia in recent times. We have seen some horrific acts from radicalised extremists, and whatever we can do to peel that back I think is really, really important.

But what this program has been doing has, for a whole range of reasons – again this is something that the government has been managing – not had the uptake that one would hope that it would have. So there have not been the numbers on this particular program. I understand from the briefing that there were six active participants and two new participants, so we are dealing with about eight participants. I am not sure in terms of total funding, but I know that the government had invested \$1.2 million into the program in previous times but that the \$1.2 million has currently not been available for the program and that there has been a real leaning on the federal government to provide the money for this program.

We do have concerns, firstly, that we have got a government that want to expand a program and on one hand they are indicating that it is a program that will have results and they support it but they do not want to put money into it. So the real question is: why are we amending legislation today on one hand but on the other hand we have a Labor government that are not prepared to put their money where their mouth is and invest in the program? I hope during the debate we will hear from the government to understand whether the \$1.2 million that was taken out of this program will be put back into the program. It is no use expanding a program if you do not have the money; it is pretty short-sighted. I know that we are in a budget crisis in this state and that we are in a crime crisis as well. I would hope that one would outweigh the other – that community safety would certainly outweigh anything else – and that there is money in here.

That brings me to the textual amendments that I wish to circulate, and these deal with very much this part of the bill.

Amendments circulated under standing orders.

David SOUTHWICK: It is amending a new clause:

Division heading preceding clause 52, after “Minor” insert “and other”.

And the new clause is:

After section 38A of the **Terrorism (Community Protection) Act 2003** insert –

“38B Review of operation of Act as amended by Terrorism (Community Protection) and Control of Weapons Amendment Act 2025

- (1) The Minister must cause a review of the operation of this Act as amended by the **Terrorism (Community Protection) and Control of Weapons Amendment Act 2025** to be commenced within 2 years of the day on which Part 2 of that Act comes into operation.
- (2) The Minister must cause a copy of the report of the review to be laid before each House of the Parliament within 14 days after its completion, but no later than the third anniversary of the day on which Part 2 of the **Terrorism (Community Protection) and Control of Weapons Amendment Act 2025** came into operation.”.

The reason why we are calling for this review is that we are not sure what success looks like here, and I am not sure whether the government is sure of what success looks like. They want to expand the program. They do not have the numbers. The briefing suggested that they wanted 30 on the program; they have got eight. Eight is a long way away from 30, so we would hope that with the changes they get more people on the program.

The other element, as I pointed out, is that there is no money for this program. I think in two years it is only fair that this program is reviewed, and if it has not had success in terms of uptake in the people on the program or if it has not had the money, then it needs to be reviewed, in terms of the future of the program. I think that is only fair, and I hope that the government will support that, because it is no use having a program if you do not put your money where your mouth is. I want to leave that there. We might have the opportunity a bit later to come back to it, but I want to talk about the second part of this bill, which is the controlled weapons part of this bill.

This part of the bill introduces further measures impacting planned and unplanned designated area weapons searches to give police greater flexibility to combat weapons offending when and where there is heightened risk to community safety. The bill amends the planned and unplanned designated area scheme in six distinct ways to improve operational flexibility and police responsiveness to weapons offending risk. We are in a crime crisis. We are seeing weapons used each and every day, and I will talk about that shortly. Not a day goes by – and I know because just about every morning I am calling the radio and unfortunately responding to another machete attack, another crime crisis or another young offender, who has been out on bail again and again and again, going into a home and stealing a car. It is horrible. We are seeing it right across everyone’s electorates. We have got to do something about it. That is why looking at giving police more search powers is really important. We advocate for that. We think it is really important. I have looked at other states that have the likes of Jack’s Law. In Queensland a young person was stabbed multiple times to death, which prompted Jack’s Law coming into play. These things are really important. We should always look at different ways to strengthen the law.

I will say up-front that machetes are still not a prohibited weapon. That is a real concern, a missed opportunity in this bill today and a missed opportunity to ensure machetes are a prohibited weapon, and I am going to talk about that as part of a reasoned amendment that I will propose shortly. The bill removes, firstly, the requirement to publish a notice of declaration of a planned designated area in a daily newspaper circulating throughout Victoria and in a daily newspaper circulating outside of the metropolitan area. Putting things in the newspapers, reading about them, is yesterday, and we do need

a more timely response when police want to actively conduct operations. That is why this is really important. It is consistent with the approach taken by other jurisdictions and recognises a shift away from hardcopy newspapers and moves things online. The bill will not alter the additional requirement to publish a notice of planned declaration in the *Government Gazette*, as this is the standard legislative approach for providing notice of this type of declaration and provides legal certainty for the exercise of search powers in designated areas.

The second part amends the provisions that currently exist for planned event declarations to provide that each period of an event declaration operates during the event and during any time before and after the event that the Chief Commissioner of Police considers reasonable. At present, event declarations may only operate strictly during the exact timing of the event itself. This amendment will allow for the chief commissioner to determine an appropriate period of time before and after an event for an event declaration to additionally operate to maximise community safety – a planned event. We saw it at Land Forces just recently. We knew that that was happening. We had extremists that decided to protest outside the Land Forces event, and there were real concerns in terms of weapons and other things that they may have. We do not know how long these extremists are going to be protesting. There could be an event declaration and then all of a sudden it needs to go beyond that time. We might initially think the protest is going to be there till 5 o'clock; they are there till 9 or 10 o'clock. You need flexibility so police can do a search operation should they find that necessary. And that is really, really important, particularly when you have extremists that turn up to these kinds of events wanting to cause trouble. We must make sure the community feels safe, and that is why having this search power in planned events is really, really important.

The third part of this is that significant crowd numbers may congregate before an event or linger afterwards, or it may be important to provide a safe environment for ingress and egress of events with high attendance numbers where an event occurs at a remote location with limited entry and exit points, which is not uncommon with rural music festivals. This bill gives the chief commissioner flexibility to tailor the duration of the declaration based on the unique characteristics of the event and the particular risk profile. Again, it is really, really important to make sure that police have those powers, particularly when people are coming or going from these events.

The fourth part is that another amendment will enable planned event declarations to be made for new and emerging events based on intelligence information of high identified risks. These planned declarations may be for events that have been marred by violence or disorder with weapons at previous occasions. It allows the chief commissioner to declare an area where an event will be held if the commissioner is satisfied from the information known to the chief commissioner that there is a likelihood that violence or disorder involving the use of weapons will occur in that area. The period of intended operation for a declaration is an intelligence-led approach, placing police on the front foot to combat the threat of weapons relating to violence and disorder.

I am not sure whether this was used on this particular occasion, but we did have a Never Again Is Now rally in the city with thousands of people, which was against being un-Australian. 'Stop the hate, mate' I think was the term that was used, which was against the racism and antisemitism that we have seen of late. There were a number of violence and disorder incidents. There was a lady at that particular time who was in a wheelchair who was pushed and shoved. She had her flag stolen from her and it was burnt. This would be an incident where you would have extremists at the event. You want to be able to have search powers, and that is why this part is very, very important.

We have seen 72 weeks of these protests in the city – 72 weeks – with 18,000 police shifts patrolling these protests in the CBD. Police need the flexibility when you have extremists that are leading these protests, and I call out the Greens as part of that. When they are up the front leading some of these protests – you know what? – you need search powers, because some of the things that I have heard people say and we have all heard people say are very threatening and very concerning, and police need to have the power to do their job.

The fifth part is that the bill promotes a sustained effort to detect and deter weapons related to violence or disorder in areas of high risk through reducing the time that must elapse between declarations of plans in designated areas. At present, police are unable to conduct a planned operation in an area until a minimum of 10 days have elapsed. What this does is reduce the minimum 10-day gap to 12 hours. So if it is going to be over a prolonged period, it allows them to have another order to be able to reduce the timeframe to search for weapons. That is really important in terms of having a more consistent police presence at random weapons searching. It just closes that gap and allows that flexibility.

And the sixth part of this, also consistent with some other jurisdictions, is to enhance operational flexibility. The maximum duration of both planned and unplanned designations of areas will increase from 12 to 24 hours. What this allows is a maximum of a 24-hour window. The chief commissioner must continue to limit the period for each designation to no longer than is reasonably necessary to enable police and protective service officers to effectively respond to a threat of violence or disorder involving the use of weapons. This change will provide greater public safety and reassurance in circumstances where there is a significant event of violence or disorder, including a critical incident of high-profile crime in relation to risk, and Victoria Police will be in a better position to tailor both planned and unplanned operations.

We saw a few months back a group of neo-Nazis came dressed up all in black. They were at Flinders Street station. They did their event. They then went onto the train platform, actually onto a train, and they were harassing people on the train. They were fully masked. They were all in black. They were wearing backpacks. Who knows what they were doing or what they had or what their intentions were? Again, this is an unplanned situation. The police need search powers to be able to deal with that. Some of that would be covered in their existing powers, but again what this does is send a very clear message for police to be able to do their job and have that flexibility. Knife crime is through the roof.

I want to circulate my reasoned amendment now. I move:

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 considers further options to tackle controlled weapons and ensure community safety during planned events.'

One of the key elements of this is the actual weapons that we are searching for. I know we have had a couple of attempts at this, and I hope this time around we are able to look at this in terms of making machetes prohibited weapons. I go back to my good friend Nick McGowan in the other place, who is currently representing the area of Ringwood as the local member amongst his other tasks. He wrote to the chief commissioner a few months back, and he said that while the draft legislation makes weapons illegal for 18-year-olds to purchase for anybody to carry around in communities and in our streets without lawful excuse, such as relevant and related employment, he is concerned to make it a prohibited weapon, effectively banning it from the state, making it illegal to sell to a person of any age in Victoria. What we are talking about is not just saying somebody under 18 cannot buy it; the question is why somebody under 18 – or over 18 for that matter – is carrying a machete around in the first place. This is an opportunity to make it an offence to actually be carrying a machete around, full stop. That is what we should do right now: ban the machete, full stop. It is not back in the 1800s when you were farming, you had your machete and you were using that for your crops. People running around the streets of Melbourne, heading into people's homes in the middle of the night, carrying a machete – there is no reason at all why they should have one. The response that my good friend Nick McGowan received was referred back from the police commissioner to the Minister for Police:

This important clarification in the definition will enhance the community's understanding that machetes may only be possessed, carried and used with a lawful excuse and cannot be sold to children or purchased by them.

I cannot think what a lawful excuse would be when you are roaming around the middle of the night with one in your backpack. If someone turns up and says, 'I'm going home to do the gardening,' is that a lawful excuse? For heaven's sake, we have got to get rid of these machetes once and for all.

I want to highlight just a few examples. From an article of 12 February, ‘Teenager who attacked man with machete in St Kilda denied bail’:

A 15-year-old boy who hit a stranger over the head with a machete in Melbourne’s inner-south has been denied bail.

The boy approached a 39-year-old man in St Kilda at about 9pm on January 12, asking for his keys and phone.

After the man attempted to distance himself from the boy, the teen hit him across the head with a machete.

The court heard a “large number of people” witnessed the attack, and that the boy was on bail at the time of the incident.

It gets worse: he was on bail for the possession of a controlled weapon in the Children’s Court and a slew of other incidents that had occurred over the course of last year, including that he brought a hunting knife to school, was involved in a carjacking as a lookout and drove a stolen car. This is an example, and what did the judge say?

You can’t keep getting into trouble because when you do ... people get hurt.

The real victim, he said, of the machete attack was clearly scared. ‘You really just have to stop,’ the judge told the teenager. ‘You really just have to stop’? Well, I will tell you what: words are not enough. Saying that somebody has to stop when they keep getting bailed, when they keep coming out with dangerous weapons and hitting people over the head with them is just absolutely inexcusable. But let us continue.

On 24 February police arrested a man and a woman after a string of violent home invasions where an elderly woman was allegedly struck with a machete and assaulted in Melbourne’s south-east. Two people have been arrested after a spate of terrifying home invasions across Melbourne’s south-east over the weekend. The offences include several alleged aggravated burglaries, including one on Friday in Keysborough where a 73-year-old man was slashed in the face with a machete. In the final incident on Sunday night, police have alleged a 77-year-old woman – so we had a man and now a 77-year-old woman – was also confronted and assaulted by the pair before being struck with a machete. What the hell is going on here? What is going on when this kind of stuff is happening? It is out of control.

Then we had two arrested after a carjacking in Hoppers Crossing. A teenager was one of two arrested by police after an aerial follow in Melbourne’s north-west overnight. Police said two occupants from a Corolla who were allegedly armed with machetes got out of the car and approached a 20-year-old Hillside man who had just parked his car on the side of the road. The offenders chased and assaulted the 20-year-old before stealing his keys, according to the police. The car was abandoned by the occupants in a nearby service station on the way to a cemetery.

If you thought that was not enough, here comes another one: again only last week a man’s face was slashed and a woman’s hand cut in a random machete attack in Melbourne’s south-east. Two offenders fled the scene in a white Subaru, which was stolen during a terrifying home invasion in Prahran. The bloody aftermath of the random daylight attack remained today in a Cheltenham car wash, after a 37-year-old woman was slashed with a machete.

These are only in the last few weeks. I did not give you a 12-month summary; I have just given you the last couple of weeks of machete attacks here in Melbourne. So this is a priority; this is urgent. This is why we need to support the reasoned amendment that I am putting forward: to ensure that machetes are made a prohibited weapon. If the government are serious, they will support this amendment. If the government want to get dangerous knives off the street, they will support this amendment. No more talk. We have heard the Premier talk; we have heard the Minister for Police talk. People are sick of talk; they want action. This is a way to do it. We can do it in a bipartisan way today. We can get machetes off the streets once and for all and make sure they are banned, full stop. There is no reason for them – no reason to have them, no reason to sell them, no reason to carry them. Make it simple, not an excuse, like we have got at the moment. We have got to get machetes off the street, and that is what we are calling for in this proposed change to the legislation. This is really important. We are

facing a crime crisis here in Victoria. There are real concerns that not enough is being done to fix this. I know and certainly we have spoken to a number of people that think we have got to do more and think this government has got to do more.

There are two important parts of the bill that we have spoken about today. There are two very distinct areas. I will come back to terrorism, which is where we started. I just want to allude to some of the issues, particularly since 7 October. I know it is not directly related, but it is in some respects in terms of the extremism that we are seeing on our streets. We saw it in some of our schools in Brighton with some of the attacks on kids, and I believe that some of these changes were part of that as well. When you have got young people that are spewing hate, when they are being uneducated – I will not call it ‘educated at home’, but I will call it ‘uneducated’ – whatever they are being taught at home, whatever they are being taught with their friends, whatever way they are being radicalised, it has got to stop. It does stop with education. It does stop with programs. I am very, very keen on hearing more from the Department of Justice and Community Safety about what they are doing. We want to work with the government to ensure that we deradicalise young people from ultimately committing serious, horrible attacks on individuals. It has got to stop, and we will do whatever it takes to do that. I say that in a true bipartisan way. We will do that; we must do that. I put the offer on the table today: whatever briefings the government can provide, whatever information they can give me when it comes to some of these programs to deradicalise young people, let me understand what is going on so we can help.

There are lots of people in the community that want help as well. There are a lot of not-for-profits and a lot of philanthropists in Victoria that have had enough of the radicalisation, of the extremism, of the division and of the hate. This is a great opportunity to do something about that, and we can do it together. It is not just about legislation, it is not just about money, but it is about expertise, experience and providing support, mentoring and role models for some of these young people that have lost their way, because the role models they have at the moment are the wrong ones. I have seen some of the stuff that is spewed out on the football ground – a 10-year-old kid spewing hate out to another person because they are Jewish and they are wearing a skullcap on their head, calling them a ‘bloody disgusting Jew’. A 10-year-old – how does a 10-year-old hear that, understand that or even know who they are playing football with? That has come from somewhere. And it is not just my community. It is not just the Jewish community; it is all communities. It does not matter whether you are Muslim, Hindu, whatever you may be in terms of your faith, background or where you are from, if you have got people that are attacking you both verbally and physically, something needs to change. They are getting the wrong education and the wrong message. Again, whether it has come from their friends or from their homes – wherever it is from – it has got to stop. Programs are good. The government is doing it. Let us fund them. As I said when I started this today, let us fund them, let us support them and let us make sure we deradicalise young people and stop them ending up in a really bad downward spiral effect of hate and division, because we do not need that – we definitely do not need that.

Just finishing on the knife crime stuff: it is the most serious thing that we are experiencing now. Not a day goes by when we do not see another knife crime here in Victoria. People’s homes are being ransacked in the middle of the night in such a brazen way, with some family member in their bedroom having someone stand over them with a machete or a large knife. That has got to stop. When somebody walks into a house with a machete, there have to be serious consequences. Whether it be on the streets, which are largely what we are talking about, or at train stations, shopping centres, sports precincts or entertainment precincts, no matter whether it is in a planned way or it is an unplanned event, police need to have the powers to search and ultimately confiscate and arrest. They have got to have those powers. We have got to get these dangerous knives off the streets. Whatever we can do to fix that, we should.

I will just finally mention: this is a great opportunity on top of everything to bring in move-on laws. That is another part of this as well. When we have got people, extremists particularly, who want to disrupt and stop people from doing what they need to do, the government could also support our move-on laws. There are two things that we could do as part of these reasoned amendments, and they are

banning the machete and bringing in move-on laws. Those two things would go a long way to disrupting the vision that we have in our community at the moment, restoring a balanced and more inclusive society and ensuring, finally, that we have community safety in Victoria. We do not have it at the moment. We have a good opportunity to get it, but we have got to work together to do that. We have got to fund the police, we have got to give the police the powers and ultimately we have got to change the court system so that there are consequences for those people that commit violent crimes. Enough is enough. Victorians have had enough. We have got to ensure that we have safer streets, and at the moment that is severely lacking here in Victoria.

Sarah CONNOLLY (Laverton) (13:53): I too rise to speak on the Terrorism (Community Protection) and Control of Weapons Amendment Bill 2024, and I am really pleased to rise to speak on this bill. This is another bill where our government has listened, not only to the community but also to Victoria Police. This is a bill that is all about our government going ahead and cracking down on crime, cracking down on offenders, trying to prevent people who are likely to get engaged in crime from doing that in the first place and also trying to deradicalise some of our youth. This is an excellent bill, and it is an excellent time to bring it here before the house. We take crime and offending, in relation to the many offences that this bill is cracking down on, incredibly seriously, which is why time and time again before this house we are here debating bills that have been put before the house that have gone through consultation with Victoria Police and that give them the powers that they need to crack down on crime on our local streets.

I talk about that quite passionately, because when I am out and about in my community I have lots of conversations about crime, particularly around youth offending and knives. This bill, I am really pleased to say – and I know my community will really be happy to hear – means we are going ahead and introducing amendments so police can stop and search and look for weapons, including knives. That is going to be really important for my local community. This is not just about preventing crimes from happening in the first place but this is also about ensuring that our community feel safe in their local neighbourhoods and streets, many of them where they grew up and where they continue to reside with their growing families.

I do want to make a couple of remarks about the deradicalisation amendments that we are putting through in this bill. We recognise the need for therapeutic intervention for those people who may be vulnerable to violent extremism. It is something that is absolutely appalling to think about in our community, and the previous speaker has talked at length about some of the abhorrent things that even 10-year-olds say at the sides of sporting games. These are the sorts of actions and words that lead to terrible things in our community that should not be happening, but it is really important that this government has acknowledged that some of these things are happening in our communities. Whether you are of Jewish faith or of Islamic faith, we are doing everything we can to crack down and provide better protection for folks.

I want to say a couple of things about Victoria's voluntary case management scheme, which has been in operation since 2022. It is a voluntary program that provides tailored intervention and wraparound support for people at risk of radicalisation. Support includes psychological counselling, career counselling, mentoring, tutoring, legal aid, access to community sports groups and the like. This scheme exists to support people who are at risk of or are actually radicalising towards violent extremism. This is about preventing terrible action from being taken before it actually happens. It connects these kids with the services they need and identifies ways to reconnect them with our community and be more included in our community. It is really important to remember that the scheme is voluntary and it complements the tremendous work that is being done by Victoria Police with high-risk individuals. These amendments will make changes to the operation of the scheme to ensure best practice at all times.

I want to take a moment to give a big shout-out to the amazing men and women that make up our police force. Since coming to government we have added over 3600 police officers on the streets of Victoria – men and women who each and every single day wake up to keep our community safe. They

do a tremendous job. I have talked here in this place about visiting the big cop shops in Melbourne's west, whether it is Wyndham police station, Sunshine police station or Werribee police station, talking firsthand to the men and women who are there on the front line and asking them what they think is happening with our youth in particular. The knowledge that they have provided us with is invaluable. That is always so important, and it is the reason why we consult so extensively with them before we put bills before this house that will give them the powers to keep our community even safer. On this side of the house we work with Victoria Police, not against them.

This is a tremendous bill. It is good timing for it to come before the house this week. I want to take a moment to give a big shout-out to the minister, who I know works extremely hard and extremely closely with Victoria Police. This bill is going to look at the deradicalisation of youth but also look at the search and seizure amendments that need to be made, particularly in relation to public places. We know that communities and families, particularly in my local patch in Melbourne's west, cannot wait to get out and about and enjoy festivals and major sporting matches. They want to be safe. They deserve to feel safe. The amendments in this bill in particular are all around making sure that folks can feel safe at these major events. I cannot wait to get out into my community and talk about this really fantastic bill that has come before the house this week. I would urge those opposite to get behind it and to get behind Victoria Police.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

Questions without notice and ministers statements

Youth justice system

Brad BATTIN (Berwick – Leader of the Opposition) (14:01): My question is to the Premier. The Deputy Premier stated that the enhanced bail supervision and support trial, which places high-risk youth offenders with ankle bracelets in schools, was wrong on so many levels and that he found out about this government plan by reading about it in the *Herald Sun*. Can the Premier confirm she failed to advise her own deputy of a major policy announcement in his portfolio?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:02): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. The opposition leader made a quote about the matter being wrong on so many levels. Let me inform the Leader of the Opposition just exactly how wrong he is on so many levels. I remind the Leader of the Opposition that the government announced the policy intent to introduce electronic monitoring for serious repeats youth offenders in April of last year. It was not last week; it was April of last year. I also remind the Leader of the Opposition –

Bridget Vallence: Speaker, on a point of order on relevance, this is specifically around a new policy of having these youth offenders in schools, and I would ask you to ask the Premier to come back to that question.

Mary-Anne Thomas: Speaker, there is no point of order. I ask that you let the Premier get on with answering the question. She was being entirely relevant to the question that was asked.

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

Jacinta ALLAN: Of course I would also like to remind the Leader of the Opposition that the introduction of electronic monitoring is providing the courts with another mechanism to monitor young offenders while they are on bail. I know the Leader of the Opposition has had a lot to say about youth justice and the importance of keeping young people connected to school settings. The Leader of the Opposition, you would have thought, would also know that a part of bail conditions is of course keeping young kids connected to school settings. And, guess what, with electronic monitoring, as part of setting bail conditions, there is –

Bridget Vallence: On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier is debating the question. It was a very narrow question asking if she had failed to advise her own Deputy Premier.

Mary-Anne Thomas: Speaker, there is no point of order. The Premier was answering the question. Again I ask you to let the Premier get on with answering the question and rule the point of order out of order.

The SPEAKER: I ask the Premier to come back to the question.

Jacinta ALLAN: In answering the Leader of the Opposition's question it is incumbent upon me to perhaps explain to the Leader of the Opposition how the bail system works. It is clear that he does not understand it, because if he did he would know that there is already the opportunity for young people as part of their bail conditions to remain connected to school settings. The introduction of electronic monitoring is absolutely consistent with that practice of keeping young people supervised and connected back into family, community and education settings. So there is no new policy. The introduction of electronic monitoring provides the youth justice system with another tool to monitor young offenders to ensure they are complying with their bail settings, and, where relevant, those bail settings include connection to an education environment.

Brad BATTIN (Berwick – Leader of the Opposition) (14:06): Can the Premier explain why the government is currently advertising positions for youth case officers for the purpose of putting high-risk young offenders in schools – a policy that the Deputy Premier, who is the education minister, described as wrong on so many levels?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:06): The engagement of public servants to support the introduction of electronic monitoring that may include keeping young people connected to a school setting is consistent with this quote:

Going to Parkville College at Cherry Creek is not a positive outcome; getting them into a school in the community where they can gain skilled employment and they can gain the skills they need for the long term is a positive outcome ...

Bridget Vallence: On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier is debating the question. It is a very narrow question: why are these jobs being advertised for a role that is wrong on so many levels, as described by the Deputy Premier?

The SPEAKER: I remind the Manager of Opposition Business not to repeat the question in her points of order.

Mary-Anne Thomas: On the point of order, Speaker, just because the Manager of Opposition Business does not like the answer to a question does not mean that the Premier is debating the question. I ask that you rule the point of order out of order.

The SPEAKER: The Premier was not debating the question.

Jacinta ALLAN: Of course I was referring to comments made by the Leader of the Opposition, as the member for Berwick, in this place, when he was advocating for exactly –

Members interjecting.

Jacinta ALLAN: This is classic form from the Leader of the Opposition, saying one thing in this place and another thing outside of this place.

Bridget Vallence: On a point of order, Speaker, question time is not a time to attack the opposition. I would ask you to ask the Premier to come back to the question.

Mary-Anne Thomas: Speaker, there is no point of order. It is entirely appropriate for the Premier to compare and contrast the actions of this government with those of the Leader of the Opposition, who says one thing in this place and another when he is out in the community.

The SPEAKER: I remind the Premier not to attack the opposition. The Premier has concluded her answer.

Ministers statements: planning policy

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:09): I want to see Victoria as the townhouse capital of Australia because we on this side of the house know the way out of the housing crisis. There is only one way: to build more homes so young people and working families can have a future, and we are doing that. We are already the state that is building and approving more homes than any other in the nation. But also we know that good affordable homes need to go in good connected communities. Increasingly that is what we are hearing, particularly from young people, who support the introduction of the townhouse code to see more townhouses. We know that our planning system needs a shake-up, because for too long it has been chock-full of blockers and knockers and delays that have stood in the way of developments that have been all about building more homes.

That is why we are introducing the new townhouse code and rewriting the planning act – to get more townhouses built right across our great state. Also, if it ticks all the boxes, it is on a pathway to getting approved, which of course means no costly delays, no VCAT limbo, no unnecessary red tape and bureaucracy – perhaps no member for Brighton with a megaphone marching up and down the main street – just getting on and building more homes more quickly. It is a pretty simple equation: make the system work in a way that works for young people and works for working people to get homes built more quickly. You would have thought that was a basic economic principle – supply and demand – something I have heard the Shadow Treasurer supposedly advocate. But instead of looking at supplying more homes, they are blocking the demand for more homes. We are getting on and doing the work that needs to be done to build more homes right across the state.

Youth justice system

Jess WILSON (Kew) (14:11): My question is to the Minister for Education. The minister stated that he did not find out about the enhanced bail supervision and support trial until reading the *Herald Sun* on Saturday morning. A Victorian government spokesperson responded, supporting the implementation of the program on Saturday afternoon. Why did the minister support putting high-risk youth offenders in schools on Saturday afternoon?

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Minister for Education, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC) (14:12): Can I say at the outset that my focus as education minister is on the hundreds of thousands of students who every day put on a uniform and go to school to learn and live a life of purpose, as well as the safety of their schoolteachers. As I have made very clear, kids with ankle bracelets do not belong in mainstream school settings. As I have equally made clear, they do belong in alternative education settings, for three reasons. Education is the most powerful weapon to combat disadvantage; alternative pathways, vocational education and training, smaller class sizes and a wider and more flexible curriculum are the pathways for these kids. On this side of the chamber we get how education changes lives. We understand what a powerful weapon it is, and that is why we will always focus on education at the heart of reform.

Bridget Vallence: On a point of order, Speaker, the minister is required to be factual, and I think he is misleading the house.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Ben CARROLL: I have got a statement here, and it is a factual statement, from Tina King, the Victorian branch president of the Australian Principals Federation. She says:

The APF applauds the decision announced –
today –

by the ... Minister for Education ... to discontinue the pilot program that placed repeat offenders on bail in mainstream schools with ankle monitoring devices.

This decision reflects a strong stance by the Education Minister and a pragmatic approach that prioritises the safety and wellbeing of students and staff.

And that is what we do. We will prioritise the safety of our staff and our students. We have more than 1 million students in our system; 660,000 students call the public education system their home. We have just announced \$2.5 billion for public education from the Commonwealth. We know the single most powerful weapon to combat disadvantage, to turn a life around, is education. But it has got to be the right education setting. It has got to be small class sizes. It has got to be a wide, tailored curriculum – you are either in vocational education, in training or out trying to get a job – and that is what we will do. As a former Minister for Youth Justice, I know and I have seen firsthand how our flexible learning options across our Education State change lives. That is why we have that approach and it is why it will change lives.

Bridget Vallence: On a point of order, Speaker, the minister is clearly debating the question. It was a very narrow question about these youth offenders being announced by the government on the weekend to be in mainstream schools.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Ben CARROLL: Most of these kids that will be subject to electronic monitoring are disengaged from education and disengaged from school. We want them re-engaged with education. We want to make sure that they have a curriculum that is flexible. We want to make sure they get intensive wraparound support. Our flexible learning options do some things that the mainstream system cannot do in terms of wraparound training, wraparound support, alternative pathways and a wider curriculum for them. That is why everyone in the Education State under the Allan Labor government will have a pathway. We know what their side is. It is cuts, it is closures and it is making sure they do everything they can to drive education down.

Jess WILSON (Kew) (14:16): Minister, principals were briefed about this program last week. How can the minister claim that principals were briefed on this program last week but he learned about it in the *Herald Sun*?

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Minister for Education, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC) (14:16): Electronic monitoring on bail is being led by the minister in the other place, the Minister for Youth Justice. As part of that, the department of justice work with the Department of Education and do briefings with a range of stakeholders. As soon as I learned that government schools were potentially being placed with electronic monitoring, I stepped in and stopped it. You only have to read the statements that have been placed by a range of stakeholders to say this is the right decision. I know the work that we have done as a government on building the Education State up: making sure we have got record investment from the Commonwealth, more schools built in this state than anywhere else in Australia, the best NAPLAN results, the best attendance rates, the best student-to-teacher ratios and First Nations attendance leading the nation right here in Victoria. This is the Education State; it always will be under the Allan Labor government.

Bridget Vallence: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, it was: why was the Minister for Education not briefed on this as principals were?

The SPEAKER: The minister has concluded his answer.

Ministers statements: construction industry

Colin BROOKS (Bundoora – Minister for Industry and Advanced Manufacturing, Minister for Creative Industries) (14:18): Yesterday I met with Damien Crough, the CEO of PrefabAUS, the national peak body for modern methods of construction, or MMC as it is known in the industry. As the name suggests, modern methods of construction incorporate new construction technologies, including modular, prefabrication and 3D printing. Supporting modern methods of construction means we can build more homes faster and we can take a proportion of construction indoors and expand employment opportunities for more Victorians. Damien pointed out that Victoria is already the national leader in MMC, with more than 40 per cent of companies based here in Victoria, including

industry stand-outs Modscape, Timber Building Systems, Fleetwood Australia and many more. That is no coincidence. These companies have set up here because Victoria is Australia's manufacturing powerhouse, with a workforce, freight network and industrial base that are the envy of the nation.

New construction technologies are also critical to delivering on our housing targets. The Allan Labor government is doubling down on our competitive advantage and backing MMC manufacturers through a range of initiatives that will see more Victorians in homes faster. A growing sector needs a skilled workforce, and that is why we have funded the Melbourne Polytechnic future of housing construction centre of excellence, the first dedicated training facility in Australia focused exclusively on advanced construction technology courses. You also need a pipeline of work. That is why we have funded 250 dwellings as part of the Regional Housing Fund's modular building program and made matched contributions to MMC developments in Castlemaine, Karingal, Eildon and Omeo. Most importantly, for industry to thrive you need a plan, and that is what the Allan Labor government has delivered through the housing statement. In the meantime we will get on with assisting Victoria's innovative manufacturers to improve Victoria's housing supply. It is part of our plan to build more homes where people want to live.

Health services

Annabelle CLEELAND (Euroa) (14:20): My question is to the Minister for Health. Australian Medical Association president Dr Jill Tomlinson has raised a concern with the government about avoidable child deaths and harm in Victorian hospitals, but their repeated pleas for reform have been ignored. Why has the minister ignored the experts' concerns and failed to act on their advice?

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services) (14:20): I thank the member for Euroa for her question, because it does give me the opportunity to put some facts on the record. But before I do can I just acknowledge that the loss of any child is tragic. I send my condolences to any family that has been impacted or has experienced harm in our public healthcare system.

With regard to the president of the AMA Dr Jill Tomlinson, she wrote to me late last year, and I responded to her on 6 January this year. She is in conversation at the moment with Safer Care Victoria regarding the suggestions that the AMA have.

I might take this opportunity just to talk through some of the processes that we have here to do everything that we can to ensure that we have the highest quality and safety in our health service system. We established Safer Care Victoria back in 2017, we have created Victoria's first chief quality and safety officer, we have introduced the nation-leading statutory duty of candour and we are implementing the Safer Care for Kids reform, which that has been co-designed with families. We are also the only jurisdiction that reports an additional sentinel event category which captures all other adverse events that result in serious harm. In addition, all child deaths are reviewed by the independent Consultative Council on Obstetric and Paediatric Mortality and Morbidity, and of course the coroner also examines all reportable deaths when someone dies unexpectedly during or following a medical procedure. So we are listening and we are consulting, and I am confident that the sentinel event review process is robust.

However, it is concerning to me that some clinicians and some hospitals are not reporting in a timely way, and that is why I have directed Safer Care Victoria and CCOPMM to provide me with urgent advice on how reporting obligations can be strengthened and to continue their consultation with the AMA.

Annabelle CLEELAND (Euroa) (14:22): Last year the minister said:

We're making significant changes to the way our health services respond to patient deterioration because we know this has historically, and unacceptably, been a significant factor in paediatric sentinel events.

Minister, have any of these so-called significant changes been fully implemented?

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services) (14:23): Again I thank you for the question. Safer Care for Kids has been rolled out right across the state. We have implemented a standard observation chart called the ViCTOR charts to be used to monitor all paediatric patients across our system. We are working on and trialling an escalation process –

Members interjecting.

Mary-Anne THOMAS: I am sorry? As I have said, the ViCTOR charts have been implemented across our health service system. We are working with the virtual emergency department to ensure that we have an escalation –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Member for Wendouree!

Member for Wendouree withdrew from chamber.

Bridget Vallence: On a point of order, Speaker, the question was whether the changes have been fully implemented. I ask you to ask the minister to respond to that very question.

The SPEAKER: The minister was being relevant to the question.

Mary-Anne THOMAS: I have been asked about Safer Care for Kids, and I am striving to inform the house of the work that is being done to implement Safer Care for Kids. As I said, an alternative escalation pathway for parents is being trialled – *(Time expired)*

Ministers statements: housing

Nick STAIKOS (Bentleigh – Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Local Government) (14:25): I rise today to update the house on the work of the Allan Labor government in cracking down on the dodgy practice of underquoting. For many young families and first home buyers, every dollar counts. They spend weeks and sometimes months searching, paying for building inspections and budgeting carefully only to find out that their dream home was never in their right price range to begin with. This is not just frustrating, it is deeply unfair, and that is why the work of the underquoting taskforce is so important. The taskforce is attending auctions regularly and sending a strong and clear message to real estate agencies doing the wrong thing that there will be tough penalties.

The trial of our government's underquoting taskforce has been so successful that it is now a permanent enforcement arm of Consumer Affairs Victoria, and since it was established it has monitored over 2200 sales campaigns and issued infringement notices that have totalled over \$1.8 million to real estate agencies caught breaching their obligations. But it is not just about issuing fines, it is about making the market fairer. The Allan Labor government is committed to supporting those who are looking to get into the housing market for the first time, and we have a strong record of doing just that. The taskforce is just one piece of the puzzle. Whether it is our 130 nation-leading rental reforms to protect tenants from unfair treatment, our enhanced consumer protections or indeed our underquoting taskforce, we will not stand by while dodgy practices hurt Victorians. We will always fight for fairness, transparency and a housing market that works for everyone.

Homelessness

Will FOWLES (Ringwood) (14:27): My question is for the Premier. In 2016 the federal census counted 24,817 Victorians who were experiencing homelessness. At the last census in 2021 that number had risen to 30,660, a staggering 24 per cent increase. Since that time homelessness support services have reported record increases in demand for their services. Premier, to what extent has homelessness worsened since Labor was elected?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:27): I thank the member for Ringwood for his question. There is no doubt that in Victoria and indeed around the nation we are seeing more people

in our community become increasingly vulnerable, and we know there are a range of different reasons that can lead people in our community to become homeless for either a period of time or an extended period of time. That is why one way to address the great challenge – and it is a deeply challenging issue to support people who are experiencing homelessness to get back into a stable, secure housing environment – is to build more homes. That is the start, but it is certainly not the end of the work that needs to be done, because in supporting people who are homeless, part of it is getting them back into a home but part of it is also addressing the reason why people are experiencing homelessness. That could be for a range of reasons. They could be people experiencing drug and alcohol addiction and needing drug and alcohol supports. We know that women over the age of 55 are the single fastest growing group of people in our community who experience homelessness, which is why alongside the member for Ashwood I visited a development in his community last year.

Will Fowles: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, the question was directed to what extent homelessness has worsened since Labor was elected. The Premier has not in any way addressed that question.

The SPEAKER: A point of order, member for Ringwood, is not an opportunity to repeat the question.

Mary-Anne Thomas: On the point of order, Speaker, the Premier was being entirely relevant to the question, which talked to homelessness and Commonwealth government programs, and I ask that you rule the point of order out of order.

The SPEAKER: The Premier was being relevant. I cannot direct the Premier how to answer the question. She was being relevant.

Jacinta ALLAN: I remind the member for Ringwood that I absolutely acknowledged at the outset that the statistics demonstrate that the challenge of homelessness has become more challenging here, like it has around the country, understanding the reasons why people are experiencing homelessness in greater numbers. Before the member for Ringwood got to his feet on the point of order, I was referring to the work we are doing to particularly support women. The fastest growing group of people experiencing homelessness is women over the age of 55, which is why through our Big Housing Build investments, like we have made in Ashwood, we have worked with the community housing sector not just to provide a roof over the heads of women in this group but to ensure that there are those wraparound supports to ensure that they remain in this secure, stable housing environment. It is why the work we do through our Big Housing Build is just so important, particularly where we partner with the community housing sector, who provide those programs that provide that additional support. I absolutely acknowledge that there is more to do in this area, which is why in the budget we have provided an additional \$197 million to provide ongoing homelessness support. It is a challenge that requires many areas of government to the task.

Will FOWLES (Ringwood) (14:31): I am grateful for the Premier's acknowledgement that the situation has worsened, and my supplementary question is: what then does your government plan to do differently to address this growing homelessness crisis?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:31): I think the member for Ringwood may perhaps already know the work that we are doing through our \$6.3 billion Big Housing Build to build more homes for vulnerable members of our community, the work we are doing to get homes built – whether they be public housing, community housing or housing in the private market – more quickly, which is why shaking up the planning system with the reforms we have worked on, led by the planning minister, is just so important. It is also why, can I say too – and I made these comments yesterday – that I think we need a compassionate approach, which is not what we have seen from the City of Port Phillip this week, where they have taken a very different approach which is not a compassionate pathway. We need to look at bringing all those elements of government together to provide those services to continue to address this challenge, and one key way of doing it is of course building more homes.

Ministers statements: planning policy

Sonya KILKENNY (Carrum – Attorney-General, Minister for Planning) (14:32): Last week we launched our new *Plan for Victoria*, a plan for all of Victoria written by Victorians for Victorians. We travelled to every part of the state, met with every local council, conducted youth panels and people's panels and attended farmers markets, shopping centres and train stations in this state's biggest community consultation ever, and the response was big: 110,000 Victorians, who overwhelmingly told us they want more homes in good locations, close to transport, close to jobs and close to services.

And the Allan Labor government is delivering, starting with local government housing targets for every single local government area across the state. For the first time ever we can see on a map how many homes we need and where those homes need to go to give certainty to community, certainty to local councils and certainty to the people who are going to build our homes and deliver the infrastructure and services we need to live well.

We have to be builders, not blockers. For too long our outer suburban areas have carried the load when it comes to new homes whilst too many Victorians have been locked out of our inner suburbs – places close to jobs, transport and services. It is just not fair. As one member in this place put it, we cannot continue to have the housing sprawl that we have seen. Who said that? The member for Berwick, now Leader of the Opposition. That is what he stood for then – now missing in action, while just last week half his frontbench were out blocking more homes.

Bridget Vallence: On a point of order, Speaker, thanks to former Speaker Brooks, a ministers statement is not an opportunity to attack the opposition.

Members interjecting.

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

James Newbury interjected.

The SPEAKER: Make that an hour.

Member for Brighton withdrew from chamber.

Mary-Anne Thomas: Speaker, the Manager of Opposition Business has already raised a point of order in relation to this matter, which you have already ruled out of order, and I would ask that you ask the Manager of Opposition Business to stop making frivolous points of order.

The SPEAKER: Minister for Planning, I ask you not to attack the opposition in your ministers statement.

Sonya KILKENNY: The Allan Labor government know what we stand for, and that is more homes and more opportunity for Victorians, and I want to thank local governments across Victoria for working with us to deliver more homes for Victorians.

Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (14:35): My question is to the Premier. Under Labor's punitive increase in the fire levy, the rate for a non-principal place of residence, which includes rental providers, will double. In a cost-of-living and rental crisis, how much will this tax increase cost renters?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:35): In thanking the member for Gippsland South for his question, of course we need to remember the context in which the Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund is being developed. It is of course, if you go back to the Black Saturday fires of 2009 and the subsequent royal commission that was held into those devastating fires, one of the recommendations was to introduce a levy to fund our emergency services. That was introduced –

Michael O'Brien interjected.

Jacinta ALLAN: I am glad you have acknowledged you introduced that, member for Malvern. I am very glad you have acknowledged your role, member for Malvern, because I was coming to that. I am glad you have self-declared.

Danny O'Brien: On a point of order, Speaker, on the question of debating the issue, the Premier is 45 seconds in and still talking about 2013. I ask you to bring her back to today.

Mary-Anne Thomas: Speaker, there is no point of order. The Premier was providing important contextual information about the fire services levy, which is entirely relevant to the question. I ask that you rule the point of order out of order.

The SPEAKER: I do not uphold the point of order at this point. Premier, be mindful of the question.

Jacinta ALLAN: It is important context because the proposed changes are to expand an existing mechanism that was put in place following the royal commission's recommendation. Legislation – and apologies to the member for Rowville or the member for Malvern, I am not sure in whose period of time as Treasurer this was canvassed – was put to the Parliament and has been in place since around 2012 or 2013.

Michael O'Brien interjected.

Jacinta ALLAN: Thank you – since 2013. He is very helpful, the member for Malvern. I am very grateful for your assistance. We have seen since then a change in both the way our community is experiencing repeat extreme weather patterns and how that is putting more and more pressure on our state emergency services.

Danny O'Brien: On a point of order, Speaker, on the question of relevance, I have been waiting nearly 2 minutes and the Premier has not even mentioned the word 'renter', which is what the question was about.

Mary-Anne Thomas: On the point of order, Speaker, the question was about the fire services levy and the way in which it relates to different people in our community. The Premier is being entirely relevant to the question, and I ask that you rule the point of order out of order.

Bridget Vallence: On the point of order, Speaker, the question was about the increase to the fire levy in December 2024 – that is what it was about – so the point of order that the Leader of the Nationals raised should be upheld.

The SPEAKER: The Premier was being relevant, but I do remind the Premier about the specific question.

Jacinta ALLAN: The question goes to the collection mechanism for this levy. The collection mechanism has not changed from when the member for Malvern introduced it in 2013. The collection mechanism remains through local government rate notices.

Bridget Vallence: On a point of order, Speaker, the question says nothing about the collection process. It is asking about how this tax increase will hurt renters. I ask you, on relevance, to get the Premier to answer that very narrow question.

The SPEAKER: I have ruled on this. The Premier was being relevant. I have reminded the Premier about the question.

Jacinta ALLAN: In terms of impact on households, as we have seen through the repeat extreme weather patterns, there is huge impact on households. There is huge impact on property owners particularly – and I refer to the member for Monbulk and the work she has done in her community – in terms of those extreme weather patterns. Do you know who the first responders in Monbulk are? It is the SES, which is why we have expanded the remit of this existing levy to include support for our hardworking state emergency services and the volunteers.

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (14:40): The government's own website shows the median liability for rental providers will increase by a third. How does this increased charge help reduce rent for people struggling to cope in a cost-of-living crisis?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:41): In acknowledging the member for Gippsland South's question, I do wonder if we are seeing a policy reversal from the member for Gippsland South and if they are now walking away from the policy position they had in government to see a mechanism like this to collect funds for our emergency services, who respond in the most difficult of circumstances, in the most extreme weather events, and that is providing support particularly for those volunteers, who deserve support in terms of having their equipment funded and their stations built. That is what this levy is about providing support for, and it will be up to the member for Gippsland South as to whether he supports it.

Danny O'Brien: On a point of order, Speaker, on the question of relevance, I will take your guidance and not repeat the question, but the question and the supplementary were about the impact of this levy increase on renters, and the Premier has not mentioned it once.

The SPEAKER: I cannot compel the Premier how to answer the question, but I do remind the Premier of the question.

Jacinta ALLAN: In concluding in the time available, I remember visiting Mirboo North last year and seeing the devastation on that town, in the member for Gippsland South's electorate, by the extreme weather event. I reckon those SES volunteers around the state, who travelled around the state, deserve our support.

Ministers statements: Metro Tunnel

Gabrielle WILLIAMS (Dandenong – Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for Public and Active Transport) (14:43): This Labor government is pulling every lever it has to build homes where people want and need to live. We need more homes, and they need to be well connected to jobs, to education and to friends and families as well. Later this year we will be opening the Metro Tunnel and taking the Cranbourne–Pakenham to Sunbury corridor out of the city loop. For the thousands of Victorians who live along this corridor this means we are providing access to turn-up-and-go train services. But beyond the benefits to just the Cranbourne–Pakenham to Sunbury corridor, it is about freeing up capacity – 45 per cent capacity – in the city loop. Why is that important? That is important because it means that we can run more services across the rest of our rail network as our population grows and shifts and as we build more homes.

We would not be able to meet that demand and provide those extra services where people will be living without delivering the Metro Tunnel, which makes it even more ridiculous that those opposite opposed it. They did not get it back then; they still do not get it now. Meanwhile, while works on the tunnel have been underway, we have been doing what we can to deliver service uplifts, capacity uplifts and reliability uplifts across our network right now. In fact this Labor government has delivered more than 2000 additional weekly train services and over 20,000 additional weekly bus services since 2014. That includes – and this is just a snapshot – 117 extra weekly services on the Frankston line, 45 extra services per week on the Lilydale line, 165 on the Mernda line and 75 extra on the Hurstbridge line. I could go on and on and on. Those opposite have opposed just about every project that has enabled us to deliver those extra services. When they had the chance, they cut services and they closed train lines. Do not trust them.

Constituency questions

Nepean electorate

Sam GROTH (Nepean) (14:46): (1010) My question is for the Minister for Ports and Freight. For the people of Flinders and Nepean more broadly, Flinders Pier is not just a structure, it is a vital piece of our heritage, a beloved landmark and a source of pride for residents and visitors alike. However,

recent communications from Parks Victoria indicate the necessary repairs, including the replacement of 54 supporting piles, may be compromised due to funding constraints. The documents from Heritage Victoria suggest that critical repair packages could be omitted. We urgently need additional funding to ensure these essential repairs are undertaken promptly, preserving Flinders Pier for future generations to enjoy and cherish, so my question is: is the government still committed to and financially able to provide the necessary funding to complete the Flinders Pier restoration?

Hastings electorate

Paul MERCURIO (Hastings) (14:47): (1011) My question is to the Minister for Climate Action. Minister, how many constituents in the electorate of Hastings have taken up the rebates from the Solar Homes program? I recently visited Jessica and her wife Jacinta and their three-year-old twins with a member for Northern Metropolitan in the other place. Jessica and Jacinta have recently purchased their first home in Hastings and have worked hard to make it energy efficient. They did this by getting on the Solar Homes program website, following the guidelines to check for their eligibility and downloading the free guides telling them how to create a solar-powered all-electric home. First, they put up solar panels on the roof and followed that by installing proper insulation in the roof also. Then they replaced the existing gas hot water system with a heat pump, which uses 75 per cent less energy than the gas system they replaced. That is money in their pocket not going on bills. Their next project is to install batteries. I congratulate Jessica and Jacinta for embracing the Solar Homes program.

Gippsland East electorate

Tim BULL (Gippsland East) (14:48): (1012) My constituency question is to the Minister for Environment, and the information that I am seeking is: what is being done to guarantee affordable domestic firewood supply this winter? I have raised this three times in the past 18 months after the cessation of the timber industry, and while the domestic season is still open, there are many in our communities – the elderly, the frail, the disabled – who simply cannot collect their own. We barely had enough to get through last winter, and that came about as a shortage after the closure of the timber industry, because they provided a lot of the supply through their residual wood. One thing we should never be short of in East Gippsland is firewood, but this government seems to have managed it. They have brought in a structure where we are short of firewood. We are only a few months away from heading into winter again, and I want to know what the minister has done to ensure domestic firewood supply for our region.

Laverton electorate

Sarah CONNOLLY (Laverton) (14:49): (1013) My question is for the Minister for Transport Infrastructure. As the minister knows, last week was huge not only for folks in Melbourne's west but for all Victorians. We are getting on and delivering Melbourne Airport rail thanks to federal and state Labor governments, and this is the best bit – the second stage of this hallmark project is set to begin in Sunshine, transforming her station into a super-hub. Sunshine is where it is at, folks, because we have been waiting on this announcement to further develop Sunshine as a precinct, with \$143 million set aside for the Sunshine precinct master plan announced back in 2022. There is no doubt about it, Labor is building MAR, and it will be absolutely life changing, particularly for westies travelling by rail. With work starting at Sunshine station, we are now ready to get a move on with rebuilding Albion station. More than a lick of paint, the station will be rebuilt from the ground up and be the station that locals have waited decades for and one that they can feel proud of. We are creating a super-hub in Sunshine, delivering jobs and business opportunities and transforming Sunshine and the surrounding areas.

The SPEAKER: The member did not ask a question.

Croydon electorate

David HODGETT (Croydon) (14:50): (1014) My question is for the Minister for Police, and I ask if he has plans to introduce a vehicle immobiliser subsidy program like the one adopted by the

Queensland government, which would help protect Victorians from the ever-increasing number of car thefts occurring across the state. Minister, I am regularly contacted by constituents who live in fear of their homes being broken into and their cars stolen, particularly as the rate of reoffending by youth criminals on bail continues to skyrocket. Families are spending precious dollars on increasing their home security; however, the break-ins continue. A subsidised vehicle immobiliser program could provide some assurance to Victorians that the government cares about reducing crime associated with car theft with increased security of vehicles.

The SPEAKER: Can I ask the member for Croydon to rephrase his question.

David HODGETT: My question is for the Minister for Police, and I ask for information about any plans to introduce a vehicle immobiliser subsidy program like the one adopted by the Queensland government. I am pleased the minister is at the table today and will take that on board.

The SPEAKER: I will review the question. However, I believe it is not in keeping with constituency questions.

Glen Waverley electorate

John MULLAHY (Glen Waverley) (14:51): (1015) My consistency question is directed to the Attorney-General. What steps is the minister taking to help protect and celebrate diversity in the Glen Waverley district? Bigotry and vilification affect us all, whether we are the direct victims of such reprehensible behaviour or not. It reflects on all of us as a society and brings us all down. This type of behaviour is simply unacceptable, and I am glad that the government has taken an appropriately strong response to deal with this pressing societal issue. The Glen Waverley district is a microcosm of the diversity in Victoria, and close to half the population was either born overseas or has a parent born overseas. We must ensure that vilification has no place in our society and that equality is not negotiable. I am proud to be part of a government which is standing up to protect every single member of our community, and I look forward to the Attorney's response.

South Barwon electorate

Darren CHEESEMAN (South Barwon) (14:52): (1016) My constituency question is to the Premier. At the 2022 election the Labor government committed to doing a business case for a new secondary school for the Mount Duneed community. My question is: will the Premier release that business case to the community so that the community can continue its campaign of advocating for secondary schooling for the Mount Duneed community?

Narre Warren South electorate

Gary MAAS (Narre Warren South) (14:52): (1017) My constituency question is for the Minister for Children in the other place and concerns the free kinder kits for three-year-olds. Minister, how do kinder kits benefit children and families in my community of Narre Warren South? The Allan Labor government's kinder kits are back for 2025, with 70,000 kids across Victoria, including in my electorate of Narre Warren South, receiving the kits starting from last week. The kits are provided to children attending funded three-year-old kinder and are part of Victoria's Best Start, Best Life reforms. Low-fee and free kinder is saving families around \$2600 a year and supporting more parents and carers to return to work if they choose to. I am sure my youngest constituents will enjoy the useful items inside the kinder kit, which also doubles as a backpack. I look forward to sharing the minister's response with my community.

Mornington electorate

Chris CREWETHER (Mornington) (14:53): (1018) My constituency question is for the Minister for Police. Crime is out of control in the Mornington electorate and all of Victoria. Criminal offences on the Mornington Peninsula have gone up 32 per cent in 12 months. What is the minister doing about providing more resources and powers to Mornington police to cope with this crime crisis? Local police are doing their best, but Labor's policies are not helping, such as weakening bail laws, scrapping move-

on laws, failing to ban machetes, reducing Mornington police reception hours and not filling the 1100-police shortage. In the last week we have seen reports about two people being arrested following an alleged kidnapping and false imprisonment in Mornington, a man charged with conduct endangering life after dousing a person with petrol and chasing them with a blowtorch late last year in Hastings and a man charged for alleged assault and carjacking in Frankston. These are just some examples. It is time Labor got serious about crime.

Monbulk electorate

Daniela DE MARTINO (Monbulk) (14:54): (1019) My question is for the Minister for Environment. Regarding William Ricketts Sanctuary in Mount Dandenong, what is the timeframe for restoration works to enable the sanctuary to be reopened to the public? A number of constituents have inquired about the recovery and reopening of this beloved sculpture park in the Dandenong Ranges. Sadly, the June 2021 storm event saw mountain ash destroy a vast number of sculptures, pathways, bridges and buildings, and the scale of the damage is extensive. I understand that recovery works by Parks Victoria are underway to make the sanctuary safe to reopen and would greatly appreciate the timeframe for its reopening, which will be eagerly anticipated.

The SPEAKER: Order! I have to rule out the member for Laverton's constituency question, and I will review the member for Croydon's constituency question.

Martin Cameron: On a point of order, Speaker, I have three questions still awaiting responses. Could I get you to follow up question 1331 for the Minister for Mental Health, question 1912 for the Minister for Emergency Services and question 1913 for the Minister for Economic Growth and Jobs.

Bills

Terrorism (Community Protection) and Control of Weapons Amendment Bill 2024

Second reading

Debate resumed.

Peter WALSH (Murray Plains) (14:56): I rise to make a contribution on the Terrorism (Community Protection) and Control of Weapons Amendment Bill 2024. On reading the bill, on reading the second-reading speech, on listening to the lead speaker, the member for Caulfield, the shadow minister, and on listening to the member for Laverton and her contribution I struggle to see how this bill actually passes the pub test. I do not see how Victorians that live their everyday lives could pick up this bill and say, 'Gee, wow, I feel a lot safer now because this piece of legislation has passed,' because it does not really do a lot. If you talk about the issues around terrorism and the functions of the community orders for deradicalisation, it is a process – and I understand it is a convoluted process – as to how you work through these issues and maintain people's right to free speech. But how does someone feel safer because of this particular process? I do not think the second-reading speech actually sets it out. I do not think anyone that I have heard from the government has actually made the case as to how people are actually safer from someone who may be radicalised and carry out a terrorist act here in Victoria.

What I have been pleased to hear in the lead-up to a federal election that no doubt will be called in the next few weeks is the fact that we have had Peter Dutton, the Leader of the Opposition, actually talking seriously about how those people who are here on visas, if they do something wrong, will have their visa cancelled and be sent home. There have to be consequences for people who come to Australia that do not want to abide by Australian laws and do not want to abide by the civil society that we live in here in Australia. We actually want people to come to Australia for the values and the lifestyle that we have, not to come here to transpose the problems they had in their country of origin. There is an opportunity with this legislation that has been missed in actually making sure there are consequences for those that do not want to abide by Australian standards and by Australian values.

If you go through the various steps that are put in place to help someone if they are showing radicalisation tendencies, as I said, I do not see how people would sleep better at night, reading this bill, or feel that somehow they will be magically safer into the future. So I think the government has missed an opportunity with that component of this bill into the future. There do need to be consequences for people who do the wrong thing here in Victoria.

The other part of the bill deals with machetes. As the member for Caulfield put in his contribution, there is effectively no reason why anyone should own a machete. There is an exemption in the legislation for agriculture use. Having had a lifetime involved in farming operations, I cannot ever remember actually picking up a machete. I cannot remember anyone I know actually picking up a machete. I think there are very, very, very limited reasons as to why anyone should have a machete. They are a lethal weapon. Having had the opportunity 18 months ago to walk Kokoda with a group of students a number of us MPs take – and I am going again this year with 30 students – yes, I have seen machetes firsthand being used by the people of Papua New Guinea as we walked the trail. They have a useful purpose for those people – to cut wood if it has fallen across the track. But that is about all. They are a lethal weapon, they are dangerous and they look horrible. I would hate to be in a situation where I had some drug-crazed, alcohol-fuelled person chasing me with a machete, because I would feel absolutely petrified. They are dangerous weapons. They should actually be banned. They should be made a prohibited weapon. Instead of having legislation that plays around the edges of the rules around machetes, with control areas where you cannot have weapons, let us actually ban machetes and make them a prohibited weapon.

Let us reinstate move-on laws. Let us not worry about having areas where police can have more powers because they believe there might be some violence. Let us actually give police the powers they need to move people on when they believe there is a need to do that. We find constantly when people are demonstrating that it is a sport. Demonstrating has become a sport for a lot of people that want to come and punch up and beat up on police. They want to cause trouble. They are the people that should be held to account. There are professional demonstrators in this state that think it is good sport to come along and bait police, throw things at them and cause trouble with police. Let us give police the laws they need to stop these people carrying on their sport of causing civil disruption, but more importantly let us give police the powers to stop their lives, their health and their safety being put at risk by people who think it is good fun to come along and roll marbles under the feet of police horses, stab police horses with knitting needles and try and make police horses react in a way that will be seen to be dangerous. Those police horses are absolutely fantastic animals in how they are trained, how they can be used in crowd control and how they do not overreact when they are baited all the time by demonstrators.

What I see as a country MP is that when there are big demonstrations on, police are drawn from the police stations in my electorate and from the police stations in the larger regional city electorates to come to Melbourne to reinforce the police here in Melbourne to police these demonstrations. That leaves us in our communities without the limited police resources that we have, because there are always vacancies in our police stations. Yes, the Echucas or the Swan Hills in my electorate might have X number of police allocated to those stations, but I can guarantee you there is very rarely a full book of police in those stations, because there are always vacancies and there are always police being called closer to Melbourne for various reasons to back up the police that are here.

Instead of just having a bit of playing around the edges – ‘We’ll make this a special area where you’re not allowed to have a weapon’ – let us actually give police real powers. Let us make sure that courts have laws they have to enforce rather than having courts saying, ‘Oh, well, it was actually a good intention you were demonstrating for, so I won’t slap a fine on you in this case.’ I am someone who was passionately supporting our native timber industry before this Allan government closed it down. People who were demonstrating in those logging coupes were putting foresters’ lives at risk by driving spikes into trees and cutting hoses on machinery, but magistrates were saying, ‘Oh, well, your intention was honourable because you were protesting against something that you believe shouldn’t be

happening. You're breaking the law and you're putting people's lives at risk, but it was well intended, so I won't fine you or I'll fine you a very small amount rather than imposing a severe fine.' If we are serious about safety in this state and if we are serious about law and order, let us give police the powers they need and let us make sure the courts actually enforce what the police want done. Let us actually have some education for magistrates as to what community expectations are around sentencing. We have had a generation of magistrates and judges appointed who seem to think that they know better than what the Parliament has intended when it comes to having consequences for actions.

I will finish where I started. If they picked up this legislation and read it, if they read the second-reading speech and if they listened to the debate that has happened so far, would a reasonable person think that they will be any safer because we are debating this bill at the moment? This bill will be passed, because we are not opposing it. It does not do any harm, it just does not do enough good when you have an opportunity with legislation. Will people feel safer with this bill going through the Parliament and being implemented? Will it actually help police do their job any better? No, I do not think it will. It will not give them the powers they need and it certainly will not do anything to give them the support they need from the courts. I think it is a missed opportunity by the government to improve safety in Victoria and improve the lives of all Victorians and actually help them sleep better at night, rather than worrying about someone coming through a door with a machete to steal their car keys to take their car, because it is happening every night. Every night somewhere in Victoria that is happening. We are seeing far too many cases of aggravated burglaries with weapons, particularly the likes of machetes. Let us get them totally out of society here in Victoria; let us not just limit them to some places.

Paul HAMER (Box Hill) (15:05): I also rise to speak about the Terrorism (Community Protection) and Control of Weapons Amendment Bill 2024, which does propose a range of amendments to both the Terrorism (Community Protection) Act 2003 and the Control of Weapons Act 1990. I want to spend most of my contribution talking about the changes to the terrorism act. While they are relatively minor and they deal with the powers that Victoria has as a jurisdiction, I also want to reflect on the broader issue of terrorism in our community and our society. A lot of these laws are governed by Commonwealth legislation, but it is a really apt time for us to talk about terrorism in the community. There has been a real rise in terrorism and terrorist activities over the last 18 months, and even in August last year the government raised the national terrorism threat level from 'possible' to 'probable'. Two cases in particular that come to mind are the firebombing of the Adass synagogue in East St Kilda back in December and then in January the discovery of a caravan on the outskirts of Sydney with features that identified that it may have been targeting some Jewish institutions. I think this is a really troubling trend that we are seeing in the community. It is putting the Jewish community under a lot of pressure and in a lot of fear to see that these terrorism attacks are either happening or being planned in our own communities.

I want to reflect a little bit on the ASIO annual threat assessment in 2025, which was delivered by Mike Burgess, director-general of security, just a couple of weeks ago. The statements that he made in that are really quite telling in terms of the state that we find ourselves in. I think this reflects the importance of this bill and the importance of any measures that we can take as a state to prevent terrorist activities and also, as the bill alludes to, to work through voluntary case management to target individuals who may be susceptible to getting involved in these sorts of groups. I want to quote a little bit from the annual threat assessment that was delivered by Mike Burgess, because I think it is important to understand the context of the timeframe that we are entering into now. One of the points he made was:

Australia has entered a period of strategic surprise and security fragility.

Over the next five years, a complex, challenging and changing security environment will become more dynamic, more diverse and more degraded.

Many of the foundations that have underpinned Australia's security, prosperity and democracy are being tested: social cohesion is eroding, trust in institutions is declining, intolerance is growing, even truth itself is being undermined by conspiracy, mis- and disinformation.

Similar trends are playing out across the Western world.

I think we can see that happening in front of our very eyes, particularly on social media. With the feeds that we get on social media and the rise of artificial intelligence in particular we really do not know what we are seeing and whether that is the truth or not. We also understand the dangers of social media and how it can be so easy to actually bring individuals, particularly vulnerable people, into that world and then potentially inspire them to act.

One of the things also mentioned in the assessment, which Mike Burgess went on to say, is:

Of all the potential terrorist matters investigated last year, fewer than half were religiously motivated. The majority involved mixed ideologies or nationalist and racist ideologies.

Almost all the matters involved minors. All were lone actors or small groups. Almost all the individuals were unknown to ASIO or the police and it is fair to say they allegedly moved towards violence more quickly than we have seen before.

I think this is why these elements of the bill are really important. The bill inserts a number of definitions which are particularly relevant to this part, including a definition of ‘vulnerable to violent extremism’. That would be inserted into the act as new section 22AGA. The meaning includes:

having psychological, behavioural or social needs that may increase susceptibility to being recruited, radicalised or influenced by ideologies or associations that advocate or employ violence for political, religious or ideological ends ...

In the context of the profile of the individuals who ASIO have identified, I think having that definition and identifying those people and particularly being able to intervene at an earlier stage are going to be absolutely critical.

I also want to reflect briefly on, as I mentioned at the outset, the terrorist acts that were either conducted or threatened to be conducted against elements of the Jewish community. The ASIO director at Senate estimates a couple of weeks ago also referred to some of these antisemitic incidents. He said:

In terms of threats to life, it’s my agency’s –

that is, the ASIO agency’s –

number one priority because of the weight of incidents we’re seeing playing out in the country.

That is not to say that there have not been many other intimidatory and violent attacks against many other communities – and we touched on those a lot in the last sitting week when debating the Justice Legislation Amendment (Anti-vilification and Social Cohesion) Bill 2024 – but it is very telling that we are seeing the level of violence that we are seeing in the attacks, particularly against some of those Jewish institutions, and the context in which these incidents are occurring.

There were two people who were arrested for the incident with the caravan in Sydney, but we still do not know who the perpetrators were of the attack in East St Kilda. There was a statement that came out shortly thereafter talking about how there may be foreign actors, even potentially foreign countries, that were enabling and promoting local criminal actors to partake in these activities, which I suspect is partly why ASIO and the AFP were getting involved in those investigations.

There is a really significant element to this bill about strengthening anywhere that we are able to strengthen our terrorism protections. I know that Victoria Police have devoted a lot of resources to these cases and are working strongly with AFP and other security agencies. And any additional powers that we are able to provide through our own means and through our own Victorian jurisdiction to facilitate that and also, as discussed before, to better protect and move young people away from radicalisation and potential terrorist acts, I think are a good thing. I commend the bill to the house.

Jess WILSON (Kew) (15:15): I rise to speak on the Terrorism (Community Protection) and Control of Weapons Amendment Bill 2024. From the outset can I thank my colleague the member for Caulfield for the mountain of work that he has done to ensure his colleagues and the opposition are

well briefed on this piece of legislation. Turning to the purposes of the bill, they are really twofold: firstly, amending the Terrorism (Community Protection) Act 2003 – and I will come back to some of the key provisions this bill is amending – and, secondly, amending the Control of Weapons Act 1990.

In terms of the main provisions of the bill in front of us, the reform to the operations of the voluntary case management, or VCM, scheme, which forms part of the Countering Violent Extremism Multi-agency Panel, provides for two intervention pathways for Victorians who are at risk of radicalisation: the voluntary case management scheme and the support and engagement order. The current eligibility criteria for the VCM scheme excludes some individuals who may benefit from a countering violent extremism intervention. The bill before us expands the eligibility criteria to enable the VCM scheme to provide services for a wider cohort of individuals. It allows programs and services to be provided to a key person of a participant of the VCM scheme, such as immediate family or caregivers. This is important because family and friends can lessen a person's susceptibility to violent extremism. As we have heard in the debate today, there is a rising threat level here in Australia. We have certainly seen that, sadly, on the streets here in Melbourne and in other cities around Australia, and whatever we can do to strengthen law enforcement's arm and their ability to counter terrorism should be a priority of government and supported by all.

The second part of the main provisions of the bill before us looks at reforming the planned and unplanned designated area weapons search scheme to give our police greater flexibility to combat weapons offending when and where there is heightened risk to community safety. It does this in a number of ways – firstly, by removing the requirement to publish a notice of a declaration of a planned designated area in a daily newspaper, instead requiring the publication of the notice on the Victoria Police website. This is consistent with what other jurisdictions do, and it does recognise the shift in technological consumption and media consumption. It also amends the provisions for planned event declarations to provide that each period of an event declaration operates both during the event as well as any time before and after the event if the Chief Commissioner of Police considers that reasonable. Currently event declarations may only operate strictly during the exact timing of that event itself. It also gives the chief commissioner the flexibility to tailor the duration of a declaration based on the unique characteristics of each event and its particular risk profile. For example, if people congregate before an event or linger after an event, it is important that they will be able to give a much longer and safer environment in relation to the ingress and egress of these events with high attendance numbers.

While the bill and these measures largely represent sensible reform, there is much we could do to empower our police men and women to tackle criminal activity and threats in this state. From the coalition's perspective, the opposition's perspective, this is largely a missed opportunity by the government to empower our law enforcement, our police, to deal with what is a rising crime crisis here in Victoria but also, more broadly, those rising threat levels that we have seen right across this country and, sadly, in the streets here in Melbourne. I note the significant organisational turmoil currently facing our police force, with a number of senior members being shown the door by this government in recent weeks. I particularly note the statement of outgoing deputy commissioner Neil Paterson, who made some very pointed remarks upon his departure – a very unceremonious departure at the hands of this government, which threw that long-serving member of Victoria Police essentially under the bus for their own failures as a government. The former deputy commissioner said:

Our hard-working police officers have never arrested more people or helped more victims, a very sad reality. Policing is only part of the justice system, and an effective justice system requires strong legislation and appropriate accountability in the courts.

The outgoing deputy commissioner hit the nail on the head. Our police force, Victoria Police, are doing everything that they can do to enforce the laws in this state, doing everything that they can do to keep the community safe, but they can only do what they can with the laws that are given to them. They are just one part of the justice system. It is the rest of the justice system that is not serving them and not serving Victorians in this state, and it is a missed opportunity by this government in bringing forward this bill here today that we are not looking at the opportunity to provide our police with more

powers to do their job and also ensuring that the rest of the justice system is supporting the ability of the police to keep our community safe.

Let me talk for a moment about the fact that we have seen in this state over the past few years crime rise and rise again. We have had in the past 12 months the highest number of criminal incidents since the Crime Statistics Agency began. We have seen youth crime at a high since 2009. Every single day I hear from local constituents and Victorians right around this state that they are scared to be in their homes at night, that they are worried about being the victim of a home invasion. This sits at the hands of the Allan Labor government in failing to keep Victorians safe – failing in their number one priority as a government: to keep our community safe. This is because this government has weakened bail laws time and time again. Every opportunity they have had to strengthen those bail laws, which would receive the full support of the opposition, has been turned down by this government, who have refused to even debate legislation brought into this place to strengthen our bail laws. At a time when we are seeing youth crime spike and we are seeing criminal incidents more broadly at an all-time high, this government is derelict in its duty when it comes to protecting our community and protecting community safety.

This bill is also a missed opportunity when it comes to empowering our police men and women with the move-on laws that this state desperately needs so that on weekends in particular we do not see the same situation after the same situation of businesses in this city, people trying to go about their everyday lives in this city, being disrupted because of the protests on our streets. I commend the reasoned amendment of the member for Caulfield, who has put forward that:

... this house refuses to read this bill a second time until the government considers further options to tackle controlled weapons and ensure community safety during planned events.

It is clear that the present move-on laws do not sufficiently empower police to break up hateful protests before they descend into violence and mayhem. We need to give our police force, our police men and women, the tools they need to keep the peace and keep the CBD a place where people want to go. In other cities and states we have seen how these laws can be used to make sure that the CBD is not hijacked on weekends by a small group of people, a minority group of people, who want to continuously disrupt other people's lives.

The bill before us is a missed opportunity. When it comes to the crime crisis in this state, this government is not only letting the community down with its weak bail laws, it is letting our hardworking police down. We have a police recruiting crisis. We have seen this morning a potential shake-up of recruitment standards for Victoria Police, but this is not an excuse for the 1000 frontline officer vacancies that remain unfilled today or the 43 stations across Victoria that remain closed.

Just last week we saw an absolutely awful incident in the electorate of Kew where a woman was the victim of a home invasion in the middle of the night. This unfortunately is too common an occurrence in this state. Night after night we are seeing home invasions by repeat offenders because this government refuses to do their job and actually keep Victorians safe.

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (15:25): We know every Victorian has the right to be safe and to feel safe, and we certainly take community safety extremely seriously on this side of the house. I will also reflect personally as the local member for the seat of Albert Park. There was an extremely serious incident over the weekend and another just a month ago. There are investigations underway now, so I will not speak to them specifically so as to not in any way interfere with those investigations, save for the fact that such violence is extremely confronting. It is absolutely understandable for locals to be concerned about such events, as I am personally and as we are as a government – and more broadly of course across the state.

We certainly are listening to Victoria Police. These amendments today are an absolute reflection of that. What we are ensuring amongst the reforms that have been brought about by this legislation – I will not speak to all the reforms, but I will say this – is that police can use their existing powers to

search for weapons more easily, more often and for longer periods of time. These are really pragmatic and important changes which do not take away in any way from the extraordinary work that Victoria Police do day in, day out for us to keep us all safe.

We know in 2024 police seized a record 14,797 knives, swords, daggers and machetes – the most in any time over the past decade. They are working extremely hard. But what we do know with the Control of Weapons Act 1990 is there are a couple of really key elements here. One of them is actually enhancing their capacity to detect – that is so there is a preventative element when you are looking at anticipating, as they do with their intelligence and their skill sets, where weapons may be used or carried – and also allowing them much greater flexibility. These are issues that they have directly identified because they are on the front line and they know exactly what is happening. These are really pragmatic and important changes.

I am really pleased to see that we are bringing them through the house, because as has been stated, there is no good reason to be carrying a knife down Fitzroy Street or Clarendon Street or Bay Street or anywhere – in my electorate or otherwise. Take your pick, CBD or otherwise, there is no good purpose for it. Why would you need to do so? That should be a given, but we are having to enhance these powers as part of listening to police and to give them the powers that they need to do even more in the work that they do.

I should put the caveat that our planned and unplanned designated area random weapons search scheme has been a key tool for Victoria Police for almost 15 years. The scheme allows Victoria Police to combat unlawful possession and use of weapons in public places by allowing them to conduct random weapons searches in designated areas. That is just giving a bit of a frame to what it does. This is certainly a longstanding and really important mechanism that has been used by VicPol to do the critical work that they do. But as I stated from the outset, they are looking for greater flexibility – for instance, with event declarations, extending their time, so not only limiting it to the time of the event, as there is the pre-emptive phase leading into the event where certain perpetrators may seek to find opportune locations to have weapons available. Having that lead-in time is a really pragmatic measure. But there is also after the event. We have all been to major events when there are huge crowds leaving all at the same time. That might also be, I should say, an opportunity for somebody to do something really unfortunate, and again, giving police the increased time to be able to do that important work that they do is a really important step forward.

Decreasing the time between operations – currently the act only allows Victoria Police to return to a place to conduct a search operation once every 10 days. What if you are in a school holiday period and you anticipate there are issues that might be concerned with a particular shopping centre? You might need to conduct this kind of operation over a longer period. We can see how the current status limitation is stopping VicPol from being able to target high-risk areas. But the good thing about the reform is this means police can return to the same place multiple times in a week, because the bill before us will drop the 10-day limit down to 12 hours between searches. Again we can see really pragmatic and helpful reforms. I know there were some statements from the opposition saying this will not do much. I have to vouch for the contrary, because you can see clearly a significant change in timelines, in prevention mechanisms and in elements that are being put into the legislation.

Also, making declarations based on intelligence – of course, if we try to get into the mindset of a criminal, they are not necessarily going to alert us in the most open way that they are about to do something terrible. But if the police, with their unique skill set, can anticipate through their intelligence that a new event or an event in an area that has never seen an incident before might see weapons-related violence, under the current legislation they could not declare the area a designated zone to search. However, we are changing that. This bill introduces greater flexibility into the threshold test to make sure Victoria Police can be agile and respond to new and emerging trends. That is what is really enhancing that proactive policing element, which is ultimately reducing the risk to community safety.

The amendments are increasing the maximum time of declarations. Right now the maximum time that a planned or unplanned search operation can run for is 12 hours. VicPol have been using a 12-hour search window since 2009, and they have told us that operationally extending that window to a maximum 24-hour search period would be really helpful. They have told us of situations, for instance, when retaliation attacks can be expected. A longer window of time gives them the flexibility they need to keep the community safe. We are listening and therefore implementing these reforms.

We are also modernising advertising requirements, because not so many people are reading the paper newspapers anymore, and it is certainly far more expedient to be able to put it on the website, with the caveat that declaration notices will still be required to be published in the *Government Gazette* and made available on the Victoria Police website. That is a really pragmatic and important change, and I think that is a real modernisation when it comes to the way this particular mechanism can operate.

I want to say more broadly too since coming into government we have made record investments of more than \$4.5 billion in Victoria Police to deliver Victorians the modern world-class policing service they deserve. This includes additional police and new and upgraded stations right across the state. I have one coming for South Melbourne, so I am extremely excited about that because of what it will mean for Victoria Police members working hard in my seat. It is going to be an outstanding facility. We are investing in new technology, I should also say, to ensure that Victoria Police continues to be a modern fit-for-purpose organisation into the future. More than 3600 additional police have been funded by our government since 2014. We have also invested in new equipment for our police, including \$214 million to roll out tasers to all frontline police officers and PSOs, ensuring they have another nonlethal tool at their disposal to respond to potential violent offenders. So we can see again that is a way of reducing the risk to community but also having the effective tools that the police need to do the critical work that they do.

I will say obviously I am extremely supportive, but I am really, really happy to see these really important reforms coming through, truly strengthening the ability of Victoria Police, particularly with their detection and prevention capacity, but also giving them the flexibility that they need to enhance even further the hard work and the efficacy of the hard work that they are doing to keep the community safe.

Wayne FARNHAM (Narracan) (15:35): I am pleased to rise today to contribute on the Terrorism (Community Protection) and Control of Weapons Amendment Bill 2024. I will start off the contribution by acknowledging the member for Caulfield, the shadow minister in this space, for his contribution of work on this bill and keeping his colleagues up to date. We do not oppose this bill, but we do have some reasoned amendments in here. The bill on the surface does give police some greater flexibility, and it is probably long overdue if you listen to our police officers and the community. The bill introduces measures to give Victoria Police greater flexibility to combat weapons offending when there is a heightened risk to community and safety, and I think that is very important. When we talk about community safety and introducing legislation in this place, nobody on this side ever works against the government on it. I just want to acknowledge our hardworking police. I know they are very frustrated at the moment in relation to having just been through an 18-month process on their enterprise bargaining agreement, not to mention the fact that I know, especially in my local community, that the police down my way are very, very frustrated with the bail laws at the moment. I just want to acknowledge the hard work that they do in trying to keep our community safe, and hopefully this bill will give them more powers to do that.

I think it is very important to note that when we talk about terrorism in our community there probably has been an uplift in terrorism – what is classed as terrorism – that we have not seen before in the community. There has been nothing more prevalent than the firebombing of the synagogue, which did get recognised as a terrorist act. I feel for the community of that synagogue, that their place of worship was a target. We could probably safely call them domestic terrorists, and there was no other reason for it than antisemitism against the Jewish community. I would like to think that our laws, with these new laws coming in, will be toughened up around that area.

But the one thing that probably concerns me a bit about this is a couple of times in this chamber we have tried to introduce laws around machetes and making machetes a prohibited weapon. I still am of the firm belief that there is no place for machetes in our society. I know the member for Point Cook will not mind when I reference this conversation. When the Werribee election was on the member for Point Cook and I were talking about machetes, and I was saying that there was no place for them. I took on board what the member for Point Cook said. He said, 'Listen, if you drive around the corner, you'll see a farm around the corner where the workers use machetes to' – was it a broccoli farm?

Mathew Hilakari interjected.

Wayne FARNHAM: A broccoli farm, cauliflower farm – they use the machetes to chop them. I said, 'I acknowledge that, but there are ways around this so that you can still have the machetes.' It is quite a simple solution. On the farm where the machetes are required, they should be locked up on the farm and not be for everyone to take home. This is my point, where we are saying, 'We don't want to see them.' The member for Albert Park referenced it as well. There is no need for knives and machetes on our streets. There is definitely no need in Narracan, and there is no need, I imagine, in Clarinda, in Point Cook or anywhere else. When there was a situation like the one the member for Point Cook rightly pointed out to me, I said, 'Well, there's a solution around this. You can treat them like guns and you can lock them up in a safe on the farm just for the workers to use when they come to work.'

I am in no way, at any point in time, saying any of those workers out there have broken the law in any way, shape or form. But we do have to start to make machetes prohibited weapons, because I think it is a community expectation at the moment and we see it in the news time and time again: a home invasion with machetes used. There is an expectation from this community in the state of Victoria that we in this place will do everything we possibly can to make them feel safe. The problem we are having now is that people do not feel safe in their own homes. They just do not. I saw one story on the news just the other day where the thieves came back twice to the same home. The first time I do not know what they did, but the second time they came back they stole two vehicles out of the garage, again with machetes. I spoke – it might have been in the last sitting week or the sitting week before that – about a 19-year-old girl in my electorate being bailed up by an offender wielding a machete. She is only 19. I know her father very well. Thankfully, she was not hurt. But they did steal her car. They took her car. Now, this is a 19-year-old girl.

At some point in time I want this government to actually wake up and say that machetes have no place in our society. They are not required. If they are required, we can put laws in place to specifically deal with that, but at no point in time are machetes required in Victoria. They are really not – unless it is for a specific use, like the member for Point Cook pointed out to me, and I took that on board. But when I see that a 19-year-old girl got bailed up by someone with a machete –

Members interjecting.

Wayne FARNHAM: I know her parents; I have known her parents for a very long time, member for Croydon. The father was angry, and you can imagine what he would like to have done to that offender. But then that offender, who was already out on bail, went to court and came out on bail again. This is where we are failing at the moment in the state of Victoria. I think this legislation introduced today will go a bit further; it goes a bit further for the police to expand their laws, especially around events. But are we doing enough? The member for Murray Plains said earlier that the government is missing an opportunity here. Does this go far enough? This is the real question the government should be asking itself.

The government says, 'We consult with people. We do all this; we do all that.' It is one thing to consult with people, but it is another thing to listen to people. If they would listen to the community of Victoria, the government would take this further. They would not miss this opportunity that they are missing at the moment. They have to listen to the police. Unfortunately, I do not think our former Chief Commissioner of Police was probably vocal enough against the government. But if they listen to the

police – if you go down to your local police station and you talk to the police, they are saying our laws are not tough enough. They are saying our bail laws are not tough enough. So consultation is great, but there is a big difference between consulting and listening, and I do not think the government is really listening at the moment to what the community expectation is around law and order. I just do not think they are listening enough.

The member for Murray Plains said it very, very well: this is a missed opportunity by this government to introduce tougher laws to absolutely prohibit machetes. They do not need to be a controlled weapon; they need to be absolutely prohibited. I feel for our hardworking members of Victoria Police when they are constantly locking up people. The member for Albert Park rightly said that it was, I think, over 14,000 knives and everything else that the Victoria Police got off the street, which is good. It is a good thing for our community. But how many of those people got bail? And there is the problem. Victoria Police do a great job. They are out there. They protect and serve. They are trying to keep our community safe, but I do not feel as though this government is supporting them enough in their endeavours to get the bail laws right and to get criminals off the streets. This bill will go some way to giving them more powers, which is a good thing, but the government does need to do more. They need to support VicPol, and they need to support them in the sense that the bail laws need to be reformed so there is not a revolving door. We will obviously go into division on the reasoned amendment, but at the moment I do not think the bill goes far enough.

Daniela DE MARTINO (Monbulk) (15:45): I rise to speak on the Terrorism (Community Protection) and Control of Weapons Amendment Bill 2024, and I want to first look at and address the amendments to the Terrorism (Community Protection) Act 2003. This part of the bill is dealing with pathways for Victorians who are at risk of being radicalised towards violent extremism.

I think it is really important to note that ASIO last year, in August, raised the terrorism threat level from ‘possible’ to ‘probable’, and from those of us who were watching there was a bit of a sharp intake of breath at the time. I was reading through ASIO’s annual threat assessment report from last month, February 2025, and I have got to say it makes for concerning reading. I would like to quote Mike Burgess, the Director-General of Security, just to illuminate some of these issues that we are seeing develop. He stated:

In previous years, I’ve focused on past and present threats.

This year is different.

This year’s Assessment is future focused. And I think it’s fair to say it’s the most significant, serious and sober address so far.

...

We raised the national terrorism threat level in 2024 and I do not anticipate being able to lower it in the foreseeable future.

Politically motivated violence is raising the temperature of the security environment and making acts of terrorism more likely.

...

We expect nationalist and racist violent extremists to continue their efforts to ‘mainstream’ and expand their movement. They will undertake provocative, offensive and increasingly high-profile acts to generate publicity and recruit. While these activities will test legal boundaries, the greatest threat of violence comes from individuals on the periphery of these organised groups.

I remain concerned about young Australians being caught up in webs of hate, both religiously and ideologically motivated ...

This bill is seeking amendments to improve the operations of Victoria’s voluntary case management, or VCM, scheme to make sure that it operates flexibly and responsibly. This scheme – I have been interested to learn about it – is basically a therapeutic response for people who might be vulnerable to violent extremism. Some of these people are frighteningly young – they are in primary school – and we know that early intervention is more efficacious than dealing with a problem at the end of it. The

earlier we get in and ensure that we are drawing away those who may be at risk of being sucked into the vortex of extremist violence – the earlier we intervene and assist – the better the results should be, so the amendments we are introducing here are really important. They allow for a wider cohort of people to be eligible to actually access that intervention, and that does reduce their likelihood of posing a risk to our community, because we all deserve to be safe. But this is a wicked problem that we have. It is insidious. It occurs in the shadows a lot of the time. And social media – there are some great things that social media has done for us, but gee, it has really opened up Pandora’s box, and there are some terrible parts of the internet out there and the wider web where we can see the darkness that can fester and how people can be basically drawn into some terrible, terrible extremism without them even realising it is happening until it is just too late.

Our scheme, the voluntary case management scheme, has been in operation since 2022. It is a voluntary program, but it provides really tailored intervention and wraparound support for this people at risk of radicalisation. The supports are quite interesting, because they can include a number of things. They can include psychological counselling, even career counselling. If someone has no objective or aim, if they have got nothing tangible in their lives to cling on to, it stands to reason they are more likely to fall into the trap of finding extremist networks and trying to find a sense of purpose in amongst that. So career counselling is really important. We all need to feel a sense of purpose, and for a lot of us it is tied into the work that we do, be it paid or unpaid. The support can also include mentoring, tutoring, legal aid and access to community support groups. It is a really interesting scheme because it provides support for people by connecting them with services they need and identifying ways to tailor it to the person. We are all very different, so the approach to take in ensuring that those who are at risk needs to be quite tailored and it needs to be multifaceted. It is quite clear that this is not a cookie-cutter approach. It is not one size fits all. It is very complementary with the work that Victoria Police do with higher risk individuals as well.

The amendments that we are seeking to introduce will make changes to the operation of the scheme to ensure best practice, basically. We have got a good sense now of what is working, because it has been in since 2022, as I mentioned, and the amendments are responding to the needs of experts working in the sector. This is what we do: we go out and listen, we tailor, we refine and we finesse. For instance, it is best practice to involve an individual with all decisions made about their wellbeing. If you want somebody to make a change, they have to buy in, they have to feel agency and they have to feel that it is going to have a good effect for them as well. This will ensure that when that voluntary case management plan is developed it is actually done in collaboration with the participant. We know what it is like: when you are told you have to do something you tend to rail against it a little bit. It is a bit of a natural inclination. But when someone is involved in it, when they have a voice and they can actually contribute to how it is tailored for them, of course it is going to work better.

We also are amending the language used around risk because we want to take away the stigma associated with joining this voluntary program. I know, I have said it so many times – I am a broken record – but words have a very definite effect. The meaning of words and the power of words are indisputable, so taking away some of that language is really important for making sure that this is more open and engaging and more likely to be adopted and embraced by those who need it the most. By providing this more holistic and tailored intervention, we basically are working to keep Victorians safer from the threat of terrorism and violent extremism.

It sometimes strikes me when I am thinking or reading about this that it almost feels like I am in, I do not know, some kind of sci-fi drama or some kind of TV show. When you hear about terrorism and extremism it almost feels surreal. Unfortunately it is a very real and growing threat. It is not necessarily happening in front of us every moment of the day. It is easy to think it is not there, but it absolutely is in the shadows, and we are now starting to see it becoming more apparent with certain attacks. The attack on the Adass synagogue made it all too clear that the threat is growing. Mike Burgess’s report really does make for very, very sobering reading for those who are keen to learn a bit more.

The bill that we have introduced also makes amendments to the role of the Countering Violent Extremism Multi-agency Panel – there is a mouthful – CVEMAP, to clarify that their role is as an advisory body. Currently the multi-agency panel has legislative functions that are really closely involved with case management, but in practice the work is actually being carried out by expert case managers, and they are the best ones to deliver this work; they are the ones best qualified. So we are again tailoring this in response to seeing it play out in practice. The bill will clarify that the multi-agency panel will continue to provide advice on the engagement and vulnerability of participants, but it will actually delegate that day-to-day case management to the Secretary of the Department of Justice and Community Safety, who manages the program.

I think this is really important work that we are doing here. As I described before, according to Mike Burgess never has the threat been as significant as it is now, and there is no view to it looking to diminish. In fact that report called out some key issues which have occurred that have affected terrorism. The main ones were the global pandemic, Russia's intervention in Ukraine and the conflict in the Middle East. These three significant global events in the past few years alone have actually contributed to this. Unfortunately, as we look at what is happening currently in Ukraine, that does not seem to be changing anytime soon for the better, although we certainly and sincerely hope that it does.

The bill goes on to make amendments to the Control of Weapons Act 1990. Much has been said about this here and I note my time is now running down quickly, but I think it is really important to thank Victoria Police for the work that they do and acknowledge that with this bill we have listened to them. We are providing greater flexibility for them in the powers that they will have when it comes to the control of weapons. We are making this a more nimble area for them so that they will not be as constrained as they are under the current legislation. I commend the bill to the house.

Martin CAMERON (Morwell) (15:55): I rise today to talk on the Terrorism (Community Protection) and Control of Weapons Amendment Bill 2024. My contribution will be around the Control of Weapons Act 1990. I stand here in the chamber today to talk about issues that we have as a community in the township of Morwell. Unfortunately, I need to stand and talk about this. I know we all like talking our communities up, but out on the streets of Morwell at the moment the community is scared. We have criminals that are out of control. We had a stabbing on the street last week. We need to be able to regain control of the Morwell CBD, because at the moment it is a challenge for anybody to walk around there.

I did a street walk late last week and spoke to some of the shop owners in Morwell. At my first place of call I spoke with Deon from Vinnies op shop and asked him about what went on with the stabbing last week and what actually happens on the streets of Morwell. He told me that on a daily basis there are youth offenders and there are people in their 20s, 30s and 40s who come into his shop and just take stuff off the shelf. His staff are volunteers in their 50s, 60s and 70s and feel the wrath of these individuals coming in and causing grief in his shop. Gippsland Cardiology Service is a new place that has opened up for people to go and get heart health checks and sometimes get blood tests. I spoke to Rosemary there. On a daily basis Rosemary sees drug dealers going down to the corner directly out the front of her shop. There is public drunkenness going on. Individuals are starting to drink at 7:30 in the morning. I was chatting with George at Cellarbrations bottle shop. The individual that would be confronted with this stabbing was in his shop. As he left the shop there were two perpetrators on the other side of the street, and they walked across the road with a baseball bat with a knife strapped to the end of it.

We can dance around the issues with these amendments that we want to make, but the bottom line is that I do not think they go far enough. I am here to represent my community. I am here to represent the police officers that put their lives on the line every day to go and break up these incidents that happen on the streets of Morwell. Police are trying to do all they can. We can no longer arrest individuals for being drunk, which is a real issue. We cannot even ask them to move on. We have to wait for them to do a criminal act – maybe assault someone – before the police can step in. The police

know this is going to happen, so they ride – pardon the pun – shotgun over the community to make sure they can protect us as well as they can.

One of the biggest issues that seems to be coming in is rooming houses. We have these rooming houses in Morwell, which have exploded. We have ones which are on a register which we know about, but we also have rooming houses which are not on a register. We have people that are making tens of thousands of dollars a week from these rooming houses, and we need to make sure that we are doing everything we can to gain control of our streets. Michael Henderson is a proud Morwell businessman and has lived there all his life. We were having a chat the other day. In the township of Morwell, with a population of around 14,000 people, we have 17 rooming houses. Those rooming houses now make up 106 bedrooms where individuals are seeking refuge, and these individuals are not so nice. We are finding out that they are being moved on from inner-city Melbourne and pushed down into my patch of the world and end up in Morwell. It is not good enough.

I would love – and call for here, as I stand – the Premier, the Minister for Police and also the Attorney-General to come and walk with me on the streets of Morwell so they can give assurance to our constituents down there that it is a safe place to live and work. Come and talk to the people that are considering closing down their businesses because they can no longer feel safe on the streets. They are worried about going into winter, and they want to curtail their small businesses so they finish work at 3:30 or 4 o'clock in the afternoon so they do not have to walk out to their car in the dark. It is wrong. It is just wrong that these things are happening.

I think someone called out before that they were going to go and see the SEC. The home of the SEC was meant to provide 59,000 new jobs, and a lot of them were going to go to Morwell. But the unemployment rate at Morwell at the moment is over 15 per cent and rising. We have got unemployment. We have got thugs walking around on the street, and they have all got weapons, every single one of them. If the police pulled them over and searched them, every single one of them would have a weapon on their body, because that is what it is like. It is not a fun place to be at the moment.

We have a minister in the other place who has her MP office 10 metres away from where most of this stuff goes down – where there is public drinking on the streets, public fighting and drug deals going down – and it just seems to go unnoticed and is swept under the carpet. This is how brazen these individuals are, coming down and doing stuff which is illegal in my book and I think in the book of any person that is in here – carrying weapons on the street. You are walking down there and having someone walk across the road with a baseball bat with a knife strapped to the end of it. That is not right in our society, not right at all. Morwell has the highest rate of criminal incidents in Victoria outside of metropolitan Melbourne. Criminal offences committed by 10- to 17-year-olds have increased by a startling 29 per cent in the last year throughout our municipality. It is something that needs to be addressed.

As I said, this particular bill, although we are making changes, does not go far enough. People are scared. Elderly people will not go down the street to do their shopping. I know I am talking about Morwell, but if you think it is not happening in your seats, where you are MPs – that you have not got individuals walking around the streets carrying weapons – you have got your heads in the sand and you are not doing your job to find out what is going on. The public drunkenness that we have – it falls to local government officers to go out and move people on. What a joke that is, putting the blame on them. There is no way that I would be sending people out onto the street to interact with these people if they were not carrying a weapon and part of Victoria Police. The police, as I said, are doing the best job they can with the laws that they can act on. I have had to stop my electorate officers walking from my office to go and get the mail from Australia Post because it is not safe enough for them to walk on the streets during daylight hours. These individuals that we have down there need to be stopped. I absolutely call to the Premier: please, come down. Minister Carbine, you are the police minister: give the police in my area the powers, because at the moment we are losing the battle with the safety on the streets of Morwell. It is time for real leadership now.

Dylan WIGHT (Tarneit) (16:05): It gives me great pleasure to rise in support of this bill this afternoon, and I do so knowing that community safety is absolutely paramount and is the highest priority to me but also to the Allan Labor government. Keeping people safe in the state of Victoria is our highest priority, and that is exactly what this piece of legislation is about. It is about giving police and giving more broadly our justice system and all that goes with it the tools to combat some of the behaviour that we have seen in Victoria over the last little bit.

I have been listening along pretty intently to the contributions of others during this debate. I must say some of the discourse – not all, but some of the discourse – from those opposite has been pretty disturbing, pretty horrible, to be frank. I mean, the member for Murray Plains – I had to look up what the electorate was for the member – took it to a pretty weird place, frankly. He took it to a pretty xenophobic place. He stood up at the start of his contribution and said about this multicultural society that we have been building for the last 100 years, ‘Not sure that’s working.’ It was pretty horrible stuff.

I will never come in here – ever – and politicise the issue of community safety. I will never come in here and politicise the issue of community safety, because it is too important to my community and it is too important to the communities right around Victoria to do so. Make no mistake, this issue is nothing more than a political plaything for those opposite. It always has been. Let us remember the history on this. Let us remember the form that those opposite have on this, from African gangs to tough on crime. They roll it out every single election when they think they have got a sniff. It is nothing more than a political plaything. They have got no interest in working with the government to try to keep the community safe. They do not care about people. They only care about votes. That is all this is to them. It is just about votes. It is not about keeping the community safe. It is not about keeping the community safe, otherwise they would come and constructively stand with us to keep the community safe.

They even have the opportunity in this place to move actual amendments, not just a reasoned amendment that says, ‘Just stop debating this so we can go out into the community and we can whip up more fear and,’ in their own minds, ‘win more votes.’ It is rank political opportunism. The opposition should be ashamed of themselves.

Jess Wilson: Acting Speaker, I draw your attention to the state of the house.

Quorum formed.

Dylan WIGHT: Need I say more? A cheap political trick from the member for Kew – nothing more than rank political opportunism, as I was saying, because they do not want to listen to the truth. The member for Kew is a reasonable person. She is a reasonable person and in the context of the Liberal Party is not a bad member of Parliament. She is sitting there going, ‘I know that is what we do. We go out into the community; we drum up fear.’ That is the only thing this reasoned amendment is about. At least come in and move an amendment that actually changes the legislation and does not just say, ‘Oh, look, stop debating it until we can whip up more fear out there in the Victorian community.’ I think Victorians, frankly, have had a gutful of it. They roll it out every single time there is an election, and they should be ashamed of themselves and hang their heads in shame.

Our police, Victoria Police, do an absolutely amazing job. That is one thing that – well, I was going to say ‘everybody in this house’, but perhaps not the Greens – most people in this house can agree with, that Victoria Police do an amazing job. This piece of legislation – in consultation, by the way, with Victoria Police and with the community – assists them in doing the incredibly important work that they need to do. The brand new member for Werribee and I not too long ago – I think it might have been at the end of last week, actually – were having a conversation about an interaction that he had with our local police force out there in Wyndham. He was out on Watton Street, and there was a police operation happening there on Watton Street down there at Werribee station, and he had the opportunity to talk to them about their weapon search operations, which they were conducting right there. Officers said to him how antiquated it felt to have to advertise in the *Herald Sun* and how much easier their job would be with the change that we are talking about right now. They spoke about how these operations

are important in keeping knives off not only our trains but also our bus networks. Seeing this operation firsthand was an important reminder for the member for Werribee – and it should be an important reminder to us all – of the hard work that our police do out there in Wyndham. I would like to give a particular shout-out to Stephen O’Connell and the team at Wyndham North police station, my local police station.

The Australian Institute of Criminology also discusses how the most effective way to reduce crime is through rehabilitation. We have to make sure – and this is what this is all about – that we are preventing and catching criminals that are doing the wrong thing but also that we have an incredibly robust and serious framework in place to make sure once people do enter the justice system that they have the capacity to be fully rehabilitated. Otherwise we just end up with recidivism all the way through our communities. We have to make sure that we have the capacity to rehabilitate those that enter the justice system. Research has consistently shown that increasing imprisonment rates does not directly lead to lower crime rates. Instead excessive reliance on incarceration can result in greater social and economic harm, as individuals may become further marginalised, increasing the risk of reoffending.

Out in my patch, in Wyndham, we do also a power of work – and when I say ‘we’ I mean the state government, Victoria Police and even Wyndham City Council – on youth prevention programs. The youth crime prevention program and drop-in at Tarneit are programs in Wyndham that help young people avoid crime and build community connections. In Wyndham, including areas like Tarneit, the YCPP has funded projects aimed at reducing youth offending, which is incredibly important. So it is prevention. Obviously, if somebody slips through the cracks, making sure that Victoria Police have the tools to do their job, but also that rehabilitation piece, if that were to be the case, is so incredibly important.

I will never, ever come into this chamber and politicise community safety, unlike those opposite, who use this issue for nothing more than rank political opportunism. This is a fantastic piece of legislation, and I commend it to the house.

Cindy McLEISH (Eildon) (16:16): Even with a quorum called in the middle of that, that was too long and too painful to listen to. Unlike the previous member, I am actually going to speak on the bill.

Members interjecting.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Juliana Addison): I remind the member for Eildon, who has been around for a little bit of time, to be parliamentary in all things, please.

Cindy McLEISH: I do not think I was unparliamentary. He is quite fine. I do not mind the member at all, but that was hard work.

I rise to make a contribution now on the Terrorism (Community Protection) and Control of Weapons Amendment Bill 2024. I guess the reason behind this bill is that we have to be kept safe, and it is up to the government to implement strategies and legislation to make sure that we are kept safe. There is an argument about how well that is actually done. Sure, there is a lot more that can be done, and we know a lot more can be done because we have in fact got a bill here before us today because the government know they need to do more.

Community safety is something that affects all of us and all of our constituencies. Whether you are in the inner city, the outer suburbs, in growing suburbs or in country areas and small towns, community safety is something that we all really have at our heart because it allows us to live our lives how we would like to live them.

There are two elements of this bill before us – two quite separate elements. One is about terrorism, and one is about the control of weapons. Firstly, this bill is amending the Terrorism (Community Protection) Act, which is not that old – 2003, and here we are 22 years later, so we know that that is a fairly new act – and the Control of Weapons Act 1990. I am going to start with terrorism protection, because this is something that affects not just us in Victoria and us locally but in Australia and also

worldwide, and we know this when we travel. There are examples of terrorism that are obvious and examples that are not so obvious, and there are different ways and different things that we hear about. Certainly there are hostile motor vehicle attacks in crowded places. We have seen even in Europe just recently at markets that there have been a number of cars that have been driven into people who were innocently enjoying their time, being put under threat like that. We have had suicide bombings. They are probably not so prevalent here, but there are certainly bomb scares and hijackings. We hear of cars being hijacked. Biological weapons are perhaps not as obvious, but they are something that everybody does worry about.

The one thing that all of these terrorist attacks have in common is that they are committed by somebody with ill intent. One of the things that does happen is that those groups with ill intent are pretty keen to try and go out and grow the number of people that are doing the bad gigs for them. They want more and more people involved in doing that. Mostly we have terrorist attacks from groups, but we have occasional lone wolves, and it gets a little bit blurry. We have had the Pan Am, Lockerby and September 11 attacks; we have had attacks in mosques and attacks in churches and in Sri Lanka and Christchurch as well. Way back in the 1970s when we had the Hilton Hotel bombing in Sydney I think it probably made us sit up and think, 'Gosh, we might need to do a little bit more here.' We have had stabbings. There was a stabbing in Endeavour Hills that was radically motivated, and we certainly had the motor vehicle attack in Bourke Street.

It is a little bit that you do not know what you do not know, because police do thwart a number of activities without alarming everybody and telling them exactly what has happened. I do know that that happens on occasion and sometimes we hear a little bit more about particular events that may have been hijacked – something at the MCG or on Mother's Day. One thing that alarms me particularly is that Australia's current national terrorism level is 'probable'. That means we do need to be doing something about it. 'Probable' is a little bit more than 'Gosh, it could happen'; it is probable. I go back to John Howard's message from way back: 'Be alert, not alarmed.' I think that is still a good message. Victoria Police have a counterterrorism strategy. The current one is for 2022–25. It is about identifying key terrorist-related threats and what the police intend to do about them. Whether they are current priorities or future priorities, they have got to prevent them and respond to them. As I said earlier, if they have prevented them, we do not always find out.

At the heart of this bill is radicalisation. We have seen people from Melbourne go overseas and fight with ISIS because they have been radicalised in some way. There are a couple of things here that the provisions of this bill give the Secretary of the Department of Justice and Community Safety and the Countering Violent Extremism Multi-agency Panel in relation to the operations of the voluntary case management scheme to better align with best practice. I will have a little bit more to say about this. They want to expand the eligibility criteria for referral to the scheme and allow the scheme to provide programs and services to family members and close contacts of participants on the scheme.

I am not sure how well this scheme is going. It has not been reviewed. It should be reviewed. I understand that they have had eight go through it. They are aiming for, the internal KPIs, I believe about 30. Six have completed it and two are active. It is pretty hard to find somebody who will voluntarily put their hand up and say, 'Hey, listen, I might be at risk of being radicalised.' But I do note the Australian Parliament tabled an inquiry just in December last year into right-wing extremist movements in Australia and they listed factors that contribute to radicalisation. I know that if you talk to the police, they have their radicalisation checklists about things that you need to keep on the lookout for. It says in the report, in section 3.2:

Radicalisation to violence is a social process which 'is different for every individual, comprised of highly complex and nuanced issues and motivations'.

That in itself is pretty complicated. It goes on to list social relations, ideology and criminal activities, but I note particularly that one of the recommendations – and remember this is only a couple of months old – is that the:

... government undertakes periodic evaluation of Australian deradicalisation and countering violent extremism programs.

I am not sure if the Victorian government has kind of twigged to this yet, but I would encourage them to be having a look at this because it looks as though it has just been expanded at the moment to try and have more people involved in it. I think there was \$1.2 million that had previously been allocated to this, and that was not renewed in last year's budget.

There are also a number of changes that are being made in relation to control of weapons, and I think this is something that we would like to see go a little bit further. The government has put down basically a six-point process, I suppose, where they have got six points that they want to strengthen to try and help be more flexible and be more responsive. We are all alarmed at knife crime in Victoria and the use of machetes on the street, and I would certainly like to see move-on laws. The amendment that has been put forward by the member for Caulfield is around move-on laws and is around machetes on our streets.

There are a couple of things that the government is looking to do. You do not need to publish a notice of declaration of a planned designation area in daily newspapers, because things have changed a little bit there. The provisions that currently exist for planned event declarations provide that each period and event declaration operates during the event and during any time before and after the event that the Chief Commissioner of Police thinks is reasonable. The chief commissioner has increased powers here and decision-making responsibilities. I think that to date it has been quite restrictive and the exact timing is not always perfect, so we need to have that greater flexibility.

I know that with regard to crowds and events we have all seen crowds get there early and linger afterwards. We have additional powers here for the chief commissioner to tailor the duration of a declared event based on its unique characteristics and its particular risk profile, and I do not think that is a bad thing at all. Sometimes we have events that are new and emerging, based on new intel, and the chief commissioner, knowing this is new intel, needs a little bit more flexibility around the timing and notice and the periods they can use there. A lot of this is to be enforced by the chief commissioner. I do note that the government very recently appointed Rick Nugent, who is a long-serving police officer, to that role. I wish him every success in that role, because there is a lot that needs to be done to rebuild the police force.

Josh BULL (Sunbury) (16:26): I am pleased to have the opportunity to make a contribution on the Terrorism (Community Protection) and Control of Weapons Amendment Bill 2024, a bill that members this afternoon have referred to as providing additional powers to perform what is a critically important role for Victoria Police and some of those provisions that go to terrorism-related work.

I will, as others have done in their contributions, make an important shout-out to the incredibly important work that Victoria Police does each and every day, both in my electorate and right across the state. We know and understand the complexity and, in many ways, the changing nature and the consistency with which Victoria Police – their hardworking members – are called upon each and every day. I had the opportunity to meet with the regional inspector and the senior sergeant locally out my way just last week to once again get a sense of the work that they do, the work that the members do, and to know and understand that this, as I mentioned earlier, is incredibly challenging work. I hope that all members of Parliament know and recognise the importance of that work. I took the opportunity to thank them and pass that on from me as the local member but most importantly on behalf of the community.

What we will continue to do, as we have done for the best part of the last decade, is to make sure that we are investing in Victoria Police but also working with agencies right across government and across

all portfolio areas to ensure that the work remains consistent and that those programs and initiatives that many have touched on both with this piece of legislation and the many that have come before continue to remain. We know that the strong and consistent record of working with VicPol to ensure that they have the tools and the resources they need to do their job is critically important. We know of the record investments of more than \$4.5 billion to deliver modern, world-class policing; additional police; new and upgraded stations, as others have mentioned; and the more than 3600 additional police funded by this government since 2014. We are also investing in new equipment – \$240 million to roll out tasers to all frontline officers and PSOs – and making sure that that work continues is a very important piece of the equation in making sure that we are supporting the work being done.

The bill that is before the house this evening looks at two key areas, those being – as others have mentioned – the amendments to the Terrorism (Community Protection) Act 2003 and having part of the bill deal with pathways for those Victorians who are at risk of radicalising towards violent extremism. I listened closely to the member for Monbulk's fantastic contribution about what we know are those threats to the community that have particularly arisen over the past few years and, as we have seen conflicts develop in other parts of the world, understanding and knowing that more work needs to be done. Listening to our state and federal agencies as they provide advice and warnings is something that is very important. We recognise through the amendments before the house that the improvement to the operations of Victoria's voluntary case management scheme to make sure that it operates flexibly and responsibly is a very important part of what is before us today.

The other provisions go to weapons. Many members have spoken about the work that is being done in this space. Certainly in speaking to those members last week in the meeting that I had back in the electorate office and in knowing of the work done by the very hardworking Minister for Police and the entire team, I recognise the significant changes to the way that we are able to equip Victoria Police with resources in the amendments around the Control of Weapons Act 1990. Ensuring that our police can use their existing powers to search for weapons more easily, more often and for longer periods of time is something that is very important. In just 2024 alone police seized a record nearly 15,000 knives, swords, daggers and machetes, the most of any other time in the past decade. The enhanced police powers provided within the strengthening of the Control of Weapons Act will help our officers to detect weapons and to deter people from using them in the first place.

The bill amends the Control of Weapons Act to do five major things, those being to increase the period of time when a planned designation of an area can take place, to reduce the time that Victoria Police need to wait before returning to an area to search for weapons, to allow police to declare an area based on intelligence, to increase the length of time a search operation can take place from 12 to 24 hours and to modernise the way that search operations are communicated to the public. The bill also provides a penalty for the offence of obstructing a PSO while they are using their stop-and-search powers, bringing PSOs into line with an offence as it applies to police officers broadly.

Both through this piece of legislation and a lot of the work that I mentioned earlier, we know and understand the complex nature and the dynamic operating environment that Victoria Police operate in. We can extend that further to our emergency services and to our courts, making sure that we are providing the powers and providing the necessary pathways, the initiatives and the investments through the provisions that are in place. Listening to, as I had the opportunity to do last week, those that are on the front line – literally the front line – is something that is very important, as is making sure that terrorism-related work is done at a federal level and at a state level to ensure that the monitoring and all of the investments that are made are designed to, in the first place, prevent and of course track and monitor those offenders that pose a threat, making sure that this work is done in a way that looks to prevention first, those provisions being very well canvassed.

I will conclude by again making the point that it is always a very fine line when it comes to these matters. We have a strong and proud record of investing in the wonderful work that Victoria Police does each and every day, keeping our community safe and working incredibly hard in what is an ever-changing and complex environment. Making sure that we are providing those investments is of course

a responsibility that members on this side of the house take very, very seriously, and we will continue to listen and make sure that we bring in legislation that supports those who support us. I commend the bill to the house.

Gabrielle DE VIETRI (Richmond) (16:36): I rise to speak on the Terrorism (Community Protection) and Control of Weapons Amendment Bill 2024. This bill has two distinct and separate objectives, so I will consider them separately. The first section of the bill amends the Terrorism (Community Protection) Act 2003 and provides for the functions of the Department of Justice and Community Safety and for the voluntary case management system, which is a diversionary tool for people identified as at risk of becoming radicalised. The bill allows the Secretary of the Department of Justice and Community Safety to delegate those powers to the department case manager and to allow co-design of the case management plan with the consent of the participant or their parent or guardian. It also allows there to be more flexibility to vary a plan if a person's circumstances change and allows the case manager to disclose information to the parent or guardian.

In alignment with legal stakeholders, such as the Law Institute of Victoria, the Greens do welcome these improvements. They accord with best practice case management principles, and early investment in diversionary tools is positive. In particular the LIV has stated it supports the proposals that emphasise collaborative design and informed consent, the attainment of therapeutic purposes and the embedding of the objective of advancing the welfare of people who are vulnerable to violent extremism into the voluntary case management scheme. We do think that the definition of 'vulnerable to violent extremism' is too broad and does need to be further clarified, and we will be asking the government to refine this definition.

This bill also amends the Control of Weapons Act 1990 with regard to searching people for weapons in planned and unplanned designated areas. Specifically, it substitutes the requirement for the Chief Commissioner of Police to publish designated areas in a newspaper with it being sufficient to publish them online on the VicPol site. The requirement for publication in the *Government Gazette* remains. It reduces the time between publication and effect from 10 days to just 12 hours, and the maximum period for an unplanned designated area has been increased from 12 to 24 hours. It also puts in place penalties for protective services officers equivalent to penalties for police officers.

Many Greens colleagues have been on the record over a number of years raising concerns about police powers more generally and, specifically, concerns about designated areas. We agree with the concerns raised by multiple stakeholders that the proposed amendments to the scheme will not achieve the stated purpose of the scheme's capacity to detect and deter weapons offending in public and, more broadly, to reduce knife crime. There is no publicly available evidence that the scheme itself is an effective means of achieving that objective. On the contrary, the limited evidence available strongly suggests that the scheme is not effective at detecting and deterring weapons and weapons offending in public or, more broadly, reducing knife crime, according to research from other jurisdictions.

In fact the Liberty Victoria report *Unreasonable Grounds: Reforming Victoria Police's Stop and Search Powers* from February this year says at page 19:

Most starkly, the data reveals the staggering inefficiency of these searches in making "finds" (just over 1%), bringing into question the effectiveness of these powers to meet their statutory purpose. This is sharply lower than the already low 17.4% reasonable ground search find rate in 2023. It is lower even than the 9.8% find rate for Firearms Prohibition Order searches.

We know from research published by the Centre Against Racial Profiling that Victoria Police has a long and very worrying history of over-searching people and communities of colour. They clearly write:

The over-policing of particular communities evident in the search data is confronting and deeply disturbing. As the search find rates for these groups are roughly equivalent to – or less than – the find rates of white people, this over-policing (over-sampling) is evidence of both systemic racism in Victoria Police practices and systematic racial profiling. If police are eleven times more likely to search a person they perceive to be

Aboriginal than a person they perceive to be White – and the hit rates for searches of these groups are roughly the same – this means that Aboriginal people are eleven times more likely to be criminalised and enter the criminal legal system than White people as a consequence of police activities alone.

In fact, I have just found out that an area that covers Richmond and Collingwood in my electorate has just been designated a zone. No more information has been given other than this was done as a preventative measure. This is an area that is the most densely populated public housing resident area in the state, covering both the Collingwood and Richmond public housing estates. How can we be assured that this designated zone and the powers that police have to stop and search and require ID without reasonable grounds will actually be applied in a way that does not further marginalise and criminalise over-policed communities?

The powers under the Control of Weapons Act have also been used misused to stifle political communication and the right to protest. Most recently, a report by legal observers at the 2024 protest against the Land Forces weapons expo found the following:

Observing police actions over the course of the four days, MALS holds the view that the COWA designated place search powers were utilised by Victorian Police members on numerous occasions as an intimidation tactic and punitive measure to both deter people from engaging their rights to protest and to quasi-penalise them ... for doing so.

The power to conduct such searches is a profound infringement on personal privacy and civil liberties. Given the invasive nature of these powers, they must be subject to stringent oversight and clearly defined criteria to ensure that they are used appropriately. This bill expands police powers without any additional oversight or guardrails preventing their arbitrary use or the weaponisation of the powers against people of colour and the right to protest.

The Liberals have a reasoned amendment calling for expanded police powers to tackle controlled weapons. While the Greens would love to see controlled weapons, rather than people of colour, tackled, we know that the Liberals approach to law and order throws evidence out the window. As a result, we will be amending the member for Caulfield's reasoned amendment to one on racial profiling. I ask that the amendment in my name be circulated at this time, and I move:

That all the words after 'until' be omitted and replaced with the words 'the government commits to working with stakeholders to address allegations of ongoing and systematic racial profiling of members of the community in designated areas.'

We know that this is a dynamic that occurs across all areas of policing, not just policing that occurs in designated areas, but the additional powers and the lower thresholds that these amendments bring continue to highlight these issues. We will also have further amendments to address these issues when the bill goes to the upper house.

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (16:45): I rise to speak in support of the Terrorism (Community Protection) and Control of Weapons Amendment Bill 2024. In doing so, like many of the previous speakers have acknowledged, I would like to also thank our hardworking Victoria Police members, namely those from across the Merri-bek LGA from Fawkner and Brunswick police stations. They do an incredible job every single day, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year to keep our community safe, because everyone in our community deserves to feel safe, whether in their homes, streets, neighbourhoods, communities or even workplaces. There is nothing more important than our communities' safety and wellbeing. That is why we as a government have very much continued to prioritise community safety via a range of reforms, investments and measures, including \$4.5 billion invested to support Victoria Police to make sure they have the powers, the tools and the resources they need to keep our communities safe.

We have helped support the recruitment of an additional 3600 police officers since 2014, with Victoria Police now having the largest sworn police force of any state or territory in Australia. I acknowledge the work of the Minister for Police in having concluded those negotiations around the enterprise

bargaining agreement, which the Police Association Victoria and Victoria Police command I believe finalised as of Friday.

In Merri-bek we have recruited an extra 180 police to local stations, including an extra 21 specialist family violence officers. We have introduced stronger bail laws as of September, which we are going to continue to strengthen. We have introduced tougher consequences as well for serious violent and repeat offenders and tougher laws when it comes to the tobacco and illicit tobacco trade, organised crime, outlaw motorcycle gangs and dangerous weapons, which this bill builds on today. And we have modernised our youth justice system and continued to invest through crime prevention, early intervention, addressing the root causes of crime, whether it is family violence, mental health, unemployment, drug and alcohol issues, housing, homelessness or socio-economic disadvantage. We are taking the action needed to be tough on crime but even tougher action on the root causes of crime.

Notwithstanding these initiatives, we know that we must continue to do more to keep our communities safe, especially when it comes to the risk of terrorism and radicalisation and the dangers of illegal and dangerous weapons across our local communities, because on both fronts we need to keep doing all we can to keep people safe across Pascoe Vale, Coburg, Brunswick West and indeed the rest of Victoria.

When it comes to terrorism and radicalisation we know sadly that following recent international and nationwide events we have continued to experience a rising number of incidents that have been impacting our social cohesion. The *2023 Victorian Antisemitism Report* recorded, for example, a 228 per cent increase in antisemitic incidents. As of February Victoria Police had attended 561 separate protests and demonstrations, some of which did contain radical antisemitic elements, whether on the far right with neo-Nazis standing disgracefully on the front steps of Parliament or on the far left by radical socialists and radical Greens protest movements. Since October 2023 the Islamophobia Register Australia recorded a 600 per cent increase in Islamophobic incidents, concerningly. I would like to acknowledge the Islamic Museum of Australia, which is on my border and that of the members for Northcote and Preston, which does an amazing job to support and raise awareness about the Islamic community across Australia, the first such museum in Australia's history.

I would like to acknowledge that recent incident at Epping Plaza – a concerning, unacceptable incident and the latest attack of Islamophobia in our community. As a result of those and other incidents, ASIO and the Australian Federal Police have raised Australia's threat level from 'possible' to 'probable' as of August 2024, with the ASIO director-general Mike Burgess on 5 August saying:

Australia's security environment is degrading. It is more volatile and unpredictable.

... espionage and foreign interference are our principal security concerns.

ASIO's intelligence suggests ...

... we are seeing an increase in extremism.

More Australians are being radicalised, and radicalised more quickly.

More Australians are embracing a more diverse range of extreme ideologies, and more Australians are willing to use violence to advance their cause.

Politically motivated violence now joins espionage and foreign interference as our principal security concerns.

That is why we need to strengthen the Terrorism (Community Protection) Act 2003 with this bill. Yes, it is about those tougher penalties for those who consider planning – or carrying out, more concerningly – such attacks, but it is also about those early intervention and deradicalisation programs, which we have got to continue focusing on. In this respect we do recognise as a government the need for therapeutic interventions for those who may be vulnerable to violent extremism.

These amendments before the house will improve operations of Victoria's voluntary case management scheme to make sure it operates flexibly and responsibly. The amendments also allow a wider cohort of people to be eligible to access such intervention, reducing the likelihood of them posing a risk to the community. Victoria's VCM has been in operation since 2022 and is a voluntary program that

provides tailored intervention and wraparound supports for people at risk of radicalisation, with the program providing for psychological counselling, career counselling, mentoring and tutoring and access to legal aid and community support groups. The scheme provides support for people who are at risk or are radicalising towards violent extremism. It connects them with the services they need and identifies ways to reconnect them with the community. It is important to remember this scheme is voluntary, and it complements work being done by Victoria Police with high-risk individuals. These amendments will make changes to the operation of the scheme to ensure best practice. For instance, it is best practice to involve an individual with the decisions made about their wellbeing. This bill will ensure that when a voluntary case management plan is developed it is done so in collaboration with the participant. It does contain a number of other amendments in this regard too. I welcome the reforms, especially given that, locally for my community, anecdotally I understand that a respectable portion of federal and state deradicalisation resources are allocated across the Hume and Merri-bek regions in Melbourne's northern suburbs.

It is also the reforms contained in this bill that relate to knives and dangerous weapons that my community will welcome. Knife-related crime in 2024 reduced by 3.6 per cent compared to 2023 levels, but we know that there is more to do. We are listening to the concerns of the community and taking the action needed to keep knives off the streets and keep people safe. In 2024 Victoria Police seized almost 15,000 knives to keep them out of the hands of offenders, equating to almost 40 knives seized every day by Victoria Police officers. That is an increase of almost 2000 knives seized by police compared to 2023, with 13,000-odd knives seized in 2023. Seventy per cent of victims of knife crime were adults, almost 55 per cent of offenders were adults, 20 per cent of offenders were young and 11 per cent of offenders were youth gang members. In my community of Merri-bek, whilst the overall crime rate and criminal incident rate does remain lower than the Victorian state average, I understand that recent statistics do show a 40 per cent increase in weapons- and explosives-related offences, mainly related to the illicit tobacco crimes that have taken place.

We are listening to Victoria Police. That is why this bill will amend the Control of Weapons Act 1990 to ensure that police can use their existing powers to search for weapons more easily, more often and for longer periods. We are getting knives out of the hands of criminals and off our streets because there is no excuse to be carrying a knife in everyday life. We know that further strengthening the Control of Weapons Act will help our officers to detect weapons and deter people from using them in the first place. These enhanced police powers will ensure opportunistic offenders are held to account.

The bill before the house will also give police the flexibility they have asked for to respond to these emerging situations based on intelligence that there is a risk of a violent event about to take place. It contains five major amendments. It increases the period of time that a planned designation at an event can take place for, reduces the time that Victoria Police will need to wait before returning to an area to search for weapons, allows Victoria Police to declare an area based on intelligence, increases the length of time a search operation can take place for from 12 to 24 hours and modernises the way that search operations are communicated to the public. It also provides the appropriate powers for PSOs to exercise these powers accordingly. When combined, these reforms will make our community safer.

Talking about community safety, Victoria Police across Merri-bek will be holding their next neighbourhood policing forum on 3 April between 6 and 9 pm at the Coburg town hall and civic centre. The forum will build on last year's forum and explore topics including current crime trends and crime prevention, family violence, young people, road policing and drugs and drug-related crime, which are the top five criminal issues in Merri-bek. I very much encourage everyone from across the community to attend and participate, and I commend our area commander Andrew Markakis and his entire team for putting it on again and the ongoing work they do every single day. In terms of crime statistics, across Merri-bek the total criminal incident rate that we will be reflecting on at the forum has slightly increased from 2023, from 9800 to 11,100, with the top five crime offence subgroups including, general theft, criminal damage, residential non-aggravated burglary, motor vehicle theft and family

violence, which continues to remain, sadly, one of the biggest issues local police respond to every single day. I commend the bill to the house and encourage everyone to attend the forum coming up.

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn) (16:55): I rise to speak on the Terrorism (Community Protection) and Control of Weapons Amendment Bill 2024. This bill is more than a missed opportunity. This bill for me is emblematic of a government that is just not prepared to tackle the real issue that is fuelling a culture of violence on our streets, principally in the form of protests and disorderly behaviour that put innocent bystanders at risk. Not only is there a primary community safety issue there, but also it is trashing the reputation of our state and in particular our great city of Melbourne domestically and internationally. It is also hard to understand why the two acts have been put together, because they deal with very important things but they are very different things. I cannot help but wonder whether the voluntary case management aspects of this bill are really there to balance out what the government hopes will be seen as tough measures on the control-of-weapons side of the bill, but I think it fails ultimately to strike that right balance.

In terms of the terrorism aspects of the bill, we are not opposing them, but let us not pretend that this voluntary case management system is going to tackle the problem that the nation in particular is confronting when it comes to threats by way of extremism that manifest themselves in the form of terrorist activities and the potential for mass casualty events. Voluntary systems like diversionary programs can be implemented with or without legislation. They are very easy to do. One has to wonder then why the government, which wants to talk a big game on these measures to improve the case management of those susceptible to radicalisation and extremism, is not backing up its words with funds. If you go back through the 2024–25 budget for this financial year and the previous budget, for the 2023–24 year, you will not see one line item addressing the threat of terrorism in this state. It is hard to discern from the budget papers where any funding for counterterrorism measures can be found. Recently we heard the Australian Federal Police commissioner Reece Kershaw, in the aftermath of the Adass Israel Synagogue bombing, talk about foreign influences behind those actions as potential sources of that activity. You have to wonder whether the government is taking that seriously.

What we say is: we do not oppose these measures, but the government is not backing them up with funding in the budget to support the initiatives that lie behind this. As far as rehabilitation, diversion and engagement go, they are all important things, but they can never be undertaken at the expense of a strong response by law enforcement agencies to prevent mass casualty events and other forms of terrorist activity. We see the social benefit in engagement with at-risk communities. The government just has to back it up.

I do want to address the control-of-weapons aspects of the bill. When I said earlier that the government was not tackling the problem, this is what I meant. If you look at the six central changes in this bill, the first one is the advertising threshold that the Chief Commissioner of Police has to meet. Yes, it makes sense. You do not have to advertise in hard-copy newspapers; you can do it online. That makes sense. Giving the chief commissioner the power to extend a designation on either side of an event – okay, that makes sense. We are not going to oppose that. The refresh provision, which reduces the time between designations from 10 days to 12 hours, makes sense. The likelihood component, which reduces the threshold at which the chief commissioner can be satisfied to designate an event, is to be welcomed. It reduces that so that you do not have to rely on a history of violent or disorderly activity at an event; you can proceed with a designation on the basis that there is a likelihood of violence or disorder that is weapons-related to enact the designation. The duration, which doubles the time of a designation from 12 hours to 24 hours, we are not opposing. On its face, it makes sense. The obstruction aspect of the bill, which creates the offence there for protective services officers – let us remember that is only addressing an oversight in an earlier tranche of amendments.

What I want to say about those amendments all told, though, is that not one of those amendments actually enhances the powers that police should have at their disposal to tackle violence when it comes to protests and disorderly activity on our streets – not one of them. What the bill effectively does is allow Victoria Police officers to exercise the powers they already have – no greater powers, no lesser

powers – over a longer period of time. Is that a bad thing? Is that something to oppose? Of course not. We would welcome that, but it does not give police that power to tackle those people who engage in violence and disorderly conduct, particularly in the form of violent protests that we have seen recently and particularly at the Land Forces protests, which involved the most despicable behaviour Victorians have seen in a very long time. It brings me to the issue of what the government should be doing in this bill.

We know that back in 2015 the government gutted the move-on provisions in the Summary Offences Act 1966, and we warned at the time that this would be a retrograde step; it would deprive Victoria Police of the chance they had to manage difficult situations without the hard choices between doing nothing and arresting offenders. There was a huge difference between what the coalition government had in the move-on laws and what the then Andrews government, now Allan government, took out. What the Allan government took out of the move-on laws were those provisions which related to police being able to move on people when there was a reasonable apprehension of violence, when there was an undue obstruction and when people were impeded in being able to lawfully enter or exit premises. They were very reasonable powers. Police had the power to require a name and address in reasonable circumstances, and police also had the opportunity to apply to the courts for exclusion orders. There were three sets of important provisions in the move-on laws which allowed Victoria Police to manage difficult situations, and history will lament the fact and censure this government for the fact that those laws were not even given a proper chance to operate.

What the government did a couple of years later was to try to embed a half-baked version of those in the Control of Weapons Act 1990 – so you see a provision in the Control of Weapons Act now which allows Victoria Police to ask somebody who does not remove a face covering to leave an area. Ultimately the problem with trying to have move-on provisions to manage difficult situations embedded in the Control of Weapons Act and not in the move-on laws regime that we had is that you are handcuffing – pardon the pun – Victoria Police by all of the cumbersome and unwieldy provisions that exist in the Control of Weapons Act.

If you allowed police simply to do their job always in circumstances that are justiciable, a person who is aggrieved can test the exercise of those powers in our courts. That is an important right that the move-on laws never extinguished. If you allow people that opportunity, then what argument can you reasonably have against provisions that allow police the option of directing somebody to move on or directing somebody to provide a name and address when they are wearing a face covering in circumstances where there is a real likelihood of violence and a reasonable apprehension of violence to a person? What is the problem with that? Why wouldn't you give Victoria Police that power? Unfortunately what we have in this bill is a measure which, yes, does allow for police to exercise the powers they already possess for a longer period of time, but that is not going to address the violence and the culture of violence we have seen on our streets.

We have to have a better and more robust conversation about the responsibilities that come with protesting on our streets. I support freedom of expression. Sometimes protests are uncomfortable and sometimes protests are inconvenient, but protests and the rights which underlie the right to that form of expression do not permit, never have permitted and never will permit a person to impose themselves physically on other people going about their business. That is the discussion this bill avoids. It does not actually address that. What we are going to see is a missed opportunity to introduce measures – principally the restoration of those move-on powers, the actual move-on powers, the requirement to give a name and address and the exclusion order provisions – which would have allowed for a genuine attempt to tackle the rising culture of violence. We have missed that opportunity for normative measures to improve protesting in this state.

Paul EDBROOKE (Frankston) (17:05): It is an absolute pleasure to rise this afternoon and speak on the Terrorism (Community Protection) and Control of Weapons Amendment Bill 2024. We know that every single day the police are out there, rain, hail or shine, protecting our community, keeping us safe, patrolling the front line and often putting themselves at risk for our community. There are some

very, very recent, very traumatic examples of that – Eastern Freeway would be one. We have seen other incidents where we just have to understand what our police go through, what they do for our communities and the sacrifices that they and their families make so we can feel safe and can have our perception of safety with the police around but also the fact that they are doing the hard work. I will talk about some statistics soon in regard to our police force and what they achieve.

The Allan Labor government does have a really proud record of working with Victoria Police to ensure they have the tools they need to do the job they need to carry out. We have been on that mission since we were elected in 2014. In fact since coming into government we have made record investments in the police force of more than \$4.5 billion to help keep Victorians safe, which is giving Victorians the world-class policing that they so thoroughly deserve. This includes additional police, new and upgraded stations right across the state and investing in new technology to ensure Victoria Police can continue to be a modern, fit-for-purpose organisation in the future. That includes more than 3600 new frontline police funded by our government since 2014 and \$214 million to roll out tasers to all frontline police and PSOs, giving them another alternative, a nonlethal alternative to deal with potentially violent offenders so they can protect themselves and our community. We have invested more than \$1 billion to deliver new and upgraded police stations across the state, and our government will continue to invest in critical police infrastructure.

It was an honour to be the Parliamentary Secretary for Police and go to all regional centres and help them open their new police stations. To see what they did have in some cases compared to what they moved into was just astonishing. There was a really high level of technology included in these builds. It was exactly what police asked for. They were involved in making those designs. It was a great thing to be able to meet different police officers in different areas of Victoria too and realise that what some of our police force are dealing with in one area, which might be regional Victoria, might be different to some of the metropolitan areas.

This bill amends the Terrorism (Community Protection) Act 2003. Part of the bill is talking about the voluntary case management scheme, and these changes make sure that it operates flexibly and responsively to the challenges that we deal with. I guess we have heard a lot from the opposition about the part of this bill that amends the Control of Weapons Act 1990, but I would like to speak more about the amendments to the terrorism act. The terrorism threat level was raised from ‘possible’ to ‘probable’ by ASIO in 2024, and we know that extreme violent acts are an ongoing threat to the safety of the community in Victoria. We saw that with the attack at the Adass Israel Synagogue, which was traumatic to watch. It was traumatic to watch that community go through that and realise that that was the kind of attack it was.

The Allan Labor government recognises the need for therapeutic intervention for those people who may be vulnerable to violent extremism, and that comes through the Victorian voluntary case management scheme. The amendments allow for a wider cohort of people to be eligible to access this intervention, reducing the likelihood of them posing a risk to our community. The VCM has been in operation since 2022 and is a voluntary program that provides tailored intervention and a wraparound support for people at risk of radicalisation. These supports can include psychological counselling, career counselling, mentoring, tutoring, legal aid and access to community support groups as well. The scheme provides support for people at risk of or who are radicalising towards violent extremism. It connects them with the services they need and identifies ways to reconnect them with the community. It is important to remember that this scheme is in fact voluntary and it complements the work being done by Victoria Police with higher risk individuals.

These amendments will make changes to the operation of the scheme to ensure best practice. Now that the scheme has been in place for this many years, we have a good sense of what is working, and these amendments respond to the needs of our experts working in the sector. For example, it is best practice to involve an individual in all decisions being made about their welfare or wellbeing. This bill will ensure that when a voluntary case management plan is developed, it is done in collaboration with the participant. That seems pretty obvious to me. It seems an obvious improvement that will make

things more efficient, make things smoother and, hopefully, have better outcomes. The bill also amends the language used around risk to reduce the stigma associated with joining these voluntary programs. We want to make programs like this safe and accessible as an option for people requiring support as well.

I must say, this week I had a seniors morning tea, which I do once every couple of months. It is always a great turnout. Last time we had police speaking. This time we had a former firefighter talking, doing some fire education. The scones are good, the slices are good, the tea and coffee are amazing and the conversation is also good. One thing that obviously came up, because it has been in the news so much and we have seen it so much on social media, is the rise in crime using blades. In 2024 alone, just to show that our police are doing an amazing job, police seized a record 14,797 knives, swords, daggers, and machetes, the most of any time over the past decade, which is quite alarming and shows a culture shift. It shows a shift in the ways crimes are being committed and the modus operandi associated with them.

Every Victorian has the right to feel safe and every Victorian has the right to feel safe in their own home, and as a measure of how seriously we on this side of the house take this and how we are listening to Victoria Police, this bill will amend the Control of Weapons Act 1990 to ensure that police can use their existing powers to search for weapons more easily, more often and for longer periods of time. We want to get knives out of the hands of criminals and off our streets, because there is no excuse for anyone to carry a knife around in everyday life. I remember we had a discussion at the dinner table quite recently when one of my sons said, 'Well, what were machetes used for? Why would anyone need a machete?' I had to explain that it was actually a farm implement back in the day. It is actually a camping implement for some people. But there is no reason for anyone anywhere to be carrying a knife, let alone a machete.

We know that further strengthening the Control of Weapons Act will help our officers do what they are already doing, which is confiscating up to 40 knives a day, 40 bladed weapons a day, from people. This is what our community wants. We are reflecting what our community is saying at things like the seniors morning tea. They want to know that we are doing everything we can to keep them safe, and this bill is part of that.

The bill before the house also gives police the flexibility they have asked for to respond to emerging situations based on intelligence that there is a risk of violence at an event, and as the member for Hawthorn stated, it amends the Control of Weapons Act to do those five things that he spoke about, which many people have spoken about.

I have been in this house 10 years now, and certainly I do not know of another government that has supported police the way we have. You will hear those on the other side talk about current events and enterprise bargaining agreements and things that we go through every couple of years, but certainly our record stands. We stand by our record. It is the largest recruitment of police ever. We had to adjust the Glen Waverley facility, the police academy, to ensure that they had enough accommodation for people, whereas it was those opposite who actually broke up the poor police band and put them back on the beat. I think it was called Code Blue. So there is a contrast in records there. I certainly stand by our record on this side of the house, and I commend this bill to the house.

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (17:14): I am certainly happy to rise to speak on the Terrorism (Community Protection) and Control of Weapons Amendment Bill 2024. I too was a little perplexed. I am glad the member for Hawthorn brought up earlier that he too wondered why these amendments were brought together when they amend two different acts, being the Terrorism (Community Protection) Act 2003 and the Control of Weapons Act 1990. The main purpose of course of the former is to:

refine the functions of the Department of Justice and Community Safety (DJCS) Secretary and Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) Multi-Agency Panel (MAP) in relation to the operations of the Voluntary Case Management (VCM) scheme to align with best-practice case management;

expand the eligibility criteria for referral to the VCM scheme ...

and other provisions as well. For the Control of Weapons Act it is:

... in relation to planned and unplanned designations of an area for the purpose of weapons searches to be conducted by Victoria Police to make various improvements to the operation of the scheme.

We have heard a few – in fact most, if not all – speakers on this side of the house talk about the missed opportunity we have here in making some real changes that may actually contribute to an increase in the confidence that Victorians have that they are safe to walk the streets and that they are safe in their own homes, because at the moment that is just not the case. Those opposite can talk about all sorts of things, and I note the member for Monbulk earlier remarked about words and how words are very powerful. Actions are more powerful – actions and words. What we have missed here is an opportunity to put machetes on the prohibited weapons list. The member for Frankston and quite a few members on this side of the house, including the member for Murray Plains much earlier today, have referred to machetes being an agricultural implement, which may have been the case prior to the 1800s. Now we have much larger, more efficient, much more expensive implements to do that work. There is absolutely no reason anyone should be possessing a machete. We do not need one to get through the jungles in the Mallee. No-one needs a machete in Australia, let us be honest, and the member for Murray Plains remarked about how he trekked Kokoda last year or the year before – not even there. Having been brought up on a farm and still being involved in agriculture now, there is no reason anyone should have a machete or any knife for that matter over 30, 40 or 50 centimetres. It is just insane, so there is that part that is a missed opportunity.

Of course the member for Hawthorn spent some time talking about giving police back their move-on powers. In fact some of our stakeholders have remarked on this. It is deficient in areas, and the amendments made through this bill must enhance the ability of police to intervene in the carriage of any controlled weapon. Anybody carrying a controlled weapon in any place at any time must be able to be arrested and prosecuted. Police must have the power to search and seize based on reasonable suspicion.

I did want to take a moment to shout out to our local police members. I love a lot of things about living in a small town, and I am small town country to my core. I make absolutely no apologies for that; I am very proud of it. I was at the rodeo last week – I know that is a cliché in and of itself now that I have said it out loud – and there were many members of our police teams from around the district. Again, many of these towns are 100 to 180 people – 200 people if we are lucky. They all came together, all of the police members from as far away as Swan Hill, some from Robinvale. After I had left the event I stopped at the local community-owned hotel on the way home at Sea Lake and they saw my car. When a highway patrol vehicle pulled up behind me in a former life I would have been a little nervous, but our police members Zac and Dave just wanted to have a conversation and just wanted to thank me for standing up for them, for speaking up for them and for ‘fighting the good fight’ I think the boys’ words were. There are many things I love about living in a small town, and that is just one of them. All the coppers know your car and they know who their local members are, and they are not afraid to have candid, honest – sometimes brutally honest – conversations about life as a Victoria Police member at the moment.

I have spoken about a few members that spoke on this bill from this side of the house. Normally I would say they have left the best till last by letting me speak last, but on this occasion the member for Morwell made a brilliant contribution about community safety in the township of Morwell. I was listening to his contribution. We feel like every week in this place we are on our feet talking about this – again talking, talking, more words, more words – with very little action. He was talking about how he will not let his parliamentary staff walk to the post office during the day. Last week I spoke in this place about how, as a 6-foot woman who is described in the Mallee as a hefty lass –

A member interjected.

Jade BENHAM: I know. It is acceptable in the Mallee; it is fine. I spoke about how I carry a personal alarm these days when I am out running or when I am walking at night. I would not be easy for anyone to take down – I know that – but that is where we are. It is the fundamental job of any government, I would think, to make sure the community is safe. At the moment it is just not the case, to the point where I heard and then saw on Instagram last week FM radio get involved in this debate. It was one of the FM stations that I did not work for, and I have worked in FM radio for a lot of my working life. They rarely if ever get involved in political debates and things as serious as this – they usually keep it upbeat and help people enjoy their mornings or drive home or whatever – but even Fifi Box said she was sick of the talk around this. Again, it is words upon words, media releases, doorstops and so on, with little action. Here we have a bill that amends two acts and which actually could have made people really quickly feel a hell of a lot safer in their homes and on the streets – pretty easily. Even FM radio announcers are now saying they are sick to death of all of the talking and they are even willing to act. That just does not happen. I am glad that it is. More and more community members that have high profiles are starting to get involved in this. Maybe that is what it will take for this government to make some real change to keep Victorians safe.

Honestly, I was listening to the member for Morwell beg the Premier and the Minister for Police to come and spend a day with him walking the streets. Again, he feels safe; he is a 6-foot-3 man. He can walk down the street to the post office during the day but his staff cannot. That is horrific. That is a horrific statement for anyone in this country to make, much less live every day. Surely there comes a point where that actually hits a nerve with the government and there are questions raised. How did we get to this point? What can we do about this, seriously? Because again, this is Australia. This is Victoria. We should be able to walk down the street in the middle of the day in any town or in any city in this country and feel safe – during the day, no less. I applaud the member for Morwell and his contribution. It was brilliant and it was heartfelt. He knows because he is out there on the ground every single day. We need change now.

Katie HALL (Footscray) (17:24): I am pleased to make a contribution to the Terrorism (Community Protection) and Control of Weapons Amendment Bill 2024. I am happy to make a contribution at a time when community safety is one of the biggest issues of concern in my community. Indeed I have spoken before in this place around the complexity of some of the issues that from time to time we are dealing with, particularly in central Footscray. Footscray has always been a quirky, colourful, creative and interesting place, but from time to time I know some of my constituents have felt that that fine balance has tipped a bit, and community safety is something that people do have concerns about.

People in Footscray are very keen to see a focus that involves health services – alcohol and other drug services – homelessness services and social work. There are a range of levers, including through local government, through public realm works and urban design, that we can look at to make our community feel safer. I was very pleased – and I spoke about this in my members statement contribution today – that the Allan Labor government has contributed \$90,000 to activate empty shopfronts. We know that high-quality urban design can make a huge impact on the way people feel and their perceptions of safety, and to be able to activate shopfronts with artists and creatives for the benefit of the community I think is a really wonderful thing.

Knife crime is something that, sadly, is too prevalent, not just in my electorate but across Victoria. In 2024 alone police seized a record 14,797 knives, swords, daggers and machetes – 40 a day – the most at any time over the past decade. As someone who previously worked at Victoria Police – I worked in their media unit a long time ago, in 2010 – I know firsthand how hard the police work. I know their commitment to community and to community safety, so I do not accept the criticisms that are levelled at police by the Greens in particular. I think some of their criticisms are deeply hurtful. Police do an outstanding job, and I am very grateful for the work that they do in my community of Footscray and in Melbourne's inner west.

It is clear to me that Victorians want the government to act and want things to change, and this is why the bill makes a series of amendments to the Control of Weapons Act 1990. This bill amends the Control of Weapons Act to do five key things: increase the period of a planned search for weapons at an event that can take place, reduce the time that Victoria Police need to wait before returning to an area to search for weapons, allow Victoria Police to declare an area based on gathered intelligence, increase the length of time a search operation can take place from 12 to 24 hours and modernise the way that search operations are communicated to the public.

Victoria's designated area random weapons search scheme has been a key tool for Victoria Police for almost 15 years. The scheme allows Victoria Police to combat the unlawful possession and use of weapons in public places by allowing them to conduct random weapons searches in designated areas. When an area is declared a designated area, police and PSOs can randomly stop and search any person or vehicle in the area without a warrant. This bill amends the act to give police the ability to make a declaration over an area both before and after an event takes place, during the bump-in and bump-out phases. Currently, planned event declarations can only take place while the event itself is happening, not while people are moving in and out of the event, and in practice this change means that police will be able to use their powers to search for weapons that might be stashed while an event is being set up. It will also give officers the power to search after events while people are leaving, and this will help with community safety when large crowds are leaving at the same time and at regional and rural events, where there is often one road in and one road out.

Right now the Chief Commissioner of Police can only declare a designated search area if there has been an incident of violence in the last 12 months involving a weapon or if there has been a history of weapons-related violence at previous versions of the same event, wherever they occurred. If the chief commissioner has intelligence that a new event or an event in that area that has never seen an incident before may see weapons-related violence, he cannot declare the area a designated zone to search. This bill introduces greater flexibility into the threshold test to make sure that Victoria Police can respond to new and emerging risks, enabling more proactive policing. I know that in my community people feel comforted by seeing the police out and about and the PSOs as well.

The bill reduces the time between operations in the same location. Currently, the act only allows Victoria Police to return to a place to conduct a search operation once every 10 days. This limitation is stopping Victoria Police from being able to target high-risk areas. For example, an operation to search a shopping centre can only happen once over a two-week period because 10 days have to elapse before police can return there. I know residents in Maribyrnong, where we have a very large shopping centre in Highpoint, will be pleased with this reform. The bill before us will drop the 10-day limit down to 12 hours between searches. It means that police can return to the same place multiple times in a week if required.

We are also changing the way that notices of planned operations are delivered. Presently, when VicPol are running a planned operation, they advertise the location, time and date in a newspaper as well as online. Publishing notices in the newspaper is costly and does not have the same reach it did when the law was made in 2009. Online newspapers often have their public notices behind a paywall and can only be accessed by subscribers. To reflect modern practice, this bill removes the requirement for Victoria Police to publish declaration notices in the newspaper. This reform responds to the times we live in and changes over the decades. When I worked at Victoria Police, one of the innovations was the first time we served an intervention order via Facebook. That was because the offender was very difficult to contact in person but very active on Facebook. As the times change it is important that we provide Victoria Police with the resources they need to make sure that they can do their work as effectively as possible.

I would just like to reiterate on behalf of me as the local member and on behalf of my community that I am enormously grateful for the work of Victoria Police and our PSOs. In fact next Tuesday we are holding a 'coffee with a cop' session in the Nicholson Street Mall, and I encourage every resident who has a question for VicPol, for Footscray police, to come along and meet their local neighbourhood

police team, have a coffee and meet Cohealth, who are doing important work, and local laws officers from council as well. I commend the bill to the house.

Iwan WALTERS (Greenvale) (17:34): I rise to speak on the Terrorism (Community Protection) and Control of Weapons Amendment Bill 2024. The safety of our communities – each one of the communities we represent as members in this place – is paramount. I can see there are a few former teachers in this place; they may also be familiar with the concept of Maslow’s hierarchy and the idea that physiological and safety needs are fundamentally integral for individuals to thrive and for society to prosper. Nothing can be achieved by an individual or by our community as a whole if there is a fear or if there is a sense of unease that comes from people feeling or being unsafe. That is why it is important that we have this bill for consideration and debate today. It is a bill that introduces a range of reforms that are designed to strengthen both the Terrorism (Community Protection) Act 2003 and the Control of Weapons Act 1990. These are superficially distinct bills, as the member for Hawthorn discussed, but I think they are fundamentally related because they are about the safety of our communities and it is appropriate that we debate them here today together.

Turning to one of the fundamental parts of this bill in relation to knife crime, the control of weapons, knife crime is a tragedy and a travesty. We have an opportunity to minimise the presence, the prevalence and the use of knives on our streets before it becomes endemic. I am going to talk about a couple of contrasting examples from other jurisdictions in my contribution today, but we have a lived example of a jurisdiction not dissimilar from ours in the UK, where urban environments in the UK have been beset by knife crime that has culminated in the deaths of far too many people, particularly young people and particularly young men. We have an opportunity to avoid that scenario by clamping down on knives and making it harder for people to carry knives, because there is a perverse reality – a perverse but also logical conclusion of behavioural psychology, if you like – whereby if people, particularly young people and people who are in communities where they may feel vulnerable, have a fear that others are carrying knives, it becomes a logical and understandable thing for them to want to carry a knife as well. But that creates absolutely no margin for error. It means that the use of knives in fights that might otherwise be minor disagreements becomes fatal. We have seen what can happen far too often in the UK but also in our own communities. Members have spoken passionately about that. We have an opportunity to avoid it.

That is what Victoria Police are doing every single day. They have, as we know, detected and confiscated a record number of knives over the last year. That is why it is so galling to have the member for Richmond, as the Greens representative in this debate, glibly effectively calling for the defunding of the police, assailing their so-called institutional racism, engaging in Trotskyite agitprop student politics and suggesting that there is a targeted vendetta against particular communities. What Victoria Police are doing is trying to keep communities safe. I do not want to see anybody in my community dying or being injured as a consequence of knife crime. Far too often it is members of our migrant communities who are victims of knife crime. That is what I want to see stopped. That is what I think is important about this bill, and that is why I am supportive of its measures.

I want to acknowledge Victoria Police in my community, both local area command and the officers on the beat who are working every day to keep communities safe, not because they have a vendetta against any particular community – they are of those communities; they are representative of our community. We are blessed in the north to have a police force that looks like and is drawn from the community it serves. We have policing by consent in Australia, and to hear the words of the member for Richmond I think is incredibly toxic, because it undermines trust. It creates this distorted view that we somehow have a police force which is set against the communities it serves. We know the truth of the matter, and that is that the police serve with dignity and respect the communities across Victoria. They do so while putting themselves in danger very often, and they do so with our support, I think, as a collective. But it is galling to hear that there are those who wish to undermine that work and, I think, leave our communities as a whole less safe than they should be.

In acknowledging the police in my community, I want to thank them for being present at a community forum that I attended and assisted in facilitating with the member for Broadmeadows last week at Our Lady Guardian of Plants Chaldean parish in Campbellfield. I acknowledge the community leaders from the Chaldean League who facilitated this meeting as well. To have the Victoria Police there talking about the work they do every single day alongside Neighbourhood Watch Victoria was important, and it exemplified that community safety is a joint endeavour. It is a joint endeavour because we have law enforcement agencies coming together, working with families and working with community, as expressed, through sporting clubs, through church communities, through mosques and through other community sites like schools, but also through government. Government clearly has a pivotal role to play in addressing this issue and ensuring community safety, and it is why record investments like those of this government in policing and in police infrastructure matter, it is why additional police on the street matter and make a difference and it is why we need stronger policies, as represented in the bills on the table today, that provide both deterrence and response to criminal activity in our communities to keep the people we represent safe.

One of the dimensions of this bill is of course related to terrorism and the prevention of terrorism. The bill deals with pathways for Victorians who are at risk of radicalisation towards violent extremism. The member for Monbulk spoke very eloquently, I believe, in this place about how prevention is so much better than response in the context of terrorism because of the capacity for it to wreak such violent destruction upon our communities. We have been very fortunate, I think, to date in Victoria that the work of our security services and Victoria Police in partnership with federal agencies has prevented cataclysmic events that could have caused so much damage to our communities. But we know that violent extremism is an ongoing threat to safety in our community, and I think it is why preventative measures like the voluntary case management scheme and the support and engagement order are important. We have had the VCM in operation in Victoria since 2022. It is a voluntary program that provides tailored intervention and wraparound support for people at risk of radicalisation, but having been in operation for a few years now, it is appropriate that we review what is working and what has some room for improvement, and that is exactly what this bill does. I think it is so important to be continuously monitoring the efficacy of preventative measures like the VCM.

I again reflect upon another jurisdiction, again the UK, where Sir William Shawcross has just conducted a review of the Prevent program, which has a similar intention to the VCM, although people can be referred to it in a less voluntary manner. It is in the context of a tragedy that occurred in the Lancashire town of Southport last year, where a radicalised lone attacker, a young man who had been known to authorities, took the lives of three little girls who were at a dance class, and it was a heinous crime that shocked people not just in the UK but around the world. The reason, sadly, it is germane to this bill is because the offender, who has now been convicted and is very unlikely to ever be released, was referred to the Prevent program three times. The first referral reported concerns about him carrying a knife, the second was focused on his online activity relating to Libya and Colonel Gaddafi, and his third referral was for searching for information about the London bombings, the IRA and the Israel–Palestine conflict. And yet, because there was not a single identifiable source of his extremism, he was not allowed, he was not encouraged, he was not permitted to progress through the Prevent program, with clearly catastrophic consequences.

The reason I think that is relevant is because it highlights the need for continual reflection and continual analysis by our law enforcement agencies, by the Department of Justice and Community Safety and by others within the Victorian government to ensure that we are doing everything we possibly can to widen the eligibility criteria, to encourage people who are at risk of radicalisation to enter into programs which have a credible chance of reducing that radicalisation and keeping our communities safe, while also reducing the stigma that may be associated with people entering those programs. We all stand to benefit if these programs are continually refined to ensure that they are as efficacious as possible, that they are keeping people deradicalised to the greatest extent possible, but fundamentally to ensure that the communities that we all represent and serve are as safe as possible, and that is why I commend this bill to the house.

Eden FOSTER (Mulgrave) (17:44): It is a great privilege to hear the member for Greenvale, quite a learned colleague of ours, whose contribution is always insightful and very clear and concise. Thank you – through you, Chair. I rise today in support of the Terrorism (Community Protection) and Control of Weapons Amendment Bill 2024, and I thank the Minister for Police for introducing the bill and the Attorney-General for her work on this bill. This bill is addressing the pressing concerns of terrorism and weapons-related violence in our community, and the bill introduces a range of reforms designed to strengthen both the Terrorism (Community Protection) Act 2003 and the Control of Weapons Act 1990, ensuring the safety and wellbeing of each and every Victorian.

Before I continue on about the bill, I would like to give a shout-out to Victoria Police and in particular to the local police in my electorate at the Springvale police station and in my neighbouring electorate of Glen Waverley as well, across the road, for the great work that they do in protecting our community, the sacrifices that they make in doing so, the hours that they put in and their availability for our community – a big shout-out to them and a big thankyou on behalf of the Mulgrave community.

This bill continues and strengthens two different therapeutic intervention programs for those at risk of radicalising towards violent extremism. One of these programs being strengthened is the voluntary case management scheme and the Countering Violent Extremism Multi-agency Panel. The purpose of a voluntary case management plan is to reduce the extent to which a person is vulnerable to violent extremism by addressing their needs and concerns with a more comprehensive approach, which is what this bill seeks, and as a clinical psychologist I can see the utmost benefit of this program and this case management plan in supporting and preventing extreme terrorism behaviour. The Allan Labor government recognises that family and friends play a protective role in an individual's life and help them to disengage from violent extremism. As such, we understand that providing these key people with the necessary tools and knowledge will enhance their ability to support their loved ones. This is why the bill allows programs and services to be provided to a key person to a participant of the VCM scheme, such as immediate family members or caregivers. Again this is about wraparound services in relation to this program, and we know that those wraparound services work.

The bill's reforms also ensure that the VCM scheme and the Countering Violent Extremism Multi-agency Panel legislative requirements adapt to the changing nature of violent extremism, and we know the extremism that we have seen in our communities is not the same all the time. It changes, and we need to change with it. So notably, the bill grants the Secretary of the Department of Justice and Community Safety the ability to seek advice from the panel at any time, rather than at set intervals, as well as to seek generalised advice on best practice case management or on general groupings, further promoting agility and proactive information.

I also seek to highlight some of the key amendments to the Control of Weapons Act 1990. Having spoken to community members as well as small business owners in the suburb of Springvale in the last few weeks, I can confidently tell you that the people of Mulgrave do not tolerate weapons violence. They want safety for their families, their businesses and their community.

Last sitting week I spent time with both the Minister for Police and the Minister for Corrections and Minister for Youth Justice and spoke about these concerns. From these discussions, I want to emphasise that the Allan Labor government does not and will not tolerate weapons violence. Thus this change will combat this risk. This bill in front of us today will seek to combat this by enhancing police powers to reach people and vehicles in designated areas known as weapons offending hotspots. The change will add to existing schemes that were introduced over a decade ago, and it will make a significant improvement which will ensure that police powers are well equipped to effectively address unlawful weapons possession, carriage and use.

Another big amendment in this bill that I would like to highlight today is the improvement to the planned and unplanned designated areas scheme. The bill increases the period that a planned designation can occur at an event and moves the requirement from being published in a daily newspaper to instead being published on the Victoria Police website as well as in the *Government*

Gazette. Police also do not have to wait as long to return to an area to search for weapons. This is about giving the police force flexibility through the increased period of time, enabling them to better tackle the threat of weapons-related offences and ultimately create a safer environment for all Victorians while also adapting to a digital environment where publications online are more visible than physical papers.

There is also the new addition of intelligence being able to be used to justify an area being declared, again giving the police greater ability to search for dangerous weapons. Having talked to many of my constituents, I can assure you that the people of Mulgrave want a more proactive approach when it comes to policing. Many of the people in the community are first-generation immigrants who came to this country seeking safety, stability and security to raise their family or start their business. My community wants police to tackle and prevent violence and crime before they occur. This proactive and intelligence-led approach places Victoria Police on the front foot in combating the threat of weapons-related violence or disorder, ensuring that potential risks are addressed before they escalate.

Central to this bill is that this is intended to help the police. We have listened to the feedback and advice and have actioned them. The Allan Labor government knows just how hard the members of the police force are working to protect our communities. Every hour, every day, no matter the weather, they are working hard to protect us and keep our community safe. Under this government, we have made record investments in Victoria Police, at more than \$4.5 billion. That is a large investment in the police, but it is justified, yet those on the other side of this chamber have the audacity to claim that we are seeking to cut a billion dollars from the police budget. This is simply a fib, but this does not surprise me, because all they know about is lying and cutting, so it would make sense for them to speak on cuts. But let us not forget what happened last time they were in government, when those on the other side chose to slash \$100 million from the Victoria Police budget. Outrageous! And to claim that we are cutting funds to Victoria Police, with their history, well, that is pretty hypocritical. Those opposite cannot be trusted to keep our community safe. While they are busy politicising criminal activity, we are doing something about it. Over here on this side of the chamber we believe in supporting the police and ensuring that Victoria Police are well funded and have the tools they need to effectively combat crime, which this bill plays a pivotal part in.

This bill addresses a gap in the current legislation by specifying a penalty for obstructing or hindering a protective services officer during their duties, such as stopping and searching a person or vehicle or seizing and detaining an item. The Justice Legislation Amendment (Protective Services Officers and Other Matters) Act 2017 gave protective services officers limited powers to join police in designated area weapons searches but did not include a penalty for obstruction. This bill corrects that by setting a penalty of 2 penalty units, aligning it with similar offences involving police officers.

This bill is a vital step forward in ensuring the safety and security of our communities. By enhancing the operational flexibility and responsiveness of Victoria Police, we are equipping them with the tools they need to detect and deter unlawful weapons possession, carriage and use. The Allan Labor government remains fully committed to taking all appropriate measures to support Victoria Police in their mission to combat weapons offending and to create a safer, more secure environment for all Victorians. I commend this bill to the house.

Brad ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (17:54): I rise to address the Terrorism (Community Protection) and Control of Weapons Amendment Bill 2024. As I was sitting here in the chamber on table duty it was brought to my attention that members of my own community have been impacted by crime in the last 24 hours. Residents in Black Rock have in fact experienced a home invasion overnight, and I rise to address this matter as a matter of urgency for the house to consider during the consideration of this bill, because I think it is important for the house to have a real-life scenario to consider during the consideration of this bill. The *Herald Sun* reports that a Black Rock home invasion victim, Adele Andrews, says her family was left in disbelief after the terrifying ordeal. If you will bear with me, I choose to read into *Hansard* just some of that article. Offenders armed with machetes are accused of stealing two luxury vehicles and a nine-year-old child's piggy bank during a terrifying

bayside home invasion. Adele Andrews's family were on Tuesday morning woken by the sound of a crew of armed offenders breaking into her garage:

... before making off with thousands of dollars worth of goods.

...

Security footage from the Fourth St home shows three hooded and masked offenders calmly walking up the driveway at about 5am.

One of them was seen wielding an enormous machete in his right hand. Four minutes later, two offenders are seen opening Ms Andrews' Mercedes parked on the street before driving away. Seconds later, her Hyundai Palisade is backed out from the garage and driven away by the third offender.

Ms Andrews, speaking from her Black Rock home on Tuesday, said it was 'frightening' how calm the offenders appeared to have been. She said they stole two vehicles, a luxury handbag and wallet and garage remotes. She also accused them of stealing her nine-year-old daughter's piggy bank from the kitchen bench.

We were in disbelief for a while ... it was just shock at what we'd seen (on the cameras) as far as preparedness of the people that came in ...

Ms Andrews told the *Herald Sun*.

The size of the weapons (was) terrifying ... the machete was, I'd say, 80cm long. It was huge ... They had the hoodies, the masks. They're big, burly characters.

It's just frightening. It's frightening that they're so brazen. It's frightening that they're so comfortable with doing it.

The mother of two said it would take her young daughter some time to recover from Tuesday morning's incident.

"She's OK now but it will be when she gets in bed at night, it will ... hit home," she said. "I suspect it'll take her a little while to get over this."

Ms Andrews said urgent action was needed:

... to protect families, including tougher bail conditions. She accused Ms Allan of having her "head in the sand" on issues such as crime.

"It's sickening," she said.

"Just do something. What you're doing is not working. Putting your head in the sand isn't working. Make some tough decisions."

...

Police say the offender's Hyundai i30 – which was driven from the scene by a fourth person – was stolen from Chadstone on Monday.

No arrests have been made and the police investigation is ongoing.

I draw the attention of the house to this matter as a matter of urgency during the consideration of this Terrorism (Community Protection) and Control of Weapons Amendment Bill 2024 to bring to life some of the issues that the house is considering at the minute. Black Rock is a beautiful part of my community. It is a place my wife and I have chosen to raise our two children, and we have got circumstances as we speak in this chamber at the moment where there is another young family experiencing the worst of the absolute worst. I do not blame the police. I am sure the police have done absolutely everything they possibly can to help this family and to help these victims of crime – these victims of senseless, needless crime. But respectfully, I say to the government, and I plead with the government: please do better, please do more.

We have heard government speaker after government speaker saying that they are doing everything they can, they are investing more than they ever have in community safety and in police, but yet we have the victim of Adele Andrews and her family who just last night, early this morning, have been impacted in this way. And as I read into *Hansard* earlier, this house heard the impact that crime is

having on not only families but children. I say to the government: please do more, please do better to keep my community safe.

Ella GEORGE (Lara) (17:59): I rise today to speak on the Terrorism (Community Protection) and Control of Weapons Amendment Bill 2024. At its heart this bill is about community safety and supporting our dedicated Victoria Police members, and this legislation is about listening to the community about needing to take more action when it comes to knife-related crimes. Knife-related crime in 2024 reduced by 3.6 per cent compared to 2023 levels, but we know there is more work to do, which is why we are introducing legislation like the bill before the house today. While knife-related crime has decreased, there are more knives being seized by police. In 2024 Victoria Police seized almost 15,000 knives, keeping them out of the hands of offenders. This equates to almost 40 knives seized every day by Victoria Police officers right across our state, and this is an increase of almost 2000 knives seized by police compared to 2023, with 13,063 knives seized. All of us here know that knife crime is a significant issue in the Victorian community, and as a local MP I have constituents report to me their concerns about knife crime and in particular about people being able to purchase knives and machetes. In fact this was a topic of conversation just this afternoon for me and one of my staff members, who has just finished year 12 and is all too aware of the challenges that young people are facing. She has seen firsthand the impact of young people who are disengaged from the education system.

Our hardworking police members are out in our community doing everything that they can to keep Victorians safe, and I want to share some recent figures that highlight the work they are doing on the ground in our communities. Operation Alliance, which targets youth gangs, has seen 466 individual arrests, over 200 gang members remanded and over 4800 charges laid. Operation Trinity, which looks at aggravated burglary and car theft, has seen over 900 arrests for aggravated burglary with theft of motor vehicle and 329 arrests for just theft of motor vehicle. There were 688 offenders in 2024, and this operation has seen more than 2400 arrests in total and has also seen a car theft recovery rate of 94.2 per cent. Operation Park, which addresses antisemitism-motivated crime, has seen police attend 561 separate protests, demonstrations and rallies. It has seen 19,192 shifts of dedicated police resources at these protests and demonstrations, 90 arrests and 315 investigations. Taskforce Lunar, which looks at stamping out illegal tobacco across Victoria, has seen 109 arrests. Taskforce VIPER, which seeks to address organised crime in our community, has seen 265 arrests, 504 charges and 53 warrants executed. I wanted to share these to highlight the volume of work undertaken taken by Victoria Police. As a government it is our job to support the police as they go about their job keeping us safe. We know that there is more to do. There is always more to do when it comes to keeping Victorians safe and responding to community safety issues as they arise, and that is exactly why we have brought forward this legislation.

This bill is about addressing extremism, and while we are talking about extremism in our community it would be remiss of me not to touch on a recent incident that has shocked our Geelong community. We have seen two pictures shared on social media taken at a local venue before a soccer match between two local clubs. One of these images depicted a group, who all had digital images placed over their faces, performing a Nazi salute. The other image of the same group saw digital images across their faces with a different Nazi symbol. Both clubs that played that night have rightly come out to condemn this behaviour, and I acknowledge the North Geelong Warriors and the Geelong Soccer Club for their swift action in calling this out as unacceptable in our community. From this, this week we have seen seven men charged on summons for public display or performance of Nazi symbols or gestures. All seven will appear before the Geelong Magistrates' Court on 6 May 2025. The maximum penalty for public display of Nazi symbols or gestures is a fine of up \$23,710, 12 months jail or both. I thank Victoria Police for their extensive investigation of this matter. While we never want to see incidents like this in our community, it is reassuring to see it being taken so seriously both by the police and by the laws that we have introduced.

Anti-Defamation Commission chair Dvir Abramovich has welcomed the charges. This week he said:

The days of getting away with this poison are over ...

This isn't just a charge, it's a reckoning.

These men raised their arms to hate, and now they will be dragged before the courts to answer for it.

Every salute they threw up was a slap in the face to Holocaust survivors – well, now the law is slapping back.

It is shocking that this incident occurred in our community. We have seen a rise of extremism right across the state, and we are seeing it on a regular basis.

I want to speak to the amendments of the Terrorism (Community Protection) Act 2003 that this bill will seek to address. This part of the bill deals with the pathways for Victorians who are at risk of radicalising towards violent extremism. We saw the terrorism threat level raised from 'possible' to 'probable' by ASIO in August 2024, and we know that violent extremism is an ongoing threat to the safety of the community in Victoria, as we saw with the attack on the Adass Israel Synagogue, a terrible incident that we all condemn.

The state government recognises the need for therapeutic intervention for those people who may be vulnerable to violent extremism, and the amendments before the house will improve the operations of Victoria's voluntary case management scheme to make sure it operates flexibly and responsibly. The amendments will also allow for a wider cohort of people to be eligible to access intervention, reducing the likelihood of them posing a risk to the community. Voluntary case management has been in operation in Victoria since 2022. It is a voluntary program that provides tailored intervention and wraparound support for people at risk of radicalisation. This support can include psychological counselling, career counselling, mentoring, tutoring, legal aid and access to community support groups. The scheme provides support for people who are at risk of or are radicalising towards violent extremism. It connects them with the services that they need and identifies ways to reconnect them with their communities. It is important to remember that this scheme is voluntary and it complements the work being done by Victoria Police with higher risk individuals.

These amendments will make changes to the operation of the scheme to ensure best practice. Now that the scheme has been in place for a few years we have a good sense of what is working and what is not, and these amendments will respond to the needs of our experts working in the sector. For instance, it is best practice to involve an individual with all the decisions made about their wellbeing. This bill will ensure that when a voluntary case management plan is developed it is done in collaboration with the participant. The bill also amends the language used around risk to reduce the stigma attached to joining this voluntary program. We want to make programs like this a safe and accessible option for people who require support. By providing bespoke and holistic intervention we can continue to keep Victorians safe from the threat of terrorism and violent extremism.

This bill will also make amendments to the role of the Countering Violent Extremism Multi-agency Panel to clarify their role as an advisory body. Currently the multi-agency panel has legislative functions that are closely involved with case management. In practice this work is being carried out by expert case managers who are best qualified to deliver it. The amendments will clarify that the multi-agency panel will continue to provide advice on the engagement and vulnerability of participants but will delegate day-to-day case management to the Secretary of the Department of Justice and Community Safety, who manages the program. The bill also makes minor and technical amendments to reflect the changes made federally to the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation Act 1979 relating to warrants.

With the time I have left I would like to reiterate what is at the heart of this bill, which is community safety. This is about keeping Victorians safe. It is about reducing extremism in our community and reducing knife crime in our community. All on this side of the house know that we have done lots of work in this space, but there is always more to do when it comes to protecting Victorian communities. I commend this bill to the house, and I wish it a speedy passage.

Gary MAAS (Narre Warren South) (18:09): I too rise to make a contribution today on the Terrorism (Community Protection) and Control of Weapons Amendment Bill 2024. Can I just say at the outset that from this government there have been so many speakers today who have been making really worthy contributions on this bill, and yet the supposed party of law and order seems to have already exhausted its speaking list for the day. They already seem to be out on the terrace, quite frankly, enjoying a few drinks in the sunshine and not bothering to come –

Roma Britnell interjected.

Gary MAAS: Well, look, I know it affects some when you actually speak the truth, but the fact is that the opposition have exhausted their speaking list and they cannot even speak to the one thing they are supposed to care about, and that is keeping our community safe.

Roma Britnell interjected.

Gary MAAS: That is exactly it. I can say who I am speaking to because I look at that side of the house and there is no-one there. There is no-one on that side of house. No-one cares on that side of the house about the safety of our community. What they do care about is having drinks out on the terrace on a sunny Tuesday evening. It is an absolute disgrace. This government is doing more to help our police to counter terrorism and to control weapons. In my part of the world, in Narre Warren, I know that we have a new police station starting to be built next week. I know the member for Narre Warren North and I are very pleased about that, because there is some \$78 million going towards that, as well as the station in Clyde North that is being built as well.

Roma Britnell: Acting Speaker, I ask that you note the state of the house and call for a quorum.

Quorum formed.

Gary MAAS: As I was saying, the investment in our police stations in Narre Warren is part of a \$4.5 billion investment, and it is the sort of investment that we are giving to our police so that they are able to counter terrorism in this state, as well as managing the control of weapons. The \$4.5 billion is going towards hiring more police as well as giving them the technology they need – the state-of-the-art technology and infrastructure systems that are needed by our hardworking police force in this state.

The bill makes amendments to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the voluntary case management scheme under the Terrorism (Community Protection) Act 2003. The bill also makes amendments to the Control of Weapons Act 1990 to enhance community safety by enabling Victoria Police to exercise, without warrant or suspicion, unlawful weapons search powers in public places that are in areas declared by the chief commissioner to be designated areas in a more flexible way for longer periods and in expanded circumstances.

To that end, the first part is the TCPA, the Terrorism (Community Protection) Act. It goes through refining the functions of the Countering Violent Extremism Multi-agency Panel and the secretary under the TCPA to improve operations of the VCM, voluntary case management, scheme and align it with best practice case management. It also seeks to reform the eligibility criteria for the VCM scheme to allow for a wider range of individuals to be serviced, to expand the information-sharing requirements in relation to the VCM scheme, to allow programs and services to be provided to key persons of a participant on the VCM scheme, and to make minor amendments as a consequence of the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation Act 1979 of the Commonwealth.

The second part of the bill amends the planned and unplanned designated area provisions of the Control of Weapons Act 1990, and that seeks to modify the advertising requirements for planned designations for events and non-events to remove the requirement to publish notices and plan designations of areas in newspapers and instead to require publication on a website maintained by Victoria Police. It also increases the time for which the operation of a planned designation for an event can apply, including the time either side of an event – I will speak to that a bit more soon – and reduces the minimum time that must elapse from the end of a declaration of a planned designated area before

another declaration of a planned designated area can take effect in the same area from 10 days to 12 hours. It also includes an additional threshold test for planned event designations so that they can operate in relation to new and emerging events where there is intelligence of a likelihood of weapons-related violence or disorder occurring at those events. It increases the duration of planned and unplanned designations from 12 hours to 24 hours to enable Victoria Police to better respond to prolonged community safety risks. Finally, it inserts a 2-penalty-unit penalty for the offence at section 10L(3) for a person to obstruct or hinder a protective services officer's exercise of stop, search and seizure powers in a designated area or searches with suspicion at a designated place such as a railway station.

The bill also promotes the idea of sustained efforts to detect and defer weapons-related violence or disorder in areas of high risk through reducing the time that must elapse between declarations of planned designated areas. At present, police are unable to conduct a planned operation in an area until a minimum of 10 days has elapsed from the end of a previous planned operation in the same area. The bill reduces this minimum 10-day gap, as I have said previously, to a minimum of 12 hours. The reduced timeframe is more aligned with some weapons search schemes that have been introduced in other Australian jurisdictions and is intended to improve community safety in high-risk areas and for periods of heightened risk. For example, more consistent police presence and random weapons-searching activity may have considerable benefits during school holidays or long weekends in certain areas. As is currently the case, police will still be able to conduct an unplanned designated area operation in the area during the gap period if circumstances require such an operational response.

Finally, the bill also rectifies an anomaly whereby section 10L(3) currently has no specified penalty for the purported offence of a person without a reasonable excuse obstructing or hindering a protective services officer in the exercise of powers to stop and search a person or vehicle or seize and detain a thing. The bill rectifies that anomaly by fixing, as I have previously said, a penalty of 2 penalty units for the offence, and that mirrors the penalty that currently applies in respect to the similar offence in relation to police officers.

This bill is an important community safety bill and it demonstrates further this government's commitment to safety in this state. I commend this bill. The government will continue to keep taking all appropriate steps to maximise Victoria Police's capacity to combat weapons offending. I commend the bill to the house.

Kathleen MATTHEWS-WARD (Broadmeadows) (18:19): I rise to speak on the Terrorism (Community Protection) and Control of Weapons Amendment Bill 2024. Safety is very important to my community and very important to communities across Victoria, as we know. The member for Greenvale, the Labor candidate for Calwell Basem Abdo and I recently attended a community safety forum at the Chaldean Church of Our Lady Guardian of Plants in Campbellfield. It was really good to chat to our local community about some of the issues they are concerned about, allay some of their fears and talk about ways we can counter some issues together. I thank the Chaldean Culture Salon and the Chaldean League for hosting the night.

I really want to give a shout-out to our local police, who are doing an incredible job in a sometimes very challenging area. They do really great work and they respond really well to our multicultural community. They do wonderful work trying to recruit extra police who speak the community languages, which makes a big difference when they are addressing issues in the community. Neighbourhood Watch also came along, and Bambi spoke really well and gave the community a sense of empowerment about things they can do themselves, particularly keeping their vehicles safe, and I want to thank her for her insights, and also the member for Greenvale and Basem for coming along.

Unfortunately, extremism is not a new concept to many in my community, and certainly religious extremism has been a favourite topic of the press for a very long time. My community has also been targeted on this issue for a long time. Extremism does not come in any colour or any religion, and it is rapidly increasing across the world as bad actors and in my view foreign interference stoke anger, hate

and polarisation to radicalise people and undermine our democracies. We have seen Nazis emboldened recently and horrible acts of Islamophobia and antisemitism in the community, as well as extreme anti-government views and a very alarming rise in extremism against women through those who spout ultramasculinity and misogyny and also through exposure to violent pornography.

Extremism does not have a colour or religion, but it does have one thing in common: people preying on vulnerable, angry or lonely people to recruit them to their cause. This has been turbocharged and often monetised by social media and gaming, both of which further undermine our social fabric and isolate people from others. Similarly to domestic violence, when you isolate people from others they are much easier to manipulate. I have had parents come to me very worried about their children, mostly sons, who seem to be slipping down the dark holes of extremism, so I am really, really pleased that we are expanding eligibility for the programs, and I have seen programs work in our community. We have provided \$2.5 million to fund the important work of the Northern Community Support Group through MyCentre and the Muslim communities in the north. Their programs support Muslim communities in Melbourne's northern suburbs to achieve their full potential through the delivery of initiatives focused on community empowerment and resilience as well as social participation.

Community-led programs support youth in our suburbs and operate out of Preston Mosque and the Multicultural Youth Centre, MyCentre, at Broadmeadows. The Northern Community Support Group is grounded in strong community-based partnership and underpinned by social cohesion themes of belonging, social justice, acceptance and worth. We know that everyone just wants to belong, and if we do not make efforts to ensure people belong to prosocial groups – sporting clubs and groups in the community – we know that they tend to find other communities, and these can be hurtful and hateful communities.

The Northern Community Support Group's objectives are to provide employment, education and training, ownership and sustainability, social participation, culturally and religiously appropriate support services, community resilience and religious identity. Young people in our community now have the support opportunities they need as a result of the programs and activities delivered through the northern centre. It has improved their resilience and self-confidence and provided them with the belief that they belong, which is fundamental to all humans. I would like to read out a case study of a holistic approach that helped a young person:

In early 2020 a mother approached the Northern Community Support Group (NCSG) regarding concerns over the anti-social behaviour of her two sons, aged in their early teens.

The brothers spent a lot of time in their rooms on social media and playing video games. As a result the NCSG leadership organised for the boys to participate in several activities, including:

- religious presentations delivered by homegrown imams, and
- indoor soccer games at MyCentre.

Following this intervention, the boys' mother was very impressed with the improvement in the mood and general attitude of her sons.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, their case manager altered intervention plans for the boys. They worked with the entire family to provide alternative engagement strategies, such as providing:

- home schooling support and advice
- online religious content from trusted sources, and
- alternative recreational activities such as board games.

The NCSG case manager maintained regular contact with the mother through video and voice calls, and connected her with various support services such as Halal Food Bank and the MyCenter food distribution project. The case manager also has regular discussions with the boys, about their studies, friends and social media.

This holistic approach in providing support to the entire family has had an enormous impact on the brothers. Both boys have now secured casual employment.

It really did make a huge difference to those boys. Having prosocial opportunities to participate in life meant that they were not vulnerable to extremism.

The Northern Community Support Group also offers school holiday programs and camps, homework clubs and playgroups, sports tournaments, trivia nights, book clubs and a range of webinars on mental health and wellbeing. They also run sporting opportunities which are both culturally and religiously sensitive, which there is a lack of in the community, for Muslim women.

It had humble beginnings. Women from the Preston Mosque and MyCentre would come together once a week to perform basic basketball drills and play casual matches under the guidance of a qualified coach. In a short period of time the program became very popular and participation grew considerably. Due to the program's success, the centre's project site organised a women's basketball tournament involving over 15 teams from across Melbourne and over 100 staff, volunteers and spectators. The tournament was a huge success, and many of the women have continued and gone on to have the groups and activities available to them – again, having that feeling of somewhere to belong, something positive to do and a way to connect with people, which, as I have said, is a fundamental human need.

The other issue that came up when I was working in the carers and volunteers portfolio was particularly carers of young people with autism, who are often quite vulnerable to extremism. I am very appreciative of seeing the expanded eligibility for children at risk of extremism because of vulnerabilities like autism. I think it will give a lot of parents a lot of comfort to know that there are supports available and that supports do work. We have funded these for quite a long time now, and we know that they work. Banksia Gardens also runs a fabulous crime prevention initiative in Broadmeadows.

We have seen time after time that these initiatives work. They keep kids out of trouble. They keep kids doing prosocial activities. We know that it can also help when we can get them into alcohol and drug treatment, mental health treatment and support services and sporting clubs and things like that that the kids enjoy. That also has a flow-on benefit for the rest of a family, because often younger brothers and sisters can be quite influenced by what older children are watching online and their interests and some of that extremism, if it gets hold of them.

Our investment is working, with an evaluation showing that completing the programs drives a 29 per cent reduction in offending for participants and a significant reduction in the severity of offending when it does occur. Through the crime prevention programs Labor has invested in – more than \$100 million in over 948 initiatives since forming government – the government understands that the best way of keeping people out of the criminal justice system is by preventing them coming into contact with it wherever possible and making sure that there are lots of wraparound services and support and other opportunities for social engagement for at-risk people. I commend this bill to the house. I thank the minister and all the people who have worked on the bill.

Jackson TAYLOR (Bayswater) (18:29): It is a great pleasure to rise and speak in support of the Terrorism (Community Protection) and Control of Weapons Amendment Bill 2024. From the very outset I thank the relevant ministers who have worked on this bill – the Minister for Police and the Attorney-General – and of course importantly their teams in the ministerial offices and those in the department who have worked with many stakeholders, in particular Victoria Police and our law enforcement agencies, on this important piece of legislation which we are debating in this place today. I want to as well just reflect on the contributions that we have heard on this bill today. In particular I was listening to the member for Footscray and the member for Frankston and hearing about the importance of strengthening police powers and giving the resources and tools – which is a proud habit of this government – to our police to better provide improved community safety outcomes in those members' communities. Of course that has been a feature of all members in this place – community safety – and safety generally is critically important to people not just in my area but right across this state. We heard the passion of those local members, and of course we heard the member for Greenvale as well talking about the work of Victoria Police in his particular community, some of the really great

work they are doing, which we know is reflected right across this state. We know the men and women on the front line do incredible work, incredibly difficult work in very difficult circumstances, and of course I am very proud to be part of a government that backs in our police and supports them every single step of the way.

I note in recent times some of the great work in a number of areas. There have been a number of operations. In Operation Alliance there have been 466 individual arrests; in Operation Trinity, 900-plus arrests for aggravated burglary with theft of motor vehicle; in Operation Park there have been a number of arrests as well and a lot of police work as part of that operation; in Taskforce Lunar, 109 arrests; and in Taskforce VIPER, 265 arrests. This is just but a fraction of the work, to be honest, of the fantastic people in Victoria Police, and I thank them for their work.

I thank in particular in the community I represent the Knox and Boronia police stations. I have had the great privilege of going out there in my role as a member for Parliament, meeting with the officer in charge, the sub-officers as well as all of the constables, senior constables and leading senior connies out there, to thank them for their work and hear from them directly about how this Allan Labor government can continue to support them in their work. I remember in my time as a police officer going to the Knox police station, because it is a custody location overnight, where you would have to deal with that from a resource perspective, going out to Knox police station. If you ever had offenders, at times you would take them to Knox police station. They were always extremely professional, good people out at Knox police, and that certainly has not changed in the role here in my dealings with them, and I thank them for their work in keeping my community safe and supporting locals.

Of course I talk about the support we have provided, and that is absolutely profound. The investment that the Andrews and Allan Labor governments have made into Victoria Police is the single biggest investment in its history. We know that the numbers that were recruited into Victoria Police, additional numbers above attrition and all of that, are over 3000 extra police officers. Over 3600 additional police have been funded since 2014, and there has been \$4.5 billion of record investments. That is delivering the modern world-class policing service that not just local communities and members of the Victorian community deserve but also our police force deserves. They deserve every bit of support, whether it is the tools or resources, to let them do their job and get on with their hard work, which is already difficult, but making sure they have got a government that supports them each and every day is critically important for them as well.

We have seen as well that we have provided a whole range of new technology. It is not just about numbers. When we talk about numbers, that is obviously frontline support – so nearly 3000 extra frontline officers have been funded. The police academy has been incredibly busy. It was certainly busy when I went through. There have been investments into new vehicles and into iPads so police can be more versatile and flexible when they are out on the road responding to incidents. There is the police assistance line. When I worked at the police station we used to get a lot of calls about matters that could be handled by people who were non-operational, and that is exactly what the police assistance line has done. It has taken that load off police officers in police stations right across this state, it has given them back that time to work on correspondence and respond to incidents that come to them directly in the watch house at those front counters and of course it means that vans can stay out on the road longer because they do not have to deal with and liaise on those inquiries coming through.

We know as well that we have rolled out tasers. That was obviously a feature in regional areas to begin with, but they have now been rolled out to every single frontline police officer. That was a \$214 million investment. I think back to my time in 2013, 2014 and up to 2018 – and I know this was an investment made in recent years – and there were many situations where they could have been used in an operational response to make sure that Victorians were kept safe. Obviously people are involved in those sorts of incidents, so tasers are an incredibly important investment. I am very proud that this government has rolled them out.

Importantly as well, we have seen a billion dollars put into new and upgraded police stations. Where I used to work, at Glen Waverley police station, I believe there has been an upgrade, which is great. As the local member, Acting Speaker Mullahy, you would be very pleased with that. I still keep in touch with many of my former colleagues. They are all doing a fantastic job. I send a shout-out to all of them. I will not name them all individually; they probably would not like that anyway.

A member interjected.

Jackson TAYLOR: No, no naming today; they know who they are. We know as well that we have invested a lot through crime prevention programs, which are critically important in that early period to help people before we get to that crisis end. This government has continued to invest in that. We will do more and will continue to invest not just in a front-end response but also in that critical early intervention as well. Importantly, one thing that I always like to say in this place is that we support Victoria Police, and obviously I have got a personal connection from my five years in the force and on the front line as a prosecutor in the Melbourne Magistrates' Court before I came to this place. There are obviously a lot of members in this place, certainly on this side, and I think supporting our police is a pretty bipartisan position for the most part, but this government supports our police every single day of the week. We do not choose a circumstance; we do not choose a particular climate where we do not support our police. That is not the right thing to do. They are out there doing the hard work.

It is easy for us to come in here and talk on this bill, an important bill that gives police the resources and tools they need and keeps us heading in the right direction to make sure they have got those right tools and resources, but they are the ones out there putting their lives on the line and doing the hard yards. I have been there; I know how hard it is. So I will never in this place, in my role as a member of Parliament, politicise or for a day not support the hard work of our police. I remember only too well during COVID some of the stuff and the rhetoric from those opposite – not all of those opposite – where a lot of people basically sought to divide and pull out separate incidents. Of course we want to ensure accountability and transparency, which are so important, but there are formal channels. If there are particular incidents of concern, then they can go through, and they should go through, those processes. But what I will not do is take one incident and broadly brush that across thousands of hardworking men and women on the front line who do incredible work.

There is a reason why they are tasked with the job they have. They carry firearms, tasers, batons, sprays and communications. They work in conjunction with Ambulance Victoria, with fire services and with the CFA. It is a very difficult job. They will always have my back, and this government will always have theirs. I do not think it is appropriate to pick days when we support Victoria Police or to pick times during COVID. Some members opposite also made the job of Victoria Police even harder by appearing in protests out the front on the steps, where there were specific death threats made towards members and a whole range of horrible scenes from a very, very, very select minority. It was obviously very sad to see, and I could not believe it occurred. I think every day that we come to this place we should support Victoria Police and support the work they do. If they have issues, people can go through those formal channels and those mechanisms. Accountability is absolutely important. I am very proud of this legislation. It is going to continue to give Victoria Police the tools and resources they need. I commend the bill to the house.

Alison MARCHANT (Bellarine) (18:39): It is a pleasure to rise to speak on the Terrorism (Community Protection) and Control of Weapons Amendment Bill 2024, and it is a hard act to follow the member for Bayswater, who has a really intimate knowledge and great understanding of how this bill will support our Victorian police, as he has been a police member himself. He gave great insight into why this bill is important but also clearly articulated how this side of government is backing our police every single day in the job that we do here, supporting the difficult job that police have across all of our communities. I thank him for his contribution.

I will just go to a couple of overall objectives of this bill, and I want to talk a little bit about what it might mean for the Bellarine. This bill will make some amendments to improve the effectiveness and

the efficiency of the voluntary case management scheme under the Terrorism (Community Protection) Act 2003, and the bill also makes some amendments to the Control of Weapons Act 1990 to enhance community safety. It will do this by enabling police to exercise, without warrant or suspicion, unlawful weapons search powers in public places that are in areas declared by the Chief Commissioner of Police to be designated areas in a more flexible way, for longer periods and in expanded circumstances. I will go into a little bit more of that in just a moment.

It is a pleasure to rise in this place to put on the record and have the opportunity to speak about something that affects us all, and that is safety. When we talk about safety it is not just about crime prevention; we are talking about the wellbeing of our community, the wellbeing of our families, the security on our streets and that peace of mind that we have when going about our lives, allowing us to work and live and raise our children in a community that we can really be proud of and be safe in. Although this bill does talk a lot about law enforcement, our Victorian police and their powers, it is a community issue and a responsibility of all of us to share that duty. There can be great partnerships with our residents, our businesses, our schools and our emergency services, and when we come together we build a safer community, a stronger one and a connected one.

I must say that I think the Bellarine communities do an extraordinary job in this area, and I would like to share with the house something that we have that may be unique. Maybe other communities do have something similar, but we have a community group called the bSafe community group. It was something established by the previous member for Bellarine Lisa Neville. She created a group that has representatives from each of the suburbs across the Bellarine who come together and have a direct line to and conversation with local police and local command. That is an ongoing group that I now chair as well, and we have regular catch-ups across time. There is nothing confidential about these meetings, but we discuss the crime stats and the police discuss the issues that they are seeing locally. They might talk about the particular areas that they are targeting. Sometimes that is about road safety. Sometimes it is about water safety. Other times it has been about e-scooters or visiting schools. They have targeted approaches across the Bellarine, and then community members have the ability to raise issues that they are seeing in their own communities. A lot of it has been around graffiti or shoplifting. It might be around car theft and breaking into cars. It is a great tool for the community to raise these issues directly with local police, who then put in a strategy to counteract some of these things they are seeing.

For example, in partnership with Neighbourhood Watch and the bSafe group's support, police have been doing anti-theft-screw numberplates. People can go along for free. They drive into the car park near Bunnings – last time it was in Leopold – and they get their numberplate screws changed over to anti-theft screws. It is a really great initiative that we are doing proactively for the community to feel safer. The police also have a targeted scam watch session. They have done a prevention strategy around scams. They were noticing an increase in people being scammed. They are getting cleverer by the day, and with an elderly population on the Bellarine, a lot were being targeted. They have gone into different community groups, nursing homes and a variety of organisations to talk about how to protect yourself from a scam. Police reported last time a decrease in scams across the Bellarine. That is the kind of proactive action that we are taking. I just want to thank, in this instance, our local police. They have been a really proactive, visible presence on the Bellarine, and I thank them for all the work they have done across this time.

It is something that I am really proud to continue, this bSafe group. I cannot emphasise enough how important it is for our communities to have that direct line to police, and I thank them for their commitment to continue to come along and for their proactive approach. I think, in this meeting – and I talked outside of the meeting with community members – that the most powerful tool they have is awareness. They know their neighbours. They check in on their neighbours and they look after each other. They recognise that we can all contribute in a way to keep our community safe. I say this a lot about the Bellarine, but we are a very connected community. We have a strong sense of our values and what is right and wrong, and we are doing a terrific job in being proactive in this space.

The other organisation that is really incredible on the Bellarine, which might also be slightly unique, is called the Bellarine Community Support Register. This is a group of volunteers that provide a service for those who may need it. It is about collecting personal, medical and property details on a database. If you are vulnerable, elderly or have some difficulties at times, this organisation will call you to check in to see how you are going and see if everything is okay. Sometimes it can be a quick 'How are you going?' and 'Yep, we're fine' – and that is it. Other times it can be a longer conversation. But in an emergency or if something has happened and we have not heard from someone for a few days, this register is able to connect with local police, who can then access the information and check up on that person to check if they are doing okay. It really is great to give that reassurance to families and the registrants that someone is there to check in and keep them safe or provide peace of mind if needed. That is just another example of how our communities and volunteers work together with local police to create a really safe environment.

I will touch on a couple of things in the bill. This bill looks at the pathways for Victorians who are at risk of being radicalised towards violent extremism. It is a worrying trend that we are seeing across the nation. Our ASIO Director-General of Security Mike Burgess recently addressed the nation with the Prime Minister in August last year. At that time, he stated:

While the threats to our way of life remain elevated, we are seeing an increase in extremism. More Australians are being radicalised and radicalised more quickly. More Australians are embracing a more diverse range of extreme ideologies and more Australians are willing to use violence to advance their cause.

That is why this bill is really, really important. We recognise this, and we recognise the need for therapeutic interventions for those who may be vulnerable to those violent extremisms. So this amendment bill in front of the house today, to do that, looks at improving the operations of the voluntary case management scheme and giving it flexibility. This bill also makes amendments to the Control of Weapons Act 1990. That will give police the powers, tools and resources they need to ensure that they can do the job that they need to do to keep our communities safe as well.

In conclusion, I encourage others to be proactive as well in their community. It can be as simple as checking in on your neighbour or attending a community meeting. You can see the bSafe newsletter that I have on my website as well. You can check in and see all of the action that we are undertaking. We know we need to create a safe community where everyone can feel a sense of security and belonging, and I commend the bill to the house.

Mathew HILAKARI (Point Cook) (18:49): I follow on from the member for Bellarine and the member for Bayswater, and I will start with the member for Bayswater first, who talked of his responsibilities as a police officer and the responsibilities – those really high-level responsibilities – of all police officers. I really thank him for that time, but I thank all the police officers who take that responsibility so seriously in keeping our community safe. I follow on also from the member for Bellarine, and she talked about the bSafe program. We have got a similar program in Wyndham. It is a terrific program bringing together people across the community to have that direct conversation with police. I think we need more of it. I am really wanting to see more of that with our local police officers because they can talk to some of the things that are happening locally, some of the important things that people can do to keep themselves safe and to be safer in the communities that we represent.

It is very unusual that I follow on from two Labor members. In fact I have followed on from many, many Labor members, because the Liberal Party, who like to talk a big game outside of the house of changing the law to improve the support for community safety, do not talk a big game inside here. They do not turn up when legislation is actually in front of them. In fact they often oppose legislation, like the bail laws last year. So I find it extraordinary that I am following on from Labor member after Labor member who are talking about the experiences of their communities, and the Liberals – I imagine; it is almost 7 o'clock at the moment –

A member interjected.

Mathew HILAKARI: They probably are. You are right, they probably have gone out for drinks, and that is so disappointing that they have got nothing to say about this legislation. I am going to keep my remarks brief because of the many other Labor members who have more to say on this. We are sharing our time because we do have a lot to say on it. I know that people in the community that I represent have been and are worried, scared and concerned, and they have been victims of crime or their family members have been victims of crime. And I know we need to do more. We absolutely need to do more. We have not got it right, and there is always more to do on crime.

Too often I am writing to members of the community, speaking to members of the community or meeting members of the community on their driveway or at their door and talking about those things that they are worried about in our community related to community safety. I want to do less of that. That is why we have got bills like this in front of the house. It is their direct experiences which are driving all of us on this side of the house to make changes.

I know that the crime rates in the community that I represent are down on 10 years ago, but they have been going up for the last two years, and people are feeling that in a really visceral way. We do need to work on the crime that exists. We are giving more resources to the community that I represent. We have had the largest police station outside the CBD built in Werribee. We have just broken ground on the Point Cook police station. That has been years in planning and it is going to be a great asset for the community, matching up the two ends of the electorate. I am so pleased for that. I am so pleased and thankful for the work of the 144 extra police officers that we have on the beat in our community. It is a great thing. We will keep investing in this and we will keep working on the causes of crime.

Last year we did the Youth Justice Bill 2024, which strengthened the laws around granting and revoking bail and ensuring appropriate consequences for those people who offend while on bail. But it also started to deal with those challenges around young people who are starting out on a life of crime and diverting them away from the justice system, a system that once you are entangled with causes more crime. We need to do more work on that, and we are doing more work on that. We need to be investing in our young people to divert them away from a life of crime, not just hoping that will happen, as those opposite seek to do.

I am going to give an opportunity for another member to speak on this bill, but we have so much more to do in this space. I am so glad that Magistrate Julie O'Donnell has been appointed to the Children's Court to see repeat offenders and to make sure they are getting the consistency they need. I have a lot more to say, but I will pass it on to others, and I hope that the Liberals turn up not just on Facebook but in the Parliament to change the laws as well.

Nathan LAMBERT (Preston) (18:54): I will begin by thanking the member for Point Cook for allowing me a brief period of time here to speak in support of this bill. I can only echo his remarks that we as a Labor Party and a Labor caucus could continue talking on this bill at great length. We have many members who are passionate about community safety and very supportive of this measure, which will increase safety in their communities. But in the time I have I will just speak in support of the Terrorism (Community Protection) and Control of Weapons Amendment Bill 2024. Obviously it is now 2025, but as we know, this bill was introduced by Minister Carbines in November.

Very briefly, I did have the chance recently to attend Minister Carbines's alma mater, Bell Primary School, a very famous school for producing not just Minister Carbines but also former Premier John Cain. I just very briefly want to congratulate that school on their new gym and congratulate the member for Northcote on all her work on that project, Glenn Dunstone and the Building Bell committee, principal David Twite and school council president Charles Beaton and all the team there on that very impressive new community hub that they are making available to the community on our side of Bell Street as well.

I would love to speak more about primary school gyms and music rooms, but I will turn to the bill at hand. As its name suggests, it does have two parts. Most of the debate has centred on the second part,

and I may also begin by just dealing with that part. Part 3 of the bill in front of us deals with the Control of Weapons Act 1990. Unfortunately we have had machete attacks in our area. It is certainly a live issue of community concern. In particular we had a very high-profile incident in November last year when two men, Mykey O'Halloran and his partner Frank Bonnici, were as I understand it walking along the Darebin Creek path behind Northland. I understand from their own comments on the incident that they were holding hands and enjoying a romantic walk, as all of us have the right to do. All of us should of course be able to do that safely, but unfortunately they were approached by four young people who started to yell homophobic slurs at them. One of the young people attacked Frank with a machete, and unfortunately Frank was very badly injured by that attack. He was rushed to the Austin Hospital and needed some extensive surgery, affecting his ability to live his life and to do his work and of course affecting their sense of safety in our community. It was an incredibly disappointing incident, but I would like to thank Victoria Police for the way they have responded. I do understand they have executed search warrants on some properties in Meadow Heights and they have laid charges against two young boys, a 14-year-old and 15-year-old. I will not speak further about those proceedings, which are underway, but just want to echo my thanks for the work that Victoria Police do to deal with these incidents.

If I can, I will also just echo the remarks of the member for Murray Plains, who I thought put it very simply. He has much greater farming experience than I do, but I think all of us who have spent time on farms know that there is no need on a modern farm or in fact in almost any modern industry to have a machete. Certainly even in my own time I never saw my parents or grandparents, both of whom farmed, have a machete around the toolshed. It simply was not a tool we needed, and there is certainly no need for people to be walking around urban environments with those weapons. I will not reiterate what others have said in support of those clauses in part 3 except to say they will be welcomed by Mykey and Frank and many in our community.

Very briefly I will just turn to the other half of the bill we have in front of us, which relates to the Terrorism (Community Protection) Act 2003. That act was introduced in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, the horrific attacks that killed 3000 people, and of course the Bali bombings, which from memory killed a couple of hundred people in that period of the early 2000s. Many of us remember the atmosphere at that time and the urgency to take steps that would protect the community from terrorism, and the act that we are amending today was the result of that. Then as we know there were some very significant amendments under this government in 2021 that introduced the voluntary case management scheme and the support and engagement order scheme – the difference being that the first of those two schemes is voluntary. The aim of those schemes was to ensure that individuals could be disengaged, if you like, from moving in a direction towards harmful violent ideologies and ultimately to acts of extreme violence.

The bill we have today makes a series of mainly administrative improvements. We know that the member for Caulfield has moved a reasoned amendment seeking to review those amendments. As I understand from his remarks he was broadly supportive, and I have said before that I thought his reasoned amendment was essentially the reasoned amendment you have when you do not really have a reasoned amendment. He was agreeing with the substance and simply asking that a review be baked in to the legislation. But I think the circumstance we find ourselves in, where the minister is actually returning to improve this legislation a couple of years after its operation, is proof that we do not need those sorts of clauses.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

Adjournment

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

North East Link

Matthew GUY (Bulleen) (19:00): (1031) My adjournment matter tonight is for the Minister for Transport Infrastructure, and it concerns car parking at the North East Link. Recently the North East Link Authority closed car parking for its workers at the corner of Bulleen Road and Manningham Road. There were hundreds of spaces there, but they have not replaced it with anything, so what that means is of course the obvious: that all those people parking cars have now transferred to residential streets. Avon Street, St Andrews Crescent, Golden Way and Rocklea Road, just to start with, are now absolutely jam-packed with workers at the North East Link parking their vehicles at the Bulleen end of that project. What we have is a generally older population trying to get in and out of their driveways, which they cannot because there are cars parked abutting them, and narrow suburban streets where there are cars on both sides and you cannot turn in and out, particularly on St Andrews Crescent. I have been there a number of times with residents and seen this firsthand. It makes it very, very difficult for those people to be mobile in any way – to get to the shops, to move around and to generally live their lives fairly.

There is another option, of course, and it is one which I am asking the minister to intervene in and ensure occurs, and that is the option of the brand new soccer fields, which, lo and behold, were paid for as part of the works for the North East Link, at the newly opened Powerful Owl Park on Templestowe Road, where there are 300 car parks that sit empty during the day. Those parks could be requisitioned for North East Link workers during the day and shuttle buses run from there – literally, it is less than a kilometre from there down to the main works – so that workers can go to and from without much fuss. Should more car parks be needed, a kilometre or so up Templestowe Road, if the minister has conversations with the City of Manningham, they would be able to requisition Finns Reserve, which could be used for another 200 car parks. That is a significant number: hundreds of car parks which could be used to replace a closed car park on the corner of Manningham Road in Bulleen so small residential streets need not fill up with that burden. So my adjournment tonight is to ask the Minister for Transport Infrastructure to intervene and ensure that the North East Link Authority not use car parks on suburban streets but require its workers to park in one or both of those two locations and run shuttle buses between them so that residents regain their streets for themselves.

Women's health

Tim RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) (19:03): (1032) My adjournment this evening is to the Minister for Health, and the action I seek is for the minister or the Parliamentary Secretary for Women's Health to join my community for an update on the women's pain inquiry and to participate in another community forum on this really important topic and issue for our community. It was the Allan Labor government that announced this important initiative to put women's pain on the agenda and to make sure that greater awareness and understanding were had about the issues that face women and girls in our communities.

We were overwhelmed by the response from Victorians. Over 13,000 submissions were made, and a significant amount of lived experience stories and a range of issues were covered. It was really amazing to host a women's pain inquiry forum with the Premier of Victoria, the Minister for Health and my parliamentary colleague the member for Clarinda to have a greater understanding and hear directly. I will say, as a male representative of my community, it was my role to hand over to Women's Health in the South East, but to platform that opportunity was one of the best if not the best thing I have done in my community. To have generations of women in our community, and girls, share their experiences, participate in this forum and make a submission and then also to have Women's Health in the South East, led by Kit McMahon, who is an absolute champion in the south-east in a range of policy areas – she is just one of the best people going – facilitate that was a really amazing outcome.

We have seen recently some pretty harrowing comments that have been made in the community. We have seen the discussion around women's sport that was deeply offensive and troubling for community members, and Victorians universally condemned that. But the comments that were made on Triple M

recently about women's pain were something that I found absolutely outrageous, and that was around endometriosis. One in seven women in Victoria will confront endometriosis, and across Australia it affects 1.5 million women. It is a significant issue in our community that needs far more research and support and consideration into the future. To hear someone platform and question the legitimacy of that ailment and that disease and that impact was something really shocking. It just highlighted the importance of this inquiry and the importance of confronting women's health issues – to validate, to support women and girls in our community. Why were this inquiry and forum so important? Some 4500 submissions talked about endometriosis, so I am really keen to hear from the Minister for Health and the parliamentary secretary if they can join me for an update on the inquiry and the anticipated outcomes and journeys that this really important inquiry has for our Victorian communities.

Childcare services

Annabelle CLEELAND (Euroa) (19:06): (1033) My adjournment tonight is for the Minister for Children in the other place, and I am calling on her to commit to delivering all of this government's 50 new childcare facilities before 2032. This government's inability to deliver these facilities in a timely manner has failed families across our state, particularly those in our regional areas, where child care is so hard to come by. Just last month this government was proud to announce that the first four state-run childcare centres have now opened, but there was no mention of when the remaining 46 will be delivered, if ever. In August 2023 a press release from this government proudly proclaimed that all 50 childcare centres would be delivered by 2028. By May last year a new minister was put in charge and another press release explained that the timeline for the centres had blown out to 2032. 282 days is all it took for this government to set our communities and our families back four years. It has been 291 days since the last announcement, so I am calling for this commitment now in the hope that we will not see these timelines pushed back by another four years.

As things stand, 26 of the 50 facilities still remain without a concrete timeline despite a lack of access to child care being a major concern in all of these communities. That is 26 towns and suburbs full of families that need help. That is 26 towns and suburbs with parents hoping to return to work, hoping to alleviate cost-of-living challenges and hoping to give their children the best start in life – Alexandra, Bendigo South, Casterton, Churchill, Cranbourne, Dandenong, Drouin, Glenroy, Hamilton, Hampton Park, Heidelberg West, Lall, Lockington, Maffra, Maryborough, Melton West, Mickleham, Portarlington, Reservoir, Rockbank, Roxburgh Park, Warnambool, Wonthaggi, Woori Yallock, Yallourn North and of course my electorate of Seymour. These communities were promised life-changing childcare centres only to be abandoned by the Allan Labor government as they mismanage yet another budget.

With \$14 billion pledged for early childhood education, families deserve more than broken promises. Seymour is one of many towns crying out for child care, while others in the electorate were never even considered. The Mitchell Institute found Benalla had the worst childcare availability in Victoria. In Seymour, Euroa and surrounding areas access is vanishing faster than almost anywhere else in the state. Parents in Nagambie, Avenel and Murchison face a years-long waitlist, and smaller towns have none at all. These are thriving communities, not forgotten backwaters, yet they are being left behind. Families already struggling with the cost of living rely on two incomes, but the childcare crisis is making that impossible. The Allan Labor government cannot manage money. It cannot deliver on its promises, and regional Victorian families are paying the price. This must change.

Narre Warren South electorate housing

Gary MAAS (Narre Warren South) (19:09): (1034) The adjournment matter I wish to raise is for the Minister for Planning and concerns the recently announced housing targets. The action that I seek is that the minister provide further information about how the housing targets and the cutting of red tape will improve housing availability and affordability for constituents in my electorate of Narre Warren South. The Allan Labor government's housing targets for local government areas make it clear that we are getting on with the job of delivering the houses needed in Victoria in line with our plan to

build more houses than ever before over the next 30 years. The targets set allow councils to work with government and industry to meet the demand in the housing market, and if not, our government will intervene and unlock more access to more homes. We will deliver more housing in established areas and suburbs near great amenities, jobs, education and public transport. While young people and families will have a greater chance to find a reasonably priced rental or indeed own their own home, the introduction of a new townhouse code and assessment times will get building moving. So many people want to live in and raise their families in the great state of Victoria. Now we need to accommodate those from near and far who want to live, work and raise a family in Victoria in the same way as many of us here in this chamber have. I look forward to sharing the minister's response with my community.

Regional police services

Roma BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (19:10): (1035) My adjournment is to the Minister for Police, and the action I seek is for the police minister to ensure that we have a fair and equitable allocation of police services in regional towns. Heywood has a station which is often unattended, and this is due to staffing rosters and police on leave or filling vacancies in neighbouring centres and larger towns such as Portland. A reasonable assumption is that the 1000 vacancies in the Victoria Police force could also be a contributing factor. The people of Heywood often speak to me about issues which occur due to insufficient police presence. One involves motorists speeding through the town, which poses a risk to pedestrians and other motorists. Some speed because they know they can get away with it. The town is about to launch a petition to get a camera installed.

It is not just in Heywood though that police resources are limited. Another issue is that residents are concerned that the lack of police presence means that some antisocial behaviours are not addressed. Too often I receive complaints from people who are frightened in their own homes by the antisocial and violent behaviours of others. The perpetrators are often known to police and have a criminal history and a reputation for menacing behaviour. People call the police, but by the time an officer is dispatched to investigate, the incident has often passed or the offender has quietened down because they know the police are arriving.

There is one particularly shocking case of a woman and her relatives being intimidated repeatedly. This woman is disabled and lives alone. I am told that this constituent and her relatives are harassed, threatened and verbally abused and have received death threats from their neighbour. I have three pages of details which are harrowing, including the use of a chainsaw to intimidate. These incidents have been reported to the police many times and intervention orders are in place, but still the terror continues. I made representation to the Minister for Police on 29 January. My constituent reports that she heard the neighbour screaming and yelling about only having to do two months in jail for stabbing if he pleads insanity. The family feel that this man is an extreme danger to the community, and he knows that the Labor government is weak on crime. My constituent lives in fear for her life.

Victorians deserve to be protected by the law and to live in peace. Over and over we have seen in South-West Coast that police are either too thin on the ground or do not have the right tools and laws to address menacing behaviours. Insufficient police presence has resulted in illegal and antisocial behaviours being able to fester, such as this horrific example. Unless there is greater police presence, people have raised taking the law into their own hands to protect their families. We definitely do not want to see another incident like we saw in the small town of Kirkstall in my electorate last year.

Infrastructure projects

Eden FOSTER (Mulgrave) (19:13): (1036) My adjournment matter is directed to the Treasurer of Victoria. The action I seek is for the minister to provide an update on the financial commitments made by the Albanese Labor government towards joint funding of infrastructure projects in our great state. The infrastructure projects we have in the pipeline are crucial for Victoria's future. As Melbourne continues to grow, our infrastructure must be equipped to handle this expansion. Additional funding

from the Commonwealth will ensure that our infrastructure pipeline continues to create well-paid jobs for Victorians and sustain Victoria's strong economic growth.

Just last week the Albanese Labor government committed over \$3.3 billion for new road and rail projects in Victoria. This includes an additional \$2 billion for transforming Sunshine station, a vital step in advancing the Suburban Rail Loop and the Melbourne Airport rail. This brings the total federal government commitment to the Melbourne Airport rail to \$7 billion. The upgrades to Sunshine station will create new platforms and a dedicated line, establishing Sunshine as a major hub for regional rail to Melbourne Airport. These developments are also beneficial for those seeking new housing opportunities. The creation of 50 new train and tram zone activity centres, supported by improved transport connections through the Suburban Rail Loop and Sunshine station upgrades, will provide more families, downsizers and young people with the chance to buy or rent homes.

This initiative continues to work along the Metro Tunnel corridor, with upgrades in Sunshine in the west as well as ongoing improvements in my patch in Springvale and Noble Park as part of the 25 new activity centres. The Suburban Rail Loop and Melbourne Airport rail are the missing links in Victoria's transport network. It is exciting that the Albanese government has also committed \$2.2 billion towards these transformative projects.

Arts sector support

Gabrielle DE VIETRI (Richmond) (19:15): (1037) My adjournment is for the Minister for Creative Industries, and I ask that the government trial a living wage for artists. Art is inherently political. It challenges us, connects us and helps us see things from a different perspective. It investigates, uncovers, teaches and builds communities. Imagine a world where artists are silenced or where they are defunded or cancelled for expressing a political opinion that the media and the government of the day do not agree with. Well, that world has become a reality, and the arts are under threat.

Antoinette Lattouf, Jayson Gillham, Omar Sakr, Jinghua Qian and now Khaled Sabsabi are just a handful of high-profile examples of censorship made by major government-funded bodies. They are not the only ones. People of colour or people who express non-Western perspectives of political conflicts or who stand up against Israel's genocide of Palestinians are the ones targeted by this shameless censorship. Most recently the National Gallery of Australia censored Pacific Indigenous art collective SaVĀge K'lub's work by forcing them to cover the Palestinian flag on their tapestry or remove their work from exhibition.

It is clear that political and creative expression is under threat. Artists who depend on cultural institutions for a platform for their livelihood are being pressured to censor their work or lose opportunities. Artists should not be punished for telling the truth or being too political. Board members of organisations helicoptered in from executive corporate roles and high net worth families should not have the power to decide what art can be seen and what should be cancelled. Attacks from the far right and from the *Herald Sun* were once seen as a badge of honour for artists, but now they can be a death sentence. To maintain artists' autonomy, diversity, courage and authenticity, arts funding must be at arm's length from the government and must be in enough supply that artists are not so desperate for funding that they are working with one hand constantly tied behind their backs. That is why the Greens are pushing for a living wage for artists, to ensure that artists can thrive no matter what, without political interference. Provide artists with a basic wage so they have the security to experiment and fail and the courage to provide a better vision for a world that is, frankly, going down the gurgler.

Family violence

Luba GRIGOROVITCH (Kororoit) (19:18): (1038) My adjournment matter tonight is for the Minister for Prevention of Family Violence. The action I seek is for the minister to investigate further opportunities to help women seek help efficiently when experiencing domestic violence. As we celebrate International Women's Day and commemorate the hard work and success of women all

around the world, we must also shed light on the women who are trapped in complex and often terrifying family situations. Too frequently we are confronted with the heartbreaking stories of women who have lost their lives as the result of domestic abuse. We often learn that these women took every appropriate step to protect themselves and that despite these efforts they were sometimes not able to get the justice or the security which they deserved.

According to statistics from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare in 2022, one in two women reported experiencing some form of sexual harassment, while one in six women were victims of domestic abuse. Data from the Crime Statistics Agency reveals that breaches of intervention orders are not isolated incidents but rather a small yet deeply concerning part of a much larger and more alarming trend. According to reports, 2010 individuals were alleged to have breached a family violence intervention order between July 2023 and June 2024. Over the past five years this represents an increase of 64 per cent, emphasising the urgent need for effective and comprehensive measures to ensure the safety of women. It is imperative that we have the resources and preventative measures to secure safety for women.

Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund

Richard RIORDAN (Polwarth) (19:19): (1039) My adjournment this evening is to the Treasurer, and the action I seek is for the Treasurer to immediately remove the new Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund from local council collections, take responsibility for the collection of the fund by the State Revenue Office, as they do with land tax and other state charges, be responsible for it and stop putting the blame on local councils. I speak with great concern about the Corangamite, Surf Coast and Colac Otway shires, who will see their rural and farming ratepayers pay up to a 300 per cent increase this year alone, with more increases set to come in this levy. This levy being collected by the state through this tax that is being levied through local government will prevent local municipalities managing their rate base in a fair and equitable way into the future. The tax cut from local communities is going from some \$700 million to nearly \$1.8 billion over a three-year period. It is just a bit over a \$1 billion increase out of mainly rural and regional areas in the collection of this tax.

This tax is completely unfair, with only 9 per cent of the additional revenue – so 9 per cent of the \$1 billion – going back to volunteer services such as the CFA and such as the SES. It does not include any extra funds for other regional volunteer emergency services such as the surf lifesaving clubs, ocean and marine rescue groups and other like community volunteer organisations that work diligently to help support local communities. This volunteer fire service fund is nothing more than a massive tax grab that is being forced on local councils to collect. Local councils are then having to add it to their rates and take the heat for this government on this massive tax increase. It is very unfair. It is putting undue stress particularly in south-west Victoria at the moment, which is enduring one of its hardest and harshest droughts for a very long time. This is a massive hit to the cost of living on farms. It is a massive hit to the cost of living for those renting homes in regional and rural Victoria, who are now paying much, much more in rent because of this increased tax. Treasurer, I look forward to you taking this action, removing this tax from local council rates and taking responsibility for it so that the people in Polwarth do not have to pay it.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will refer your question, member for Polwarth, to the Speaker in regard to anticipating debate. There is a fund there, but I am just going to refer that to the Speaker.

Members interjecting.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: It will be fine if that is the case.

Port Melbourne Secondary College

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (19:23): (1040) I would like to raise a matter for the Minister for Education, and the action I seek is for the minister to visit Port Melbourne Secondary College to see firsthand the outstanding work being done in their STEM program. Port Melbourne Secondary

College is a growing school with a strong focus on science, technology, engineering and mathematics, key fields that are critical for the future of our workforce and economy. This school's innovative STEM initiatives are providing students with hands-on real-world learning experiences, equipping them with the skills needed for emerging industries. A visit from the minister would provide an opportunity to engage with students and educators, understand their successes and explore ways the government can further support the school's vision for excellence in STEM education.

Bridget Vallence: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, just in relation to your referral to the Speaker, I appreciate that very much, but on behalf of the member for Polwarth, my understanding is that the particular tax hike that he is referring to is something that was announced by the government in December 2024 as part of their budget update, so therefore it is something that has already been announced and well ventilated in the community.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will not rule on the point of order as such. It will be referred to the Speaker. It is not the role of the Chair to determine the facts in regard to future bills. I just had the question.

Responses

Natalie SULEYMAN (St Albans – Minister for Veterans, Minister for Small Business and Employment, Minister for Youth) (19:24): The member for Bulleen raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Transport Infrastructure, and the action the member seeks is for the minister to address concerns relating to the car parks around North East Link. The member for Mordialloc raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Health, and the action the member seeks is for the minister to join the Mordialloc women's pain inquiry forum, a very important matter and one that the member spoke so passionately about. The member for Euroa raised a matter for the Minister for Children, and the action the member seeks is for further childcare centres in her electorate and across the state. The member for Narre Warren South raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Planning, and the action the member seeks is for the minister to provide further information on how the Allan Labor government's housing targets will improve housing affordability for local families in the Narre Warren South area. The member for South-West Coast raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Police, and the action the member seeks is for equitable police staffing in regional towns.

The member for Mulgrave raised a matter for the Treasurer, and the action the member seeks is for the Treasurer to provide an update on the financial commitments made by the Albanese Labor government towards funding of infrastructure projects in our great state of Victoria, including the airport rail link and the superhub station at Sunshine. The member for Richmond raised a matter for the Minister for Creative Industries, and the action the member seeks is for a living wage trial to be run for artists. The member for Kororoit raised a matter for the Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, and the action the member seeks is that the minister investigate more opportunities to help women seek help and support effectively when experiencing domestic violence. The member for Polwarth raised a matter for the Treasurer, and the action the member seeks is the removal of local government levies. The member for Albert Park raised a matter for the Minister for Education, and the action the member seeks is for the minister to join the member at Port Melbourne Secondary College. The member for Albert Park described the school's fantastic STEM program and the achievements of the school, which is so important for young students and in particular for the electorate of Albert Park.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The house stands adjourned till tomorrow morning.

House adjourned 7:27 pm.