



Hansard

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

60th Parliament

Tuesday 7 February 2023

Members of the Legislative Council

60th Parliament

President

Shaun Leane

Deputy President

Wendy Lovell

Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council

Jaclyn Symes

Deputy Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council

Lizzie Blandthorn

Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Council

Georgie Crozier

Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Council

Matthew Bach

Member	Region	Party	Member	Region	Party
Bach, Matthew	North-Eastern Metropolitan	Lib	Luu, Trung	Western Metropolitan	Lib
Batchelor, Ryan	Southern Metropolitan	ALP	Mansfield, Sarah	Western Victoria	Greens
Bath, Melina	Eastern Victoria	Nat	McArthur, Bev	Western Victoria	Lib
Berger, John	Southern Metropolitan	ALP	McCracken, Joe	Western Victoria	Lib
Blandthorn, Lizzie	Western Metropolitan	ALP	McGowan, Nicholas	North-Eastern Metropolitan	Lib
Bourman, Jeff	Eastern Victoria	SFFP	McIntosh, Tom	Eastern Victoria	ALP
Broad, Gaëlle	Northern Victoria	Nat	Mulholland, Evan	Northern Metropolitan	Lib
Copsey, Katherine	Southern Metropolitan	Greens	Payne, Rachel	South-Eastern Metropolitan	LCV
Crozier, Georgie	Southern Metropolitan	Lib	Puglielli, Aiv	North-Eastern Metropolitan	Greens
Davis, David	Southern Metropolitan	Lib	Purcell, Georgie	Northern Victoria	AJP
Deeming, Moira ¹	Western Metropolitan	IndLib	Ratnam, Samantha	Northern Metropolitan	Greens
Erdogan, Enver	Northern Metropolitan	ALP	Shing, Harriet	Eastern Victoria	ALP
Ermacora, Jacinta	Western Victoria	ALP	Somyurek, Adem	Northern Metropolitan	DLP
Ettershank, David	Western Metropolitan	LCV	Stitt, Ingrid	Western Metropolitan	ALP
Galea, Michael	South-Eastern Metropolitan	ALP	Symes, Jaclyn	Northern Victoria	ALP
Heath, Renee	Eastern Victoria	Lib	Tarlamis, Lee	South-Eastern Metropolitan	ALP
Hermans, Ann-Marie	South-Eastern Metropolitan	Lib	Terpstra, Sonja	North-Eastern Metropolitan	ALP
Leane, Shaun	North-Eastern Metropolitan	ALP	Tierney, Gayle	Western Victoria	ALP
Limbrick, David ²	South-Eastern Metropolitan	LP	Tyrrell, Rikkie-Lee	Northern Victoria	PHON
Lovell, Wendy	Northern Victoria	Lib	Watt, Sheena	Northern Metropolitan	ALP

¹ Lib until 27 March 2023

² LDP until 26 July 2023

Party abbreviations

AJP – Animal Justice Party; ALP – Australian Labor Party; DLP – Democratic Labour Party;
 Greens – Australian Greens; IndLib – Independent Liberal; LCV – Legalise Cannabis Victoria;
 LDP – Liberal Democratic Party; Lib – Liberal Party of Australia; LP – Libertarian Party;
 Nat – National Party of Australia; PHON – Pauline Hanson’s One Nation; SFFP – Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party

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Tuesday 7 February 2023

The PRESIDENT (Shaun Leane) took the chair at 12:04 pm, read the prayer and made an acknowledgement of country.

Condolences

Hon. John Michael Landy AC CVO MBE

Jaclyn SYMES (Northern Victoria – Attorney-General, Minister for Emergency Services) (12:05):
I move:

That this house expresses its sincere sorrow at the death, on 24 February 2022, of the Honourable John Michael Landy AC CVO MBE and places on record its acknowledgement of the valuable services rendered by him to the people of Victoria as Governor of Victoria from 2001 to 2006.

I would like to take some time just to speak on the condolence motion on behalf of the government. John Landy was known for his many, many talents, including his sporting prowess, but he was also known as a person of integrity and compassion and somebody who Victorians held in high regard. Mr Landy's moment of ultimate sportsmanship down at Olympic Park during the Australian mile championship is represented by a statue. It depicts the famous moment Landy stopped to check on the wellbeing of his rival. The statue serves as a reminder of the pure, unselfish nature of Landy's gesture. Landy went on to win bronze at the 1500-metre event at the 1956 Melbourne Olympics, cementing himself as a true Victorian sporting legend.

But of course Mr Landy did not stop his contribution to public life there; rather, some would say he was just getting started. He served for eight years on the Victorian Land Conservation Council from 1971 to 1978, providing a valuable insight into the fair and equitable use of public land. He had an extensive appreciation of the natural beauty of the Victorian bush landscape. Mr Landy served as a Governor for 5¼ years, appointed by Premier Bracks. He was known for expressing great warmth to everyone he met. That is certainly the feedback that you hear from anybody who had the pleasure of doing so. He was a passionate supporter of all areas of our state and visited every local government area during his tenure. During the final months of his governorship Landy was also the baton runner, presenting the baton to Queen Elizabeth II at the opening ceremony at the MCG for the 2006 Commonwealth Games.

Mr Landy was later appointed by Premier Brumby as the founding chair of the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund advisory panel. The fund was established in 2009 by the Victorian government in response to the Black Saturday fire tragedies. The fund raised well over \$30 million to go to supporting those families, those individuals and of course those communities that were impacted by that devastation. He travelled across those impacted communities, listening to the stories of loss and also of miraculous survival. His efforts in visiting towns large and small were commendable and meant a lot to those people that he came across. I would also like to take the opportunity to acknowledge in the house today that 7 February is the anniversary of those Black Saturday fires.

Mr Landy lived a life of high achievement. We thank him for his tremendous contributions to the state of Victoria, and on behalf of the government I extend my condolences to Mr Landy's wife Lynne and their children and respective families on his passing.

Georgie CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (12:08): I rise to join in the debate on this condolence motion for John Landy AC CVO MBE, and on behalf of the Liberals and Nationals can I also express our sympathies and condolences to the Landy family. As the Leader of the Government has highlighted, John Landy was a man of great character and of great warmth, and as has already been pointed out, he did achieve an enormous amount for this state and for our country. He died after a long period of illness, but prior to his death he was a man, as I said, who served this state. He was the 26th Governor of Victoria from 2001 to 2006. As the leader has pointed out, he achieved so much

during that time and then became so integral in the aftermath of the 2009 Black Saturday bushfires, and we remember it is the anniversary of those dreadful bushfires today.

John Landy will be remembered as a great Victorian who made a significant contribution, and he was an inspirational sportsman as well as achieving those other achievements that I have mentioned. He was an immensely talented athlete. In the 1950s he held world records for distance running and won bronze in the 1500 metres at the 1956 Melbourne Olympic Games. He is revered for his sportsmanship as much as his sporting prowess, following the selfless act of stopping to help fellow runner Ron Clarke in the 1956 mile race at the Australian national championships – that iconic moment that has been immortalised in a sculpture on Olympic Boulevard. The National Centre for History Education have said this about that very moment, which I think captures the man so beautifully:

It was a spontaneous gesture of sportsmanship and it has never been forgotten.

He was a man, as we have said, of many achievements extending far beyond the sporting field, and he received numerous accolades for his distinguished service to sport, science, the environment and the community. After attending his final years at Geelong Grammar and the University of Melbourne he graduated with a degree in agricultural science and spent much of his career at ICI and served as well on the Victorian Land Conservation Council.

John Landy was also the author of a number of natural history books. He was a scientist and a conservationist, an avid butterfly enthusiast. He amassed an unrivalled butterfly collection over his lifetime, which he generously donated to the Australian Museum in 2018.

Over the years John Landy was acknowledged for the work that he had done, and he was awarded a number of honorary degrees, including doctor of laws from the University of Victoria, British Columbia, Canada; doctor of rural science by the University of New England; as well as doctor of laws from the University of Melbourne and doctor of laws from Deakin University. He was made a Member of the Order of the British Empire and a Companion of the Order of Australia and was appointed a Commander of the Royal Victorian Order.

As a young man in 1956 representing his country at the Olympic Games in his home town, where he was given the honour of reading the Olympic oath, he would never have imagined that 50 years later he would be at the MCG again for the opening ceremony of the 2006 Commonwealth Games. On that occasion he was in the final month of his term as Governor of this great state, and as the final runner in the Queen's baton relay he presented the baton to the Queen.

John Landy had many connections to many people across this state, not only in my electorate of Southern Metropolitan Region but right across rural Victoria. He was a man who achieved so much, and he will never be forgotten for all that he achieved. I together with my colleagues extend condolences to his family and friends.

Melina BATH (Eastern Victoria) (12:12): I am pleased to follow on from my colleague the leader of the Liberals in the upper house, Ms Crozier, and add my voice on behalf of the Nationals – there are two of us now in the upper house – to celebrate the life of the Honourable John Landy AC CVO MBE and many, many more. Perhaps I am reiterating the other two speakers, but I think sportsmanship is something that Australians have always held very dear to our hearts and we pride ourselves on being good sports and showing that, and the epitome of that good sportsmanship was going back, stopping, collecting the hand of his friend Ron Clarke back in that competitive race and then going on to pass people and finish that race. It showed the calibre of the man. It also showed potentially his later life and what he would achieve there.

Doing a bachelor of agricultural science at Melbourne University, Mr Landy really took on a passion for the environment and for agriculture, and as Ms Crozier has outlined and the Leader of the Government, he worked very much in that space. But what I also found interesting in researching him was he was chairman of the Australian Wool Research and Development Corporation, and as a

National Party member that is something very dear to my heart, the R and D into how agriculture can be developed and has been developed over the decades.

In his inaugural speech in 2001 he focused on volunteers, and I would like to read to the house his words, because they show where his mind has been all throughout his career:

VOLUNTEERS are to the community what lifesavers are to the Australian beaches. They are a vital ingredient in so many facets of our life whether it be charity, caring, schools or sport.

...

Volunteers serve without question, they share without reservation, they listen with compassion and they enrich their community beyond measure.

On this day, the anniversary of Black Saturday, we remember those people in our region who were so substantially impacted as victims and communities, and it was so wonderful that he took on that role provided to him by the government of the time.

Can I pay my condolences to his wife and children and extended family. In an era where we have fast-moving media and a lot of, sometimes, hyperbole, it is wonderful to celebrate the life of a modest man, a respected man, a man of dignity, a competitor without doubt, but a man of great respect. Vale, John Landy.

The PRESIDENT: I ask members to signify their assent by rising in their places for 1 minute's silence.

Motion agreed to in silence, members showing unanimous agreement by standing in their places.

The PRESIDENT: The proceedings will now be suspended as a further mark of respect. I will resume the chair in 1 hour.

Sitting suspended 12:17 pm until 1:20 pm.

Members

Ministry

Jaclyn SYMES (Northern Victoria – Attorney-General, Minister for Emergency Services) (13:20): Apologies, I do not believe this has been circulated prior to today's sitting. There have been some minor tweaks in relation to the representing portfolios of ministers in the upper house for the Assembly, so with your indulgence, if people are unsure who the representing minister is – which is actually not necessarily that different to most sitting weeks anyway – we will endeavour to work out who the appropriate representative minister is for the variety of portfolios. But I can confirm there are no changes to our substantive ministerial responsibilities.

Questions without notice and ministers statements

Child protection

Matthew BACH (North-Eastern Metropolitan) (13:21): (9) My question today is for the minister for child protection. Minister, in 2014 fewer than one in 16 Indigenous children were in child protection. The new Andrews Labor government committed to reducing that proportion. However, new data from the *Report on Government Services* shows it has increased by 63 per cent. Minister, what has gone wrong?

Lizzie BLANDTHORN (Western Metropolitan – Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers, Minister for Child Protection and Family Services) (13:22): Thank you, Dr Bach, for your question. Given the issues that we are talking about, could I begin by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which we are meeting and pay respects to them and their elders past and present. I also acknowledge, I think, given the topic relating to the question that Dr Bach has asked, the challenging circumstances around this and in particular the evidence that was very bravely given to Yoorrook just

before Christmas in relation to these issues. I know at that time the Premier made some very clear statements about Indigenous children in the child protection system and Indigenous children in care and, in particular, vulnerable Indigenous families. It is clear that we need to do more, and the Premier has made it very clear that we need to do more in relation to Aboriginal children who find themselves at many points in the system, both the statutory and the non-statutory system – the family services system and the child protection system. There are too many children in care, and I note Dr Bach's comments in relation to these issues in *Sky News* opinion pieces over Christmas on wanting to work with us on that. I welcome that, and I look forward to working with you and this Parliament as a whole to reduce the over-representation of Indigenous children in care.

Bail laws

Samantha RATNAM (Northern Metropolitan) (13:23): (10) My question today is for the Attorney-General. This Parliament resumes today fresh in the wake of the coroner's findings into the death of Veronica Nelson, a death that we now know without a doubt was utterly preventable and caused by, in the words of the coroner, the 'complete and unmitigated disaster' of Victoria's bail laws. Your government insists that changes to bail laws are not ready and cannot be rushed, but by 2019 you were aware that the government's laws had led to the highest levels of Aboriginal incarceration and imprisonment of women in Victoria's recorded history. The government was also aware the majority of these people were unsentenced and charged with relatively minor offences, yet still you sat back and did nothing for almost the entire last term of government. Attorney, given the speed with which the government introduced changes to bail in 2017, why is the government not in a position today to act on bail law reform to finally end the years of damage it is causing First Nations women on remand?

Jaclyn SYMES (Northern Victoria – Attorney-General, Minister for Emergency Services) (13:24): I thank Dr Ratnam for her question and at the outset acknowledge the devastating incidents that led to the death of Veronica Nelson. We have a coroner's report which has a number of findings that cross a range of issues in the justice system, and we will take the time to carefully consider those recommendations.

It is not the coroner's findings that have motivated the government to act on bail reform; this is a piece of work that I have been embarking on for some time now. And although it is easy to oversimplify legislative reform, particularly in the justice space, as regularly happens, it is incumbent upon me – in fact it is a responsibility and an obligation of mine – to get this right, and that includes talking to a range of stakeholders, including people in the chamber and in the Parliament. The Shadow Attorney-General is interested in working with the government on these reforms, and I certainly welcome that exchange. There are a range of stakeholders that we want to talk to in relation to that.

But to suggest that we have done nothing in relation to these issues again is a fairly simplistic way to put these things. What you want to do is make sure that people are not in a situation where they are even talking about bail. We want to divert people from the justice system. We want to have programs in place where people have got other options that deal with the underlying causes of crime, whether that is assisting in homelessness, and we have our Big Build project assisting people to gain employment, we have our free TAFE programs and we have a range of specific programs, as you have identified, to target Aboriginal women, because we know that this is a cohort that is appearing too regularly in our justice system.

Bail laws are of course something that I am motivated to reform because of the over-representation, but there are other programs that we have put in place. We have got the Koorie women's diversion project, which is intensive and holistic case management and practical support to ensure that Aboriginal women have access to the services and advice they need in this case. We have a dedicated women's bail project, which is a cultural and gender-specific support program for Aboriginal women involved in the corrections system to obtain bail and avoid remand. So there are things that we have been doing.

I am on the record. I have the support of the Premier. He has made very strong commitments around the fact that we are looking at bail reform. It is well developed, but there is further consultation to do to make sure that we get it right, and I will have more to say in the very near future.

Samantha RATNAM (Northern Metropolitan) (13:27): Thank you, Attorney, for your response. We look forward to seeing progress as quickly as possible and as urgently as the situation warrants. Attorney, compounding the damage of holding Aboriginal women on remand is the fact that a majority of these women have children. As a recent parliamentary committee confirmed, parental incarceration is both disproportionate and particularly harmful for First Nations children and a significant contributor to the next generation's ongoing disproportionate contact with the child protection and criminal justice systems. Attorney, will you ensure that any amendments to bail laws, which you have indicated will be reviewed and hopefully reformed, will include specific provisions to require consideration of parental duties along with the long-term intergenerational harm of First Nations over-incarceration when determining bail?

Jaelyn SYMES (Northern Victoria – Attorney-General, Minister for Emergency Services) (13:28): Dr Ratnam, I think that that supplementary question is a good example of how complex this legislation reform can be. It is not a matter of one section of the Bail Act being reformed. It is about the considerations that you want to bring in, it is about the level of reverse onus and it is about where the threshold sits in relation to summary offences. This is really complex legislation, and I look forward to having the conversation in the chamber. But you have identified a pretty specific part of the Bail Act that of course I am looking at. I am looking at a range of considerations that can be brought in, but that is the exact reason that we cannot rush this.

Ministers statements: floods

Harriet SHING (Eastern Victoria – Minister for Water, Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Commonwealth Games Legacy, Minister for Equality) (13:29): Today, as Minister for Water and indeed Minister for Regional Development, I want to talk about the flood events which have swept through the entire state, in rural and regional areas as well as metropolitan Melbourne – flood events of significant magnitude, being one-in-50-year floods, one-in-100-year floods. Over recent months I have visited communities across Benalla and the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority. I have met with councils. I have been to Bendigo, to Echuca, to Rochester, to the Elmore Events Centre and to Maribyrnong to meet with affected residents, to meet with Melbourne Water and to see firsthand the impact of the flooding events.

There is a lot of work to go on in the rescue, relief and recovery efforts. I want to commend those who often put their lives on the line to make sure that others were safe in some extraordinarily swift water circumstances that took place and unfolded across the state. The water sector itself responded to more than 220 incidents during these floods, which ranged from inundation of water assets, including water treatment facilities and sewerage pump stations, right through to dam safety events, fish deaths, blackwater events, sewer spills and water service disruptions. These are matters which have occupied staff of water corporations, catchment management authorities and Regional Development Victoria, and communities. I want to commend everybody who has come together in the spirit of cooperation and of interoperability in the course of the immediate response as well as the relief and recovery efforts.

I also want to put on the record the collaborative efforts that have been undertaken by local, state and federal levels of government. There has been more than \$1.8 billion of combined funding and resourcing to assist communities, businesses, farmers and not-for-profits to rebuild, and that work will continue now and into the future as an absolute priority.

Foster carers

Matthew BACH (North-Eastern Metropolitan) (13:31): (11) My question is for the minister for child protection. Minister, does the KPMG report that one of your predecessors commissioned into the adequacy of the foster carer allowance recommend increasing it?

Lizzie BLANDTHORN (Western Metropolitan – Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers, Minister for Child Protection and Family Services) (13:31): Thank you, Dr Bach, for your question. Firstly can I say that our carers do an amazing job and that there is probably never enough, in terms of the care of our children, for those delivering this important service and assisting our foster carers in this way. Foster care is an important part of the child protection system. It is absolutely something that successive governments, as well as my predecessors, have looked at. I very much look forward to continuing to work with carers and their respective organisations and have already met with some of those organisations with a view to working with them to look at what we can do to continue the support that we provide for our carers.

Matthew BACH (North-Eastern Metropolitan) (13:32): Minister, will you release the report?

Lizzie BLANDTHORN (Western Metropolitan – Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers, Minister for Child Protection and Family Services) (13:32): Thank you, Dr Bach, for your question. As I said, I was very pleased to read over Christmas that you were interested in working –

Members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The minister has only just started her response.

Lizzie BLANDTHORN: Thank you, President. As I indicated, I was very pleased to read over Christmas that you are committed to working with the government and that you are committed to working in particular, you said, with me in relation to how we can make improvements to the child protection system over the forward journey. I look forward to doing that with you, as I look forward to doing that with the carers in our system that provide a vital role in the lives of so many vulnerable children. They do absolutely an amazing job. I think we all take our hats off to them and the work that they do, and I very much look forward to working with them and with you on how we can ensure that they get the services and supports that they need.

Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

David LIMBRICK (South-Eastern Metropolitan) (13:33): (12) My question is for the Attorney-General. Last year in this house we passed a bill to implement an international agreement on the protocol against torture in detention known as OPCAT. However, it was reported a few weeks ago that Victoria has missed the deadline to set up a body to manage this monitoring regime. What is the reason for this deadline being missed on such an important issue?

Jaelyn SYMES (Northern Victoria – Attorney-General, Minister for Emergency Services) (13:33): I thank Dr Limbrick for his question. There are a couple of issues that you have raised. There is the legislation that we passed to facilitate the UN subcommittee visit to our state in relation to the inspection of places of detention, and it was great that this Parliament had the foresight to pass that legislation to enable that visit to occur, unlike some other states.

But when it comes to the broader OPCAT commitment that has been made by the federal government I think it is useful to just give a brief overview of the current oversight that is in place in Victoria. We have an oversight regime that covers places of detention involving IBAC, the Ombudsman, human rights agencies, specialist commissioners and voluntary visitor schemes which, similar to OPCAT principles, have a view, have a purpose, to prevent acts of torture and other cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment against people deprived of their liberty. Victoria runs three voluntary independent visitor programs that conduct regular monitoring visits to prisons, youth justice centres and accommodation facilities for people with disabilities and mental impairments, and I am sure that the Minister for Corrections is more across the intricacies and operation of those programs than me. Victoria's detention oversight regime in that sense meets the objectives of OPCAT.

But that is not to say that we do not further support the principles of OPCAT that the federal government has signed up to at the international level, because that was a 2017 ratification and it does

not impose additional and separate obligations on states and territories. Victoria has been consistent in its position from this time of ratification – alongside other states, particularly New South Wales – that a sufficient and ongoing funding commitment from the Commonwealth is required to essentially implement and deliver on those obligations which go over and beyond the robust regime that we already have in place.

In fact I think it was in October 2021 that the New South Wales Attorney-General Mark Speakman and I jointly wrote to the Commonwealth explaining our position: that we would be unable to take steps to implement some aspects of OPCAT that perhaps were not picked up by what we already have without accompanying sufficient and ongoing funding from the Commonwealth. It was a matter that was on the agenda at SCAG, which is the Standing Council of Attorneys-General, the forum for federal, state, territory and New Zealand ministers in the Attorney-General space, so I am continuing these conversations with the new Attorney-General Mark Dreyfus. I will update the house if we can get any commitment out of them to help fund the obligations that they have signed up to, but with full confidence that we have a very robust system that is already in existence.

David LIMBRICK (South-Eastern Metropolitan) (13:37): I thank the Attorney-General for her answer. Can I just clarify, then, with the Attorney: that sounds like Victoria will remain not fully compliant with OPCAT until such time as the federal government provides funding. Is that the current situation?

Jaelyn SYMES (Northern Victoria – Attorney-General, Minister for Emergency Services) (13:37): It is a national obligation, so it is not that Victoria is non-compliant. It is not Victoria's obligation to meet. It is the federal government's obligation that they have signed up to, and we have asked for assistance to ensure that we can implement the full requirements that they would like us to, not only to establish but to provide funding to ensure that we can have an ongoing system that meets OPCAT obligations.

The PRESIDENT: Before I call the next ministers statement, I acknowledge that former member of the Assembly and former government minister John Pandazopoulos is in the gallery.

Ministers statements: early childhood education

Ingrid STITT (Western Metropolitan – Minister for Early Childhood and Pre-Prep, Minister for Environment) (13:38): I am very proud to update the chamber today on the next steps of our nation-leading Best Start, Best Life reforms. From 2025 four-year-old kindergarten children will transition to pre-prep over the next decade, and that will become a universal 30-hour-a-week program of teacher-led, play-based learning available to every four-year-old in the state. Regional children will be the first to benefit from 30 hours of free pre-prep each week, and pre-prep will start in 2025 in Ararat Rural City Council and Gannawarra, Hindmarsh, Murrindindi, Northern Grampians and Yarriambiack shires before rolling out progressively across the state.

We know how important early education is to the development of children, and that is why Aboriginal children and vulnerable children will be able to access 30 hours of pre-prep from 2026 no matter where they live. Children whose families hold Commonwealth concession cards will be eligible for pre-prep from 2028. Children in metro Melbourne will be able to access up to 20 hours of pre-prep from 2030. And from 2032 every child in Victoria will be eligible for 30 hours of pre-prep each week, and of course that will be free.

The rollout is based on the way we have rolled out three-year-old kinder and those learnings, and it will allow us to have the time to grow the necessary workforce and deliver the infrastructure that we need right across the state to accommodate this expanded program. I am really proud that we are getting on with the next stage of Best Start, Best Life. These reforms are absolutely critical. The investment in our littlest learners and their families will not only save families money; it will help more women back into the workforce and of course it will give every Victorian child the very best start in life.

Foster carers

Matthew BACH (North-Eastern Metropolitan) (13:40): (13) My question is to the minister for child protection. Minister, will you increase the allowance for foster carers in 2023?

Lizzie BLANDTHORN (Western Metropolitan – Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers, Minister for Child Protection and Family Services) (13:40): Thank you, Dr Bach, for your question. It is good to be able to continue to discuss these issues of foster care with you. I am obviously not here to make any announcements today, but I think we can all agree that the foster carers in our community very much take on a role that we all support them doing for the most vulnerable children in our community. It is absolutely true to say that foster carers need our support, and we continue to provide them with that support. We continue to provide them with allowances, allowances which can be scaled up in relation to the complex needs of the children. Foster carers are paid an allowance. We all agree that foster carers do an amazing job, and there is, I am sure, always more that we can do to support them. We look forward to continuing to work with you, as you indicated you were keen to do over Christmas, to achieve those outcomes.

Matthew BACH (North-Eastern Metropolitan) (13:41): I pick up the minister's final comments. When she is in a position to make a decision about upping the carer allowance, she will have my full support. I appreciate what the minister said: that she is not here to make an announcement on this matter today. I will ask the minister: can you provide a date, even a broad time line, by which you will be in a position to make a decision about the carer allowance?

Lizzie BLANDTHORN (Western Metropolitan – Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers, Minister for Child Protection and Family Services) (13:41): Dr Bach, thank you again for your question. I do look forward to continuing to work with you, and I am pleased that you continue to acknowledge that foster carers in our community provide an invaluable service for the most vulnerable children in our community. These people are truly saints in the modern-day sense of the term. They are people who go above and beyond providing care and services for the most vulnerable children, giving them some stability in their lives when often there has been very little until that point. We continue to want to work with you as a government. As a Parliament I am sure we all want to work together to ensure that we continue to provide both for the most vulnerable in our community and also for those who support and look after the most vulnerable in the community. Decisions in relation to funding are obviously government decisions, and they will be debated by government in the usual way, but I am glad that we have your support to continue to work to improve the lives of the most vulnerable.

Avian influenza

Melina BATH (Eastern Victoria) (13:42): (14) My question is to the Minister for Agriculture. The 2020 avian influenza cost the lives of hundreds of thousands of productive birds and countless wild birds in Victoria. With the imminent risk of another avian flu outbreak, how many AgVic staff have been allocated to ensure avian flu does not enter Victoria?

Jaclyn Symes interjected.

Gayle TIERNEY (Western Victoria – Minister for Training and Skills, Minister for Higher Education, Minister for Agriculture) (13:43): I thank the member for her question and the enthusiasm of a former Minister for Agriculture. Indeed the most recent incident was when Ms Symes was the Minister for Agriculture.

It is absolutely true that there is talk amongst the jurisdictions about how Victoria handled the situation here, and it did get the gold star. We have got the capability and capacity to deal with a whole range of issues within agriculture, whether it be avian flu or of course all the other elements in terms of biosecurity. We were the first jurisdiction that took the exotic diseases management issue on board. We were one of the first to actually make a significant budgetary allocation out of cycle in respect to

biosecurity issues – \$33 million last year alone just in terms of preparation and being able to work with our farmers, as we do with everything. They understand that the only way we can deal with avian flu, foot and mouth or lumpy skin, you name it, is to work together, because everyone has a responsibility and has a role to play.

Indeed our agriculture department is a department that is revered not just in terms of our stakeholders but in terms of other jurisdictions because it is seen to be well prepared. It does have the capability. Whether it is avian flu or any other distraction, we do not have specified job roles for every single threat that is confronting this country and this state. That is why we have got a whole-of-department strategy employed when it comes to things like biosecurity. If you silo people too much, it means nothing much gets done in areas where specific threats are being made. So I can assure Ms Bath that we have got the capability and we have got the history and the capacity to deal with so many threats, and I take this opportunity to thank all those in AgVic, who do an amazing job day in, day out.

Melina BATH (Eastern Victoria) (13:46): The minister – and I thank her for her response – talks about working with farmers, so my supplementary is: what steps have you taken to engage with the productive bird sector – the farmers – so that they are prepared for an avian influenza incursion?

Gayle TIERNEY (Western Victoria – Minister for Training and Skills, Minister for Higher Education, Minister for Agriculture) (13:46): There are a number of measures that AgVic undertakes on a regular basis, but can I tell you, in terms of the perspective of farmers and producers, AgVic and the ministerial office, that our highest priorities are more around things like biosecurity. Has the memo not been received? There is a 56 per cent chance that we will actually get foot-and-mouth disease or lumpy skin. These are the things that are really occupying our minds. The other things that are occupying our minds are how we can support farmers who have gone through floods and how to support farmers and producers that have gone through hailstorms and whose crops have been affected, particularly in the Goulburn Valley. These are the priorities of this government. Avian flu obviously is always there as a threat, but in terms of the real activities and the real priorities of my portfolio at the moment, it is foot-and-mouth, lumpy skin – you name it – in terms of EADs and of course all the other threats that are imminent.

Ministers statements: TAFE funding

Gayle TIERNEY (Western Victoria – Minister for Training and Skills, Minister for Higher Education, Minister for Agriculture) (13:48): I will use the opportunity to be the Minister for Training and Skills on this occasion. I am pleased to update the chamber on how the Andrews Labor government is providing free TAFE to more Victorians. Last week I was pleased to visit Box Hill Institute with federal Minister for Skills and Training Brendan O'Connor to announce the expansion of free TAFE. The Andrews Labor government has removed the upskilling rule so people with a previous higher qualification can change careers and complete a free TAFE course. Essentially there are 2 million Victorians that have got a diploma or a higher education certificate that will now be eligible. We have also removed the once-in-a-lifetime limit on free TAFE courses within specific training pathways, including nursing, early childhood, community services, building and construction.

At Box Hill TAFE we met a group of trade students and a group of hospitality students studying courses that will set them up in fantastic jobs with financial security and also of course help Victoria's economy grow. I was really pleased to meet Thomas. He had originally studied arts and then HR at university but was not finding that stimulating enough. He said that TAFE actually had not been raised as a very good option when he was at school, but he did notice the free TAFE ads and thought being an electrician would keep him very busy and mentally alert. He is currently completing the 10-week preapprenticeship course, which he said is fascinating, and is delighted that he will not be adding to a large HECS debt. Thomas cannot wait to start his apprenticeship and cert III once he finishes his preapprenticeship. The Andrews Labor government has continued to show its commitment to TAFE, and now more than ever Victorians will have even more access to free TAFE courses in this state.

Duck hunting

Jeff BOURMAN (Eastern Victoria) (13:50): (15) My question will be no surprise to anyone that has been here before. My question is to the minister representing the Minister for Outdoor Recreation, who from memory is Minister Stitt. Duck hunting is legislated and duck hunting is sustainable according to the government's own scientists, yet here we have duck hunting again under attack, and from what I can tell it is borderline whether we will get a season at all this year, despite the government's very own scientists telling us that a season is sustainable. One of the scientists even went on the ABC and very publicly supported the season. Hunter misbehaviour was rolled out by the Premier as why we should not be surprised to have duck hunting banned, yet the Game Management Authority's own data suggests that hunters are probably one of the best behaved cohorts of society in general. Assuming all the fines and breaches were hunters, which is highly unlikely, that is 0.12 per cent – statistically irrelevant and hardly justification for cancelling duck hunting. So my question is: why did the Premier mention this when it was clearly incorrect?

Ingrid Stitt: On a point of order, President, I think it is Minister Shing.

The PRESIDENT: Minister Shing.

Harriet SHING (Eastern Victoria – Minister for Water, Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Commonwealth Games Legacy, Minister for Equality) (13:51): Just on that, I am wondering, President, whether you might seek that the member rephrase the question on the basis that he was asking why it is that the Premier did certain things. That might be perhaps something that can be rephrased by Mr Bourman.

The PRESIDENT: Minister, I am happy for it to stand.

Harriet SHING: Thank you, President. Thank you, Mr Bourman. You and I, I know, have had numerous conversations about this very topic over the eight years that we have been in this place. I am very happy to forward that question on to the minister for a response to be provided to you in accordance with the standing orders.

Jeff BOURMAN (Eastern Victoria) (13:52): I thank the minister for her forwarding it on. My supplementary question is: the data is in, the science is in – what is the a hold-up for releasing the seasonal changes for the 2023 season?

Harriet SHING (Eastern Victoria – Minister for Water, Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Commonwealth Games Legacy, Minister for Equality) (13:52): Again, in accordance with the standing orders, I will seek that the minister provides a response to you.

Victorian Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages

Georgie CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (13:52): (16) My question is to the Attorney-General. Attorney, the office of the registry of births, deaths and marriages at 595 Collins Street, Melbourne, has been closed to the general public since 2020, causing immense frustration and delay to many Victorians. Call centre access is limited and characterised by long delays of up to 4 hours. Attorney, why have the registry's doors remained closed to the public, and when will they reopen?

Jaclyn SYMES (Northern Victoria – Attorney-General, Minister for Emergency Services) (13:53): I do not want to be too cute about this, but I am not the responsible minister for births, deaths and marriages, because that has moved across to the Minister for Government Services. However, in a show of good faith, I know a fair bit about it because I did have it for the previous two years. When it comes to the office of births, deaths and marriages, it is not the only place that you can access certificates; you can go to regional offices and department of justice service centres. There are a range of activities I think where requiring people to come into the CBD to obtain their documents is probably not a fit-for-purpose type of model in 2023. Notwithstanding that, there is a call-back feature for people

to contact births, deaths and marriages so that they can get the assistance they need if they cannot make the time to make the phone call during the office hours that it is open.

What did happen – and I have explained this answer when we have had issues with births, deaths and marriages in the past two years in relation to the impacts of COVID – was obviously that the office was closed during some of the time of restrictions and there was a fair turnover in the workforce. I was getting questions about ‘Why haven’t you just opened when you can?’ It was because we had to recruit new people, because we could not just bring people back that had moved on to other roles. A lot of them had moved into roles that were responding to the COVID response, particularly helping people on those helplines and the like.

I do know that it is a source of frustration for electorate offices, because I know that you get feedback about BDM hold-ups and the like. I can assure you that there is a concerted effort across government to ensure that there are a range of ways for people to access the documents that they need. And I know that the Minister for Government Services, who is now responsible for this, is certainly working towards this, because we have provided him with the information about some of the concerns that we have about making sure we are on the pathway to continual improvement.

Georgie CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (13:55): I ask the minister to refer this to the appropriate minister now that it is out of her hands. But, Attorney, the failure of births, deaths and marriages to fully reopen is causing, as you have acknowledged, great distress to many Victorians: new parents who cannot get their babies’ birth certificates in a timely way to apply for passports or enrol in schools; people going through divorce who cannot obtain marriage certificates to finalise proceedings; bereaved relatives who are trying to manage estate issues who cannot obtain death certificates in a reasonable time. You are saying they should be able to get a call-back, but they are waiting on the phone for hours. These people deserve better. Attorney, citing the pandemic, as you just did, is no longer acceptable to excuse this failure to provide important services to Victorians. I ask the minister: will the minister commit to a full reopening of the registry of births, deaths and marriages by no later than April this year?

Jaelyn SYMES (Northern Victoria – Attorney-General, Minister for Emergency Services) (13:56): Ms Crozier, that is a series of misinformation that you have just presented to the chamber. Certainly there are individuals that have had hold-ups, but if you get on the births, deaths and marriages website, it tells you the average processing days. The people that are having problems are generally the people that have complicated issues where they have had a change of name that was not registered properly or whatever. ‘Normal’ is not the right word, but when there is not another factor and it is just your standard certificate, they are being processed at record speed in comparison with other states. Again I am no longer the minister responsible, but I am pretty sure when you get onto the website it tells you how long you should anticipate to get a response, and that is being met in the vast majority of cases. In terms of your timing in specific relation to that office, I will pass that on to the relevant minister, because I am the representing minister in this chamber for Minister Pearson.

Ministers statements: youth justice system

Enver ERDOGAN (Northern Metropolitan – Minister for Corrections, Minister for Youth Justice, Minister for Victim Support) (13:57): I rise to update the chamber on the recent release of the Productivity Commission’s 2023 *Report on Government Services* for youth justice. The *Report on Government Services* provides information on equity, effectiveness and efficiency of government services across Australia, and it shows that when it comes to youth justice Victoria is leading the way and our investments are paying dividends.

The report confirms that Victoria had the lowest rate in the country of young people under youth justice supervision in 2021–22. The average number of young people aged 10 to 17 in custody is down by more than 30 per cent over the past six years. The rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in custody has more than halved in the past six years from 20.5 per 10,000 in 2016–17 to just

9.5 per 10,000 young people in 2020–21. Although this is still very high, it is well below the national average.

Victoria also has one of the lowest rates of reoffending. Our focus on diverting children and young people away from the criminal justice system is already getting results, with fewer young people offending in Victoria and fewer young people entering the system, because this government knows that helping young people in trouble to turn their lives around does not just help them but makes Victoria a safer and fairer place to live.

The Productivity Commission's *Report on Government Services* as it relates to the corrections system also shows that Victoria's prison population decreased by 5.2 per cent in the last financial year compared to an average decrease of 2.2 per cent across the nation. Victoria has the second lowest rate of Indigenous incarceration after a substantial 7.8 per cent decrease in the last financial year. The reoffending rates also fell, both for return to prison and for community corrections orders.

The report also highlights Victoria's strong investments in rehabilitation programs and services for prisoners, which are reflected in Victoria's lower than average recidivism rate. Our investments in rehabilitation and transitional support programs during the custodial sentence and post the release date are working to break the cycle of offending and making Victoria safer for all Victorians.

Written responses

The PRESIDENT (13:59): Working backward as far as written responses go, can I thank Minister Symes, who offered to get a written response from the Minister for Government Services to Ms Crozier's supplementary question. Mr Bourman will get a written response via Minister Shing from the Minister for Outdoor Recreation on both his question and supplementary. And can I ask Minister Blandthorn on Mr Bach's second question regarding a KPMG report if she could get him written responses on his substantive and supplementary questions in line with the standing orders.

Constituency questions

North-Eastern Metropolitan Region

Matthew BACH (North-Eastern Metropolitan) (14:00): (8) My constituency question today is for the Minister for Education in the other place, and I ask her: will you instruct your department to work with the City of Whitehorse and the school community at Box Hill Senior Secondary College in an effort to get this school some funding for some indoor sports courts? I want to stress the importance of this funding, because the growing Box Hill Senior Secondary College in my electorate intends to manage and operate a new and expanded facility with local clubs, and their plan is so exciting. It consists of the development of an additional three-court stadium on the school site, which will enable the school to run excellent sport and specialist education programs and cater for expanded growth at the school through increased enrolment opportunities in basketball and sports programs. In meeting with school leaders and others in the local community it has been stressed to me that if the government can come on board and provide what would be just some modest funding in Box Hill, in particular we would be able to see far more women's sports teams catered for, which would be so exciting. This would be a collaboration with the Koonung Comets Basketball Club and also the Camberwell Dragons basketball club. I have put my question to the minister. I would urge her for a favourable response.

Northern Victoria Region

Wendy LOVELL (Northern Victoria) (14:02): (9) My question is for the Minister for Agriculture. I know the minister is aware of the two major hailstorms that occurred across the Goulburn and Murray valleys that have severely impacted our local horticultural and agricultural industry. The hailstorm on 22 December destroyed approximately a thousand hectares of stone fruit, tomato and other crops in an area stretching from Tatura to Bunbartha only days before harvest. Fruit Growers Victoria estimate that the damage will see growers lose approximately \$50 million from the farm gate, and many have lost more than 80 per cent of their crops. To assist affected growers, Fruit Growers Victoria has

recommended that the state and federal governments increase the threshold of the primary producer concessional loan to \$1 million. Will the minister work with the federal government to increase the primary producer concessional loan threshold from \$250,000 to \$1 million to help growers impacted by the recent hailstorms in the Goulburn and Murray valleys?

Eastern Victoria Region

Melina BATH (Eastern Victoria) (14:03): (10) My constituency question is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. The current Latrobe River bridge, which connects the two towns of Tyers and Traralgon, has been closed since November, and the community is none the wiser as to when the new bridge, which was promised in 2015 by the Premier at the time, who came down to the area, will be complete. So there is no access with the old bridge, and certainly the new one is not complete. Apparently Regional Roads Victoria has assessed the old bridge and it has major structural issues. The residents are being forced to travel considerable distances for school, work and medical appointments, and first responders are having to move and go via alternate areas. The minister needs to come clean and tell the community what is going on. So, Minister, will you explain how long the residents will be without access, provide a time line for completion of the new construction and share this with the local community very clearly?

Eastern Victoria Region

Renee HEATH (Eastern Victoria) (14:04): (11) My question is for the Minister for Employment in the other house. Recently the Maryvale paper mill suspended its white paper production indefinitely due to lack of timber supply and the court's decision to further restrict VicForests operations. This government has also decided to bring forward the deadline to end the native timber industry by 2030 without a thought for over 1000 jobs that rely on this industry in Gippsland, a region that has already been hard hit by the government's job-culling policies. Some employees have worked at this mill for over 20 years. Can the minister please provide any advice to the employees who will lose their jobs and tell us what plans the government has to transition and support these workers and their communities into new work?

Southern Metropolitan Region

David DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) (14:05): (12) My question is for the minister representing the Minister for Planning and is for the Minister for Planning, and it relates to the heritage area around Wattle Road in Hawthorn in the City of Boroondara. Ms Crozier well understands the representations of Christina Branagan and Nerida Muirden and others, indeed as does the Leader of the Opposition John Pesutto. They both understand that this is an important issue. Number 76 in particular is subject to VCAT approval, but what I seek, given the difficulties faced by the City of Boroondara in providing adequate heritage protection to these properties, is that the Minister for Planning commit to meet with the Boroondara heritage group to see and understand the need for heritage protection in and around that area of the City of Boroondara and in doing so to be in contact with the council, who are in general supportive, but the protections that are needed need the intervention of the Minister for Planning.

Western Victoria Region

Bev McARTHUR (Western Victoria) (14:06): (13) My constituency question is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. On 17 January three cars collided in Meredith at the corner of the Midland Highway and McLeod Street. A woman was killed in the accident. On that day the Ballarat *Courier* gave the story the following headline: 'Crash at notorious corner closes Midland Highway'. Last year the Andrews government gave much hype to the roadworks it was doing on the Midland Highway, including installing 21 kilometres of wire rope barriers between Clarendon and Buninyong at a cost of \$23 million. Yet just weeks after that work was finally completed, a life was lost further down the highway in an area publicly referred to as 'notorious'. Minister, will you listen to locals, who know how bad Victoria's country roads are and invest in making this notorious section of road at Meredith safer?

*Members***Acting presidents**

The PRESIDENT (14:07): I lay on the table a warrant nominating acting presidents, and I ask that the Clerk read the warrant.

The Clerk:

Pursuant to the provisions of Standing Order 2.12 of the Legislative Council, I hereby nominate –

Mrs Beverley McArthur

Ms Sonja Terpstra

to be an Acting President whenever requested to do so by the President or Deputy President.

Given under my hand on 7 February 2023.

SHAUN LEANE

President of the Legislative Council

*Bills***Bail Amendment (Reducing Pre-trial Imprisonment of Women, Aboriginal and Vulnerable Persons) Bill 2023***Introduction and first reading*

Samantha RATNAM (Northern Metropolitan) (14:08): I introduce a bill for an act to amend the Bail Act 1977 to simplify the process for making bail decisions, to make related amendments to that act and for other purposes, and I move:

That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.**Read first time.**

Samantha RATNAM: I move:

That the second reading be made an order of the day for the next day of meeting.

Motion agreed to.*Papers***Magistrates Court of Victoria***Report 2021–22*

Jaclyn SYMES (Northern Victoria – Attorney-General, Minister for Emergency Services) (14:08): I present, by direction of the Governor, the Magistrates Court of Victoria report 2021–22, and I move:

That the report be tabled.

Motion agreed to.**Supreme Court of Victoria***Report 2021–22*

Jaclyn SYMES (Northern Victoria – Attorney-General, Minister for Emergency Services) (14:09): I present, by direction of the Governor, the Supreme Court of Victoria report 2021–22, and I move:

That the report be tabled.

Motion agreed to.

Judicial Commission of Victoria*Report 2021–22*

Jaelyn SYMES (Northern Victoria – Attorney-General, Minister for Emergency Services) (14:09):
I move, by leave:

That the Judicial Commission of Victoria report 2021–22 be tabled.

Motion agreed to.**Papers****Tabled by Clerk:**

Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission – Chair of the Board of the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission – Report, 2020–21.

Benalla Health – Report, 2021–22.

Casterton Memorial Hospital – Report, 2021–22.

Caulfield Racecourse Reserve Trust – Minister’s report of receipt of the 2021–22 report.

Central Highlands Rural Health – Report, 2021–22.

Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978 –

Order of 11 January 2023 giving approval to the granting of a lease at Yarra Bend Park.

Order of 11 January 2023 giving approval to the granting of a lease and licence at Mount Doboobetic Bushland Reserve.

Order of 23 January 2023 giving approval to the granting of a licence at Point Cook Coastal Park.

Dhelkaya Health – Report, 2021–22.

Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981 – Documents under section 12H in relation to –

Minister’s Notice of preparation of amendment to the Poisons Code.

Poisons Code.

Therapeutic Goods (Poisons Standard – February 2023) Instrument 2022, that the Poisons Code incorporates by reference.

Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 –

Education and Care Services National Amendment Regulations 2022, under section 303 of the Act.

National Education and Care Services Freedom of Information Commissioner, Privacy Commissioner and Ombudsman – Report, 2021–22.

Financial Management Act 1994 –

Minister for Industry and Innovation’s report of failure to submit the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions Report, 2021–22, together with an explanation for the delay, under section 46(3)(a) of the Act.

Victorian Budget 2022–23 Quarterly Financial Report No. 1 (*released on 23 December 2022 – a non-sitting day*) (*Ordered to be published*).

Gippsland Southern Health Service – Report, 2021–22.

Grampians Health – Report, 2021–22.

Kilmore District Health – Report, 2021–22.

Kyabram District Health Service – Report, 2021–22.

Land Tax Act 2005 – Treasurer’s Report for 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022 of Land Tax Absentee Owner Surcharge Exemptions, under sections 3B and 3BA of the Act.

Omeo District Health – Report, 2021–22.

Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre – Report, 2021–22.

Planning and Environment Act 1987 –

Infrastructure Contributions and Development Contribution Levies – Report, 2021–22, under section 46GZJ of the Act.

Notices of approval of the –

- Ararat Planning Scheme – Amendment C42.
- Boroondara Planning Scheme – Amendments C390 and C393.
- Cardinia Planning Scheme – Amendment C270.
- Darebin Planning Scheme – Amendments C170, C203 and C212.
- Glenelg Planning Scheme – Amendment C106.
- Greater Bendigo Planning Scheme – Amendment C271.
- Hume Planning Scheme – Amendment C253.
- Manningham Planning Scheme – Amendment C133.
- Mansfield Planning Scheme – Amendment C48 (Part 1).
- Melbourne Planning Scheme – Amendments C420, C422, C445 and C446.
- Moreland Planning Scheme – Amendment C227.
- Port Phillip Planning Scheme – Amendments C184 and C204.
- Surf Coast Planning Scheme – Amendment C133.
- Towong Planning Scheme – Amendment C37.
- Whittlesea Planning Scheme – Amendment C270.

Statutory Rules under the following Acts of Parliament –

- County Court Act 1958 – No. 131/2022.
- Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act 2009 – No. 1/2023.
- Health Practitioner Regulation National Law – No. 2/2023.
- Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Act 2011 – No. 3/2023.
- Land Conservation (Vehicle Control) Act 1972 – No. 6/2023.
- Magistrates' Court Act 1989 – No. 134/2022.
- Public Interest Monitor Act 2011 – No. 4/2023.
- Supreme Court Act 1986 – Nos. 132/2022 and 133/2022.
- Victorian Inspectorate Act 2011 – No. 5/2023.
- Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 – Documents under section 15 in respect of Statutory Rule Nos. 97/2021, 153/2021, 171/2021, 37/2022, 81/2022, 93/2022, 111/2022, 124/2022, 134/2022, 3/2023 to 6/2023.
- Victorian Institute of Forensic Mental Health (Forensicare) – Report, 2021–22.
- Victorian Public Sector Commission – Report, 2021–22.

Business of the house

Notices

Notices of motion given.

General business

Georgie CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (14:21): I move, by leave:

That the following general business take precedence on Wednesday 8 February 2023:

- (1) order of the day 3, second reading of the Children, Youth and Families Amendment (Raise the Age) Bill 2022;
- (2) order of the day 6, second reading of the Parliamentary Committees Amendment (Preventing Government Dominated Investigatory Committees) Bill 2022;
- (3) notice of motion 3 standing in Georgie Crozier's name on the production of documents relating to the staff shortages in the public health system;
- (4) order of the day 1, resumption of debate on the second reading of the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Amendment (Restoration of Examination Powers) Bill 2022;

- (5) order of the day 2, resumption of debate on the second reading of the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Amendment (Facilitation of Timely Reporting) Bill 2022;
 - (6) notice of motion 11 standing in Samantha Ratnam's name on the group voting system;
 - (7) notice of motion given this day by Jeff Bourman on the native timber industry;
- and the resumption of debate on the address in reply to the Governor's speech be postponed until Thursday 9 February 2023.

Motion agreed to.*Members statements***Myer Frankston**

Michael GALEA (South-Eastern Metropolitan) (14:22): I rise to acknowledge the recent closure of the Myer store in Frankston in my electorate and to thank the staff of the store for their dedicated service. Myer Frankston closed in January this year after a little over 50 years of trade. In my time as a union organiser I had the privilege of looking after members in that store for 4½ years. As with any workplace, it is one's co-workers who make it a rewarding place to work.

The retail industry is fast-moving with high turnover, which makes it notable when someone devotes a large part of their life to a workplace. I would like to take this opportunity to recognise some of those people: with more than 10 years of service, Sharon Hogg, Candice Peterson, Glenys Price and Vicki Thomas; with more than 20 years of service, Wendy Brown, Cheryl Burford-Smith, Anne Holiday, James Khan, Rosemarie Leishman, Judy Mitchell, Alana Mort, Claire O'Connor, Faye Peterson, Ali Priest, Carmen Ryan, Lisa Smith and Lisa Williams; with more than 30 years of service, Clare Campbell, Carol Flower, Hayley Garrett, Deborah Threadgold and Michelle Woods; and with an extremely impressive excess of 40 years of service, Andrea Lynch-Wilde, Lesley Chaplin, Jenny Williams and Ron Wanders.

I recently had the privilege to meet with a number of these individuals, and I wish to extend my congratulations to them all for their service and wish them all the very best for the next chapters of their lives.

Australia Day

David DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) (14:23): I am pleased today to rise and draw attention to Australia Day. On 26 January just gone I was pleased, first, to attend Government House and hear the Governor speak and see so many people attend to celebrate not only the day but the opening of Government House. I also attended, with Ms Crozier and others, at the City of Port Phillip – 130 Australian citizens, new Australian citizens, and a very good feel. And this is right across the state.

I think we have to be very careful not to damage longstanding respected institutions. The Australia Day that we celebrate does recognise European, British, settlement of Australia – of course it does – and it is obviously a matter that some Indigenous Australians have strong views on, legitimately. But that does not mean that the government by stealth is able to change our institutions, change the decision to celebrate Australia Day on 26 January.

This government has now for a third year running cancelled the Australia Day parade. Why have they cancelled the Australia Day parade? There is no reason why the Australia Day parade should not have occurred, and indeed overwhelmingly the polling indicates that most Australians – most Victorians – support the retention of Australia Day. I say it is an important cultural recognition. It is not inconsistent with supporting our Indigenous community and recognising wrongs that have been done, but it is an important part of our culture and should continue to be celebrated.

Climate change

Samantha RATNAM (Northern Metropolitan) (14:25): As we begin the work of the 60th Parliament I hope that the issues that impact our community the most are given the space and time to be aired and hopefully solved in this place. We owe it to all those who chose us to be their representatives, and we owe it most importantly to the generations to come that are counting on us to ensure they can survive and thrive. There is no bigger issue before us than climate change and the survival of our environment.

In less than three years Victoria has experienced the beginnings of what will become more frequent and fierce climate disasters. The bushfires of 2020 had barely been recovered from when the floods came. Across the seas our friends in New Zealand have endured intense flooding over the past few weeks. We are being warned about more fires to come. Arctic ice shelves are melting and the oceans are warming. We are close to reaching five tipping points that will consign the earth to irreversible and catastrophic climate change.

The 59th Parliament did some groundbreaking work in its inquiry into Victoria's extinction crisis. It found that climate change was one of the biggest threats to our biodiversity, with habitat loss and invasive species also greatly threatening our plant and animal life – yet Victoria still allows our native forests to be logged. That Parliament also investigated how Victoria can move to 100 per cent renewable energy by 2030 and keep coal and gas in the ground and found that it is possible. There is so much that we can do in this place. Let us not miss this chance.

Midsumma Festival

Sonja TERPSTRA (North-Eastern Metropolitan) (14:27): I rise to make my first members statement of the Parliament this year, and in doing so I would like to wish all members in the chamber a very happy new year and also to the constituents in my region, the North-Eastern Metropolitan Region. Even though it is February, we still have not done those pleasantries, so happy new year to everyone in the chamber today.

There are just two matters I would like to touch on quickly. Just at the weekend I along with a number of my colleagues attended the Midsumma Pride March. It was the culmination of a festival of celebration, the Midsumma Festival, which began on 21 January and finished at the weekend. Can I say I was so pleased to see such a strong showing of support for the LGBTIQ+ community in Victoria. I had a great time, I had an absolute ball, and I know a number of my colleagues who attended with me also had a great time. It was really a wonderful celebration of diversity in Victoria, while also letting our LGBTIQ+ Victorians know that they are loved and we love them being here – and we also love the fact that they know how to party. It was a great celebration. I do believe I saw Mr Davis there, minus the Panama hat and the dark glasses this time, so a bit of an incremental change there. However, I do believe that this march was the most well attended march, and the Pride March is getting bigger and bigger every year. There were thousands of Victorians who attended this year, and I know this will continue to grow year on year.

Lunar New Year

Sonja TERPSTRA (North-Eastern Metropolitan) (14:28): Very quickly, happy new year also to our Chinese Victorians for the Year of the Rabbit this year.

Australia Day awards

Wendy LOVELL (Northern Victoria) (14:28): It gives me great pleasure to recognise and congratulate the recipients of local Australia Day awards in my electorate, acknowledging the wonderful service of those who work to make their communities great places to live.

I started Australia Day with the Greater Shepparton City Council celebrations in Queens Gardens. I would like to congratulate the overall winner of the Greater Shepparton Citizen of the Year Michael D'Elia, Greater Shepparton Young Citizen of the Year Denni Bathman and Senior Citizen of the Year

Kathleen Treacy. In Shepparton Michael D'Elia was also the Shepparton Citizen of the Year, my dear friend Judith Longley was named Senior Citizen of the Year and Young Citizen of the Year was Cassidy Ahmet. I then attended celebrations in Tatura, where John Lowe was named Citizen of the Year and Thelma Wood Senior Citizen of the Year. It was wonderful to then join the Mooroopna community to recognise their award winners: Citizen of the Year Neville Musgrove and senior citizen Kathleen Treacy. I completed the day as always in Nathalia at their twilight ceremony. Congratulations go to Citizen of the Year Mary Wilson. Congratulations to Dookie Citizen of the Year Suzie Hall and Senior Citizen of the Year Joy Sims and to Murchison Citizen of the Year Gordon Newton and young citizen Denni Bathman.

My congratulations also go to all nominees and winners of all local Australia Day awards and also to recipients of Australia Day honours throughout my electorate. In particular I would like to congratulate Judi Hanlon and Ted Davis, who I know personally, who received Order of Australia Medals for their services to our community.

Wallara Australia

Tom McINTOSH (Eastern Victoria) (14:30): I rise to speak on this first sitting day of 2023 and what is my first opportunity to speak in the 60th Parliament about the not-for-profit Wallara Australia, who operate the terrific Sages Cottage farm in Baxter on the Mornington Peninsula. Wallara provide life and work pathways for 70 people with intellectual disabilities on a beautiful historic site set on 38 acres with a heritage homestead that is an incredible building to walk through.

I would like to acknowledge all the hard work that Phil, Zara and the team have done to create this unique space that offers such innovative opportunities for members of our community. Those I met have access to supported employment and further education via accredited courses and hands-on training to become incredible cooks – whose food, I can tell you, is delicious – baristas and gardeners. Wallara also offers retail training with Wallara Shop and media production with WallaraTV, and it has a busy logistics division working with supportive partners like the St Kilda Football Club and Visy to provide warehousing, packing, land management and corporate volunteering opportunities. I met Maddy, Chris and Terry. They told me about how they much they love their jobs, and the smiles on their faces were truly testament to that.

Wallara's vision with Sages Cottage is to normalise disability, to set a new benchmark for inclusive tourism on the Mornington Peninsula and to create paid jobs for people on and off the farm with its growing list of supporters. I look forward to my next visit and to continuing to support their great work.

Australia Day awards

Melina BATH (Eastern Victoria) (14:31): I would like to acknowledge all of the award recipients and nominees for the Australia Day awards in Eastern Victoria Region and share with the house four exemplary people: Mr Max Wood was South Gippsland's Senior Citizen of the Year, Mr Glenn Wright was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia, Mrs Nadia Stefani was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia and Mr Peter Keenan was Latrobe City Senior Citizen of the Year.

Max Wood is an absolutely dedicated South Gippslander. He lived most of his life in Welshpool and was like salt and pepper – he was in every single club and supporters group, with 39 years in the CFA. But his award was for his work in establishing the Leongatha Men's Shed in most recent times and his ability to turn a \$60,000 grant from the state government into a \$350,000 facility and social hub. Congratulations to Max – a very, very worth recipient.

Mr Glenn Wright, again, is salt and pepper. He is in the Leongatha Football and Netball Club and the district cricket association in leadership roles and is the most amazing person.

Ms Nadia Stefani is a lady I know well – Fish Creek, Fish Creek, Fish Creek. She has been in absolutely everything in Fish Creek, and I congratulate her for her service to her community.

Mr Peter Keenan: 47 years in the CFA, a passionate Victorian, in the Gippsland Dog Obedience Club, the umpires association, service to the community and heart on his sleeve where the CFA is concerned.

E-cigarettes

David LIMBRICK (South-Eastern Metropolitan) (14:33): In Australia the official statistic for COVID-19-related deaths since the beginning of the pandemic is approaching 20,000. This is roughly equivalent to the annual number of deaths attributed to smoking-related illness. For COVID we turned society upside down – there was no measure beyond contemplation for governments around the country – but for these smoking-related deaths our bizarre public health sector will not even support vaping as a less harmful option for nicotine delivery.

The Cochrane network is generally considered one of the best sources for high-quality evidence in healthcare policy. Their latest review on e-cigarettes found that there was high certainty that electronic cigarettes with nicotine increased quit rates compared with nicotine replacement therapy. The UK actively encourages smokers to try vaping through their public health institutions, as does New Zealand. In Australia, however, our public health lobby insist on continuing to demonise vaping and have muddied the water so much that people believe that smoking is a healthier option than vaping.

We have managed this policy area so poorly that the people who would likely benefit the most have poor access and we have a burgeoning black market that is supplying teenagers. A simple solution is to accept the inevitable and allow adults access to vaping products as a regulated consumer product. Then the issue of teen vaping can be addressed with full support from all sides.

Australia Day

Georgie CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (14:34): I join other members in the chamber today in acknowledging those Australia Day recipients who received their awards, and there were many across my Southern Metropolitan Region. And I was delighted to attend citizenship ceremonies in Glen Eira and Port Phillip. They were both wonderful occasions. There were tears of joy and relief from some of those recipients who received their citizenship, and it was just wonderful to see. I really want to just place that on record.

Health system

Georgie CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (14:35): Another matter, which is a very serious matter and one that I have raised continuously in this chamber, is around the number of Victorians waiting on the elective surgery waitlist. We still do not have the latest quarterly figures. I just checked before I stood to see whether that Victorian Agency for Health Information data was out – the data from October to December. The government has to publish it and has not. They were supposed to publish it a week ago. It is still missing, and I do not think that sends a good message to the tens of thousands of Victorians who are waiting on waitlists for vital surgery and also dental care. There are literally hundreds of thousands of Victorians who are waiting and captured by the inadequacies in the system. I think it is incredibly disappointing, yet again, the lack of transparency and the lack of ability for the government to provide this information on time.

Sitting suspended 2:38 pm until 2:55 pm.

*Address to Parliament***Governor's speech***Address-in-reply***Debate resumed on motion of Michael Galea:**

That this house agrees to the following address to the Governor in reply to the Governor's opening speech:

GOVERNOR

We, the Legislative Council of Victoria assembled in Parliament, express our loyalty to Australia and the people of Victoria, and thank you for the speech which you have made to the Parliament.

We declare that we will faithfully carry out the important duties entrusted to us by the people of Victoria, to advance the best interests of all sections of the community.

Ryan BATCHELOR (Southern Metropolitan) (14:56): President, I am so very grateful to the people of the Southern Metropolitan Region for giving me the honour of representing them in this place, and I look forward to working with you and all members serving the people of Victoria.

Importantly, and firstly, I acknowledge the traditional owners of the land we are meeting on here today and the traditional owners of the lands that now comprise the Southern Metropolitan Region: the Wurundjeri and the Boon Wurrung people of the eastern Kulin nation. I would like to pay my deepest respects to their elders past and present.

As a member of the Victorian Parliament I also accept and acknowledge the role that this institution has played in the systematic dispossession of Aboriginal people from their lands. The qualification for election to this place for much of its history was based on a franchise of land ownership, the same land curated and nurtured for thousands of years by its traditional owners – a franchise enabled by forcible dispossession. The laws that were then made here furthered that dispossession, the incarceration and the removal of children from their families. They are failures of the past and failures of the present and failures we must fix, and I commit as a new member of this place to use the power placed in my hands by the people to work together with Aboriginal Victorians to remedy the injustices of the past and empower them as part of creating a better future together, working with their voice to treaties and truth, here in Victoria and then leading the nation.

All of us come here shaped by the experiences of our lives, and those experiences will in turn shape our actions as representatives. Melbourne's Southern Metropolitan Region is where I grew up and went to school, and I know it so very, very well. My mum grew up in South Melbourne with her family and my dad with his in Beaumaris. They met and married and bought a house in a bayside suburb at a time, believe it or not, when a trade union official and a typist could afford to do so. It is the house I was raised in and where Mum still lives today. My childhood was spent ranging across these suburbs. I moved to and from my grandparents in Cheltenham and in Ormond. I remember board games being played in the front room of my cousin's house to the background clanging of the boom gates at the now-removed North Road level crossing. Sadly, there are some childhood memories we can never relive.

In short, it was the best kind of an upbringing that a kid in the suburbs could ask for, and it is the same essential reason that hundreds of thousands of families call this part of Melbourne home – for its great schools, its parklands and beaches, for its libraries, cultural centres and community hubs, for its art and for its music. It is a great place to raise a family. I am very grateful for the opportunity to represent them and will work to keep improving the services and infrastructure that make their lives better.

We all need to listen to what the people tell us at elections. In reflecting on 2022, with elections of significance for our nation and for our state, it is I hope an inflection point that might underscore the importance of purpose in politics. People want governments who do things, and voters will reward governing and especially governing well. They will forgive an occasional misstep and are sick of being

told that problems are beyond our ability to control or are someone else's responsibility. We must not be afraid to tackle the challenges we confront, and we must govern with purpose.

There has been a disturbing tonal shift in the broader political debate in this state. I think that is undeniable. And to me what the last election shows is that we need to be listening more to the hundreds of thousands of quiet Victorians who care more about the quality of the services they receive, about the infrastructure they rely upon and about having a job than being distracted by the braying voices of a few.

In all that noise, however, we must not miss the signals that are being sent our way. For some, the vulnerability created by our current economic and labour market structures makes their experience of precariousness a fertile receptor to messages of fear and division. Harnessing the power of government to strengthen their economic security is our best response. Creating secure jobs, reliable transport, renewable energy, good schools and health care whenever needed is what restores their trust in politics, in government and in us. And with the confidence of the community, we as legislators and policymakers can lead our state forward to even greater things.

Many people worked very hard to see this Labor government re-elected for a third term, and I would like to pay tribute to their efforts. They were ably led of course by the Premier and Deputy Premier. But I would especially like to thank the lower house Labor candidates across the 11 districts in the Southern Metro Region, more of whom were unsuccessful than not but all of whom worked incredibly hard, and the hard work of their campaign teams and each and every booth volunteer who stood through those hours and days of wind and rain and sun – that was the same day! That is the reason the Labor ticket secured my election, so thank you.

The grind of campaigning is well known to my family because ours is a Labor family. In fact it has been 100 years since my great-grandmother Isabel Gwynne was a stalwart in the Granville and Parramatta ALP branches in western Sydney. Thanks to the glory of the national archives I recently discovered a newspaper clipping from the wonderfully named *Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate* from 1923 that delves into great detail about an intra-branch preselection dispute in which it seems she was involved. So for Labor and the Labor family it seems the more things change, the more they stay the same.

But of course my father Peter – and I am very grateful he is here today – was a member of this Parliament in the other place for 20 years, and he made an enormous contribution to the Parliament, to the people of Victoria, to politics and to the Labor Party through his lifetime of tireless work for the causes he believed in. If I can replicate just some of that contribution, it will be an achievement that I can be proud of, because I am very proud of him.

For many, my connection to the Labor family is mostly what they know about me – they often do not look far past my surname – but today is an opportunity to tell a bit more of that story, and in doing so there is no more important person to understand me and my life than my mother. This is going to be tough. Alice Reilly was a working-class kid who grew up in church-owned housing in South Melbourne, the daughter of post-war Scottish migrants. Her dad was a linesman for the SEC and her mum was a cleaner. She left school at 15 and went to work in a typing pool, often shouldering the responsibility of looking after her brothers and sister as her mum left the house to clean offices in the city, returning late at night. Her piercing blue eyes and sharp brain set her apart. She was tenacious and smart and worked incredibly hard. She lives her life with epilepsy, and with that have come good days and bad, but nothing has ever stopped her, and woe betide anything that tries.

She is also the most courageous person I know – a woman who took the very difficult decision, especially for a girl brought up in the Catholic Church, to end her marriage and set out on her own with a three-year-old son, me, because it turns out life around politics and the Labor Party just was not her cup of tea. She had her own path to forge. She also, though, had a young kid, no formal education and a house with a mortgage to pay. But she knew and instilled in me over my life that education

matters most. She knew she needed more of it, at least in a formal sense, and so she set out on a special entry pathway for early school leavers to get a university degree. So reading and learning were, to her, the most important things that I could do. So I did, a lot – and I loved it.

She worked nights waiting tables at the local hotel to make sure we had enough money to pay the bills and got jobs on campus working in administration, all while studying and being a single mum. Everyone helped – family, friends, the succession of boarders we had renting out the spare room – and the support network she made during those years was so strong it has sustained to this day. She was always loyal, and people were loyal to her. She graduated university when I was eight, setting up her next career phase in office administration, and in the late 1980s she was learning about computers and automation and helping others adjust to the nascent technological revolution. She knew how rapidly the world was changing and why we all needed to be ready to learn and adapt. She did get a break from me every second weekend. I spent that with my dad, and she deserved every moment's rest. All the time I was learning about hard work and about her never stopping, being resilient and caring and thinking about others and the world around us. She worried about the planet long before it was front-page news, and she taught me to stand up for what was important.

Mum cannot be with us in the gallery today. These days her body just is not well enough, but she is watching at home with her partner Greg – so hi, Mum. And importantly, she is here, in me, and she is the reason I am who I am. Her values shaped me, and I hope you will get to see me with those values during my time in this chamber.

While today I am less of a hands-on rabble-rouser than I was in the mid to late 1990s – while I was finding my own voice protesting as a schoolkid against Pacific nuclear testing and education cuts – my passion for and commitment to achieving change remains, because we should all be here to change things. I have had unparalleled opportunities as a researcher, as a public servant and as a policy adviser to witness good governments changing people's lives. I know the power of good public policy. What I have also learned is that the task of policy reform is never done. There are always new challenges to confront, and we cannot rest on our laurels or be zealously uncritical of work already done.

I worked during the last federal Labor government to help set up the national disability insurance scheme, and it is one of the things that I am professionally proudest of – supporting the Prime Minister as she signed agreements with premiers to deliver the scheme. But I know that the NDIS has its challenges and is far from the promise that we hoped to deliver. Reform is never done. So we can defend universal health care while acknowledging the system can improve its patient outcomes. We can support our public schools while admitting our kids need to be better taught basic reading and writing and maths.

As a policy wonk I am incredibly excited about the government's Best Start, Best Life reforms – like, do not start me. Kinder for three-year-olds, more pre-prep for four-year-olds – it will transform lives. Fifteen years ago I had the absolute privilege of working with Jenny Macklin and Kevin Rudd to write the then federal Labor opposition's first policy document to deliver 15 hours of universal preschool for four-year-olds, but Victoria's efforts today show us that that was nowhere near ambitious enough. There is always more to be done.

There are many lessons to learn about how to be an effective activist and policy agitator, and there is one that I learned from the late Dorothy Reading, my father's long-term partner and my brother's mother and, it is fair to say to those who knew her, a force of nature in politics, policy and public health advocacy. Faced with a choice between expressing sentiment and taking action, Dorothy would always insist on the latter. Dorothy's work helped Victoria be a global leader in tobacco control, which has delivered us enormous public health dividends, but 30 years of sustained efforts are at risk with the rise of vaping in our community. Five years ago the rates of young people starting smoking cigarettes were negligible, and today youth vaping rates are exploding, as is the related harm. So much has changed so fast.

Children are calling the Quitline addicted to nicotine. They are vaping in class. And if our regulatory model allows this to happen, then it is broken and needs to be fixed. We know that inhaling substances into our lungs is dangerous. Whether it is nicotine or asbestos or silica dust, it kills, and we do not have the luxury of time to wait and see. We must act. Vaping products are dangerous and should be treated as such, and I believe federal and state governments must act quickly and decisively. This is a crisis, I believe, that must be resolved before the Parliament contemplates any further progress on drug law reform.

As parliamentarians we do not achieve change ourselves. Yes, we can pass laws, but change is created by movements, and none have had more of an impact on positive change for people in this country than the trade union movement. Unions have always been a big part of my life, both personally and professionally. I remember as a kid with my Uncle Dave marching with what was then known as the Federated Engine Drivers' and Firemen's Association of Australasia against Kennett's cuts in 1992. We were with the Maritime Union of Australia on the waterfront in 1998, and I remember listening to and learning from the WA metalworkers during my uni days in Perth. Professionally as an adviser and researcher while in Canberra I worked with the ASU on equal pay, with the ACTU on paid parental leave and the then United Voice on better pay for early childhood educators – and most recently here with Trades Hall on safety for young apprentices. So across the movement, comrades, you continue to inspire, and I will continue to work side by side with you from this place.

Walking across the entry to Parliament from Spring Street we are reminded by the floor that there is safety in a multitude of counsellors, and I am fortunate to have many whose counsel I can rely upon. There are many who have given me support over many years in politics, and I cannot mention them all, but I especially want to thank Paul Erickson, Susie Byers, Andrew Giles and Linda White for their constant wisdom and advice. To those members and ministers who have employed me along the journey, starting with Alan Carpenter, Jenny Macklin, Julia Gillard and Anthony Albanese, the opportunities that you gave me were priceless and the lessons you taught me about being a good representative, about remembering why we are here and who we are here for, will guide me in this place. Importantly, to the brilliant staff that I worked alongside in those offices and who remain my good friends, when we did our jobs well our efforts were unseen and achievements unnoticed by many, but it all added up to Labor governments changing people's lives for the better. Those ex-staffers are an unparalleled network of whip-smart strategic thinkers, and I know their phones are always on, so I will be calling.

At the end of it all, though, there is nothing without our family. I have already spoken – and blubbed – about what my mum means to me, how I would not be who I am without her, but I would not be here today if not for the love, the support and a fair amount of forbearance from my partner Rosie. Her intellect and achievements in her field of medicine are astounding, but it is her passion for what she believes in that helps sustain me and reminds me constantly of what matters: yes, our family, of course, but there must always be more than just us. There is injustice to address, systemic disadvantage to overcome and constantly thinking about how to improve the services our community relies upon. There is definitely something bigger that we are trying to achieve. And, Rosie, each in our own way, we will achieve it together.

But I want to end the speech with our two kids, just over there, Lewis and Clement. The joy and wonder they constantly bring to our lives is invigorating. Their thirst for learning and knowledge is an inspiration. And I know that it is not always easy growing up around politics. You get well practised at hanging around that boring stuff waiting to do something fun. But I hope they know that those meetings and phone calls and late nights are all for a purpose, because the future will pass on to them and their generation, and we have an obligation to make that future better. So let us get on with it.

Members applauded.

Gaelle BROAD (Northern Victoria) (15:16): I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land we govern and pay my respects to their elders past, present and emerging.

Sir Peter Cosgrove was once asked to define an Australian, and he said, ‘Anyone who feels a connection with this land, whether they have just arrived and intend to stay or their ancestry dates back 60,000 years.’ That connection with the land and its people reflects our strong Indigenous history, and it unites us here today.

I first came to this place as a parliamentary intern 28 years ago. I stood in the vestibule and read Proverbs 11:14 inscribed in the mosaic tiles on the floor: ‘Where no counsel is the people fall but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety.’ And I am sincerely grateful to the people of Northern Victoria for electing me to this chamber to represent our region in Victoria’s 60th Parliament. I feel a very strong connection to Northern Victoria. It is a region that spans over 100,000 square kilometres and covers nearly half of the state. It stretches from Mildura to the snowfields down to the outskirts of Melbourne, from broadacre farms to busy shopping centres.

I grew up on a third-generation berry, fruit and flower farm in the stunning Yarra Valley, and I spent my school holidays picking, planting and packing. My grandparents lived just up the road, and whenever I dropped in Grandma Stone would make a strong pot of tea and share some family history. Her grandfather owned an agency of Cobb and Co coaches in New South Wales, but times changed with the introduction of motor vehicles, and without work they had to move and start again. Grandpa’s story was similar. His family owned a large clothing manufacturing business that closed during the Great Depression. They started with just a small parcel of land and learned how to farm. My grandparents met at a local dance, were happily married over 60 years and argued every single day.

Growing up in the Great Depression my grandparents knew hard times, and together with my parents they encouraged me to work hard, get a good education, love my family and make the most of every opportunity. When I was 17 I wanted to go on a cultural exchange program to Russia, and my family helped me raise the funds to go. We made chocolate-coated snowballs to sell at the local markets, and we hosted an old-time movie night at the local public hall. I lived with a host family, endured minus 28 degrees and received my VCE results by telegram. I experienced firsthand what life was like after a Communist regime. My host sister and her mum shared a one-bedroom flat, people queued to get eggs, there was no bread on the shelves and the black market was thriving. I learned that we live in the best country in the world and that our democracy is worth protecting.

I arrived home to a family wearing T-shirts at the airport that said ‘Welcome home, Gaelle’. They were my first campaign team, and they have supported me all the way. It is great to have my mum Annette, Auntie Sharyn and sisters Merryn and Laura here with me today.

I studied at Monash and went on to complete a graduate diploma in communications before undertaking a master of public policy at the University of Melbourne. I joined a local theatre group and presented a program on radio. Grandpa Budge enjoyed connecting with people around the world via ham radio, and he would tune in every week to provide feedback and count the number of ums. He was pleased that I chose to study politics and equally proud of the connection to his second cousin Sir Henry Bolte, a Liberal and still the longest serving Victorian Premier – for over 17 years.

In 1999 a referendum was held to decide if Australia should become a republic. I organised a public forum and invited speakers from both sides of the debate, including the late Governor of Victoria Sir Richard McGarvie. I used a timer that looked like a traffic light, gave the panel equal time to present their views and then opened the floor to questions. Over 400 people attended, eager to listen. As we approach the coming referendum, let us encourage respectful and informed public debate in politics as well as the media.

That same year I met a young man from Kerang. Grandma was quick to contact her friends in the region, and from all reports the Broads were a good family. As well as being tall, dark and handsome, Dale worked for World Vision. We shared the same values, and he enjoyed tennis as much as I did. I

met his family and discovered their passion for football and politics and their strong connection with the local community. I am very grateful to Arthur, Heather, Robin, Deirdre and Amanda for their love and support and proud to be part of the Broad family tree. Dale and I were both working in Melbourne. On our way to Kerang we would drive through Bendigo, and I fell in love with the city in a forest. We moved to central Victoria 20 years ago and have never looked back.

With the discovery of gold in 1851, people came to Bendigo from all across the world. It is a place where George Lansell walked by foot to the goldfields, first starting as a candle maker before investing in mining. He worked hard, overcame setbacks, expanded his knowledge and became known as Australia's quartz king and one of the wealthiest people in Australia. He built a stunning 40-room mansion in Bendigo called Fortuna, which still exists today, and he was known for his charitable endeavours and contributed much to the local community. After he returned to England, the people of Bendigo signed a petition asking him to come home.

Today Bendigo has grown into a regional city. Without any direct water supply, it still relies on a gravity-fed water channel built in the 1870s. Sacred Heart Cathedral dominates the skyline, a church designed in 1897 and finished nearly 100 years later. It is the home of Bendigo Bank, which started from humble beginnings and now employs over 7000 people.

Regional Victoria is a place of opportunity where people feel a strong connection to the land and to each other, a place where people come with nothing but determination and resilience and build not just a home for their family but a vibrant local community. At the Bendigo town hall on Australia Day it was great to see nearly 70 people become Australian citizens from over 20 countries, and they have chosen to live in regional Victoria. These personal stories have shaped our history, and they will continue to shape our future.

That connection with regional Victoria is why I chose the Nationals. It is a party with commonsense politics that balances social, environmental and economic interests and that values democracy, freedom and equal opportunity regardless of your background or postcode. It is a party with a long history and a bright future that now represents regional Victoria from border to border and has a majority of women in this Parliament based on merit and not quotas.

I am grateful to Nationals branch members across the state, including Daniel, Elaine, Lindsay, Emma and Bill, for their contributions to a great result and would especially like to acknowledge our local branch, including Murray and Nola, Jim and Cathy, Dan and Simon, and my friends Ellie and Michelle, for their support over many years.

It is an honour to be part of a strong Nationals team under the experienced leadership of Peter Walsh and to join Melina Bath and my colleagues in the other chamber. They all reflect the authenticity and heart that people want to see in politics. But this is not my first attempt at being elected. I have stood as a candidate before, and I remember being outside a supermarket when a man came up to me and said, 'Gaelle, don't do it. It's not too late – don't go into politics.' Well, he is not alone. Politics is a dirty word. A friend of mine in business said, 'I have no interest in politics, but I am glad you do.' For me, politics is about connecting people and building community. It is about listening, researching, making informed decisions and having a vision for the future.

If you knew my parents, you would understand my motivation. I grew up with a mum and dad committed to serving the local community. My dad Clive Stone was a man of faith, hardworking, intelligent, compassionate and generous. He worked on a farm and earned a badge at the markets for 40 years of service. He was an expert in his field and inspired many to grow berries in their own backyards as the author of *The Australian Berry Book*. He used the funds from the sale of water to build an orphanage, and he travelled to India to help farmers install irrigation. And if he saw a pothole, he would take his tractor to fix it. Dad gave me the courage to stand, and I hope that my service will honour his legacy.

My mum shares that same commitment to serving others. Together they helped to start Mountain District Christian School. With just over 100 students from prep to year 10, I learned to connect with people of all ages and backgrounds, to care for the world we live in and to value people for who they are and not what they do. Mum worked as a teacher and continues to be actively involved in the local community with the Country Women's Association and Quilts for Orphans, and I hope to bring some of her creativity and fun to this chamber.

My parents were married for 45 years, but like the Bendigo cathedral, which started as a vision that others saw built, some people plant a seed and may never see it grow. After past disappointments my friend Bec said, 'It's not if but when you get into politics.' I held on to those words even after she passed away from cancer, just like my dad, several years ago.

My contribution in this place will be influenced by my experience outside of politics and the people I meet along the way: people like Alec, the 16-year-old I met as a mentor for disadvantaged youth, who was homeless and needed the support of local services to help him find his feet; people like Miriam, who called me on the day I was elected to tell me about her son, who started using marijuana at age 29. He stole money from her, and she learned to speak in code with friends when he lived in her home. Now at 36 he is in a psychiatric centre for the fourth time after suffering mental health breakdowns. And there is the couple I met from Karook, whose home, like many, was insured for everything except floods. They spent six weeks out of home, sold half their cattle and fed those remaining by hand. In Rochester, supermarkets, schools and nearly every home were flooded. The community have rallied together to continue the recovery efforts, and they need our support.

As a volunteer for different groups I have seen the benefits of working together to build community and I have learned that the more you contribute to your local community, the more you care about its future. As I look back at the experiences I have had in government, business and the media, I am grateful to those who have given me opportunities along the way: Murray Thompson, who served with integrity as the member for Sandringham in this Parliament for 26 years, who first gave me an opportunity as a parliamentary intern and later encouraged me to consider a future in politics; and former federal treasurer Peter Costello for the effective combination of good policymaking and strong leadership. I worked in his office when the GST was first introduced, and I remember it well because I was answering the phone calls. Jonathan Ridnell, a presenter on ABC radio for nearly 25 years, gave me the opportunity to sit behind the microphone and experience the responsibility and privilege of sharing people's stories. I thank Victorian Nationals senator Bridget McKenzie for being a passionate advocate for regional Victoria and helping me see that what started as a farmers party now embraces all those who live and work in regional Victoria, and Carol Schwartz and the team at the Pathways to Politics Program for Women for sharing the tools and inspiring more women to stand.

In recent years I have been a manager in one of Australia's largest regional banks, and I have learned from true professionals like Stephen Brown. I had the privilege of leading a great team and managing programs across regional Victoria. I am grateful for the opportunity to have helped people impacted by drought, bushfires, COVID and the recent floods and to better understand the challenges that regional communities face.

I am interested in state government because the policies that become law in this place impact our daily lives. During the pandemic government policies divided our state. People lost their jobs, families were unable to grieve together, businesses closed their doors and kids dropped out of school. People were led by fear, and to move forward we need hope. In this chamber we have a shared responsibility to uphold democracy, advocate for our regions, ensure accountability and transparency in government and contribute to informed public debate.

Regional Victoria is home to 25 per cent of our state's population, but we only received 13 per cent of infrastructure spending in Labor's last budget. Mildura, Swan Hill, Wodonga, Shepparton and Bendigo are growing, and we need significant investment in our roads, schools, hospitals and rail to help keep pace with population growth and provide the infrastructure that our region needs. We need

greater equity in government funding to decentralise Victoria, to build a state of cities and not a city-state. We need to curb our spiralling state debt and reduce the cost-of-living pressures on families. We need better access to child care and mental health services, reduced surgery waiting lists and to make it easier for people to find a home.

Despite these challenges, regional Victoria keeps moving forward. There are job opportunities in health care, construction, retail, education and manufacturing, and if you move to regional Victoria, you will never look back. There are great local communities right across the region. I invite you to explore northern Victoria, from the beautiful Macedon Ranges to the mighty Murray, from the goldfields to the High Country.

We are looking forward to the Commonwealth Games in 2026, and our athletes are already in training. To represent our country at the highest level requires dedication, hard work and sacrifice, and we should apply that same effort in politics. But just like sport, it takes a team to perform at your best, and in this role I am very grateful for the support of my family and friends. I especially want to thank my husband Dale, who has been part of this journey from the start, and our three amazing kids Aaron, Lydia and Nathan. Watching you grow up has been the greatest joy of my life.

I wake up every day grateful for this opportunity and pray that my service in this Parliament will honour all those who have supported me and that my contribution, however short or long it may be, will benefit the people of the Northern Victoria for many years to come.

Members applauded.

Sitting suspended 3:37 pm until 3:54 pm.

David ETTERSANK (Western Metropolitan) (15:55): President, I congratulate you on your election. It is a role I know you will discharge with fairness, professionalism and good humour.

I acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet today, the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation. I pay my respects to their elders past, present and emerging, and I record that sovereignty has never been ceded.

I thank the voters of the Western Metropolitan Region, who have bestowed upon me the honour of representing them in this Legislative Council. I will strive daily to reward their faith in electing me. The Western Metropolitan Region is an area of great cultural diversity and richness and also extraordinary growth and challenges. I will return to this issue.

I wish to sincerely thank the many volunteers and candidates who worked so hard to secure the first two Legalise Cannabis members of this Parliament. My special thanks to Craig Ellis, our campaign director; our federal management committee; my colleague Rachel Payne, who worked so hard to pull the party and the campaign together; my running mate, the nuclear-powered Raffaella Menta; and the indomitable Tony Verde, who daily refuses to let his Parkinson's define his life and inspires us all. I would also like to express my appreciation to Fiona Patten, who blazed a reformist trail over the past eight years and has been incredibly generous in sharing her time, passion and wisdom.

I am advised that it is customary to share something of our lives and history at this time to illustrate some of the experiences and values we bring to this chamber, so here goes. My life fits neatly into roughly three 20-year parts. I was born into a very comfortable white middle-class household living here in Melbourne and abroad. At the age of 14, circumstances, litigational bastardry and shortfalls in the family law system at that time saw our fortunes reversed, and my mother, sister and I were introduced to a world of social disadvantage as we took shelter with my paternal grandmother in south-east Queensland. From this I learned a lifelong lesson: that the law can be used as a cudgel. It is neither accessible nor equitable for all, and one must never confuse the law with justice or fairness.

At 15 I started working part time at Coles, and I have worked continuously for the last 48 years. I was blessed to have two formidable matriarchs as my grandmothers. These women were born in poor

working-class situations in Britain, migrated to Australia to find a better life and pretty much lived the Australian postwar dream. My maternal grandfather was a master bricklayer and a shop steward and life member of the building workers union. He was also an aspiring communist, but his ambition was frustrated by my grandmother, who would simply say, 'Don't be silly, Charles. That will never happen.' I still remember fondly my grandfather covertly passing me political texts as though they were copies of *Playboy* with the words, 'For God's sake don't tell your grandmother I gave you this.' Throughout my life I have been blessed to have strong and intelligent women shape my thinking and my practices, and I am a better person for that.

My political puberty was during the reign of Queensland Premier Joh Bjelke-Petersen, who led a profoundly corrupt and gerrymandered state government. In the late 1970s what started as a campaign opposing uranium mining evolved into the right-to-march struggle. Like many other activists at the time, I racked up a dozen arrests and a few thorough beatings at the hands of the Queensland police. Following in the wake of the Vietnam War movement and ongoing opposition to apartheid, these times forged a generation of activists. We learned firsthand about the coercive power of the state but more importantly about the power of people who organise and collaborate to resist and to achieve change. This shaped my next 20 years, with a decade in the Communist Party of Australia and two decades working in the trade union movement. The CPA introduced me to extraordinary people who had struggled to improve our society for decades, often against incredible odds but who fought on nonetheless. I will be forever grateful to those comrades who introduced me to the concepts of race, gender and class. They challenged me to think critically and strategically and to organise and to fight.

In the union movement, as either an industrial or an education officer, it was my privilege to work with members, reps and officials to preserve and advance the interests of working people across Queensland, the Northern Territory and here in Victoria. My life in the union movement generated both great highs and great challenges. In my heart of hearts I believe that the union movement remains an essential element of the democratic fabric of our society, and it is a part of my DNA.

For the last 20-something years I have been a partner in a small consulting firm, working primarily with not-for-profit aged care providers across Melbourne and regional Victoria and interstate. I would like to express my thanks to the many organisations with which we have partnered. I would also like to acknowledge all the aged and community care providers and peak bodies working with culturally and linguistically diverse communities and special needs groups. It has been an honour and, for me, an education to work and to collaborate with you.

These not-for-profit aged care and community service organisations are a critical part of our civil and our humane society. They tend to have a few things in common: voluntary boards with little or no support from the government who share their time and experience and often their own resources to ensure services are delivered to their communities. They have incredibly hardworking staff and management teams who day after day turn up and deliver great care and services. Across regional Victoria they are often among the largest employers and the economic and social backbone of their regional communities. This sector is under-resourced, under-recognised, underpaid and under enormous pressure. Huge demographic changes are underway that are reshaping our health, aged and community services sector. If we wish to retain our voluntary, religious and not-for-profit providers, we must address at both a state and a federal level critical resourcing and workforce issues or witness their collapse. I sincerely hope that over the next four years I can work with you to improve the situation in these sectors to improve the lives of service providers, carers and recipients.

I would like to thank my business partner of 20 years, Ken Ridgwell, and his wife Barb. Ken is a man of great intellect, integrity and humour. We have faced many challenges and confronting assignments, and it has been a privilege to work with him. Ken's friendship and counsel will always be treasured. I would also like to express my thanks to long-time collaborators Kerri Rivett, Anna Aristotle and Michelle Penson.

Over the last 25 years I have also participated in multiple community organisations, most notably the Kensington Association, and many campaigns in the inner west. Most of these campaigns, some successful, others not so much, have been against inappropriate development or to enhance or protect local amenity and services. This included opposition to the development of the flood wall at the Flemington Racecourse and a constant rearguard action against excessive and poorly planned high-rise development. Other highlights have included the fight against the east-west tunnel, seven years on the community reference group for the redevelopment of the Kensington housing estate and a couple of years on the local police community consultative committee. I extend my appreciation to my many friends in the Kensington, Flemington and North Melbourne residents associations, and I also thank the councillors and officers of the cities of Melbourne and Moonee Valley with whom I have had the pleasure to work.

My experiences in community campaigning have taught me a lot about the need for considered and appropriate approaches to planning and development. I mentioned previously that the Western Metropolitan Region is rapidly expanding, with multiple growth corridors as well as major infill redevelopments. The rate of expansion across the west is startling. It has been put to me that if you stand still for too long in the Wyndham or Melton growth corridors, the tradies will just build over or around you. We all know that there is and has been for some time a critical shortage of affordable housing, but what is being developed on Melbourne's fringes is often far short of what is necessary to create vibrant, sustainable and well-serviced communities.

Time and again developers and land bankers have made fools of governments from both sides. Time and again governments have capitulated to these developers under relentless pressure to deliver housing. Time and again we look back and lament opportunities forgone because of poor decisions and the prohibitive cost of correcting shortfalls that should have been addressed at the get-go. Further, much of the burden of compensating for poor planning and execution falls upon under-resourced and overworked local councils and community service providers.

I understand the government will say they are striving to address these shortfalls, and they are, but we keep on replicating the same problems in new developments. There must be a better way, and I am keen to work with you, my colleagues, to develop a better approach to planning and development, sustainable communities and increased housing. As the population of Melbourne continues to burgeon, I know the people of Western Metropolitan Region expect and deserve nothing less.

I would like to move to a few other issues that are close to my heart and which I hope I may have the opportunity to address over the term of the Parliament. Consistent with the traditions of the inaugural speech, I do not raise these issues to score points, and in making the following comments I would like to respectfully recognise the good work that has been already undertaken by this and previous governments and many members in both houses.

As parents we aspire to create a world and a set of circumstances for our children where they are happier, healthier, wealthier and safer and have greater opportunities than we ourselves experienced. For many Australians living in this country of extraordinary richness that ambition has been both an aspiration and a reality. But for many Australians the dream of ever greater abundance has been just that: a dream, and a dream disconnected from their lived reality.

For our First Nations people, colonisation, dispossession and racism have been that reality. Too often closing the gap has been no more than closing our eyes, our ears and our minds. In the *Uluru Statement from the Heart* First Nations people have offered the country a gift with clarity and generosity. It is incumbent upon us all to graciously accept and give life to the offer of voice, truth and treaty. These three elements will not miraculously rectify centuries of destruction, but embraced nationally they are potentially a fresh start for us all. In the immediate term that opportunity presents itself in the Voice to Parliament. It is incumbent upon us all to put aside partisanship and to seek meaningful reconciliation and restitution. I commend the Andrews government for its work to date to advance reconciliation. I look forward to contributing to this process in the future.

Our future aspirations are also clouded by the ever-increasing reality of climate change. Across this beautiful state Victorians know that climate change is a reality and that it is profoundly changing our environment and our lives. We need to move decisively to both radically reduce our production of greenhouse gases and protect and nurture our precious natural heritage. We must also commence the daunting process of adapting to the environmental changes that we have now irrevocably locked in for ourselves and for generations to come.

Victoria is the most socially progressive state in Australia. As such it is incumbent upon us to continually strive to improve the situation of those less fortunate. Many Victorians struggle with a disability, or poverty, or chronic illness, or homelessness, or systemic discrimination. For many happenstance can be unexpectedly cruel. One need only look at the growth of homelessness amongst women over the age of 55 to see not only a desperate need but also a confluence of gender discrimination with the failures of our social safety net. We must identify any and every opportunity, however modest or however bold, and hopefully we can – we should and we must – do better.

One of the lessons of the pandemic, and I think of the last election, is that most Victorians are socially progressive people. There is a pride in our state; there is a spirit of communitarianism that is in stark contrast to the angry individualism that pervades, for example, US politics. That community spirit was reflected in the response to COVID. We drew on good science, we had good leadership and as a community we recognised that we work together or we die apart.

Working in aged care, I saw firsthand that too many did die and continue to die. A large and rapidly growing cohort of people continue to struggle with long COVID. It is of great concern to me that the concept of ‘living with COVID’ is code for ‘Let’s pretend it’s over’. To the degree that there is some level of breathing space associated with the current less severe mutations, we are squandering the time and the opportunities to build community vaccination and to bolster our critical health system and our exhausted health workforce.

The pandemic also reinforced in the minds of the Victorian people the importance of good government and a robust and competent public service. Like many Victorians, I have watched with dismay successive governments of both persuasions continually slash our public services. Worse, we have watched functions of government, including the provision of fearless and forthright advice, privatised and contracted to large multinational consulting firms at exorbitant rates, often using ex-public servants who would have previously provided that advice at a fraction of the cost. Let us rebuild our public services to the benefit of our community, and if that involves resurrecting the State Electricity Commission of Victoria, let us debate that too.

On another matter, I would like to draw to the attention of the chamber the passing of a great Australian, Professor David Penington AC, on 6 January this year. Professor Penington was one of Australia’s leading public intellectuals and health experts. His legacy includes making Australia a world leader in HIV/AIDS public health strategy and changing community attitudes to alcohol and illicit drugs. A part of Professor Penington’s legacy is the Penington Institute, which aims to support cost-effective approaches that maximise community health and safety in relation to drugs. The institute’s patrons represent the cream of our health and legal leaders, and its board is chaired by Kathryn Greiner.

The Penington Institute has produced a two-volume report entitled *Cannabis in Australia*. It is a cracker of a read, and I commend it to the chamber. Yes, you were wondering when I was going to get to cannabis, weren’t you? Well, here we go, although I will endeavour to keep it relatively brief. The Penington report identifies that cannabis is currently consumed every year by up to 4 million people in Australia. This includes around 1 million Victorians annually. The current cannabis prohibition makes criminals of millions of otherwise law-abiding citizens, particularly the most marginalised and vulnerable.

Breaking from the report for a minute, I wish to record that because of these laws I am a criminal and I have been committing criminal acts for over 40 years. Further, because of these antiquated laws, I regularly commit crimes, along with hundreds of thousands of other Victorians, and I intend to continue doing so until I pass away, I am incarcerated or these prohibition laws are reformed.

To return to the Penington report, they find that the prohibition model is both ineffective and inefficient. It fails to control supply, it creates an illicit market that is largely in the hands of organised criminals, who profit to the tune of around \$8 billion per year, and it costs over \$1.5 billion every year for largely ineffective law enforcement. Penington also noted that prohibition has prevented research into the potential benefits of cannabis and has distorted research into the negative consequences of its use. I will not keep reading from the Penington report; it only gets more critical of the current situation.

The cannabis prohibition has been in place in Victoria since 1928. That is a 95-year trial, and that is 95 years of demonstrable failure. As Einstein observed, insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results. We need to demonstrate sanity and common sense, and we need action. We do not need a semantic debate about decriminalisation versus legalisation. We need a debate about an appropriate regulatory framework for the cannabis market. Like any market regulation, it needs to address both supply and demand. As the Penington Institute identifies, we also need to address questions of good public health policy, community education and harm minimisation.

And let us keep this in some perspective. When we look at the really difficult challenges that confront our society, some of which I have mentioned previously, cannabis reform is not one of them. While cannabis reform is a critically important issue to many, many people, it is a relatively simple exercise. We need to find common ground on how a staged process of reform, regulation and change can be implemented to the benefit of all Victorians. I commend the government for starting this change process by addressing medicinal cannabis and look forward to working with both the government and across the chamber to achieve reform. I will leave the cannabis issue there for the moment.

I would like to express my thanks to the many members from both chambers and from both sides of the house who have reached out and indicated their desire for change. We will be taking every opportunity to advance this issue in the future, and we will do whatever is required to achieve responsible change.

Finally, in closing, I would like to thank my family. My sister Kathy continues the familial tradition of strong women as embodied in our late and much-loved mother Daphne. To my son Charlie, I love you, and I am incredibly proud of your many achievements. And to my wife and companion of 38 years Dr Kate Kennedy, you are my inspiration. You mean everything to me, and I love you more now than ever.

President, I thank you for the opportunity to speak today, and I look forward to working constructively with you over the term of this 60th Parliament. Thank you.

Members applauded.

The PRESIDENT: I probably should have mentioned at the start that I have changed the ruling so that during an inaugural speech people can take photos if they respect everyone else. Just respect other MLCs and other guests.

Georgie PURCELL (Northern Victoria) (16:22): Thank you, President, and I extend my congratulations to you.

Before I begin, there are many people to thank for me being here today in this place: my parents, Brenden and Kirsty, who are probably completely unsurprised at my life course, when at nine years old I proudly wrote and sang a song to them called *Polling Booth Rock* during the 2001 federal election; my brother Jack and his partner Flick for supporting me, loving me and believing in me, and their gorgeous and confident daughter, my niece Livvy – I hope you know I will do all I can to create a better world for you; Linda and Reece, and of course Grant, who I wish was still here to be with us

today; everyone at the Animal Justice Party, especially the Victorian committee convener Bronwyn Currie and state manager Ben Schultz, the other upper house candidates, all 88 lower house candidates, national president Angela Pollard, former national president Bruce Poon and the New South Wales crew, especially Louise Ward, Tess Vickery and MP Emma Hurst; and finally, my former boss and our first MP, Andy Meddick. I only wish we were seated beside one another today.

My office queens, Kelly, Aimee and Danni: there are few workplaces where you get to go to work each day and do what you love with friends, and I will be thankful for that every day for the next four years. Deb Tranter and everyone at Oscar's Law, I will deeply miss working alongside you all. My Macedon Ranges family – Webs, Kyle, Kelly, Isa and Wolfgang – I cannot tell you how much Sunday night dinners without discussion of politics mean to me. My best friend Toni, who has made a one-day trip from New South Wales just to be here today, has been beside me for the best and worst moments of my life with her unwavering kindness, humour, solidarity and ability to see the bright side in everything.

Thank you to the team at Pathways to Politics for Women for encouraging me and equipping me with the skills to run for election, particularly Meredith, Carol and my Pathways mentor Jenna; Fiona and Andy from the Reason Party for paving the way for so many women in politics and all of the guidance you have so kindly provided me over the past four years; and my dear friends Nathan and Reed, who I can always rely on for feedback and an honest opinion. Juls and Abby, who convinced me I could in fact get admitted as a lawyer in 2020, almost five years after finishing my degree, I am so proud to know you. Clare, Kim and Amy – or the Angry Beavers – there is nothing better than checking into the group chat at the end of the day and hearing about your babies and your dogs. Most importantly, to Ward, who I met protesting on the steps of this very building as a 19-year-old, both with clear eyes and full hearts, ready to change the world for animals, thank you for coming with me on this journey with all of its twists and turns and for believing that I cannot lose.

I want to start by acknowledging the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Bunurong Boon Wurrung, Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung peoples as the traditional owners and custodians of the land and waterways which I live on and speak to you from today. The Macedon Ranges, where I live, are rich with Indigenous knowledge, history, culture and storytelling that date back at least 26,000 years. I acknowledge the true history of our significant Aboriginal sites, including Hanging Rock, Mount William and Mount Macedon, and recognise that Indigenous ecological knowledge has sustained life for tens of thousands of years. It will be fundamental to our ongoing protection of animals and the environment. I look forward to working together as an ally over the next four years. Indigenous sovereignty was never ceded. This means this was and always will be Aboriginal land.

It has been said that the greatest threat to our planet is the belief that someone else will save it. I was just four years old when I locked eyes with a sow on a truck. Curious and newly obsessed with pigs after watching *Babe*, I asked my parents where she was going. They did not lie, and from that moment I declared, 'I don't want to do that anymore.' It is safe to say as I stand here 26 years later, at 30 years old and as Victoria's second Animal Justice Party MP, that it was not just a phase.

I grew up in Inverleigh, a small farming town in western Victoria, where I spent every spare moment I had with animals – my horses, my guinea pigs, my budgies, cats and dogs. The revelation of how animals in our state were treated, even as a young child, was a defining moment. Life is made up of those defining moments, and for me there have been many.

I studied a bachelor of laws and communications at university, and from there my adult working life has always been political, from my role as a digital campaigner in the union movement to advocating for the hard-earned retirement savings of working people at Industry Super Australia and as chief of staff to Andy Meddick. In 2016 I took a cleaner to meet the Premier. He had been in his job cleaning the Premier's office since Dick Hamer, but he had never been able to take long service leave. Despite working for almost four decades in the same building, every time he was close to qualifying his entitlements would be erased with the arrival of a new contractor. A few years later this Parliament

legislated portable long service leave, and it was then that I realised the profound impact that politics can have on our own lives and the lives of the most vulnerable. It was another one of those defining moments.

I felt this again when I was able to attend a Melbourne abortion clinic and make a legitimate medical decision over my own body without being harassed or intimidated after this Parliament legislated safe access zones. I feel it each and every time I receive treatment for my chronic illness, an often debilitating autoimmune disease, and I show my Medicare card. And I especially felt it as I sat in the gallery of this very chamber to watch Victoria become the first state to ban puppy factories after decades of campaigning from Oscar's Law, an organisation I was so proud to be president of, up until my election.

Yet despite my passion for politics and the powerful tool it is for creating a kinder, fairer, more just society, becoming a politician was never part of my plan. I always felt that I belonged in the background. I was led to believe that women like me belonged in the engine room and not in public life. It is no secret I have a more colourful background than most politicians, but at one point in my life it was a secret, and it was a secret that was stolen from me. This defining moment was in the summer of 2012, when I was in my second year at Deakin University and working as a topless waitress and stripper. I did everything that I possibly could to protect my anonymity from my peers, but it did not work. My whole world stopped on the day that my phone pinged with a notification that I had been tagged in a post on Facebook. I froze, staring at a photo of myself on the screen and a thread of comments beneath. We know that university campuses have historically been a Petri dish for misogynistic behaviour, but at the same time for many men it is where they get their first taste of politics. While they get a short course in the tenets of power, women are delegitimised, and I had become one of them.

Being outed is the most severe of betrayals. Because of one person's fleeting decision to take away my consent and my autonomy, I felt that my life was no longer worth living. They stole 10 years from me, with my past constantly hanging over my head like a dark cloud, living in fear every single day that it would resurface. But here I stand today, the youngest woman in this Parliament, owning my story, proud of my past and ready for my future. I now know that my experiences bring a unique perspective to this place and the ability to consider matters with kindness, empathy and compassion. What I once perceived as one of my biggest weaknesses I now know is one of my biggest strengths, and with a new generation of women coming into our parliaments, I hope they can look to me and see that their past will never define their future.

Despite my hesitancy to become a politician myself, I am driven by a passion that is much higher, representing a constituency that is so vulnerable and so often forgotten in this place. The decisions made in the halls and chambers of Parliament impact the lives of animals every day, yet they are so rarely considered. It is my job to change that.

Our lives are often full of firsts too. The first horse I saw die in a jumps race 10 years ago was named Fergus McIver. He was a beautiful bay gelding killed at the final hurdle, his life cut tragically short at just five years old for gambling profits. Dozens of horses have been killed in jumps races in Victoria since then, and with South Australia moving to outlaw jumps racing last year, we are now the only state left in the country to continue this cruel pastime. It is something we should be not only ashamed of but motivated to fix.

The first duck I ever scooped up into my arms was wounded, bleeding but still alive, and her little body was scattered with shotgun pellets. Victoria's wetlands are peaceful sanctuaries for our native wildlife year-round, until the third weekend in March comes by and suddenly they become a bloodbath. Despite New South Wales and Queensland banning duck shooting decades ago and Western Australia before I was even born, Victoria, the so-called progressive state, still continues an annual recreational slaughter on our native waterbirds.

The first greyhound I met was named Blue. He was dorky and lovable but carried the trauma of the racing industry with him. We are only one month into 2023, yet our state is first place on the leaderboard for on-track deaths and injuries. So far this year six gentle, docile dogs have been killed with broken legs and broken spines on Victorian racetracks. In their final moments I am sure they knew nothing but confusion and fear. I would like to tell you about how many dogs and puppies die off the track in Victoria, but the truth is I do not know. Nobody knows. I have two rescue greyhounds in my office, and as lazy as they truly are, they are so good at their new roles, because now their job is changing hearts and minds about just how special and loving greyhounds are and just how much they deserve to be companions, not commodities. Pat them the wrong way and they will shake and scream, look them in the eyes and they will tell you exactly how they feel about their past.

You see, many people say that animals are voiceless, but that just is not the case. When the pig in a sow stall tries to make a nest for her piglets on nothing but concrete, she is speaking to us. When the hen in a battery cage attempts to dust bathe in her packed wire cage, she is speaking to us. When the bobby calf cries out for his mum on the way to the abattoir, he is speaking to us. And when the millions of newborn lambs shiver to death without shelter in freezing winter elements, they are speaking to us. They are all speaking to us, screaming out to us, asking us for help every minute of every day; we are just not listening to them.

To meet our growing population's demand for protein, we are factory farming animals at a rate so rapid it is destroying our planet and wreaking havoc on our environment. When our state is not on fire, it is ravaged with floods, yet we focus on keeping the man-made machines that destroy our very home oiled instead of taking on the solutions that stare us in the face. Habitat is destroyed to build factory farms or to make way for introduced grazing animals, and we allow one of the biggest climate culprits – the animal agriculture industry – to produce more emissions than all forms of transport in the world combined, as we all look away.

Our insistence on treating animals as commodities sees them live a life of misery and of suffering until they pay the ultimate painful price with their lives. In fact since I began speaking today almost 140,000 animals have been slaughtered for food in Victoria. Their so-called protection under legislation is a myth. It is a great lie, with nothing but voluntary codes of practice, loopholes and exemptions that legally permit mutilation that would be illegal if done to our cats or our dogs. When it comes to the way we treat animals, their biggest threat is our own perception. Charles Magel said, 'Ask experimenters why they test on animals and the answer is: because they are like us. Ask experimenters why it's morally acceptable to test on animals and the answer is: because they are not like us.'

People love to ask me about my companion sheep. When they do, I say 'Which one?' because they are all so different but with one thing in common: the desire to just live. They wag their tails and they know their names. People say they are just like dogs, but they are not; they are like sheep.

For the past seven years I have called the beautiful Macedon Ranges my home. It is a community that I am now so proud to represent. There is a lot to love about Northern Victoria, and what is perhaps most special to me is the local wildlife. But each and every day their ability to survive becomes harder. It is the same story across the whole state. Their homes are being rapidly destroyed and cleared, leaving them to be dispersed onto roads and public places where they are killed or injured in the thousands. The tired volunteers left to care for or euthanise them are left traumatised, and their workload only increases by the day.

We are facing a dangerous narrative of our indigenous animals being seen as pests, despite being native to this state. Instead of learning to coexist with our wildlife, they are slaughtered en masse under commercial shooting programs under the cover of night or by private permits. We are in an extinction

crisis, and if we do not act, there is nothing we can do to bring our precious native animals back. As Bradley Trevor Greive warned, for wildlife:

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

But there is something we can do here in this place to change the course for animals in Victoria. In this place, words do matter. And while I speak each word with conviction here today, know that it is not my own legacy I plan to impress upon this place but rather a legacy that leaves behind a kinder Victoria for the dogs and cats in pounds that are killed when there is another option; for the pregnant ewes giving birth prematurely out of fear and stress on a truck to slaughter; for the displaced kangaroos who hop through the sunset looking for food, only to be shot at nightfall and have their babies legally bludgeoned on a tow bar; for the rabbits who through our folly are divided into groups of those we deem worthy of companionship as our pets and those we choose to lock up in laboratories or factory farms with zero protection under the law; and for the pigs, smarter than dogs, with a likeness to three-year-old children, that are being lowered into the gas chambers considered best practice by the pork industry before having their throats slit – to fight the secrecy, the legalised cruelty, the lack of morality and the belief they are here for us when they are really here with us.

Animal rights are intrinsically linked to human rights. By protecting them we are protecting all of us. I am here to change the idea that offering kindness to animals is somehow extreme. As Maya Angelou said, ‘It takes courage to be kind’. In politics many see kindness as weakness, but I think it is one of the most honourable and important traits for us all to possess. So to my colleagues in this chamber, I hope over the next four years we can all find it within ourselves to just be a bit more kind – to animals, to people, to the planet, to each other. And to the animals of Victoria, despite your suffering in the shadows, I see you. Despite speaking a different language, I hear you. As long as I have the honour and the privilege of being a member in this place, I will fight for you. And while your situation is so dire, with all of our supporters behind me, I am filled with hope for the future. Thank you.

Members applauded.

Lee TARLAMIS (South-Eastern Metropolitan) (16:45): I move:

That debate on this matter be adjourned until later this day.

Motion agreed to.

Business of the house

Sessional orders

Jaelyn SYMES (Northern Victoria – Attorney-General, Minister for Emergency Services) (16:46): I move:

That until the end of the session, unless otherwise ordered by the Council:

(1) The following sessional orders be adopted, to come into operation on the next sitting day:

1. Interruption of debate – Messages

In Standing Order 4.07(7) for “will” substitute “may”.

2. Order of business

Standing Orders 5.02(2) and (3) are suspended and the following order of business will apply on Wednesday –

Messages

Formal business

Members’ statements (up to 15 members)

General business

At 12.00 noon Questions

General business (until 5.15 pm)

At 5.15 pm Statements on tabled papers and petitions (30 minutes)

Petitions (qualifying for debate) (30 minutes)

Government business (maximum 60 minutes)

At 7.15 pm Adjournment (up to 20 members)**3. Time limits**

- (1) Standing Order 5.03 Time limits –
- Budget debate*
- is suspended and the following will apply:

Budget debate

Total time	No limit
Main Government lead speaker	30 minutes
Main Opposition lead speaker	30 minutes
Other lead speakers	30 minutes
Remaining speakers	15 minutes

- (2) Standing Order 5.03 Time limits –
- General business (Standing Order 5.07)*
- is suspended and the following will apply:

General business (Standing Order 5.07)

Total time	90 minutes
Mover/Sponsor	20 minutes
Lead speakers	10 minutes
Remaining speakers	10 minutes
Mover/Sponsor, in reply	5 minutes

- (3) In Standing Order 5.03 Time limits, insert the following:

Private member bills – second reading debate

Total time	No limit
Mover/Sponsor	30 minutes
Main Government lead speaker	30 minutes
Other lead speakers	30 minutes
Remaining speakers	15 minutes

- (4) Standing Order 5.03 Time limits –
- Government bills – second reading debate*
- is suspended and the following will apply:

Government bills – second reading debate

Total time	No limit
Main Government lead speaker	30 minutes
Main Opposition lead speaker	30 minutes
Other lead speakers	30 minutes
Remaining speakers	15 minutes

- (5) Standing Order 5.03 Time limits –
- Government business (Standing Order 5.06)*
- is suspended and the following will apply:

Government business (Standing Order 5.06)

Total time	No limit
Main Government lead speaker	30 minutes
Main Opposition lead speaker	30 minutes
Other lead speakers	30 minutes
Remaining speakers	15 minutes

- (6) Standing Order 5.03 Time limits – *Statements on tabled papers and petitions (Standing Order 9.10)* is suspended and the following will apply:

Statements on tabled papers and petitions (Standing Order 9.10)

Total time	30 minutes (<i>a member with the call at the expiration of the total time will be permitted to complete their contribution</i>)
Each member	5 minutes

4. Disorderly conduct – Member ordered to withdraw: application during questions without notice

Notwithstanding Standing Order 13.03(2), if –

- (1) a member is ordered to withdraw from the House under Standing Order 13.03(1) during questions without notice; and
- (2) the time for questions without notice concludes before the expiration of the suspension period –

the member may return to the Chamber at the conclusion of question time and must serve the remainder of their suspension during the next occurrence of questions without notice.
- (2) The foregoing provisions of this resolution, so far as they are inconsistent with the standing orders or practices of the Council, will have effect notwithstanding anything contained in the standing orders or practices of the Council.
- (3) The Clerk is empowered to renumber the sessional orders and correct any internal references as a consequence of this resolution.

Notice of motion 1 is just in relation to sessional orders. It was circulated in December, which feels like some time ago, but since then it has been the subject of a few conversations and some questions in relation to what is in it. I guess in summary it is effectively just picking up some of the sessional orders that proved to be useful to the chamber in the former Parliament. There are no surprises here from the government. It covers, effectively, messages and the order of business, particularly on a Wednesday, picking up feedback from non-government and opposition members in relation to how they want Wednesdays to run, and also looks at speaking times, predominantly around facilitating the ability for as many people to speak on motions as possible, notwithstanding that we do have constraints on our time. It goes through budget debate, general business debate, private members bills, government bills and government business speaking times. There are no surprises, and everyone, as I understand it, is reasonably okay with what is being proposed. And it does reinstate this disorderly conduct provision, which I understand was not used much, so let us hope that is not used again in this term of Parliament.

I think there is probably potential for a few more conversations should there be amendments put, but this is very non-controversial, as I understand. I will not speak for other members, but nobody has raised any concerns with me – and there has been ample opportunity to do so – on the material that is in this motion.

Georgie CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (16:48): I thank the Leader of the Government for going through the proposal that she has put forward in terms of the sessional orders, and I do agree in terms of the running of the house and the conduct of the house and understanding some of those time limits. I know that some new members were concerned about that, but I think it is very clear why we are trying to have some time limits on certain areas in certain debates – to give the opportunity for more members to be able to contribute to the debates – and I want to agree with the Leader of the Government in relation to that very commonsense approach to how the running of the house could be, as has been outlined by the government’s motion in relation to the sessional orders for this Parliament.

I want to thank the Leader of the Government. I know that we did have discussion last night in relation to me moving an amendment to the sessional orders, and I will move that amendment. I move:

1. Insert the following new sessional order before sessional order 4:

'X. Ministers' statements

Standing Order 8.04(3) is suspended and the following will apply:

At the conclusion of formal business, and prior to members' statements under Standing Order 5.13 (where applicable), up to four Ministers may seek the call to make a Minister's statement of up to two minutes each, to advise the House of new Government initiatives, projects, and achievements.

In Standing Order 8.04(4), **omit** the words "and four Ministers' statements have been made".

I think it is relevant to just put this on record in relation to some of the ministers statements that are done in this house. I was listening closely to the ministers statements today and thought actually that the ministers statements were more about what ministers statements are supposed to be about in relation to advising the house of government initiatives, projects and achievements, so I thank the couple of ministers that did do that. However, we have seen in the past Parliament how ministers statements have been used. There have been virtual cheerios and references to their good friend in this house and that house or this member and that house, and it really did not go towards, I think, what the intent of the ministers statements is.

Certainly question time is a serious part of what we do in this house. We are a house of review. Question time is to hold the government to account. It is the ability to ask questions of government, and we need to have a thoroughly working question time without these ministers statements, which sometimes are not new initiatives and quite frivolous in nature on some occasions. That is why we are moving this motion that those ministers statements be moved out of question time and follow in the business program, following members statements. Then it flows: members statements, ministers statements. You can still say the same things about what the initiatives of government are, or if you want to make the cheerios to your colleagues or whoever it is in the ministers statements, you can do it, but outside question time.

I will not name anyone. But, quite seriously, question time is a serious time to ask the government about the issues that are happening in this state, and for that reason I think it should be a continuous question time. That is why I propose this amendment, and I would urge the house to support that initiative.

Samantha RATNAM (Northern Metropolitan) (16:51): I wish to make a brief contribution regarding the proposals around the sessional orders on behalf of my Greens colleagues, firstly to thank the government, the opposition and the crossbenchers, who have been engaged in a collaborative discussion over the last number of weeks to understand the purpose of these sessional orders and think about where we could strengthen them to ensure that the democracy and accountability of this house is as strong as possible. Thanks to those discussions, we have got to a point of by-and-large agreement, and that is hopefully a testament to what this chamber can achieve together, working across the sides over the next four years.

The sessional orders are important. They set the tone and the opportunities for us to be able to do the important work that we will do over the next four years, so they do need due consideration. I hope, too, that there is a spirit of review that we can build in to the sessional orders. Over the four years there might be times when we believe a sessional order is not working to the best of its ability and it needs to be improved, and I hope that we will be able to enter a conversation on reviewing and improving that if it is needed.

I too would like to move an amendment, which I have canvassed with the crossbench, opposition and government, to reduce the threshold for the petition debate, and I am happy for that amendment to be circulated now, please. I move:

1. In paragraph (1), after sessional order 3, insert the following sessional order:

‘X. Presenting a petition

In Standing Order 11.03(10)(i) for “10,000” substitute “5,000”.’.

Speaking to my amendment, it proposes to reduce the threshold from 10,000 signatures to 5000 signatures to qualify a petition to be debated in this new time that we have allocated on a Wednesday after general business time. It is a new feature of the standing orders in the term ahead, which I think is a good feature, thanks to the work of the Procedure Committee and a number of previous members. I believe Ms Patten particularly led the charge over a number of years, joined with others, to think about how petitions can be better acknowledged and responded to by this chamber given the weight they have in the community. They are an important way that the community communicates to this chamber and this Parliament about things that they want changed or improved or to have their voice heard. It is really incumbent on us to create opportunities for the community’s voices to be heard, acknowledged and responded to.

It is welcome that we have this addition on a Wednesday, with half an hour for petitions to be debated, should they meet the threshold. However, the Greens believe that that threshold is too high. It has been set at 10,000. There are differing accounts as to how that 10,000 number was reached, but our understanding is that it can be lowered without significant impact on our ability to use that 30-minute time slot. We have asked for some advice about the last parliamentary term – how many petitions were received with the different thresholds – and a threshold of 5000 signatures would have qualified 15 petitions over a four-year period for debate using those 30-minute slots. If you understand that we have essentially 15 weeks of Parliament and a 30-minute session each week of Parliament for 15 weeks times four, and 15 petitions qualify for debate, I do not think it is too onerous for this chamber to lower that threshold to 5000 to allow just a few more petitions – we are talking under 20 – to be debated in this chamber, to hear the voices of Victorians who have gone to a tremendous effort to canvass their communities on issues they really, really care about and want to be heard about in this chamber.

Lowering the threshold to 5000 would give more Victorians the ability to have their important matters heard. And it is not actually putting a value on the different types of matters. There will be matters that I, for example, might not agree with, but I still believe in the principle that the community’s voice should be heard. For a number of us who have been in this chamber for a number of years, we do, I am sure, appreciate and acknowledge there are so many ways that we have to improve the democracy of our chamber and the accessibility of this Parliament to the Victorian public. There are thousands of Victorians who have no idea what happens here; they feel really excluded, when this should be the people’s place. If we are going to be truly democratic, we should be looking for every opportunity to hear the voices of Victorians. So having done the research, looking at the task before us, if we reduce that threshold to 5000 we do not think it is too onerous, and therefore my amendment would have that effect.

If I can speak briefly in response to the opposition’s amendment around ministers statements, the Greens are not in a position to be able to support it today. However, we appreciate the sentiment behind it. In terms of a future conversation, we need to have enough time to consider it and also understand the impact and interaction that ministers statements have with question time and other contributions. My understanding too is that when this was originally negotiated – and there have been years of negotiations to take Dorothy Dixers, for example, out of question time – it was part of a set of measures that responded to taking Dorothy Dixers out. So I think it is worth, if you are going to make a change to that, understanding the implications of it, and therefore the Greens are not in a position to support that amendment today.

David LIMBRICK (South-Eastern Metropolitan) (16:57): I would also like to start by thanking the crossbench, the opposition and the government for the collaborative way that we have gone through these procedural changes and got to a place where we are in a fair amount of agreement. Some of these changes that were brought in through the Procedure Committee, as Dr Ratnam alluded to, such as responding to petitions, I am very happy about. I sponsored many petitions in my last term of Parliament and had complaints from constituents when they got tabled in Parliament and then they asked, 'Well, what's the government going to do with it next?' and my answer was usually 'Nothing'. It is good that they are going to be able to respond to that and also have the opportunity to even debate it within the chamber. I think this is an excellent improvement.

On that note, I agree with Dr Ratnam that the threshold is too high and should be lowered, and therefore I will be supporting the reduction in the threshold to 5000. I actually think that Dr Ratnam overstates the burden, because many of these petitions would not end up being debated. They are not the sorts of petitions that you would actually debate in many cases, so that number of 15 I think would actually be far lower than that, and over the course of four years I think this would by no means be overburdening the Parliament. Therefore I think it is an obvious thing to try and support that and give more opportunity for people who have gone to that effort of going out and setting up a petition, getting it sponsored and getting people to sign it about something that they are passionate about to have it debated in Parliament; I think that is an excellent thing.

Also, in my response to the amendment put forward by the opposition to change the way that ministers statements work, I will not be supporting this amendment today. I have concerns about how Parliament would actually operate with this effectively new section before question time, when all the ministers would, to my mind, get up one after the other and give a statement at a time when no-one would really be paying attention, I think. Also, the ministers statements in the first place were brought in as a compromise to get rid of Dorothy Dixers. I am open-minded on how we might improve that process, but I would prefer to discuss further what might be the best approach rather than just ripping them out of question time and putting them into another block. I am not sure that that is the best solution, and I will not be supporting that.

Harriet SHING (Eastern Victoria – Minister for Water, Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Commonwealth Games Legacy, Minister for Equality) (17:00): I am going to speak briefly on both of the amendments further to the Leader of the Government's introduction of these particular components of the sessional orders.

I will deal with Dr Ratnam's amendment first if I may. I just note that these are matters which have been canvassed, I think, as early as the end of last year and have been the subject of a wideranging number of discussions in terms of the sessional orders as they sit within this pink here today and that it is only relatively recently that we have seen a proposal to reduce the number from 10,000 to 5000, as it sits within your proposed amendment moved here today, Dr Ratnam. I also note that the Procedure Committee does perform a range of really important tasks as they relate to the house and indeed the Parliament's discharge of obligations and responsibilities. Mr Limbrick has referred directly to that work and to the work that the Procedure Committee has undertaken. This occurs in consultation and discussion with the clerks and with those who are responsible for providing resources, processes and time frames in the acquittal of those obligations. On that basis it may well be useful for this to be something that you or your colleagues seek to raise and to prosecute through the Procedure Committee. There are a range of options and opportunities for you there.

In addition to that, and noting what Mr Limbrick has quite appropriately raised as being what we anticipate to be a much lower number than that which you have canvassed, there are a range of other mechanisms within the standing orders as they operate to table petitions and to do so within the framework that exists within the standing orders. So that might be something which you can also turn your minds to and to do so in accordance with the opportunities that also exist within the Procedure Committee. On that basis the government will not be supporting the amendment that you are putting here today.

I might turn briefly to the amendment proposed by Ms Crozier and note the comments made by other speakers. Ms Crozier, you yourself said when you got to your feet that you were pleased with the level of relevance, the quality and indeed substance, perhaps even relevance, of ministers statements that have been issued. One of the great challenges that we have here is an attempt to regulate or indeed have a view on the substance of ministers statements. In the same way that the standing orders do not empower the house to direct the way in which somebody answers a question, the idea behind ministers statements is that they enable a minister to speak about matters germane to their portfolios in whatever way that they choose, provided that it is not unparliamentary. Where this involves discussion of portfolio matters as they are implemented and rolled out across the state in direct relevance to the way in which a portfolio might operate, then that is a wonderful thing and in fact an important thing for the house to hear about.

I think it is great, Ms Crozier, that you have noted the relevance and the substance of ministers statements as they have been made recently. You have said they have been improved. It is really great that you are making a qualitative statement about the way in which ministers statements have been rolled out, but to actually seek to move an amendment based on what you assess the quality of ministers statements to be I think gets the task of this Parliament wrong. The job that we have here is to make sure that members of this chamber and indeed of the Parliament, both of those people watching along at home, can get a good sense of what it is that we are doing here, and that includes the work of the government and it includes the work of ministers as they relate to a range of different portfolios. So on that basis and given that the flow of question time has not itself – and you would have to agree with this, Ms Crozier – been without controversy in recent parliaments in terms of interjections, unparliamentary remarks and indeed requests for rulings and guidance from the Chair at any number of different issues, in fact this would not be an amendment that would perhaps elevate question time to the standard that you might otherwise like it to be. On that basis we will not be supporting the amendment that you are proposing here today, but thank you for at least recognising the excellent work done by the government in the way in which ministers statements have been acquitted at the beginning of the sitting year.

Matthew BACH (North-Eastern Metropolitan) (17:04): I too just want to make a couple of brief comments about these two issues at play, and I also want to put on the record my thanks to the Leader of the Government for the very straightforward manner in which she has dealt with this. I think when you look at the sessional orders and the standing orders in the other place – well, again we should not be overly smug – we do things better, if not even well, in this place.

On petitions, I think Dr Ratnam made a series of very valid points, and it has been great to engage closely with her and her team over the last few days. The opposition will on this occasion not be supporting your amendment, Dr Ratnam. I do agree, and we do agree, with a couple of the points you made, Ms Shing, in your contribution. There has just recently – very recently, I understand – been a significant review by the Procedure Committee. While on a personal level I think the notion of looking very closely in future at reducing thresholds even more to enable greater discussion of matters, as you said, Mr Limbrick, that are really important to groups of Victorians, who are not small groups of Victorians, is a very good thing, our view nonetheless, upon serious consideration of what you wanted to put forward, Dr Ratnam, is that given that this review concluded so recently and that we have so little experience of this particular arrangement, the proper thing to do on this occasion is to wait and see how this operates – however, with a very open mind to continuing these discussions.

Briefly, on the matter of question time the arrangement that Ms Crozier is seeking to put forward is not a novel one. In fact my advice is that this house agreed to exactly this arrangement in 2014. At that time it was put forward by the coalition parties with the coalescence of several members of the crossbench. I take the criticism of Minister Shing of our position. My hope is that these comments will come back to bite me in four years. Question time has across Australian parliaments, no matter which party is in government, been a farce for a long time. Dorothy Dixers have become a farce. Ministers statements have become a farce. That is not a criticism of this –

Members interjecting.

Matthew BACH: Ms Crozier said they were better today, and they were better today. But Minister Shing is a great student of history. She would be aware that historically across Westminster parliaments there has been far less centralised party control. Dorothy Dixers as we understand them today are a relatively recent innovation. Of course backbenchers are not members of the government, so historically Labor backbenchers when Labor is government or coalition backbenchers when the coalition is in government have asked questions that have not gone through any centralised process. However, both when the coalition has been in power for short periods of time here and for longer in Canberra and also during the long period of recent Labor government here we have had a quite frankly rather silly state of affairs that has led to a change, as Ms Shing said. But the idea that ministers statements should be incorporated within question time, I am sure she would agree, goes directly against the grain of the entire purpose of question time. It is also something that has been agreed by this house previously. So I would commend in particular that proposed change to my friends on the crossbench and any waverers on the Treasury bench as well.

Council divided on Samantha Ratnam's amendment:

Ayes (10): Jeff Bourman, Katherine Copsey, David Ettershank, David Limbrick, Sarah Mansfield, Rachel Payne, Aiv Puglielli, Georgie Purcell, Samantha Ratnam, Rikkie Tyrrell

Noes (28): Matthew Bach, Ryan Batchelor, Melina Bath, John Berger, Lizzie Blandthorn, Gaele Broad, Georgie Crozier, David Davis, Moira Deeming, Enver Erdogan, Jacinta Ermacora, Michael Galea, Renee Heath, Ann-Marie Hermans, Shaun Leane, Wendy Lovell, Trung Luu, Bev McArthur, Joe McCracken, Nicholas McGowan, Tom McIntosh, Harriet Shing, Ingrid Stitt, Jaclyn Symes, Lee Tarlamis, Sonja Terpstra, Gayle Tierney, Sheena Watt

Amendment negated.

Council divided on Georgie Crozier's amendment:

Ayes (15): Matthew Bach, Melina Bath, Jeff Bourman, Gaele Broad, Georgie Crozier, David Davis, Moira Deeming, Renee Heath, Ann-Marie Hermans, Wendy Lovell, Trung Luu, Bev McArthur, Joe McCracken, Nicholas McGowan, Rikkie Tyrrell

Noes (23): Ryan Batchelor, John Berger, Lizzie Blandthorn, Katherine Copsey, Enver Erdogan, Jacinta Ermacora, David Ettershank, Michael Galea, Shaun Leane, David Limbrick, Sarah Mansfield, Tom McIntosh, Rachel Payne, Aiv Puglielli, Georgie Purcell, Samantha Ratnam, Harriet Shing, Ingrid Stitt, Jaclyn Symes, Lee Tarlamis, Sonja Terpstra, Gayle Tierney, Sheena Watt

Amendment negated.

Motion agreed to.

Adjournment

Jaelyn SYMES (Northern Victoria – Attorney-General, Minister for Emergency Services) (17:33):
I move:

That the house do now adjourn.

Interest rates

David DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) (17:33): (8) I have an adjournment matter for the Treasurer, and it concerns the interest rate changes announced today by the Reserve Bank. Obviously the 0.25 per cent rise is one in a cascade of rises that we have faced over the last 12 months, a very significant series of rises that are putting pressure on families, putting huge pressure on those with significant mortgages and putting significant pressure also on the state government budget. When one looks at the sensitivity analysis in the state government's budget, at the back of the budget papers, it is clear

that about \$2.5 billion is the cost over four years of a 1 per cent movement in interest rates. Obviously these changes take time to work through in the budget, and the borrowing cycle is as it is – lumpy – but nonetheless it does have a significant impact.

When one does the calculations now with a significant rise in the order of 3.35 per cent, that is likely over four years to be a more than \$8 billion impact on the state government budgetary position – more interest payments in the state government's budget of that order according to the budget sensitivity analysis that was in the most recent budget. These are very significant impacts, and I ask the Treasurer to come clean and to provide to Victorians and this chamber the precise impact of the recent cascade of interest rate rises – the 3.35 per cent increase in interest rates that the Reserve Bank has put in place – and the impact that that has on the state government budget. So it is a very simple question. He needs to provide a figure over the four years of the forward estimates period of what the cost to the state government budget is of the 3.35 per cent interest rate rises.

Springvale temple fire

Michael GALEA (South-Eastern Metropolitan) (17:35): (9) I rise to raise a matter for the Minister for Multicultural Affairs in the other place, and the matter that I seek is an update on the support being provided to the Buddhist community of the Bright Moon temple in Springvale South subsequent to the devastating fire that occurred at their premises on Sunday night.

The Bright Moon temple is a special place designed to enable the promotion of peace, tolerance and harmony and as a home for the teaching of Buddhist culture. 'Community' is probably the word that best describes this home of generosity and kindness, having been built as a result of community donations. The temple has also been a provider of fresh vegetarian food for those that need it in the area. Importantly, for many hundreds of families it is also a sacred place where the ashes of their loved ones have been stored. Thankfully so far it appears that most of the urns were saved from the fire.

It is pleasing to see so many people visiting the community of the Bright Moon temple at this time, including the Premier, the minister and indeed the local MP, Meng Heang Tak, who has been a great source of support and is one of the community's strongest advocates. The member for Clarinda has also been working closely with the president and the community in relation to making sure that the urns are returned to family members where possible. Over 80 firefighters contained the massive blaze, and I would like to thank them for their work that ensured that the neighbouring houses were also spared from the fire. Again I ask that the minister update the house on the support being provided to this community at a time of great sadness and loss.

Teachers

Matthew BACH (North-Eastern Metropolitan) (17:37): (10) The matter I raise on the adjournment debate tonight is for the Minister for Education in the other place. The minister has very kindly agreed to arrange a briefing for me in my new shadow portfolio. We face a whole series of challenges across our education system. One of them is a very significant teacher shortage. This has come about for a whole range of reasons, but we know there are workforce challenges right across the country. The government has in place a series of measures that are designed to alleviate that challenge, and I do not have a problem with any one of those measures that have been put forward by the minister. The action that I seek – not wishing to divert her time and energy or the time and energy of any of her officials from their important work – is, nonetheless, at that briefing that she has already kindly arranged for me, to understand any analysis that there may have been from the department about the effectiveness of the measures the government has put in place specifically to seek to ensure the best possible outcomes for students regarding their learning and their wellbeing, given the well-known teacher crisis.

As I said, this has been an issue right across the country. Of course we can re-prosecute arguments from the past, but I would rather focus now on what we need to do to encourage teachers to come back into the profession. I do agree with the minister that what we need to be doing is seeking to communicate

with teachers who have previously left the profession, teachers who have retired, in order to streamline the process to get as many of them back to the classroom as possible.

There has been some discussion, especially in the media over the last couple of days, about inadequate processes that may have led some teachers to return to the classroom without proper checks. I have not wanted to wade into those discussions, because in my view the overwhelming majority of teachers – and I am biased as a former teacher myself, and there are other teachers across the chamber – have the highest regard for student safety. Of course we must have regard for those processes but nonetheless seek to streamline and fast-track processes to get teachers in front of classrooms.

We have got challenges when it comes to the make-up of our curriculum. I think we do need to have a really difficult discussion about teacher quality. The vast majority of our teachers are fantastic. We can have a difficult discussion there, and yet right now I do agree with the very sparing public statements of the minister recently about the primacy of this issue – getting teachers back into the classroom. So I would be very grateful to Minister Blandthorn if she would pass that on to her colleague for me to have at least some understanding of what is being done there and also a further understanding of what we can do on this side of the house to support the minister in her endeavours.

Extremism

Samantha RATNAM (Northern Metropolitan) (17:40): (11) My adjournment matter tonight is for the Premier, and my ask is that his government responds to the Legal and Social Issues Committee's inquiry, completed in the last Parliament, into the rise of far-right extremism in Victoria. Over the summer it has once again been distressing to see groups of neo-Nazis and far-right fascists gather openly in Melbourne. Last month a group of far-right white supremacists gathered on Elwood Beach in the middle of the day, making offensive gestures and taking and sharing photos that were widely circulated on social media. And on Invasion Day, a day of mourning and reflection for our First Nations community, a group of far-right racist extremists attempted to disrupt Merri-bek council's mourning ceremony. These events have occurred following years of escalating incidents in Victoria, and I know personally what it feels like to be on the receiving end of their threats and terror.

These far-right extremists are becoming increasingly emboldened and are a threat to Victoria. These groups prey on the isolated and vulnerable in our communities and exploit people's fears and anxieties to further their own ideological movements. Their movements are founded upon spreading hatred and misinformation in order to increase division in our communities and mistrust of authorities and of each other. Such harmful ideologies have no place in Victoria. They are a threat to our First Nations community and our multicultural communities and must be denounced and rejected when we encounter them, especially by all of us in this place.

Last year the Greens initiated and participated in the Legal and Social Issues Committee's inquiry into extremism in Victoria. This inquiry was the first of its kind in Australia and investigated the rise of far-right extremism in our state. The inquiry found that the COVID-19 pandemic had provided fertile ground for far-right movements and that people's exposure to far-right extremist ideologies had escalated during the pandemic. It found that young people are targeted by far-right groups and are particularly at risk of radicalisation and recruitment, and it found that racism and racist scapegoating are a common feature of far-right movements. While its findings should be concerning to all of us, the inquiry also found that there are things that our governments can do to prevent and counter these movements and to keep our communities safe. It made 12 recommendations, including the government using and investing more in social cohesion and community building, supporting more anti-racism education, and digital and critical literacy, especially for young people. It also recommended improving our integrity measures to build trust in our political systems. However, the last government failed to respond to the findings and recommendations of the inquiry despite its importance and the growing threats of inaction. The start of this Parliament is an opportunity for the government to signal its priorities for a new term. Countering the continued presence of far-right racist

movements in our community must be one of these priorities. I ask the Premier to ensure that the government responds to the previous Legal and Social Issues Committee's inquiry into extremism in Victoria and that it be prepared to table it as a matter of priority.

Remembrance Parks Central Victoria

Wendy LOVELL (Northern Victoria) (17:43): (12) My adjournment is for the Minister for Health, and it concerns the board of Remembrance Parks Central Victoria cemetery trust. The action that I seek is for the minister to exercise the powers available to her under section 10 of the Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2003 and remove the current board of Remembrance Parks Central Victoria cemetery trust and appoint an administrator until such time as a new skilled and compassionate board is appointed by the minister. Remembrance Parks Central Victoria is a class A cemetery trust controlling 11 separate regional cemeteries in Bendigo, Eaglehawk, White Hills, Kangaroo Flat, Axedale, Donnybrook, Sunbury, Heathcote, Pine Lodge and Kialla West. The RPCV website clearly articulates the values and mission statement of the organisation, stating that all members of the organisation will uphold the values of compassion, community and integrity as well as deliver quality and caring service with compassion.

The actions of the trust in recent times have been in complete contrast to these values, with management practices and the treatment of families of departed loved ones best described as cruel and heartless. In the last few weeks hundreds of families of loved ones interred at some cemeteries managed by RPCV have been left devastated when, without any warning or consultation, personal keepsakes, mementos and tributes have been removed from graves. Grieving families honour their loved ones by personalising their gravesites, and the actions of the trust to remove these items have caused unimaginable grief. To add insult to injury, the trust board started out defending this action, then only after considerable media attention finally admitted it was heavy-handed and stood down the CEO. In the meantime families with graves at Pine Lodge were insulted when RPCV posted on their Facebook page that the items had been washed away in the floods. The floods were in mid-October. Families had visited graves many times between then and January when the graves were cleared of memorials. An RPCV staff member told one family that a sign was supposed to be erected giving families three months to clear the graves, but a mistake had been made and they were cleared before it went up.

Clearly the excuses were being made up to suit the complaint. This heartless act comes in the wake of RPCV's controversial proposal in May 2022 to introduce exorbitant price increases for interment and cremation services, a proposal that was ultimately abandoned following pressure from the Liberal-Nationals coalition and significant negative media regarding the issue. These two controversial incidents show a pattern of failure in governance of the current board. The provisions of section 10 of the Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2003 allow the minister to remove the current RPCV board and appoint an administrator. I urge her to do so until a more compassionate and suitable board of directors can be appointed.

National parks

Bev McARTHUR (Western Victoria) (17:46): (13) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Environment and concerns Victoria's national parks. These extraordinary places should be a source of great pride to all Victorians, particularly given the 125th anniversary this year of the first national park reservation in our state at Wilsons Promontory in 1898. They exist for many important reasons, but the preamble to the National Parks Act 1975 defines one clearly:

... whereas it is in the public interest that certain areas of Crown land ... of particular interest or suitability for the enjoyment, recreation and education of the public ... should be reserved permanently and made available for the benefit of the public ...

Section 4, 'Objects of Act', includes paragraph (c):

to make provision ... for the use of parks by the public for the purposes of enjoyment, recreation or education ...

including for the encouragement as well as the control of that use. Sadly, by degrees and apparently without any public debate or even awareness, the situation is now very different. Victoria's national parks apparently now aim to exclude the public, not encourage them. Exhibit A is the set-aside determination for Grampians National Park issued by Parks Victoria dated 9 March last year. This remarkable decision in one stroke removes all public right of access to the park and then deigns to reinstate it in certain areas for certain purposes. It is extraordinary. It does not protect individual sensitive environments or sites of cultural or ecological significance; instead it is a blanket ban on our access to the park except where Parks Victoria majestically and oh so graciously grant us entry.

How have we gone from the understanding that national parks should be reserved permanently and made available for the benefit of the public to this? National parks are parks for the people no more. So, Minister, the action I seek is your immediate review of this set-aside determination and of statutory rule 115/2013, which enabled it. The regulations reference only the set-aside of an area. If the intent was to allow the entire park to constitute that area, why is this absent from the legislation? Minister, I implore you: look again and restore national parks to all Victorians.

Timber industry

Renee HEATH (Eastern Victoria) (17:49): (14) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Agriculture. The Victorian timber industry is a completely sustainable and renewable practice operating under the highest levels of international logging certification and provides three great outcomes. Firstly, the Australian forestry industry contributes \$24 billion to the national economy annually. Secondly, it provides thousands of jobs for Victorians, specifically in rural and regional communities. Thirdly, it provides incredible environmental benefits due to its carbon capture and storage qualities, removing emissions from the atmosphere. The engineering and science worlds have found it impossible to replicate a machine or process as effective as forests at removing carbon from the atmosphere, and industry have found man-made efforts eye-wateringly expensive to use. Yet Labor is going to shut down the entire industry by 2030. The action that I seek is that the government reverse its anti-logging policy and its decision to shut down the industry by 2030.

Rural and regional health

Georgie CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (17:50): (15) My adjournment matter this evening is for the attention of the Minister for Health in the other place, and it concerns specialist appointments in outpatient clinics in the public system. As we know, we have got a very real crisis in our hospitals and our healthcare system. We have got tens of thousands of Victorians – actually we do not know, because the government will not provide that data. I have checked again, and there is still no data on the Victorian Agency for Health Information (VAHI) website about how many Victorians are waiting for their vital surgery. But even when they get that appointment to have that vital surgery, they have got to be seeing a specialist to enable that all to occur.

Back in 2018 the government promised 500,000 specialist appointments in rural and regional Victoria, and that was to occur over a five-year period. Well, we are coming up to that period, and what I want to understand are the details around that promise by the government. Yes, we have had COVID, but that is no excuse for not delivering on what is required in these areas, because far too many people, as we know, are impacted by a lack of services and a lack of being able to see a specialist to get ongoing management and care and, in many instances, surgery.

Just a few weeks ago it was reported that VAHI's data was showing that the wait times for people to get an initial consultation with a specialist have blown out to more than a year. This includes for chronic diseases, and they are very debilitating – things like rheumatoid arthritis – and other appointments for neurologists or dermatologists for very debilitating conditions that affect people's

health and wellbeing. Some of these conditions affect their ability to even work, and when they cannot get in to see a specialist to get treated, to get managed or to have surgery, many people are not able to go to work. That just puts pressure on the entire system. Ending up on a disability pension at an early age is not the answer. We need to deal with a whole lot of these issues here and now, and I think the government has been remiss in not being up-front with the public about the extent in terms of where these specialist appointments are.

As I said, in 2018 the government promised an additional 500,000 of these specialist appointments in rural and regional Victoria. The action I seek is for the minister to provide to the house the number of specialist appointments that have actually been delivered out of those 500,000 promised. We need to understand the depth of the problem. If we do not understand this information, we cannot possibly then go towards fixing it. We all need to be working with that aim so that we can give Victorians, especially those patients that are waiting for these specialist appointments – waiting for treatment, waiting for management and waiting for their surgery – assurances that we understand what is going on.

Health and wellbeing data

David LIMBRICK (South-Eastern Metropolitan) (17:53): (16) My adjournment matter is for the attention of the Minister for Health in the other place. Section 21(c) of the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 establishes a requirement for the chief health officer:

to publish on a biennial basis and make available in an accessible manner to members of the public a comprehensive report on public health and wellbeing in Victoria ...

The last report available on the Department of Health website is the 2019 report. While the reports are generally produced every two years, this report was simply a snapshot of 2019.

I was made aware of the absence of this report back in late 2021 but chose not to raise it at the time, as it seemed a little petty to focus on a missing report given the unique circumstances at that time. If you open the document as it is currently published, it states in the introduction:

This report, published as a requirement of the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008, presents information across a range of key topics that provide a snapshot of the health of Victorians in 2019.

However, at the top of the document it states that it has been authorised by the Victorian government and published in December 2022. There are also some strange references contained within what looks like a recently edited version of the 2019 report citing data from 2021 and 2022.

It is not clear why this was done, but if this is some kind of attempt to shoehorn this report into being compliant with the requirements of the act, then it is shameful and inappropriate. Whilst the delay in publishing a comprehensive health report for Victorians might be excusable, it is a legislated requirement. It is also quite an important report not just for public health professionals but as a formal document for public consumption. My request for the minister is to ensure that the chief health officer publishes a comprehensive report on public health and wellbeing in Victoria as soon as possible.

Responses

Lizzie BLANDTHORN (Western Metropolitan – Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers, Minister for Child Protection and Family Services) (17:55): Mr Davis raised a matter for the Treasurer; Mr Galea raised a matter for the Minister for Multicultural Affairs; Dr Bach raised a matter for the Minister for Education; Ms Ratnam raised a matter for the Premier; Ms Lovell, Ms Crozier and Mr Limbrick all raised matters for the Minister for Health; Ms McArthur raised a matter for the Minister for Environment; and Ms Heath raised a matter for the Minister for Agriculture. I will pass those matters on to them for their consideration.

The PRESIDENT: The house stands adjourned.

House adjourned 5:56 pm.