

**PROOF**

**Hansard**

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

**60th Parliament**

**Tuesday 5 May 2026**



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**Tuesday 5 May 2026**

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

*Condolences*

**Graham Keith Ernst**

**The SPEAKER (12:04):** I advise the house of the death of Graham Keith Ernst, member of the Legislative Assembly for the districts of Geelong East from 1979 to 1985 and Bellarine from 1985 to 1992. I ask members to rise in their places as a mark of respect to the memory of the deceased.

**Members stood in their places.**

**The SPEAKER:** I will convey a message of sympathy from the house to the relatives of the late Graham Ernst.

*Members*

**Ministry**

**Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (12:06):** I am delighted to advise the house that there have been some changes to our government's ministries, the representing ministers in each chamber as well as the parliamentary secretaries. I am very pleased to also advise that a copy of these changes – our government's new team with new energy and a new focus on the new solutions to make life easier, safer and more affordable for Victorians, as reflected in our new Minister for Cost of Living, reflecting the priorities of my government – has been provided to the Clerk for circulation as necessary. I am also very pleased to advise the chamber of the appointment of the member for Glen Waverley as Government Whip and the Minister for Police as Leader of the House.

*Questions without notice and ministers statements*

**Public lottery licence**

**Jess WILSON (Kew – Leader of the Opposition) (12:07):** My question is to the Premier. The government has awarded a 40-year extension to Victoria's lottery licence to the Lottery Corporation at a value of a high single-digit EBITDA. When New South Wales did the same it achieved a multiple of 13.6 times EBITDA, and South Australia achieved a multiple of 12.9 times. Isn't it the case that the Premier has rushed into a bad deal for taxpayers to prop up her fake budget surplus?

*Members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Given there is a new seating plan, I may call the wrong member at the wrong time, but I will not tolerate interjections.

**Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (12:08):** The answer is no, and the answer is not only no. I am going to take up the opportunity to remind the Leader of the Opposition and those opposite that when it comes to delivering a surplus in this year's budget and in future years we are the only jurisdiction on the eastern seaboard to be delivering this surplus. The characterisation of the surplus by the Leader of the Opposition tells Victorians everything they need to know about this Liberal–National coalition.

*Members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Bulleen is warned. Member for Bulleen, you have not moved your seat.

**James Newbury:** On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier is debating the question.

**The SPEAKER:** Premier, come back to the question.

**Jacinta ALLAN:** I am very grateful for the member for Brighton, because I was actually coming to a comment that the member for Brighton made last week describing cost-of-living support as a hoax, which tells Victorians everything they need to know about this Liberal–National coalition.

**James Newbury:** On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier is defying your ruling.

**The SPEAKER:** The Premier has concluded her answer.

**Jess WILSON** (Kew – Leader of the Opposition) (12:10): Why did the government extend this licence without a public tender?

**Jacinta ALLAN** (Bendigo East – Premier) (12:10): In regard to this matter, this was dealt with in the usual way, with appropriate probity, oversight –

*Members interjecting.*

**Jacinta ALLAN:** I know the member for Bulleen struggles with probity and oversight, but that is the approach that this government took.

*Members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Bulleen, second warning. The member for Brighton will come to order as well.

#### **Ministers statements: public transport fares**

**Gabrielle WILLIAMS** (Dandenong – Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for Public and Active Transport, Minister for Women and Girls) (12:10): We know how important public transport is for Victorians, and with household budgets under pressure we are making accessing public transport even easier and making it a real, genuine option to leave the car at home. We made public transport free for the month of April, and we have extended that now until the end of May for everybody, every mode, every day, everywhere in the state. And from June we are making fares half-price for the rest of the year for regular public transport users. That is a saving of over a thousand dollars – a thousand dollars back into household budgets, where they are needed.

We can only offer this because we have invested in tens of thousands of extra bus services, train services and tram services and the infrastructure that has unlocked those services, and our work will not stop. This budget delivers another \$200 million for additional train and bus services across our network. We have funded more trains more often on the Mernda line, the Hurstbridge line and the Belgrave, Lilydale, Glen Waverley and Alamein lines – extra services made possible by the Metro Tunnel. We are also delivering more services on the Shepparton line following the completion of the Shepparton line upgrade, and we have invested in more capacity on one of our busiest corridors in the network, the Wyndham Vale line.

We will not leave it thin. We are giving Victorians more options to leave the car at home, with free public transport and more services, and we are saving Victorians money when they need those savings the most. On this side of the house we will do all we can to help Victorians right now. Meanwhile, those opposite promise to cut. They promise cuts to those who need support.

#### **Public lottery licence**

**James NEWBURY** (Brighton) (12:13): My question is to the Premier. To prop up her fake surplus the Premier has granted a 40-year licence extension to Labor donor the Lottery Corporation. Why was an almost half-century licence awarded two years early without any public tender?

**Jacinta ALLAN** (Bendigo East – Premier) (12:13): Firstly, I do not understand why the member for Brighton and the Leader of the Opposition are attacking the Auditor-General in this way. The

Auditor-General signs off on the budget, and the Auditor-General is signing off a budget that is delivering a surplus.

**James Newbury:** On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, I have raised the potential corruption of the government doing a deal with a Labor Party donor.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Brighton knows that that is not the correct way to raise a point of order. I ask the Premier to come back to the question.

**Jacinta ALLAN:** Methinks he doth protest too much. I have already answered this question. We have followed the appropriate probity advice, and I would suggest that if the member for Brighton has an allegation to make he should put it.

*Members interjecting.*

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

**Member for Wendouree withdrew from chamber.**

**James NEWBURY** (Brighton) (12:15): Isn't it the case that the government engaged in a secret negotiation with the Lottery Corporation because they have donated \$177,000 to the Labor Party in the past four years?

**Jacinta ALLAN** (Bendigo East – Premier) (12:15): No.

#### **Ministers statements: roads**

**Ros SPENCE** (Kalkallo – Minister for First Peoples, Minister for Roads and Road Safety, Minister for Community Sport) (12:15): Today I rise to update the house on the Allan Labor government's continued investment across Victoria's road network. We know that our roads play a vital role in the lives of Victorians, connecting people to jobs, to school, to friends and to families. We want every Victorian to arrive safely, and better roads get you home safer and sooner.

That is why we are delivering a record investment of more than \$1 billion in road maintenance to rebuild, repair and resurface roads right across Victoria. Crews are already hard at work in every corner of the state delivering on last year's record investment, which we are building on this year. We know regional roads do much of the heavy lifting, so 70 per cent of this funding will go to regional Victoria. This budget also invests \$102.6 million for vital road projects across the state – projects like improving the safety of pedestrians on Barwon Heads Road in Bellarine, resurfacing Pound Road in Narre Warren South, improving the intersection of Dohertys Road and Woods Road in the Laverton electorate and, in South Gippsland, developing better freight routes in Leongatha and an overtaking lane on the Strzelecki Highway.

To help families who use these roads to get to work and to get the kids to school and to sport we have announced 20 per cent off their car registration bill. From 1 June Victorians can apply through Service Victoria for a 20 per cent rebate on their registration, putting up to \$186 per car back in the pockets of families. With families already stretched with rising fuel prices and cost-of-living pressures, we know that every dollar counts. The Allan Labor government is focused on practical outcomes: safer roads, stronger communities and real support for Victorian families.

#### **Prisons**

**Brad BATTIN** (Berwick) (12:17): My question is to the Minister for Corrections. The government has announced a review of Victoria's sentencing laws, saying sentencing must reflect community expectations and that community safety comes first. Given tougher sentencing will inevitably place further pressure on Victoria's already stretched prison system, will the minister commit to reopening Port Phillip and Dhurringile prisons?

**Paul HAMER** (Box Hill – Minister for Local Government, Minister for Youth Justice, Minister for Corrections) (12:18): Can I start by thanking the member for his question and reiterating that our government’s priority is the safety of our community. All Victorians have a right to be safe and feel safe whether they are in their homes, on the street, in their workplace or in their communities. I want to say what an absolute honour and privilege it is that the Premier has appointed me as the Minister for Corrections alongside Minister for Youth Justice and Minister for Local Government.

*Members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members will come to order. The member for Brighton has a point of order, and he will be heard in silence.

**James Newbury:** Speaker, this is not a ministers statement. On relevance, I would ask the minister to actually deal with the question that was asked.

**The SPEAKER:** The minister has only been on his feet a short time. The minister to come back to the question.

**Ben Carroll** interjected.

**Paul HAMER:** I would be very happy to start again, Deputy Premier. But I will continue and reiterate how important a priority community safety is to our government, and that is why we introduced Australia’s toughest bail laws. It is why we introduced adult time for violent crime and the establishment of the violence reduction unit.

**James Newbury:** On a point of order, Speaker, this was a very serious and simple question. Without repeating it, it was a very straightforward question, and you have asked the minister to come to the question. The minister is defying your ruling.

**Anthony Carbines:** On the point of order, Speaker, the minister was being very relevant to the question asked, and you did not seek to bring him back to the question. He is being completely relevant to the question, and the hectoring from the member for Brighton should cease.

**The SPEAKER:** The question referred to community expectations and community safety. It also did ask an explicit question, and I ask the minister to come back to the question.

**Paul HAMER:** The reason that I started with that preamble is because it shows that our legislative reforms are working, because since we introduced this legislation bail refusals and revocations are now at record highs. Remand decisions are also up strongly, nearly 70 per cent, and that means that we are seeing that there are more –

**James Newbury:** On a point of order, Speaker, you asked the minister to come to the explicit question, which was whether or not Port Phillip Prison will reopen. It was a very simple question, and the minister should come to that question.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Brighton will resume his seat and not repeat the question in his point of order. The minister still has 1 minute and 40 seconds to get to the answer.

**Paul HAMER:** As I was saying – it is a bit hard to concentrate with so many different points of order being raised – we have got more people on remand and more people in custody than we had this time last year, and we invested in the last budget, in the 2025–26 budget, over \$700 million to stand up more beds in our adult corrections facilities and more beds in our youth justice facilities, including more correctional staff and more youth justice staff to accommodate this increase in demand.

**James Newbury:** On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, we are two-thirds of the way through the word salad and the minister is yet to mention Port Phillip Prison. That was the question.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Brighton, you do not need to raise your voice for a point of order. I cannot tell the minister how to answer the question. I can direct the minister back to the question. The minister has concluded his answer.

**Brad BATTIN** (Berwick) (12:24): Very simply, Minister, what was the cost to close Port Phillip Prison?

**Paul HAMER** (Box Hill – Minister for Local Government, Minister for Youth Justice, Minister for Corrections) (12:24): I thank the member for his supplementary question. The former minister exercised the state's right within the terms of the contract to close the prison, and it will not be my practice to go into details of commercial or legal arrangements.

#### Ministers statements: Victoria Police

**Anthony CARBINES** (Ivanhoe – Leader of the House, Minister for Police, Minister for Community Safety, Minister for Victims, Minister for Racing) (12:25): I am pleased to rise and thank the men and women of Victoria Police – out there day and night, 24/7, keeping our community safe. In particular, can I just say that we have been very pleased to announce a further \$62 million to recruit some 200 police reservists. These are experienced police officers who have done great service in our community and who are coming back to support their fellow officers in roles around administration and investigative work. This is to allow further police officers to get out on the front line, to get in the vans, while those who they trust and know, experienced former officers, provide that service in our police stations and in the community. For those 200 reservists, we have had a record number of applications and expressions of interest already. We are very pleased to welcome back former experienced serving Victoria Police officers as part of a \$62 million plan to bring police reservists back to our state.

I also want to touch on the \$18.3 million for some 3000 new mobile devices. When police are out on the road keeping people safe, we want them to have the latest technology so they can stay out on the road, not be buried in paperwork, and that investment in those 3000 new mobile devices will assist them in that work. We have also announced \$44 million for an additional 50 protective services officers, and we know what a great role they are playing in our community. Through Operation Pulse in our shopping centres we have seen 1000 arrests and we have seen 2000 charges laid. Those 50 additional PSOs will be deployed where Victoria Police deploy them – not where politicians might like to see them deployed, but where police see them needed in our community.

I want to also say thank you to our Victoria Police members who, through a range of other works that we are doing, have seen the academy full, with double squads of up to 50 recruits on Friday every fortnight at the police academy. Our Made for More campaign is delivering results. These investments in Victoria Police – the largest police service in the country – are continuing to deliver results for our community and keeping them safe.

#### Carer support

**Tim BULL** (Gippsland East) (12:27): My question is to the minister for carers. With the number of Victorian carers now exceeding 1 million, many of these young carers with financial challenges, what specific financial relief measures will you implement to ensure these young carer card holders receive assistance to manage the ballooning costs of their essential and critical carer roles?

**Luba GRIGOROVITCH** (Koroit – Minister for Youth, Minister for Carers and Volunteers) (12:27): I thank the member for the question. I have got to say from the outset that carers give a huge input to Victoria, and I see that every day with my mum, who has cared for my uncle for many decades. They give a huge amount to our community. They bring experience and resilience, but the reality is that balancing a caring role with work, study and school simply is not easy, and we see that every day. Just last week in Koroit I held a youth forum, and at that youth forum one of our young carers came

forward and said, ‘I’m a young carer. What benefits are there for me?’ And I was really pleased to be able to unveil all that the Labor government has to offer, from our free public transport –

**James Newbury:** On a point of order, Speaker, this is not a members statement. There was a question there, and I would ask the member –

**Anthony Carbines:** Speaker, on the point of order, the minister was being directly relevant to the question, that went to the work on the policies for carers in our community.

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

**Luba GRIGOROVITCH:** As I was saying, we invest \$31 million each year in carer support and respite programs. We do that on this side of the chamber. Over that side, all they want to do is cut, cut, cut, and we see that every day.

**James Newbury:** On a point of order, sledging is irrelevant, Speaker.

**The SPEAKER:** That is not a point of order, member for Brighton. The minister has concluded her answer.

**Tim BULL** (Gippsland East) (12:30): Minister, can you outline what targeted mental health and educational support programs are being developed specifically for young carers so they do not have to choose between their education and their caring responsibilities?

**Luba GRIGOROVITCH** (Kororoit – Minister for Youth, Minister for Carers and Volunteers) (12:30): I will start off by saying this is a question that should be directed to the Minister for Mental Health, but in saying that, I will say as the minister for youth and carers that we invest a huge amount across Victoria, as we know. In 2025–26, 31 community groups received up to \$100,000, including 14 projects in regional areas. We have invested an additional \$5.1 million to expand the programs, on top of funding each and every year. And although the budget is not yet unveiled, this afternoon I look forward to hearing it and seeing what is in it.

#### **Ministers statements: education funding**

**Ben CARROLL** (Niddrie – Minister for Education, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC, Minister for Medical Research) (12:31): The Treasurer will soon hand down her 2026–27 budget, and this will be a Labor budget with things that matter to everyday Victorians: more funding and support for health care, more cost-of-living relief and something that is very close to every member on this side of the chamber, more funding for education. I have said it before, and I will say it again: Victoria’s future is written in our classrooms. Our most important resource is not in the ground, it is in our classrooms.

I had the great pleasure to be with the member for Werribee just last Friday in Wyndham Vale. We were out in a paddock, but under this Premier and this Labor government we are going to transform that paddock into a state-of-the-art, 21st-century public secondary school that will change the life of everyone that goes through it. This budget has new schools, more funding for planning and more expansions. We are upgrading 55 public schools in every corner of this state.

I would have thought that was good news for everybody, but not for the Leader of the Opposition. She has come out and opposed every single one of these measures. You heard that right – every single one of them.

**James Newbury** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** I ask you not to use unparliamentary language, member for Brighton. I can hear you.

**James Newbury:** On a point of order, Speaker, this is not an opportunity for the Deputy Premier to sledge the opposition.

**The SPEAKER:** The Deputy Premier to come back to his statement.

**Ben CARROLL:** I have kept my posts up on this matter because it is so important for every Victorian to know about it. I will not delete posts that tell the truth. That is why whether it is Maribyrnong College in Footscray, whether it is the Maryborough Education Centre in Ripon, whether it is Yarrowonga College in Ovens Valley, whether it is Boroondara Park Primary School in Kew, we know Labor is on your side. When it comes to education the Liberals only know one thing, and that is cuts.

### Road maintenance

**Danny O'BRIEN** (Gippsland South) (12:33): My question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. On Sunday the member for Ashwood posted a reel on Facebook stating he had had a complaint last Christmas about a pothole on Blackburn Road. In the reel the member was celebrating the fact that the pothole had been fixed by May. Does it take five months for every pothole in the state to be fixed?

**Ros SPENCE** (Kalkallo – Minister for First Peoples, Minister for Roads and Road Safety, Minister for Community Sport) (12:34): I thank the member for his question. We all know that there is more work to be done. We know that there are potholes around the state. There is more work to be done. We are concerned about people getting home safer and smoother, and that is why we have got a record investment in road maintenance in this year's budget. If you add that to the previous two years budgets, we have got nearly \$3 billion, and that is a record sustained investment in road maintenance.

**Danny O'BRIEN** (Gippsland South) (12:35): How many potholes are there in total across the state?

**Ros SPENCE** (Kalkallo – Minister for First Peoples, Minister for Roads and Road Safety, Minister for Community Sport) (12:35): Again I thank the member for the question. The answer is quite simple: too many. That is why we have got a record investment in this year's budget of over \$1 billion to get on and address potholes.

### Ministers statements: budget 2026–27

**Jacinta ALLAN** (Bendigo East – Premier) (12:35): Budgets are about choices and priorities. They show what governments value, what we fund, what we build and what we are prepared to protect. But more than that, they demonstrate what a government stands for, and in this budget our Labor government has made a very clear choice: to manage the economy responsibly and use that position to help people, to deliver a surplus without cutting into the services that families rely on, to bring down debt as a share of the economy, but still investing – you have got to keep investing in the future of this great state – and also to deliver immediate and real cost-of-living help for families at a time we know they need it more than ever before. This is possible because we have grown the economy faster than any other state. Business investment has grown faster than anywhere in the country, and there are 123,000 more businesses today than there were six years ago. We have approved and built more homes than any other state and created more than 300,000 jobs in just the last three years alone, the highest percentage growth of any state.

We acknowledge that Victoria is not immune from global pressures. No state is. But because we have built a strong, resilient economy we are better placed to face into those pressures, and importantly, because we have made it a priority, we are well placed to help families through them as well. Of course we know there is another way: cut hard, cut fast, cut schools, cut hospitals, cut costs and support for families. That is what those opposite would do if they were given the chance. That is not responsible. Our Labor government has made a choice: to back families and the services they rely on.

### *Constituency questions*

#### **Mornington electorate**

**Chris CREWETHER** (Mornington) (12:38): (1618) My constituency question is for the Minister for Environment. When will the minister update Nepean Ratepayers Association and others on the

FSC Group report and the government's response on Mornington Peninsula coastal erosion linked to the then Labor government's channel deepening? Anthony Marsh, who is in the chamber today, and I have advocated for years for Mornington Peninsula coastal erosion fixes, including at Portsea, Mount Martha North and Shire Hall. Part of it has been caused by the channel deepening, along with other factors. While we have heard crickets from state Labor, following community advocacy Anthony secured council funding to fix the Beleura cliff path and Birdrock Beach steps. But much more is needed. On channel deepening, the government said they need to review the FSC Group report. We were finally told on 27 April that this will be publicly released in coming months. The minister must push along this release and take urgent action to restore our coastal areas for the environment, locals and tourism.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Mornington is reminded not to acknowledge people in the gallery.

#### **Tarneit electorate**

**Dylan WIGHT** (Tarneit) (12:39): (1619) My question is to the Minister for Public and Active Transport. Minister, what increase in capacity will be delivered by the introduction of nine-carriage V/Line trains on the Wyndham Vale line? The Allan Labor government has recently announced a \$14.8 million investment to boost capacity on the line, including the rollout of longer, nine-car trains during peak periods. This represents an important step in responding to the rapid population growth and increasing demand across Melbourne's west. This investment will directly benefit passengers across the board, particularly with the upcoming opening of the West Tarneit station later this year, which is expected to further increase passenger demand and place additional pressures on services. I am proud to be part of a government that is investing in real, practical solutions, delivering the infrastructure needed to support growing communities, particularly in the ever-growing community of Tarneit.

#### **Lowan electorate**

**Emma KEALY** (Lowan) (12:40): (1620) My constituency question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and the information I seek is: when will the Western Highway be duplicated to Stawell and through to the South Australian border? This is a project which began back in 2013. Originally it was expected that the highway would be duplicated right through to Stawell by 2016, and yet we are still waiting for the Labor government to fund this very important road. It is the second-busiest highway in Australia. It is the subject of so many accidents and has caused so many fatalities, which is not just devastating to family members and people who have lost a loved one but also has a huge impact on the volunteers who turn up – the CFA volunteers and the SES volunteers – and of course an impact on our police as well. This is something that just cannot be continually kicked down the road and ignored. We are paying the price for a Labor government that has got its priorities all wrong. I ask the minister to explain when this project will be finished.

#### **Laverton electorate**

**Sarah CONNOLLY** (Laverton) (12:41): (1621) My question is for the Minister for Public and Active Transport. As part of today's budget, \$14.8 million will be invested into more capacity on the Wyndham Vale line, with longer trains during peak-hour services. This means that if you live in Truganina and you catch the train at Tarneit station, you will have nine-carriage V/Line trains throughout the morning rush. That is up to 50 per cent more capacity for one of our busiest growth corridors. Despite what the member for Bulleen thinks – as he said on ABC radio last week – these are not excess services, these are vital capacity supports for some of the busiest V/Line stations outside of Southern Cross. Taking away from Wyndham Vale and Melton, as the member said last week, and leaving the line thin is the epitome of madness. While those opposite want to cut capacity on the Wyndham Vale line, we on this side want to boost it. My question for the minister is this: how will these additional nine-car carriage services address capacity and improve services on the Wyndham Vale line?

**Prahran electorate**

**Rachel WESTAWAY** (Prahran) (12:42): (1622) My constituency question is to the Minister for Police. When will the minister finally recognise that crime is out of control and commit the full-time police resources needed to keep Chapel Street and our surrounding areas safe? In recent weeks Chapel Street and surrounding areas have been rocked by escalating attacks on local venues, leaving traders, residents, staff and patrons fearing for their safety and their livelihoods. While Victoria Police undertook a three-week police blitz, a short-term operation is absolutely no substitute for the sustained, visible police presence this precinct desperately needs. Chapel Street is one of Melbourne’s most important hospitality, retail and entertainment destinations, and it absolutely should be safe. It should be vibrant and welcoming, not abandoned to face escalating crime, with only temporary police measures.

**Narre Warren South electorate**

**Gary MAAS** (Narre Warren South) (12:43): (1623) My constituency question is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety and concerns the car registration rebate. Minister, how will the recently announced rebate on light vehicle car registrations benefit my constituents in Narre Warren South? With households facing cost-of-living pressures due to factors outside of their control, like a war in Iran, every little bit helps. Labor governments will always do what they can do to help people make ends meet, and this upcoming state budget will be supporting Victorians as much as possible. Car registrations are one of those big costs for constituents in my electorate, and I welcome any cost-of-living relief possible, as many local families rely on cars to get around, especially for work. I look forward to sharing the minister’s response with my community.

**Brunswick electorate**

**Tim READ** (Brunswick) (12:44): (1624) My question is for the Minister for Energy and Resources. More than 140,000 Victorians live in apartments with embedded electricity networks. Typically, a developer sells the rights to supply electricity for an entire apartment building to just one electricity retailer. Residents are then locked into that retailer, who often charges above-market rates. Many of the affected residents are my constituents in Brunswick; this is common, however, wherever there are apartments. Switching providers requires a meter replacement, costing at least \$1500. In 2023 the government appropriately banned embedded networks in new buildings, with existing residents promised phase 2 reforms, which have still not been done. So, what is the status of the phase 2 embedded network reforms and when can Victorians trapped in these networks expect relief?

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Brunswick, that is two questions. Can you ask one question, please.

**Tim READ:** I will just ask the last bit, which is: when will the phase 2 embedded network reforms be implemented?

**Preston electorate**

**Nathan LAMBERT** (Preston) (12:45): (1625) My question is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and my question is: what traffic management requirements apply to the LMCT petrol station on the corner of Gower Street and Plenty Road in Preston? There appear to be a lot of questions we could ask about this particular business and the larger LMCT business, including questions about whether we need to reform section 5 of the gambling regulations, which is the section under which these businesses apparently operate. But for nearby residents the more immediate concern is the frustration of being unable to access their homes or pick up their children from Preston High or from Darebin Child Care and Kindergarten during the periods when this particular business is offering its promotional pricing. It is a general requirement in Victoria that event organisers and others have a traffic management plan in place when they are going to cause traffic disruption or traffic congestion, which is usually organised through their local councils. Any information the minister could provide about whether this has occurred in this instance would be greatly appreciated.

**Rowville electorate**

**Kim WELLS** (Rowville) (12:46): (1626) My question is to the Minister for Planning. Minister, when will my deeply concerned Rowville electorate constituents have their voices and third-party review rights restored regarding local Knox City Council planning decisions on townhouses and multi-unit developments? Many are outraged by what they see as a draconian erosion of local planning oversight and a total denial of third-party appeal rights on planning decisions within the Rowville and Knox community. Since the introduction of planning amendment VC267 by the state government in March 2025, Knox City Council have been stripped of their ability to apply local neighbourhood character policies to residential multi-unit developments. This deemed-to-comply pathway has effectively silenced my constituents, removing their third-party review rights and preventing them from challenging inappropriate developments at VCAT.

**Pascoe Vale electorate**

**Anthony CIANFLONE** (Pascoe Vale) (12:47): (1627) My constituency question is for the Minister for Small and Family Business. What initiatives are available to assist and support small and family businesses across my Pascoe Vale electorate? On 22 March I had the honour of attending the 70th birthday – buon compleanno – of the magnificent Arena family’s O’Heas Bakery & Deli. The Arena family are the definition of what the very best of small and family business is all about. The Arena family migrated from Italia’s Catanzaro province in Calabria, from the paese di Sant’Angelo. Their family’s O’Heas Bakery started from very humble beginnings, first established in 1956 while raising seven children at the back of the shop: Dominic, Carmel, Rose, Nick, Jim, Joe and Tony. And their nonno, zios, extended family and parents – the late Bruno and Giuseppina, who namely oversaw the bakery for many years – worked hard to bake the freshest of bread for the community while building a future legacy for their children and their grandchildren. Since then they have continued to serve the very best and have become an institution in handmaking cannoli, ciabatta, caffè and so much more. I was truly humbled as the state member to celebrate U Furnu, which is colloquially known in our community as the oven of the community. It does definitely take a village to raise a family, but it takes a bakery to raise a village.

**Bridget Vallence:** On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, I have a number of outstanding questions overdue and unanswered, some dating back 11 months. They are questions on notice to the Treasurer 2421, 3237, 3238, 3239, 3240, 3241, 3242 and 3256. Questions on notice overdue by the Minister for Skills and TAFE are questions on notice 3140, 3141 and 3142. Questions on notice overdue by the Minister for Finance are 3243 and 3245. The constituency question overdue by the Minister for Public and Active Transport is 1512. And questions overdue by the Minister for Education are questions on notice 3210 and 3211. I would appreciate responses for my constituents, and I will pass these to the clerks.

***Business of the house*****Notices of motion and orders of the day**

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** (12:50): General business, notice of motion 28 and order of the day 6, will be removed from the notice paper unless members wishing their matter to remain advise the Clerk in writing before 5 pm today.

***Petitions*****Bus route 526**

**Anthony CIANFLONE** (Pascoe Vale) presented a petition bearing 627 signatures:

**Issue:**

This petition of residents in Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Assembly the need for an improved service on bus route 526, which runs in Coburg and Coburg North, terminating in Reservoir. Bus route 526 does not run on Sundays and finishes early on Saturdays. On weekdays, the service runs every

30 minutes, and the last bus leaves the Coburg terminus at 7.43 pm. The Reservoir terminus does not connect with either the nearby route 11 tram, nor nearby train stations on the Mernda line. Buses provide the only public transport to the Newlands Estate and Coburg Hill. Bus route 526 has not seen any improvements to its timetable, despite significant growth in the area over many years. The absence of Sunday bus services also limits opportunities for shopping, work and social activities for residents who do not drive a car. Census data shows a significantly higher proportion of zero car households in the Newlands Estate compared with the surrounding area.

**Action:**

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly calls on the Government to improve services on bus route 526 by extending operating hours to at least 9.00 pm every day, increasing the frequency to at least every twenty minutes, connecting the route to the Darebin tram and/or train services, and introducing Sunday Services.

**Ordered that petition be considered tomorrow.**

**Merri-bek Primary School**

**Anthony CIANFLONE** (Pascoe Vale) presented a petition bearing 1050 signatures:

**Issue:**

This petition of residents in Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Assembly to the Concept-Master Plan, developed by the Merri-bek Primary School (MPS) community to inform its future capital needs and improvements.

MPS is a vibrant school community of around 380 students and 43 staff, supporting a diverse, inclusive and growing community in Coburg. The school's experiencing increasing enrolment demand which requires new and fit-for-purpose facilities to support current and future students, teachers, staff and families.

That's why MPS developed a Concept-Master Plan, following more than 18 months of extensive consultation with the whole school community, outlining the future infrastructure, facilities and resource needs of the school.

MPS's Concept-Master Plan provides for a staged approach to delivering these upgrades, including: Stage 1) replacement of the current playing surface with an environmentally friendly, resilient and versatile option; Stage 2) construction of a new covered outdoor learning area (COLA) and canopy to accommodate all-weather activities and whole-school assemblies; Stage 3) creation of new 'in-between' and outdoor learning spaces with increased greenery and landscaping to support wellbeing and inclusivity; and Stage 4) development of an upper terrace to support neurodiverse students through inclusive learning environments.

**Action:**

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly calls on the Victorian Government to provide funding towards the delivery of Merri-bek Primary School's Concept-Master Plan.

**Ordered that petition be considered tomorrow.**

**St Kilda PCYC**

**Rachel WESTAWAY** (Pahran) presented a petition bearing 110 signatures:

**Issue:**

This petition of residents in Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Assembly that for 77 years, the St Kilda Police Citizens Youth Club (PCYC) has been a vital part of our community, providing programs and facilities that support young people, families, and local groups. Now, the PCYC faces the devastating prospect of closure at its Inkerman Street site because the State and Federal Governments have failed to provide secure, consistent funding. The PCYC delivers critical early-intervention programs such as the Mobile Activity Centre and Young Leaders Camps, which mentor disadvantaged and at-risk youth. The facility also serves the broader community, providing one of only two indoor basketball courts in the area, supporting St Kilda Primary School teams, seniors' programs and local groups. Losing it would be an enormous blow to our community.

**Action:**

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly calls on the Government to act and deliver funding to the St Kilda Police Citizens Youth Club so that this vital service remains a part of St Kilda's future.

**Ordered that petition be considered tomorrow.**

### Warrnambool rail line

**Roma BRITNELL** (South-West Coast) presented a petition bearing 190 signatures:

The petition of *Constituents of South West Victoria* draws to the attention of the House *the unacceptable conditions experienced by passengers on the Warrnambool rail line.*

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria *urgently restore safe fair and reliable rail services with six carriage train sets and enforceable reserved seating.*

**Ordered that petition be considered tomorrow.**

#### *Members*

#### **Acting Speakers**

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** (12:52): Under standing order 20 the Speaker has tabled a warrant amending the panel of members to preside as Acting Speakers. The Speaker has discharged Paul Edbrooke and Paul Hamer.

#### *Documents*

#### **Budget papers 2026–27**

**Sonya KILKENNY** (Carrum – Attorney-General, Minister for Planning, Minister for Violence Reduction, Minister for Finance) (12:53): I table, by leave:

budget paper 1, ‘Treasurer’s Speech’;

budget paper 4, ‘State Capital Program’;

budget ‘Overview’.

#### *Committees*

#### **Integrity and Oversight Committee**

*Inquiry into the Adequacy of the Annual Budget of the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission, the Victorian Ombudsman and Integrity Oversight Victoria*

**Tim READ** (Brunswick) (12:53): I have the honour to present to the house a report from the Integrity and Oversight Committee on the inquiry into the adequacy of the annual budgets of the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission, the Victorian Ombudsman and Integrity Oversight Victoria.

**Ordered to be published.**

#### *Documents*

#### **Documents**

**Incorporated list as follows:**

**DOCUMENTS TABLED UNDER ACTS OF PARLIAMENT** – The Clerk tabled:

Auditor-General – Enhanced Maternal and Child Health Program Performance – released on 30 April 2026

*Interpretation of Legislation Act 1994* – Notice under 32(3)(a)(iii) in relation to Statutory Rule 10 (*Gazette S204, 22 April 2026*)

*Financial Management Act 1994:*

2026–27 Budget Paper No 2 – Strategy and Outlook

2026–27 Budget Paper No 3 – Service Delivery

2026–27 Budget Paper No 5 – Statement of Finances (incorporating Quarterly Financial Report No 3)

2026–27 Budget Information Paper – Gender Equality Budget Statement

## 2026–27 Department Performance Statement

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

Ararat – C43  
Ballarat – GC255  
Baw Baw – GC255, GC263  
Benalla – GC255  
Brimbank – GC236  
Cardinia – GC263, GC272  
Colac Otway – C132, GC255  
Darebin – C191  
East Gippsland – C159  
Glen Eira – C280  
Golden Plains – GC255  
Greater Bendigo – GC255  
Greater Geelong – C487  
Hepburn – GC255  
Horsham – GC255  
Hume – GC263  
Loddon – GC255  
Macedon Ranges – GC236, GC255  
Manningham – C125  
Mansfield – GC255  
Melbourne – C493, GC272  
Merri-bek – GC236  
Mitchell – GC255  
Moonee Valley – GC236  
Moorabool – GC255  
Mornington Peninsula – C315  
Mount Alexander – GC255  
Port Phillip – C233  
Pyrenees – GC255  
South Gippsland – GC255, GC263  
Surf Coast – GC255  
Victoria Planning Provisions – VC232, VC307, VC308  
Wodonga – GC255  
Wyndham – GC263

*Professional Standards Act 2003:*

The Australian Institute of Building Surveyors Professional Standards Scheme (*Gazette G16, 16 April 2026*)

The Surveyors Australia Professional Standards Scheme (*Gazette G16, 16 April 2026*)

*Project Development and Construction Management Act 1994* – Orders under ss 6, 8 and 9

Statutory Rules under the following Acts:

*Architects Act 1991* – SR 29

*Building Act 1993* – SR 38

*Casino Control Act 1991* – SR 23

*Fines Reform Act 2014* – SR 34

*Infringements Act 2006* – SR 35

*Liquor Control Reform Act 1998* – SR 37

*Magistrates' Court Act 1989* – SRs 30, 31, 32

*Meat Industry Act 1993* – SR 22

*Non-Emergency Patient Transport and First Aid Services Act 2003* – SR 26

*Professional Standards Act 2003* – SR 36

*Retirement Villages Act 1986* – SRs 24, 25

*Subordinate Legislation Act 1994* – SRs 27, 28

*Supreme Court Act 1986* – SR 33

*Subordinate Legislation Act 1994:*

Documents under s 15 in relation to Statutory Rules 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 38

Documents under s 16B in relation to:

*Meat Industry Act 1993* – PrimeSafe meat industry licensing and fees determination 2026

*Seafood Safety Act 2003* – PrimeSafe seafood safety licensing and fees determination 2026

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

*Building Legislation Amendment (Fairer Payments on Jobsites and Other Matters) Act 2025* – Part 2 (other than s 25(4) and s 45(3)) – 15 April 2025 (*Gazette S189, 14 April 2026*).

*Entities Legislation Amendment (Consolidation and Other Matters) Act 2026* – Parts 4 and 6 and Division 1 of Part 9 – 15 April 2026; Division 2 of Part 8 – 28 April 2026; Remaining provisions of Division 1 of Part 8 – 3 May 2026 – (*Gazette S189, 14 April 2026*).

*Labour Hire Legislation Amendment (Licensing) Act 2025* – Ss 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16(2) and (3), 17, 18 and 19 – 1 June 2026 (*Gazette S200, 21 April 2026*).

### **Bills**

#### **Safe Food Victoria Bill 2026**

*Council's agreement*

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** (12:55): The Speaker has received a message from the Legislative Council agreeing to the Safe Food Victoria Bill 2026 without amendment.

#### **Education and Training Reform Amendment (Free TAFE Guarantee) Bill 2026**

#### **Electoral Amendment Bill 2025**

#### **Justice Legislation Further Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2025**

#### **Regulatory Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2026**

#### **Safe Food Victoria Bill 2026**

*Royal assent*

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** (12:55): I inform the house that the Governor has given royal assent to the Education and Training Reform Amendment (Free TAFE Guarantee Bill) 2026, the Electoral Amendment Bill 2025, the Justice Legislation Further Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2025, the Regulatory Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2026 and the Safe Food Victoria Bill 2026.

**Dangerous Goods Transport Bill 2026**  
**Occupational Health and Safety Amendment (Dangerous Goods) Bill 2026**  
**Outdoor Recreation Victoria Bill 2026**  
**Roads, Road Safety and Ports Legislation Amendment Bill 2026**

*Appropriation*

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** (12:55): The Speaker has received messages from the Governor recommending appropriations for the purposes of the Dangerous Goods Transport Bill 2026, the Occupational Health and Safety Amendment (Dangerous Goods) Bill 2026, the Outdoor Recreation Victoria Bill 2026 and the Roads, Road Safety and Ports Legislation Amendment Bill 2026.

**Appropriation (2026–2027) Bill 2026**

*Appropriation*

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** (12:56): The Speaker has received the following message from the Governor, accompanied by the estimates:

In accordance with the requirements of section 63 of the *Constitution Act 1975* the Governor recommends to the Legislative Assembly that an Appropriation be made from the Consolidated Fund for the purposes of a Bill for an Act for the appropriation of certain sums out of the Consolidated Fund for the ordinary annual services of the Government for the financial year 2026/2027 and for other purposes, and hereby transmits to the Legislative Assembly estimates of the Expenditure requiring annual appropriation in the financial year 2026/2027.

**Estimates tabled.**

*Introduction and first reading*

**Sonya KILKENNY** (Carrum – Attorney-General, Minister for Planning, Minister for Violence Reduction, Minister for Finance) (12:56): I move:

That I introduce a bill for an act for the appropriation of certain sums out of the Consolidated Fund for the ordinary annual services of the government for the financial year 2026–27 and for other purposes.

**Motion agreed to.**

**James NEWBURY** (Brighton) (12:57): I seek a brief explanation of the bill.

**Sonya KILKENNY** (Carrum – Attorney-General, Minister for Planning, Minister for Violence Reduction, Minister for Finance) (12:57): The Appropriation (2026–2027) Bill 2026 provides legal authority for the appropriation of money from the Consolidated Fund for the ordinary annual services of government for the 2026–27 financial year.

**Read first time; under standing order 61(3)(a), ordered to be read second time immediately.**

*Statements of compatibility*

**Sonya KILKENNY** (Carrum – Attorney-General, Minister for Planning, Minister for Violence Reduction, Minister for Finance) (13:02): Under the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 I table a statement of compatibility, and under the Statewide Treaty Act 2025 I table a statement of treaty compatibility.

**Statement of charter compatibility incorporated as follows:**

In accordance with section 28 of the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* (**Charter**), I make this statement of compatibility with respect to the Appropriation (2026–2027) Bill 2026.

In my opinion, the Appropriation (2026–2027) Bill 2026, as introduced to the Legislative Assembly, is compatible with the human rights protected by the Charter. I base my opinion on the reasons outlined in this statement.

**Overview of Bill**

The Appropriation (2026–2027) Bill 2026 will provide appropriation authority for payments from the Consolidated Fund for the ordinary annual services of Government for the 2026/2027 financial year.

The amounts contained in Schedule 1 to the Appropriation (2026–2027) Bill 2026 provide for the ongoing operations of departments, including new output and asset investment funded through annual appropriation.

Schedule 2 of the Appropriation (2026–2027) Bill 2026 contains details concerning payments from the Advance to Treasurer in the 2024/2025 financial year.

Schedule 3 of the Appropriation (2026–2027) Bill 2025 contains details concerning payments from advances made pursuant to section 35 of the *Financial Management Act 1994* in the 2024/2025 financial year.

**Human Rights Issues**

The Appropriation (2026–2027) Bill 2026 does not raise any human rights issues.

As the Appropriation (2026–2027) Bill 2026 does not raise any human rights issues, it does not limit any human rights and therefore it is not necessary to consider section 7(2) of the Charter.

**Conclusion**

I consider that the Appropriation (2026–2027) Bill 2026 is compatible with the Charter because it does not raise any human rights issues.

**The Hon Sonya Kilkenny MP**

**Attorney-General**

**Minister for Finance**

**Minister for Planning**

**Minister for Violence Reduction**

**Statement of treaty compatibility incorporated as follows:**

In accordance with s 66 of the *Statewide Treaty Act 2025*, I table a statement of Treaty compatibility for the Appropriation (2026–2027) Bill 2026.

In my opinion, the Bill is compatible with the objects set out in section 66(3)(d) of the *Statewide Treaty Act 2025*. I base my opinion on the reasons outlined in this statement.

**Overview of the Bill**

The Appropriation (2026–2027) Bill 2026 will provide appropriation authority for payments from the Consolidated Fund for the ordinary annual services of Government for the 2026/2027 financial year.

The amounts contained in Schedule 1 to the Appropriation (2026–2027) Bill 2026 provide for the ongoing operations of departments, including new output and asset investment funded through annual appropriation.

Schedule 2 of the Appropriation (2026–2027) Bill 2026 contains details concerning payments from the Advance to Treasurer in the 2024/2025 financial year.

Schedule 3 of the Appropriation (2026–2027) Bill 2025 contains details concerning payments from advances made pursuant to section 35 of the *Financial Management Act 1994* in the 2024/2025 financial year.

**Consultation with the First Peoples' Assembly of Gellung Warl**

Due to the recent establishment of the First Peoples' Assembly of Gellung Warl, it was not possible to give the First Peoples' Assembly the opportunity to advise on the Bill or for them to otherwise make representations about the effect of the Bill on First Peoples.

**Compatibility of the Bill with each of the objects in section 66(3)(d) of the Statewide Treaty Act 2025**

1. I have considered whether the Appropriation (2026–2027) Bill 2026 is compatible with the objects at section 66(3)(d) of the *Statewide Treaty Act 2025* being:
  - 1.1 advancing the inherent rights and self-determination of First Peoples; and
  - 1.2 addressing the unacceptable disadvantage inflicted on First Peoples by the historic wrongs and ongoing injustices of colonisation; and
  - 1.3 ensuring the equal enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms by First Peoples.
2. The Appropriation (2026–2027) Bill 2026 does not in its terms deal with First Peoples. As noted in the Overview, the purpose of the Bill is to provide an appropriation of funds for the ordinary services of Government. Decisions have been, and will be, made in respect to the use of such funds, however, these are separate from the effect of the Bills.

**Conclusion**

I consider the Bill does not affect any of the objects specified in section 66(3)(d) of the *Statewide Treaty Act 2025* and is therefore compatible with each of those objects.

**The Hon Sonya Kilkenny MP**

**Attorney-General**

**Minister for Finance**

**Minister for Planning**

**Minister for Violence Reduction**

*Second reading*

**Sonya KILKENNY** (Carrum – Attorney-General, Minister for Planning, Minister for Violence Reduction, Minister for Finance) (13:02): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

**The SPEAKER:** In accordance with the resolution of the house on 1 April 2026, I ask the Serjeant-at-Arms to admit the Treasurer.

**Serjeant-at-Arms admitted Jaclyn Symes (Treasurer) to chamber.**

**Jaclyn SYMES** (Northern Victoria – Treasurer, Minister for Industrial Relations, Minister for Development Victoria and Precincts) (13:03): I begin my budget speech by acknowledging the traditional owners and custodians of this land. I pay my respects to elders, past and present. The Allan Labor government is proudly committed to truth, treaty and self-determination for First Peoples.

For a long time in this country, there's been this basic deal: that if you work hard, do the right thing and look after your family, you'll have the opportunity to build a decent life – not an easy life, not a perfect life, but a decent one. You'll have a safe home and a secure job, good schools and good health care when you need it. You'll be able to put enough food on the table. And you'll even have a bit left over to enjoy the life you've built.

My parents had that deal. Growing up in Benalla, money at times was tight. Mum and Dad worked incredibly hard to support their family. And they made many sacrifices. And there were times when things felt really stretched. But my parents knew that if they worked hard enough, and if they kept going, they could build a good life and a strong future. And they did. That hard work led somewhere. It meant stability. It meant being able to provide. It meant home ownership. It meant opportunity for their kids. It meant confidence that, however hard things were, you could keep moving forward.

But for too many Victorians, particularly families, that basic bargain no longer feels secure. What was hard then is much harder now, because over the past few years, global pressures that once felt distant have started landing right in people's everyday lives – war in Ukraine, tariffs and instability in the global economy, war in the Middle East. One after another, they've pushed pressure higher. And working people are the ones being asked to carry it. You hear it wherever you go, in schools, on the street, on hospital wards and factory floors. People say it in different ways, but they are often describing the same thing. They say: 'I am working hard. I am doing my best. But I still don't feel like I'm getting ahead.' And they aren't just talking about money. Of course it's there in the weekly shop, the rent or mortgage, the cost of getting to work and keeping the car on the road. But it's the strain of it all too – the extra hours, the time spent away from home, the constant pressure, the sense that even when you are doing everything right life still feels like it's getting harder, not easier.

This budget is about getting to the heart of that feeling. It is about helping with the cost of living. It is about giving families more time in their day. It is about strengthening the systems Victorians are relying on more than ever before. It is about building a stronger economy, a more secure future, and creating opportunity for every Victorian. It doesn't solve every issue that families are facing or stop the wars and shocks and impacts from overseas. But at its core it helps to restore that basic deal: that if people work hard, they deserve a decent life. It's a Labor budget – one that makes life easier, safer and more affordable for every Victorian.

One of the clearest places families are feeling pressure right now is in the cost of getting around – getting to work, getting the kids to school, getting to appointments. And right now, Trump’s war in the Middle East is not some distant event for Victorians. It drove up fuel prices. It is adding to the cost of doing business. And it is putting even more pressure on household budgets that were already stretched. Families in Victoria are carrying more burden every day. And when the cost of getting around rises, the effect is immediate. And it leaves families with less room to cover everything else they need.

For many families, especially in regional Victoria, the car is not optional. It is how they keep life moving. And that is why this budget helps there first. We have already acted to keep fuel prices fair with daily price caps, Servo Saver, and strong action against operators who try to rip Victorians off. And now, for those who have to drive, we are rebating some of the costs of running a car, giving Victorians 20 per cent back on the cost of their rego this financial year. That means up to \$186 back for a driver with one car and up to \$372 back for a family with two cars. That is practical help – help that families will feel straightaway.

But reducing the cost of getting around goes beyond the car. That is why we acted in April, making public transport free for a month. And we have already seen the impact – more people on the network, fewer cars on the road and less pressure at the pump. When you talk to people on trains, trams and buses, they will tell you what it means. It saves them money, which is why this budget builds on that work. Free public transport has been extended by an extra month. And we are cutting fares in half, across the state, for the rest of the year – Metro, V/Line, trams, local buses – half-price transport, for every Victorian.

And we’re investing almost \$100 million for more buses, more often, with new and upgraded routes in growing suburbs, and better connections to train stations, universities and jobs. That means more services to La Trobe and RMIT in the north, a new bus network for Melton South, and better links from Dandenong to Chadstone and Monash. It will put money back in people’s pockets. It will take pressure off family budgets. And it will make the most of the record investments this government has made in public transport right across the state, because at a time like this, government should not stand back. It should step in. It should ease pressure. And it should deliver relief that families can feel straightaway.

We know the pressure families are facing is not narrow. It touches transport, health care, schooling, household bills, and the time it takes to hold everything together. Government can’t solve everything – we know that. But we can make life just a little bit easier. It is why we are continuing free public transport for every child in Victoria. It is why we are continuing free dental check-ups in schools and expanding the Glasses for Kids program, because if a child cannot see the board, they cannot learn properly. Since it began, Glasses for Kids has delivered more than 68,000 eye tests and 13,700 pairs of glasses. We are continuing free kinder, building and upgrading more public schools, because every family deserves a great local school close to home.

And we are backing the people who care for some of Victoria’s most vulnerable children. Foster carers, kinship carers and permanent carers step up to provide care, stability and a safe home, and they deserve support to keep doing it. That is why this budget increases care allowances – delivering around \$400 more a year at the lowest level and up to around \$1700 more at the highest.

This year, we are also spending more on our health system than ever. That means easier care through urgent care clinics, the virtual ED, Chemist Care Now. And it means expanding our world-class care, especially in the west – new postnatal beds, more sonography appointments at Joan Kirner, and more special care nursery cots for babies with complex needs, \$95 million to open the upgraded Werribee Mercy Hospital emergency department, doubling capacity and allowing local doctors and nurses to treat 25,000 more patients every year once fully operational. We’re also investing in a fast track for kids’ care so they can get the surgery or the specialist care they need – more quickly – because Victorian families deserve to know that when they need care, it will be there.

And because no family should ever have to worry about where their next meal is coming from, this budget continues our government's commitment to ensuring food relief providers and support organisations can continue providing vital support to Victorians in need.

The reason that this budget can go so far and do so much to help families with the cost of living, to save them time, and to keep them safe is simple. We have made responsible economic choices. We have made disciplined decisions, cut inefficiencies, consolidated entities, and kept our focus on what matters most – protecting frontline services and building the strength Victoria needs to weather uncertain times. This budget confirms Victoria's first operating surplus in seven years, the only surplus on the eastern seaboard – a higher than forecast \$727 million operating surplus in the current year and surpluses averaging \$1.7 billion being maintained over the budget and forward estimates period. Debt as a share of the economy is on track to decline from 2026–27. And with this budget, net debt is lower in every year over the forwards, compared to the budget update.

Importantly, we have also helped grow the economy. Despite everything going on in the world, Victoria's economy remains resilient. Over the past decade, it has grown faster than any other state in the country. Our economy is estimated to be almost 15 per cent larger in real terms in 2025–26 than it was before the pandemic. Business investment has grown by 44 per cent since 2020, the strongest in the nation. Since June 2020, more than 123,000 net new businesses have been created in Victoria – again, the largest percentage growth of any state. Over the last three years, 300,000 Victorians have found work, a higher percentage increase than the rest of Australia. And since the peak impacts of the pandemic, 646,000 more Victorians are in jobs – yet again, the strongest absolute increase in the nation.

That strength must mean something in people's lives: more security, more opportunity, more secure work, more homes in our state. That is why Victoria continues to lead the nation in delivering new homes each year, with more than 16,000 social and affordable homes being delivered, more than 12,000 underway or complete and another 7000 to come through the Social Housing Growth Fund.

We have looked after the economy so that we can look after Victorians. And because we have built that strength, we can help families now – and keep building for what comes next. Strong economic management is not separate from helping families.

Labor's budgets have built the productive infrastructure Victoria needs and created thousands of jobs as a result – roads, rail and tunnels that provide for a growing population and give families more time and the economy more opportunity; easing congestion with level crossing removals; better connecting regional Victoria through the regional rail revival; opening a new link with West Gate Tunnel; and transforming commutes by switching on the Metro Tunnel.

Construction of the North East Link continues at pace – closing our critical missing link. Melbourne Airport rail is turning Sunshine into a superhub. And the SRL will transform the way we move around the city and will deliver thousands of new homes.

This budget invests a record \$1.04 billion to rebuild, repair and resurface roads across Victoria – enough to get rid of 200,000 potholes, 200,000 graffiti tags, and much more. This is the biggest roads blitz in the state's history – with 70 per cent of the funds going to repair regional Victoria. Labor has invested nearly \$3 billion over the past three years – the largest sustained investment in road maintenance in Victoria's history – because better roads do more than get people from A to B. They make the trip safer. They make it easier for parents, tradies, and regional communities to get where they need to go, sooner.

That is what investment looks like when it is real – not abstract, but felt in the trip to work, the school run, and the journey home – because government investment should not live on a balance sheet. It should make life work better for people.

We also have to ensure that every Victorian feels safe – safe at home, safe in their communities, safe where they work, study and travel. That is why this budget continues to back Victoria Police with more resources, better tools, and more officers where they are needed most. It includes \$62 million to recruit 200 police reservists for station reception and front counter duties, freeing up more frontline police. It includes \$79 million for police IT systems so officers spend less time on paperwork and more time in the community, and giving police faster access to accurate data on firearms, weapons and the private security industry.

But keeping communities safe is not only about response. It's also about prevention. That is why this budget invests \$33 million in the violence reduction unit, backing early intervention, lived-experience mentoring, school support, and community programs that help keep young people engaged and away from crime, because when a young person stays connected to school, support and community, we get better outcomes for them and safer communities for everyone. More police, stronger prevention, safer communities – that is what this budget does.

Helping families through this moment matters. But our job is so much bigger than that. We're making sure the future being built in this state is a future that every Victorian can see themselves in – a future where the young people training in our free TAFEs are the ones working on offshore wind, installing solar panels on rooftops, building the next generation of trams, trains and advanced manufacturing, working in the data centres, clean energy projects and biotech facilities of the future, and earning decent wages from it, in good, steady jobs. That is how you build security. That is how you build the future – a future where Victorian families are not just protected from change but part of it, and better off because of it.

This budget is not only about the big picture. It is also about the difference good governments can make locally. What our investment means – and how it is felt and seen – in the towns, suburbs and communities people call home: almost \$4 million for Rochester's pool, \$19 million to open Pakenham Community Hospital, a new school gym and classrooms at Wales Street Primary in Thornbury, a brand new CFA station in Mirboo North, a new pump track in Haddon, toilet facilities for Coburg reserve. Different places, different projects, but the same idea behind every one of them: backing local communities, building on what makes them strong, and making sure every part of Victoria can share in the future we are building. Because we should be proud of this state. In tough times it's easy to feel pessimistic, but there is lots to be positive about. This is a strong state, a capable state, a state people can believe in. You can see it in the growing economy and the businesses choosing to invest here, in the workers choosing to build their lives here, in the families choosing to make their future here. In uncertain times, that matters. And that strength is something we can use to support families, to keep services strong, to back jobs, to keep building.

At the end of the day, this budget is about people's lives – a cheaper trip to work, a lower rego bill, a child getting to school for free, a family saving money on dental care, glasses, kinder or energy bills, a parent getting home earlier, a household with a bit more room at the end of the week. That is what this budget is all about – real help, right now, and real confidence in what comes next – because if people are working hard to build a decent life, they deserve a government working just as hard to make sure they have it. That is what this Labor budget does. It makes life easier, safer and more affordable. And it builds a stronger Victoria for the future. I commend the bill to the house.

**Serjeant-at-Arms escorted Jaclyn Symes from chamber.**

**Jess WILSON** (Kew – Leader of the Opposition) (13:23): I move:

That the debate be now adjourned.

**Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.**

**Ordered that debate be adjourned for one week. Debate adjourned until Tuesday 12 May.**

**Appropriation (Parliament 2026–2027) Bill 2026***Appropriation*

**The SPEAKER** (13:23): I have received the following message from the Governor, accompanied by the estimates:

In accordance with the requirements of section 63 of the *Constitution Act 1975* the Governor recommends to the Legislative Assembly that an Appropriation be made from the Consolidated Fund for the purposes of a Bill for an Act for the appropriation of certain sums out of the Consolidated Fund for the Parliament in respect of the financial year 2026/2027 and for other purposes, and hereby transmits to the Legislative Assembly estimates of the Expenditure requiring annual appropriation in the financial year 2026/2027.

**Estimates tabled.***Introduction and first reading*

**Anthony CARBINES** (Ivanhoe – Leader of the House, Minister for Police, Minister for Community Safety, Minister for Victims, Minister for Racing) (13:24): I move:

That I introduce a bill for an act for the appropriation of certain sums out of the Consolidated Fund for the Parliament in respect of the financial year 2026–27 and for other purposes.

**Motion agreed to.**

**James NEWBURY** (Brighton) (13:25): I seek a brief explanation of the bill.

**Anthony CARBINES** (Ivanhoe – Leader of the House, Minister for Police, Minister for Community Safety, Minister for Victims, Minister for Racing) (13:25): The Appropriation (Parliament 2026–2027) Bill 2026 provides legal authority for the appropriation of money from the Consolidated Fund to the Parliament and independent officers of the Parliament for the 2026–27 financial year.

**Read first time; under standing order 61(3)(a), ordered to be read second time immediately.***Statements of compatibility*

**Anthony CARBINES** (Ivanhoe – Leader of the House, Minister for Police, Minister for Community Safety, Minister for Victims, Minister for Racing) (13:27): Under the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 I table a statement of compatibility, and under the Statewide Treaty Act 2025 I table a statement of treaty compatibility.

**Statement of charter compatibility incorporated as follows:**

In accordance with section 28 of the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Charter)*, I make this statement of compatibility with respect to the Appropriation (Parliament 2026–2027) Bill 2026.

In my opinion, the Appropriation (Parliament 2026–2027) Bill 2026, as introduced to the Legislative Assembly, is compatible with the human rights protected by the Charter. I base my opinion on the reasons outlined in this statement.

**Overview of Bill**

The purpose of the Appropriation (Parliament 2026–2027) Bill 2026 is to provide appropriation authority for payments from the Consolidated Fund to the Parliament and its agencies in respect of the 2026–2027 financial year.

**Human Rights Issues**

The Appropriation (Parliament 2026–2027) Bill 2026 does not raise any human rights issues.

As the Appropriation (Parliament 2026–2027) Bill 2026 does not raise any human rights issues, it does not limit any human rights, and therefore it is not necessary to consider section 7(2) of the Charter.

**Conclusion**

I consider that the Appropriation (Parliament 2026–2027) Bill 2026 is compatible with the Charter because it does not raise any human rights issues.

**The Hon Anthony Carbines MP**  
**Minister for Police**  
**Minister for Community Safety**  
**Minister for Victims**  
**Minister for Racing**

**Statement of treaty compatibility incorporated as follows:**

In accordance with s 66 of the *Statewide Treaty Act 2025*, I table a statement of Treaty compatibility for the Appropriation (Parliament 2026–2027) Bill 2026.

In my opinion, the Bill is compatible with the objects set out in section 66(3)(d) of the *Statewide Treaty Act 2025*. I base my opinion on the reasons outlined in this statement.

**Overview of the Bill**

The Appropriation (Parliament 2026–2027) Bill 2026 will provide appropriation authority for payments from the Consolidated Fund to the Parliament and its agencies in respect of the 2026/2027 financial year.

**Consultation with the First Peoples' Assembly of Gellung Warl**

Due to the recent establishment of the First Peoples' Assembly of Gellung Warl, it was not possible to give the First Peoples' Assembly the opportunity to advise on the Bill or for them to otherwise make representations about the effect of the Bill on First Peoples.

**Compatibility of the Bill with each of the objects in section 66(3)(d) of the *Statewide Treaty Act 2025***

1. I have considered whether the Appropriation (Parliament 2026–2027) Bill 2026 is compatible with the objects at section 66(3)(d) of the *Statewide Treaty Act 2025* being:
  - 1.1 advancing the inherent rights and self-determination of First Peoples; and
  - 1.2 addressing the unacceptable disadvantage inflicted on First Peoples by the historic wrongs and ongoing injustices of colonisation; and
  - 1.3 ensuring the equal enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms by First Peoples.
2. The Appropriation (Parliament 2026–2027) Bill 2026 does not in its terms deal with First Peoples. As noted in the Overview, the purpose of the Bill is to provide an appropriation of funds to be used by the Parliament and its agencies. Decisions have been, and will be, made in respect to the use of such funds, however, these are separate from the effect of the Bills.

**Conclusion**

I consider the Bill does not affect any of the objects specified in section 66(3)(d) of the *Statewide Treaty Act 2025* and is therefore compatible with each of those objects.

**The Hon Anthony Carbines MP**  
**Minister for Police**  
**Minister for Community Safety**  
**Minister for Victims**  
**Minister for Racing**

*Second reading*

**Anthony CARBINES** (Ivanhoe – Leader of the House, Minister for Police, Minister for Community Safety, Minister for Victims, Minister for Racing) (13:27): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

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

**Incorporated speech as follows:**

The Appropriation (Parliament 2026–2027) Bill 2026 provides appropriation authority for payments from the Consolidated Fund to the Parliament and its agencies in respect of the 2026/2027 financial year, including ongoing liabilities incurred by the Parliament such as employee entitlements that may be realised in the future.

Honourable Members will be aware that other funds are appropriated for parliamentary purposes by way of special appropriations contained in other legislation. In addition, unapplied appropriations under the *Appropriation (Parliament 2025–2026) Act 2025* have been estimated and included in the Budget Papers. Before 30 June 2026, the actual unapplied appropriation will be finalised and the 2026/2027 appropriations will be adjusted by the approved carryover amounts under section 32 of the *Financial Management Act 1994*.

In line with the wishes of the Presiding Officers, appropriations in the Appropriation (Parliament 2026–2027) Bill 2026 are made to the departments of the Parliament, and the independent officers of the Parliament.

The total appropriation authority sought in the Appropriation (Parliament 2026–2027) Bill 2026 is \$313 713 000 for Parliament in respect of the 2026/2027 financial year.

I commend the Bill to the House.

**James NEWBURY** (Brighton) (13:27): I move:

That debate be adjourned.

**Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.**

**Ordered that debate be adjourned for one week. Debate adjourned until Tuesday 12 May.**

### **Appropriation (2026–2027) Bill 2026**

#### **Appropriation (Parliament 2026–2027) Bill 2026**

##### *Concurrent debate*

**Anthony CARBINES** (Ivanhoe – Leader of the House, Minister for Police, Minister for Community Safety, Minister for Victims, Minister for Racing) (13:28): I move, by leave:

That this house authorises and requires the Speaker to permit the second-reading and subsequent stages of the Appropriation (2026–2027) Bill 2026 and the Appropriation (Parliament 2026–2027) Bill 2026 to be moved and debated concurrently.

**Motion agreed to.**

#### *Motions*

##### **Motions by leave**

**James NEWBURY** (Brighton) (13:28): I move, by leave:

That this house grants the Speaker an opportunity to provide the chamber with a personal explanation following allegations that the Speaker was involved in a hit-and-run in a taxpayer-funded vehicle.

**Leave refused.**

#### *Business of the house*

##### **Adjournment**

**Anthony CARBINES** (Ivanhoe – Leader of the House, Minister for Police, Minister for Community Safety, Minister for Victims, Minister for Racing) (13:28): I move:

That the house, at its rising, adjourns until Tuesday 12 May 2026.

**Motion agreed to.**

#### **Program**

**Anthony CARBINES** (Ivanhoe – Leader of the House, Minister for Police, Minister for Community Safety, Minister for Victims, Minister for Racing) (13:29): I move:

That, under standing order 94(2), the orders of the day, government business, relating to the Roads, Road Safety and Ports Legislation Amendment Bill 2026 be considered and completed by 7 pm on 5 May 2026.

If I can continue with my remarks with regard to the government business program, I would first like to acknowledge my predecessor as Leader of the House, the honourable member for Macedon, who

had held the position since December 2022 and who played a significant role in facilitating and delivering on the Allan Labor government's ambitious agenda for Victoria as Leader of the House. I know with her other responsibilities up until most recently as Minister for Ambulance Services and Minister for Health she delivered on a very strong agenda for our government and people's health care where and when they need it most. I thank her on behalf of members in this place and also for her ongoing work representing and advocating for the people of her beloved electorate of Macedon.

We have heard the Treasurer from the other place hand down the 2026–27 Allan–Symes budget, a budget focused on delivering real and immediate cost-of-living relief to Victorians and making things easier, safer and more affordable for all Victorians. It is a budget that invests in things that matter to Victorians, whether it is their education or their health care, keeping them safe and making sure that things are affordable. Budget day means that we have a single sitting day this week. We will be getting on with business this afternoon. The house will be debating the Roads, Road Safety and Ports Legislation Amendment Bill 2026. I do not seek to anticipate that those opposite would oppose the government business program, but I am sure, having been kept in anticipation, we will find out soon enough through this debate. It is an important bill. It is about road safety, and it is about saving lives. We will go to that debate this afternoon.

We know that any life lost on our roads is one life too many. The impact of road trauma is felt very widely in the community, not just by the loved ones of victims but also our first responders and the work that they do to keep people safe. With road trauma more broadly, for those who survive significant road trauma, there is support and rehabilitation that is provided to them and their families and the ongoing supports we provide to our first responders. This year's road toll – I would much prefer to call it 'lives lost' rather than a 'road toll' – sits at 92. We were at 97 at the same time last year. These are significant tragedies. No-one is left unaffected.

This bill builds on a range of road safety measures from our government. As the Minister for Police, I am pleased to have a close interest in much of that work. For example, there is our \$21.1 million boost for road policing operations, more roadside drug testing and improved technology to catch those doing the wrong thing and impaired drivers on our roads. It is something that we must continue to crack down on. Technology is always a challenge in being able to detect those who are affected by other drugs outside of alcohol, but there is much work being done internationally.

I also want to touch on the fact there has been some \$80 million for the continuation of our road safety camera network and particularly the work that we have been able to do around the distracted driver camera network. That is new technology that is finding people who are not getting the basics right: not wearing their seatbelts and people who are on their phones. What it all comes down to is 'Put the phone away, put your seatbelt on and drive the car'. It is a pretty simple message, but so many people, thousands in fact, have been picked up on our distracted driver cameras. We know that that means we have got to get back to the basics of getting people to do the basics well. This has an effect on saving lives and changing behaviour. There have been some significant infringements issued – in the several thousands per month – to those not doing the basics well. But in time people will get that message, and it will just tighten up where people have been slack.

Of course it was this Parliament and our Road Safety Committee going back many decades that made wearing seatbelts the law in this state and led the way not just in this jurisdiction but around the world. Ninety-nine per cent of drivers do the right thing, but we know that speed, distraction, drink and drug driving are all elements that we need to continue to work on and areas where we want to make sure we can see further improvement.

The bill also delivers a broad range of reforms around road safety outcomes, managing our transport network and in relation to ports the very significant rail freight work that we have seen with investments from our government of up to half a billion dollars. I know that there are many on our side of the house who are looking forward to making contributions on this bill that goes to significant investments that the government has made.

It is a government business program that picks up on the budget speech today. It is a more limited program since we are only here for one day this week, but it picks up on the significant work of the roads, road safety and ports bill. I commend the government business program to the house. I look forward to, I would hope, support from those opposite to continue delivering for Victorians.

**James NEWBURY** (Brighton) (13:34): Ask and you shall receive, Leader of the House. We will not be opposing the government business program, the government business program that has been proposed with simply one bill today. I welcome of course the new Leader of the House. Because it was his first go I did not want to pick him up on the second-reading speech that he gave in the government business program debate. I am sure that in future debates on the government business program he will more understand the nature of the motion as being a procedural motion. I know other members across on the other side of the chamber were agreeing with me. I do welcome the Leader of the House. I acknowledge the former Leader of the House and wish her very well in her retirement. But we have a new Leader of the House in the chamber, and I am sure it will be more difficult for the Speaker to manage the both of us. I think it would be fair to say we both have a different style, and I suspect the two of us will in the best, most collaborative way butt heads in the chamber, which is a good thing. I think that both of us will have a voice rather than simply one side having a voice over recent years.

This government business program, as I say, deals with a roads bill that is primarily around road safety. Without wanting to foreshadow the Leader of the National Party's contribution on the bill, anything that we can do to improve road safety is a good thing, and so this bill is an opportunity to deal with the measures that do just that. But as I say, I do not want to go into any great substance on the bill.

I do want to also note that on budget day we on this side of the chamber hope every year – the Leader of the House just moved a motion to allow a cognate debate on the budget bills – that everybody on this side and, frankly, every member of this chamber will be provided an opportunity to consider the budget bills and to speak on the budget bills. What I suspect will soon happen is next sitting week the budget bills themselves will move to the other place but we will have a take-note motion in this chamber, which hopefully should in theory allow every member to speak on it. Sadly – and the Leader of the House may not be aware of this, so I am glad that he is here so I can let him know – last year there were roughly 20 members of the government who were not provided an opportunity to speak on their own budget. I know that is a clear reflection of what the government think of their own budget – it is a stinker, is what it means. That also means that not all members of the chamber are provided an opportunity to speak on the budget, and no matter how bad a budget is – and this is a \$200 billion bad one – the government should not be afraid of allowing members of the chamber to speak on it. You would think that all members would have an opportunity to speak on it. So I say to the Leader of the House here: I hope we do not have a repeat of last year. I would hope that all members have an opportunity to speak on it so that in our communities we can speak of the neglect and financial mismanagement and the government members have an opportunity to read their talking points. That is okay; we know their talking points. But last year that unfortunately was not the case. So being budget day I had hoped the Leader of the House would give me that wish – that we will all have that opportunity soon. I would also say, with the Treasurer's speech being so short, that that probably has provided the house with a little bit more time overall. I was looking at my clock and thinking, 'Well, we're about half the way through half an hour,' and then it just ended. So we have all been given the gift of extra time that we did not think we were going to have, with that short speech. I do hope that all members have that opportunity.

But as I return back to this, we will not be opposing this government business program, which deals with only one bill, which we will consider this evening, at the end of the day.

**Danny PEARSON** (Essendon) (13:39): It is a joyous day. It is not budget day, it is surplus day. Let us be clear: this is the only jurisdiction on the eastern seaboard to deliver an operating surplus. It is a joy of wonder to be in this place on this day, this glorious chamber of magnificent gold and natural light. You just feel nothing more than alive on a day like today.

We have had a change of circumstances in relation to the way in which the appropriation bill is normally dealt with. That is because of the fact that the Treasurer is a member of the other place. We dealt with this last year, but I thought it would be worthwhile just talking to colleagues about the history of this great state. Those of us who are fiscally literate, financially literate, do love the significance of 30 June and 1 July: 1 July 1851 was when Victoria became a colony in its own right. At that point in time a Legislative Council was formed and created which governed this state up until the passage of the Victoria Electoral Bill, which passed on 13 March 1856, and that led to the creation of the Legislative Assembly. At that point in time there was a gentleman called Charles Sladen, who was appointed as acting Treasurer on 28 November 1855, and he held that role for one year and 103 days before he was elected to the Legislative Assembly.

I raise this point simply because it was not until the great John Lenders became the Treasurer of Victoria that we had a Treasurer of this state who was a member of the other place. It is also important to note that for a long period of time the Premier was also the Treasurer. This did not change until after the 1979 election, which was Hamer's worst election and his final one, when Lindsay Thompson was appointed the Treasurer of Victoria on 16 May 1979, a role that he held until he was defeated in 1982. He was Treasurer as well when he was Premier. Steve Bracks was also Premier and Treasurer briefly from 20 October 1999 to 22 May 2000. In many respects what you see here in Victoria is a long tradition of either the Premier holding the portfolios of Treasurer and Premier or in more contemporary circumstances the Treasurer being a member of this place. But you have got to hand it to the Treasurer. She has brought home the bacon today with an operating surplus, and she has worked tirelessly in her role as Treasurer to deliver this great outcome.

For me budget day, or in this case surplus day, is a joyous occasion. The great tactile pleasure one feels when they break the spine of budget paper 5 for the first time – please, I beg of you, get to budget paper 5. Read it. It is a page-turner. Get across the details. What is in budget paper 5? It is a symphony, and it would be remiss of me not to acknowledge the great contribution of a recently retired public servant Steve Mitsas, who was the ecumenical patriarch of budget paper 5 in the Department of Treasury and Finance. He presided over accounting standards in the state of Victoria for about a quarter of a century, and recently he retired. I have got to tell you, if you ever get the opportunity to sit before somebody who has got expertise and knowledge in accounting standards and you go through budget paper 5 at length, which I was fond to do at times, it is just mind-blowing. It opens the eyes in so many ways in terms of what is in this august document. Please, I would encourage all of you to break the spine of budget paper 5. As a former Minister for Finance, you never detract from budget paper 1. It is a very important piece of documentation accompanying the budget papers. Budget paper 2 is pretty good. Budget papers 3 and 4 have their roles to play. But if you take yourself seriously when it comes to accounting standards, if you take yourself seriously when it comes to budgets, make sure you make your way over to budget paper 5. Take your time through this wonderful journey. Absorb the knowledge and information. You will be surprised what you learn.

I also note that the chair of the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee is in the chamber today. If anyone ever gets the opportunity to serve on PAEC, do it. Run it hard. Enjoy it. It is a gift. It is a joy. You learn so much as the chair of PAEC. It can be a bruising experience from time to time. It was once described to me by a former chair of PAEC as a bit like chairing a rowdy ALP branch meeting, but it is a good experience and you learn so much. I wish the members of PAEC all the very best for their travails over the coming weeks. Government is a gift, budgets are a gift and a surplus is a delightful, delicious gift. It is delicious.

**Jade BENHAM** (Mildura) (13:44): I am glad we squeezed every last second and then some out of that – what a joy that was! It was like a university lecture, I suppose. I do not know; I did not go.

As the member for Brighton indicated earlier today, we are not opposing the government business program, because the bill on the program –

*Members interjecting.*

**Jade BENHAM:** I know, remarkable. But the bill on the program is to do with road safety of course. In our neck of the woods, road safety is paramount, given that we have to drive around on crumbling goat tracks and that we do not have car-worthy roads but are expected to have roadworthy cars. Anything that is going to contribute to safer roads I should think is a positive thing. It has been already a fascinating day – fascinating. The Treasurer mentioned that the budget she had just handed down was a Labor budget. It sure is. The member for Essendon mentioned that the Treasurer has brought home the bacon. Yes, she has, in terms of pork-barrelling, I would say, in Labor seats, building nice new shiny things with money we have not got. An operating surplus is a fake surplus; let us be honest. Honestly, in basic budgeting in a household, for example, if you had surplus money, you would pay that toward your ever-growing debt, would you not? The commonsense, fiscally responsible thing to do would be to reduce your debt, not barrel down towards a \$300 billion debt. It is absolutely mind blowing.

I do have to say that whenever there has been a break from this place and then I return to the bubble that the Labor government live in, it is quite perplexing that members on the other side can sit up and pat themselves on the back for what is presented to the house and to the Victorian public. It is quite remarkable that they actually think that Victorians still believe the messages that are being peddled by this government. I can tell you, after spending every day within my community over the weeks that we have been out of this place, they do not; it is as simple as that. No-one is believing this message and the – I do not know the best way to put it; it is all quite perplexing – pats on the back that this government give themselves for a job well done in fiscally responsible management. This is a government that cannot manage money, and this budget proves it once again. I know the member for Brighton also stated, and I have brought it up in government business program contributions several times this year in fact, that my colleague the member for Morwell –

**A member** interjected.

**Jade BENHAM:** great bloke – and the member for Shepparton did not get to give their response to last year's budget. The member for Narracan and the member for Hawthorn did not get to respond to the budget. Of course the government does not want to give time to those who get not much out of that budget.

When we talk about new schools and when we talk about new hospitals, some of that investment in the region would be great. I would like to see a return-on-investment statement. The member for Essendon was talking about the immaculate journey that budget paper 5 is. Given that there is no regional budget paper anymore, I would like to see a statement on the return on investment in real terms, because when we talk about all the billions of dollars now – we do not even talk in terms of millions, we talk in terms of billions, including our interest rate payments and debt – I would like to see the return on that investment and how life is actually getting better for Victorians, because it is not. I can tell you that it is not. The cost of living, community safety – I mean, the heading on the budget paper itself is 'Easier. Safer. More Affordable'. The Leader of the Nationals and I had a conversation this morning that the term that young people use for that these days is 'delulu'.

I will say before I finish here, though, that it is lovely to have a new Leader of the House, who I am sure will be gracious in leniency toward me. And is lovely to have Statler and Waldorf in the box seat over here.

**Tim RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) (13:49):** Well, it is a great pleasure to follow the member for Mildura, who I tuned into on the radio the other day with Georgie Purcell, where she talked about One Nation on a charge and tearing through regional and rural areas. To follow that sort of summation and the criticism of budget paper 5 – as a former student of the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee, budget paper 5 is where the love lives. This is where you find everything, where you do the work, where you put in the effort, and that is where you do not mix up a \$300 billion deficit, because clearly numbers on the paper are just made up – they just move around; they do not make much sense there.

But this is an exciting time here. This is a really exciting time because, for those opposite, how many how many budgets has this government handed down? I will give them a clue: this is the 12th appropriation. So when those opposite had four and the member for Rowville forgot that jobs existed in a Treasury speech – remember that? Ctrl+F – if you had ChatGPT today, you would chuck it in and you would go, ‘The Treasury speech missing from the member for Rowville does not mention jobs once.’ Well, in this budget we have got jobs and investment. We are making it easier, safer and more affordable for Victorians.

I was a bit shattered because I thought, ‘The federal budget’s next week on Tuesday. We could have the member for Kew, the Shadow Treasurer and the Leader of the Opposition, because of those opposite there is no-one else that can do the job that the member for Kew does, on both occasions’ –

*Members interjecting.*

**Tim RICHARDSON:** Leaning in here, remember when the member for Brighton was there as the Shadow Treasurer? The member for Sandringham –

*Members interjecting.*

**Tim RICHARDSON:** Well, member for Brighton, I would rather be a contender than a pretender, my friend, because over there, after 12 appropriations introduced to this house, you can see the values live large. Those opposite have a chance in the coming little while to reflect on how they can talk about how important this budget is.

I note the concerns from the member for Brighton and genuine concerns around those opposite having the opportunity to speak for their communities on a take-note motion, in the spirit of multipartisanship for us as well, and I think that is an important point that they get the opportunity. But let us just put this forward: we see constantly the junior party of the coalition speaking for so much more. We see the Nationals contributing significantly more during government business program efforts. Their back is sore from carrying the other side of the coalition. So I would say to those opposite: get some Liberals on the appropriation to talk about the values in their community – not just the talking points but actually analyse and dig deep. All we see from those opposite, time and time again – and we will see it on the road safety bill. We will see the lead speaker from the Libs, then we will see one or two and then we will see six or nine Nationals front up. This is my call-out to the Liberal Party: do the work. There are only 21 sitting days to go. At least get on the speaking list –

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Come back.

**Tim RICHARDSON:** We are just saying here that we are taking count of who is contributing, and I am giving a shout-out to Mildura and colleagues over there that they are carrying the team with their contributions.

*Members interjecting.*

**Tim RICHARDSON:** Their back is sore, someone said. The Roads, Road Safety and Ports Legislation Amendment Bill 2026 is really important when you read through that. We know the impact of road trauma in our communities, and this is on the government business program at a time when we have just announced record funding for road maintenance and upgrades of \$1.04 billion. It comes at an important time, because we want to make sure that Victorians are safe. Those road upgrades are really important. That bill goes to the heart of decades-long work in road safety enforcement, which has been really led from Victoria for decades. So that is a really important bill for people to contribute on. It is the one on the business program today.

But to see the appropriation come in here – the 12th that I have had the opportunity and privilege to scrutinise and look at on behalf of my community in Mordialloc – is a tremendous privilege. Government and representation are an opportunity. It is a way to put your values forward, and that is what the appropriations allow us to do. To be able to have 12 on the run – those opposite got four.

They had four at that time. They are not memorable. You might remember those stickers they put down at Southern Cross of where the airport rail would go, and tourists would walk into Southern Cross station off the V/Line and then go to the end of the platform with the sticker, waiting for the airport rail. There are apparently still people waiting there. We mourn their souls who never found their way to the airport. That was the infrastructure contribution of those opposite. This is a budget that is easier, safer and more affordable for Victorians.

**Wayne FARNHAM** (Narracan) (13:54): I am pleased to rise today on the government business program and to follow the member for Mordialloc. I will get to you in a minute. Congratulations to the Leader of the House on his promotion. It is good to see he actually stood up today and said something. I thought he was going to be quiet for the whole day while he learns the trade. But it is great to be here.

The member for Brighton stated earlier that we do not oppose the government business program. This will probably be the only time this year that we do not oppose it, would be my guess. Of course we do have a little bit on the program, the Roads, Road Safety and Ports Legislation Amendment Bill 2026 and of course the budget handed down today. And it is quite funny, member for Essendon – I have got a bit of respect for the member for Essendon. Thank you for your time as a minister. He is very, very excited about budget paper 5 – very excited about it. Different things excite different people, that is all I could say. But I would love for the member for Essendon to read budget paper 4. Budget paper 4 is where my community is concerned, and I will point that out to the member for Mordialloc as well, because in budget paper 4, when we look at what has happened, guess what has happened with the West Gippsland Hospital – no uplift in funding, not one cent. This is a broken promise from this government, which was going to start that hospital in 2024, and today there is not one extra cent for four hospitals, not just West Gippsland Hospital – Wonthaggi, Dandenong and I cannot remember the other one. But there were four hospitals in there that the government have given no uplift in funding to, and they have literally misled those communities. So if we are going to get excited, I would not be reading budget paper 5. I am getting more disappointed about budget paper 4, where this government have not delivered the uplift in funding that they promised to do.

I will congratulate the member for Mordialloc on his promotion. I think it is a promotion. He is cabinet secretary at the moment. But I know he is always the bridesmaid and never the bride. He just cannot quite get into cabinet. They have had as many reshuffles as they have had taxes – 35 reshuffles and he has missed out again, and he is one of the better contributors on that side. We were opposite numbers. He was Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier, and he has missed out. The last parliamentary secretary got promoted, I believe – that was the member for Bentleigh – but the member for Mordialloc missed out. My sincere commiserations to you, member for Mordialloc. I think you deserve to be in there. No matter what your colleagues think, I think you deserve to be in there.

He also noted that this was the 12th budget the government has delivered. That tells me that 12 times the government has missed the opportunity to deliver the West Gippsland Hospital – this is the 12th time the government has failed on delivery of the West Gippsland Hospital – which is pretty poor in anyone's language, when this hospital was actually put forward in 2015 as a priority hospital. But the government failed on that. Someone mentioned we have about 21 sitting days left, which is true, but it would be nice if we could get a reply to this this time. I only got 7 minutes to reply on the 2025–26 take-note motion for the budget – 7 minutes to put forward my community's case as to why the budget was bad, and this one is even worse. The member for Morwell did not get a chance. Member for Mildura, I do not think you had a chance.

**Jade Benham** interjected.

**Wayne FARNHAM:** You did – you got through. But there were lots of members in this chamber that missed out on a budget reply. So I put to the new Leader of the House: how about you give a bit of priority and a bit of respect to those opposite so we can have a reply to the budget rather than just guillotining it off and letting it just drift off into the ether with no reply from people on this side? I

know the government will not want the scrutiny on this budget, because it is not a great budget. It is a very, very bad budget for Victoria, and it is good to see they have pork-barrelled their own seats again, like they do every other budget.

**Motion agreed to.**

### *Members statements*

#### **Bulleen electorate schools**

**Matthew GUY** (Bulleen) (14:00): I just want to rise to put on record my recent visits and admiration for the teachers and students at Birralee Primary School, who are working through very tough conditions after being ignored for 12 years by the Andrews and Allan Labor governments, despite their student enrolment rising from about 300 to 700 over that time. They do not have a hall. They have got nowhere undercover to look after those students. I have raised this matter before. It appears that they are never listened to. Despite many tours from Labor upper house MPs who are desperate to get pictures with parents, they will not do anything in terms of advocating for the school to get the money they need. It is the same with Templestowe College, where I also was last week. Templestowe College parents are doing their best with a government who give them nothing.

#### **Hospitality industry**

**Matthew GUY** (Bulleen) (14:00): On another matter, we are about to lose an entire sector of our economy. Melbourne is about to lose its hospitality sector from the violence that is happening against small businesses, against family businesses, against established businesses. Whether it is tobacco wars or the vodka wars that are coming, this government and this Premier have not even talked about this. We are going to see institutions in Melbourne close because the government is not doing anything to stop these wars against our hospitality sector. Whether it is people from overseas, whether it is gang violence that is from Melbourne, it is hurting small business.

#### **Budget 2026–27**

**Emma VULIN** (Pakenham) (14:01): I am very pleased to share that the Pakenham electorate has much to celebrate from this year's budget. It includes funding for planning and development work to improve the Toomuc Valley Road–Princes Highway intersection, the opening and establishment of services at the Pakenham Community Hospital, \$250,000 for Pakenham Upper Recreation Reserve, \$450,000 for upgrades at Pakenham Consolidated School and extra hours for bus route 928, to name a few.

#### **Shane Lewis**

**Emma VULIN** (Pakenham) (14:02): On another note, and sadly, it is with a heavy heart that I send my sincere condolences to the Lewis family on the passing of their dear Shane, who was also famously known as 'Grandpa'. Shane Lewis was a champion for raising awareness about motor neurone disease and sharing his and his family's experiences with living with MND. The beast of a disease has taken his life approximately two years after diagnosis. Vale, Shane Lewis. You were courageous, loving and a true gentleman – now at peace. Big hugs to the family and a special one for Finn Cadman too.

#### **Gippsland East electorate health services**

**Tim BULL** (Gippsland East) (14:02): I want to raise a number of issues with the new Minister for Health from within both her and my electorate. These issues are all matters that I have raised previously that we have had no action on. Bairnsdale hospital needs a new lift; the current one breaks down, meaning those needing critical care are often forced to negotiate stairs in their beds. Public dental waiting lists are out of control and the voucher system fails. A new ED is required at the hospital – stage 1 of a new hospital – to meet current and future needs and to assist with ambulance ramping and response times. We were promised a mental health and wellbeing hub in Orbost – where is it? An outreach service is not what was promised. Buchan Bush Nursing Centre needs the funds for a new

facility, having been refused funding twice. I ask that the new minister address these issues in her own electorate.

#### **Wild dog control**

**Tim BULL** (Gippsland East) (14:03): I also want to relay a voice message I received from a local farmer in the far east just last week: ‘Hi, Tim. I just want to let you know we’re being visited by massive numbers of wild dogs. It’s becoming very frightening. At times I’ve warned people to get inside or get into a vehicle if they turn up. The numbers are just unbelievable. It’s bloody dangerous, and I don’t know if I can work out there or send anyone else out there to work. As I said to one person, you’d need a semiautomatic to have a hope. Having one dog trap is not enough. They’re coming out of the national park. The numbers are just incredible, like nothing I’ve ever seen before. I don’t want to be accused of doing nothing when someone else is attacked. We need more resources applied to that program.’

#### **Springvale activity centre**

**Eden FOSTER** (Mulgrave) (14:04): I would like to thank the Minister for Planning for joining me in Springvale last week to visit a site allocated for 87 units of affordable housing in the activity centre and to speak with local traders from the Springvale Asian Business Association. As one of the train and tram activity centres, this government is building more housing in Springvale so people can live close to public transport, schools and family, and the strong enthusiasm and the strong backing of the Springvale Asian Business Association was very much welcomed.

#### **Springvale Rotary Club**

**Eden FOSTER** (Mulgrave) (14:05): I would also like to congratulate the Springvale Rotary Club for an incredibly successful fundraiser event in the fight against polio worldwide. I was very proud to see my community come together in support of this great cause, and I want to congratulate the executive for the night and for the work that they do for such important causes.

#### **Dandenong Hospital**

**Eden FOSTER** (Mulgrave) (14:05): Finally, I would like to acknowledge the amazing new development occurring at Dandenong Hospital. I was very happy to join a number of my colleagues, including the Minister for Health, for the sod turn. Residents in Mulgrave know how important our health services are, and delivering an expanded intensive care unit in Dandenong Hospital, as well as delivering the new Monash hospital tower expansion, demonstrates that this government will back our public services, unlike those opposite, who will only cut, cut, cut.

#### **Warrnambool May Racing Carnival**

**Roma BRITNELL** (South-West Coast) (14:06): Today marks the start of one of regional Victoria’s most iconic events: the Warrnambool May Racing Carnival, and what a significant event it is for our community. This carnival is far more than a racing event; it is a powerful economic driver, injecting more than \$15 million into the local economy and bringing over 30,000 people through the gates across three incredible days. Our hotels are booked out months in advance, our hospitality venues are buzzing and local businesses deliver quality service and a much-needed vital boost. As the local member of Parliament, I am proud to stand firmly behind this carnival, an event steeped in history dating back to the 1800s showcasing both jumps and flat racing at the highest level. At its heart is the world-renowned Grand Annual steeplechase, the longest steeplechase in the Southern Hemisphere, drawing thousands to line the famous hill on Thursday in a tradition unlike any other. So significant is this event to our region that we mark it with a local public holiday – a reflection of just how deeply it is woven into the fabric of our community. But what truly makes the carnival special is the people: the club, the committee members, the volunteers, the hospitality staff and the local families who step up year after year to welcome visitors with pride. It is a time when people return home, reconnect with

old friends and celebrate everything that makes Warrnambool unique. This is a community, this is tradition and this is regional Victoria at its best. I say to this house: how good is the 'Bool?

### **Ballarat**

**Juliana ADDISON** (Wendouree) (14:07): According to the 2026 happy city index, Ballarat is the happiest city in Australia, securing 16th place globally. The index highlights Ballarat's exceptional quality of life, strong economic growth and outstanding livability, reinforcing the strength of regional cities in delivering happiness and wellbeing. Ballarat performs strongly across key indicators, including abundant green space, excellent housing affordability and a high net internal migration rate, showing that more people are choosing to live in Ballarat. Located on the lands of the Wadawurrung people, Ballarat combines a rich goldfields history with a progressive, community-driven future. Our city offers accessible infrastructure at the Ballarat and Wendouree train stations, strong healthcare services through Ballarat Base Hospital, St John of God and our regional cancer centre and high-quality public, Catholic and independent schools. Ballarat's cultural and sporting life is vibrant, hosting events like Spilt Milk, the Ballarat International Foto Biennale, the Ballarat Marathon and AFL and AFLW matches. We are also home to Sovereign Hill and the Ballarat Wildlife Park. We are a beautiful city with Lake Wendouree and the botanic gardens as well as our 19th century streetscapes, Her Majesty's Theatre and the Ballarat Mining Exchange. From world-class sporting facilities and thriving communities to great cafes, restaurants, markets and creative spaces, well done, Ballarat.

### **Kim Cain**

**James NEWBURY** (Brighton) (14:08): All of Bayside have full hearts as we wish Kim Cain well as he leaves St Leonards Uniting Church in Brighton Beach. We will miss him greatly. As he said at his cutting of ties, he is loved by our community and he loves us. His 16 years at the church have been nurturing and guiding with a depth of spiritual leadership we will miss.

### **Bayside early childhood education and care**

**James NEWBURY** (Brighton) (14:09): Making our kindergartens compliant will cost \$65.3 million across Bayside kindergartens. So far, state Labor has contributed \$700,000 in my community and promised another \$850,000 that has not even been paid. The gap is a chasm of tens of millions of dollars. Recently Bayside council was forced to consider centralising community kinder with the closure of current centres in Hampton because of Labor's funding shortfall.

### **Yalukit Willam Nature Reserve**

**James NEWBURY** (Brighton) (14:09): Working with a handful of supporters, we publicly advocated for the conversion of the former golf course into the blossoming Yalukit Willam Nature Reserve. The reserve was opposed by Bayside council and state Labor. The reserve association is the beating heart of this site. If there was ever a plan to remove the association, I would personally be at the front of every protest opposing it.

### **Brighton Primary School**

**James NEWBURY** (Brighton) (14:10): A year ago termites ate through the floor and roof of Brighton Primary School's junior building. Although it took six months before state Labor replaced two floors, the entire bathroom block remains without a floor or roof. What is worse, a stack of uninstalled toilets sit piled against a wall. The neglect shown by Labor towards Brighton and Brighton Primary and our children is disgraceful and forgotten again in the budget today.

### **Women's health**

**Gary MAAS** (Narre Warren South) (14:10): I rise today to speak about the women's pain forum that I recently held, facilitated by Women's Health in the South East (WHISE), for women in my electorate to discuss the Victorian government's inquiry into women's pain and its findings. It was wonderful to be joined by the Parliamentary Secretary for Women's Health the member for Northcote.

I know many appreciated her attendance and the serious response from the government. Her presentation was just outstanding, with a focus on systemic solutions to the problems. Many representatives from local organisations in my community reflected on the findings of the inquiry through positive conversations on the realities of our health system in a safe and supportive space. Each plays an important role in supporting this issue on the ground in my electorate; they represent a range of backgrounds, professions and experiences, and the forum offered validation of what they already know: that women's pain is real and too often dismissed.

CEO Kit McMahon, advocacy and policy adviser Zoe Francis and evidence and policy lead Rachel Bush from WHISE facilitated a significant discussion about the report, allowing those present to discuss where they thought more work needed to be done and what meaningful change could look like in Melbourne's south-east. WHISE are a great organisation whose continued work supports the health and wellbeing of women in our area. It was also terrific to have the members for Narre Warren North and Cranbourne there to contribute their perspectives.

### **Netball Victoria**

**Peter WALSH** (Murray Plains) (14:11): Female sport should be for females, not for players who choose to identify as female but who are not. Netball Victoria's rule that players may participate in any affiliated competition in accordance with their gender identity is a travesty of justice for female netball players; it takes no account of the superior stamina and physique of males. I commend the coach of the Echuca United netball team, who protested against a male player playing against her team. That protest fell on deaf ears. The team then forfeited, denying the Echuca United players the opportunity to play netball that Saturday. Netball Victoria decided not to comment but passed it on to the Murray league.

There is precedent. Last year the Riddell district league banned two transgender players. Why didn't the Murray league do the same? The reason they banned those players was because of their superior stamina and physique. For those that have abused the Echuca United players and coach, resorting to calling them racist and homophobic, can I tell them that they have lost the debate before they have started, because all they can do is slander rather than express a logical reason as to why a male should play female sport.

### **Footscray electorate schools**

**Katie HALL** (Footscray) (14:13): There is an education revolution happening in Maidstone and Maribyrnong. We started with the sod turn for a new kinder on Rosamond Road which is conveniently located across the road from Footscray North Primary School, which has already had a \$20 million upgrade under this government. But there is more: students who go to that kinder and then to the primary school will now be able to go to an upgraded Maribyrnong College because in this year's budget we have announced a \$13 million upgrade at Maribyrnong College, a school close to my heart – my dear old dad was school captain there in 1968, and I think some of those academic buildings are well and truly overdue for an upgrade. This is exciting news for the Maribyrnong school community.

There is great news for Footscray High too in this year's budget. Footscray High has a really innovative rowing program. It is one of the few government schools that offers a rowing program, but we know that that can be expensive for students, so I am absolutely delighted that in this year's budget I have secured \$140,000 for students who might not be able to financially participate to do so.

### **Budget 2026–27**

**Brad ROWSWELL** (Sandringham) (14:15): Today is the day that the Allan Labor government delivered their 12th Victorian budget. I just want to spend a small amount of time indicating what was delivered for my community. Wait for it, Deputy Speaker; here it comes.

That is right – nothing, absolutely nothing. There are good schools in my community – Sandringham College, Beaumaris Primary School, Beaumaris North Primary School and Mentone Primary School

– all deserving of infrastructure upgrades in their schools. But no, today has delivered nothing for those communities. As the government plan to increase the density of housing with their activity centres plan and with their Suburban Rail Loop, which no-one in my community ever voted for, there is no plan to step up the infrastructure and the services that are required with the anticipated uplift in population currently being imposed by the policy settings of this government. And good luck to those people driving down Bay Road. There is no infrastructure funding for a traffic study on Bay Road to make that safer for our community.

All my community have ever asked for is for their fair share of funding, and this is the 12th year in a row that my community have been given anything but that. This Labor government are more interested in servicing their backbenchers and saving their seats than governing for all Victorians.

### **Budget 2026–27**

**Tim RICHARDSON** (Mordialloc) (14:16): Easier, safer and more affordable – that is what this Victorian budget is about and what Labor governments deliver in the support of all Victorians. We see record investments in health funding, with upgrades on the way to Dandenong Hospital of \$305 million to improve the theatre rooms there and provide better health care, after backing in our health services at Frankston Hospital and the Victorian Heart Hospital in recent years and with an upgrade to Monash Medical Centre just around the corner. We see upgrades to our schools in our Kingston and Greater Dandenong communities. With the wonderful principal leadership of Sherri Jenkins at Keysborough Gardens Primary School, \$8 million will be delivered to complete the school to deliver a library and a science and technology space that will be so innovative for the kids in Keysborough South into the future. I want to give a shout-out to those educators, who do so well in our community. We also have for Edithvale Primary School a \$1.33 million to upgrade their outdoor learning spaces and their outdoor basketball court facilities. Thank you to Detta Gordon and the wonderful school community there, who have achieved that outcome.

We are backing in Victorians at a time of need with support for the cost of living like we have not seen before. There is a 20 per cent refund on rego across our state from 1 June to support Victorians. We are seeing free public transport throughout April and May for the conflict in the Middle East started by President Trump. We see the impact that the Middle East conflict has had, but Victorians know that Labor governments back them in, and it is why we will have half-price public transport for the rest of the year as we support Victorians.

### **Croydon electorate businesses**

**David HODGETT** (Croydon) (14:18): I rise today to speak about one of the many privileges I enjoy as a member of Parliament: being invited to take part in the opening of local businesses. In recent weeks it was my honour to participate in the opening of not one but two local businesses. I was pleased to be joined on both occasions by Grant Hutchinson, Liberal candidate for Croydon.

Desi Basket, conveniently located near my office on Main Street, Croydon, is a welcome addition to our community. It is a one-stop shop for South Asian groceries, offering a wide range of authentic products from India, Fiji, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Nepal, all under one roof. For those who may be time poor but still wish to enjoy South Asian flavours, Desi Basket also offers the convenience of online shopping with a home delivery option. With such an extensive range of goods, I encourage members of the community to visit and explore all they have to offer the next time they are in Croydon.

On the weekend Grant and I also attended the official opening of FadeNation Barbers in Burnt Bridge, a great barber shop that offers more than just a haircut. It provides a place for confidence, conversation and connection. FadeNation Barbers is a fantastic addition to the local area, and I have no doubt it will quickly become a favourite amongst residents. While my own need for a haircut may not be as great as it once was, a great haircut is more than just a service; it is part of looking and feeling your best.

Next time you need a haircut, visit FadeNation Barbers in Burnt Bridge, meet the team and support this exciting new venture.

Local businesses such as Desi Basket and FadeNation Barbers are the backbone of our community. They create jobs, support local families and provide places where people can connect. I wish both businesses every success and a long and prosperous future serving the Croydon district.

#### **Mernda swimming pool**

**Lauren KATHAGE** (Yan Yean) (14:19): Mernda pool needs to be built. Council committed to the pool but now seems to be walking it back. Council must not axe our pool based on five-year-old business case figures. Council must provide the community with updated costs and scope options. The state government has funding there, committed and ready to go, and we want Whittlesea to get going on this too.

#### **Yan Yean electorate roads**

**Lauren KATHAGE** (Yan Yean) (14:20): The Wallara Waters property developers need to explain to the community why they still have not built a second exit from the estate. A second exit has been planned for from the back of the estate, over the Hume and onto the Northern Highway. With our new Wallan ramps under construction, along with the supersizing of the main Wallan intersection in town, the second exit would have been very welcome right now. The state government's new primary school has been zoned pretty much just for the estate, so it has reduced the traffic of families who need to head along Watson Street to Wallan Primary. All the same, the second exit should have been completed by now, and the community and I have waited long enough.

The budget we are delivering means we will have safety barriers installed between Donnybrae and the train station. I took the minister for a walk on Donnybrook Road to show her how pedestrians feel walking home from the train station, and she has delivered – *(Time expired)*

#### **Planning policy**

**John PESUTTO** (Hawthorn) (14:21): The Allan Labor government's activity centres policy will radically change areas around Hawthorn station, Glenferrie Road, Auburn Village, Camberwell Junction and Willison and Riversdale train stations, which are being opened up to huge towers. As well, small side streets will face six- or four-storey apartment dwellings or maybe more. Just a month ago the government gazetted GC270, which was supposed to install height limits, and in Glenferrie Road the height limits gazetted were for 12 storeys. There is already a proposal for a 16-storey development in Glenferrie Road under the Allan government's secretive development facilitation program. This is in excess of the 12-storey limit the government said would apply to Glenferrie Road only a month ago.

The government's housing policy is proving to be a secretive scheme that abolishes the rights of residents to have a say, undermines transparency and uses the activity centre program as an artifice to force skyscraper-type buildings under a fast-track regime that poses as a process while being nothing more than a means to conceal from public view deals the government makes with project proponents that no-one can interrogate and no-one can scrutinise. The government's housing policy will not work. It will not provide homes that are affordable for young Victorians. The Liberals and Nationals will.

#### **Mary Barry**

**Nina TAYLOR** (Albert Park) (14:22): I would like to acknowledge the service of Ms Mary Barry, who served for eight years as president of Middle Park Primary School, including throughout the education of her two daughters at the school Irene Barry and Antonia Barry. I want to note Ms Barry's leadership in advocating for STEAM into the school's curriculum with a deliberate addition of arts and critical creative thinking as foundations for student learning. I want to recognise the production of a short film made using the United Nations ambassador which brought sustainable development goals into classroom learning at Middle Park Primary School and was launched externally to a broader

audience. I also want to highlight Ms Barry's longstanding commitment to learning spaces through infrastructure, the principle being that quality school buildings and facilities are foundational to what is possible for children. I particularly want to acknowledge her tenacity, care and commitment. These were all created by her and combined federal and state funding to deliver real infrastructure outcomes for Middle Park Primary School, a practical working example of cooperative federalism at the community level. I want to note that throughout her presidency Mary Barry always worked in a bipartisan and objective way. I also want to conclude that Ms Barry leaves a lasting legacy at Middle Park Primary School, a fantastic local primary school treated as a living laboratory for industry-led government partnership and data-driven reform through R and D in Australian education. Mary Barry is a female entrepreneur driving our dual-sector universities and universities that stand alone.

#### **Werribee Mercy Hospital**

**Dylan WIGHT** (Tarneit) (14:24): Health infrastructure is rapidly expanding across the state, including in our growing community of Tarneit. That is why this Victorian budget is making serious investments across the health sector, like \$95 million in funding to open the upgraded Werribee Mercy Hospital emergency department this year. The ED expansion is part of a \$280 million package which will see patient treatment spaces doubled; four new resuscitation bays; 16 short-stay beds; 36 emergency care cubicles as well as a behavioural assessment room; six spaces for treating issues related to mental health, alcohol and other drugs; and separate but co-located paediatric and acute and short-stay zones. Once fully operational an additional 25,000 patients will be able to receive treatment each year. Not only will patients in ED have their wait time cut, but the expanded facilities will also ensure our dedicated doctors, nurses, allied health workers and support services have a modern workplace designed to ensure they can deliver the best possible emergency care.

#### **Specialist Advice Now**

**Dylan WIGHT** (Tarneit) (14:25): We are not stopping there. This budget will also see \$8 million going towards a new pilot called Specialist Advice Now, which will enable GPs and patients to get timely specialist advice without the need for a referral and a reduction in the number of children and young people on preparation lists, with 4000 more planned surgeries for children and 45,000 additional specialist clinic appointments for children. The Allan Labor government is considered – (*Time expired*)

#### **Somerville train station**

**Paul MERCURIO** (Hastings) (14:25): Firstly, I would like to thank Jenna Bell from the Somerville Business Group, the whole Somerville Business Group and also the Rotary Club of Somerville Tyabb for putting on a clean-up day at Somerville train station. It was a fantastic day. Lots of community came out, which is the point: community supporting community. Of course as soon as we got there to begin the clean-up it rained, and it did not stop raining at all. But some great work was done, and I thank everyone for turning up.

#### **Victorian renewable energy terminal**

**Paul MERCURIO** (Hastings) (14:26): I would also like to thank the Minister for Ports and Freight and the Minister for Climate Action for coming down to Hastings port to make a budget announcement on the Victorian renewable energy terminal, and that announcement was for \$124.45 million to continue the development of the Victorian renewable energy terminal and the wind turbines and wind farms. This is fantastic for the township of Hastings, it is fantastic for the electorate of Hastings and it is fantastic for the whole of Victoria, the work that we are doing on this. I know the port have been doing some fantastic work, and I look forward to it happening.

#### **Budget 2026-27**

**Paul MERCURIO** (Hastings) (14:26): What a fantastic budget. I thank the Treasurer. There is quite a bit in it. I got \$6 million for an early parenting centre in Hastings, which is great. One I am

really happy about is \$1.65 million for Hastings Primary School for some upgrades and a lovely performing arts hall. Thank you, Treasurer.

#### **Budget 2026-27**

**Kat THEOPHANOUS** (Northcote) (14:27): Today is budget day, and there is a lot to be excited about in Northcote. Wales Street Primary is getting a major upgrade, backed by over \$21 million to deliver a new gym and library and new classrooms. This has been a true community effort, with principal Robyn Owens, the school council, families and students working alongside me to make it happen. We are also continuing to support students and families who need it, with dedicated funding for outside-school-hours care at Croxton School. And we are backing local sports clubs at Mayer Park in Thornbury with a \$500,000 investment for surface upgrades and the planning of a new pavilion. Transport is hugely important to us in the inner north, and it has been massive to have free PT for April and May, half-price fares for the rest of the year and free travel for under 18s ongoingly. The Mernda and Hurstbridge train lines are getting more services. The 508 bus will have better weekend and evening coverage. At the same time we are cutting 20 per cent off car rego – direct cost-of-living support for people under pressure right now.

These budget wins build on the steady work we do in Northcote day in and day out to deliver real outcomes for our community. At Farm Road in Alphington works have now started on the crucial local connection to the Darebin Yarra trail. At Pitcher Park a local sports grant will create a safer oval and new first aid and coaches shelters. In Northcote works have just begun to build our early parenting centre, where 10 residential overnight units will support families with expert care. I am proud to always back Northcote and be part of a Labor government that listens, acts and delivers.

#### **Budget 2026-27**

**Sarah CONNOLLY** (Laverton) (14:28): We know that right now so many Victorians are doing it tough, and the war in the Middle East has caused major disruptions, especially to our fuel supply, making it harder and more expensive for folks to get around, which is why I am so pleased that our government has placed cost-of-living relief at the heart of this year's budget. Already folks are benefiting from our government's free public transport initiative, which we have extended to the end of this month. It means that folks can leave the car at home and can catch a bus or a train to get around without having to touch on or pay a cent. From June this year they will continue to save money with our half-price fares, but this does not include our existing free public transport policies, including for young people, which is free for under 18s all the time, and free travel on weekends for seniors and disability pensioners and their carers. If you do not or will not catch the train or a bus, if you prefer to drive around in your car, there is something for you too, because our government is funding a 20 per cent rebate on your car registration fees, saving you up to \$186 per vehicle that you own, which you can claim from 1 June. If you are a family who has two cars at home, that is \$372 that a family can save, because we know that every little bit helps. It is real cost-of-living support being delivered right now when Victorians need it most.

#### **Vermont Primary School**

**John MULLAHY** (Glen Waverley) (14:30): \$15.514 million has been delivered to Vermont Primary School in this year's budget. I would like to thank the Treasurer for that. Only the Allan Labor government delivers for Victorians.

#### **Bills**

#### **Roads, Road Safety and Ports Legislation Amendment Bill 2026**

#### *Second reading*

#### **Debate resumed on motion of Melissa Horne:**

That this bill be now read a second time.

**Tim McCURDY** (Ovens Valley) (14:30): I am delighted to rise and make a contribution, although I am not the shadow minister for this portfolio. He is busy with some budget day issues at the moment but will be in shortly to make sure that he has a say on this bill. I do want to speak on the Roads, Road Safety and Ports Legislation Amendment Bill 2026, which has many purposes, as we know, one of them being amendments to point-to-point cameras to operate over various speed limit zones.

Point-to-point cameras, as we know, are extremely good revenue-raisers for the government. They are sometimes called safety cameras to make sure that people understand that they are involved in safety and trying to slow people down, but at the end of the day they are revenue-raisers. Part of this legislative change helps when point-to-point cameras operate on a stretch of road where there is a change of speed limits. You can still evaluate what time should be taken to travel from one point to the other, and the bill will legislate that. I have no trouble with making sure these safety cameras can still work to the best of their ability, because they are a big investment to put in. We need to make sure that, if people are speeding, we can raise that revenue in due course. I know point-to-point cameras are used throughout New South Wales and Queensland in a lot of areas, and I know they are used in some of the main areas in Victoria. But they are also going to be used on the Goulburn Valley Highway, the Hume Highway, the Princes Highway and other roads throughout regional Victoria. That is part of what this legislation will do.

I also want to say from the outset that the opposition will not be opposing this bill. I think it is important when it comes to roads, and I will talk about some of our roads in a minute, that part of road safety is the condition of our roads. In the Ovens Valley we have got communities like Cobram through to Yarrawonga and Wangaratta and up to Myrtleford and Bright, and we have never seen conditions like we are seeing at the moment in terms of potholes, broken signage and signs falling down. If you are a visitor to the area, you may not even know where to go unless you have got a GPS, because many of the signs have fallen down and have not been replaced or repaired. There was a massive pothole on the west side of Bundalong, and that pothole has been fixed five times in the last three years – a massive pothole that people would talk to me about. I would write to the minister, we would get a response, it would get fixed and then it would just be created again – potholes all over. As I said, this one has been fixed at least five times.

At the Yarrawonga channel, on the west side of Yarrawonga on the Murray Valley Highway, there is a stretch of road that I hit most nights on my way back from Wangaratta, and there is a channel bridge there that is a lip in the road. People have been complaining furiously about this for the last two or three months, and it is important. It is a small change in the bridge. But if you get a 50- or 60-millimetre lip on that bridge and if you do not know to expect it when you are driving there, it will do major damage to some vehicles. Yarrawonga-Wangaratta Road out between Esmond, Killawarra and Peechelba is just a disgrace.

We talk about road safety. We cannot talk about road safety without talking about the condition of our roads and the effects this is having on people. We often say cars have got to be roadworthy, but our roads certainly are not carworthy. I do not think that is any surprise to anybody in this room, even though the government suggested there is going to be another roads blitz this year. I think this is about the sixth or seventh road blitz.

**Roma Britnell:** Cut and paste the press release from last year.

**Tim McCURDY:** Yes, cut and paste a billion dollars. This one is a record. I think last year's was a record, and the one before was some major investment. If the blitzes were so good, our roads would not be in the condition they are now. I cannot say that I believe the government when they say they are doing another road blitz, because that is five or six in a row.

I know the shadow minister, the member for Gippsland South, will give more detail on that when he gets his opportunity. Certainly if the blitzes have been working as well as the government suggests they have over the last six, seven, eight years, we would not have the roads in the conditions they are

in now. As I say, some of that narrative is laughable – ‘road blitz’, ‘massive investment in roads’, ‘record investment’ – every superlative we can think of, and yet the roads remain a mess.

In terms of the budget announcement today, I think it is a record spend. I will believe it when I see it. Some would say the spending on roads is not worth the paper it is written on because it just does not seem to come to fruition. As I say, if the government had spent what they said they were going to spend over the last five, six or seven years, we certainly would have better roads going forward, not what we see now.

This bill imposes requirements on port operators to provide data to the government for various reasons. I am not clear as to what that data will be used for. I assume there is a logical reason for this, but again, at what cost? I always get concerned when you are collecting data or there is another imposition on businesses. Whether they are port operators, trucking companies or whatever, there will be a cost. That cost gets passed on to the port operator and the trucking company, and of course that has to be passed on directly to the consumer. And we wonder why things are going up. We wonder why we have got a cost-of-living crisis. The government talks about the cost-of-living crisis like it is somebody else’s fault – like they have had no contribution whatsoever when it comes to it. It is either Donald Trump or somebody else who is at fault for this cost-of-living crisis. We know the taxes are hurting people, with the cost hurting all of our communities. It is driving up the price of food and all our daily living. If we are going to have a reduction in our rego, that is terrific. Whoop-dee-do – that is great. We will take that. But we need a reduction in our power prices as well. I thought renewable energy was going to make power so much cheaper for us. I do not know anybody who is ringing me to say, ‘Thanks, the power’s just got cheaper.’ That is not the case. That is why I say the cost-of-living crisis is driven largely by the behaviour and as a consequence of the Victorian government.

The bill also provides exemptions for emergency services, with certain Heavy Vehicle National Law requirements. Again, it is important we make sure that if there are any areas we need to streamline, we make easier for emergency services vehicles to be able to do what they do in their daily use of the roads. I certainly support that idea, and that is important. But again, if it comes at a cost, we all need to share in that cost. It is not just the commercial industries. If there is a cost that has got to be shared because of heavier vehicles, we need to make sure that we are all paying and contributing to that cost.

There has been consultation through the RACV. Like us, they are not opposing this bill, but just like us they want to see the roads get fixed. I was travelling around my electorate the other day and there was a sign that said, ‘Just fix the bloody roads,’ and I thought, ‘Gee, that’s getting a bit out there.’ People are getting very antsy about the state of our roads, as we all know.

The point-to-point cameras – we certainly want to make sure that they are catching those who are doing the wrong thing. I do say they are revenue raisers, and I do not have a problem with raising revenue as long as it is fair and they are in appropriate places and actually designed to be safety cameras rather than just revenue-raising cameras.

The budget handed down today they call a Labor budget. I get that. I see increased debt and reduced spend on important maintenance issues in health, education and emergency services. This is an area we see time and time again, where the investment that is made does not correlate with the taxes that are generated in that portfolio, for example. I see that the roads blitz that has been announced today is enough to cover 200,000 potholes.

**Roma Britnell:** That is just in South-West Coast.

**Tim McCURDY:** I was just going to say that will cover the Ovens Valley electorate. I do not know how they are going to go in the South-West Coast and the other 86 electorates in Victoria, because I reckon there have got to be 200,000 potholes in just my electorate alone. That is just on the VicRoads roads, not the local council roads. We know local councils are getting starved for revenue from the state government as well, and of course their roads are deteriorating at the same time.

Again, there is a lot of work to do in this space, and we need to make sure that this investment gets to where it should be going. The blitz also includes, I see, mowing, slashing and graffiti removal and repair and replacing of signs. I do not have a problem with that, because that is all part of the road system at the end of the day. But again, obviously, when we look at what does get spent, it is interesting to see what gets spent on actually fixing the roads, and that is what we need. We need the roads fixed because that is what is important – to make sure that we get the safety back onto our roads. That is why we would like to see a greater percentage of that investment going into the actual fixing of the roads, but of course, at the end of the day, signage is important as well.

In summarising, we know that the bill updates laws about roads, road safety and the ports in Victoria and covers a mix of changes rather than just the one issue. It talks about the point-to-point cameras, which I have mentioned, expanding the work across different speed zones and even multiple speed zones, and it means drivers can be fined based on their average speed between two points, even if that limit changes along the way. The emergency services, as I mentioned, will be exempt from some heavy vehicle work rules, and that is to make it easier for them to respond quickly when they need to. That is important, and it is not just in metropolitan Melbourne but in regional Victoria that we know we need to be able to respond quickly where possible as well.

The government could also temporarily declare a road as official before it is fully legal and the process is finished. Well, that has definitely got to be in a metropolitan seat, because we do not get any new roads in regional Victoria; we just want the ones we have got fixed. Declaring or naming a road before it is new – well, I can see that might be a tunnel; it might be a road in metropolitan Melbourne in a new build. We will not even go down that path of the new builds, with the money that has been wasted there. But at the end of the day it is more about new roads in metropolitan Melbourne. We just want the ones that we have got in regional Victoria fixed. It will also ensure that someone is responsible for the maintenance, safety and liability straightaway in terms emergency services.

Authorities will be able to pursue fines using overseas addresses. Of course we do not want people who are running up fines here in Victoria ducking overseas and not being caught. We have all got to share that load. If you are breaking the law, if it is a point-to-point camera or whatever it might be, I suspect they need to be chased down, and this legislation will support that and closes the loophole where drivers avoid fines because they live overseas. I think, again, that is a positive step forward.

Some minor updates: clearly seatbelt rules and ensuring passengers do not share the same seat – we would all support that in this place. We know how safety belts save lives. I do not know how long safety belts have been compulsory – 25, 30 years; I would not have a clue, but a long, long time. We know the lives that have been saved through safety belt rules and laws, and that is a terrific thing and a good thing. Anything that ensures that passengers do not share the same seatbelt I think is a positive step going forward.

Port operators – I touched on those with shipping companies and the need to provide data about trucks and containers. Again, it will be interesting to hear what port operators say about what that cost is and when that cost then gets forwarded on to somebody else. I know it is aimed at improving freight planning and tracking activities at the port. Some rail rules are being simplified, including fewer consultation requirements for the small price increases. We will find out what that price is.

As I said, the coalition will not be opposing this bill. The Shadow Minister for Roads and Road Safety will get his opportunity when he finishes his budget commitments, and he will be in to add to this story.

**Anthony CIANFLONE** (Pascoe Vale) (14:44): I am pleased to rise to speak on the Roads, Road Safety and Ports Legislation Amendment Bill 2026. In doing so I support the bill as the state member for Pascoe Vale, Coburg and parts of Brunswick West, but I also of course support the bill as the newly appointed Parliamentary Secretary for Community Safety, because every single person in our community deserves the right to be and feel safe in their homes, in their streets, in their neighbourhoods

and in their communities generally, and that includes when it comes to road safety – keeping people safe on our roads, whether as drivers, as commuters, as public transport users, as tram users, as people that are vulnerable road users, walking, pushing a pram, walking to school or cycling on a bike, or as elderly people with walking frames.

Every single person has the right to be and feel safe on our roads, just as much as in any other part of our community. In that respect I acknowledge the Minister for Police, who is at the table and who has carriage of a big part of this bill as well with respect to the road safety cameras. This bill is an important element of our ongoing work to keep our community and our roads safe. I welcome and acknowledge that the opposition will not be opposing this bill because, frankly, road safety needs to be above politics and a bipartisan issue.

There are a number of elements in this bill, including include expanding and strengthening the role of point-to-point road safety cameras and speed enforcement, making permanent the exemptions for emergency services from the heavy vehicle national law and modernising the way road declarations and temporary road declarations are administered. There are amendments to various toll road management acts as well, including the West Gate Tunnel (Truck Bans and Traffic Management) Act 2019, the North East Link Act 2020, the Melbourne City Link Act 1995, the EastLink Project Act 2004 and other related acts. It progresses actions from the Victorian freight plan, improves management of local ports and improves the Road Safety Act 1986, including when nominating a responsible driver to be held accountable for an offence, along with a number of other miscellaneous-type reforms.

When combined, this is all about making our roads, our streets and our neighbourhoods safer for everybody. In Victoria we have continued to take strong action over many, many years when it comes to making our roads and streets safer, leading the nation and indeed the world in many respects too. Victoria was the first jurisdiction in the world to introduce a range of road safety measures, including mandatory seatbelts way back in 1970, random breath testing in 1976, speed cameras in 1986, mandatory bike helmets in 1990, random roadside drug testing in 2004 and a motorcycle graduated licensing system in 2016. These measures of course have been supported by the incredible work of the Transport Accident Commission's public education campaigns since 1989, the TAC, and since then by many other road safety organisations and bodies as well. The state's road safety policies and behavioural change programs have been credited for a major reduction in the road toll over these years as well against a backdrop of increasing car registrations and population growth.

Just listen to the numbers here. In 1970 around a thousand road fatalities were recorded on average each year. Compare that to the recent five-year average, which sits at about 253. In 2025, sadly, there was an increase of 2.5 per cent on the road toll to 291. Of course every life lost has an impact; it is one life too many. That is why as a government we are progressing this bill, but we have also adopted the Road to Zero road safety strategy, which is, in the short term, a 10-year aim to reduce road deaths by half and progressively reduce serious injuries by 2030.

In this respect, I was very honoured to be part of the parliamentary inquiry into vulnerable road users, which the chair, the member for Bellarine, who is here, did incredible work on as well. It was a bipartisan inquiry, I might add, with no dissenting reports. We all agreed we need to do more in this space. The member for Glen Waverley of course was a key advocate in that inquiry as well. But contrary to some of the misconceptions around the state of the road and road infrastructure, what it found was that the leading drivers of accidents, deaths, near misses and serious incidents on our roads by far are associated with driver behaviour. Dangerous driving, aggressive driving, impatient driving, risk taking, speeding, distracted driving, inattention, drink driving, drug driving and failure to wear seat belts, when combined, are the overwhelming contributing factors and causes of tragic fatalities, accidents and incidents on our roads, as was demonstrated to us by Victoria Police and the many other experts who appeared before the inquiry. That is also why this bill is so important.

We remain committed as a Labor government to improving road safety outcomes across Victoria, because we know that speeding contributes to 30 per cent at least of road fatalities in Victoria and a quarter of serious injuries sustained by occupants of light vehicles. The reforms in this bill seek to improve road safety outcomes by delivering improvements that enable the enforcement of an average speed limit. Currently the enforcement of average speed can only be undertaken where there is only one speed limit between two detection points. The bill will expand the enforcement of average speed by allowing the enforcement of point-to-point average speed across a stretch of road that contains two or more different speed zones. An example of a road between two detection points could contain a stretch of road, for example, where the limit is 110 kilometres, a stretch where the limit is 80 kilometres and another stretch where the limit goes back to 110. The bill will introduce a new formula for calculating the average speed limit that applies between those two detection points that spans those different speed zones in between. The bill will introduce that new formula for calculating the average speed of travelling between those two points.

If the calculated average speed of a vehicle exceeds the calculated average speed limit between the two detection points, then the driver of the vehicle will be subject to graduated penalties equivalent to existing speeding offences. This requires the bill to introduce a new offence in the Road Safety Act. It will be an offence for the driver of a motor vehicle to drive so that the average speed of a vehicle, as calculated, exceeds the average speed limit, as calculated, that applies on the total length of the road between those two detection points. The bill also makes appropriate provisions for roads with temporary speed limits, road work limits and other factors, accurately accounting for that point-to-point speed.

I will just draw the house's attention to page 95 of the parliamentary inquiry in this respect, because there was a comment or two by the shadow minister that went to the assertion that this is all about potentially revenue raising – it is actually not. The inquiry was very clear on this, and the evidence from independent submitters was very clear. Victoria's road safety camera commissioner Neville Taylor and the Monash University Accident Research Centre, MUARC, show that – and I quote from the report:

the presence of road safety cameras and the enforcement experience people have does have an impact on reducing the incidence of collisions involving trauma either at intersections or in the kind of haloed proximity of that area, and that is an evidence base that adds to the benefits of road safety cameras as one part of a suite of the road safety sort of enforcement program.

Road safety experts believe that road users are more likely to change their behaviour from a fear of receiving a penalty rather than a fear of a collision. This theory is supported by the 2023 survey conducted for the Office of the Road Safety Camera Commissioner, which found 55% of drivers who had received an infringement notice for speeding 'now slow down all or most of the time and that they are what they consider to be a more careful driver now.'

And page 99 went on to say:

Research broadly has shown that road safety cameras, with both general and specific deterrent effects, are one of the most effective ways to save lives and get motorists to slow down.

....

We know that when we have got mobile cameras set up on regional and rural roads there is an improved behaviour and change to behaviour and crash data drops and incident data drops.

Again, page 99:

The distracted driving cameras, which were introduced on 31 March 2023, are estimated to prevent 95 crashes that result in death or serious injury each year. For the first three months, drivers who were detected with distracted driving or seatbelt offences were sent an advisory letter to alert them of the detection. In this period, over 12,000 advisory letters were sent. Of these, 42% (over 5,000) were for portable device offences, 45% (about 5,500) for driver seatbelt non-compliance and about 1,500 for passenger seatbelt non-compliance. Early data suggest –

from that original trial –

similar trends have continued following the grace period and an evaluation of the cameras' operations will be conducted ...

I acknowledge the Minister for Police again, in August 2025, who released some further results on the difference these cameras are making. He said:

The latest road safety camera statistics show that more Victorians are getting the message to stay focused on driving, with a 36 per cent decrease in the number of infringements issued by the cameras from January to March this year compared to the same period last year.

In Quarter 3 2024–25 there were 19,063 infringements issued for not wearing a seatbelt properly or for using a device while driving, while during the same time last year there were 29,832 infringements issued.

So there you go. It goes to show that when people know there are more road safety cameras out there, whether they are based on speed or point-to-point or are distraction cameras, people's behaviour will change, and people's behaviour is the leading contributing factor that we have to tackle to reduce the road toll and reduce the number of accidents we have across the community.

Of course I would love to go on for another 10, 20 minutes or so. I would love to have taken the shadow minister's time – he left, I think, at about 15 minutes on the clock. There is so much to talk about on this bill, but I would like to just draw the attention of the minister and the government to the measures we are taking in my community of Merri-bek as well. We are making our local roads and streets safer. We have removed four level crossings through Coburg. Whether it is Nicholson Street, Bell Street, Coonans Road, Murray Road, Melville Road, Sydney Road or Moreland Road, we are working to make these streets safer. But there is always more to do, and I continue to work with all those stakeholders across the community to make our other roads and streets safer.

**Roma BRITNELL** (South-West Coast) (14:54): I rise to speak on the Roads, Road Safety and Ports Legislation Amendment Bill 2026. This a bill that, whilst largely presented as administrative, reveals a great deal about the Allan Labor government's approach to roads and regulation and frankly its priority, or lack thereof, for roads. Some elements of this bill are uncontroversial, and there are sensible fixes and minor updates and practical changes that we do not oppose. But buried within this omnibus legislation are measures that deserve far greater scrutiny, because they go to the heart of whether this government is genuinely focused on road safety or increasingly reliant on enforcement as a source of revenue.

The most significant change in this bill is the expansion of point-to-point speed cameras. Under these amendments drivers can now be fined based on their average speed across multiple speed zones, even across different roads. That means a motorist travelling through a 100-kilometre-per-hour zone and then a 110-kilometre-per-hour zone could still be penalised based on calculated average speed. The government's explanation for this is simple – road safety – and everybody is in favour of road safety; that is not questionable. However, Victorians are not naive, and south-west Victorians certainly are not. They have watched as speed limits have been lowered time and time again, and not because the roads have improved but because the roads have actually deteriorated. Across our communities like Warrnambool, Port Fairy, Portland, Terang, Heywood, Nelson and everywhere in between, the condition of our roads has deteriorated to an unacceptable level. Potholes, crumbling edges and uneven surfaces are no longer occasional issues; they are daily realities for our drivers, freight operators and families just trying to get from A to B safely. It is a serious safety hazard that damages vehicles, increases the risk of accidents and places enormous strain on regional communities that rely on reliable road networks.

This situation is not inevitable. It is a direct result of the government's neglect in maintaining and properly investing in our roads over many, many years. We just saw an announcement by this government released before the budget of record spending. No-one in my electorate was fooled by that announcement. We saw that it is like a cut and paste from last year and a cut and paste from the year before. When you see the government boasting about how much they are doing to fix our roads

yet when you drive on the roads you see them deteriorate at a rapid rate, you know that one does not equal the other. The government is not telling us the truth. They are not fixing the roads. Instead of proactive long-term maintenance, we have seen a very reactive approach that allows roads to fall into disrepair before patch-up jobs are rushed in.

They have actually decided that fixing potholes is a celebration. Well, let me tell you, as someone who has built roads – and dairy farmers are very focused on making sure they have got good roads for cattle to walk on – you cannot successfully fix a pothole. The road is damaged and the water has got into the substrate, and you cannot fix it. You have to fix the section of the road. I have tried to fix potholes with every possible material I could find, but you cannot successfully do that. We deserve better than this cycle of neglect and just patching potholes; we need the roads fixed. I stand today in this chamber having read this bill, which claims to be all about road safety. Not once does this bill address the reality that people in the communities that I live in are facing every single day: that the roads are crumbling beneath them. The maintenance backlog that is putting their lives at risk is what this our communities want addressed.

Just this morning I had a woman from my electorate reach out to me. She told me about a drive that she took that should have been routine: a simple trip along the Hawkesdale Woolsthorpe Road, one I have travelled hundreds and hundreds of times. But it turned into something that was far more frightening for her. As she drove, she was confronted by a stretch of road riddled with deep, unavoidable potholes, and at the exact moment another car appeared coming towards her she had a split second to decide to drive straight through the pothole or risk a head-on collision. That is not a safe choice, but that was the least dangerous one she could make. The impact was immediate and violent. The jolt ripped through her car, destroying a near new tyre and sending a shock right up through her spine. But the damage did not end there. Since that day she has been living with constant neck pain and persistent headaches, the kind that linger and that wear you down day after day. What began as an everyday drive turned into ongoing medical appointments, allied health treatments and a daily reminder that a system that we should have in place that should be safe has failed her. This Allan Labor government has absolutely failed her. This is not just about potholes, it is about a government that has allowed our roads to deteriorate to the point where people are forced to make impossible, dangerous decisions, where getting home safely is no longer guaranteed but a matter of luck. That is genuinely how bad it has got. It is dangerous and it is frightening, and it should not be down to luck.

We continue to see the Allan Labor government fail to properly maintain road infrastructure and now turn to stricter enforcement to compensate. We are asked to accept that expanding the scope of speed cameras, making them more flexible and more complex and more difficult for drivers to interpret, is purely about safety. There is a real risk here that this becomes less about saving lives and more about raising revenue.

When you combine the declining road conditions, inconsistent speed limits and expanding enforcement powers, this government has created a system that feels less fair and far more punitive. That is not how you build public trust in road safety measures. If this government is serious about road safety, it should start with the fundamentals: fixing our pothole-ridden roads properly; investing in maintenance, not spin; and ensuring speed limits are logical, consistent and evidence based. It is impossible as you drive through country roads now. You go from 40 to 60 to 80 to 60 to 40. It is absolutely impossible to be able to work out what actual speed limit you are in. Sometimes they do not even end – miles go on and there is not an ending, and it is probably 100 again. Instead we see a government reaching for an easier lever than fixing the roads, and that is fines.

This bill also imposes additional data collecting requirements on port operators and shipping companies. Let us hope that is not just more regulation which adds more costs, which – I am sorry – I am suspicious it probably is.

There are also provisions in this bill that we do welcome, particularly the exemptions to the emergency services from heavy vehicle work diary requirements. This is an opportunity for the government to

recognise the important work that our emergency services do, and that was a sensible change. While we do not oppose the legislation, I do oppose the spin. In the budget released today was the announcement that this government is going to fix 200,000 potholes. I reckon that is just the amount of potholes we would have in South-West Coast. I do not know where the rest of my colleagues' electorates are going to get the funding for their potholes, because I am pretty sure we could swallow all that up with just the 200,000. Potholes being filled in – I will say it again – is not a fix.

This is a government that has lost the faith of our community. No-one believes these record spends, because they are seeing what they are driving on. Let us remember what the Victorian Auditor-General's Office report said back in 2017. If we just spent 30 cents per square metre fixing the roads proactively, we would not have to spend \$175 per square metre on rebuilding the roads. We could spend 30 cents per square metre and then not have to spend \$175 per square metre on rebuilding the roads. That is an extraordinary difference, but has this government listened? They were told back in 2017 that if they do not fix the roads properly, we will end up with 90 per cent of the roads in poor condition, and that is exactly where we are. We have got a government who would rather have spent \$15 billion supporting the CFMEU and bikie gangs and putting strippers on worksites. That is not for the workers, that is for the big boys at the top, and they would rather spend money on that. Imagine what that could have built in the way of safer roads in south-west Victoria alone.

This is a government that is reactive and not proactive, a government that is more focused on enforcement than investment, a government that is quicker to issue fines than fix roads. Victorians deserve better than that. They deserve a road network that is safe, that is well built and well maintained, not one that relies on increasingly complex enforcement mechanisms to compensate for the neglect of this government. We deserve transparency, fairness and common sense in how road safety is delivered. It is not hard to supervise a road, it is not hard to make sure it is built according to specifications, it is not hard to put clauses in contracts that make sure the workmanship is held to account, but this is a government that has no understanding of how to run a contract, a program or a project and get a return on investment that gets a road that is safe and gets a fair deal for Victorians here.

**Danny PEARSON** (Essendon) (15:04): I am delighted to make a contribution on this omnibus bill, but calling it an omnibus bill I do not think does justice to the quality of the statute books that will ultimately house this magnificent piece of legislation, because at the core of this bill is that glorious and most noble of principles, kaizen, which is a Japanese word for 'continuous and constant improvement'. Indeed we must always aspire to constantly be pushing ourselves to do better, to reform and to improve. This bill covers a wide range of areas in the transport portfolio. I am going to spend a bit of time in my contribution talking a bit about that.

One of the great initiatives of a former Labor government was the first TAC commercial, which was broadcast in 1989. Many of us would have seen that ad, and Steve Crabb deserves a lot of the credit, as transport minister, for coming up with that idea. As I understand it, the way that ad was filmed was that they had a patient who had not been injured in a road accident, but the cameras were rolling and they put the actor into the emergency room to create that sense of trauma and of fear in order to try to capture the community's imagination about why this was so important. I spoke with Steve Crabb many years afterwards, and do you know who the audience of that ad was? It was not the ordinary rank-and-file members of the community – that was a second order. It was Victoria Police, because they wanted to say to Victoria Police, 'If you pull someone up for speeding, if you pull someone up for drink driving, you are doing an important community service, because this is what happens when these things go wrong.' If you look at the way in which that ad completely changed the way people behaved, it was extraordinary. And if you look at the trajectory that the road toll has gone on, particularly over those years, we saw a significant reduction. Certainly I think when I got my licence in the early 1990s we probably had about 400 Victorian lives lost a year, and now obviously it is considerably less. Steve gets a lot of credit for that.

I think when you look at the way technology is being harnessed and utilised, the point-to-point system for speed cameras will play a really important role in, again, trying to make sure that we capture

efficient, correct and accurate data in relation to the way in which people are travelling in order to try to ensure that people behave properly and responsibly, because we know that when you have an increase in speed, not only do you have an increase in relation to the aggregate level of trauma but you start to see the broader implications of the severity of that trauma.

I had the great privilege of being the minister responsible for the TAC. I remember meeting a woman who was living with her mum. She might have actually been a constituent of the member for Macedon. This woman had gone out with friends after working in Ballarat. She was a passenger of a vehicle, and she received a significant brain injury. She was trying to get around living her life as best as she could. She was by that stage a woman in her 40s, but her life had been completely changed and had been destroyed as a consequence of road trauma. I think that when you look at these sorts of initiatives, it is really important that we start to make these sorts of improvements. Part of that is making sure, too, that we recognise that we are a global city. We get amongst our ranks every year tens of thousands of international students. We are a global city; we have people from around the world wanting to come to Melbourne or come to this state. It is proper, right and appropriate that we amend the legislation to make sure that where an infringement occurs as a result of a driver who does not live here, there is the capacity to ensure that infringement is enforced and that penalties are imposed. Again, making sure that we have got the ability to tackle this I think is incredibly important as well.

The reality is that data is key in all of these things. The reforms of the bill make sure that we have more information collected by private providers in the transport portfolio and provided back to the state. Those of us who recall the GFC might recall the Baltic dry index. I have got to say I was a devotee of the Baltic dry index, because what it represented was the passage of freight volumes in relation to shipping. You were trying to understand, when you saw the sledgehammer impact of the global financial crisis, ‘We know that the economy is going to contract, but when will the economy start to expand?’ I think that requiring, in this instance, those shipping owners to share information in relation to those ships which are in commercial ports in Victoria will be really important in trying to get more of that information.

If you ever get the opportunity, download MarineTraffic. It is an absolute cracker of an app. It is a really good way to understand what is happening, for example, in the Strait of Hormuz in relation to traffic volumes, but also in Port Phillip Bay. I had the great privilege of being up at 1 Spring Street, and it was quite glorious to ponder over the lustre of Port Phillip Bay and watch ships coming in and out. I was always a fan of the *Goliath*. *Goliath* was a quite a small vessel. It was shipping cement from Melbourne to Devonport primarily, which was its main route. Again, you can get on MarineTraffic, and you can get a sense in terms of where these ships are coming from.

But that is information that is collected in an app. There may well be questions about the accuracy and the veracity of some of that information. We are in a digital age when we want to collect more data to make better decisions and to inform the choices that we make, and again, making sure that the Department of Transport and Planning has the ability to access timely and accurate data in relation to those ships which are berthed on our commercial ports I think will be very important.

The same of course extends to our tolling road operators. Transurban runs the majority of our toll roads but also EastLink, although the equity participants are probably a bit more passive when it comes to the operation of that asset. But providing that level of timely and accurate information is very important. The reality is of course that when we make these sorts of investments in roads they are for the future. I was stunned that between 50 and 60 per cent of the roads in the United Kingdom were actually created by the Romans. That is extraordinary. Obviously not the small roads, but the major transport routes that are in operation in the United Kingdom today were built, in fact, by the Romans. If you are ever asked the question ‘What did the Romans do for us?’ – well, they delivered 50 to 60 per cent of the United Kingdom’s roads. I think that is important, because of course, when you make these sorts of investments in these assets –

**Bridget Vallance** interjected.

**Danny PEARSON:** Happy to come back by popular demand, member for Evelyn. I think in terms of these questions, when we make these sorts of assets and these sorts of investments we are investing for the future, and the reality is that these roads, these assets, will be here for a significant period of time.

The bill also makes changes in relation to the access regime for rail and makes sure that any increases relate to CPI. From an economics perspective, rail access regimes and pricing are really interesting. It is quite interesting, because if you think about this, the capital expenditure required to build rail infrastructure is quite expensive. At one level you would say, 'Well, if I build it, I should be able to charge what I think is a fair price in order to recoup the investment I've made.' You would say that if you were the person who invested in the infrastructure to begin with. But of course you have got to think about how, if that effectively is the action of a robber baron that would have been more at home in the gilded age of laissez-faire capitalism which dominated the 19th century of America, that is less than ideal and will lead to suboptimal economic outcomes. Instead you want to try and find ways in which that asset can be appropriately harnessed and utilised by a number of different operators in order to realise the underlying productive capacity of that asset. That is why I think making sure that you have got some checks and balances in relation to those access regimes is really important. So the bill will make those changes in relation to rail access pricing and make sure that that is at a maximum level. It was not clear to me whether it will have the Essential Services Commission involved, but the ESC certainly plays a really important role in relation to managing these sorts of infrastructure monopolies, or these significant providers of essential services, as the name would suggest.

This bill is an important bill. People will say it is an omnibus bill, but I think that in its breadth, its depth, its complexity there is an inherent beauty in legislation like this, because frankly it is opening up like opening up a box of Favourites chocolates – honestly, there is something for everybody in a bill like this. It really makes sure that we continue to strive and improve the quality and the performance of the legislation that is brought into this place and we continue to modernise our statute book so that it is fit for purpose for the modern, vibrant globalised economy that is Victoria.

**Cindy McLEISH (Eildon) (15:14):** I always take great pleasure in being able to speak about roads, in this instance through the Roads, Road Safety and Ports Legislation Amendment Bill 2026. It does allow an opportunity for us to talk about the importance of road safety. The bill has been described as an omnibus bill, but it is a pretty skinny omnibus bill, so I am not quite sure I would go that far. What it does do is make amendments to allow point-to-point speed cameras to operate over multiple speed zones – and I will come back to that, because that is quite important – it allows the use of overseas addresses for the pursuit of fines under the operator onus scheme, it allows the government to temporarily declare a new road, it imposes requirements on shipping companies and port operators to provide certain data on containers and trucks that we need and it provides exemptions for emergency services from certain heavy vehicle national road law requirements.

I could probably talk about the heavy vehicle national laws as well, because they give me no end of grief, but I am going to start with the point-to-point systems. What the bill does is introduce amendments and a formula to enable point-to-point average speed camera enforcement across multiple speed limit zones and across more than one road or road network. This is the next step in what we have had with the point-to-point cameras in operation. I was previously the member for Seymour when the Hume Highway had point-to-point cameras that were not always working perfectly. There were some issues, but they seemed to have been sorted out.

The cameras on the Hume Highway have been in operation since 2007 but were activated for instantaneous detection in August 2012. At the moment there are 28 cameras at 14 separate locations along the Hume, and that is northbound and southbound, seven of each. They capture travelling traffic moving in both directions, with the active point-to-point cameras effectively creating these different zones. It is the intention to roll these out a little bit further – they are already on Peninsula Link and the Hume but perhaps to the Goulburn Valley and Princes highways as well, and I think that is not a

bad thing. But one of the things I do want to talk about is having multiple speed limit zones with these point-to-points and the fact that the government are taking these into account.

They have said to us that this is because of road safety requirements, but I look at the reality. With a lot of the roads that I travel on, there might be point-to-point cameras installed at some points but the roads are in such shoddy condition that it is 60 kilometres an hour for a kilometre and then it is 80 kilometres for 2 kilometres. Sometimes it is one lane in different sections. There are so many variations. I am not sure whether the government is just doing this for safety or how they are actually going to do it – yes, safety is important, but the state of the roads is so ordinary that the variations in the road limits are constant. I could look at the Melba Highway and drive from Yarra Glen to Yea and at some point the number of different speed zones is quite extraordinary. On the Warburton Highway we have everything from 40 during school times to 50, 60, 70 or 80 kilometres an hour, and it is really frustrating for traffic. It is really frustrating for drivers having to watch out the whole time. I think if you have got point-to-point cameras operating, it is very reasonable that they have to be altered and amended in a way that allows for all of these different anomalies that happen not just from time to time but often.

The road toll is too high, and I think we know that. It has been hovering around 290 deaths a year for the last few years. If you go to a few years prior to that, it was around 240 deaths a year. There is a lot more that can be done by the government, but the government is hell-bent and intent on starving the TAC of funds when it could implement a greater number of safe road initiatives. Again today in the budget what I thought was most interesting is they are pulling out \$1.1 billion for the next financial year. Previously we have seen \$1.3 billion over a number of years, but it looks like this is being pulled out in the one year, with little sums after that to prop up this surplus that the government is intent on carrying on about when they have got a debt that is basically \$200 billion. It is really quite extraordinary. There are many dangerous intersections out there, there are many dangerous roads, and I will certainly agree that a lot of driver error does lead to accidents and deaths. I have seen plenty of bad drivers on the road doing extraordinarily dangerous things.

Most recently I asked the Minister for Roads and Road Safety to ensure works as a matter of priority to improve line markings on the Whittlesea-Kinglake Road across the ranges before winter sets in, because the line markings are almost invisible and the cat's eyes in many places are worn out and damaged, reducing visibility even more. Now, this is a road safety initiative. Line markings and cat's eyes are not billions of dollars. These are simple treatments that can be done as a matter of priority. I got such an embarrassing response yesterday from the minister to say:

DTP crews inspect Whittlesea-Kinglake Road once a fortnight and plan and prioritise routine maintenance activities ...

I am telling you they have looked at it once a fortnight and they are not planning on doing any maintenance activities. These issues are raised with me by constituents who find the conditions dangerous. Driving at night and driving in intense fog, which Kinglake is known for, are problematic. These are things that can be avoided.

Equally, on that same road is the Kinglake football ground, and on that football ground the fences are low and the footballs often end up on the road. It would be a terrific road safety initiative for TAC to support putting up higher nets so that kids are not chasing the balls onto the road, parents are not chasing balls onto the road and the cars that come along are not having to dodge balls. The response I got there was to tell them to look on the website at how to apply for a grant. I mean, seriously, these are simple road safety initiatives that could be undertaken, and it has been really disappointing that some of the simple stuff is not being done.

I am disappointed to hear with drug testing that cocaine is not tested for in roadside drug testing and in fact the amount of funds that have been dedicated to doing some of these sorts of things have been much less. Not only that, we know the huge shortage of police on the beat out there on the highways has meant that a lot of these initiatives are not being done to the extent that they could be. We have

had a change of police commissioner, and I have noticed a little bit more, certainly in the last couple of weeks, the highway patrols that are out there. It does make a difference when people see highway patrols – and Acting Speaker Tak, I am sure I have your attention. Good. It does make a difference – people slow down, people see them, people warn other drivers and it does slow the traffic down. We need to have people concentrating all the time. We need to have a visible police presence on the roads and on the highways. And where you can have something that is automated, like the point-to-point system, that does reduce the burden on the police somewhat because it can be done automatically. I think that is not a bad thing, because people do slow down. I remember in 2012 when the point-to-point system was activated, which was quite a while ago, that what happened was the number of fines for speeding reduced. It was directly related to the fact that people knew these point-to-point systems were operating. It was not catching you at a particular point in time; it was catching you on that average speed over 10–15 kilometres, where it does make such a difference.

Using overseas addresses for the pursuit of fines under the operator onus scheme I think is a good thing because too often people are able to hide and get away with fines that they have incurred. I appreciate seeing that that is going to be done, and that may be increasing the coffers a little bit by the government, but it is probably going to cost more money to pursue some of these fines. The opposition is not opposing this bill and in fact appreciates some of those efforts that are being done.

**Nina TAYLOR** (Albert Park) (15:24): I am very pleased to speak on the Roads, Road Safety and Ports Legislation Amendment Bill 2026. The bill delivers a broad package of reforms to improve road safety outcomes, strengthen the management of our transport network and support the efficient movement of freight across Victoria.

I was almost taken aback by some of the commentary from the opposition with regard to revenue-raising, because let me tell you in my electorate people absolutely want people to adhere to the speed limits and they would happily have fixed cameras on every street if they could. We certainly have a significant number of fixed cameras. We have got mobile cameras. These controls are greatly appreciated in my electorate. I would say it is rare, if ever, that I have anyone wanting to speed. It is the other way. I have residents in my community that really respect safety and want to make sure that we have the best possible outcomes for the community as a whole, because if we all act safely together we are all better off. Moreover, we know that speeding contributes to at least 30 per cent of road fatalities. Curbing that, government taking appropriate actions to ensure that we are doing everything we can to deter speeding, is a really good thing. I think instead of bemoaning revenue raising we should look at the fundamental purpose that underpins this. This is to keep Victorians safe. I think that, when you put safety over the irritation of a fine, safety should always win.

I also want to comment on the issue of driver fatigue. While not always deliberate behaviour, driving when tired is a contributing factor in 25 per cent of all road crashes in Victoria. Again, when we are thinking about encouraging the best and the safest behaviours for all users of the road, I think it is in all Victorians' interests. I am just not sure it sends the best message when you are bemoaning revenue raising when really the focus is on safety and encouraging people to adhere to the speed limits, because there is absolutely nothing to be gained from speeding whatsoever. I will put the caveat for our frontline services – emergency services when they are delivering people to hospital, police, fire engines, fire services, CFA et cetera – because they have a particular reason, a paramount reason, an urgent reason to be supporting community in various ways.

One of the key changes in the bill is seeking to improve road safety outcomes by delivering improvements to enable the enforcement of an average speed limit. We are getting down to quite a technicality, but technicality absolutely matters when we are talking about how people use roads and whether we are adhering to safe limits. Currently the enforcement of average speed can only be undertaken where there is one speed limit between two detection points. This bill will expand the enforcement of average speed by allowing the enforcement of point-to-point average speed across a stretch of road that contains two or more different speed zones. As an example, a series of roads between the two detection points could contain a stretch of road where the speed limit is

110 kilometres per hour, a stretch of road with a limit of 80 kilometres per hour and another stretch where the limit goes back to 110 – I have to say less common in the seat of Albert Park. We do not have 110 around the seat of Albert Park. But this bill has to cover the whole state and all the different contingencies, so it is fair enough to use that example. In my seat it might be 40 to 60. The bill will introduce a new formula for calculating the average speed limit that applies between two detection points that span different speed zones, and the bill will also introduce a new formula for calculating average speed of a vehicle that has travelled between these two points. Whilst this sounds quite convoluted in a sense, when we are talking about the bill and coming down to this granular detail, the granular detail actually matters for all road users when it comes to how we are calculating speeds and whether people are actually doing the right thing for the benefit of all Victorians. The bill introduces a new offence to the Road Safety Act 1986. It will be an offence for the driver of a motor vehicle to drive so that the average speed of the vehicle as calculated exceeds the average speed as calculated that applies on the total length of road between the two specific detection points. That is really to clarify overall the point I have been making all along with regard to those specific calculations.

Another element is with regard to emergency services exemptions from Heavy Vehicle National Law. The Heavy Vehicle National Law places a range of obligations on the drivers of heavy vehicles and other responsible parties. This includes a series of obligations to prevent drivers of certain heavy vehicles from driving while fatigued – fair enough. As we have stated from the outset, it cannot be underestimated, and the mind can play tricks. You can think, ‘I’m fine,’ and then suddenly you are not fine; you are slipping into sleep and not even recognising it. So it is not here to in any way attack a person because they are slipping into sleep when they are driving and it is unintentional, but more to recognise that as human beings we do have this vulnerability and so we do have to have appropriate measures in place to mitigate or I would say curb entirely or as much as we can the risk of people being drowsy or falling asleep while driving and having terrible accidents. This includes a series of obligations to prevent drivers of certain heavy vehicles from driving while fatigued. As part of these obligations, drivers of fatigue-regulated heavy vehicles and their record keepers are required to complete and maintain certain records, including work diaries.

Emergency services are currently exempt from some fatigue management record-keeping requirements under the Heavy Vehicle National Law. These exemptions are currently provided by a time-limited notice issued by the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator. The bill will provide ongoing certainty – I think this is the crux of the matter, particularly when we are looking at our emergency services – by amending the Heavy Vehicle National Law Application Act 2013 to make these exemptions permanently available for Victorian emergency services. It is really about certainty, and when we are thinking of the important services that emergency services deliver for our community, we can see why these are good changes to make. I note the subset in terms of protocols of the CFA and others, and I understand that CFA members in particular have been strong advocates for these changes. They would have their own protocols as well in terms of mitigating fatigue and the risks that that can pose when you are driving heavy vehicles.

I will say also that as part of the 2026–27 budget we are investing a record \$1.04 billion to rebuild, repair and resurface roads across the state – the largest roads maintenance blitz in Victoria’s history – and we are also investing \$102.6 million in vital road projects to improve safety, reduce congestion and get Victorians home sooner. At a time when cost of living matters, we are making it cheaper to get around with 20 per cent off vehicle registration for Victorians. I know already when I have been doorknocking in my local area that this certainly has been well received. When you are looking at circa \$186 per vehicle, that is a real saving for households, and if you have got a couple of vehicles in the household this can make a real difference, because all those kinds of costs really do add up. Certainly I can say personally, just from the engagement I have had in my local community – and I am sure this is being experienced in other parts of the state – that the feedback has been really positive on these changes.

The bill is really sitting alongside those investments, because when we are looking at the whole framework under which we all have to exist and function in a safe and supported way on our roads, costs are part of this issue naturally, but also maintaining the roads and being able to afford to run your car. Also, we have got the Servo Saver app. I know that is not strictly within this legislation, but it is also relevant when it comes to being able to afford your petrol or your diesel for your car, and it may be with business or it may be on a personal level. I will reiterate, as I said from the outset, that I think certainly as an MP, that rather than saying, ‘Oh, revenue raising,’ – and I know I am being a little repetitious on this point – what is the fundamental purpose when we are looking at the speed control cameras? It is about keeping Victorians safe, and maybe erring towards that and backing in that fundamental principle is really in the best interests of everyone.

**Jade BENHAM** (Mildura) (15:34): I am more than happy to speak to the Roads, Road Safety and Ports Legislation Amendment Bill 2026 this afternoon. Roads are things that I use plenty of each and every day, as I am sure most of us in here do, and making them safer should be a top priority for everyone in this place. I have been given 10 minutes only, sadly. I could speak for hours on the state of our roads in the Mildura electorate, which is about 16 to 18 per cent of the state’s total geography, so it is a fair-size electorate that I drive around every day. So I get to experience those roads intimately every day, and I can tell you that there has been little improvement to potholes. The Leader of the Nationals asked in question time today, ‘How many potholes are there?’ and the minister responded, ‘Too many.’ Yes, that is correct.

I have got a story about potholes and not even cars, but very important people in our small communities having altercations with potholes in town centres, on state roads. I will get to that shortly. One of the roads that I am talking about is the Murray Valley Highway between, say, Piangil or even Wood Wood and Robinvale, where it ends. It is in a horrific condition. That road does run alongside the Murray River and in 2022 we had those floods, so it was affected. That means that road needs to be reconstructed. When I have my little Garmin device on my wrist, it measures how many floors I am walking up, and travelling along that road, which is about 45 minutes, I walk apparently 15 flights of stairs by the watch, so it is in horrific condition.

Birchip-Rainbow Road is one I have spoken about in here often. I have community members who drive it telling me that their cars – most of them drive Land Cruisers or at least some sort of SUV – could easily become airborne on that road. The Sunraysia Highway has had patches of work done to it, as has Robinvale-Sea Lake Road, but again there needs to be extensive work because bandaging up potholes does not mean they are fixed. It means that they are flat for a little while, but once you get heavy vehicles on them, or any vehicles really, particularly if there has been some rain, they are damaged again really quickly. We need to make sure we are getting the specs right if we are repairing or reconstructing roads. The Calder Highway, which I drove down yesterday from Mildura to attend Parliament today, is in horrific condition. You have got people now unavoidably swerving into the centre of the road to avoid the huge potholes or huge crevices and mounds that have accumulated on the side of the road. It is horrific.

[NAME AWAITING VERIFICATION]

Then we get to the speed limits which have been altered, because fixing the roads costs too much so they just drop the speed limit. This has proven in regional areas to be sometimes even more dangerous, particularly when you have B-quads on the road and there is no step-down from a 100-kilometre-an-hour speed limit to 60. It takes a long time for a B-quad pulling that much weight to slow down to that speed. It is incredibly dangerous. The other day, full disclosure, the lovely highway patrol officers out of Swan Hill pulled me over on a section of road that has recently been dropped from 80 kilometres an hour to 60. It has been 80 forever, so everyone is in that habit. It is just on the periphery of town. The highway patrol officers pulled me over to say hello. Magnet was on the side of the road. He said, ‘Can you answer me a question? I think this is 60, but I don’t know because there’s no sign.’

**Danny O’Brien:** The police officer?

**Jade BENHAM:** The highway patrol did not know the recently dropped speed limit, because on Google Maps, and I do not know how that works, it says 80 still. There is one sign beyond the intersection of the Murray Valley Highway and Robinvale-Sea Lake Road that says 60 where it used to say 80, but as you turn right on to Robinvale-Sea Lake Road from the Murray Valley Highway there is no sign there to tell you that that is a different speed limit now – nothing. The highway patrol had no idea what the speed limit was. Everyone was doing different speeds. That is a direct result of inadequate signage. That is an issue.

Getting back to potholes, though, there has been for some time a huge pothole in Best Street in Sea Lake. That is the main road. It is a state road. It is in front of the playground, across the road from the pub and right in front of the Juke cafe. Cafe does not seem appropriate for the Juke; it is more like a provedore. It is amazing; best bacon and egg rolls in Australia, bar none. It is run by Ezra and Dylan – beautiful people. Ezra was walking across the road. Let me take a step back. That happened in February.

In September Dylan reported this pothole to VicRoads, as well as many other concerned community members. As you can imagine, there are lots of people of all ages that have to cross the road to get to the pharmacy, to the playground and to whatever. That was reported in September of last year. In February this year Ezra had a fall. I do not know at what age it goes from falling over to having a fall. He is not that old – 28 maybe. This resulted in Ezra fracturing his ribs in 17 places – 17 fractures of his ribs. He also cracked his engagement ring that Dylan had bought him – a beautiful emerald engagement ring, cracked. That was in February of this year. Of course they reported it then to VicRoads once again with the injuries that were sustained with that fall, and a claim was lodged for compensation, particularly for that beautiful emerald ring that was cracked as a direct result of this fall. You would think that would be pretty straightforward, given that there were plenty of complaints months earlier about this pothole in Best Street, Sea Lake. Claim denied. However, last month, finally, once the claim had been lodged, magically the pothole was fixed. It takes someone to fall over a pothole, crack their ribs, damage their shoulder – and he told me yesterday that his shoulder is still damaged – for all of a sudden the pothole to be fixed. Is this what it takes for this government to actually fix potholes – personal injuries, not even in a car now? We literally have people with one foot in front of the other walking across the road and falling over potholes. It is beyond a state of disaster. It is just mind blowing. And then for the government to not take responsibility or admit there is a problem is again mind blowing. I can only hope that that will be rectified very, very soon, because it is just beyond belief that that should be something that any Victorian is subject to.

Of course regional Victorians feel like they are being forgotten about anyway, because apparently the government does not understand the weight of trucks that are on our roads and the volume of trucks. This is why I bang on all the time about the importance of rail freight and a rail freight strategy connecting particularly Mildura to the national rail grid so we can actually get those trucks off the roads, which will help that roads maintenance budget, because you will not have to do it so much if you can remove heavy vehicles. It is not that hard.

Look, any moves that we can make to improve road safety in cars, in trucks, on foot, on bikes and on motorbikes – I am not even sure I could get started on the motorbike issue. I, along with many of my friends, obviously ride motorbikes. I actually went on a group ride between Mildura and Robinvale recently raising money for the Lifeline call centre. The care that is taken by these riders is exceptional, I will say that, because they understand if they ride right over to the shoulder of the road there are drop-offs that are huge and those potholes can be lethal. So when we talk about potholes and the lack of road maintenance, shoulder drop-offs and just the dangerous state of Victoria's roads, it impacts more than just drivers. It impacts every Victorian on the roads.

**Katie HALL (Footscray) (15:44):** To the member for Mildura, I have got some good news for you. Here is one the government prepared earlier. The Minister for Ports and Freight, who is at the table, recently announced that we are transforming the former Melbourne market site into a place where the fruit and vegetables and beautiful produce from your electorate can travel by freight down to

Melbourne to be sold here. That work is underway. It has just started at the former Melbourne market site. So that is good news for your community, and it is great news for my community because it will be taking trucks off local roads as well.

I am very pleased to make a contribution on the Roads, Road Safety and Ports Legislation Amendment Bill 2026. This bill delivers several reforms to improve road safety outcomes across Victoria's transport network as well as to support the efficient movement of freight across Victoria. Through the Victorian budget, which has just been introduced by the Treasurer, this government is investing a record \$1.04 billion into road maintenance to undertake the largest road maintenance blitz in Victoria's history. We are also investing \$102.6 million in vital road projects to improve safety, reduce congestion and get Victorians home sooner. And at a time when cost of living matters we are making it cheaper to get around, with 20 per cent off vehicle rego for Victorians and of course free PT, which is enormously popular in my electorate of Footscray with the busiest station outside the city loop. But this bill sits alongside those investments and ensures that the legislative framework underpinning the transport system is just as strong as the investments we are making into it. The investments made into road safety are felt keenly in my electorate of Footscray, where the West Gate Tunnel Project has transformed the lives of local residents, and I know that the changes have also had an enormous impact on the neighbouring electorate of Williamstown.

This bill includes amendments to transfer functions relating to the management of the West Gate Tunnel tollway from the Secretary of the Department of Transport and Planning to the head of Transport for Victoria, and this will ensure the most appropriate body is responsible for decisions that are operational in nature. This bill, in recognising the successful completion of the project, transfers management from the Victorian Infrastructure Delivery Authority to the relevant statutory authority. The completion of the West Gate Tunnel Project and the subsequent ban on trucks on roads in the inner west have been absolutely transformative. Every day I hear from residents that live on or adjacent to streets that have a truck ban enforced. From day one this project has achieved what it set out to do, and I would like to thank the former minister for roads Melissa Horne for her tireless work to bring about the truck ban and the state-of-the-art enforcement system, which we secured funding for in last year's budget – a \$10 million national first into monitoring the no-truck zones in the inner west. I have had residents say to me that now for the first time they can hear the birds in the morning. They are not hearing trucks coming past their house; they are hearing the birds. That is a really valuable investment into the quality of life of residents in my community.

Because of our investment into vital infrastructure in the inner west, getting the kids to school, at Kingsville Primary School, coming home from work or walking down the street have become safer and have become easier. The West Gate Tunnel Project has made our streets safer. It has made our air cleaner too, and it has made our roads less congested. These issues were raised almost daily by my constituents to my office, and I am so proud to be part of a government that after decades of advocacy has finally landed the solution to get trucks off inner-west streets and have direct access to the port – the most appropriate way to get to the largest container port in the country and growing.

This has been a very challenging legislative change for our community. It has been complex reform work, complex policy work. Alongside the member for Williamstown, I am very proud that we have landed it, because we know that the impact on air quality is also going to be transformative.

This bill also includes measures to improve the efficiency of container movements through the ports and adjacent areas by requiring prescribed information to be recorded by relevant commercial operators. Enhanced information collection on shipping container movements and heavy vehicles will ensure consistency of information across the supply chain and provide greater certainty to the sector. One of the benefits of an enhanced container and heavy vehicle tracking system is the reduction of unnecessary container movement from the port to container parks. That is another issue in the inner west that, alongside my colleague the member for Williamstown, we are determined to tackle – unnecessary empty container movements from the port to container parks on industrial land on the

city's fringe. There is a better location for them, and the Melbourne market site that I mentioned before is one of those locations where the container parks should be going.

We have done the complex policy work on getting trucks off our local roads. We are continuing the work to make sure that container logistics is better located opposite the port. We are making sure that there is more freight on rail. These movements have been a significant contributor to the number of trucks historically on local roads in Footscray, Yarraville, Braybrook and surrounding areas. The Allan Labor government recognises the need for trucks and especially the thankless work often undertaken by some of the state's truckies. While truck bans are great for the community, it is not feasible to ban all trucks from our roads, but we can of course reduce the number of trucks on the road by working with industries to improve efficiency where possible. Obviously less trucks on the roads in the inner west means less pollution, less traffic and safer streets. The Allan Labor government is working tirelessly to make the inner west safer and healthier, and this bill is a reminder of that work. From the brand new state-of-the-art Footscray Hospital, which delivers world-class medical care, to the West Gate Tunnel getting thousands of trucks off local roads or to the Metro Tunnel providing turn-up-and-go services to the Sunbury line, the Allan Labor government has backed in the inner west with the infrastructure and services it needs time and time again. This bill is part of our broader reform through the Victorian freight plan, and the Victorian freight plan – perhaps some heavy reading for people – is actually part of that really important work that is changing the inner west forever.

**Danny O'BRIEN** (Gippsland South) (15:54): I am pleased to belatedly rise to speak on this bill, which comes under my portfolio of roads and road safety. I thank the member for Ovens Valley for stepping in to cover me as the lead speaker as I was –

**Tim Richardson** interjected.

**Danny O'BRIEN**: I was having a crack at the government, member for Mordialloc – what a big shock. Budget day – yes, I was unavoidably detained by having a crack at the government. Members opposite will be pleased to know that I am not particularly going to have a crack at the government on this legislation – or at least not the legislation itself. Like the member for Mildura, there is plenty I can say about roads. I will acknowledge the former Minister for Roads and Road Safety at the desk. We were just having a bit of a chat about a couple of things in the budget that finally have actually been delivered for Gippsland South, in particular the planning money for what is known as kamikaze corner in Leongatha, the intersection of the Strzelecki and South Gippsland highways, which is just a basket case of an intersection.

The Nationals committed to this money in 2022 to actually begin the process. So, four years later, it is very much belated but also very much welcome – finally something is going to be considered. One of my other disappointments about the budget today is the Sale College – a separate issue altogether from this bill but also one where planning money was committed, where land has been acquired but nothing has happened. I hope the same does not happen with kamikaze corner, because we do need that intersection fixed, and likewise some planning money for the Mirboo North to Leongatha stretch of the Strzelecki Highway, which the minister and I were just discussing. It is unclear to me exactly what that is going to do, although it is a relatively windy stretch of road, where some straightening where possible and some additional road shoulder construction would certainly be helpful on what is a pretty busy stretch of road. So that is good.

This legislation is largely an omnibus bill. It has a number of different aspects to it; some are road safety and roads and some are in fact the ports and freight portfolio. I did thank the minister, actually, at the time this was introduced for doing so when there was a four-week gap, which gave me plenty of time to do the research and prepare the bill report. I would like to unthank whoever it was that decided it would be debated on budget day, because that has caused a few dramas. Nonetheless, we are here now. This legislation makes amendments to allow point-to-point speed cameras to cover areas where there are multiple speed zones. When we asked in the bill briefing what the genesis of this was, what the government is actually trying to achieve with this, we were told simply that it is about

reducing the road toll. Whilst that is noble and we have no issue with that and certainly support it – that is good – there are two alternate notions that we would wonder about. One is whether this is about giving more opportunity for the government to raise revenue on fixed point-to-point speed cameras on some of our freeways. Secondly, the fact is that we are now amending this legislation to allow these cameras to cover either multiple stretches of road but also stretches of different speed zones, so it might be a 4-kilometre stretch of road where there is both a 100 zone and a 110 zone or a 100 zone and an 80 zone.

We have seen an explosion in the number of speed limit reductions over the last 10 years under this government, sometimes for genuine safety reasons but, generally speaking, because the roads are in such an appalling condition that the only way the government can do anything about them is to actually reduce the speed limit. So I do have a bit of a question mark as to whether that is one of the reasons this legislation is being introduced, because we now have so many stretches of roads where there is not a consistent speed limit, and I think it is actually a road safety issue in itself. There are so many places now where there are greater speed reductions coming into or out of a town, sometimes now stretching for kilometres outside of towns in regional Victoria. I would be interested in what MUARC – the Monash University Accident Research Centre – might think about it, because I think there is a safety issue in that in itself, in that people get frustrated and people get confused because there are so many changes of speed limit. This is something that I think we need to do more work on, because that level of frustration is genuine from motorists on these issues.

There are a couple of other issues in this legislation. It changes some acts to allow the use of overseas addresses for the purposes, effectively, of fines. When a council issues a parking fine or a speeding fine is issued to someone with a hire car, at the moment it simply says ‘Residential address’, and that has been interpreted to be an Australian residential address, and it has made it difficult for companies such as hire car companies to actually be able to track down particularly overseas drivers and ensure that they are responsible for paying their fines. I think this is an issue that we certainly support being addressed. This small amendment will allow the use of overseas addresses when chasing fines under the operator onus scheme.

The bill also gives the head of Transport for Victoria powers to make a temporary declaration of a road. That is just to address the fact that once a road is finished, for all intents and purposes, there is always pressure for it to be opened, and as I understand, it can take some time for the full surveying and those sorts of activities to occur because they need to wait till literally everything is finished on a road. So this gives a temporary declaration opportunity for the government for 12 months. It can be extended by the minister for a further 12 months. Again, we have no particular issue with this.

I am very pleased that there is a clause in this legislation to provide an exemption for emergency services drivers for certain Heavy Vehicle National Law requirements, particularly with respect to filling in driving logs. That is a sensible exemption that ensures that if you are on a fire truck for a period of time, you do not have to be doing what someone who is doing an interstate freight run, for example, is doing, and that makes sense. We certainly support that.

Finally, on the freight aspect to this legislation that the member for Footscray talked about in particular, the bill imposes new requirements on both shipping companies and port operators with respect to providing data to the government both on containers – what is in containers, what they are doing, where they are going and where they are coming from – and on trucks and truck movements within ports. That seems to me a little bit surprising. I am told by the government that information is already provided but is done so in an inconsistent manner, so this is about ensuring that it is consistent. There would potentially be a concern – certainly I had a concern – about whether this was additional red tape and requirements that were not necessary, but I have heard back from the Container Transport Alliance Australia, for example, who have indicated that they fully support this because they do need that data to understand things like truck movements in ports and things like the quality of trucks and what they are doing in and out of ports as well as containers, as I mentioned. That is the bulk of it. There are a number of other miscellaneous amendments, which I will not go into.

But I will highlight that our roads continue to be in an appalling state. We have seen announcements in the budget today and indeed announced a week or so ago that supposedly there is a record investment. What is not explained are the performance measures in the budget, which highlight that in fact for every single performance measure, regional, metro and inner metro, the performance measures are actually going backwards. If we are spending more money, we are actually seeing less output. Whether it is the road area major patched or whether it is the road area resurfaced, in all those areas they are actually going backwards on what they were two years ago – going backwards on the road area surfaced by an enormous amount compared to recent years. That highlights the spin that there is in this particular budget. We are being told one thing, but the reality of what is happening or what is going to happen on the ground is different. This legislation, though, we have no issue with, and I look forward to it progressing through the chamber.

**Tim RICHARDSON** (Mordialloc) (16:04): The Leader of the Nationals is a fortune teller. He has come out on the budget in his closing statements and is saying the reality on the ground, before the investments are in, is not going to meet the needs. Well, at least give us a chance. \$1.04 billion – it is not always negative, it is not always talking the place down. That is all we ever hear from those opposite. They are the greatest commentators and cynics we have ever seen in Victoria on that side – that is what we see all the time. They cannot even acknowledge a good news story when it hits them right in the sternum. That is right, today we have got \$1.04 billion that is being invested, and here today we have still got negativity.

But at least the Leader of the Nationals has acknowledged that for this bill there is broad support. That is important for road safety, something that we care about and are passionate about. Obviously the size of his electorate is very different to a Mordialloc's 56 square kilometres. It is a bit bigger out there towards Gippsland South, and there is diversity all across the state and in many of our areas.

**Danny O'Brien:** Eight thousand, for the record.

**Tim RICHARDSON:** That is a fair size. Some of the important points to note in some of that \$1.04 billion is the investment in regional and rural roads that is coming to Victorians very soon. This is an important juncture in a week when we are talking about the Treasurer's speech on the appropriations, the investment in roads and road safety and this bill coming forward, the Roads, Road Safety and Ports Legislation Amendment Bill 2026. It is all about making our roads safer and ensuring that our transport system is at pace with our growing state, something that is of importance to this government when you look at the amount of road upgrades and investments that we have seen. If I just think of my local community and the upgrades to the Mordialloc Freeway that were talked about for over 50 years – I remember when the coalition said that they would think about it. It was a line on a map that ended in the Woodlands industrial estate and went no further. Well, when we came to government we invested in roads, and it is a safer outcome with the Mordialloc Freeway. It is a wonderful connection that takes pressure off our local roads and makes it safer, because we had so much truck traffic running down White Street and Wells Road and the impact that that had on our communities.

The substantial investment that we have seen on level crossing removals has been a huge upgrade and investment in our community. When we first came to government this was one of the biggest safety challenges that we were facing. People were getting stuck at level crossings, being hit. There were the stress and impact of pedestrian movements at crossings as well. We had 30 on the Frankston line, and over 22 now I think have been removed on that Frankston train line. It means a safer and greater connection for our residents. It means the uplift in communities, but importantly, it means safer outcomes more broadly and locally. These are all the elements and values of this government, which invests in roads and road safety and provides the infrastructure for tomorrow, whether it is big, major road upgrades like we are seeing with the North East Link, which was opposed by those opposite – they were not fans of it and criticised it in every single frame, particularly the member for Bulleen, who talks it down all the time; this is a massive jobs-creating investment for the future – or the West Gate Tunnel. Do you remember the commentary, Acting Speaker Kathage? You might have been

tuning in to the negativity around the West Gate Tunnel and delivering for the west. Well, look at it now. Look at that project now taking pressure off the West Gate and getting people to where they need to be, safer and sooner. These are some of the big road upgrades and investments that need to happen to keep our communities connected.

There is also the enforcement frame to this and safety into the future. Members of Parliament would interact on a range of different occasions with the Victoria Police members who service our community each and every day. I am particularly struck when we engage with road safety and community safety forums around the work that they do. I give a shout-out to Victoria Police members like the member for Bayswater, who served his community for a number of years – was it five years that the member for Bayswater was a member of Victoria Police? He would know, undoubtedly, like other members of Parliament do and like the member for Berwick, as a serving Victoria Police member, does, how critical road safety and support for Victorians are. Everyone has someone they know that has been touched by the impacts of road trauma. It is so jarring to think of just the impact and the ripple effect that this has on people when they lose a loved one or someone is seriously injured. There are the more than 200 Victorians that we lose each year, but there are also the tens of thousands of people that are impacted by road trauma that are supported by the Transport Accident Commission each and every year. All of those Victorians have a story, whether it is those trying to compartmentalise and process the trauma of road deaths and how we lower them over time and make it safer for the future or whether it is those that are living with injuries and need to be supported into the future – life-changing on many occasions. This is at the heart of what this bill looks to do: to improve the road safety outcomes. That point-to-point enforcement is in the arsenal of what Victoria Police and what road traffic authorities do each and every day. Providing this greater formula, this greater investment and this greater contribution will change lives and outcomes.

We know that 30 per cent of road trauma has a contributing factor of speed. We know we have so much more to do. There have been decades of work that has been led from this Parliament, and mentioned each and every time you do a tour with school students is the seatbelts being mandated in Victoria under legislation through this Parliament. Victoria is always at the forefront of innovation here. We think of the landmark nature of the Transport Accident Commission and what that has meant for Victorians: a no-fault scheme, which means that you get the support and the comfort and care that you need if you are impacted by road trauma. That is truly Victorian values lived right there in the way that we support our fellow citizens in times of road trauma and impact. But we will be tireless in our efforts to try to lower the road toll over time, and I am really pleased to see some of that work. The point-to-point is really interesting, because with our navigation systems these days, the bell goes off in the car and everyone drops down to 5, 10 K's under as they go past the speed camera. But is that a behaviour change or is that the avoidance of an infringement, as opposed to 'I'm on the Frankston Freeway,' 'I'm on the Peninsula Link' or 'I'm on the highway down to Geelong and down to Torquay,' where there are point-to-point speed variables? Is that better? Because over the course of the journey people are going to be regulating their behaviour rather than getting the notification on their navigation system or through Google Maps, slowing down for a particular impact and then taking off again. I think the point-to-point system, particularly on major roads, is a really critical element, and putting more technology and investment in that space is really important to increase safety into the future.

I am also really struck by the changes to the emergency services exemptions to the Heavy Vehicle National Law. Maybe the member for Hawthorn is tuning in. He might have a contribution on this one as well if he rolls the arm over. But this one is really interesting, because it acknowledges the unique circumstances of our emergency service workers, who each and every day have challenges in their work and the complexities of supporting their fellow citizens. Police, paramedics and our firefighters carry a level of fatigue and impact each and every day, and it is acknowledged in the exemptions that will be permanently provided or available for Victorian emergency services around the Heavy Vehicle National Law Application Act 2013. This is really interesting because I think it calls out particularly just the overall impact on our emergency services and the level of impact, particularly when we think

about our firefighters, those that are driving the drug and alcohol and other drug testing in Victoria Police and some of the work that is done. But the impact on emergency services is an important call-out in that bill. But there is a broader narrative as well.

I know that the Transport Workers' Union did an extraordinary amount of work on safe roads and safe driving rates for Victorians and indeed Australians during that time, because the fatigue and the safety impacts on heavy vehicle drivers are substantial. I give a shout-out to that powerful union, the Transport Workers' Union, which has done a huge amount of advocacy around safe travel on our roads and the support of drivers – that is unions and workers advocating and supporting those outcomes. I think the protections that have been changed over time are in large part from the safety and the improvements that have occurred on the back of the union movement to get national support. I think it is a really strong testament to the work that they do each and every day. This bill builds on our legacy each and every day in supporting Victorians to be safe and connected to their communities. There is nothing more important than supporting people who have been impacted by road trauma and avoiding the tragic impacts that that can have into the future. This is really important legislation, and I commend the bill to the house.

**John PESUTTO** (Hawthorn) (16:14): I rise to speak on the Roads, Road Safety and Ports Legislation Amendment Bill 2026, and I do so on a day when, although we will not be opposing this bill, there is a long shadow over what the government has not said and not committed to today. We welcome and will not oppose any efforts that improve road safety measures, including point-to-point speed camera enforcement. To that extent, it already exists on parts of our road network, and to the extent that it can drive improvements in driver behaviour, that is something that we should all welcome.

But I do want to spend some time echoing the remarks of earlier speakers on this side of the house that this bill, like so many others, is emblematic of a government that, as we enter the final straight before the people's verdict in November, across the long arc and span of 12 years of office has missed the opportunities and challenges of a growing community, with demands right across different portfolio areas that are becoming more intense.

In the road space we have heard the government today and in previous weeks talk about the highest level of road funding, a little over a billion dollars. Let us remember in budget papers 3 and 4 you will normally see a record amount of spending because from year to year you have indexation and commodity price movements and nominal prices growing, and they factor into the revenue streams that then factor into the outputs and the appropriations. All the government has done is rely on the normal carryover that comes from those movements in nominal prices. There is nothing in the government's budget announcements today and in previous days around the \$1 billion which suggests there is any serious effort to genuinely tackle the horrific state of our roads. It is an issue that comes across my desk as a member for an inner-metropolitan seat as much as it does for members representing regional communities. In my own electorate, if you drive down Canterbury Road, Riversdale Road, Toorak Road or Auburn Road, you will find potholes that are as bad as anywhere you will see across the road network. In Camberwell Junction there are potholes that are camouflaged only by the busy intersection of tram tracks.

The broader point I would make in terms of the government's failure to see this as a serious backlog and a growing catalogue of unmet needs is that we have a number of factors coming together. First of all, there is growing demand on our roads. If you look at the population changes in Victoria, particularly immediately after the pandemic lockdowns ceased, Victoria's population was growing at nearly 3 per cent. We were carrying nearly 30 per cent of the population load. Even this year at 1.7 per cent growth we are seeing the among the highest levels of population growth in the country. We had about 88,000 in the year to September 2025. That is bringing in a lot of new people who are using our roads. That is the first thing: the government is not planning for that. It is oblivious to that growing need on our road network. Its own housing statement talks about 800,000 homes in 10 years but, more importantly, 2.4 million homes or thereabouts by 2051. How are you supposed to do that if you are

not investing in a road network that is fit for purpose? It is simply not meeting the demand that comes from that statement and the initiatives that are supposed to flow from that as well.

Then we have the problem with the billion dollars the government is spruiking as an historic amount for roads investment. Given construction inflation, which is much higher than the general rate of inflation that we see – whether it is the headline or the trimmed mean, it is still higher than that – you will get less for that amount of money. It will not surprise people to appreciate that, although it is more than the \$970 million-odd that was spent last year trying to play catch-up on road maintenance, you will probably get less because it is not that far different in nominal terms from the amount last year, yet construction inflation will erode the extent to which you can use that funding to address the urgent need, particularly in regional and rural Victoria, to do that.

A further reflection on the budget in the context of roads is that this budget was a final missed opportunity to prepare the Victorian economy for a growth rate that can beat the natural limit that the Reserve Bank has spoken about. The Reserve Bank says that we cannot grow at more than 2 per cent without fuelling inflation, and perhaps that is reflected in the government's growth forecasts in this budget, which are well under 2 per cent.

What that means is the government should have been looking, in this final budget before the election, at how you can unlock the economic potential of this state. The outer metropolitan ring – I do not see anything in there. Ports reform – the need, as others have spoken about, and something I have spoken about regularly, to get more freight onto rail. How do we build a road network that accommodates the growing housing estates around Melbourne and in regional and rural Victoria? How do we fund the many overpasses and interchanges that we need to see constructed if we are to reduce congestion, which is a serious problem. I know, Acting Speaker Kathage, that in your area congestion is a serious problem, and it is partly because no planning has gone into the explosion in population growth. The government's own figures will reveal for anybody who takes the time to look that the population in the growth corridors in particular is growing by a multiple of three or four compared with established suburbs. You need to be planning for that, and that is simply not happening.

There is nothing in this budget that shows we have a government that appreciates that the key to giving Victorians rising living standards, lowering the cost of living and improving the quality of life in our state can only be secured by investing in infrastructure that genuinely improves productivity and safety, whether it is in aviation, whether it is in ports and freight, whether it is in public transport or whether it is in roads. Many suburbs, particularly new and emerging suburbs, will rely heavily on the vehicle fleet for a long time to come, because it is simply not going to be possible given the nature of the infrastructure portfolio and the spends that we see in the budget and in recent budgets to accommodate that in the short term. That is the great missed opportunity here. The government has been urged by me and by many others in Victoria to reorient the capital program so that you can start addressing those needs that I have spoken of.

I think history will be a fairly stern judge of the government's preoccupation in particular with the Suburban Rail Loop. I do not want to get into an argument so much about the merits of the Suburban Rail Loop – my thoughts on that are on the record. But it came at an enormous opportunity cost, because seats like your own, Acting Speaker, seats like those in the west and the north and the south-east in particular, are crying out for infrastructure that they have been denied. As I said earlier, whether it is roads or ports and freight, there is an opportunity to improve the quality of life and ensure that we address what has been a growing and more pronounced problem of inequity in the way government over the last 12 years has funded infrastructure.

That is the broader context in which we debate this bill today – a bill which is important in improving road safety, and that is why we will not oppose it. But remember, the greatest threat to road safety at the moment are the potholes and the deterioration of so many parts of our network. I even had one of my daughters stranded in an inner suburb of Melbourne simply because she drove over a pothole. She was not alone that night. It was a Sunday night, and there were other drivers who drove over that

pothole, and her car needed to be towed away. These are very real life, very direct consequences on all of us. Every Victorian is affected by the failure of this government to properly fund roads and to make sure that its performance measures are a genuine discipline on it so it does deliver the funding and the outcomes Victorians need.

**Paul MERCURIO** (Hastings) (16:24): I am very happy to stand and speak to the Roads, Road Safety and Ports Legislation Amendment Bill 2026. I am happy to be speaking after the member for Hawthorn. I am sorry to hear about his daughter – I think that is a shame; it does happen – but pretty much everything else he said I disagree with. But anyway, we get the opportunity to speak and we get the opportunity to put what we believe forward, and we get the opportunity to disagree completely with others in this place.

I am pleased to rise and support this bill. This is a practical, important piece of legislation that reflects exactly what Victorians expect from their government: action on the things that matter most, keeping people safe on roads, getting freight moving efficiently, supporting our emergency services and making sure the rules and systems that operate our transport network are as strong and modern as the roads themselves.

Before I speak to the measures in this bill I just want to set the scene a little. We are a government that is investing in Victoria's transport network on a historic scale. Through the Victorian budget of 2026–27 we are committing a record of over \$1 billion to build, repair and resurface roads across the state – the largest roads maintenance blitz in Victoria's history. I note also we spent just under a billion dollars last year and I believe a similar amount the year before. We are investing \$102.6 million in vital road projects to improve safety and reduce congestion, and we are currently delivering real cost-of-living relief to everyday Victorians by cutting vehicle registration by 20 per cent as a rebate. That is money back in the pockets of families, tradies, small business owners and commuters right across the state. This bill sits alongside those investments. It ensures that the laws governing our transport system keep pace with the scale of what we are building, because it is not enough to simply pour money into roads if the rules, responsibilities and enforcement mechanisms that govern how those roads are used are not up to scratch.

Let me first turn to the road safety measures. Every year in Victoria speeding contributes to at least 30 per cent of road fatalities and a quarter of serious injuries sustained by occupants of light vehicles. That is not a statistic to be glossed over. Behind every one of those numbers is a family that has lost someone, a community that has been shaken and a life that has been changed forever, and this government takes that seriously, which is why we continue to support smarter and stronger enforcement on our roads. I might just also say it affects families but it also affects first responders in some very deep and traumatic ways. Better responsibility with roads is also about helping our first responders not have to deal with some of the things that they see and deal with.

Point-to-point average speed enforcement has already proven to be an effective tool in encouraging safer driver behaviour. The concept is pretty straightforward. Rather than catching a driver speeding at a single point in time, average speed enforcement measures how fast a vehicle has travelled across an entire stretch of road between two detection points. It removes the incentive to speed between cameras, and it encourages consistent responsible driving across the whole journey rather than just one moment – and it works, because I will make sure I stick to the speed limit between all of the cameras on the Hume Highway. Currently there is a gap in how this works. Average speed enforcement can only be applied where a single speed limit applies across the entire stretch of road between two detection points. That means that on roads where the speed limit changes, perhaps dropping through a town or a roadworks zone before going back up, average speed enforcement cannot be used. This bill fixes that. It introduces new formulas for calculating both the average speed limit across multiple speed zones and the average speed of a vehicle travelling between those detection points. If a driver's calculated average speed exceeds the calculated average speed limit, they will face graduated penalties equivalent to existing speed offences. Did we follow that?

*Members interjecting.*

**Paul MERCURIO:** It works. This is a sensible targeted reform. It does not create new bureaucracy or impose unreasonable burdens on law-abiding drivers. It simply closes a gap that has prevented enforcement on some of our most high-risk, high-speed roads, and it does so fairly, because temporary speed limits, such as those applied for roadworks, will be disregarded in calculating average speed, with those temporary limits continuing to be enforced through existing methods such as speed cameras. That is a balanced approach, and it will save lives.

I also want to touch on something that does not always get mentioned in debates like this, and that is the cost-of-living angle of road safety reform. When we talk about reducing road fatalities and serious injuries, we are also talking about reducing the enormous financial costs that flow from those tragedies. The cost of serious road accidents in terms of hospital care, rehabilitation, lost productivity and long-term support is staggering. Preventing even a small number of those accidents through smarter enforcement represents a significant saving not just to government but to families and communities. Road safety is a cost-of-living issue, and this bill treats it as one.

And I go back again and thank our first responders – our ambos and firies, police, SES, CFA – because the cost to them to turn up to road trauma or road accidents is huge, and it is something that they have to live with. I would prefer that they do not have to go through those experiences. Bills like this to minimise road trauma are not just about a cost-benefit analysis – they are – but they are also about the mental health and wellbeing of everyone concerned, especially our first responders.

I want to spend a moment on the 20 per cent vehicle registration rebate because it deserves more attention than it sometimes gets. For many Victorians the family car is not a luxury; it is how they get to work, drop their kids off at school, visit their parents and get to medical appointments. The cost of running a vehicle includes registration, insurance, fuel and maintenance. It is a real pressure on household budgets across the state. Cutting registration by 20 per cent or getting a rebate from it is not a minor administrative tweak; it is real money returned directly to Victorians at a time when it is needed, and it sits alongside a government that is also investing record amounts in repairing and maintaining the roads, as I said previously. On some of the comments I am getting on my Facebook around the rebate, the time to actually claim the rebate is between 1 June and 31 July. The rebate is not based on registering your car in those two months, which is where there seems to be some confusion. If you register a car or a vehicle, when you register it you can get the rebate. You just need to apply for that rebate between 1 June and 31 July.

The freight and ports reforms are the kinds of changes that do not always make headlines but that quietly keep the economy ticking. Victoria is the freight and logistics centre of Australia. The Port of Melbourne is the country's largest container point, and the efficiency of our freight supply chain has a direct bearing on the cost of goods, the competitiveness of Victorian businesses and the livelihood of workers across the supply chain. The measures in this bill to improve data sharing between government and industry, requiring stevedoring businesses to collect and share information on truck activity and requiring cargo vessel owners to supply container shipping information, will help drive real efficiencies through the supply chain. When containers move more smoothly and activity is better managed, costs come down, and when costs come down on freight and logistics, that flows through to businesses – small businesses, mum-and-dad businesses – and ultimately to consumers, and this is a real cost-of-living benefit.

The emergency services exemptions from Heavy Vehicle National Law fatigue management requirements are another measure worth highlighting, because they speak to the kind of practical, no-nonsense governance this government is committed to. Our emergency services, including our volunteers, do extraordinary work under extraordinary circumstances. The existing exemptions from certain fatigue management record-keeping requirements have been provided through time-limited notices, requiring ongoing renewal and creating unnecessary certainty. Making those exemptions permanent removes a burden from volunteers and provides lasting clarity.

There is quite a bit more that could be said about this bill. I do believe the budget today was fantastic for roads and road safety and the work that the Labor government is doing is exemplary. As I said, the member for Hawthorn kind of disagreed with any positivity in terms of what this bill does, even though they are going to support it. I am very proud to be here and talk about it. I acknowledge our emergency services people for the fantastic work they do. I thank them, and I commend the bill to the house.

**Matthew GUY** (Bulleen) (16:34): The coalition does not oppose this bill, the Roads, Road Safety and Ports Legislation Amendment Bill 2026, and we obviously are making some comments in relation to it. I want to focus on part 6, which talks specifically about the implementation of the Victorian freight plan, because I think the Victorian freight plan is an important document. I think that we need to do what we can to implement the Victorian freight plan in a succinct way to ensure that we have got all the necessary armoury in place to maintain our position as a logistics capital of this country, which I am not sure we are doing with the state of our roads and the difficulty we have had over the last decade with the declining amount of road maintenance.

What I do want to focus on is the state of our rail network, and the freight rail network in particular, referencing the Victorian freight plan and part 6 of this bill. What I firstly want to talk about are some of our private rail operators in Victoria. There has been a tendency to hoard locomotives, which I note the government has not intervened on, which has had a direct impact upon the ability to deliver the freight plan, hence this part of the bill. The issue with that is that once operators obtain locomotives, rather than disposing of them when they reach a certain timeframe, they are scrapping them. Some have been scrapped; they should have been sold. Rather than allowing another operator to purchase a locomotive, which may then become competition to the operator that is selling those locomotives, they are scrapping them. It is leaving our freight rail network at a peak time – which may be grain demand, for instance – with a dearth of motive power to move the goods that are needed on rail. We do not have it because those operators have hoarded them and either left them in the yard to rot or be scrapped, and the government has not intervened.

As a problem, a lot of that transport which should be on rail is going onto roads. That is causing huge issues with the quality of roads in regional Victoria. We have got a huge amount of road freight, which could be rail freight, because they have not got the motive power, which has been allowed to be scrapped by some of the private operators because the government has not said, ‘Well, actually, we’re not going to allow you to do that.’ What we do have are 70-year-old locomotives or older being requisitioned by private operators, and even some by the government – and I should say by Pacific National as well – to be used in rail freight, which is not fit for purpose, but there are not any other options. I put that on record because this is a matter of importance when we are trying to mode share freight onto rail, which has a direct impact on roads and which has a direct impact on this bill through the Victorian freight plan. I put that on record because I think there is more that can be done.

There have been a number of freight lines in this state that have been allowed to either shut or fall into disrepair in the last 20 years. This is at a time, as I say again, when our freight plan, reasonable as it is, should be focusing on upgrading Victoria’s freight rail network. Not every railway line has passenger trains. The majority do not. In New South Wales country freight lines – for instance, to Griffith or beyond it to Lake Cargelligo and other places – operate at 100 to 215 kilometres an hour. New South Wales invests in its freight rail networks and in the infrastructure of freight rail, and thus it becomes a viable alternative to road transport for heavy and long haulage. In Victoria that is not the case. The Castlemaine–Maryborough line has been allowed to fall into disrepair and is running at just 30 kilometres an hour. That is not an option when it comes to a private operator wanting to put something onto freight rail. There is the Toolamba–Kyabram section, at 40 kilometres an hour. The Australian Rail Track Corporation standard gauge line down to Portland has numerous very long speed restrictions. I note some, particularly through Dunkeld, are being improved, but this has been a long time coming. We are trying to get freight onto rail, and this is not being helped. The Hopetoun–Warracknabeal line is 30 to 50 k’s an hour. The Yaapect line is 55 kilometres an hour. That is 30 miles an hour in the old time. I mean, the steam trains ran faster than this.

When I look at our freight plan, again I will say it is a reasonable document. We need to have the armoury in place to make sure we can actually implement it. The line north of Sea Lake was closed in February 2010, and west of Ouyen in 2007. The Ultima–Robinvale section was booked out in January 2008. These have direct impacts on the ability, as I said before, of our regional and country economy to then be able to put stuff onto the railway lines. Look at the Murray Basin rail project, which the member for Murray Plains – and before that, Swan Hill – and myself have talked about on numerous occasions in this chamber, and now the member for Mildura as well.

We had an opportunity to get this line up and running with standard gauge through from the Port of Geelong all the way to Mildura. That has not been the case. The project was never completed in its entirety. All excuses were used in terms of standard-gauge trains through Ballarat and the like, but at the end of the day what we do have is a half-built project which is not servicing country and regional Victoria in the way it should. The government had an opportunity to implement its own freight plan through standardising that line with federal government funds, which could have and should have delivered, at a minimum, an 80-kilometre-an-hour section all the way from Yelta down to the Port of Geelong, which was what the plan was about. That is how it should have been delivered, and it has not been delivered that way. As a consequence, what we now have is a half-built Murray Basin rail project which ends north of Ballarat, or Maryborough actually, and then links back to the standard gauge on a dual-gauge section down through to Ararat, which is not what the project was meant to be. Again, if we are going to do these things properly, they need to be done properly from the very start.

The member for Gippsland East, who is in the chamber with me, will know exactly what happened with Bunyip River rail bridge on the Gippsland line. The federal government effectively paid 90 per cent of the money to duplicate that bridge so that the Gippsland line could be upgraded. There are still significant and heavy freight trains operating on the Gippsland line. They operate in between the VLocity services which run nowadays all the way to Bairnsdale but predominantly out of Traralgon. What the federal government did was give the money to the state to manage particularly the single-track section through from Bunyip to Longwarry – that could be duplicated. It would allow duplicated running all the way through to Longwarry, then a single-line section up through Drouin and then double line from there to Moe. That would at least improve that section. What the government then did was upgrade every part of the Gippsland line: signalling and the Stratford river bridge. I think it was the bridge at Stratford, wasn't it?

**Tim Bull** interjected.

**Matthew GUY:** The Avon River bridge at Stratford. The member for Gippsland East can advise me. The one thing that was not done was the duplication of the one part of the line that should have been done, which was the Bunyip River rail bridge. I think there was an excuse found on a cabinet-in-confidence document that has never been released in relation to a possum or a bird – a bird, I think it was. It is like when I grew up in Eltham. The Eltham copper butterfly decided to stop at McDonald's; it decided to stop the Fitzsimons Lane duplication. It stopped a few things. It is just that no-one has ever seen it. I lived in Eltham for 30 years, and I never saw the Eltham copper butterfly. A few people managed to find it. Around the time of the Greensborough by-election it was found; in the 1992 election it was found. Anyway, the point being that the state government did not do the job properly, which has a direct impact on freight and the Victorian freight plan, which directly relates back to this bill.

The western line, the standard-gauge line out to Adelaide, is in a deplorable condition, sections of it. Drivers are now constantly talking about sections of that track which need to be upgraded. It is going the way the north-eastern line did 15 years ago before it was effectively regraded and done again, or at least parts of it anyway. It is still very bouncy in sections. If you go on the XPT, which is the Sydney train, you probably do not want to go on the top bunk because you might be finding yourself on the floor north of Benalla. But the point being that that line out to the west is in a deplorable condition. Again, it is incumbent upon state and federal governments to ensure that those lines are maintained to

a proper condition so that they can be used for higher speed – 110- or 115- kilometre-an-hour – freight running. That is what you would expect going out through western Victoria.

I would just conclude on one line which is very important, and that is down to Hastings. The steel train which runs down there is the heaviest in the state. You have probably seen it running down there on the Frankston line, and then it heads down to Hastings. I have been in a cab on a train running down the Hastings line. It is actually a bit disconcerting. The weight of the train and the condition of the track on timber sleepers is something to behold when you realise the weight of that train. Of course if we are going to try and maintain the Port of Hastings and at least a semblance of freight compatibility from the port to the rail and then back into Melbourne, into logistics centres in and around the city, on the broad gauge, then the line needs to be held to a proper standard, and it is not being. That is a direct result of the state government. I put those points as a point of concern in relation to the freight plan, which relates to this bill.

**Kat THEOPHANOUS** (Northcote) (16:44): I am proud to speak on this bill, the Roads, Road Safety and Ports Legislation Amendment Bill 2026. It is a practical bill. It deals with speed enforcement, road declarations, toll road administration, heavy vehicle law, port data, freight movement and operator onus offences. In other words, it deals with the rules that sit behind the way people, goods and services move around Victoria every single day. In my electorate those rules are felt very directly. Our inner northern suburbs are dense, they are highly connected and they are doing a lot of work for the city.

We have High Street, St Georges Road, Bell Street, Heidelberg Road, Station Street, Darebin Road and Normanby Avenue. We have got trains, trams, buses, bikes, school routes, shopping strips, local parks and major arterials all intersecting in a very small geographical area and a geographical area enclosed by waterways. These roads are not just lines on a transport map; they are places people cross with prams and ride along to work and wait beside after school and drive on to care for family and rely on for local business and freight. So when we talk about road safety in this chamber, we are not talking about an abstract system, we are talking about whether a student can get from Thornbury High to the bus stop safely, whether a family in Alphington can get onto the Darebin Creek Trail without being pushed onto Heidelberg Road, whether a pedestrian on St Georges Road has a better chance of avoiding serious harm because the speed limits are appropriate, whether Fairfield Primary kids can cross Wingrove Street between their two campuses safely, whether a bus service is frequent enough to be a real transport option choice at night or whether heavy vehicles are on the right roads and local streets can be local streets. That is why this bill matters.

One of the most significant reforms is the expansion of point-to-point average speed enforcement. Speeding contributes to at least 30 per cent of road fatalities in Victoria and a quarter of serious injuries sustained by light vehicle occupants. That tells us very clearly that if we are serious about reducing road trauma we need a speed enforcement system that is modern, that is fair and that is capable of dealing with the road network as it actually exists. At the moment average speed enforcement can only operate where there is one speed limit between two detection points, but many roads do not work like that. A corridor can move through different speed environments and the law should be able to respond to that, so this bill will allow point-to-point average speed enforcement across a length of road with two or more different speed zones. It is a technical change, but the purpose is pretty straightforward: it encourages safer, steadier driving over high-risk corridors, and it strengthens the tools available to reduce road trauma.

In Northcote we know that speed reform makes a really big difference. On St Georges Road between Northcote and Preston we recently reduced the speed limit from 70 kilometres to 60 kilometres an hour along this hazardous 3-kilometre stretch. Over five years this stretch saw 80 crashes and 22 serious injuries; that is a crash every few weeks and a major injury every three months on one length of road in my community. So lower speeds reduce the likelihood of a collision and reduce the severity if one does occur. That is especially important on roads like St Georges Road, where there are cars, trams, cyclists and pedestrians all interacting and where there are kinder and school facilities.

Families have raised really serious concerns with me about it, so I am happy that we have achieved that.

That same evidence-based approach is guiding our work in Thornbury as well. On Normanby Avenue residents have long raised concerns about the speed limit of 60 kilometres an hour there. We have already delivered electronic speed signs that flash during peak school hours, reminding drivers to slow down through the 40-kilometre school zones between St Georges Road and Clapham Street. That was a really practical improvement, and it was secured because residents spoke up and because the road incident data supported action. But I know our community wants a more permanent solution there, so I am working with the Minister for Roads and Road Safety and the Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) to advocate for a safer speed environment on Normanby Avenue, including consideration of a further speed reduction there.

The same is true around Thornbury High School. Anyone who has travelled along Station Street near Collins Street at school time understands how complex that environment is. The road carries heavy north-south traffic, students are walking to and from bus stops and there are turning movements, visibility issues, a median, a bend and a crest. There is a lot happening in a very constrained space, and that is why I have been working closely with Thornbury High families, the school, Darebin council and the minister. There has already been a win on Matisi Street, with Darebin council committing to working with Thornbury High to construct a wombat crossing on the other side of the school. That is a positive step in the right direction, but we also need to work through some of those other pressure points. I was pleased to sponsor a petition in the Parliament from local resident Nina Collins, which was tabled with 720 signatures from local residents. It calls for a review of road safety at the intersection of Darebin Road and Wilmoth Street and at Station Street and Collins Street in Thornbury. They are highly active intersections used by students, families, pedestrians, cyclists, bus users and motorists every single day.

The community is asking for a really legitimate thing here, which is carefully assessing the situation, providing those practical improvements and action informed by data and local knowledge. I do welcome that, off the back of some of our advocacy there, DTP has already proposed a 40-kilometre school zone on Station Street at drop-off and pick-up times, recognising that proximity to Thornbury High. We are looking forward to that.

The bill also improves the way we manage new roads once they are open. Road declarations require land acquisition surveys and formal classifications, and sometimes those steps cannot be completed until construction is almost finished. Even though there is pressure to open the road to the public, without a proper declaration there can be uncertainty about who is responsible for inspection, maintenance and liability.

We see the importance of those good processes on projects close to home. In Alphington works are now underway for the Alphington link at Farm Road. This is a major milestone in a longstanding community priority. For years Alphington residents have been cut off from a safe, direct and practical connection to the spectacular Darebin Yarra trail that we built. The new link will deliver a 120-metre shared-use path from Farm Road to the trail, including a raised crossing. It will connect locals to the more than 600 kilometres of walking and cycling routes across Melbourne. That project involved sustained advocacy, community consultation, design work, planning approval, legislative change and land acquisition, and the final design has evolved in response to community consultation. The earlier plan had it as a bridge; now it is a ground-level path, and that will save trees and reduce construction impacts and blend more sensitively into the landscape. It is a really positive local outcome for us.

The broader network matters too. We have got the Eastern Freeway upgrades delivered as part of the North East Link Program. That will provide new traffic management technology, express lanes and Melbourne's first dedicated express busway. But importantly for the inner north, it also includes new and upgraded walking and cycling connections through Yarra Bend Park, including a new bridge over the Yarra River that we are very excited about.

This bill sits alongside some pretty major investments from the state Labor government in roads. There is a \$1 billion investment in the budget to rebuild, repair and resurface roads across the state, \$102.6 million for vital road projects to improve safety and reduce congestion and those practical cost-of-living supports, including 20 per cent off vehicle registration for eligible Victorians. For Northcote that broader program is visible in the work we are doing every day. It is the safer speeds on St Georges Road; the continued advocacy on Normanby Avenue; the practical action around Thornbury High; the Alphington link moving forward into construction; more evening services on the route 508 bus; the North East Link taking pressure off our local roads; and the Eastern Freeway upgrades that include those walking and cycling connections through Yarra Bend Park.

This is what good transport reform looks like. It is not one project, it is not one road or one mode. It is a network, it is safety, it is freight, buses, bikes, walking, enforcement, maintenance and accountability all working together in an integrated system. That is why I support this bill, and I commend it to the house.

**Annabelle CLEELAND** (Euroa) (16:54): I also rise to speak on the Roads, Road Safety and Ports Legislation Amendment Bill 2026. As we have heard, our side will not oppose the bill. However, it is being presented on a day we get to fact-check the Allan Labor government's genuine commitment to road safety. I could not count how many times my colleagues and I have raised road safety during this Parliament, let alone over the last decade. It is important to us as the Nationals because we live in the communities that have to live with loss and the impact of poor roads and road safety.

We live with the families when they have an accident or a family member loses their life. One of my most harrowing challenges in this job was when having only been in this role for a few months I had lots of people reach out to me about the Euroa–Mansfield road and how dangerous that section of road is. I wrote repeatedly to the roads minister at the time to ask for a review of the speed limit and also to ask for a review of the shoulder. It was nearly 12 months on when we lost a life – an 18-year-old who had recently got her licence – that I got a response and the road speed was changed and the shoulder was broadened. What a shameful trigger for this government to act.

What we want to talk about from some of the feedback we have heard on our side is that it is about time. It is about time this government speaks about road safety. We are going insane on this side. We feel the gaslighting constantly about the neglect of our road network. And every time we raise it they are saying, 'Well, we're doing our job. We're investing a billion dollars.' That is basic maintenance in this day and age. So I wanted to start my contribution and list all of the roads that desperately need an upgrade in the Euroa electorate, but I will run out of time. Some of the critical roads that we must look at are the Murchison-Violet Town Road, the Benalla to Swanpool road and the Midland Highway. There is not a section that is not dangerous with poor lines, absolutely treacherous potholes and shoulders that are causing accidents – deteriorated, crumbling shoulders. The Kilmore main street, Benalla-Yarrowonga Road and the Colbinabbin to Murchison road – every arterial road that is not built for major freight but has become a major freight road because of the condition of people trying to get to places quicker is now incredibly dangerous. I dropped in to see a mate at Warring Motors, Trevor Cubbin, just last week, and because he is a mechanic, 25 vehicles he does a week by himself, largely an impact of this government's failure. Because of the conditions of the roads his business is booming. And he is frustrated. He does not want to see his mates in the community have that financial impact from a government that cannot manage its road network. Twenty-five vehicles a week, and he went through and he showed me the financial consequence of a government that does not invest in maintaining and upgrading our road network – it is felt by every Victorian.

What floors me about this bill is that the Allan Labor government are going to go down the path of fining and infringement rather than fixing the roads. It is just a different approach this government has compared to our side, where we believe in genuine repairs and maintenance. Not just fixing potholes; repairing and rebuilding the roads. Potholes, edge breaks, faded and non-existent line markings are becoming an absolute hazard, and this government has turned to enforcement rather than doing its own job, which is fixing the roads.

Shortly after the 2022 election we had the floods, which was the original excuse as to why the road network was so poor. It was the floods, then it was the bushfires and now it is the war. Anyway, the gaslighting is quite extraordinary. I went into Murchison, and on the entrance into town there were these extraordinary air pockets on the main road line-marked with yellow all over it. Every Victorian knows those damn line markings and what that means as a warning signal. The line markings wore off. They have not been fixed; it is just that the line markings no longer exist. This is dangerous. It brings me to Archie Baines's story. He is a Broadford 82-year-old and an absolutely huge identity in our region. Driving down just past Warring Motors on the Goulburn Valley Highway he hit a pothole that threw him across a lane past another car, destroyed his truck, destroyed a neighbouring vehicle and caused several people thousands and thousands of dollars worth of damage because of a pothole that was known to authorities. It has been repeatedly marked, and only when I raise it here in this place does the government go out to do its job and fill these potholes. It is a shameful use of resources when it takes us to individually name a pothole before this government responds.

I just want to talk about the infrastructure and the fact that we are not seeing that investment keep pace with some of our population growth and what that means for our road network. This government has put a 300 per cent population increase on the residents throughout the south of my region, from Kilmore to Broadford, the Mitchell shire – a 300 per cent increase in population. Yet, since the 2022–23 budget, the government has spent about \$50 million on the Kilmore bypass but has not even acquired a paddock. Ask me where that money has gone – I have no idea, but there are plenty of questions. Labor planned, started and almost finished the West Gate Tunnel in the same period – a megaproject in less time than they can purchase a couple of paddocks for a roundabout. But still, mind you, they managed to spend \$50 million. The money is there; the choice is not. Regional Victorians are sick and tired of missing out, because our lives are at risk; the roads are dangerous.

I want to highlight a couple of the issues within the budget, and it is a coincidence that this bill gets put forward on the day that we get to scrutinise the true spending of the road maintenance and safety budget by the Allan Labor government. A bit of creative accounting is happening, I think we can all notice, and plenty of road projects are moving from capital to operating expenditure. Why is that important? Capital works are about building and fixing. Operating spend is maintenance – the core responsibility, the job the government should be doing but is not. The outcome is the same: fewer upgrades, delayed works and patch jobs instead of long-term fixes. The fact that this government has put a 300 per cent increase on our population and we still do not even have a Kilmore bypass and can spend \$50 million on bureaucrats but cannot buy a paddock are examples of how bad the Allan Labor government is at managing a project and managing the budget. Regional Victorians certainly pay the price time and time again.

Again, the bill focuses on infringements and targeting drivers, yet the Allan Labor government is failing to meet its core responsibility, which is to fix our roads. There is a pattern of neglect when it comes to the Allan Labor government's investment in our road network. Short-term fixes are replacing that long-term planning. South of my electorate and in fact the whole north-east are paying the price for that. We can see it in the public transport gaps, energy reliability, the school infrastructure. Today's budget shows shameful neglect when it comes to investment in regional Victoria, and roads are no different. What we actually want to see on our side of the house is the Nationals dream of safer roads, not more fines – that is not the way to go about it. Fix the roads: that is how you make community roads safer. We need to see viable upgrades and not just announcements – these hollow promises of a Kilmore bypass, and yet 50 million spent on who knows what.

Regional roads, as we have heard, are not a luxury. Acting Speaker Mercurio, you said it yourself: the emergency services that are turning out to the road tolls and driving patients on the roads – they are the ones that are experiencing the cost of the failure of our road network. It is the everyday Victorians, the freight operators and the families trying to get their kids to school that pay the price. They are all going to Trevor Cubbin's place, Warring Motors, and he cannot keep up. Actually, Acting Speaker, it was your term – you said 'exemplary standard of roads'. Mate, that is gaslighting. The facts are in

the budget. This government neglected our regional road networks. The greatest threat to road safety at the moment is the absolute neglect by the Allan Labor government of our roads.

**Steve McGHIE** (Melton) (17:04): I rise to speak in support of the Roads, Road Safety and Ports Legislation Amendment Bill 2026, and in doing so I want to focus my contribution on road safety and the road management reforms contained within this bill. Let me just say initially that this bill is not about revenue raising and fining people. People would not get fined and we would not be raising revenue if people did not break the law. It is pretty simple: drive to the road laws and you will not get penalised. That is what laws are all about: do not break them.

It will not be any surprise to anyone in this place that I want to focus on saving lives as well as improving our accountability and ensuring that our road network keeps pace with a growing state. I think it is worth highlighting that this bill reflects a simple and urgent reality: too many lives are still being lost on Victorian roads. And as we have heard, speeding alone contributes to about 30 per cent of fatalities as well as a significant proportion of serious injuries each year – as I say, due to speeding alone, let alone the nonsensical decision by some drivers or some passengers not to wear seatbelts. I know in my days in the past as a paramedic, in many, many situations people that did not wear seatbelts did not end up in the car, they ended up out of the car and most times dead on the road, unfortunately. You do not need to be a paramedic to know that behind every one of those statistics is a family, a community and a future that has been irreversibly changed. That is the tragedy in these things – that it is avoidable, and it is avoidable by common sense and respectful driving and sticking within the road rules. Of course it is not just speeding drivers that pay the price for the choice that they make. I have seen literally countless instances where law-abiding motorists, the ones that are driving within the rules and driving respectfully, could not anticipate the actions of a driver that deliberately chose their own selfish needs over the safety of everyone else. That is what happens when we see these road accidents, unfortunately, in a lot of situations. So when we consider reforms like this bill, we are not debating percentages and statistics, we are debating measures that will directly influence whether people get home safely, and that is what this is all about: making it safer on the roads and allowing people to drive with, as I say, confidence that they can come home safely.

Certainly I would like to thank the minister in regard to this bill. The minister is at the table at the moment. I thank her and her team for all the great work that they have done in bringing this legislation forward. It takes practical, evidence-based steps to strengthen road safety enforcement and improve how our road network is managed. It does so in a way that is targeted and forward-looking and takes into consideration real scenarios and real-life situations that people have experienced and of course all of the data collection from Victoria Police, the coroner and the Monash University Accident Research Centre, who do a lot of the road accident research.

I want to reflect on the improvements to road safety enforcement. Of course one of the most significant reforms in this bill is the expansion of point-to-point average speed enforcement. I know a few people have spoken to this already today, but it is certainly infrastructure that affects the Melton electorate, given the highways that pass through Melton and the Western Freeway, which passes through Melton. It is a location at the end of the metro area and the beginning of the regional area as you are approaching Bacchus Marsh. The Western Highway travels through Melton from an east–west point of view and has a varying speed limit – many, many changes in the speed limit along the road. And of course when we upgrade that stretch of road between Melton and Caroline Springs it will become a freeway and it will have one speed limit on that freeway, which will change the way people drive into the future. It is important that people be aware of that.

Police radars and permanent speed cameras are for both the detection and the perception of detection to bring about traffic calming. And that is what it is all about – it is about making people aware that they could be breaking the laws and they could be penalised. As you know, when people see the roadside camera detections and things like that, they do slow down in that initial vicinity. Whether they speed up again is another issue. But again, some drivers take caution when there are detection cameras. We all will be familiar with the different types of technology that we are enforcing around

this state. It measures the time it takes for a vehicle to travel between two fixed points and calculates an average speed. It is already in use across parts of Victoria and has been shown to reduce dangerous driving behaviour, particularly on high-risk roads. However, the current system has a critical limitation: it can only operate where the speed limit remains constant between the two points.

But in reality many of our roads, particularly major arterial roads and routes in Melton such as the Western Highway and the Old Western Highway, do not operate with point-to-point cameras. There are many speed zone changes, and the conditions obviously vary. As a result some of the very roads where enforcement would be most effective are currently excluded, which is a shame, because people know about that and the ones that want to break the law will break the law, unfortunately. In the end some of those will be caught up in some tragic situations, and some innocent people will be caught up in those tragic situations.

Back in 2019, through my office, we wrote to the federal minister for infrastructure at the time, Michael McCormack, asking about funding and the upgrades that were needed to the Western Highway in my particular electorate. The response that we got was they were planning to upgrade the highway, which thousands and thousands of western suburbs residents use every single day, but not in Melton. They were planning to upgrade it between Ararat and the South Australian border. Ararat is about 161 kilometres west of Melton, and of course no upgrading of that section on the national highway was going to help the Melton residents get to work on time or even get to work safely. We were seeking an upgrade back then from that federal government at that particular time, but there was little interest in it. Unfortunately, over the 10 years of Liberal–National governments there was no work done on the Western Highway – none at all, not even a murmur that they were going to upgrade the Western Highway.

I notice that our friends opposite criticise our government in regard to neglecting the west and not upgrading the Western Highway. I am pleased to say that both the state government contributed \$10 million and the federal government, the Albanese government, put in \$10 million for a \$20 million business plan. I am pleased that our two local federal members Sam Rae and Alice Jordan-Baird were very supportive of that. Out of that the Albanese government committed \$1 billion to starting an upgrade of the Western Freeway between Melton and Caroline Springs. At the moment there is already preconstruction work that has commenced before that upgrade starts, which I am pleased to say, having partners out of Canberra working with the state government, is the first opportunity that people in the west, in my corridor or in my electorate, will have to see an upgrade of the Western Freeway. Some will scream that it has taken too long. Again, it is a federal road, and we had 10 years of Liberal–National governments that did nothing for the Western Freeway in my patch.

While we are talking about roads, I want to talk about the removal of four level crossings in the local government area of Melton, three in my patch, my electorate, and one in the electorate of Kororoit. The Hopkins Road bridge over the level crossing will open in only two weeks time, and it will be a major change for traffic flow within Melton. Then in July we will have the Ferris Road overpass over the level crossing in Ferris Road, where the new hospital is being built and the TAFE college and we have just opened a secondary school. There is so much activity going on down at Ferris Road at Cobblebank. That traffic flow will completely change with that bridge going over the level crossing. Then later this year the Coburns Road and Exford Road level crossings will be completed and opened up, which will change traffic movement in Melton. It will make it safer. It will allow people to go to where they want to go – to schools, to the hospital, to the TAFE college, out with their friends, to the local railway station at Cobblebank. It will change traffic movement. It is so important in my electorate that those level crossings are being removed, and those road networks will be open, all of them, later this year, which is fantastic for our electorate.

Of course there is a lot more that I could talk on in regard to this particular bill, and I just noticed that I am running out of time. This is an important bill. I am pleased to say that the opposition are supporting this bill, although with some contributions you would not realise that. I commend the bill to the house.

**Richard RIORDAN** (Polwarth) (17:14): I too rise to talk about the Roads, Road Safety and Ports Legislation Amendment Bill 2026, and I am just having a little chuckle to myself as I look at this bill today. On the day the budget gets handed down, when we learn of the massive crippling debt that is striking the state of Victoria and the good people of Victoria, we have a bill called the Roads, Road Safety and Ports Legislation Amendment Bill. The average punter out there in voter land is probably thinking, ‘Good, this might be a bit of legislation that’s going to make sure our roads are safer, fill up the potholes, fix the edges, fix the dangerous intersections, replace the one-way bridges – the list goes on – even fix up some traffic lights, add a few more roundabouts, I don’t know, to make the driving experience safer and more conducive for the people of Victoria considering that they’re now paying \$50 billion worth of tax.’ You would think that would be what it is, but no.

Cunningly, as this government does, part 2 is about how we can make speed cameras detect more people on our crumbling, failing roads. Any of us in country Victoria know that as you go along a 100-kilometre-an-hour road, for a lifetime it was a given that a 100-kilometre road is a 100-kilometre road – not in Victoria anymore. No, a 100-kilometre-an-hour road could be 40, could be 70, could be 80, back to 40, up to 60, back to 70, up to 40. A drive in country Victoria is like ‘Spot the 100-kilometre-an-hour zone’ because the government’s only way it can try and keep people safe on the roads is to say, ‘Folks, for the last hundred years you’ve been on a 100-kilometre-an-hour road, but through our mismanagement and absolute chaos we’re going to slash it down. We’re going to leave it at 40 kilometres and 60 kilometres for years.’ That marvellous bit of road network that we tried to get all the way down to Polwarth, Princes Highway West, is a joke. It is a two-lane road that has not even officially opened yet, I might add. It is still officially under construction even though it has been essentially finished for quite a few years. But most of that is 80 kilometres or 70 kilometres. It is all over the place. A dual-lane beautiful bit of potentially new road that the incompetence of this government has seen as one of the roads that will likely benefit the government and disadvantage the taxpayer because they have now cunningly set the rules so that we can fine people who fail to see the blown-over 40-kilometre-an-hour or 70-kilometre-an-hour zone temporary road repair signs that just litter our highways and byways in country Victoria now.

Parts 5 and 7 of this wonderfully important, diabolically interesting bill that has come to the Parliament today are about how we do not miss out on the fines that we are giving our foreign drivers. We are here today to make sure that the State Revenue Office, which struggles to get its billing right at the best of times, is going to go overseas and cross country and go track down the fines issued on these same roads to our tourists and visitors to the area. Ordinarily I do not have a problem with tracking down someone who has been issued a fine who has then done a runner overseas. It is not such a bad thing, because it raises the interesting question: what are we actually doing as a state on road safety?

Sadly and unfortunately – in the great electorate of Polwarth we have the Great Ocean Road – one of the great torments for people in my electorate is the volume and number of overseas drivers who have literally landed at Tullamarine airport and have been given the okay to drive 4 hours one way – an 8-hour drive, essentially, in a day – based on their stated capacity to be eligible to drive on an Australian road. There are many examples. One was as recently, sadly, as only yesterday, where we had a minibus-and-car accident on the Great Ocean Road. My best wishes to those involved in that, and I hope there was nothing serious. You may also be aware there is an ongoing court case at the moment from a young German backpacker who had literally been in Australia for less than 24 hours, hired his Mr Juicy van and went off to the Twelve Apostles. I am imagining a poor young German backpacker had probably never driven more than an hour at any one time in his life, but we allowed him to come onto our road with no fundamental understanding of the distances when driving around Australia.

The question I would pose is: rather than having a road safety amendment bill that is more concerned with making sure we hunt people down to get the money from speeding fines, wouldn’t it be a good piece of legislation to bring to the Parliament where we actually verify and confirm that people, when they are from overseas, are fit to drive on our roads? At the moment anecdotally there is ample

evidence that people are buying bogus licences overseas and being able to hire a car here without fundamentally ever having driven.

I draw on my own experience, having gone to some South-East Asian countries that drive on the other side of the road and drive in very different habits and norms when driving on the road. I would make the observation from having done a few laps around a few countries in South-East Asia, for example, that they do not really get up to the speeds we get up to on our roads because there is a fair bit more chaos and it is a very different way to drive. That in itself is fine, because it seems to work quite well. I have actually found quite a bit of enjoyment in trying to cross a seven-lane road in Ho Chi Minh City or somewhere, only to find that the traffic just swerves beautifully around you. But when you drive on a country road in Australia, the road might look clear and open, and it might look enticing to go at 70 kilometres or 40 kilometres or 60 kilometres or 100 kilometres or whatever the road is allowing you to do, but what we have in Australia that you do not see in many of these jurisdictions is a thumping big B-double or B-triple hurtling down the road at 100 kilometres an hour fully laden with sheep or cattle or milk or grain and stock, which makes driving conditions in Australia very different, and we do not do very much to deal with that. As a consequence we have this tragic court case on at the moment where a young 18- or 19-year-old has now been in jail in Australia for 18 months awaiting his trial for culpable driving. I pose the question: could we have avoided the trauma to the two families that were affected by that terrible double fatality, and could we have avoided the clear tragedy that will be wrought on this young driver who landed in Australia for 24 hours and found himself in jail and is still in a costly and ongoing court case? Could we have avoided that after having spent some time verifying his ability to drive on our long distances and with our very different driving requirements here, particularly in regional Victoria and in regional Australia for that matter? For those of us brought up in it, we are used to it; we know the fact that you cannot get over very much on a Victorian country road because there are simply no shoulders and if you have had a bit of rain, the clay and the muck on the side of the road can be quite deadly, particularly if you are in an unfamiliar vehicle and you do not know what you are doing.

These are real issues about road safety, but sadly, while we are supporting this bill because it is probably going to serve to help dig this poor broken state out of the financial pickle it is in, it is really not addressing some of the fundamental issues we have with roads and road safety. As many of my colleagues have highlighted this afternoon in their contributions, when we talk about roads and road safety, those of us representing regional and rural Victoria can wax lyrical for a very long time about what we want to see a good, responsible government do in these areas, and quite frankly it really does not involve the amount of time and effort this government has clearly gone to to figure out how it can squeeze a bit more money out of road users. I would rather they talk about how we can actually save road users money. I would rather be having the debate today about how we make our roads safer, how we make sure our drivers are better educated and better trained and how we can make sure that the investment in our roads is long lasting and effective.

I just make a final statement with a minute to go that I have been amused over recent days when this government have been claiming this extra money spent on roads for pothole management, and they are talking about all the potholes they are going to fill. I do not know, but I think they came up with a figure of about \$3 million. I would guess I have got 3 million potholes alone just in my own electorate, without sharing the money or the resources with anyone else's. But I want to see this government actually fix the road surfaces, and it is more than just potholes, because I have seen what they do with potholes: they allocate a little length of road they are going to do, and they will cut a pothole in half and fill half of it and leave the other half empty, which of course, as we all know, blows out. Roads and road safety are important issues; we need to take them seriously. This government's attempt at it today is a pretty lame effort.

**Meng Heang TAK** (Clarinda) (17:24): I am delighted to join this side of the house and the hardworking member for Melton, who spoke just before me, in support of the Roads, Road Safety and Ports Legislation Amendment Bill 2026. This is another important bill, one that will improve road

safety outcomes and the management of Victoria's roads. This is welcome news for my constituents and for my electorate, because road safety is a very important priority in the Clarinda electorate, particularly in Springvale South. Unfortunately we have had several fatal crashes in the electorate over the past few years. There were a few things, they were either to do with traffic lights or to do with the driver behaviour, and that is why we have this bill today. I send my condolences and best wishes to all the families that have been affected by these horrible accidents.

One intersection that gets raised with me very consistently is the Springvale Road and Athol Road T-intersection. Unfortunately earlier this year there was a three-vehicle accident at the T-intersection which involved a vehicle travelling south running a red light. Prior to this I can remember another incident there mid year at the same intersection where a southbound car travelling along Springvale Road collided with a car turning right from Athol Road, tragically resulting in the loss of life of the driver of the right-turning vehicle. Again, I send my condolences, thoughts and best wishes to all those affected by this incident.

I understand that over the two-year period ending 31 December 2024 there were four reported casualty crashes at the same intersection. Of these, three resulted in serious injuries and one resulted in non-serious injuries sustained by those involved. Not only is it a busy intersection but there are three temples along this Springvale South road. There is a school. There is a small shopping strip there. During school hours parents pick up the kids and are also in a hurry to pick up something at the grocery shops. Sometimes during the festival seasons we have visitors to the wonderfully multicultural Springvale South. There is a Cambodian temple, there is a Vietnamese temple, there is a church and there is also the Bright Moon Temple down south. Residents can just walk across and sometimes not wait for the green light. That is on an already busy road, so it is congested, and I believe this bill will fix some of the issues that we are having.

Along this road, as I said, there are three temples, and on the right-hand side there is the Athol Road shopping centre. The area in front of the shopping centre had a 60-kilometre sign some time back. My constituents and I would welcome a reduction of the speed limit along this road and have requested for this to be investigated by the department as soon as possible. I thank the minister at the table, the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, for her engagement there and look forward to working together with her to deliver some change to improve the safety of that intersection in my electorate.

As mentioned, the focus of this bill is to improve road safety outcomes and the management of Victoria's roads. That begins with an amendment to the Road Safety Act 1986 to reduce the number of lives lost on Victoria's road and improve road safety outcomes by enabling the expansion of the point-to-point average speed enforcement to cover a broader range of circumstances, which will help to encourage safer driver behaviour through the use of stronger and smarter enforcement practices.

Currently under the existing legislation point-to-point average speed enforcement can only operate on sections of the road where there is a single speed limit. This reform will allow point-to-point average speed enforcement across sections of the road with multiple speed limits and continuous roads with varying road names and enable the use of different camera types, including fixed and mobile, to improve coverage and flexibility. Together these changes allow point-to-point average speed enforcement to better influence driver behaviour over larger sections of the Victorian road network.

By monitoring driver behaviour over long road sections, point-to-point average speed cameras encourage consistent compliance with speed limits rather than monitoring compliance near a single camera. This is considered to be a fairer approach because infringements are only issued when a driver's average speed for the whole section is above the limit, showing that they were exceeding the speed limit for a sustained period.

Research conducted by the Monash University Accident Research Centre has shown that the point-to-point average speed system achieves crash reductions comparable to fixed spot cameras but across much longer sections of road. This demonstrates the significant impact of point-to-point average speed

technology in reducing speeds and saving lives on Victorian highways. These are some really compelling conclusions from the Monash University Accident Research Centre which demonstrate that these are really important changes that can greatly improve road safety outcomes. Instead of just measuring speed at one single point in time, we are talking about monitoring driver behaviour over a long stretch of road and encouraging consistent compliance, which is really, really positive. Further, we have improved the process of nominations for the operator onus offences to ensure the penalty is paid by the driver responsible, an important and commonsense change.

We are also amending the Road Management Act 2004 to improve the management of Victoria's road network by introducing a new power to temporarily declare and classify a road in order to provide certainty around road authority functions and responsibilities. As we have heard from colleagues on this side, there are also changes to implement relevant actions from the Victorian freight plan to support the efficient movement of freight and future policy development, as well as the delivery of improved processes and administrative outcomes across transport legislation, all of which I am happy to support here today.

Road safety is a real priority for my constituents. We have seen some positive improvement locally, in particular with the black spot project at Westall Road and Rowan Road in Dingley Village not long ago. The intersection has long been recognised by residents, as well as the City of Kingston, the City of Greater Dandenong and the department, as a critical concern due to its record of serious accidents, frequent crashes and fatalities. Local schools, including Kingswood Primary School and Dingley Primary School, and the wider community have reiterated those concerns, stressing the urgent need for action. It has been great to be part of that treatment there, with a new traffic signal to control right-turn movement into Rowan Road linked to both nearby walk signals and the signals at Springvale Road. This is an important improvement with a great result. It has significantly improved the road safety of Dingley Village and Springvale South residents, schools, families and road users. I commend the minister for that work and for bringing this bill forward today. It is an important bill to improve road safety for all, and I commend the bill to the house.

**Chris CREWTER** (Mornington) (17:33): I rise to speak on the Roads, Road Safety and Ports Legislation Amendment Bill 2026. This is an omnibus bill dealing with a range of matters across the roads, road safety, freight and ports portfolios. Broadly the bill makes a number of technical and practical amendments to existing transport legislation. The main feature of the bill, though, is the expansion of Victoria's point-to-point speed camera framework.

The bill allows point-to-point speed cameras to operate across sections of road with multiple speed limits and even across more than one road or road network. In practical terms this means that a driver's average speed can be calculated across a journey where, for example, part of the road is 100 kilometres per hour and another part is 110 kilometres per hour. This Labor government says that this is about improving road safety not just about revenue raising, but I have my doubts on the latter, particularly given the budget just handed down where we will see debt rise very soon to \$199 billion and interest payments on that debt – that is, taxpayer-funded interest payments – being over \$1.35 million every single hour.

That is \$1.35 million every single hour that could be used on our roads for road safety, for road maintenance, for fixing potholes and much more.

Road safety is something the Liberal and National parties take seriously, but Victorians are entitled to ask fair questions about how these measures will be used. Speed enforcement should always be about safety, not simply about raising revenue. That is particularly important in a state where motorists have seen speed limits reduced on many roads, often because the road network itself has been allowed to deteriorate. Indeed it is easier to fundraise on roads where there is deterioration and where there are reduced speed limits. There are so many roads that have been reduced down to, say, 40 or 60 or 80 due to not just bad roads but also poor road maintenance. One example is the Peninsula Link roadworks, where over summer the speed limit was reduced from 100 down to 80 kilometres an hour

when no works were happening at all over a two-month period between December and February. We are going to have a very similar situation upcoming for the Peninsula Link works, which will pause again in winter of this year.

Indeed motorists have to look out when they are facing, say, 40 or 60 or 80, back to 40, back to 60. There are so many speed changes, often because of bad roads and poor road maintenance, that they are often spending more time looking at the speed signs than the road. It seems that Labor's modus operandi is lower speeds instead of actually fixing our roads. And what have we seen in Victoria on roads and on road safety? We have seen roads deteriorating, we have seen potholes, we have seen poor management of road contracts, we have seen a lack of road oversight and coordination. Three examples in and affecting my electorate are the Peninsula Link works, the Bungower Road and Racecourse Road works and the works now on Nepean Highway, all involving state government at the same time, to the point where it has become road Armageddon on the Mornington Peninsula.

On Pen Link, that is a road being upgraded, even though many people say that the Peninsula Link, where it is being upgraded, did not need an upgrade as compared to so many other projects that are needed in the electorate and beyond. But that is being upgraded under a 25-year public-private partnership signed by the state Labor government in 2010 to this day, where Labor have oversight over that contract. It is a project that started mid last year, with the first stage meant to be completed in October last year, which was then extended to mid-November. The final layer was not done at the time, with works paused over December to February, with drivers limited to 80 kilometres an hour due to weather. Then the works continued, but we have an upcoming pause again, as mentioned, in winter, again due to weather. I am not sure how they build any roads in places like Iceland or Saudi Arabia when weather is continually used as an excuse. Then we have the major impact and lack of planning with Peninsula Link on diversion roads, putting people's lives at risk in some places, including a few months ago outside of Moorooduc Primary School. A big one at the moment is the intersection of Derril Road and Bungower Road, where it is so dangerous. I know my wife and two kids nearly had an accident where they were about an inch off being hit by another driver, and so many people are at risk on that intersection just trying to turn right and left to get in and out of that road. In that situation there was a lack of consideration, there were no temporary traffic lights put in and there was no consideration as to what the impacts would be because of those roadworks.

We have said in the Liberal Party that if we form government in November, under the Peninsula Link contract we will keep the contractors accountable. We will penalise them when there are time delays or when the work is not being done properly. This is something that this Labor government have refused to do despite us saying they should keep the contractors accountable under the existing contract again and again and again. It is no wonder we have seen such waste and mismanagement under this government, because they cannot coordinate contracts and they cannot keep people or organisations accountable under contracts. It is no wonder we have seen \$15 billion of CFMEU waste due to situations like this.

I mentioned Peninsula Link, but at the same time we also have the state Labor government undertaking bus stop works on Bungower and Racecourse roads, two diversion roads off Peninsula Link, impacting traffic there as well.

Yes, bus stops are needed, but we need coordination between government departments. We need the minister to actually take responsibility to coordinate both Pen Link and these other works at the same time. And thirdly, we now have the Nepean Highway outside of Bata for this Neue Space project. This has been an absolute disaster, again impacting another diversion road from the Peninsula Link as well as the diversion road from the Bungower and Racecourse roadworks. As mentioned, it has been an absolute disaster. We have had one lane closed. The state government gave permission, but they and the developer, Neue Space, did not notify me or most locals beyond minimal legal requirements. We have seen drivers spending up to an hour between Mount Eliza and Mount Martha, only just down the road, in what is normally a 15- to 20-minute trip. We have seen a big impact on surrounding streets

like Grant, Shotton and Cobb roads, which include dirt roads in residential areas not made for heavy traffic. We have had parents running late for kids, sport, community work and more.

My office team and I have had hundreds of emails, phone calls, contacts on social media and more – indeed I think it is over a thousand now on Pen Link, the Nepean Highway works and Bungower and Racecourse roads – and this all links to road management and road safety. I have had no response, though, from the minister; I have only had a response from Neue Space. And now today I have had further reports of closures greatly impacting Padua College, without notification to Padua either by the minister or by Neue Space. Indeed Padua wrote to parents, guardians and staff today, and they said:

[QUOTE AWAITING VERIFICATION]

These changes were implemented without any prior notice to the college.

I note this is on Nepean Highway, which is a state government road.

This meant that there was no opportunity for us or key transport providers, including bus operators, to plan or put alternative arrangements in place. The resulting congestion and delays were entirely foreseeable and have had a substantial impact on our community. At this stage we understand that unless changes are made, the current traffic conditions are likely to remain in place until the end of June. We recognise that this is not an acceptable position for many in our community, and we will continue to press for improvements.

I have had so many people from the school – parents, staff, commuters, community members – contacting me about this situation today, where I and the school were not contacted. We are putting students' lives at risk in a school that has over 2000 students and over 300 staff. Indeed the school said they have a situation where over 2000 students, 300 staff and so many parents are accessing the Mornington campus every single day in addition to a significant number of bus services. The absence of any communication to the college, transport providers or relevant authorities meant that there was no opportunity to plan or mitigate the impact of these changes. The school said that this situation was entirely avoidable with appropriate communication and planning. At present the burden of that failure is borne by students, families and staff.

This is a situation where this Labor government, in this bill today, talk about roads and talk about road safety, but when it comes to dealing with actual road safety issues that I have contacted them hundreds of times about and that we see every single day, every single week, we see little to no response from this Labor government, we see little to no response from the Labor minister, we see a lack of coordination, we see a lack of action and we do not see any planning between these three different projects. This is a government that cannot manage the budget. They cannot manage roads. They cannot fix roads properly. They are panicking at the moment, putting some money into fixing potholes in an election year. But this is something that should be done every single year on a continual basis and done properly, fixing the potholes so the road lasts.

*Members interjecting.*

**Chris CREWETHER:** I know the member opposite talks about these things, but I know that it is impacting your electorate as well. Many people are suffering because of this Labor government.

**Sarah CONNOLLY (Laverton) (17:44):** I would welcome an audience for a little committee called the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee. They are about to undergo budget estimates, and there will be lots of conversations about roads and road safety and potholes. With the amount of conversation here around potholes being filled, not filled, not fit for purpose, I often have to reflect: do those on the other side ever read the budget papers or ever listen to budget estimates and the very clear explanations around the situation with roads and getting on with fixing potholes across this state and the record amount of funding over successive years that has been delivered by this government to do just that?

I would say to the previous member on his feet: 15 May. It is going to run for seven days. We love having an audience. There is an open gallery. You are more than welcome to come in – maybe you will learn something.

But I do rise to speak on Roads, Road Safety and Ports Legislation Amendment Bill 2026. This is a really important bill and piece of legislation that has come before the house. It aims to deliver a range of improvements to road safety outcomes, the management of our transport network and the movement, most importantly, of freight across Victoria. I love talking about the movement of freight across Victoria, because in the seat of Laverton we have one of the biggest freight corridors here in this state, running through the belt of – dare I try and name it? We have got Tottenham. We have got Brooklyn. We have got Laverton North. We have got Laverton, and then we have got Truganina and Trug North. It is a big area, and there is a lot of movement of freight in and around this area. But at its core this bill truly is about safety, and that is something that I would say that both sides of this chamber would have to agree on: safety is absolutely paramount and must be paramount on our roads.

Because today is budget day I am very pleased to personally acknowledge that the budget has delivered much-needed safety upgrades for my community in Laverton. Road safety is not just about safety for drivers, and sometimes that gets forgotten here in this place, especially by those on the other side. It is also about pedestrians, it is about the foot traffic. This budget invests around \$29 million into improving and upgrading local roads, intersections and roundabouts across Melbourne. I am just so happy to say this because there has been a community campaign that I have been helping lead for one intersection, and one of the intersections we are going to upgrade with pedestrian signalisation is at Dohertys and Woods roads in the mighty Truganina.

**Paul Edbrooke** interjected.

**Sarah CONNOLLY:** It is life saving. I say to the member for Frankston that it is life saving, because hundreds of children and their parents and their grandparents cross every week at this pedestrian crossing. It is a very busy road. Truganina is one of the fastest growth postcodes in this state and this country. Dohertys Road has always been a very busy road, and so is Woods, as we have continued to build out Truganina, and we have the mighty Trug Central that people love going to and shopping at. But most importantly, it is just a couple of hundred metres to a really special precinct where this Labor government went ahead and purchased the land, got the plans delivered and went ahead and built and opened not just one school, not just two schools but three amazing education precincts on this piece of land. We have got a kinder, we have got a primary school and we have got the junior campus of Bemini Secondary – Truganina's only high school – so there are hundreds and hundreds of children of all ages using this crossing at least five days a week.

The community has been talking to me for some time about the need to put in pedestrian signalisation at this crossing. They want to use it. Not everyone can catch a bus. Some kids, as parents here in this place would know, love to be able to ride their bike to school, and they want to get on their bike. And whether their parents are walking with them or they are riding alone, the kids need to be able to cross that busy road intersection safely and be able to get to school safely. I am absolutely stoked to say Labor has delivered that in this budget. We have listened to the community, and we have delivered what is needed. I am also very pleased to say to the community that that means the very controversial Wyndham City Council can now open that pedestrian footpath that they cornered off, waiting for us to do this signalisation, full well knowing that it was sitting as a budget bid and hoping that today would come and deliver funding for that signalisation. The time has come, people.

For locals, even if they do not have children, it means that they can walk to Truganina Central. Next door to Truganina Central is a gorgeous pool. In this case it is a private pool that we have not built and invested in, but we have got a community centre that has a library which was co-funded by the Allan Labor government, so this is a really busy hub.

I do want to acknowledge in particular the staff and the students at local schools who have continued to raise this with me over the past 12 months, and I have to say to them on a personal level: I am so glad that together we have been able to deliver this. It may not seem a big project, and it probably does not seem like a big project to those opposite, but it is a massive win for a very big and very vocal local community who wanted this signalisation.

But of course I do have to say it is not just our cars when we are talking about road safety. It is not just our cars that use our roads, it is buses too. I have been out and about a lot lately in Sunshine and in Braybrook talking about the 408 bus, which I am very glad to say has received a major service uplift in this budget as well. The 408 bus travels from St Albans station to Highpoint shopping centre. For those that are not from Melbourne's west, Highpoint shopping centre – the member for Werribee is going to say, 'No, it's not' – is the Chadstone of Melbourne's west. It is a very popular shopping centre. It is somewhere that I love to go shopping with my kids on the weekend. But there are folks, whether they are in St Albans, Sunshine, Braybrook or Maribyrnong, who want to catch the 408 bus to either do some shopping in Highpoint or go and have some great food in Sunshine or great food and lunch in St Albans. One of the things that folks have been talking to us a lot about is that they wanted services to run more often but they also wanted more services on weekends. Now that is something they are going to receive, in particular a major boost to Sunday services. Who does not love shopping and eating out on a Sunday? Now the community will have a bus that they can catch.

These budget initiatives are important for road safety because they get people out of their cars in the first place by putting them on buses or making it easier to walk, but this is bigger than the Laverton electorate. This budget invests a record just over \$1 billion to rebuild, repair and resurface roads, and that is right across Victoria. The largest roads maintenance blitz in Victorian history – that says it all, doesn't it? We hear all the time about our roads, about potholes and about how the servicing of major roads can be a hazard for drivers. I think we have all been there. That is not something that we argue against on this side, and that is why we are making a record investment of over a billion dollars in this budget to fix just that. That is because Labor will always deliver real support for our roads, ensuring that Victorians can get to work and get home every day no matter where they live and, more importantly, that Victorians get to go where they want to go in one piece, safe and sound.

Of course there is more that we can do to make our roads safer, which this bill also contains. I will not have the time this evening to go to those changes, but this bill does deliver important reforms to our road safety laws to keep Victorians safe, whether they drive, whether they catch a bus or whether they walk like folks in Truganina or ride their bike like the kids in Truganina. This bill will allow us to improve the operation of the road safety network, including average speed calculations, detection across changing road speed conditions and improving the nomination process for a fined driver. I will give again a huge shout-out to my local Laverton community who got behind my campaign. They were very patient. Thank you for waiting, and I am very proud to say we have been able to deliver.

**Kim O'KEEFFE** (Shepparton) (17:54): I rise to make a contribution on the Roads, Road Safety and Ports Legislation Amendment Bill 2026. The bill includes road safety enforcement, freight and port operations, toll road administration, emergency services fatigue exemptions and road management powers. We are not opposing this bill and welcome road safety measures, but we also know that there is so much more that is not here in front of us in this bill today.

This legislation aims to improve road safety outcomes and increase efficiency and modernise transport management. One of the key amendments contained in this bill is around the Road Safety Act 1986, to which it introduces amendments and formulas to enable point-to-point average speed camera enforcement across multiple speed limit zones and across more than one road or network of roads.

Most drivers often see these cameras on the Hume Freeway and the Peninsula Link. I often see drivers hit their brakes when they see the cameras, not understanding the way that they work. We know that speed kills, and any measures to reduce speeding behaviour are welcomed-

The road toll in Victoria remains deeply concerning. In 2025, 290 people lost their lives on Victorian roads, an increase on the previous year, with rural and regional Victoria accounting for 156 of those fatalities. Regional roads continue to carry a disproportionate burden of road trauma despite lower population density. The TAC statistics also show that regional municipalities continue to be among the hardest hit areas in the state. The Moira shire recorded one of the highest road tolls in regional Victoria, highlighting the ongoing challenges faced across the broader Goulburn Valley region. The GV road safety group and local stakeholders have repeatedly raised concerns about the rising road toll in our region and the urgent need for greater investment in prevention, education and safer road design and to also address the appalling and unsafe condition of our roads and intersections. Communities continue to raise concerns about the appalling, unsafe conditions of our roads, which are crumbling and full of potholes, and road maintenance delays and their fear of the dangerous road network they face every single day.

Today this government has announced funding for roads, labelling it a roads blitz once again. The government's failure and neglect for many years have led to the appalling and unsafe condition of our roads. The suggestion to fix 200,000 potholes is astounding – to think that there are even that many, but we know there are possibly even more. But road repairs are more than just fixing potholes. The other question is: will the quality of works be done to a standard that will last and not begin to deteriorate in a short period of time, not just the patch-up jobs that we have constantly seen? We need the roads fixed correctly and for the long term. Patching up potholes and dodgy works are not the long-term solution to maintaining and repairing our roads.

Wherever you might travel right across Victoria the roads are deplorable. This government has failed to support critical road safety upgrades in the Moira shire and the Greater Shepparton region for some of our most dangerous roads and intersections, which have had numerous fatalities. The Barmah-Shepparton Road intersection is in desperate need of an upgrade and a known black spot location on a major arterial road, recording five separate casualty crashes in the last five years. Most accidents have been related to a failure to give way, and it is proposed that the upgrade will prevent speeding through the intersection. This is a \$2 million upgrade. The Numurkah Road–Naring Road–Tocumwal Road intersection is another dangerous intersection, and Department of Transport and Planning safety analysis has identified this intersection as Moira shire's highest transport infrastructure risk. It is a known black spot risk. Serious casualty crashes have been recorded in the past three years. We are not talking billions of dollars for these projects. We are talking money invested to save lives – lives that will continue to be lost at these dangerous intersections.

I see we have the new Minister for Roads and Road Safety at the table today, and I would welcome the minister to come out to my region and see firsthand some of the roads that I am talking about and some of these dangerous intersections. I met with Moira shire just last week in regard to these roads. They are constantly advocating, along with the Greater Shepparton City Council, to upgrade their roads for the safety of their communities. There are so many roads in my electorate. There are many others than just these two that I have mentioned. Council have an extensive list. To show you the level of neglect, there are nine here on my list, but just to name a couple: River Road, Kialla, \$15 million; Ford Road, \$7 million – the Shepparton alternate route; and Congupna, \$20 million. They are not billions of dollars of projects. These are roads that desperately need safety upgrades, which have been neglected.

I do not think many on that side of the house truly understand the regional road network that we have to use every single day, because it is very different. I travel constantly between my small towns on back rural roads, and these are known to be dangerous. Navigating narrow backroads are trucks, vehicles and other users. As our region continues to grow, so does the pressure on the local and broader road network. I have mentioned in this place before the incredible volume of truck transport movement, with 25 per cent of the state's trucks registered in my region. We must have an adequate, safe and fit-for-purpose road network. Today my electorate is still facing the same unsafe road

networks and intersections and the very high risk of more fatalities without the government's investment.

It is not just major highways where we need to address speeding. As I have said, the regions have alarming statistics when it comes to the road toll. I wish to acknowledge my friend Sharon O'Dwyer, who lost her 26-year-old son Matthew in a car accident a few years ago. It was so devastating, as you can imagine – a wonderful young man's life cut short too soon and a grieving family who will never get over it. Sharon has become a passionate advocate and spokesperson for road safety and has spoken at many community events, sharing her experience and the need for young drivers to be aware of the dangers when driving and how, like her son Matthew, their life can be taken away in an instant.

Sharon does not want other families to go through what her family has gone through, but we also know that there are so many others who are impacted each and every day by road trauma whose lives and those of their loved ones are changed forever.

We all know that road safety is not simply about addressing enforcement; it is also about creating a road network that is safe, reliable and fit for purpose for every road user. Road safety policy should always be focused on saving lives and reducing the alarming road toll outcomes. Road safety is not achieved through cameras and compliance alone. It requires investment in safer roads and intersections, road maintenance, better lighting, clearer signage, improved line marking, stronger maintenance programs and roads capable of handling increasing freight and heavy vehicle movements safely. It requires investment in public transport and freight efficiency, and it requires government to listen to communities raising concerns long before tragedies occur.

Regional communities should not have to accept a lower standard of road safety whilst this government focus on their citycentric spending, billions of dollars in waste, cost blowouts and financial mismanagement. The \$15 billion blown in rorts on Big Build sites should have gone to fixing and maintaining the dangerous roads and intersections that I have just mentioned in my electorate, which have been neglected for far too long, and also put into our hospitals, sporting facilities, critical services and infrastructure. Labor can no longer fool the people. Victorians simply do not trust or believe you, and they want to know where their \$15 billion has gone, as do I. And there is the \$600 million loss to the Commonwealth Games and nothing to show for that money. The financial mismanagement of this government is just appalling. As we stand here on budget day, nothing has changed, and the significant debt will continue to impact all Victorians and my electorate.

Wherever you might travel on our roads right across regional Victoria, as we have said, they are deplorable. I will finish off by saying I jumped in a truck with one of our local truck drivers, who wanted me to experience the impact on his vehicle every single day and what he was having to navigate. It was actually unbelievable. The driver has a special seat that assists with the impact, but the passenger seat does not, and I was thrown around and shaken around. The appalling condition of our roads is very real. That same driver raised the enormous costs in repairs that his company has experienced, and it has been in the thousands of dollars every single month. This government has allowed our roads to get to the condition that they are in today. It is astounding that this government think that the past level of neglect can just be ignored. It is because of their neglect that we are faced with enormous amounts of crumbling and unsafe roads and damage to vehicles. So many of my constituents have had to pay hundreds of dollars in repairs that they cannot afford. They are angry and they can see through Labor's spin because it is happening time and time again: big promises and failure to deliver.

I hope I get to speak on the budget, as there is so much in my region that is being neglected by this government, and it is simply wrong. We do not have adequate public bus transport services. We have small towns that have limited or no bus services and parts of Shepparton where you cannot get a bus. There is so much more that I will share, and I look forward to responding to the budget. But coming back to the bill in the few minutes that I have, we do know that there is so much more that needs to be done. As we said, we welcome road safety measures, but we also want to see this government invest

where it is needed. If they are serious about investing in road safety, those intersections that I have referred to today where lives have been lost should have been invested in, and they have not been. We have many roads. We have many drivers trying to navigate regional roads, and it is dangerous. It is time for this government now to step up and fix the roads. That will make a difference and save lives.

**John LISTER** (Werribee) (18:04): It is my pleasure to rise to speak on the Roads, Road Safety and Ports Legislation Amendment Bill 2026. Road safety is something particularly important for me and residents in my electorate, which I will come to more broadly. But I think it is personally very important for me too. As a road crash rescue operator with the CFA, I have certainly seen my fair share of and probably too much trauma on our roads in responding to some of the most horrific accidents across the response zone that we have at Werribee, which goes all the way from the Derrimut interchange at the Western Ring Road all the way out towards Tarneit and the back of Werribee into Little River. Some of the accidents I have seen have been horrendous. I do not want to speak for my colleague the member for Melton, but as people who have spent a lot of time on the job we have seen our fair share.

We know that the sorts of reforms that we have in this bill are all about building a system which not only helps keep people safe on our roads but also responds to some of those little quirks, which I will talk about, particularly when it comes to the emergency services.

I have got a few anecdotes on the issue of heavy vehicle licensing and regulation, particularly as a code one driver and pump operator, and some of the things that come from that regulation when you are trying to respond to an incident. As I said, as a road crash rescue operator, I have seen my fair share. A lot of my comrades at the fire brigade have been to some pretty heavy jobs over the years. Werribee fire brigade was one of the first CFA brigades to develop a road crash rescue response. In fact we pioneered quite a lot of the techniques that we use today. And in that pioneering spirit, every year we send a team to New South Wales to compete against the New South Wales emergency services, and we show them up most of the time at what they think they are quite good at doing but Werribee does better. Only this weekend our road crash rescue operators went to Dubbo, so I would like to give a little shout-out to Dan, Dom, Neil, Trevor, Hilly, Greeny, Aiden and Blix for all their efforts at this road crash rescue event.

One of the particular things about this event is that they develop new techniques. One of the newest techniques that we have got in road crash rescue is around relocation, which has helped save countless lives by literally relocating a vehicle to be able to make better access to the patient and obviously have safer egress and quicker response to getting them to that tertiary care hospital. The pioneering spirit of Werribee road crash rescue response is well known throughout the Asia Pacific as well, having won many awards.

The reason I touch on this in particular is we talk a lot and we hear a lot from those opposite. Whenever we have discussions around our speed cameras – road safety cameras, I should call them – there is always this old argument of it being about revenue raising and that it is just another way for the government to get money. It is absurd. I have seen where the revenue goes from our road safety camera program. It goes towards new equipment in the back of Werribee's rescue truck. It goes towards things like vehicles that we can practice on. People might not know, but it costs about 800 bucks to get a vehicle debugged and into our yard for us to practise on and cut up. All that practice is so vital to having, whatever time of day, that response.

That money also goes towards other sorts of projects around the station that we have had over the years, including a better electronic turnout system, which helps us get out a lot quicker to these events, because we are responding in road crash rescue anywhere up to 20 minutes from our station. The quicker we get out – our service delivery standard is one of the best in metropolitan Melbourne – the quicker we get on scene and the quicker we can help them. These rubbish claims of revenue raising show that those opposite really do not understand the system. It has been that long since they have had the privilege of being in government that they do not understand the system.

When we talk about the very modest changes to what we are doing around those point-to-point speed cameras and having that way of taking into account varying speeds along a stretch of road, the accusations that this is some way of raising revenue are just wrong. We have got to remember that if you are caught by one of our road safety cameras, it is because you have broken the law. I would think from those opposite, that go on so much about community safety and holding offenders to account, that having proper enforcement mechanisms, including road safety cameras, would be one of the key ways that we can make sure that we hold people who break the law to account. I have very little time for excuses for speeding on our roads because I have seen the impact – literally the impact – of that speeding on our roads. I would counsel those opposite when it comes to discussing this bill that we remember that the road safety camera program is important for enforcing that.

There have been other reforms in the space too, including in finding ways to deliver those infringements more quickly, because we know the effectiveness when someone cops that fine in the mail, and hopefully in the future electronically, and the impact it has on their driving behaviour.

The other thing I would like to touch on is, as I mentioned earlier, as a code 1 driver in the fire brigade there are a lot of different responsibilities that we have. The first responsibility and primary responsibility is our safety and the safety of the crew that is in the truck with us and, alongside that, of the community as we are driving code 1. As part of this – I drive a truck that is nearly 13 tonnes usually at about 110 kilometres an hour down the Princes Freeway – we have some particular hazards that we need to be mindful of, but at the same time we are all heavy vehicle licence holders, and there are laws that are in place for our licence generally. The requirements and the exemptions under that heavy vehicle legislation, the national legislation, mean that in responding to an incident we do not have to necessarily have the brakes that we would need to have if we were just driving generally or commercially. There are some other things too around the types of trucks that we can drive. There has also been a lot of discussion in CFA circles around some of the logbook requirements that we have to have, and we all know in the fire brigade just how annoying it is to do the logbook. It is very important, obviously, because it helps us keep track of who is driving and how many drives we get, but it is important when it comes to managing fatigue in emergency situations that the CFA has its own policies and procedures to help manage fatigue. It is an emergency situation, so it requires a different response to what would be normally considered for commercial operators who might be driving day after day after day. Every time we have this exemption it expires and we have to go back and redo that exemption, so changing that part and amending that part of the Heavy Vehicle National Law and its applicability to Victoria is particularly important so that we can have that continuing on. That certainty for code 1 drivers and for heavy vehicle operators in the emergency services is so vital.

In the short amount of time that I have left I just want to touch on the work that we are doing to improve road safety, particularly in the electorate of Werribee. One of the issues that we have had in Werribee as a result of poor planning decisions by those opposite when they last had the chance to govern is rapid growth in precinct plans and rapid housing growth. So we have been meeting that demand with projects like our Wyndham ring-road, building the Ison Road link and the bridge across from Wyndham Vale to Tarnait, for which land acquisition is underway currently. Having more local roads to reduce congestion is better than just building one giant road to funnel everyone through, because we know that when it comes to duplicating roads and when it comes to having wider roads with increased speed we end up having more accidents. So having more ways to move people between different parts of the municipality can often be safer than just having one big road.

This Labor government has invested hundreds of millions of dollars into road maintenance across Wyndham with our western roads upgrade package. Every few months you see the crews come through and they are repaving stretches of Wyndham's arterial roads, most recently on Princes Highway and down at Duncans Road as well, where you will find the surfaces are being kept to safe standards, and they regularly monitor it using our partner that we have got with that western roads upgrade program. This is an example of how the government is meeting those demands of our growth suburbs, particularly when it comes to roads. I commend this bill to the house, and I would remind

everyone as we debate this of the importance of keeping safety front and centre in what we are considering in this bill.

**Martin CAMERON** (Morwell) (18:14): I rise to contribute on the Roads, Road Safety and Ports Legislation Amendment Bill 2026, and in doing so I note that we are not opposing this bill, and that is the way it should be with anything that we can do to make sure our roads are safer not only for ourselves but for our families and every single person in Victoria. I do not care where you come from or what region you represent; I think we can all stand in agreement here that our roads in Victoria have disintegrated. They are not up to standard, and we need to do some work to make sure that we are saving the lives of the wonderful people that we represent in Victoria.

I will roll the dice tonight, because after Parliament finishes here I will be leaving Parliament and I will be driving back to the Latrobe Valley, back to my home town of Traralgon.

On the way down and over the many journeys that I have made over the last few years to Parliament I have seen firsthand and virtually now know where the potholes are on the way home. I know you, Acting Speaker Farnham, use the same route on the way home too going back to Warragul. When we get to that stage where we know that the potholes that we do have are getting worse – and it does not matter if we are in a rain event like what has happened around the state or if it is just our normal weather cycle and we have no rain – these potholes continually come back. We have seen in the budget that over a billion dollars is going to be spent on repairing potholes around Victoria and a lot in regional Victoria. Well, I have seen the trucks out over the last few years repairing the potholes, but they come back. Repairing potholes will not fix the issue. We have to do major works on many, many sections of roads to make sure that they are up to standard. I know that on this side of the house we talk about our cars having to be roadworthy, but our roads are not car-worthy. That is exactly the point that we bring up every single time we are spending money. We are spending a lot of money patching our roads. I have got roads in my electorate in the Latrobe Valley – I have got one where they have got signs up just outside of Moe. If I am heading from Traralgon to Melbourne, and I am coming up to the Moe turnoff, they actually have a sign there with a car and a few skids on it: ‘When wet, slow down to 80’. The reason is because that road is not up to standard to be able to have cars go around the corner at 100 kilometres an hour. When it is dry it is okay, but when it is wet we have a sign warning us we need to slow down to 80. Wouldn’t the responsible thing to do – and this is right across the state, not just in the Latrobe Valley – be to actually stand up and make sure that our roads are up to scratch? It seems that for the Allan Labor government the easiest way to fix our roads is to reduce our speed limit, and we need the speed limits reduced, unfortunately, because our roads are deteriorating right before our eyes. How many of these potholes that we are going to fix will need to be repaired again in six months time? I am thinking most of them, because I have seen over the last two years that when they are repaired these potholes materialise once again, especially if we have a little bit of rain. If we have a storm, well, then it is game on: we have potholes everywhere on our roads.

It is not just our roads with the potholes that are deteriorating, it is the edges on the side of the roads. We have grass that is actually off the edge of the road which has now encroached onto the road surface itself, so when it does rain the rain cannot get off the road, and we see people aquaplaning on roads all the time. I do it in my car. It does not matter if I am responsibly driving at the speed limit, which we all in this place always do, I am sure, but we can be going at 60 kilometres an hour, and we hit a patch of road where there is water over it, and it is hard to see these days. We have got kilometre after kilometre after kilometre of road barriers, which have been put up to protect us, that have been hit by a truck or a car, and now they are in disrepair, and they have not been fixed. I am not talking about being fixed over the last 30 days, 60 days; I am talking about two, three, sometimes four years that these barriers have been left there. I would love to know what the number of unfinished maintenance jobs in Victoria is. It would be in the tens of thousands. There would be tens of thousands of jobs which they just cannot get to because the money has not been put forward.

Lloyd Street in Moe is a railway crossing with boom gates. We have B-double trucks that cross that and actually get stuck on the railway lines as they try to negotiate this horrendous intersection, which we have been wanting to have upgraded. The government have gone through their supposed due diligence of acquiring land. This intersection was going to be done three or four years ago, but it still sits the same way there today. We have another intersection at Bank Street in Traralgon where over the journey works have been done, and we talk about it all the time. There is a section of road on the Princes Highway on the corner of Bank Street where there are traffic lights that have been put up, except for the lights – the poles are there, the intersection has been done, the roads have all been reconfigured to make it work, but we do not have traffic lights to make it safe to actually cross the highway.

Who is coming up with this stuff, Acting Speaker Farnham? I know you will also be aware of intersections in your community, but who comes up with road upgrades but will not put traffic lights there to finish the job? Who are these people that are sitting and making the decisions? I have asked time and time again for the roads minister to come down. We do have a new Minister for Roads and Road Safety now, and I will invite her to come down and have a look. It was meant to be finished 18 months ago, 12 months ago, six months ago, and now we are hearing it is not going to be finished until 2027. They do not give a timeframe for when these lights will be going up. Believe me, not only is it our road users and our car users that are in trouble, it is the poor old train driver that is going to come hurtling through the Waterloo Road intersection with a B-double truck parked over it or that is going to move through the intersection at Bank Street and either hit a car or hit students and people that have to walk up over the railway line to get from one side of the road to the other.

These are intersections in my community that you just shake your head at. What is the hold-up? Why aren't we protecting our community? Why aren't we making it safe? At that Bank Street intersection we have Latrobe Valley Funeral Services, and I do not want to see any of my constituents at all end up at Latrobe Valley Funeral Services. We have had a bus that crashed with school students on it at that intersection. What did the government do – drop the speed limit from 80 to 60. That will fix it! How is that going to fix it? They take the easy options all the time. The infrastructure is there; all they need to do is supposedly put the lights up. Just let us know what is going on. These hidden faces – I get questioned all the time about who is coming up with the responses to say, 'No, it'll be right; it will happen in 12 months time.' Who knows, it might be 18 months time. We just need to know.

There are unintended consequences that I talk about in this place all the time from issues that arise with stuff the government has done. We have talked about the shutting of the timber industry and the effect on white paper having to shut that industry. I am coming up with a theory that our roads are now so bad that when I go into Woolworths and I go to buy my weekly lot of eggs, every time I open them up there are more and more eggs in that carton that are broken. I am putting it down to the poor state of our roads. How much is that costing us? Because I am sure that Woolworths and Coles and anyone, in particular our IGAs, will be throwing the eggs out. It never used to be like that. You used to open them up and you might have one. Nowadays, with our roads that are so poor, it will not matter where you are. Go and check when you get home this weekend. I can see the smile on your face, Acting Speaker. You will be the first one calling in tonight. Open up the box of eggs. There are half a dozen of them broken, and the only reason is because our roads are so poor. Let us get this done. I am glad we are spending some more money on the roads, but let us make sure we get it in the right spots.

**Alison MARCHANT** (Bellarine) (18:24): Eggs are fine on the Bellarine. They are great on the Bellarine, and we get our eggs around the Bellarine. It is really lovely to speak on the Roads, Road Safety and Ports Legislation Amendment Bill 2026. Roads are something that I have spoken about many times in this place, because they are a really important issue for my constituents and for me personally. I think that also, having chaired the Economy and Infrastructure Committee's inquiry a few years ago, with you, Acting Speaker Farnham, on that inquiry around road safety behaviour and vulnerable road users, it really has given me an insight into the expert advice that comes around our road safety and our road safety behaviours. I am going to touch a little bit on that inquiry as we go.

There was an incredible amount of investment announced in the budget – a record investment of just over a billion dollars – for our roads, and as a regional MP, to see 70 per cent of that coming to regional Victoria is certainly very welcome.

When I do doorknocking, when I do stalls and when I am out and about in the community the issue of roads is raised with me by my constituents, and it is certainly something that I continue to advocate for here in this place to the minister and the Treasurer to ensure that we get our fair share in the Bellarine. We have certainly done that. I have been really proud to see some significant investment across the Bellarine. We have had the Bellarine Highway resurfaced all the way from Wallington down into Leopold. We have had some pedestrian upgrades, including making sure that a very busy roundabout in Ocean Grove, at Shell Road and Grubb Road, now has the wombat crossings. They are not for wombats, as people might have originally thought, they are for pedestrians. But they are raised pedestrian crossings that slow down people entering the roundabout for a start, but they also allow safety for people to cross. Because this was such a busy roundabout, I have seen that it has worked. It has been able to get motorists to slow down. Because it is near schools and sporting facilities I see children, particularly on their bikes, getting across that roundabout very safely now. We are also about to install wombat crossings at a Barwon Heads roundabout at Golf Links Road. So I am really excited to see that as well.

In today's budget we also have further announcements for Barwon Heads Road at Tomara Drive, and that again is about pedestrian safety. We have a new roundabout down in Clifton Springs, which is sort of an entrance to the Clifton Springs boat ramp and boat harbour. It is a really busy intersection because obviously boats and trailers need to navigate that intersection. That has been terrific. We have new lights coming on Grubb Road and Smithton Grove, and that is really about supporting an industrial area, which has become very busy and very hard for people to come in and out of that area. I continue to advocate for roads, as I have said, across my electorate, including roads for Indented Head and Portarlinton, across the Portarlinton Road; Murradoc Road going down towards Drysdale and St Leonards; Banks Road in Ocean Grove, which I note is a council road; and again Melaluka Road and Kensington Road in Leopold. They continue to be on my radar and the community continue to raise them with me, and I hope to continue to advocate for those projects. I do want to just also note that when a lot of people contact me about roads, being a regional area we still have a lot of unsealed and dirt roads across our electorate, but they are council-managed roads. I think sometimes people do not understand there is a difference in terms of who manages those roads. We try and navigate that and talk to our constituents about who is responsible for which roads across the Bellarine.

Just about this this bill, though, this is really an important piece of legislation, which is about delivering a broader package of reform. People have talked here in the chamber today about road safety and strengthening management of our transport network and really more efficient movement of freight across Victoria. But ultimately there is one objective of this bill, and that is making roads safer. This bill, as I have talked about, is going to complement the significant investment that we are making and have made obviously in this budget as well. One of the things I would like to highlight in this bill and some reforms is around that point-to-point average speed enforcement. We know some of the facts, and Acting Speaker Farnham, you were on the committee when we looked at vulnerable road users in the inquiry into road safety behaviours. We know that at least 30 per cent of our road fatalities in Victoria and a quarter of our serious injuries have been contributed to by speeding. We know speeding is a real contributing factor to that. They are horrible statistics, but they are real lives and lives that have been lost and families that have been changed forever. That is why we have committed to strengthening the enforcement, and I am talking a little bit more about that point-to-point enforcement, or it might be cameras and it might be red-light cameras that we see across Victoria. But we know that we also have areas where the zones change, and we have changing conditions from highways and then back into maybe suburban roads. This bill is really about modernising that system.

Importantly, the Economy and Infrastructure Committee had a final report in May 2024 about those behaviours that we were seeing post pandemic. Submissions that came to us and witnesses that came to us in that inquiry certainly told us that something had shifted in the community post COVID.

They were seeing more people taking risks on the road. They were seeing people speeding more. They were seeing people deliberately running red lights. They were seeing more drug and alcohol affected drivers. People were making these conscious decisions to undertake these risky behaviours. Incredibly, we have seen an uplift of people who just do not want to wear seatbelts. It is absolutely incredible to think that. But some of the most vulnerable people on our roads are our pedestrians, our cyclists, our children who are walking to school, our older seniors that may simply be trying to get across the road. They are not protected. They are the most vulnerable. In our inquiry we talked about having a hierarchy system where they should be the ones that we think about the most, at the top of a hierarchy system, with trucks and big buses down at the bottom, and our infrastructure should be designed better for those vulnerable road users.

Importantly too in that inquiry, and I want to touch on this, we saw significant submissions around cameras, road safety cameras. That could be a speed camera, it could be a red-light camera or that new driver distraction technology where it takes a picture above the head of a driver and it might detect that a driver is on their phone, and we are seeing more drivers on their phones in their cars while driving. But what stood out was not really just the policy argument but more the community sentiment. People understood that these dangerous behaviours, like I have talked about, were putting lives at risk. Many people were calling for more tools to deter that type of behaviour.

We cannot ignore the challenges, but we also need to address the public perception that the cameras are there for revenue raising. That is not supported by the evidence. It is not supported by the experts, because the evidence was really clear in the inquiry that we undertook. From the researchers and from police we know that cameras and reducing speed save lives. They are there to improve compliance. But that does not mean we should not be more transparent and we should not be sharing data. That is certainly what the inquiry recommended to the government. That is what really this bill today in the house is supporting with that approach. It is not punishment for punishment's sake. It is about that deterrence, it is about safety but it is ensuring that people can use the road safely, with confidence. We want to do that. This is part of broader work that we are doing in responding to that inquiry but also making sure that we continue to strengthen our laws and continue to improve our enforcement and continue investing in those safer roads because we know that every life lost on our roads is one too many.

In conclusion, this bill does include a number of minor amendments. They may not be headline reforms, but they are essential in keeping the system running smoothly. This is all about making sure that we are investing in our roads and that we are strengthening the rules, the systems and the safeguards that support all that. We want to make sure that our roads are safer. We want to ensure that we are also addressing some of those little pressures that families are facing. I want to quickly mention that it is fantastic to have that 20 per cent off your car rego coming up. I am encouraging the Bellarine to apply for that 20 per cent off. I commend the bill to the house.

**Peter WALSH** (Murray Plains) (18:34): I rise to make my contribution on the Roads, Road Safety and Ports Legislation Amendment Bill 2026. In the 10 days running up to the budget the Premier made her annual announcement about how much money was going to be spent on roads: a billion dollars. I think I have seen that press release for about five years now. About the only thing that has changed on that press release is the date or probably the year – the date is very similar.

Every year there is an announcement. But what I found intriguing this year was that the Premier blamed the weather for the condition of the roads. If you go back in time, we had dirt roads with horses and carts, then we had gravel and then we started sealing roads. We called them all-weather roads. They are made to be able to stand the weather. The fact that the Premier would blame the weather for the roads – if they were built properly, if they had good foundations, if they had a good seal, if the

shoulders were maintained to let the water run away, which they are not, the roads would not be worried by the weather. They would be fine.

A number of years ago I went out to what was then the Australian Road Research Board, which is now called the National Transport Research Organisation. We went out there to that research organisation, which is very good, and they said, 'What are you doing here?' And we said, 'Our perception is, if you talk about all the states in Australia, Victoria has the worst roads. If you go to South Australia or you go to Western Australia, they have a 110 speed limit. The roads are better. When you come back from South Australia into Victoria you do not have to look for the sign that says you are entering Victoria; you can just see by the potholes on the road that you have come back into Victoria.' We said to the people that ran what was then the Australian Road Research Board that we believe that Victorian roads are worse than other states and we do not believe we are getting value for money in our road spend. They said, 'That's true. Victoria does not build its roads as well as the other states.' They actually said, 'We have the research and we have the advice that we can give to the road authorities on how they can actually build roads better, but no-one comes to talk to us,' and they were very glad that we were there to talk to them. A number of my colleagues and I followed up over the years and met with the new organisation, which actually now has that semitrailer that can drive down the highway at 80 k an hour and can use the technology in that truck to tell you the condition of the pavement and when that road needs to be upgraded or re-sheeted. The dilemma is the people that build the roads here in Victoria do not take that advice and actually do not build the roads properly.

I will come back to the issue of the shoulders. One of the dangerous things with a lot of country roads is the drop-off on the edge of the seal. There is anything from up to 6 inches of drop-off, and you can see that when you follow a semitrailer. If the trailer moves and the wheels get over, there is a big swing around because there is such a huge drop-off there. That is dangerous. Years ago they used to actually have a small road grader that would go along and maintain the shoulders and make sure the water would run away. Now you see there is a dip-off, grass grows, the water lays there, it gets in under the seal and it breaks away more. It would make a lot of economic sense to actually maintain the shoulders of our sealed roads so that the water would run away and the seal would last longer.

I come back to what I said about the Premier. They are called all-weather roads for a reason. If you actually build them properly and you maintain them properly, there is not an issue with the weather – except when there are floods, and I will make that exception. Talking to the people from the National Transport Research Organisation, one of the challenges we have in Victoria is that under our flood recovery legislation, local government or the roads authority are paid to build the roads back to how they were before the flood. They are not actually paid to put enhancements into that road. They said there is very good research that if you put in a different mix of seal and put some rubber compound in so they are slightly flexible, they will actually withstand a flood better than a traditional road will. So our rules are wrong. We are building the roads back to what they were rather than actually having enhancements, or betterment, as it is called, to make sure those roads would withstand floods into the future. There is a very good adage that if you invest in country roads, you save country lives. One of the tragedies is we have not had the investment. What investment there has been has not been spent well, and that is why we have the issue with the higher fatality rate in country Victoria.

The other thing I want to touch on, which again is an issue, is the number of animals that we have on our roads now. Particularly since the Labor Party was re-elected into government, they have stopped the harvesting and culling of kangaroos like it was done before, so we see a lot more kangaroos. The second highest place in Australia for kangaroo collisions with cars is actually Heathcote. Canberra is the highest. Effectively because of the do-gooders and the greenies up there they cannot cull kangaroos in Canberra. But the second highest in Australia is Heathcote, and that is because there are just so many kangaroos there. If we actually had a well-managed program that harvested that protein for pet food, we could make sure there were less collisions between cars and kangaroos. They are a native animal, but the other issue is the introduced species, particularly deer.

The deer numbers in the state have exploded, and you would know from your area, Acting Speaker Farnham, if you hit a deer – with a kangaroo, the advice I give everyone is ‘Don’t swerve, just hit the skids and hang on’, because there is very little risk of you actually being physically hurt by hitting a kangaroo. If you swerve and you crash into an oncoming vehicle or you hit a tree on the side of the road, yes, there will be fatalities. But a deer is a lot bigger and does a lot more damage to a car, and if it gets in the air and comes through your windscreen, you are in a lot of trouble as well. So if we actually had better control of deer, particularly around our more populous areas, there would be less accidents there too. With both the kangaroo and the deer, it would probably do some of the panelbeaters out of some business, but I think they have got more than enough work to do, fixing the cars that do hit kangaroos and deer at the moment, let alone the issue, as the member for Eildon will talk to you about, of wombats. If you hit a wombat, it is pretty brutal, and it does a lot of damage underneath your car – again, as you would know, Acting Speaker.

The last thing on the roads issue – some previous speakers talked about fixing half a pothole. It was actually explained to me that with the privatisation of a lot of road repairs there are tenders let and there are designs done of how much would be fixed here, there and everywhere else.

*Members interjecting.*

**Peter WALSH:** No, this is a true story. A guy at the Elmore Field Days last year came up to me who worked for a road repair business, and he said, ‘We get given the specifications that we’re to go out to that road and we’re to fix a hole that has got 1 cubic metre or 1 square metre that needs fixing.’ But from when that contract was let to when they actually got there to fix the pothole, the pothole was twice as big. But the specification sheet and the amount of money that was paid to the contractor said ‘You’re fixing X amount of the size of a pothole.’ So we are finding that potholes actually are not being totally fixed because the need has changed from when the specifications were designed. So we have a huge issue that with the privatisation of a lot of road repair work and pothole fixing the system fails, because from the time of being told ‘That pothole needs fixing’ to the money being allocated, to a contractor going out to do it, the pothole is twice the size, and they say, ‘We’re only going to fix half, because that’s what we’re told to do and that’s what we’re paid to do.’

The whole system of road maintenance and repair in this state is not well done at all. The alleged or supposed billion dollars that the government announced to fix roads, with the huge increase in cost of road construction, is only a fraction of what it was worth five years ago and, tragically, is not going to make a lot of difference. I cannot see any difference on the roads that I travel on every week or that any roads are improving. They are getting worse. One time the road guy would go out with his can of white paint and put some lines on it; now, where the bulges or the holes are worse, they put yellow paint. I did a social media post on it, and he rang me up and said, ‘Well, the reason I do that is particularly for motorbikes, because they know that if I put yellow paint on it, that is more dangerous than the white paint hole.’ Wouldn’t it be great in the world if we did not have any white paint holes, we did not have any yellow paint holes and the government actually fixed the roads and saved country lives by spending the money wisely so it was a lot safer to drive on our roads?

**Iwan WALTERS** (Greenvale) (18:44): I also rise to contribute on the Roads, Road Safety and Ports Legislation Amendment Bill 2026, and I want to thank the ministers for roads and road safety past and present and the Minister for Ports and Freight for bringing this bill to this place. I was taken with the member for Essendon’s characterisation of the bill earlier in the debate as being an example of iterative improvement, or kaizen, that ensures that across our road network we are consistently striving to improve safety outcomes, to strengthen more broadly the management of our transport network and also to support the efficient movement and distribution of freight across Victoria.

I begin my contribution by recognising that Victoria has been a world leader in some of the innovations around road safety and really at the vanguard of some of the technologies and statutory innovations that have driven down the road toll in effectively a secular decline over about five to six decades now,

from a period of crisis when seatbelts were not mandatory and were not used and when drink driving was pretty commonplace in the absence of either legislation or enforcement mechanisms.

But from 1970, when seatbelts became compulsory in Victoria, the first jurisdiction to do so anywhere in the world, followed by random breath testing in 1976 and assorted mechanisms and enforcement strategies associated with that after 1976, and Victoria was the first in Australia, we have also adopted sophisticated advertising campaigns that have sought to highlight the impact of driver behaviour. Again, the member for Essendon and the member for Werribee talked very powerfully about why those road safety campaigns were needed and the impact they have had. One of the core measures within this bill is to enable a more sophisticated set of point-to-point camera arrangements to both detect and deter speeding. As anybody listening to the debate so far would know, currently the enforcement of average speed can only be undertaken where there is one consistent speed limit between two detection points – in practice, on highways or freeways like the Hume Freeway in north-eastern Victoria, where there are well-established point-to-point cameras – whereas this bill will enable the use of those cameras to be implemented more broadly across the state by allowing the enforcement of point-to-point average speed across a stretch of road that might contain two or indeed more different speed zones. The bill, in doing so, will introduce a new formula for calculating the average speed that would apply between those two detection points, spanning multiple speed zones.

There has been a lot of discussion across the house about the merits of speed detection cameras, with some suggesting or positing that they are simply a cynical revenue-raising exercise. I think, by contrast, they are a proven technology for reducing the incidence of really dangerous speeding. I think particularly of the many instances of feedback that I have had from constituents in my own community and those particularly travelling along Mickleham Road and Pascoe Vale Road, as the member for Broadmeadows can attest, who have talked to me about the impact on them and the threat they feel to themselves and their families of drivers exceeding the speed limits on those arterial roads by a very significant amount. That dangerous behaviour does not just threaten drivers and make them feel unsafe while using the roads, as well as obviously pedestrians and cyclists and road users more broadly, but costs lives. It is a deeply tragic thing that that kind of reckless behaviour, whether it is speeding down Mickleham Road or running red lights at Alanbrae Terrace or the intersections of Pascoe Vale Road and Somerton Road or the entry points into Meadow Heights between Roxburgh Park station and Coolaroo, causes fatalities.

I was very pleased to be with the Minister for Police in 2023 when there was funding provided to implement road safety cameras at the intersection of Alanbrae Terrace and Mickleham Road in Attwood, which has had a marked improvement in driver behaviour in that area, with far fewer incidents of red light running and really egregious speeding in an area that has not only a large volume of traffic but also a very large population of kangaroos. The member for Murray Plains talked about the impact of wildlife strike on cars and on their occupants. In those areas of grassland adjacent to Melbourne Airport and Woodlands Historic Park there are very large populations of kangaroos on roadside verges. Ensuring that drivers, to the greatest extent possible, adhere to the speed limit saves lives and ensures that first responders, like the member for Werribee was describing, are not obligated to be in really harrowing circumstances any more than is sadly already the case. I am cognisant of the positive impact that those safety cameras have had in my own community and the feedback from residents about them.

I also want to talk about one of the provisions in the bill to amend the Port Management Act 1995 in relation to information gathering and charges, and in doing so this really enacts a recommendation within the Victorian freight plan. Requiring container shipping information to be provided to Ports Victoria and then shared with third parties is a really important step towards enabling an effective and efficient functioning market. Again, the member for Essendon talked about how the Baltic dry index, a measure of shipping costs across the world, is a really important forward-looking indicator of economic activity. If government and third parties more broadly have the capacity to see data pertaining to shipping in and out of Victoria's ports, that is a really important economic indicator that

can help to drive improved decision-making and market activity in a whole swathe of areas. I think that is a really important tweak to our Port Management Act, and at the margin it helps to improve productivity and economic efficiency.

Similarly, the changes to the Rail Management Act 1996 to improve access regimes for rail I think are another important step. The bill will remove a requirement to consult when maximum rail access prices are maintained or increased by no more than CPI. That seems like a really sensible, straightforward measure that reduces an unnecessary compliance burden and red tape. In reflecting upon the importance of an efficient rail network and the capacity of operators to utilise assets like rail corridors, I just want to reflect upon this government's investment in the port rail shuttle network, which is in fact itself designed to operate as an open-access non-discriminatory network connecting the \$500 million privately funded intermodal freight terminal in my own electorate, in Somerton, with the Port of Melbourne down at the docks. To make it work, it requires there to be fair and efficient pricing so that rail operators can get containers and bring them up to Somerton for distribution. That requires equitable market access. There is a need to address potentially monopolistic power of rail asset owners, especially in a jurisdiction like Victoria, where we have had a separation of track and rolling stock with either VicTrack or the Australian Rail Track Corporation owning the infrastructure asset underneath trains and now an open-access market existing in the context of the utilisation of those rail assets. In a sense there are two alternatives to address the challenge of the very high cost that is associated with building and then operating rail corridors, which can potentially be exploited as monopolies: either a government could allow unfettered construction of railways, which would be hugely inefficient and you would have parallel infrastructure along the same corridor – and other jurisdictions have seen that, such as the railway booms of the 19th century in England and the UK and Europe, which then resulted in many railways being closed, and it is a really significant waste of capital; or you can have effective regulation and pricing structures which enable competition and which allow a number of operators to utilise a single track, irrespective of ownership. But for that to happen there needs to be an effective pricing regulatory mechanism that has really clear pricing that is available to all potential market users, rather than enabling the owner of that track to charge monopolistic prices, which would obviously be a deterrent to freight operators being able to use assets like the VicTrack-owned and ARTC-owned corridors between Somerton and the port. These things are superficially quite small but also actually help to improve the productivity of our economy and the efficiency within it. I commend the bill to the house.

**Bronwyn HALFPENNY** (Thomastown) (18:54): I also rise to speak in support of the Roads, Road Safety and Ports Legislation Amendment Bill 2026. This bill really is a collection of amendments to various pieces of legislation, and the purpose is of course to continue supporting the implementation of the *Victorian Road Safety Strategy 2021–2030*. It also is a raft of legislative amendments to sort out some anomalies, to update practices and bring legislation into the modern day, often reflecting different ways of doing things and perhaps new technology and ways that we need to support road safety as contained in the road safety strategy. We all have different views on the road rules and road safety programs and also the state of the roads, and this bill, which looks at many pieces of legislation, is about trying to refine and fine-tune legislation and bring it into the modern era, as well as of course listening to stakeholders, pedestrians and drivers of vehicles so that we are also taking on some of that feedback.

One of the things that we all agree with and totally believe in, and I think there would be no disagreement from anybody, is that we want to make sure and see that the road toll is going down. One life lost on our roads is one too many. This bill also makes some amendments to legislation regarding freight. With the need for increasing volumes of freight on our roads and truck numbers required to transport goods in support of our growing population, again there needs to be corresponding legislative change to enable some of that to happen. But I will really more be speaking around the roads rather than the freight.

I will just go through a couple of amendments that are contained in this bill and give some examples of what they are about and what they do. I think previous speakers have also raised all these things. There are gaps in the legislation when it comes to drivers who live overseas that may have come here as tourists or visitors, they breach road laws and they get a fine. But the way that the legislation is worded can make it often difficult to issue those fines and penalties for such breaches. This legislation is about making sure it is easier to track down and to issue fines to overseas residents.

The other issue is that at least 30 per cent of all road fatalities and serious injuries involve speeding as a contributing factor. We have technology that allows speed detection for a fixed point on a road where as soon as you pass that fixed point it reads the speed that you are going, but now we have technology that is much more useful and more accurate in really picking up drivers that are speeding along a stretch of road. It is not just a matter of stopping or going a bit slow where you know the camera is and then going fast again to avoid being in breach and getting your photo taken; this is where there are stretches of road and we have technology that can actually measure from particular points the average speed that a driver is going. Therefore if it is over the speed limit, a fine can be issued. However, this does not work when there are differing speed zones within that stretch of road. In the legislation that we are talking about here one of the amendments is to ensure that we can continue to issue fines based on drivers exceeding the speed limit. We do not want people exceeding the speed limit, because it can lead to serious injury and fatalities. The technology is able to average out that speed within those multiple speed zones and determine whether you were actually going over the speed limit or not. We need to make sure that legislation keeps up with that sort of technology. This is again an example of us modifying current legislation to adapt to changing conditions and changing technology.

The third and really significant reform is the road management declaration that ensures roads can be managed as soon as they are built. In various parts of the Thomastown electorate – in the outer suburbs, in the new estates – new roads that were never there before are being built all the time. One of the problems has been that sometimes those roads are not open, because they have not yet been declared. That declaration requires surveying, making sure that the boundaries are correct and, in order to do that, also nominating what various level of government is responsible for or has ownership of that road. This delays much-needed infrastructure that we really need to use straightaway. It also reduces productivity if we are not using those roads quickly. I can think of a couple of examples where this is maybe the reason why this has happened – Edgars Road in Epping. Hopefully with this legislative change we will not see the same thing occurring at Koukoura Drive, which is under construction at the moment, another road that goes into the outer suburbs of Wollert, where it will relieve congestion on Edgars Road, which is going in the same direction – those north–south connections – to make sure that residents have the full benefit of those roads as soon as possible.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

**Read second time.**

*Third reading*

**Motion agreed to.**

**Read third time.**

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

**Business interrupted under sessional orders.**

*Adjournment*

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

**Ambulance services**

**Danny O'BRIEN** (Gippsland South) (19:00): (1639) My adjournment matter this evening is for the Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services, and the action I seek is an investigation into an incident impacting one of my constituents. My constituent Rick Edgley and his wife Jennifer had trouble getting an ambulance a couple of weeks ago. On a Saturday morning Rick called 000 at 4:30 am, when Jennifer was having an issue with her bowel, and was told he would receive a call back, which he did, at 5:04 am. They said an ambulance would not be available to transport her from her home, which is in The Honeysuckles near Seaspray, so about half an hour or 40 minutes from Sale, for several hours, so they suggested that Rick drive Jennifer to the hospital himself and offered a taxi voucher to take her to Sale. Once they arrived at Sale they were told Jennifer needed critical care and would be transferred to Dandenong. They were told by staff at Sale hospital, Central Gippsland Health, that she needed to be transferred within the hour, and they arranged for an ambulance to do so. The ambulance then did not show up for 3 hours, and by the time she arrived at Dandenong the surgeons that had been arranged for her had gone home due to the delay in her arriving. She then had to wait until the next day to have surgery, which took 10 hours, as her condition got worse as her bowel had split. She was then in the ICU for a period of time.

This was a situation where specifically the delay in the ambulance caused the health situation of Jennifer to deteriorate significantly. Both Rick and Jennifer have told us that all the staff they dealt with were great at both Sale hospital and Dandenong and the ambulance service, but they are extremely frustrated at the delay in getting an ambulance first from their home to Sale and secondly to be transferred to Dandenong, such that it actually caused a significant deterioration in her health.

There was a separate issue that came to my attention literally on the same day of another gentleman in the Sale area, who had extreme pain in his lower back and could not move. He managed to reach his phone and call 000 and was told they were an hour away. An hour later he called back and was told that the ambulance would be a further 4 hours away. Eventually it was a friend who got him into a car and took him to hospital, and he was admitted straightaway. Again, he noted that both the ambulance and the staff at the hospital were wonderful. Both of these circumstances, though, demonstrate a significant problem still with the ambulance service, and I seek the minister to investigate Rick and Jennifer's situation, a wholly unacceptable one for people in regional Victoria, let alone anywhere else in the state.

**Pascoe Vale electorate health services**

**Anthony CIANFLONE** (Pascoe Vale) (19:03): (1640) My adjournment matter is also for the Minister for Health. The action I seek is for the minister to visit my community and see firsthand the benefits of federal and Victorian Labor government investments to support health and wellbeing outcomes for people across my community of Pascoe Vale, Coburg and Brunswick West. The health and wellbeing of everyone is absolutely paramount, and regardless of age, background, income, circumstance or postcode, everyone across our community deserves access to quality health care. It has always been federal and state Labor governments that have established, sustained and protected Medicare and the pharmaceutical benefits scheme; built and expanded new hospitals, health and wellbeing services; and backed our doctors, nurses, allied health, community health and health workers right across the sector.

Building on this record, I very much welcome the recent opening of the new Coburg Medicare urgent care clinic just a few weeks ago, made possible by the Albanese Labor government and our federal member Peter Khalil, the member for Wills. The new Medicare urgent care clinic is situated at 444 Sydney Road in Coburg and is open from 8 am to 10 pm, seven days a week, every day of the

year, and the clinic is equipped to treat a range of conditions and injuries that need urgent attention but that are not life-threatening, including cuts, burns, viral infections, breaks or sprained ankles. No appointment is needed. All patients can just walk in and all services are bulk-billed with your Medicare card, and it has already seen over 200 patients.

One of those patients was a young girl, Zohar, who experienced a serious episode of anaphylaxis a few nights ago, around the time just after the opening. Her dad Raza rushed her down to the Medicare clinic, where she was given urgent care and treatment. I met them at the front, ironically enough, when they came to thank the diligent staff. Zohar and Raza's case is the reason why we need Medicare urgent care clinics across our communities, including in Coburg. These clinics build on the other initiatives we are pursuing as a Victorian Labor government through the Nurse-on-Call hotline and the virtual emergency department. 24/7 you can speak to an emergency doctor or nurse online by video at any time. My wife and I have used that a few times for our kids. It is absolutely sensational.

The Chemist Care initiative is providing free advice and treatment from participating pharmacies for a range of conditions without the need to see a GP: uncomplicated infections, skin conditions, UTIs, shingles, mould infections, vaccinations for travel, hep A, hep B, polio and typhoid and the resupply of the oral contraceptive pill. In the near future it will be expanded to also cover asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, type 2 diabetes, ear infections, high blood pressure, hormone replacement therapy and much more. There are a number of pharmacies that offer this across my community: Pharmacy 777 on Kent Road; TerryWhite chemist on Cumberland Road in Pascoe Vale; Direct Chemist Outlet in Coburg; Bell Street Pharmacy on Bell Street; Healthline Pharmacy, Bell Street, Coburg; Halfpenny pharmacy, Sydney Road, Coburg; Chemist Warehouse, Sydney Road, Coburg; Nelson's Pharmacy, West Street, Hadfield – for the member for Broadmeadows – which we visited; and Healthline Pharmacy, Snell Grove in Oak Park. These reforms are all about saving locals time and money when it comes to accessing quality health care, including that from September GPs will also be allowed to diagnose and prescribe for ADHD and from July women over 18 will be able to be prescribed and treated with the pill. I welcome the minister to my community.

#### **Caulfield electorate schools**

**David SOUTHWICK** (Caulfield) (19:06): (1641) The budget is out today, and it is big doughnuts when it comes to education for my electorate of Caulfield. The action that I seek is that the minister come and visit my schools and tell the students in Caulfield why they are not worthy of receiving the funding that they deserve in our electorate – very plain and simple. For 12 years this government has had the opportunity to fix our schools, to repair our schools and to provide the basics for our schools, and they have delivered absolutely nothing. We are meant to be the Education State – you see it on our numberplates – but that does not translate into my electorate of Caulfield.

Take Caulfield Primary School and Caulfield Junior College, two schools that provide bilingual education – Caulfield Primary when it comes to Japanese and English, and Caulfield Junior has a French program – they are great schools without the facilities. These schools still have their assemblies outdoors in the rain. They do not have multipurpose facilities. They are desperate for them, but they do not have them. These schools are over 100 years old, but the facilities are pretty much as old as the schools. Ripponlea Primary School is very, very similar. They, again, have their assemblies out on the asphalt in the outdoors because they do not have the facilities. They desperately need a STEM centre, a multipurpose facility.

Also our secondary schools – Glen Eira College has safety issues, having two campuses that sit across the road from one another. They have been requesting a bridge because of the difficulties of the road itself. Four hundred students cross each and every day between lessons. Again the government has ignored those calls. This budget is meant to be easier, safer and more affordable. It is none of that when it comes to what it is delivering in my electorate of Caulfield.

Back to Caulfield Junior College, we have a parent who is at the moment advocating for a lift for their child with a disability, not having the ability to go between floors with her wheelchair. The government

has said, ‘Well, get some quotes and work with the VSBA,’ and it is the parent having to work through quotes and deal with the basics that this government should be doing. This government is failing Victorians. This government are failing my electorate, particularly when it comes to education, and we want the government to get their skates on. The minister can come down, have a visit, a cup of tea and maybe a doughnut with Caulfield Primary School, Caulfield Junior College, Ripponlea Primary School and Glen Eira College and finally give them the funding that they deserve.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Caulfield, that was for the Minister for Education.

#### **State Emergency Service Port Phillip unit**

**Nina TAYLOR** (Albert Park) (19:09): (1642) My adjournment matter this evening is for the Minister for Emergency Services. The action I seek is for the minister to visit the Port Phillip SES unit to meet with local volunteers and hear directly from them regarding the recent Victorian budget announcement to relocate and deliver a new VICSES facility for the Port Phillip unit.

The Port Phillip SES unit plays a critical role in supporting our community – responding to storms, floods, rescues and a wide range of emergencies. Like many SES units across the state, they are powered by highly trained volunteers who give their time to protect others. The relocation recognises both the growing demand on the unit and the need to ensure volunteers have access to modern, fit-for-purpose infrastructure to safely and effectively carry out their work. Hearing firsthand from the Port Phillip SES members will ensure that this project delivers not just a new building, but the right facility in the right location designed to meet the real demands faced by the unit. I look forward to the minister taking up this invitation and continuing to support the incredible work of our SES volunteers.

#### **Government performance**

**Nicole WERNER** (Warrandyte) (19:10): (1643) My adjournment is for the Treasurer, and the action I seek is that the Treasurer publish a clear and transparent plan to urgently reduce Victoria’s debt. There are some numbers that are so large it is hard for an average person to wrap their mind around. Victoria’s nearly \$200 billion of debt is just one of those numbers. Let us put it in perspective. Just how big is the bill that future generations will have to pay back? Victoria’s entire police budget for a year is about \$4.7 billion. The money we owe as debt could pay for that for more than 42 years. It could pay for 2.1 million nurses or 1.7 million teachers. \$200 billion is enough to pay off every single HECS debt in Australia three times over and then build three brand new 500-bed hospitals on the side. It is enough to give \$80,000 in cash to every single household in Victoria or to pay for every single Victorian’s gas and electricity bill for the next 20 years. Except, since it is debt and not cash to hand out, that means in reality that the Allan Labor government will be putting their hands into the pocket of every single Victorian taxpayer in order to make up for it, not just for the debt but also for the interest bill. In fact just this year’s \$8.9 billion bill on interest alone would be enough to cover the cost of the state’s police, ambulance and kindergartens and still have \$1 billion to spare. But instead of paying for services, infrastructure or cost-of-living relief, that money is going to international banks and investors who loaned Victoria the cash the Allan Labor government wanted for its fake freebies, pet projects and money for criminals and corruption. This is intergenerational debt on a massive scale. Victorians know it is time to throw Labor out and deliver a fresh start.

Then there is also the story of how the Allan Labor government managed to manufacture a fake budget surplus. Their budget was a disaster and they needed something to sell, so they landed on an operating surplus, the kind that conveniently ignores the billions in debt they have blown for major projects. But even on those generous terms, they were still going to fall short. So who comes to the rescue? A long-term Labor donor. With no public tender, the government quietly sells the Lottery Corporation 40-year exclusive rights to run Victoria’s lotteries, despite usually only granting a 10-year licence. The price was less than other states got for the exact same deal, and it was conveniently enough to push Victoria’s budget into an operating surplus. And anyway, they also donated nearly \$180,000 to Labor over the past four years.

### Community safety

**Juliana ADDISON** (Wendouree) (19:13): (1644) My adjournment matter this evening is for the Attorney General. The action I seek is for the Attorney to visit my electorate of Wendouree and speak directly with my community about community safety, law reform and how this government is making life easier, simpler and safer for local families. Community safety matters to the people in my electorate of Wendouree and across Ballarat. They want to know that their government is serious about holding violent offenders to account while also investing in the early intervention needed to prevent crime before it starts. That is exactly what the Allan Labor government is delivering. Through this year's budget we are continuing significant investment in our courts, ensuring cases are heard faster, victims are not left waiting and justice is delivered efficiently, because safer communities depend on a justice system that works. We are also backing our nation-leading violence reduction unit with a \$33 million investment to deliver local initiatives that tackle the root causes of youth crime and steer young people away from a life of violence before harm occurs.

Importantly, our government has been listening to Victorians, and we are acting. We have already delivered tougher bail laws for alleged high-harm repeat offenders; adult time for violent crime, ensuring seriously violent young offenders face consequences equal to the harm they cause; new 'post and boast' offences targeting criminals who publicly brag about certain offending; new offences for assaulting workers, those who protect us and serve our community; and new offences for serious vilification, sending a clear message that hate has no place in Victoria. We have also changed the law so that community safety is the overarching principle in sentencing decisions by judges, because that is what matters to Victorians.

The people of Wendouree would welcome the opportunity to hear directly from the Attorney-General about this work, about the reforms already delivered and about how our government will continue to keep our community safe. That is why I ask the Attorney-General to visit Wendouree and engage with my community on these important issues. I look forward to welcoming her to Wendouree.

### Electoral reform

**Ellen SANDELL** (Melbourne) (19:16): (1645) My adjournment tonight is to the Premier. I am calling on the Labor state government to finally fix Victoria's dodgy, undemocratic group voting system. Last week far-right extremist Avi Yemini publicly declared that he would register the Free Palestine Party in Victoria and then funnel the votes that this party gets to far-right political parties, intentionally deceiving voters in order to get himself elected. This is obviously outrageous, but it is also currently legal under Victoria's undemocratic voting laws, because Victoria's laws allow backroom deals to decide where preferences go in the upper house rather than letting the voters decide for themselves. This system is called group voting. Victoria is the last place in the country to allow it, and it needs to end.

Avi Yemini is not the only person to declare that they will be running for election under a deceiving name and then funnelling votes to far-right political parties. In February anti-lockdown campaigner Monica Smit said that she would run under the name of the Save the Environment Party in order to funnel votes to right-wing parties who have anti-environment policies. And just recently we saw someone declare that they would register the Muslim Votes Matter party and then funnel their votes to parties with anti-immigration and anti-Muslim views. How is it that in 2026 far-right grifters can openly brag about rigging Victoria's elections and the Labor government does nothing about it? Why does Labor keep allowing con artists to manipulate Victoria's voting system for profit?

Glenn Druery, the so-called preference whisperer, charges wannabe politicians \$55,000 for a backroom preference deal, getting clients elected to the upper house on as little as 0.6 per cent of the vote. This is how the Daylight Saving Party got elected in WA with just 98 votes, taking a seat off other parties who received much, much higher votes. This is an openly anti-democratic system, but now it risks far-right extremists literally buying their way into Victorian Parliament this November. Glenn Druery wants this gravy train to keep running, so he has recently tried a new fear campaign

which some in Labor seem to be falling for. He claims that Victoria should keep the dodgy system because it helps keep One Nation out. However, this is simply not true, because we know that in the 2022 election almost all of Glenn Druery's tiny micro-parties preferred One Nation over the major parties as part of his backroom deals. Glenn Druery helped One Nation.

And anyway, shouldn't voters get to decide where their preferences go, not dodgy backroom deals made by a guy who gets paid to do them? If a party polls enough legitimate votes to win a seat in the upper house, then they deserve a seat. Whatever you think of their political views, the voters should get to decide. I think Victorians want their Parliament filled with people they actually voted for, not people who were able to pay huge sums of money to a dodgy backroom dealer. It is time for group voting tickets to end.

### **Cost of living**

**Meng Heang TAK** (Clarinda) (19:19): (1646) My adjournment is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and the action I seek is for the minister to provide the latest update on the government's 20 per cent refund on the full cost of car registration. My constituents are very excited about the announcement, and I have received many inquiries through my electorate office already, and some also to myself, particularly from the local seniors group, including members of the Three Hierarchs Greek elderly group from Clayton South and many others who are interested in hearing more about this important cost-of-living measure.

Cost of living is front of mind for so many in my electorate in Clarinda. It is something that my constituents raise with me really consistently when I am out doorknocking, at mobile offices and at community events. Cost of living, utility bills, grocery bills – all of our everyday living expenses are adding up, so it makes sense that balancing the family budget is front and centre of mind in Clarinda. This is particularly so in the City of Greater Dandenong, which is right up there in terms of Victoria's most socially disadvantaged local government areas. Given the pressures in my community, across our state and across the country, it makes absolute sense that our focus is on cost-of-living relief, making life just that little bit easier and supporting Victorians where we can. This is a fantastic initiative from the Allan Labor government, one that is slashing the cost of driving a car, which goes together with the free and half-price public transport. We know that currently light vehicle registration costs up to \$930.70 every year for every car. So with the 20 per cent off registration, my constituents with one car will receive a rebate of up to \$186 and a family with two cars will receive up to \$372. This is an amazing initiative and one that is all about putting money back into the pockets of Victorians, who are paying more than ever for fuel. I commend the minister for this important cost-of-living measure, and I look forward to her response.

### **Cosgrove–Katamatite–Shepparton roads, Invergordon**

**Tim McCURDY** (Ovens Valley) (19:21): (1647) My adjournment is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and the action that I seek is an onsite meeting with VicRoads on the intersection of Cosgrove Road and the Katamatite–Shepparton Road in Invergordon. Currently there are give-way signs there on the Cosgrove Road when you want to either cross the main Shepparton road or turn onto that main Shepparton road. Local farmer Laurie Lawless has alerted me to this intersection, and I visited the site with him. We observed numerous vehicles barely slowing down to enter this crossroad, which is a 100-kilometre-an-hour road with many heavy vehicles, B-doubles, A-doubles and triples thundering along the Katamatite–Shepparton Road, as it is one of the main routes from Melbourne to Brisbane and sees an enormous traffic load. Put simply, the road signage needs to change from a give-way to a stop sign. This is a very unforgiving site to have an accident, with very, very fast and heavy vehicles mixing with local traffic. I urge the minister to have the north-east VicRoads team meet onsite with me and local farmer Laurie Lawless to discuss the best way forward to make this a safer intersection for all but especially for the local traffic.

### Coolart Homestead

**Paul MERCURIO** (Hastings) (19:22): (1648) My adjournment matter tonight is for the Minister for Environment, and the action I seek is for the minister to come down to my electorate and tour the very special and unique Coolart Homestead. The Coolart Homestead is a beautiful example of late Victorian architecture dating from 1895. The surrounding formal gardens and lawns feature native and exotic plants, perfect for a stroll, a picnic or a wedding. The late Tom Luxton purchased Coolart in 1937 and immediately had the property declared a sanctuary for native wildlife. In 1938 the then curator of the Footscray Gardens David Matthews redesigned the garden for Coolart. This is the design enjoyed by visitors at Coolart today. The farmyard outbuildings are even older than the homestead, originating from the early days of settlement when Coolart was farming and grazing land. One of Coolart's oldest buildings is the barracks built in the 1860s. This building, along with the buttery, meat house and part of the stables, was built of handmade bricks. Coolart was bought by the Victorian government in 1977 in recognition of its historic buildings and significant wetlands. Over the years there have been improvements and renovations to the homestead, which continue to this day.

Coolart is also a renowned wetlands for keen birdwatchers and nature lovers. Each year nomadic and migrating birds pass through Coolart, stopping at its waterways and woodlands to breed and rest. Over 125 species of birds visit Coolart or are residents, and there is a perfect place to observe them in the observatory, which is situated below the main homestead and overlooks the wetlands. It offers an amazing viewing position in all weather. I know the Friends of Coolart would love to share this magnificent homestead with the minister, and I look forward to the minister's visit.

### Responses

**Michaela SETTLE** (Eureka – Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Agriculture) (19:24): We had the wonderful member for Gippsland South request information from the Minister for Health regarding ambulance services in a matter relating to a constituent. The member for Pascoe Vale also wants to refer a matter to the Minister for Health, and that is a request to visit Pascoe Vale and see the wonderful health and wellbeing services in his electorate. The member for Caulfield invited the Minister for Education to visit the schools in his electorate to share a doughnut and a coffee. The member for Albert Park referred a matter for the Minister for Emergency Services and requested that the minister visit the Port Phillip SES to see the wonderful new upgraded facilities in her electorate. The member for Warrandyte would like to refer a matter to the Treasurer requesting a fiscal plan. The member for Wendouree would like to refer a matter to the Attorney-General requesting that the Attorney-General visit her electorate of Wendouree to talk to people in her community about the many measures that the Attorney-General has in place to make people in our communities feel safer and also to talk about the work of the violence reduction unit. The member for Melbourne would like a matter referred to the Premier relating to electoral reform. The member for Clarinda would like to refer a matter to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, asking them to visit so that the community can hear about the cost-of-living measures introduced in this budget and in particular the 20 per cent rego rebate and the importance that this will have for families' budgets. The member for Ovens Valley has a matter for the minister for roads and requests an onsite meeting at the Cosgrove Road intersection along with VicRoads. The member for Hastings would like a matter referred to the Minister for the Environment in which he requests that the minister visit his electorate to visit the wonderful Coolart Homestead with its beautiful gardens. I will refer those matters to the relevant ministers.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The house stands adjourned until next week.

**House adjourned 7:27 pm.**