



# **Hansard**

## **LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

**60th Parliament**

**Tuesday 13 May 2025**



**Office-holders of the Legislative Assembly**

**60th Parliament**

**Speaker**

Maree Edwards

**Deputy Speaker**

Matt Fregon

**Acting Speakers**

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

**Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Premier**

Jacinta Allan (from 27 September 2023)

Daniel Andrews (to 27 September 2023)

**Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Deputy Premier**

Ben Carroll (from 28 September 2023)

Jacinta Allan (to 27 September 2023)

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

Brad Battin (from 27 December 2024)

John Pesutto (to 27 December 2024)

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

Sam Groth (from 27 December 2024)

David Southwick (to 27 December 2024)

**Leader of the Nationals**

Danny O’Brien (from 26 November 2024)

Peter Walsh (to 26 November 2024)

**Deputy Leader of the Nationals**

Emma Kealy

**Leader of the House**

Mary-Anne Thomas

**Manager of Opposition Business**

Bridget Vallence (from 7 January 2025)

James Newbury (to 7 January 2025)

## Members of the Legislative Assembly

### 60th Parliament

Member	District	Party	Member	District	Party
Addison, Juliana	Wendouree	ALP	Lister, John <sup>7</sup>	Werribee	ALP
Allan, Jacinta	Bendigo East	ALP	Maas, Gary	Narre Warren South	ALP
Andrews, Daniel <sup>1</sup>	Mulgrave	ALP	McCurdy, Tim	Ovens Valley	Nat
Battin, Brad	Berwick	Lib	McGhie, Steve	Melton	ALP
Benham, Jade	Mildura	Nat	McLeish, Cindy	Eildon	Lib
Britnell, Roma	South-West Coast	Lib	Marchant, Alison	Bellarine	ALP
Brooks, Colin	Bundoora	ALP	Matthews-Ward, Kathleen	Broadmeadows	ALP
Bull, Josh	Sunbury	ALP	Mercurio, Paul	Hastings	ALP
Bull, Tim	Gippsland East	Nat	Mullahy, John	Glen Waverley	ALP
Cameron, Martin	Morwell	Nat	Newbury, James	Brighton	Lib
Carbines, Anthony	Ivanhoe	ALP	O'Brien, Danny	Gippsland South	Nat
Carroll, Ben	Niddrie	ALP	O'Brien, Michael	Malvern	Lib
Cheeseman, Darren <sup>2</sup>	South Barwon	Ind	O'Keeffe, Kim	Shepparton	Nat
Cianflone, Anthony	Pascoe Vale	ALP	Pallas, Tim <sup>8</sup>	Werribee	ALP
Cleeland, Annabelle	Euroa	Nat	Pearson, Danny	Essendon	ALP
Connolly, Sarah	Laverton	ALP	Pesutto, John	Hawthorn	Lib
Couzens, Christine	Geelong	ALP	Read, Tim	Brunswick	Greens
Crewther, Chris	Mornington	Lib	Richards, Pauline	Cranbourne	ALP
Crugnale, Jordan	Bass	ALP	Richardson, Tim	Mordialloc	ALP
D'Ambrosio, Liliana	Mill Park	ALP	Riordan, Richard	Polwarth	Lib
De Martino, Daniela	Monbulk	ALP	Rowswell, Brad	Sandringham	Lib
de Vietri, Gabrielle	Richmond	Greens	Sandell, Ellen	Melbourne	Greens
Dimopoulos, Steve	Oakleigh	ALP	Settle, Michaela	Eureka	ALP
Edbrooke, Paul	Frankston	ALP	Smith, Ryan <sup>9</sup>	Warrandyte	Lib
Edwards, Maree	Bendigo West	ALP	Southwick, David	Caulfield	Lib
Farnham, Wayne	Narracan	Lib	Spence, Ros	Kalkallo	ALP
Foster, Eden <sup>3</sup>	Mulgrave	ALP	Staikos, Nick	Bentleigh	ALP
Fowles, Will <sup>4</sup>	Ringwood	Ind	Suleyman, Natalie	St Albans	ALP
Fregon, Matt	Ashwood	ALP	Tak, Meng Heang	Clarinda	ALP
George, Ella	Lara	ALP	Taylor, Jackson	Bayswater	ALP
Grigorovitch, Luba	Kororoit	ALP	Taylor, Nina	Albert Park	ALP
Groth, Sam	Nepean	Lib	Theophanous, Kat	Northcote	ALP
Guy, Matthew	Bulleen	Lib	Thomas, Mary-Anne	Macedon	ALP
Halfpenny, Bronwyn	Thomastown	ALP	Tilley, Bill	Benambra	Lib
Hall, Katie	Footscray	ALP	Vallence, Bridget	Evelyn	Lib
Hamer, Paul	Box Hill	ALP	Vulin, Emma	Pakenham	ALP
Haylett, Martha	Ripon	ALP	Walsh, Peter	Murray Plains	Nat
Hibbins, Sam <sup>5,6</sup>	Prahran	Ind	Walters, Iwan	Greenvale	ALP
Hilakari, Mathew	Point Cook	ALP	Ward, Vicki	Eltham	ALP
Hodgett, David	Croydon	Lib	Wells, Kim	Rowville	Lib
Horne, Melissa	Williamstown	ALP	Werner, Nicole <sup>10</sup>	Warrandyte	Lib
Hutchins, Natalie	Sydenham	ALP	Westaway, Rachel <sup>11</sup>	Prahran	Lib
Kathage, Lauren	Yan Yean	ALP	Wight, Dylan	Tarneit	ALP
Kealy, Emma	Lowan	Nat	Williams, Gabrielle	Dandenong	ALP
Kilkenny, Sonya	Carrum	ALP	Wilson, Belinda	Narre Warren North	ALP
Lambert, Nathan	Preston	ALP	Wilson, Jess	Kew	Lib

<sup>1</sup> Resigned 27 September 2023

<sup>2</sup> ALP until 29 April 2024

<sup>3</sup> Sworn in 6 February 2024

<sup>4</sup> ALP until 5 August 2023

<sup>5</sup> Greens until 1 November 2024

<sup>6</sup> Resigned 23 November 2024

<sup>7</sup> Sworn in 4 March 2025

<sup>8</sup> Resigned 6 January 2025

<sup>9</sup> Resigned 7 July 2023

<sup>10</sup> Sworn in 3 October 2023

<sup>11</sup> Sworn in 4 March 2025

#### Party abbreviations

ALP – Australian Labor Party, Greens – Australian Greens,  
Ind – Independent, Lib – Liberal Party of Australia, Nat – National Party of Australia

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**Tuesday 13 May 2025**

**The SPEAKER (Maree Edwards) took the chair at 12:04 pm, read the prayer and made an acknowledgement of country.**

***Bills***

**Corrections Legislation Amendment Bill 2025**

***Introduction and first reading***

**Anthony CARBINES** (Ivanhoe – Minister for Police, Minister for Community Safety, Minister for Victims, Minister for Racing) (12:05): I move:

That I introduce a bill for an act to amend the Serious Offenders Act 2018, the Sex Offenders Registration Act 2004 and the Corrections Act 1986 and for other purposes.

**Motion agreed to.**

**Michael O'BRIEN** (Malvern) (12:05): I would ask the minister to provide a brief explanation of the bill.

**Anthony CARBINES** (Ivanhoe – Minister for Police, Minister for Community Safety, Minister for Victims, Minister for Racing) (12:05): I thank the honourable member for Malvern. The Corrections Legislation Amendment Bill 2025 will address several priority issues in the corrections portfolio. The bill will amend the Corrections Act 1986 to provide for tougher sentences for people in prison who injure prison officers, deliver the government's commitment to implement recommendations from the review of the Serious Offenders Act 2018 and improve the management of serious offenders after they leave prison, strengthen community safety by increasing the period some serious sex offenders must report to police under the Sex Offenders Registration Act 2004 if they are also subject to a post-sentence order and make other miscellaneous amendments to ensure corrections legislation operates as intended.

**Read first time.**

**Ordered to be read second time tomorrow.**

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

***Introduction and first reading***

**Melissa HORNE** (Williamstown – Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Roads and Road Safety, Minister for Health Infrastructure) (12:06): I move:

That I introduce a bill for an act to amend the Road Safety Act 1986, the Road Management Act 2004, the Port Management Act 1995, the Marine Safety Act 2010, the Marine (Drug, Alcohol and Pollution Control) Act 1998, the Transport (Safety Schemes Compliance and Enforcement) Act 2014, the Transport (Compliance and Miscellaneous) Act 1983, the Transport Integration Act 2010 and other acts and for other purposes.

**Motion agreed to.**

**Roma BRITNELL** (South-West Coast) (12:07): I ask the minister to give us a brief explanation of the bill.

**Melissa HORNE** (Williamstown – Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Roads and Road Safety, Minister for Health Infrastructure) (12:07): The bill will deliver a range of legislative amendments to improve safety, achieve operational and administrative efficiencies and improve the effectiveness of transport laws. This bill will achieve this by improving enforcement practices and requirements to improve road safety outcomes, addressing known safety risks to workers and reliability at commercial ports by regulating the providers of mooring services, improving the management of certain road infrastructure and making processes for the consent of works on roads

more effective, and making improvements to legislation that governs the operation of local ports and a range of other legislative amendments to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of transport legislation.

**Read first time.**

**Ordered to be read second time tomorrow.**

*Business of the house*

**Notices of motion**

**Notice given.**

**The SPEAKER** (12:10): General business, notices of motion 9 to 10 and 49 to 72, will be removed from the notice paper unless members wishing their matter to remain advise the Clerk in writing before 5 pm today.

*Announcements*

**Office of the Public Advocate**

**The SPEAKER** (12:10): I wish to advise the house that on 15 April 2025 I administered to Rosemary Therese Barker, the acting Public Advocate, the oath required by section 14 of the Guardianship and Administrative Act 2019.

**Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission**

**The SPEAKER** (12:11): I wish to also advise the house that on 12 May 2025 I administered to Colleen Lynette Bell, the Deputy Commissioner of the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission, the affirmation required by section 31 of the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Act 2011.

*Petitions*

**Maroondah Hospital**

**David HODGETT** (Croydon) presented a petition bearing 140 signatures:

**Issue:**

This petition of residents in Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Assembly community support for the Victorian Government to rebuild Maroondah Hospital to address its dated infrastructure and inadequate facilities. Maroondah Hospital is a very busy hospital, that is under extreme pressure to cater to patients from all over the Eastern Suburbs. They lack the up-to-date facilities, which have been promised over the past two election periods by the Victorian Government and deserve to be supported completely.

**Action:**

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly call on the Victorian Government to fulfill their election promises of 2018 and 2022 and finally deliver on the \$1.05 billion promise given to our community, by rebuilding Maroondah Hospital from the ground up. Funding needs to be allocated in the 2025/2026 State Budget so that the rebuild can start soon – not in ten years' time.

**Ordered that petition be considered tomorrow.**

**Marlo to Cape Conran shared pathway**

**Tim BULL** (Gippsland East) presented a petition bearing 846 signatures:

PETITION: To the Honourable Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly State Parliament of Victoria

This petition of residents of and visitors to Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Assembly to the lack of progress on the shared bike-walking path from Marlo to Cape Conran – a bushfire recovery project announced by the Andrews Government on 23 August 2020 as “Essential Services Connection and Shared Path to Cape Conran.” The shared pathway has strong community support and will improve safety for users and increase tourism access to the Marlo Cape Conran area.



Action: The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly call on the State Government to honour the funding commitment and commence work as soon as possible on the Marlo Cape Conran Shared Pathway.

**Ordered that petition be considered tomorrow.**

*Documents*

**University of Divinity**

*Report 2024*

**Ben CARROLL** (Niddrie – Minister for Education, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC) (12:12): I table, by leave, the 2024 report of the University of Divinity.

**Independent Review of the Modernisation of the WorkCover Scheme**

*Final Report*

**Ben CARROLL** (Niddrie – Minister for Education, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC) (12:13): I table, by leave, the final report of the Independent Review of the Modernisation of the WorkCover Scheme.

*Committees*

**Economy and Infrastructure Committee**

*Inquiry into Workplace Surveillance*

**Alison MARCHANT** (Bellarine) (12:13): I have the honour to present to the house a report from the Economy and Infrastructure Committee on the inquiry into workplace surveillance, together with an appendix, extracts from proceedings, a minority report and transcripts of evidence.

**Ordered that report, appendix, extracts from proceedings and minority report be published.**

**Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee**

*Alert Digest No. 6*

**Gary MAAS** (Narre Warren South) (12:14): I have the honour to present to the house a report from the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee, being *Alert Digest* No. 6 of 2025, on the following acts, bills and subordinate legislation:

Family Violence Protection Amendment Act 2025

Gambling Legislation Amendment Bill 2025

Justice Legislation Amendment (Anti-vilification and Social Cohesion) Act 2025 – house amendments

Justice Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2025

Wage Theft Amendment Bill 2025

Wrongs Amendment (Vicarious Liability) Bill 2025

SR No 90 – Credit Regulations 2024

SR No 92 – Local Government (Infringement Notices) Regulations 2024

SR No 102 – Road Safety (General) Amendment (Electric Scooters) Regulations 2024

SR No 113 – Plant Biosecurity Amendment Regulations 2024

SR No 124 – Supreme Court (Fees) Amendment Regulations 2024

Australian Computer Society Incorporated Professional Standards Scheme

Notice of Declaration of the Kind of Insurance that is Excluded from the Definition of Business Insurance under Section 3(2A)

Practitioner Remuneration Order 2025

together with appendices.

**Ordered to be published.**

**Electoral Matters Committee***Ballot Paper Shortages at the 2022 Victorian State Election*

**Dylan WIGHT** (Tarneit) (12:15): I have the honour to present to the house a special report from the Electoral Matters Committee on the implementation of recommendation 60 of volume 2 of the inquiry into the conduct of the 2022 Victorian state election.

**Ordered to be published.**

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

*Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978* – Order under s 17B granting a licence over the Pines Flora and Fauna Reserve

Deakin University – Report 2024

Federation University Australia – Report 2024

*Financial Management Act 1994* – Report from the Minister for Environment that he had not received the Report 2024 of Alpine Resorts Victoria, together with an explanation for the delay.

*Interpretation of Legislation Act 1984* – Notice under s 32(3)(a)(iii) in relation to Statutory Rule 136/2024 (*Gazette S213, 30 April 2025*)

La Trobe University – Report 2024

*Local Government Act 2020* – Order in Council – Suspension of an individual Councillor of Whittlesea City Council under s 229A

Monash University – Report 2024

*Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*:

WorkSafe compliance code for engineered stone

WorkSafe compliance code for metal casing

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

Bayside – C207, GC252

Benalla – C46

Brimbank – C243

Boroondara – GC252

Casey – GC237

Darebin – C227, GC252

Frankston – C160, GC252

Glen Eira – C273, GC252

Greater Dandenong – GC237

Hobsons Bay – GC237

Hume – C279, GC252

Kingston – C226, GC252

Knox – C202

Mansfield – C55

Maroondah – C160, GC252

Melbourne – GC237

Merri-bek – C234

Monash – GC252  
Moonee Valley – GC252  
Moorabool – C118  
South Gippsland – C132  
Stonnington – GC252  
Towong – C40  
Victoria Planning Provisions – VC251, VC280, VC281  
Warrnambool – C213  
Whittlesea – GC237, GC252  
Wyndham – C272  
Yarra – GC237

*Professional Standards Act 2003:*

The Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand Professional Standards Scheme  
(*Gazette S207, 29 April 2025*)

The New South Wales Bar Association Professional Standards Scheme (*Gazette S207, 29 April 2025*)

The Victorian Bar Professional Standards Scheme (*Gazette S207, 29 April 2025*)

The Western Australia Bar Association Professional Standards Scheme (*Gazette S207, 29 April 2025*)

Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT University) – Report 2024

Statutory Rules under the following Acts:

*Audit Act 1994* – SR 23

*Bail Act 1977* – SR 16

*Marine (Drug, Alcohol and Pollution Control) Act 1988* – SR 25

*Parliamentary Workplace Standards and Integrity Act 2024* – SR 17

*Road Safety Act 1986* – SRs 15, 21

*Subordinate Legislation Act 1994* – SRs 19, 20, 24

*Transport (Compliance and Miscellaneous) Act 1983* – SR 22

*Wrongs Act 1958* – SR 18

*Subordinate Legislation Act 1994:*

Documents under s 15 in relation to Statutory Rules 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 24, 25

Documents under s 16B in relation to:

*Gas Industry Act 2001* – Declaration of Gaseous Fuels 2025

*Meat Industry Act 1993* – PrimeSafe Meat Industry licensing and fees determination 2025

*Seafood Safety Act 2003* – PrimeSafe Seafood Safety licensing and fees determination 2025

Swinburne University of Technology – Report 2024

University of Melbourne – Report 2024

Victoria University – Report 2024.

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

*Agriculture and Food Safety Legislation Amendment Act 2024* – Whole Act – 7 April 2025  
(*Gazette S182, 15 April 2025*)

*Roads and Road Safety Legislation Amendment Act 2024* – Division 5 of Part 2 – 3 April 2025  
(*Gazette S149, 1 April 2025*).

*Youth Justice Act 2024* – Parts 22.2 and 22.3 and Division 1 of Part 22.1 – 22 April 2025 (*Gazette S149, 1 April 2025*).

*Bills***Help to Buy (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2025***Council's agreement*

**The SPEAKER** (12:17): I have received a message from the Legislative Council agreeing to the Help to Buy (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2025 without amendment.

**Help to Buy (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2025****Justice Legislation Amendment (Anti-vilification and Social Cohesion) Bill 2024****Safe Patient Care (Nurse to Patient and Midwife to Patient Ratios) Amendment Bill 2025***Royal assent*

**The SPEAKER** (12:17): I inform the house that the Governor has given royal assent to the Help to Buy (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2025, the Justice Legislation Amendment (Anti-vilification and Social Cohesion) Bill 2024 and the Safe Patient Care (Nurse to Patient and Midwife to Patient Ratios) Amendment Bill 2025.

**Gambling Legislation Amendment Bill 2025***Appropriation*

**The SPEAKER** (12:18): I have received a message from the Governor recommending an appropriation for the purposes of the Gambling Legislation Amendment Bill 2025.

*Business of the house***Program**

**Mary-Anne THOMAS** (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services) (12:18): I move:

That, under standing order 94(2), the orders of the day, government business, relating to the following bills be considered and completed by 5 pm on 15 May 2025:

Justice Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2025

Workplace Injury Rehabilitation and Compensation Amendment Bill 2025

Superannuation Legislation Amendment Bill 2025

As we come together in the Parliament for another sitting week, this motion provides an opportunity to briefly reflect on all the work that certainly members on this side of the house have been doing during the break. I suppose it concerns a number of us really when people think that the life of an MP is all about what happens in this place. We know that the real work is in being in our communities, listening to our communities, hearing from them about their concerns and making sure that we then take the opportunity to use our time in this place to convert what we hear into legislation and take action on the things that really matter to the people of Victoria. Once again I am delighted that the government business program before this place seeks to address matters of concern to Victorians.

Of course it would be remiss of me not to mention that other important event that happened while we were in recess, the federal election. When I reflect on the last time we were sitting in this place, there was a lot of cockiness, I have got to say, from those on the other side.

**Bridget Vallence:** Speaker, on a point of order, this is a very narrow debate on the government business program. I would ask you to ask the Leader of the House to resume speaking on that very narrow procedural debate.

**The SPEAKER:** I do hope the Leader of the House is going to tie her comments in to the government business program.

**Mary-Anne THOMAS:** I very much am, and I will be doing it in this way: I want to congratulate the Albanese Labor government on their comprehensive re-election and congratulate all the MPs who won seats here in Victoria – because it was, of course, a Labor government that implemented superannuation in this nation. We introduced compulsory superannuation to make sure that working people would have sufficient funds to retire upon. We know that superannuation has been consistently under attack by Liberals the entire time that the industry superannuation funds have been in operation.

But of course we are talking about the Superannuation Legislation Amendment Bill 2025 in this place and what we will be doing with the current super scheme, ESSSuper, which provides our emergency services workers and other public sector workers with a defined benefit scheme. It delivers to them a financially secure retirement, but it is important that we maintain the relevance of that scheme for our ambos, our police and our firefighters and that the Emergency Services Superannuation Scheme continues to be updated and modernised so that it is appropriate to meet the needs of those hardworking public sector workers in emergency services. So that bill will be debated in this place. I know people on this side of the house will have a lot to say about protecting emergency services workers and ensuring that we have got the super schemes that we need, whereas those on the other side – it will be interesting to hear what they have got to say about super, which is something they have fought against and tried to unpack or undo at any opportunity that they have had.

Also, on another matter dear to the heart of people on this side of the chamber, the Workplace Injury Rehabilitation and Compensation Amendment Bill 2025 will be up for debate. We have a proud history – again, another Labor legacy – of having workplace occupational health and safety laws and a WorkCover scheme, so we will always advocate for working people. The bill is required to provide an improved experience for injured workers accessing the WorkCover scheme. Once again, there will be many contributions from this side of the house on that bill.

The other bill before us is the Justice Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2025, and it amends a number of acts to support the courts and improve the operation of the Victorian justice and legal system. This is a great, very important government business program. I am looking forward to the opposition supporting this government business program and letting us get on with the business of governing for all Victorians, no matter where they live.

**Bridget VALLENCE** (Evelyn) (12:23): Sorry to disappoint the Leader of the House, but it is probably no surprise that we will be opposing the government business program today. This Labor government – this tired, 10-year-old Labor government – has a very weak legislative program. Often the bills that the government introduces are bills that are years and years overdue or are fixing up poor drafting errors, which just demonstrates the tiredness of this Labor government. Labor is denying the ability of any non-government members to ask questions about these bills that come into the chamber. Time and time again they deny any non-government members the opportunity to scrutinise their proposed legislation so that we, as a Parliament, can get the best possible outcomes for all Victorians, not just the few that Labor seek to represent. After 10 years either the ministers are just getting lazy or they are hiding.

We asked the Labor government to go into consideration in detail, particularly on the Workplace Injury Rehabilitation and Compensation Amendment Bill 2025, but yet again, unsurprisingly, this Labor government and the Leader of the House denied our very reasonable request to go into consideration in detail on that bill. I really was surprised that the Deputy Premier and Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC was not willing to go into consideration in detail – not willing to go toe to toe across the dispatch box – in relation to some of the reforms that this particular bill seeks to make to the WorkCover scheme. Or is it just that the Premier does not want to give the Deputy Premier more opportunity to audition for her role?

The Workplace Injury Rehabilitation and Compensation Amendment Bill includes many reforms, some of which have not been the subject of any public consultation or feedback, so I wanted to ask the Deputy Premier about some of the measures that are included in this workplace injury bill that will

impose significant costs on Victorian businesses or whether he would be willing to match the opposition's very sound policy of a commitment to freezing WorkCover premiums to give certainty to small businesses so that they can employ more Victorians. I think it would have provided a great opportunity for the Deputy Premier to show off his credentials and audition for the Premier's role. Perhaps the Deputy Premier is too busy talking to the Treasurer to recover the Gonski funding that the Premier cut from state schools.

I note that about a year or so ago the Minister for Finance was very willing to go into consideration in detail on the previous WorkSafe modernisation bill, when he was the Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC. The Minister for Finance was happy to go toe to toe, happy to go into consideration in detail. In fact he conceded that WorkSafe and the WorkCover scheme were broken and unsustainable on the Labor government's watch. It is a shame that the Deputy Premier again has failed to match the Minister for Finance's performance in this regard.

We also have the Superannuation Legislation Amendment Bill 2025 on the program this week, and as the Leader of the House said, the Emergency Services Superannuation Scheme is a significant fund. It does manage the retirement savings of our dedicated emergency services members, our first responders – our police, our ambulance, our paramedics. Many of these emergency services workers are actually on the steps of Parliament today protesting against the Labor government's massive new tax grab with the emergency services levy – a tax on all Victorians during a cost-of-living crisis. On the ESSS, it is incumbent upon all of us here in the Parliament to do everything that we can to ensure the superannuation liabilities of our emergency services workers and our public service workers are fully funded in the years to come as more and more of these public sector workers look to retire. Regrettably the Labor government – and I think these Labor MPs sitting here should absolutely know – has allowed Victoria's unfunded superannuation to spiral out of control and put these retirement savings in absolute jeopardy. It is a shameful thing that the Labor government has done and is doing, and I sincerely hope that the Treasurer will take meaningful steps to address these unfunded superannuation liabilities in her budget next week.

We have also got the Justice Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2025 up for debate. Again the Shadow Attorney-General has kept busy – doing a fantastic job, really – because the Labor government has got such deficient legislation in a crime crisis. We will be opposing this government business program because it is not just a rubberstamping exercise.

**Dylan WIGHT** (Tarneit) (12:28): It gives me great pleasure to rise this afternoon to speak in favour of the government business program. It is a government business program that I would have thought, frankly, by any measure is a pretty reasonable and responsible government business program. The Manager of Opposition Business stood up and made a contribution before me to inform the house that the opposition once again – no surprise – will be opposing our government business program. The reason that she gave – and she was sort of scratching around for a reason there for a little bit – is that there has been a lack of scrutiny of the bills that the government has on the notice paper for this week. I am not quite sure how there could be a lack of scrutiny. I mean, you have had five weeks. They have been on the notice paper, Manager of Opposition Business, for five long weeks.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Tarneit, through the Chair.

**Dylan WIGHT:** Sorry. That is about three weeks longer than the opposition will typically get to scrutinise bills. It is about three weeks longer than the opposition will typically get to go and drum up some fear in the community around the legislative agenda that we have. What have they been doing for the last five weeks if it is not trying to understand the legislation that we were going to bring into the Parliament this week? I mean, they have been doing a few things. We have had a federal election. I am sure that took a little bit of time. There was a fair bit of time, from what I understand, organising the Exclusive Brethren to get bussed in to the western suburbs to volunteer for the Liberal Party.

**Bridget Vallence:** On a point of order, on relevance, Speaker, this speaker, in his dismal contribution, is straying far from this very narrow procedural debate.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Tarneit will come back to the government business program.

**Dylan WIGHT:** Indeed, Speaker, I did think that I was being relevant, but I will take your advice. I mean, long may Mrs Deeming have some influence in the Victorian Liberal Party; that is all I can say. Now, as I said, this government business program –

**Bridget Vallence** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Evelyn!

**Dylan WIGHT:** That hit a nerve. By any measure, this is a responsible and reasonable government business program that we have brought to the Parliament this week. To stand up and say that this government does not have a legislative agenda, given what is on the notice paper this week, I think is, quite frankly, pretty irresponsible, really.

I mean, let us go to the Workplace Injury Rehabilitation and Compensation Amendment Bill 2025. This bill, and indeed all policy to do with the safety of Victorian workers, is incredibly important to those on this side of the house. This bill to introduce a code of complaints rights and increase the support and compensation for families after a work-related death is fantastic Labor policy. If you looked up ‘Labor policy’ in a dictionary, this is the sort of stuff you would find. We know what those opposite think about the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 and about workers injury compensation. Indeed, a previous Liberal government tore away the common-law rights of Victorian workers, and it took a Labor government under Steve Bracks to reinstate them. We are on the right side of history when it comes to the safety of Victorian workers, to the protection of Victorian workers and to the compensation of them and their families, indeed, when something goes wrong.

Also there is the Superannuation Legislation Amendment Bill 2025. I spoke before about workplace safety and workplace injury compensation being great Labor policies, and now we go on to superannuation. It is one of the great Labor reforms that we have seen in the history of this country, making sure that all workers in this country, indeed Victorian workers, have retirement savings, can live a fruitful retirement and have their retirement savings protected. For the Liberal Party to oppose a government business program with such important pieces of legislation on it is an absolute travesty.

**Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (12:33):** Of course I reiterate the words of the Manager of Opposition Business in opposing this week’s government business program. However, some of the bills listed give me a great opportunity to draw attention to our CFA volunteers and farmers, both the Workplace Injury Rehabilitation and Compensation Amendment Bill 2025, which is on the program this week, and of course the Superannuation Legislation Amendment Bill 2025, which is also listed this week. You would have noticed on the steps of Parliament this morning a lot of regional CFA volunteers, and there were even some United Firefighters Union members. Peter Marshall spoke against the tax that is being presented in the other place this week.

I said publicly during the week on a podcast – I will give it a shameless plug – that there is probably not often a time that the United Firefighters Union and the Nats would stand side by side, particularly along with the CFA. Cancer is probably the other reason, and there have been some reports this week of some of our CFA captains – two in particular that I can think of – passing away after their time spent volunteering with the CFA. That as well adds weight to why our volunteers should be looked after.

For the last five weeks there has been a lot going on. The Leader of the House and the member for Tarneit illustrated and spoke about the federal election. Can I just say, Speaker, and you would have seen this firsthand, it was an enormous swing, with the Nationals going from zero to 100, or at least

10 per cent – the biggest swing in the country. I do want to take some time just to congratulate those involved, to process it and to inform those that have not been engaged with the Bendigo campaign.

**Mary-Anne Thomas:** On a point of order, you did ask me, Speaker, when I was on my feet to relate my discussion about the federal election back to the government business program, which I did. I would request that you ask the member for Mildura to do the same.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I do ask the member for Mildura to come back to the government business program, which is very clear about which pieces of legislation are before the house this week.

**Jade BENHAM:** Yes, of course. I believe the electorate of Bendigo has many a butter factory being restored at the moment. You will notice the Justice Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2025 there. This, as detailed in the bill report by the member for Malvern, came out of a 1905 Royal Commission on the Butter Industry, which was fraught with corruption at the time. So the electorate of Bendigo is very, very relevant to the justice legislation amendment which is on the government business program being debated today. Andrew Lethlean, the excellent, exceptional candidate, took the Nationals very, very close to winning the seat of Bendigo. I do want to congratulate him on a very, very well run and executed campaign. He did an excellent job. He is a great person.

I am looking forward to listening to the Shadow Attorney-General. He has assured me that during his contribution on the Justice Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2025 he will expand on that Royal Commission on the Butter Industry. Wait with bated breath; it will be exceptional. Actually, it is very, very interesting, so we are looking forward to that. The Nats – all of my Nationals colleagues – have spent the last five weeks reading up on all of these bills and are ready to contribute, as we always are. I think of the Manager of Opposition Business when we talk about scrutiny. The member for Tarneit, unfortunately, is not here. What we talk about when we talk about the bill being scrutinised is consideration in detail so it can be scrutinised in the chamber, which is very important, and that is why we oppose the government business program.

**Sarah CONNOLLY (Laverton) (12:38):** I rise to speak in favour of the government business program for this week, and I have to say, it is so great to be back here. The sun is shining; it is warm. I do not think I have ever felt so overwhelmed and happy to be in one place with all of my Labor colleagues on this side as we welcome a re-elected Labor Albanese federal government. The previous member talked about scrutiny of government and legislation. Well, I swear, over the past five weeks there has been scrutiny like no other across Australia and indeed here in Victoria, and they have voted with their feet. They have voted in droves for a government with a solid Labor legislative agenda federally. I am really happy to speak on the government business program today, because we are back here as part of our government's amazing legislative reform agenda for this state.

I know those opposite were looking to come here and use the results as an indictment of our government, and they have come a bit empty-handed. There are a few of you lacking across that side this morning as we kick off a really strong week in debating really important pieces of legislation here in this place. I am really looking forward to being here, particularly as I feel like I am on an extra high after spending some great time with the Premier and with workers out in Sunshine. We are here this week talking about the Workplace Injury Rehabilitation and Compensation Amendment Bill 2025. As previous speakers have said, we are going to deliver much-needed reforms to our WorkCover scheme. This is all about workers, and Labor governments will always, always back in workers, not just here in Victoria but indeed across this country, which is exactly what we saw as part of the results of the federal election a couple of weeks ago. It was great to be at Sunshine station talking to workers from none other than Metro Trains. I am very proud to say that they were two westies – one happened to live in Truganina, in my part of the world, and it was wonderful to thank him for his service in looking after commuters and folks there at Sunshine station. We know indeed folks in Sunshine voted in droves against Peter Dutton's proposed cuts to rip the heart out of Sunshine station –



**Bridget Vallence:** On a point of order, Speaker, yet again the member on her feet is straying very widely from this very narrow procedural debate. I would ask you to get her to come directly back to the three bills.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Laverton will come back to the government business program.

**Sarah CONNOLLY:** I know it does hit a raw nerve, and we have said time and time again, as we go ahead and debate incredible legislation as part of our legislative reform agenda in this state, that those opposite only want to cut and block. Their contribution today in talking about not supporting this government business program is again trying to block the things that folks out on the streets and at the hustings across Victoria have said were important to them. They are trying to stop that legislation from coming before the house today. Shame on them, and I have to say, 'Be careful', because the Victorian public are much, much, much smarter and much more aware than those opposite give them credit for.

There are a couple of bills before the house this week. Like I said, we have got the Workplace Injury Rehabilitation and Compensation Amendment Bill, which is going to be really good, to make good on our commitment to improving the claims process for workers with complex claims. Some of those claims and those injuries are really complex and deal with systemic agent behaviours, which have, sadly, compounded injuries. We have also got the Superannuation Legislation Amendment Bill 2025, which makes a number of changes to our state-managed superannuation schemes for emergency services employees. We have also got the Justice Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2025, which will make a number of small but also really important technical amendments to the operation of our justice-related acts here in this place. All of these bills deliver really important improvements and changes, and I really do hope that those opposite support them and we see them passed here in the Assembly later this week.

Time and time again, as I talk about the government business program and make contributions on these bills, it seems that we are swiftly moving through our legislative program. The three bills coming before the house this week are all pieces of legislation currently sitting in the dock. We are introducing more bills this week in advance of the state budget happening next week, which I know everyone is awaiting with anticipation. It is a great plan this week for Parliament, and I support it.

**Wayne FARNHAM** (Narracan) (12:43): It is great to be back. Welcome back, everyone. I am pleased to rise today to talk on the government business program. Yes, as the Manager of Opposition Business stated earlier, we do oppose it. We oppose it because again this government will not allow us consideration in detail on a bill. The Workplace Injury Rehabilitation and Compensation Amendment Bill 2025 – I do not know why this government is so scared of actually answering questions about a bill. The government says this is about workers – 'Labor fights for workers' and 'We care about workers' – so let us scrutinise the bill. Let us have a fair dinkum debate about the bill and let us scrutinise the bill and find out if it actually is good for workers. If it is good for workers, I am sure we will support it. We will get to that later on in the week, but what we should do – and I have said this before in this chamber – is have more consideration in detail.

The previous minister for WorkCover, the member for Essendon, is the only minister since I have been in this place that has been brave enough to sit in that chair and take on consideration in detail. I do not know what the Deputy Premier is scared about. If the bill is that good, then let us go into consideration in detail on it. Let us do that, because Victorian workers deserve to know that this bill is best for them, and the best way to do that is through consideration in detail.

It is interesting, and I am going to go there – yes, we have had the election. It was good to see that the member for Tarneit, in his first contribution for this year, managed to attack religious groups. How is that for good form? In his very first contribution he has managed to attack a religious group. Unbelievable. Why would you do that? Why would you take the opportunity in Parliament to attack religious groups? I cannot believe he did that first thing.

The member for Laverton leaned in about cutting and blocking. The Victorian public is smart. The Victorian public found out the other day that this Labor government cut \$2.3 billion out of education. They found that out the other day too. I agree with the member for Laverton. I do believe the Victorian public is smart, and I do believe that the Victorian public will not confuse the two issues between state and federal parliaments. They will not do that. It will be interesting to see, when we come to 2026, whether those opposite are as cocky as they are now. I dare say they will not be, and the reason for that is their approval rating. Their approval rating is not great. It was interesting that the Premier came out and decided to take credit for –

**Mary-Anne Thomas:** On a point of order, Speaker, I know that despite it being a narrow debate you have allowed some wideranging contributions, but I do believe the member for Morwell –

**The SPEAKER:** Narracan.

**Mary-Anne THOMAS:** Narracan, sorry – is pushing the barrow out a little bit far, and I ask that you bring him back.

**The SPEAKER:** Apologies to the member for Morwell. Member for Narracan, come back to the government business program.

**Wayne FARNHAM:** Speaker, I thought I would have got the apology on that one, but never mind. I have been called the member for Nepean as well. But we will move on. Let us get back to the business program. There are another two bills up here today: the Justice Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2025 and the Superannuation Legislation Amendment Bill 2025. The superannuation bill is important. It does lean into our emergency services – all emergency services – who, funnily enough, were on the steps of Parliament today protesting about an unfair tax that is going to be debated in this Parliament. They were out there on the steps. I find it amazing that the United Firefighters Union are on our side on this. Your people are on our side on this, on this unfair tax on Victorians, and that is what comes back to – it is an unfair tax on all Victorians. The fact is that it is going to affect farmers. Farmers at the moment are going through drought and their costs are up, and the UFU have come out with the coalition on this side in regard to this. The Superannuation Legislation Amendment Bill is important, but we oppose the program because you are too scared to go into consideration in detail.

#### **Assembly divided on motion:**

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

*Noes (31):* Brad Battin, Jade Benham, Roma Britnell, Martin Cameron, Annabelle Cleeland, Chris Crewther, Gabrielle de Vietri, Wayne Farnham, Sam Groth, Matthew Guy, David Hodgett, Emma Kealy, Tim McCurdy, Cindy McLeish, James Newbury, Danny O'Brien, Michael O'Brien, Kim O'Keeffe, John Pesutto, Tim Read, Richard Riordan, Brad Rowswell, Ellen Sandell, David Southwick, Bill Tilley, Bridget Vallence, Peter Walsh, Kim Wells, Nicole Werner, Rachel Westaway, Jess Wilson

**Motion agreed to.**

*Members statements***Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund**

**Danny O'BRIEN** (Gippsland South) (12:55): I rise to condemn the Allan Labor government for its failure on this emergency services tax. We have seen 500 people gather on the front steps of Parliament in the last hour or so to express their anger against this tax, this new impost, which, as the member for Lowan often says, is a land tax by stealth on farmers. We are going to see a 189 per cent increase in the tax that farmers will pay and a 100 per cent increase that every household in Victoria will pay both on the fixed and the variable charge for landlords, which will no doubt be passed on to renters at a time of a rental crisis. Plus we will see a doubling of the rate for commercial and a 64 per cent increase for industrial.

This is nothing to do with emergency services. This is all about the government trying to raise revenue. It is absolutely that, because \$2.1 billion raised – the SES can be supported out of general revenue, Minister, and you know it. This is about the government doing a pea and thimble trick, taking a billion dollars out of consolidated revenue and slugging it on to Victorians with this great big new tax. The government stands condemned. Farmers are facing drought. They are facing increased cost of living right across the state. This is not the time for this tax. It is a bad policy. The government should scrap this tax.

**Pakenham electorate seniors morning tea**

**Emma VULIN** (Pakenham) (12:57): There have been many worthy and terrific occasions to celebrate across the Pakenham electorate this past month, but today I want to talk about the seniors morning tea that I co-hosted with Minister Shing last Friday. It was a wonderful turnout, with over 130 local seniors joining us to actively participate in some Q and A and chat with representatives from Services Australia, the Department of Health and Aged Care, Cardinia Shire Council's ageing well team and our mayor Jack Kowarzik. Importantly, it was also an opportunity for people to catch up with friends, meet new people and share common ideas and concerns. I want to sincerely thank everyone for making this such a productive and friendly event.

The key takeaway for me has been that more people now have a better understanding of how to approach the different levels of government for support. It is so important to not just give people a voice but a platform for them to express that. The event strengthened relationships between government agencies, representatives and our community leaders, and you can never underestimate the power of a cuppa and a piece of cake. I want to thank everyone who took the time to attend the seniors morning tea and for being so open with our participation.

**Curtis Cooper**

**David HODGETT** (Croydon) (12:58): Today I wish to speak on an outstanding individual from my electorate, Curtis Cooper. Curtis took up long-distance running after the birth of his son in 2017, and since then he has run 15 marathons. In 2024 he took part in his first Bravehearts 777 Marathon event. The event was founded in 2013 and involves participants running seven marathon events across seven Australian cities on seven consecutive days. Money raised supports the charity's work, which is dedicated to the prevention and treatment of child sex abuse.

This year not only is Curtis running in the Bravehearts 777 Marathon event, where he will again run seven marathons across seven states in seven days, but he has committed to challenging himself further. From 30 June this year to 29 June 2026 he will be going solo and running 52 marathons across 52 weeks, inclusive of the 777 marathons. As part of this commitment he has set himself a goal to fundraise \$250,000 for Bravehearts by the end of June 2026. Curtis's inspiration is to show his son that there is nothing you cannot achieve in life if you are willing to put in the work, whilst also raising awareness for the incredible work that Bravehearts do. Curtis's decision to take on this impressive commitment demonstrates his passion and dedication to making a difference. Well done, Curtis, and all the best for your upcoming marathons.

**Borrie–Hickford streets, Reservoir**

**Nathan LAMBERT** (Preston) (12:59): I would like to raise the issue of the Hickford and Borrie streets intersection, which is next to Reservoir Views Primary School. Darebin council has recently replaced the roundabout there with raised crossings, but there are concerns from local residents and parents that the raised crossings are very shallow and that vehicles will now travel through that intersection at higher speeds. We look forward to further advice from council on that issue.

**Visy, Reservoir**

**Nathan LAMBERT** (Preston) (13:00): I would also like to raise an issue related to the Visy recycling plant on Edwardes Street in Reservoir. That plant has been there for many decades, but over the past five years it has been emitting some very strong odours – so strong that some residents have been unable to go outside or even open their windows. We are very grateful to the EPA for their work over several years now to rectify that issue, and we are particularly grateful to the Minister for Climate Action, who strengthened the powers of the EPA during her time in the environment portfolio, which has thus allowed the EPA to make better outcomes for residents a condition of the plant's new operating licence.

**National Road Safety Week**

**Nathan LAMBERT** (Preston) (13:00): In National Road Safety Week we continue to advocate for more 40-kilometre-per-hour zones in Reservoir, particularly on residential roads where there are parked cars on both sides and effectively only space for one vehicle to pass between them. It is not safe to travel down such roads at 50 kilometres per hour, and we hope council will consider rezoning roads like Compton Street, Whitby Street, Delaware Street and Arundel Avenue.

**Gaetano Greco**

**Nathan LAMBERT** (Preston) (13:01): Finally, I would like to acknowledge the sad passing of former Darebin mayor and councillor Gaetano Greco. Our thoughts are with his family and friends at their time of loss.

**Finding 15 walk**

**James NEWBURY** (Brighton) (13:01): Bayside recently turned out strongly in support of the Prader-Willi Research Foundation's Finding 15 walk in Melbourne. The walk at the Sandringham athletics track in Hampton is a celebration of our loved ones who have Prader-Willi syndrome. The syndrome is a randomly occurring disorder where some of the genes in chromosome 15 are inactive or missing. Congratulations to CEO Kathlene Jones and the Prader-Willi community.

**Brighton North Rotary**

**James NEWBURY** (Brighton) (13:01): Chartered in 1985, Brighton North Rotary provides charitable services to local and international communities. The club is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year. It has led on raising awareness of suicide and motor neurone disease. Some of their local projects include the North Road shipwreck playground and the refurbishing of the Brighton courthouse. Congratulations to president Peter Terrens and the club on the anniversary.

**Elsternwick Amateur Football Club**

**James NEWBURY** (Brighton) (13:02): The Elsternwick Amateur Football Club is the third oldest continuing district club, having formed in 1906. They first competed in the Federal Football League before crossing to today's Victorian Amateur Football Association in 1914. Having won the 2023 senior men's division 3 and the 2024 senior men's division 2 premierships, the club has been promoted to division 1. Congratulations to president Graham Higginbotham and the club.

**Royal Brighton Yacht Club**

**James NEWBURY** (Brighton) (13:02): The Royal Brighton Yacht Club is celebrating its historic 150th anniversary this year. Following a chance race challenge between two gentlemen cleaning their boats on the beach at Middle Brighton in August 1875, the club was formed one month later. Since then the club has been a cornerstone of Brighton. Congratulations to commodore Peter Demura and the club on the significant anniversary.

**South East Community Links**

**Eden FOSTER** (Mulgrave) (13:03): I recently had the privilege of visiting South East Community Links in Springvale with the Minister for Consumer Affairs. This vital organisation provides invaluable support to our community. In particular, we spoke with staff who provide important financial counselling to families in my electorate and throughout the south-east. SECL have a 'Bring your bills' day, and recently in Springvale they helped over 300 attendees, with \$511,000 in debt and bills managed for families in my area. It is clear that SECL play a crucial role in strengthening the social fabric of the Mulgrave electorate and the south-eastern suburbs, and I commend their CEO Peter McNamara and their staff for their commitment to ensuring that every person is supported. I thank them for their ongoing work.

**Victorian Heart Hospital**

**Eden FOSTER** (Mulgrave) (13:03): I was also honoured to attend the Victorian Heart Hospital at Monash Health with the Minister for Health last week. The heart hospital is a landmark facility for our state and our nation. This hospital represents a major leap forward in cardiac care, integrating world-class clinical services with cutting-edge research and education, providing life-saving treatment for thousands of Victorians and driving innovation in cardiovascular health. It is a true testament to this government's dedication to health. I would like to express my gratitude to Professor Derek Chew and the staff at the Victorian Heart Hospital, along with Dipak Sanghvi, the board chair, who will soon be departing from his role as the chair in June.

**Bega Cheese**

**Tim McCURDY** (Ovens Valley) (13:04): I call on the Allan Labor government to assist the communities of Strathmerton, Cobram and Numurkah, who are devastated by the news of 300 jobs leaving the area and being relocated to New South Wales. Many families will be hurt, and the flow-on effect into local towns will be detrimental to the bottom line of businesses. Without an autumn break to speak of thus far, things are grim, and it is getting worse for our region. We need investment in our region to bring jobs back to town, not more taxes that drive businesses to New South Wales.

**Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund**

**Tim McCURDY** (Ovens Valley) (13:04): I want to also put on record my disgust at the Allan Labor government's emergency services tax, which will rip millions out of struggling farming communities. Without an autumn break in sight, our farmers are pouring every dollar they have into purchasing hay and grain to keep animals alive. Even if it rains tomorrow, winter feed will be extremely short. If the Premier can postpone this tax for a federal election, surely this government can scrap this tax against rural committees.

**Ovens Valley electorate funding**

**Tim McCURDY** (Ovens Valley) (13:05): The Victorian budget next week must deliver the last stage of the Wangaratta High School, along with the Wangaratta-Whitfield Road upgrade. The Bright football-netball club is seeking minimal funds for a timekeeper's box, and the government has ignored this community, including further investment in the Bright hospital. Mount Beauty police station is desperate for an upgrade to give our officers better facilities as they are the front line of the alpine region, and Myrtleford needs investment in the day care centre and CFA. While Moyhu are a unique community who do not ask for much, a new bowls green will keep this close-knit community walking

on the same path. Labor promised to govern for all Victorians. It has failed, and it is time to turn this ship around and invest in the regions. Start with the roads, schools and hospitals, because they are at breaking point.

### **Knoxfield development**

**Jackson TAYLOR** (Bayswater) (13:05): It is very exciting to see work is soon to start, with the establishment of a site office at the corner of Scoresby Road and Burwood Highway in Knoxfield. Development Victoria are doing a fantastic job at establishing and unlocking this huge parcel of land for around 400 homes, new wetlands and new and beautiful public open space. It was great to get out there with the minister the other day, and I cannot wait to see construction get underway next year to build more homes for more people exactly where they need them.

### **Bayswater electorate schools**

**Jackson TAYLOR** (Bayswater) (13:06): It is great to see lots of work happening in terms of the construction at our local schools. Major construction is underway now at Bayswater South Primary School, upgrading all of their learning spaces. We have got upgrades underway at St Joseph's Primary School in Boronia, who also could claim fame to having probably the best school song in Victoria. It is the school on the side of a hill. I could go on. It is fantastic. We are upgrading their school with new classroom facilities. I am very proud to be working with Catholic education on that project. And work is nearing completion at Kent Park Primary School with the completion of the oval underway.

### **Alchester Village, Boronia, road safety**

**Jackson TAYLOR** (Bayswater) (13:06): Can I also say thank you for everyone's patience with the work underway at Alchester Village. We are nearly there; completion is set for around June. Thanks to all the traders, and let us make sure we all get around and support them.

### **Federal election**

**Jackson TAYLOR** (Bayswater) (13:07): Congratulations to the re-elected member for Aston, Mary Doyle. It was wonderful to see her be re-elected and see her hard work rewarded. She is a real person. She gets it, and I really appreciate the way that she and her team conducted themselves. Democracy is a beautiful thing. Thank you to the AEC, thank you to the locals and thank you to all the candidates who put their hands up. Well done again, Mary.

### **Albury Wodonga Health**

**Bill TILLEY** (Benambra) (13:07): The promise of a world-class hospital for Albury Wodonga Health is now a delusion. New South Wales's Health Infrastructure recently advised it is yet to finalise the business case for this project, which was first announced in 2022. The business case is the key to unlocking Victoria's \$225 million for this project. It is already 18 months late. The scuttlebutt is they need to make more cuts to the project to fit the budget. What was originally promised was second best; now it is somewhere like fourth or fifth best. It will not meet our needs or reduce the chronic waiting list that for the second consecutive quarter was not reported. This is about people's lives. One of those lives was a fellow by the name of Christopher Paull. He died on Tuesday 26 November last year. He was aged 52. Mr Paull had been waiting for a hip operation since 2021. That was meant to be a 90-day wait – priority one. He had vascular necrosis in his hip, which means effectively his hip was dead. He was on massive painkillers, and they did nothing. He died at about 10:30 am. At 10:45 am that same day a message was left on his message bank telling him another surgeon could see him on Monday. This is the real cost of Labor's spin, politics and pretence. Rest in peace, Christopher Paull, and heaven help any others on our waiting list.

### **Footscray community safety**

**Katie HALL** (Footscray) (13:09): I will always fight for the people in my electorate – for their education, their health care and their services. Because I have a seat at the table as the proud Labor

member for Footscray in the Allan Labor government, I get the opportunity to fight meaningfully for these outcomes – funding for co-health outreach, for urgent care clinics, for schools, for hospitals, for art and culture and for all the things my community values. I am proud to have delivered these things, but there is always more to do.

It is no secret that there are challenges for a small group of people in Footscray's CBD. Following the tragic death of Abdifatah Ahmed, I sought a meeting with the Premier to discuss these complex challenges. I have been working closely with our Premier; local council; the Salvos, who I believe could undertake their highly effective social work locally; Victoria Police; and community organisations to work towards addressing the challenges that remain. Everyone has a right to feel safe – on the street, in their home or anywhere else. My message to my constituents is that I hear you and I am listening, and I will continue to make sure that your voices are heard. This is what I will continue to work towards: the safety, security and dignity of everyone who calls Footscray home or needs help.

#### **Five Ways intersection, Warrandyte**

**Nicole WERNER** (Warrandyte) (13:10): Since being elected just over 18 months ago I have made it my mission to get the Five Ways intersection in Warrandyte South fixed. Thirteen times I have raised it in Parliament – 13 times from my maiden speech to this day, over and over again – because of how dangerous and notorious this intersection is in my community. I am known locally as the Five Ways lady, and even people outside of my electorate frequently ask me when the government is finally going to fund and fix it. Today I am pleased to announce that finally Five Ways intersection has been funded and that we have officially secured \$25 million to get this intersection fixed. It has been my mission to make this an issue that the government simply could not ignore. Thanks to the willpower and efforts from our community, including my predecessor Ryan Smith, we have achieved this win together. However, we have not gotten here without a fight. In the 13 times I have raised it in Parliament I have received the same copy-and-paste response about how it was too complex and too difficult to fix and in the too-hard basket. For years the state government ignored my community, but not on my watch. So this is a win for our local community, and now I will not rest until this project is delivered urgently, with no further delay.

#### **Noel Withers**

**Colin BROOKS** (Bundoora – Minister for Industry and Advanced Manufacturing, Minister for Creative Industries) (13:11): The Greensborough Historical Society is a cornerstone of our local community and is dedicated to preserving the rich history behind the Greensborough area. Today I wish to acknowledge in particular the service of Mr Noel Withers. Noel served as president of the society from 2010 to 2022 and was in every sense its driving force. With his good humour, boundless energy and unwavering commitment, he played a vital role in establishing the society back in 2010. From day one Noel not only researched and delivered countless talks to local community groups, he also personally contributed and edited historical content for publication, ensuring the stories of our region were recorded and shared. Noel was instrumental in managing and winning multiple successful grant applications, helping to secure vital funding to support the society's work. He also brought the organisation into the modern age, installing and maintaining its IT systems himself. I saw firsthand Noel's passion for our community's history when he led work to install historical signage through Greensborough township and led local history walking tours. Noel's outstanding service has been recognised with a life membership of the society in 2015, and the Banyule community group award and the Jagajaga community award in 2017. He is quite rightly considered a local historical treasure. Our community is richer thanks to Noel's work, and we thank him for his enduring legacy in preserving Greensborough's past for future generations.

#### **Mount Duneed schools**

**Darren CHEESEMAM** (South Barwon) (13:13): Today I rise to make my member's statement on the very fast growing Armstrong Creek growth corridor. The Armstrong Creek growth corridor is

Australia's fastest growing regional growth corridor, and the Labor government since its election in 2014 has been investing in the educational needs of all of those families moving into that Armstrong Creek growth corridor. The western end of the Armstrong Creek growth corridor is the fabulous new Mount Duneed community. That community has been campaigning and making representation for a secondary school for a number of years. Pleasingly, I was able to secure a commitment at the 2022 election to see a business case funded for identifying the needs of that growth corridor. I am very much looking forward to that business case being released at some point this year. That community has wonderful primary schools, and I think really what is now required is a wonderful secondary school to complement that community's educational needs.

### **Federal election**

**Steve McGHIE** (Melton) (13:14): I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Albanese Labor government on a historic federal election win over the last week. To have a Labor government we can count on in Canberra will benefit all Victorians, and especially the constituents west of Melbourne. I would like to acknowledge the Labor candidates – Sam Rae for Hawke; Alice Jordan-Baird for Gorton, a first-term member; and Catherine King for Ballarat – for their advocacy for their communities. I congratulate them on successful campaigns. I look forward to working closely with them in their term.

This transformative partnership between the Albanese and Allan Labor governments will deliver a long overdue upgrade of the Western Freeway, a \$1 billion investment that will provide more lanes, build new overpasses and improve safety and efficiency for all road users. It is a direct result of Labor's \$20 million business case, delivered in just three years, proving what can be achieved when governments actually care about our communities and work together. For nine years the former coalition government ignored the Western Freeway – no funding, no plan, no action. In just three years Labor has done what they never even attempted, and now we are getting on with the job. The Sunshine station rebuild is a major boost for Melbourne's west, delivering vital connections between the airport, regional Victoria and the metro rail network. It is a key part of electrifying the Melton line, and with strong backing from our federal Labor partners, this project will get done.

The success of the Albanese Labor campaign is a testament not only to the strength of the candidates, but to the tireless dedication of our incredible volunteers in door knocking, phone banking and standing tall on election day. Finally, a big thank-you to the mighty trade union movement, who once again turned out in force.

### **Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund**

**Emma KEALY** (Lowan) (13:16): I rise today to urge the Allan Labor government to urgently reconsider its desperately unfair emergency services and volunteers tax and immediately scrap the tax. We have just had a thousand or more people standing on the steps of Parliament. They are farmers, they are CFA volunteers, they are people who have been on the back of fire trucks all summer helping to fight bushfires, and they are desperate in their calls to scrap the tax. For my electorate of Lowan, it is about \$30 million of additional taxes our people will have to pay. For Hindmarsh it is an additional \$2.1 million; Yarriambiack, an additional \$3.4 million; Moyne, an additional \$5.9 million; Southern Grampians, an additional \$4.1 million; Glenelg, an additional \$3.6 million; Horsham, an additional \$3.3 million; West Wimmera, an additional \$3.2 million; Ararat, an additional \$2.8 million; and about an additional \$3 million in Northern Grampians. This is an enormous amount of money out of our small regional economies, and it could not have come at a worse time. With so many parts of my electorate facing urgent drought conditions, this will push our businesses to the wall. Local jobs will be lost. We will see money taken away from our charitable organisations and volunteer groups. I urge the Labor government to see the impact this surrogate land tax will have on country communities and scrap the tax.



**Yan Yean electorate infrastructure**

**Lauren KATHAGE** (Yan Yean) (13:17): I am really glad to share with the chamber that the preferred contractor for the Yan Yean Road upgrade stage 2, Decmil, has been announced. Decmil is getting to work on the northern part of that upgrade, which is going to make traffic flow so much smoother and so much faster. It is a well-anticipated road upgrade in my community, and I am so glad to see that it is going to be getting underway.

People in our community are also going to benefit from the M80 Ring Road completion project. Anybody who has been past there recently would have been amazed to see those amazing totems – the bridge piers – go up, so that we are going to have an actual end to the M80. We are also going to have an extra lane added between Plenty Road and that amazing overpass. Whether you are in Doreen or Mernda, you are going to be able to get very smoothly and very quickly to Box Hill for dumplings, say, or if you want to get into the city to work, why not? You could do that too.

If you are in Donnybrook, or even in Wallan, and you are looking to get to work, there is going to be an extra train to take you to work in the morning and bring you home to your family, because we all know that we want to get the next train – the soonest train – home to be with our families. I am so proud that our government is delivering that for Donnybrook, Wallan, Wandong and Heathcote Junction.

**St Joseph's Christian college**

**Iwan WALTERS** (Greenvale) (13:19): I would like to speak on St Joseph's Christian college, a project of profound importance to many of my constituents, particularly those of Assyrian heritage, and a project that this Victorian government will deliver in partnership with community. I thank those who have been working with me over recent months and years to ensure that this project is delivered, especially His Grace Mar Benyamin Elya and past mayor of Hume City Council Joseph Haweil. Our Assyrian community has a deep knowledge that freedom of faith is not an abstract principle. It has experienced persecution across generations. For Assyrians, Victoria represents safety, security and the right to practise faith freely and to embrace history, culture and language. St Joseph's will be an expression of those freedoms and an enduring symbol of the Assyrian community in Victoria.

The independent planning process to reach this point has been a challenging one, and I share the frustrations of the community. But the closing of one chapter provides a renewed opportunity to work together to achieve a positive solution. Now the VCAT process is over we can get on with delivering the school. I will not rest until St Joseph's moves from a plan to a reality, with land and funding secured. This commitment to establishing St Joseph's is shared across the Victorian government. It is why the Deputy Premier and his department are working with the community and why I look forward to our Premier joining me in the north with the Assyrian community soon. This Victorian government is proud to support the choices of parents and families to pursue faith-based education for their children. Unlike other parties, we do not just spout empty rhetoric. We partner with communities to build schools and we invest in faith-based education. It is why we are funding new and expanded schools in my community like Kolbe Catholic College, Mary Queen of Heaven, Aitken College, Oscar Romero primary, Holy Cross Mickleham and St Carlo Acutis. My commitment to the Assyrian community is simple: I will not cease my advocacy and work on your behalf until this school is delivered.

**Lara waste-to-energy facility**

**Ella GEORGE** (Lara) (13:20): Today I rise to speak in the Parliament about an issue that is of great concern to residents across the Geelong region: the proposed Lara incinerator. I have spoken about the proposed incinerator before in this chamber, but I am raising it again today because it is incredibly important to the community that I represent. I am proud to stand with the community as they continue to fight against this. The Lara community has some very reasonable concerns about this project, and these are concerns that I share. These include safety issues; the proximity of the proposed

incinerator to local homes, schools and businesses; and the impact that it will have on air quality and noise pollution in the area. This project has no social licence. There have been hundreds of written objections lodged throughout the planning process, with hundreds of community members attending forums and thousands who have signed a petition to object. While I have had hundreds of residents raising these concerns with me, I am yet to have anyone contact me or speak to me about their support for this project. Local businesses do not support the project; the City of Greater Geelong, the Committee for Geelong and the Geelong Chamber of Commerce do not support this project. My colleagues in this house and the upper house and the federal member for Corio do not support this project. But the real champions working tirelessly against this project are local community members such as Charles Street, Les and Ryan Dew and their family, Annie Duncan, Melanie Szocs and James and Jane Compston. They have been fighting this since 2021, and I commend their efforts. I am proud to support them, and I will always stand with the community against this proposal.

#### **Point Cook electorate infrastructure**

**Mathew HILAKARI** (Point Cook) (13:22): Five hundred children are on the waitlist at Eagle Stadium, according to Wyndham City Council. Wyndham council says that Point Cook requires the equivalent of 12 indoor basketball courts. We do not have a pool in Point Cook, and it is the largest and most multicultural suburb in the country. Wyndham council have no plans to rectify these massive gaps. On Monday I, with Dwayne, a Point Cook resident, delivered almost 3000 signatures to urge Wyndham council to change their minds, but \$36 million should not be it for the community of Point Cook. The ratepayers there deserve the facilities that give young people the best start in life and that build our community. Councils are not on our side. Our community is full of young people – volunteers, contributors – all of whom have been held back by the lack of care and effort. Council have been ignoring their own legal advice and their own budgets. What some in the community have to say about council's decisions is stark. Frances said:

The Mayor and the Councillors responsible should hang their heads in shame for trying to pull a fast one on the Cookies.

Kirsten said:

I think a new petition needs to be started to remove councillors and appoint administrators.

Basil said:

That is a blatant misappropriation of funds that should be spent on building infrastructure in the areas from where the funds were collected.

Amy has 'lost all faith in council actually serving the entire community'. Wyndham needs to do better. The Minister for Local Government is writing to you, and I hope you can take account of your actions.

#### **Parsa Naimi**

**Daniela DE MARTINO** (Monbulk) (13:23): On 18 April a six-year-old boy named Parsa went missing from Olinda play space around 4 o'clock in the afternoon. Parsa has autism and is non-verbal. In the blink of an eye he wandered into the Dandenong Ranges National Park. His mother Sahar was beside herself. She described to me how her worst nightmare had come true. Not long after, a multiagency search began to find this little boy lost in the bush. Local police, the air wing, the search and rescue unit and the dog squad joined the large-scale search, which was supported by the SES, the CFA and a huge turnout of local community members, who gave up hours into the night to search for Parsa. Around 200 people joined in that search. Our community held its breath, only exhaling when news got out around 16 hours later that Parsa had been found, tired but well, at 8:15 Saturday morning by a young local man, Asher Shinkfield, who contacted police and sat with Parsa until the paramedics arrived. Sahar expressed to me just how grateful she was. She said:

People I had never met brought us clothes, toys for Parsa's twin sister, warm homemade cakes, food, water, and hearts full of love.

I've always known I was lucky to call Australia home, but this experience showed me just how extraordinary this country's people truly are.

To the young man who found Parsa, sat beside him, and gave him water – I'm so deeply grateful for you.

I too would like to thank every single person who helped in the search for Parsa – Victoria Police, the SES and CFA volunteers and the community – as well as Asher for finding and caring for him until rescuers arrived. We truly are at our best when we come together, and I am proud to be the member for this extraordinary community.

### **Endeavour Hills Senior Football Club**

**Belinda WILSON** (Narre Warren North) (13:25): I recently had the pleasure of attending Endeavour Hills football club to unveil the flag of the women's team that won the grand final last year. Now we are already four rounds in, and the girls are undefeated. I would like to wish them luck for the season ahead, and I look forward to following them, especially at the end when they hit the finals and make it a double-header.

### ***Bills***

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

#### *Second reading*

#### **Debate resumed on motion of Sonya Kilkenny:**

That this bill be now read a second time.

**Michael O'BRIEN** (Malvern) (13:26): I am happy to lead off the batting on government business today and speak on the Justice Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2025. There are no real surprises, given the name of the bill; this is a hotchpotch of amendments to various different acts in the justice space, most of them fairly uncontroversial.

The bill will repeal an outdated regulation-making power in the Magistrates' Court Act 1989. It did provide for the ability to prescribe municipal areas where police are not required to serve civil process. I am no longer a practising lawyer, but I was a practising lawyer for many years. I cannot remember a time when police ever served civil process. That was always the job of process servers. Police were very much involved in the criminal side of the justice system and not the civil side, so I am not quite sure when police used to do that work of serving civil process. Clearly it has been lost in the mists of time, apart from an outdated reference in the Magistrates' Court Act to a power to prescribe certain areas where police did not have to do this. That is certainly a change in the bill which I do not think many people in this house or indeed the community would have even known was required, let alone object to, and we do not object to it.

The bill also amends the Social Services Regulation Act 2021, and in doing so the bill rectifies an unintentional deemed exclusion for out-of-home-care workers in the Social Services Regulation Act 2021 during the three-year transitional period for the suitability panel. It provides that a person can only be excluded from working in the out-of-home-care sector where the panel finds that the person both engaged in conduct and poses an unacceptable risk to children. We have not had any negative feedback about this proposed amendment, and on that basis we do not object to it.

The bill also seeks to amend the Worker Screening Act 2020, and in doing so the bill corrects errors in cross-references in the Worker Screening Act 2020 relating to NDIS checks and working with children checks. It is very important that we get technical details right, particularly anything that has to do with working with children checks. Working with children checks are very important for the safety of minors. I know that when the system was brought in it did cause a change in practice for many organisations, but it is an important one. I know that working with children checks are not without some issues, and I have adverted to those in other cases. I think that the government has not maintained the system of working with children checks as well as it could or should have. No system

is going to be perfect, but I think we have to make every effort to seek perfection when it comes to protecting children. Certainly this error in cross-referencing does not seem to be one which has exposed children to particular risks, but I would urge the government to be very, very vigilant on anything to do with working with children, because we must get the detail right. We cannot afford to create loopholes which could be either intentionally or inadvertently exploited by those people who want to do harm to children.

The bill seeks to improve the operation of the case management system in the Magistrates' Court. It does so by seeking to make technical amendments to the Criminal Procedure Act 2009 and the Sentencing Act 1991 to allow the Magistrates' Court of Victoria to extend the use of its case management system in the criminal jurisdiction. The CMS is another one of these great projects under Labor which take years and years and years beyond when they were supposed to be introduced, many, many millions of dollars more than was budgeted and still do not seem to be working particularly well. If members were to speak to magistrates who are known to them – I am very fortunate in knowing a lot of magistrates, some of whom I knew before I took on this role and some of whom have become known to me since I have been in this role – they would find that the CMS continues to be a massive bugbear for magistrates, so anything which can aid the rollout of it and its proper bedding down, the opposition would be supportive of.

This does seem to be an IT system which has taken on a life of its own and caused a great deal of grief. There have been lots of briefing sessions with magistrates and then changed dates as to when it is going to be rolled out. It is the never-ending story of IT. If I recall correctly, Deputy Speaker, you might have had some involvement in IT professionally before your election to this place, so I am sure I do not have to tell you how tricky IT systems can be. But the onus is on governments to get them right, and that applies to the Magistrates' Court of Victoria no less than it does to any other publicly funded entity. But certainly those amendments themselves do not seem to be anything which raise a concern for those on this side.

There are perhaps two more substantive amendments in this bill, which I will now turn my attention to. The first is to amend section 180 of the Crimes Act 1958 in relation to offences for the replacement of trustees. Section 180 of the Crimes Act deals with providing a secret commission to a trustee in return for a substituted appointment. The bill seeks to amend section 180, which currently makes it an indictable offence for a person to offer or give to another, or for that other person to solicit or receive, any valuable consideration as an inducement or reward for appointing or otherwise authorising a person to be appointed as a trustee or to act in their place as a trustee without the assent of the persons beneficially entitled to the estate or the Supreme Court of Victoria. That is the current offence constituted by section 180 of the Crimes Act. This bill seeks to narrow that offence by requiring the relevant conduct to have been done with 'a dishonest or otherwise corrupt purpose'.

I will pause at that point to note that the current offence does not have a requirement that the impugned conduct be done with a dishonest or corrupt purpose. Effectively, if the conduct meets the test in current section 180, even if it is done in good faith, people may still fall foul of it and be liable to being charged. That is the first change: to put in place a requirement that the relevant conduct has been done with a dishonest or otherwise corrupt purpose. The second aspect of this narrowing is to remove the requirement for the consent of beneficiaries or the Supreme Court.

The bill also seeks to insert a new section 640 of the Crimes Act, which will make the amendments retrospective to 1 April 1959. Usually we are very cautious about retrospective legislation in this place and certainly legislation retrospective to much more than half a century ago – in fact about 84 years ago based on my maths, which are not unimpeachable – so to make retrospective these changes to 1 April 1959 is quite extraordinary. I did ask the Attorney-General's office in the bill briefing why that date has been selected, and I am very grateful to the Attorney-General's office for their assistance and bill briefing. This is one of the less controversial justice bills I think we will have before the house this year, so it was all done in a very friendly manner, as you would expect.

I was advised that the reason for the retrospectivity to that particular date in 1959 is because that was when the section 180 offence which is being amended was first created. The idea is to make sure that any conduct which has occurred since 1 April 1959 which may have fallen foul of the old section 180 but would not fall foul of the newly constituted section 180 would effectively get a leave pass. While I am normally very, very concerned about retrospective legislation, on this occasion I think that the argument for it can be maintained, particularly since conduct which is corrupt or conduct which is otherwise dishonest will still be caught by the new offence. The government advice is that recent Supreme Court decisions have confirmed that a corrupt purpose is not an element of the offence, and therefore there is a risk that certain non-corrupt and good-faith conduct could contravene the current provision.

I think it was the explanatory memorandum or possibly the second-reading speech that referred to the genesis of the offence which is being amended by this bill. The original offence was introduced following the 1905 Royal Commission on the Butter Industry, which found widespread evidence of bribery and secret commission by agents. I must admit, though I would like to think of myself as being a little bit of a student of legal and political history in this country, I was not aware that we had a Royal Commission on the Butter Industry in 1905. That one did pass my radar. I am sure members will be very interested in some background on that royal commission.

Can I at this point just give a shout-out to my electorate office staff, who, whenever they walk into my office, never know what they are going to get from their boss in terms of requests for research. I suspect none of them thought that a very quick precis of the 1905 Royal Commission on the Butter Industry was going to be on their batting list for today, but that is what they got and that is what they have delivered. Thank you very much to Mia and Lucy, who are superstars.

On that basis, Deputy Speaker, I am sure you will be fascinated, as will other members of the house. In early 1904 concerns arose among some butter exporters over reports that the P & O and Orient steam navigation companies had granted freight concessions – essentially secret rebates or commissions – to select shippers while excluding others. This unequal treatment caused significant unrest within the industry and led to public allegations of corruption. In response a royal commission was established to investigate these secret commissions, which were found to total £13,130 over a 10-year period. I did not ask my office to work out what the modern-day equivalent of £13,130 would be compared to the early 1900s, but I imagine it would be a significant amount of money. The chairman of the royal commission was Mr GC Morrison. The members were Mr George Graham and Mr H Gyles Turner. The issues to be determined were (a) were payments made from time to time by the mail companies to certain shippers of butter (b) were these payments in the form of a rebate on freight or a brokerage or a commission and (c) were these payments made on the understanding that they were to be kept secret?

The royal commission investigated these matters and did in fact find that there was dodgy conduct going on in relation to the shipping of butter. Who would have thought it? The payments were made in the form of a rebate on freight – as I said, over £13,000 pounds worth – not for services legitimately rendered as brokers. The rebate was not given to all shippers, which was apparently a violation of certain contractual clauses. Nine New South Wales shippers discovered in 1902 and 1903 that rebates on freight had been made to certain Victorian shippers. Thereupon the said New South Wales shippers demanded a similar concession, which was granted, and payments were made to them by the mail companies for the period of the expired portion of their existing contracts. Apparently the closest secrecy was required and observed as to the payments made to the shippers and others in Victoria. This is a quote from the royal commission itself:

We have not discerned during the investigation an instance where gifts were bestowed or bribes given with a philanthropic motive.

In other words, this was not bribery for any philanthropic purpose; this appears to be just very poor, unethical, sharp practice. The royal commission goes on:

It has been clearly demonstrated that the object of these payments was to gain the favour of the director or official as against the interests of their principals, or to perpetuate a practice followed by competitors and insisted upon by the employees.

This shook things up, as you would expect. It led to the Secret Commissions Prohibition Act 1905 of this Parliament, which comprised a suite of different offences addressing forms of bribery and corruption. The member introducing the bill into the Assembly, Mr Mackey, observed that the bill was almost exclusively one of the consequences of the butter royal commission. Deputy Speaker, you are far better at puns than I am. I am sure you would be able to come up with some excellent wordplay about a butter royal commission and something about spreading bribery, so I will leave that to you. But that is the genesis of the current section 180 of the Crimes Act 1958, which is to be amended by the Justice Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill currently before the house. On this particular matter the opposition does not have any particular problem with the narrowing of the offence, given that it does require that ‘dishonest or otherwise corrupt purpose’ be an element of the offence. The removal of the requirement for trustee beneficiaries or the Supreme Court to approve such matters does seem to be something that is not unreasonable in the circumstances.

Let me turn to perhaps the most controversial aspect of the bill, which is the further delaying of the commencement of the abolition of de novo criminal appeals from the Magistrates’ Court to the County Court. First, a brief history lesson for the house. It was back in 2019 that the government first proposed to abolish the current system of de novo criminal appeals from the Magistrates’ Court. At present an appeal from a criminal conviction in the Magistrates’ Court is by way of a completely new hearing – what lawyers would call a de novo hearing, because we love using Latin – so that when that appeal is heard in the County Court it is as if the Magistrates’ Court hearing never occurred. All evidence is led again, as if for the first time. All legal submissions are led again, as if for the first time, and a completely new decision is made. The government proposed to abolish that system of appeals on the basis that it would be far more efficient and far more expeditious. It would be something which would place less of a burden on the justice system. It would also place less of a burden on witnesses. For example, at the moment if a witness has to give evidence in a criminal matter in the Magistrates’ Court and that matter is then appealed, the witness has to give the evidence all over again in the County Court.

What the government proposed through this change was to say that effectively the evidence that is led in the Magistrates’ Court would be the evidence considered in the County Court on appeal, so there would be no need for that evidence to be led again or repeated. Obviously lawyers for the appellant would be able to make legal submissions as to what that evidence meant and the legal consequences of it, as would the respondent. But the idea is that you would not have to have that effective double handling of evidence. The government thought this was an excellent idea. I note that the Law Institute of Victoria opposed it at the time and continues to oppose it. I note that the Victorian Bar opposed it at the time and continues to oppose it. Their concern is that to change the system, as the government proposes, would lead to potentially miscarriages of justice. Given the volume of matters that Magistrates’ Courts have to deal with, it could require much greater evidence to be led at the Magistrates’ Court, because you do not get a second chance. At the moment, effectively, if evidence is led at the Magistrates’ Court and there might be something missing, you can get another chance. If you are acting for the defendant, you can lead further evidence on the appeal. You do not get that opportunity under the government’s proposed de novo system, unless there are some exceptional circumstances. Both the law institute and the bar have been opposed to this change.

They need not have necessarily worried, because this change was supposed to have come into force no later than 3 July 2021. However, it did not come into effect on 3 July 2021, because the Justice Legislation Amendment (System Enhancements and Other Matters) Act 2021 extended the default commencement date until 1 January 2023, so we had an 18-month extension for these changes to kick in. Then a further bill, the Justice Legislation Amendment (Trial by Judge Alone and Other Matters) Bill 2022, delayed the commencement date of these criminal reforms until 5 July 2025, which members would be aware is just around the corner, less than two months away. But the government is not ready to introduce these amendments yet. The government still has not got its act together. The

government in this bill proposes that the default commencement date for these reforms, which the government said were important justice reforms, is now being kicked down the road until 1 July 2028. Important reforms that were supposed to take effect by no later than 3 July 2021 are now being extended until 1 July 2028. That is a seven-year delay. Goodness me, you would think this government would be able to get its act together, support the courts and implement what it says are important justice reforms a bit sooner than seven years after they were supposed to come into effect. But the government is not in a position to do that.

This government has kicked the can of these criminal appeal reforms seven years down the road, and you have to ask yourself why. The initial delays the government attributed to COVID, and I am prepared to give the government half a tick on that. We appreciate that COVID did cause a lot of disruption to many aspects of society, including the courts. But what is the reason for the continual delays now? We are advised that there is a resourcing issue for the courts, that the courts need the right equipment to be able to deal with transcripts and consideration of evidence in such a way that evidence led at the Magistrates' Court can be easily transmitted to the County Court in the event of a criminal appeal. Why would there be a problem with the courts having the resources and the infrastructure they need to implement these reforms? Maybe it has something to do with the fact that this financial year the government has cut the budget of Court Services Victoria by \$19.1 million. Maybe, just maybe – stick with me on this – it is really hard to implement reforms that require additional resourcing when you are cutting resourcing from the courts. You cannot cut \$19.1 million out of Victoria's courts at the same time as you are asking the courts to implement new reforms which take additional resourcing. It does not work. It does not add up.

But it gets worse, because as bad as the \$19.1 million cut to Court Services Victoria in this financial year is, this government has got an even nastier surprise planned for the 2027–28 year. Do you know how much extra the government is going to be cutting from the Court Services Victoria budget in 2027–28? An extra \$58 million will be cut out of our courts. Does the government not realise we have got a crime crisis in this state? Has the government not realised we have got a bail crisis in this state? Does the government not understand that magistrates are giving people bail because the delays in getting them to trial are such that they believe they cannot justify keeping somebody on remand for months and months and months waiting for their day in court if at trial they may only get a month in jail?

When the government cut funding to the courts, they make it harder for magistrates to keep people on remand who should be kept on remand for the purposes of community safety. This government's budget cuts are putting the safety of Victorians at risk, and the government has cut \$19.1 million this year and has baked in a \$58 million cut in 2027–28. They are not the actions of a government serious about the justice system, they are not the actions of a government serious about protecting Victorians and they are not the actions of a government supposedly tough on crime or tough on bail. Nothing like it at all – a \$58 million cut.

**A member** interjected.

**Michael O'BRIEN:** I think I heard somebody say 'fake news'. Unless the government backbench believe that the government's own budget papers are fake news, I would be very careful throwing that around. So the government wants to defer –

**Colin Brooks:** On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, I think the member is debating a budget bill, not the bill in front of the house. He might have just been coming back to the bill then, but I ask you to refer him back to the bill in front of the house.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** On the point of order, the member had strayed a little bit from what is in front of the house, but as the lead speaker you get some latitude. I would ask you to come back to the bill.

**Michael O'BRIEN:** I appreciate the latitude. I would not want to ever abuse the latitude, but it is directly on point that these important criminal justice reforms are being delayed because of a lack of resourcing, and the reason for the lack of resourcing is this Labor government's budget cuts. They have cut the court's budget by \$19.1 million this year, they have baked in a \$58 million cut in 2027–28, and goodness knows what this government is going to announce next Tuesday on budget day. Unless the government is serious about putting money back into the courts, giving the courts additional resources, not cutting them, this government cannot claim to be serious about this criminal justice reform and this government cannot claim to be serious about any criminal justice reform or bail reform at all.

Next Tuesday is going to be a very big test of whether this government is prepared to put its money where its mouth is. This government talks a big game about justice, talks a big game about bail, but the reality is cuts, cuts, cuts. This government thinks building a train tunnel between Box Hill and Cheltenham is more important than resourcing our courts and our justice system. It tells you about the resources available to the courts, but it tells you a lot more about the priorities of this Allan Labor government. We are very concerned that these criminal justice reforms – which the government trumpeted as being so important for justice, so important for the efficiency and effectiveness of the courts, and so important, they were saying, to try and stop witnesses having the burden of having to give evidence twice in the same matter – apparently all do not matter anymore, because they have kicked them down the road by not one or two or three or four or five or six but seven years. There is something biblical about seven years, but that is how long this government has delayed what it claimed were very important reforms, so we are very concerned about this government's continual cuts to Victorian courts.

I was in some regional courts recently, including Wangaratta. We have got some great people on the ground working in our justice system, and they deserve to be properly supported. What I do not want to see are the sorts of budget cuts which are affecting these criminal justice reforms in this bill moving on to seeing more costs for people trying to access justice. We have already seen probate fees go up by millions and millions of dollars under this government because of its budget cuts to courts. I wonder how many of our regional courts will continue. Are they going to be shut down? Is the Labor government going to be shutting down our regional courts in order to try and impose these budget cuts on the court system? People need access to justice, and that includes people in regional Victoria. They are just as entitled to have local access to justice as anybody living in Melbourne. So the opposition will not be opposing the bill, but when the government –

**A member:** Yay!

**Michael O'BRIEN:** There is nothing to cheer about when this government is cutting \$19.1 million out of Court Services Victoria this year. We are already seeing the impact that is having on access to justice. We are already seeing the consolidation of Children's Court matters into just a handful of courts, requiring more people to have to travel longer distances in order to be able to access justice. But while the Labor Party backbench is cheering on a \$19.1 million cut to courts this year and then cheering on \$58 million in cuts to courts in 2027–28, the opposition will stand up for a properly resourced justice system. The opposition will stand up for courts that can do their job properly. The opposition will also stand up for victims of crime whose interests are not served by the continual delay to these reforms because of a government that cannot manage money and cannot manage the justice system.

**Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (13:55):** I am very pleased to hear that the opposition are not going to oppose this important legislation in light of the fact that it has time-critical reforms and reforms to achieve administrative efficiencies and correct technical errors in legislation. We did hear some creative allegations about purported cuts et cetera, and I would like to put some clarity on the table. First of all, the 2024–25 budget provided a total investment of \$164.97 million to support the ongoing operation of therapeutic court programs, court holding cells and to improve court access and undertake repair and maintenance of court buildings. This investment builds on approximately \$435 million in



funding over the previous four budgets, which is helping to promote swifter resolution of court cases, with backlogs reducing by 14 per cent in 2023–24 and a decrease of 30 per cent since pending matters peaked in January 2022. I would strongly refute any allegations by the opposition regarding a certain reform being prioritised relative to cuts or otherwise. That is not at all, in any way, the basis for the decision-making in this process.

We have to respect also that the courts have to be brought on the journey out of respect. These are difficult jobs, and we all can share in the seriousness of reforms and their implementation and making sure they work as we intend them to work. It is also important for them to be seen within the context of where we sit now. I would note that the reforms do not impact court efficiency and the implementation of other recent significant reforms, including bail, youth justice and committal processes, which also promote victims' interests.

I want to salute the tremendous advocacy more broadly of victims of crime. We know many people endure things that they should never have to endure. I do want to say more broadly, and I will nuance it further in a moment, that we are very grateful, because they, more often than not, are some of the greatest advocates for reform in our justice system, and I salute them wholeheartedly. I do want to point out, for instance, that a recent victim-centric reform includes strengthening the test for cross-examination in committal proceedings. This reform will significantly reduce the amount of pre-trial evidence given by victims and witnesses. We know that it can be traumatic for victims and witnesses, even in the first instance, to have to share and reshare traumatic incidents that they have been through. You can see that we do already have victim-centric reforms in place or being implemented.

I should mention the Youth Justice Act 2024. It is introducing more options for restorative justice. When I was the Parliamentary Secretary for Justice I did a deep dive into this matter to get a greater appreciation of the fact that victims, by having a choice and having different pathways, can be empowered to pursue what is best for them, as they determine it, to heal them from whatever trauma they have been experiencing. This allows – I should say, just for the clarity of the chamber – offenders to hear directly from victims about the harm they have caused to help victims heal and to give offenders insight into the impact of their offending.

The new bail laws will put community safety front and centre of every decision on bail. We are cracking down specifically on the crimes that are on an upward trend while people are out of bail.

**Business interrupted under sessional orders.**

*Questions without notice and ministers statements*

**Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund**

**Brad BATTIN** (Berwick – Leader of the Opposition) (14:01): My question is to the Premier. Peter from Yarrawonga told me his emergency services bill will rise \$15,000 under the government's new tax plan. As a CFA captain for 29 years, he and his fellow volunteers are planning to park the fire truck and hand in the keys in protest. Why is the government doggedly pushing its emergency services tax despite relentless opposition from struggling home owners, drought-stricken farmers, under-resourced councils and emergency service workers and volunteers?

**Jacinta ALLAN** (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:02): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question, but of course some of the detail in the Leader of the Opposition's question is incorrect. I will go through the detail of how it is incorrect. As the member for Malvern knows, this is not a new levy, this is a levy that has been in place since 2012. And if I recall correctly –

**Michael O'Brien** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Malvern is warned.

**Bridget Vallance:** On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier is required to be factual. This is a massive new tax. I would ask you to ask the Premier to come back to answering it factually.

**The SPEAKER:** There is no point of order.

**Jacinta ALLAN:** I say this because it was indeed a recommendation from the royal commission into the Black Saturday fires to have a mechanism to fund our fire services, because they deserve to be supported because they support our community.

**Danny O'Brien:** On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier is debating the question. The royal commission did recommend this for fire services, not for all the government agencies that she is now trying to charge Victorians for again.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Premier was being relevant to the question.

**Jacinta ALLAN:** Disappointingly, it is standard practice from this Leader of the Opposition to be not across the detail and to mislead Victorians on these important matters.

**Brad Battin** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Leader of the Opposition!

**Jacinta ALLAN:** When we consider how we fund and how we as a community back and support our emergency services – who back and support us in the face of more frequent and more fierce floods, fires and storms – they deserve our support, which is why, using the existing mechanism that was introduced by the member for Malvern, we are, at the call of the state emergency services, recognising all of those emergency services that respond to fire, flood and those wind events and those storm events that are happening more frequently. They are more fierce. We are seeing so many parts of rural and regional Victoria today in the grip of unprecedented dry weather.

*Members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Mildura! Leader of the Nationals!

**Jacinta ALLAN:** My community and many communities across rural and regional Victoria – we are all experiencing this significant shift in weather patterns that is causing these more frequent and fierce fire, flood and storm events, which is why, listening to the state emergency services and listening to the needs of communities, we are supporting them with this approach.

**Bridget Vallence:** On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier is debating the question again. The government has not quarantined this for the emergency services – for the SES and CFA. I would ask you to ask her to come back to the question.

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

**Jacinta ALLAN:** There is pressure on communities everywhere as a result of these changed climate patterns, and that is why we need to support further our emergency services, who go out in those dangerous and difficult conditions. The Leader of the Opposition made reference to CFA volunteers. I hope the Leader of the Opposition has said to those CFA volunteers that this government, in recognising the great work that they do in protecting our community – that they will be exempt from this levy. I am sure the Leader of the Opposition has not said that as he continues his campaign of misinformation.

**Bridget Vallence:** On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier is required to be factual. I renew that point of order again, because volunteers actually have to pay this tax up-front.

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

**Brad BATTIN** (Berwick – Leader of the Opposition) (14:06): The Premier consistently claims this big new tax on everyone is to support emergency services and volunteers. Premier, why then are emergency service workers and volunteers protesting on the steps of Parliament today?

*Members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER:** The house will come to order. The Premier will be heard in silence.

**Jacinta ALLAN** (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:07): In terms of always taking the opportunity to listen and understand the concerns of people in my community and country communities right across the state, we always respect their right to come onto the steps of this place – to come and meet with us to hear their views. Indeed I have met and listened to a number of people from across rural and regional Victoria who have told me about the challenges that we are all facing, those of us who live in these rural areas. I have farmers as neighbours. I have the support of my local CFA protecting my community. I understand clearly the challenges that we are being faced with in rural Victoria as a result of these changing weather patterns, and that is why we will continue to support our emergency services and thank them for the work they do and respect them when they come and talk to us about these issues.

### **Ministers statements: bail laws**

**Jacinta ALLAN** (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:08): Keeping Victorians safe is and always will be our priority. That is why we introduced into this place, this Parliament, and saw pass through this Parliament the toughest bail laws in the country – to break that pattern of repeat serious offending, because when people commit serious crimes they should not be out on the streets. What we are seeing as a result of the hard work of the Attorney-General, the Minister for Police and the Minister for Corrections is more serious and repeat offenders are going to jail; they are not getting bail. When you look at the data, we have seen more people on remand in our prisons over the past month – 465 more people compared to this time last year. And when we put these bail laws, the toughest bail laws in the country, to the Parliament and the community recently, we said we would also invest in our corrections system, because to see more people not getting bail but going to jail also needed the government to back the hard work of our corrections system. It is why I was pleased today, with the police minister and with the corrections minister, to visit Western Plains Correctional Centre, a new modern facility, and to announce that next week's budget will invest a further \$727 million to increase the capacity of our prison system – 1000 new adult prison beds, 88 new beds in our youth justice facility and of course additional staff too. Today we met with Jack, Joy and Nina, new Corrections Victoria staff who have been part of the recruitment process to date. We are going to bring on more Corrections Victoria officers with the investment in the budget and we are going to protect them too, with better protections in their workplace with the legislation that has been introduced to this place today.

### **Drought**

**Emma KEALY** (Lowan) (14:10): My question is to the Minister for Agriculture. South Australia has announced a \$73 million drought support package, yet Victorian farmers neighbouring South Australia in the midst of the same low-rainfall conditions are only eligible for a \$13.5 million drought support fund. Given the critical impacts of the drought on Victorian farmers, why has the Allan Labor government been so slow to offer support?

**Ros SPENCE** (Kalkallo – Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Community Sport, Minister for Carers and Volunteers) (14:11): I thank the member for Lowan for her question. We are all acutely aware of the extent of the drought that is being felt across not only south-west Victoria but many other parts of Victoria as well. That is why in September we did bring in that relief. That was the right thing to do at the right time. As we know, since then there has not been the autumn break. There are a lot of farmers that when it came to that Easter and Anzac Day period really became more distraught at the situation that they were facing. That is why we are looking at an additional drought package, which I will have more to say about soon; that is why we will not be waiting for spring for drought relief; and that is why we are keeping a very careful eye on the conditions to make sure that the package that we bring forward is appropriate for the circumstances.

**Emma KEALY** (Lowan) (14:12): As has been provided by the South Australian government, will the government commit to waiving the crippling emergency services or fire services tax bill for areas impacted by drought?

**Ros SPENCE** (Kalkallo – Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Community Sport, Minister for Carers and Volunteers) (14:12): Again I thank the member for Lowan. I know that this is a topic that is of great interest to her, and it is a topic that we have discussed on many occasions – even as recently as today. I know how important it is to her and to many in this place – in fact, I would have to say, to all of us. But what I will say is that negotiations in regard to the tax are best done with the Treasurer. I will not be making commitments on her behalf, and I understand that these matters are being canvassed in the other place right now.

#### **Ministers statements: bail laws**

**Sonya KILKENNY** (Carrum – Attorney-General, Minister for Planning) (14:13): I wish to update the house on this government's tough new bail laws. The changes we have made to bail are having a real and measurable impact. In the last month we have seen 465 more people on remand compared to April last year. That is an increase of 22 per cent. Thirty-nine more young people are on remand compared to April last year, an increase of 71 per cent. These are not just statistics. It is a clear signal our bail reforms are working. We have tightened the conditions and made it harder to get bail for those who pose a risk to others. That is exactly what this community expects – that community safety and protection come first.

Last month we also launched our two-year electronic monitoring trial for young people on bail. This is a breakthrough. It is not about being soft or tough, it is about being smart. Ankle bracelets allow children to stay at school and stay with family while still being held accountable every day. We want to make sure that young people are given an opportunity to get their lives back on track. This government is about ensuring the safety of the community first and foremost. Those opposite, in a desperate grab for attention, finally had an announcement on bail – well, really a slogan. Indeed part of their proposal was to reannounce this government's bail reforms. Thank you for the endorsement. They also propose laws that do nothing to protect community safety but everything to hurt vulnerable people. That is not smart at all. The Allan Labor government will get on with cracking down on high-harm repeat offending to keep the community safe with the toughest, smartest bail laws.

#### **Education system**

**Jess WILSON** (Kew) (14:15): My question is to the Premier. The government's secret decision to cut \$2.4 billion from public schools means that Victorians will now lag three years behind Queensland and six years behind New South Wales in adopting the Gonski reforms. Why is the Premier cutting billions of dollars from public schools?

**Jacinta ALLAN** (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:16): I thank the member for Kew for her question because it gives me the opportunity to be absolutely clear about my government's commitment to public education. It is only Labor governments that invest in public education. This might be a record from the member for Kew, who up until this point has only ever asked about private schools in Kew. She has only ever asked questions in this place about private schools in Kew.

**Bridget Vallance:** On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, it was a very narrow question to the Premier about cutting \$2.4 billion from state schools. I would ask you to ask the Premier to come back to that question instead of attacking the opposition.

**Mary-Anne Thomas:** On the point of order, Speaker, there is no point of order. The Premier was being entirely relevant to the question. It did ask about the funding of government schools, and the Premier was taking the opportunity to update the house on our government's ongoing commitment to public education.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I remind the Premier not to attack the opposition and to come back to answering the question.

**Jacinta ALLAN:** I will remind the house of the fact that this government, our government, has made the biggest increase of any state or territory to government school funding – 34 per cent. Then

you can also consider the \$17 billion that we have invested in new school buildings. We have made this investment because as Premier I support our teachers and staff. We support them to have the buildings and the facilities, and also, importantly, we support students to have access to those critically important wellbeing services that are offered in government schools, because we have invested in nurses, in doctors, in Glasses for Kids and in mental health support staff for students in government schools. I say –

**Bridget Vallence:** On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier is debating the question. I would ask you to ask her to come back to the very narrow question of cutting funds to state schools.

**Mary-Anne Thomas:** On the point of order, Speaker, there is no point of order. The Premier continued to be relevant in her answer. She is not debating the question, she is getting on with informing the house of our government's commitment to fund government schools in this state.

**Sam Groth:** Speaker, further to the point of order, the question related to recurrent funding and the Gonski report, not capital funding, to which the Premier was referring.

*Members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The minister will come to order. It was a very narrow question. The Premier was being relevant, but I do remind the Premier that it was a very narrow question.

**Jacinta ALLAN:** For the benefit of the member for Nepean, that 34 per cent increase I was talking about is exactly the recurrent funding that is going into government schools. I am delighted that the member for Nepean has been swotting up over the break, reading the budget papers. Maybe the member for Brighton has been giving him a bit of a helping hand on going through the budget papers and getting ready for his big day next Tuesday.

But what I was also going to, in terms of answering the question from the member for Kew, is the support that we give to teachers, to buildings but also, importantly, to students around what goes on in government schools. I say this as Premier and I also say this absolutely clearly as a parent who sends her kids to government schools: I see firsthand every single day what a good, strong government education provides for students. Regardless of who they are, regardless of the wealth of the family that they come from and regardless of their background, they know in Victoria they can get a good government education, because we back them and so too does the Albanese Labor government, which is why we are working with them right now on that outcome that has been driven for a number of years to get our government schools fully resourced, and that is because we are committed to government schools. I am committed to them as a parent and I am committed to them as the Premier. We will continue to back and invest in our great government education system here in Victoria.

**Jess WILSON (Kew) (14:21):** Does the Minister for Education speak for the government when he says that this \$2.4 billion cut to schools will damage Victoria's reputation and embed Victoria's status as Australia's lowest funder of students at public schools?

**Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:21):** Again, this is a pattern of behaviour from the Leader of the Opposition. I did not think it was a pattern of behaviour we would see from the member for Kew – coming in and absolutely putting misleading statements to the house. I will tell you what I, the Deputy Premier and Minister for Education and every single one of the members of this government will do: we will back our government schools. I know this is a tough concept for the member for Kew, because Liberal governments cut funding to government schools. They cut Fresh Fruit Friday. They cut the education maintenance allowance. They did not invest in building new schools, which meant we had not enough schools being opened from their time in government.

**Jess Wilson:** On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, the Premier is debating the question. It was a very narrow question about whether the Minister for Education speaks for the government when he says this is going to damage Victoria's reputation.

**The SPEAKER:** I believe the Premier had already responded to the question.

**Jacinta ALLAN:** I will say this: we will continue to invest. We will continue to invest in government schools and we will continue to invest in those frontline services because we back our government school system, we back our teachers and we back our staff. I thank them for the work they do every single day.

#### **Ministers statements: Victoria Police**

**Anthony CARBINES** (Ivanhoe – Minister for Police, Minister for Community Safety, Minister for Victims, Minister for Racing) (14:23): I do bring the good news to cheer up those across the aisle here, who do look a little bit long in the face. I am not really sure what bad news has crossed their faces recently, but they seem a little bit down, so I will share some good news with us all. It is my pleasure to update the house on the appointment of the new Chief Commissioner of Victoria Police.

‘If you’re a criminal, you should be worried’ – so said Mike Bush, the new Chief Commissioner of Victoria Police, when he announced with the Premier just recently that he will have a five-year appointment and will start very soon, in the next month. Mike Bush has had a long and distinguished career in New Zealand Police, where he served for six years as the commissioner, including through some of its most challenging aspects, particularly the Christchurch terror attack, where 51 people were killed, and the White Island tragedy, where dozens died. Mr Bush also oversaw a significant transformation, which saw more public trust and confidence in police, lower crime rates, a bigger focus on early intervention and also a better staff culture.

We know that on this side of the house we are focused on identifying who will be the right person to lead Victoria Police and deliver on the powers that we have given them; the new laws; the infrastructure investments; the \$4.5 billion record budget; the 19 new police stations, many of which we are building right now; and the funding of an extra 3600 additional police here in Victoria. Our Made for More campaign is encouraging more people to come and join and serve the Victorian community as members of Victoria Police.

I did note, though, that those opposite, when they were asked to speak on these matters, could only make the point that Mr Bush is not a Victorian. Such is the xenophobia of those opposite – very disappointing. They did creep out just the day after the federal election – maybe they were hoping to be out there with some other people – to make an announcement where they really joined in welcoming our government’s tough new bail laws. We have heard from the Attorney-General already about the effect that is having in holding those who commit offences to account here in Victoria. We welcome Mr Bush. We look forward to his leadership of Victoria Police next month.

#### **Economic policy**

**James NEWBURY** (Brighton) (14:25): My question is to the Premier. Andrew Irvine, CEO of the National Australia Bank and a hand-picked member of the Premier’s own business council, recently said:

On every measure in our business, Victoria does a little bit worse. There’s a little bit less growth, there’s a little bit more delinquency, a little bit more impairment and confidence and business conditions in our surveys are weaker in Victoria than they are in other states ...

Does the Premier endorse Mr Irvine’s assessment?

*Members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Gippsland East! Member for Mordialloc – nice try.

**Jacinta ALLAN** (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:25): I thank the member for Brighton for identifying the fact that we have a Premier’s Business Council. It is led by Ahmed Fahour, and it contains a number of people who are leaders from across the business community. They represent big business, small business and the commercial sector. They come from rural Victoria, metropolitan

Melbourne and the suburbs, and they also represent the great diversity of our business community here in this state. I established this Premier's business advisory council because I want to get advice directly from business. As a result of the work that they are doing and as a result of the work we are doing – and other activity across Victoria – we are seeing strong business investment here in this state.

*Members interjecting.*

**Jacinta ALLAN:** I know this is inconvenient for the member for Brighton.

**James Newbury:** On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, the Premier is being evasive. This was a very, very specific question about the comments of Mr Irvine, and I would ask the Premier to stop being evasive and answer the question.

**Mary-Anne Thomas:** On the point of order raised by the member for Brighton, Speaker, there is no point of order. The Premier was being entirely relevant to the question. She was referencing her Premier's Business Council, of which Mr Irvine is a member. I ask that you rule the point of order out of order and let the Premier get on with answering the question.

**The SPEAKER:** The question was quite long in terms of its –

*Members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The question was long in terms of its preamble. I do remind the Premier of what the question was, but the Premier was being relevant.

**Jacinta ALLAN:** I will also not do what the member for Brighton is attempting to do and talk this state down. That is exactly the sort of behaviour you see from Liberals –

**James Newbury:** On a point of order, Speaker, it is entirely inappropriate for the Premier to be attacking members of her own business council, which is exactly what she is doing.

**The SPEAKER:** There is no point of order.

**Jacinta ALLAN:** When it comes to business investment, building more homes than any other state, creating more jobs and investing in our community, we have a strong economy here in Victoria. We are focused on taking advice from business leaders but also taking on board the views of the Victorian community – of working people and families who need a Labor government that is focused on them, investing in education, investing in health and making sure too we are investing in infrastructure projects, not cutting them like the cheerleader over here –

**Bridget Vallence:** On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier is debating the question. It is very narrow about whether the Premier endorses the comments of Mr Irvine.

**Mary-Anne Thomas:** On the point of order, Speaker, there is no point of order. You yourself said that it was a very wideranging question – some might say all over the place. Nonetheless the Premier is answering it, and I ask that you rule the point of order out of order.

**The SPEAKER:** I uphold the point of order. I ask the Premier to come back to the question.

**Jacinta ALLAN:** We will continue to support hardworking Victorians on construction projects but also in the private sector as well, which is why, with the work that is being led by the minister for economic growth, we are looking at how we can cut regulation in this state and invest in the things that matter to our business community – having the right environment here in Victoria and supporting our exporters to find new markets, particularly at a time when the global environment is being challenged in a way by the actions of the US administration. We know through our network, the largest network of overseas offices of any state in the nation, that we will work with our exporters, with our small and medium and large businesses, to find new markets. It is why the industry minister is working directly, whether it is with our food industry or our defence industry, to provide access to those new markets, all of which we detailed in our economic growth statement that we released last December.

Our ministers are getting on and delivering and working with the business community, with the small business minister leading the work with small businesses as well, which are such a big and important part of our economy.

**Bridget Vallence:** Speaker, I will renew the point of order, which you upheld – thank you – that the Premier is failing to answer the very narrow question: does she endorse Mr Irvine’s comments or not?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Premier was referring to confidence and business conditions in Victoria. I do not uphold the point of order.

**Jacinta ALLAN:** I will continue, with my government colleagues, to work hard to back our businesses and to give them the workers with the skills they need to support a strong and growing economy.

**James NEWBURY** (Brighton) (14:31): Mr Irvine also said:

The government here in this state needs to look at the tax settings for businesses and for property. It’s really hard to grow your way out when you’re the highest tax jurisdiction. Victoria needs to become attractive for businesses to want to invest here and grow here ...

Why does this government continue to impose the highest level of tax of any state?

**Jacinta ALLAN** (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:32): Let me share some data with the member for Brighton. The latest data –

*Members interjecting.*

**Jacinta ALLAN:** Just to be clear before the member for Evelyn jumps up, the member for Brighton did ask about business investment. He did refer to business investment. The latest data shows that Victorian business investment has increased by 3.7 per cent over the year to December 2024. What can –

*Members interjecting.*

**Jacinta ALLAN:** Thank you very much. The Leader of the National Party has asked me: how does that compare to other states? Let me tell the Leader of the National Party how that compares to other states. Tune in. The national growth rate –

*Members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER:** The Premier will be heard in silence.

**Jacinta ALLAN:** I appreciate that, Speaker, because I was about to share the national growth rate of minus 0.1 per cent. The largest growth rate of all the state. I thank the member for Brighton for his question.

### Ministers statements: transport infrastructure

**Gabrielle WILLIAMS** (Dandenong – Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for Public and Active Transport) (14:33): This government has a strong record of building transport infrastructure, improving accessibility and safety and of course creating lots and lots of jobs along the way. But the real reason we invest in transport infrastructure is because it allows us to deliver more public transport services – more services that get people to work, more services that get people to education opportunities and of course to important appointments and social occasions as well.

Yesterday the Premier and I and lots of colleagues from the mighty west were at Sunshine station to announce funding for even more trains more often, giving Victorians more options to get to where they need to go. None of that would be possible without the Metro Tunnel project. We are investing in more services on the Sunbury, Cranbourne and Pakenham lines, which will run through that brand new Metro Tunnel later this year. We are also investing in more trains more often for passengers on



the Werribee, Sandringham, Craigieburn and Upfield lines, and we are investing in better train frequency and capacity on the Seymour, Gippsland and Bendigo lines as well.

These investments will reduce wait times for busy Victorians catching public transport. They will also, of course, create capacity and make journeys easier across the board. And with our partners in Canberra, we are going to transform that messy rail junction at Sunshine to prepare for the years ahead and the growth ahead, with works getting underway next year. The Sunshine project does three things: it is the first stage of airport rail, it is the first stage of Melton electrification and it paves the way for even more train services for people in our western suburbs and our western region. Those opposite stood against and opposed the Metro Tunnel. The member for Bulleen was out yesterday opposing the extra services that it enables. They stand for nothing and they stand up for no-one.

### Employment

**Bridget VALLENCE** (Evelyn) (14:35): My question is to the Minister for Finance. The Australian Bureau of Statistics has confirmed that Victoria has the highest unemployment rate of any state in Australia and that Victoria's unemployment rate has been worse than the national average now for 13 consecutive months. Will the minister admit that under Labor Victoria is the unemployment capital of Australia?

*Members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Sunbury can leave the chamber for half an hour. I had hoped to get through question time without removing anyone.

**Member for Sunbury withdrew from chamber.**

**Danny PEARSON** (Essendon – Minister for Economic Growth and Jobs, Minister for Finance) (14:36): I am not going to cop this rubbish from those opposite. They are constantly talking the joint down. The reality is Victoria is a great place to live and work and invest. If you look over the last decade, we have outperformed all other states. In economic growth we have had a 31 per cent increase. Our employment growth has increased by 29 per cent, our business investment growth is at 62 per cent, our business counts are at 35 per cent and we are the reigning premiers when it comes to new homes being built over the last 12 months. We have created more than 800,000 jobs since we were elected, and the unemployment rate is at 4.6 per cent, so Victoria is a fantastic place to work. When you see the amount of growth and economic development that is occurring in this state, you recognise the fact that we have got our settings right. This is a great place to invest, and I think the budget that will be handed down next week will demonstrate the fact that we have got the fiscal settings right and we have got the right approach in terms of growing and expanding the economy. We know that the economic growth statement that we released last year was all about making sure that we can reduce the regulatory burden and make it easier for businesses to work. So while those opposite constantly talk the joint down –

**Bridget Vallenge:** On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, I would ask you to ask the minister to come back to the very narrow question about the unemployment rate being the highest in Australia under the watch of the Labor government. Will you answer that question?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Minister for Finance was being relevant to the question that was asked.

**Danny PEARSON:** There have been something like more than 132,000 Victorians who have found work over the year to December of last year, which, again, is one of the largest increases in Australia for this period. When I go around the state looking at and meeting with businesses, talking to them and hearing their stories about the growth that they are experiencing and about the investments that they are making, we are the economic powerhouse of this state and we are employing thousands more Victorians now than when we were first elected. We have got a plan for the growth of this state. We have identified the fact that there are key industries that we want to target and grow. We want to

be leading the nation when it comes to key industries like pharmaceuticals, like med tech, like data and like data centres and digital. We are leading the nation.

While there is this level of turbulence that is occurring at a global level, through our extensive network of trade offices around the globe there is an opportunity for us to seize that advantage and make sure that more and more of the world can see the great produce that is being produced right here in this state. So I will not cop those opposite talking the state down. We know that they are a rabble. We know that they are irrelevant. We know that they are divided. We are getting on with growing the state.

**Bridget Vallence:** On a point of order, Speaker, the minister is required to be factual, and these are the ABS data: Victoria has had the highest unemployment rate in Australia consecutively now for 13 months.

**The SPEAKER:** The minister has concluded his answer.

**Bridget VALLENCE (Evelyn) (14:39):** With Victoria having the highest unemployment rate in the nation for 13 consecutive months, will the government and the minister admit that it has failed to achieve its first step of Labor's own fiscal strategy?

**Danny PEARSON (Essendon – Minister for Economic Growth and Jobs, Minister for Finance) (14:40):** For the Shadow Minister for Finance's benefit, we have got a fiscal strategy in place – the only one in the nation. The first was about growing jobs and stabilising the economy. That was step 1. We have created 800,000 jobs since we were elected. Step 2 was to have a cash surplus. We have achieved a cash surplus.

**Bridget Vallence:** On a point of order, Speaker, the minister is required to be factual, and the first step of their fiscal strategy was about reducing unemployment, yet unemployment is rising under this Labor government. I would ask you to ask him to be factual.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Manager of Opposition Business, a point of order is not an opportunity to make a statement to the chamber. It is an assumption in this house that every member who gets on their feet will be factual.

**Danny PEARSON:** Step 2 was a cash surplus, and the cash surplus has been achieved. Step 3 is an operating surplus, and I am going to be thrilled and excited to see the budget being handed down by the Treasurer next week. Again, the previous budget papers show that we are on track for an operating surplus. Step 4 was to stabilise net debt as a proportion of the economy. Step 5 was to reduce net debt as a proportion of the economy. We are the only jurisdiction in the nation with a fiscal strategy; we are faithfully adhering to that. We have got the policy settings right. The economy is going gangbusters. Those opposite are a joke and irrelevant. They constantly talk the place down, and they do not –

**Bridget Vallence:** On a point of order, Speaker, again the minister is debating the question. Step 1 of the fiscal strategy says 'reducing unemployment'. They are failing on that first step.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The minister has 6 seconds to come back to the question.

**Danny PEARSON:** Look, if this is about trying to find Michael Sukkar a job, I am happy to meet with him anytime.

#### Ministers statements: education system

**Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Minister for Education, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC) (14:42):** We know Victorian families are doing it tough. That is why we are providing cost-of-living relief, and it is our government's number one priority. In this year's budget the Allan Labor government have tripled the Glasses for Kids program, making it available to 70,000 public school kids right across our state. It has been a game changer, making sure our little ones have access to free vision screening and

glasses if they need them. It has been such a game changer that I am thinking about bringing the program into Parliament and calling it Glasses for Libs, because we know they will need to get their eyesight tested to be able to decipher those results the Australian public handed out only 10 days ago.

We also know some of those opposite like to turn their phone off. They like nothing better than turning their phone off. That is why as a government we are rolling out outside school hours care right across our specialist schools system. Eighty-four specialist schools are being upgraded by our government, helping our most needy people, our most needy students – something we can be proud of. Outside school hours care has been a game changer. Working mums – and potential opposition leaders – are using the time to turn the phone off, to go for a yoga lesson, to do a TAFE course, to go down the Nepean Highway or whatever they need to do to get the bit of rest and respite that we know is what we deliver. On this side of the chamber we care about our Victorian people. We are about building the economy and building a care economy. We are all about making sure our young ones, no matter who they are or where they come from, get the best start in life. We will not turn our phones off on this side; we would never think about doing that. We are about making sure that every person, no matter who they are or where they come from, gets the best start in life, and that starts with investing in education.

### *Constituency questions*

#### **Eildon electorate**

**Cindy McLEISH** (Eildon) (14:45): (1100) I have a question for the Minister for Emergency Services. How much longer will the Mansfield SES unit need to wait before funding is made available to upgrade their station? The former minister, now Treasurer, knows the current station is outdated and not fit for purpose. The government knows the unit cannot adequately accommodate their extensive equipment, which includes an inflatable rescue boat and a regular boat. They know they need investment in a new station, they know the unit and the Mansfield shire have constantly advocated for an emergency services precinct in the town. I have raised this in this chamber since 2015. That is 10 years. Unit members are out all of the time fundraising, selling raffle tickets at every opportunity to put money towards a new station. They need the support of the state Labor government. The government needs to invest now, and I would expect that they will make that commitment in the coming budget.

#### **Kororoit electorate**

**Luba GRIGOROVITCH** (Kororoit) (14:46): (1101) In light of National Volunteer Week next week, my question is to the Minister for Carers and Volunteers. On that note I want to acknowledge my very good friends from Altona City Rotary Club, of which I was a member for many years, who are here today. This year's theme is connecting communities and celebrates the power of volunteering to bring people together, so I ask the minister: how is the Victorian government supporting volunteer service organisations to continue their work and foster stronger, more connected communities across Kororoit? In my own electorate of Kororoit these organisations provide essential support through local projects, youth programs and charitable initiatives that make a real difference in people's lives. Having been personally involved in community service, I have seen firsthand the incredible impact and magic that these groups achieve at a grassroots level. It is truly a privilege to welcome representatives of the Altona City Rotary Club to Parliament today, and I thank them for their ongoing commitment to and support for all of our communities and thank all volunteers here in Victoria.

#### **Shepparton electorate**

**Kim O'KEEFFE** (Shepparton) (14:47): (1102) My question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and I ask: will the minister commit to funding an upgrade at the River Road and Goulburn Valley Highway intersection? The dangerous intersection has become notorious in our region, with multiple crashes in recent months and again recently with two crashes within a week, which highlights this grave safety issue. The intersection sits on a major highway and can no longer safely and

efficiently support existing traffic volumes close to a residential area. Greater Shepparton City Council has this intersection as a project priority and has been advocating for an intersection upgrade that would include a new roundabout to improve safety for all road users. River Park Estate planning committee have also raised their grave concerns, with the school bus stop located on the highway just 50 metres from this intersection, calling for it to be relocated. Ninety-four per cent of residents said this intersection upgrade is their number one priority. Again, I ask the minister: will you commit to funding this intersection?

#### **Preston electorate**

**Nathan LAMBERT** (Preston) (14:48): (1103) My question is for the Minister for Mental Health. My question is: how is the Allan Labor government working to increase the availability of the life-saving drug naloxone? I was recently chatting with Paula, one of our pharmacists in Preston, and she described how she now carries a naloxone spray with her and once administered it to someone experiencing an overdose in Chadstone. Based on that conversation, we now have some Nyxoid spray in our office, and I understand that the member for Footscray has indicated that she does the same. Unfortunately, while drug-related deaths have reduced significantly since their peak in the late 1990s, approximately 15 people continue to die each year in the Darebin LGA from drug overdoses, and that is a higher rate than most other parts of the state. I know the minister and everyone in our Labor government is committed to reducing overdose deaths and reducing other forms of drug-related harm, particularly through our health-led and evidence-based state action plan, and we would be grateful for any information the minister could provide about naloxone initiatives specifically.

#### **Warrandyte electorate**

**Nicole WERNER** (Warrandyte) (14:49): (1104) My question is to the Minister for Education. When will the minister fund Warrandyte High School to deliver urgently needed upgrades to core facilities like toilets, sports infrastructure, food technology and science classrooms? As the only government secondary school servicing Warrandyte, North Warrandyte and parts of Warrandyte South, Warrandyte High School covers a large catchment, but its ageing infrastructure is letting students down. Nearly half of locally zoned students are now choosing to enrol elsewhere, due in large part to deteriorating infrastructure, including ongoing leaks in the stadium and theatre. While the school was grateful for the money invested in stage 1 of its master plan, it has now waited years for further progress. The school still has not received stages 2 and 3 master plan documents, which are essential for planning and advocating for the next stages, and they would greatly appreciate receiving them without further delay. I urge the minister to ensure the school receives the funding they urgently need.

#### **Hastings electorate**

**Paul MERCURIO** (Hastings) (14:50): (1105) My question is to the Minister for Public and Active Transport. What is the next step in delivering the cross-peninsula bus service to my community? Standing on the polling booths over the last 2½ weeks, I spoke to many of my constituents about a whole range of issues, and the most common questions were ‘Are we ever going to get a bus service direct to Mornington?’ and ‘What is happening with the cross-peninsula bus service?’ I received funding in the 2023 budget for planning and community consultation for how the cross-peninsula bus service might look. In the 2024 budget I received money for infrastructure for the bus service, such as bus stops et cetera. My constituents are very keen to understand what the next step will be, and quite frankly, they are all looking forward to catching a bus from Hastings to Mornington or Mornington to Hastings and it only taking 30 to 40 minutes instead of 2 hours. We all look forward to the minister’s answer.

#### **Richmond electorate**

**Gabrielle DE VIETRI** (Richmond) (14:51): (1106) My question is to the Minister for Creative Industries. Live music is in crisis. Rising costs for both punters and venues are pushing venues to the

brink. Last year I joined live music venues to call on the government for more support and the government responded with a round of grants, but frankly venues told us that they were hardly worth the time they took to apply for. Live music precincts were supposed to be the government's way to protect venues long term, but with the Night Cat, the Old Bar, Bar Open, Punters Club, Sugar Glider, Labour in Vain, the Evelyn, Nighthawks and more in Fitzroy alone and other legacy venues like Bakehouse Studios, the Tote and the Corner, why hasn't the state government declared a single live music precinct in the inner north? Minister, please listen to live music venues and provide the solutions that they actually need to stay alive.

#### **Pascoe Vale electorate**

**Anthony CIANFLONE** (Pascoe Vale) (14:52): (1107) My constituency question is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. How will the new road safety upgrades on the Gaffney Street corridor help improve road safety for all local residents and vulnerable road users across Pascoe Vale? Following extensive advocacy, engagement and consultation with local residents – namely, Pascoe Vale Primary School community members – I was delighted to have secured much-needed funding and designs to help make the Gaffney Street corridor safer for all, essentially between Cumberland Road and Pascoe Vale Road. On 23 April 2025 I was delighted to have joined with the Minister for Roads and Road Safety to inform locals that construction had now commenced to make Gaffney Street safer for all, with works to provide for the installation of a raised and signalised pedestrian crossing over Gaffney Street between Ann and Wilna streets, a new raised crossing on Ann Street, a safer speed limit of 40 kilometres on Gaffney Street between Somerset and Heath streets, a safer 40-kilometre speed limit on Park Street between Stewart Street and Somerset Street, a safer traffic island and line markings near Pascoe Vale station to make the crossing easier for pedestrians and new shared bike lane markings and symbols to help vulnerable road users, along with many other initiatives to help make the place safer for Gaffney Street village shops, Pascoe Vale train station, Strathmore college and many others.

#### **Prahran electorate**

**Rachel WESTAWAY** (Prahran) (14:53): (1108) My question is to the Minister for Police. When will the minister properly fund policing in Victoria to enable Prahran police station and St Kilda police station in my electorate to have more police officers to respond to the rising levels of crime and antisocial behaviour? Our local police do a great job, but they are run off their feet, with a 19 per cent increase in criminal incidents in our local area over the last year. Locals tell me that they rarely see police on the streets and response times are absolutely blowing out. More police would help provide a more visible police presence, would allow officers to proactively work to reduce offending and would help prevent burnout for our existing overworked police. This would help provide Prahran locals with the safer and more secure community that they deserve and that they expect.

#### **Tarneit electorate**

**Dylan WIGHT** (Tarneit) (14:53): (1109) My question is to the Minister for Transport Infrastructure. How will recent investments in road infrastructure in the western suburbs impact my community of Tarneit? The Wyndham ring-road will be an absolute game changer for people in my community, easing congestion on busy local roads like Heaths Road and providing a much-needed alternative route for commuters. The upgrade will build a new bridge over the Werribee River to connect Wyndham Vale and Manor Lakes to Tarneit, upgrade the freeway interchange at Werribee Main Road and provide a direct link from Wyndham Vale and Manor Lakes to the Princes Freeway with the Ison Road link. These new and improved connections will make a real difference, cutting travel times and making it easier for residents to get to work, school and essential services. It has been fantastic to have strong support from our federal Labor colleagues, who have joined forces with the Allan Labor government to complete this project as part of our \$1.2 billion road blitz.

*Bills***Justice Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2025***Second reading***Debate resumed.**

**Nina TAYLOR** (Albert Park) (14:55): I believe I was discussing the new bail law. The impact of those new bail laws was reinforced by statistics that were read out to the chamber by the Attorney-General. We can see clearly that they are having an impact, hence we have implemented significant reforms in the justice space. I should say, just to round out that particular discussion, we are cracking down specifically on the crimes that are on the upward trend while people are out on bail – that is, aggravated burglary, home invasion, armed robbery and carjacking. I think we would all be in agreement that these are really serious crimes that can have a devastating impact on victims. It is completely unacceptable that alleged offenders are being bailed time and time again for these crimes, hence the imperative for the reforms that we have been driving.

The benefits of these reforms will not be achieved if the courts are not prepared for implementation, so we are speaking more broadly about the discussion about which reforms are prioritised or otherwise. Referring back to – and I will just be precise on that – the summary appeal reforms and the delay that was spoken to earlier, it is always important to speak within the context of the overall reform agenda that is being implemented and what it means for community safety. That is why I wanted to speak to some of the incredibly important reforms that have been prioritised with the courts – not least the new bail laws, as well as the Youth Justice Act 2024. These are historic. The Youth Justice Act is an enormous piece of legislation, to say the least, and it certainly specifically tackles the needs of youth justice matters. This is very important from the point of view of being directive in terms of preventing youths from being incarcerated in the first place when more appropriate rehabilitative or otherwise supportive alternatives can be implemented. However, there are important caveats – hence the bail laws addressing those issues, particularly when we are looking at some of the most serious crimes in our state.

I did want to speak to a couple of other matters with regard to reforms being driven by this bill, not the least relating to secret commissions for trustees. I will commend the member for Malvern. I found it interesting, and I think helpful for the chamber, that he spoke to the Royal Commission on the Butter Industry. He articulated that very clearly and in a very helpful way for the benefit of the chamber, so we understood the genesis of the secret commissions for trustees – the original act, I should say. These are really practical but also really important reforms in another respect, and that is to prevent injustices that could unnecessarily – I should say, we should never have injustice, but inadvertent injustices that could result were these changes not to be implemented now through the debate and the hopefully successful passing of this bill.

Firstly, the changes will remove the requirement to obtain assent of trust beneficiaries or the Supreme Court for the proposed conduct, which will streamline routine transactions. The changes break the old offence down into five separate offences, making them clearer and narrowing them – that has been discussed – to only capture conduct done with a dishonest or otherwise corrupt purpose, which is indeed fit and proper when we are talking about the reason for these legislative controls in the first place. Why is this important? Just to reiterate: this reform is important as recent Supreme Court decisions demonstrated that the current offence may capture routine, good-faith and standard transactions associated with the replacement of a trustee. That would clearly be an injustice, and hence it is important to bring about these reforms. Also, without these reforms, there is a risk that applications to the Supreme Court will increase for routine matters to ensure trustees avoid criminal liability. We can see there inherently that this would not be a just outcome and it could also be a costly outcome. It would impose a significant administrative burden, cause delays and add to the court's workloads.

It makes good sense, and I should say as a rounding point that these changes align with an equivalent provision in New South Wales. So you can see that there is a solid imperative to bring about the amendment, which will mitigate the risk, shall we say, of such injustices prevailing. There are a number of reforms associated with this bill in different aspects – I should say, above all, some timely critical reforms – and hence it is appropriate for the chamber to be bringing them forth. I thank again the opposition for not opposing this bill, respecting that we are bringing forward changes that are much needed.

**Danny O'BRIEN** (Gippsland South) (15:01): I am pleased to say a few words on the Justice Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2025. I have probably said those words a few times over the decade, because we seem to have one of these bills several times a year. I seem to be the lucky one on this side that gets to speak on them too, often following the member for Malvern, who, as I have indicated before, is a far more learned colleague than I will ever be on matters of legal opinion. The best I can offer is from having done legal studies 101 as part of an economics degree, and that does not qualify me for much, but I am indebted to the member for Malvern for his contribution and for his guidance on this legislation, which as the member for Albert Park indicated, we are not opposing.

Largely these are – I will not say inconsequential – certainly not controversial amendments in this legislation. We have some changes to secret commissions to trustees in return for a substituted appointment. I will not go into the detail of that, but I was interested to see that this was originally introduced in 1905 in the wake of the Royal Commission on the Butter Industry. It must have been something of a scandal at the time. Of course at that time there was only butter. I am reminded that I have in my possession in the office a Country Party central council minute book from the 1930s, which is replete with references and motions calling for government to ban margarine, highlighting that butter and margarine have been issues of political consideration for some time now.

The other issue that I want to touch on is the further delay in the commencement of the abolition of de novo criminal appeals, which was first proposed by the government in 2019. Here we are in 2025, and we are delaying it again. Indeed the government is delaying it for a third time now. At the moment if there is a criminal appeal from the Magistrates' Court, that is heard in a completely new hearing in the County Court, that being a de novo hearing. That allows for entirely new evidence to be admitted and new legal arguments to be made. That is different from that for a criminal conviction in the County Court, which can only be made to the Court of Appeal on the basis of legal error, meaning there is no rehearing of the evidence. The government argued that these changes would lead to a more efficient appeals process and one that offered a lower burden on witnesses, on the courts and on the evidence that would have to be provided. At the time we did not oppose those changes and we took at face value the government's claim that this would lead to efficiencies in the courts. But the commencement date was postponed. These amendments were scheduled to come into effect in July 2021, but that was initially postponed to 1 January 2023 on account of the disruption caused by the pandemic. I might say that governments around the world have been using the pandemic as an excuse for things for a long time, often with good reason but sometimes one does wonder how accurate in fact they have been. The second time the default commencement date was postponed to 5 July 2025 by a bill in 2022.

Here we are a third time – I was about to say 'final', but we are not even sure whether it is the final time – and the default commencement date for these changes now will not be until 1 July 2028. That will make it nine years since this reform was first proposed before it is actually implemented. The government's excuse on this occasion is the significant time and resources required to implement the summary appeal reforms on top of these other reforms, so it is necessary to further delay the commencement. That may well have something to do with the budget for Court Services Victoria, as the member for Malvern indicated. I recall asking in the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee last year about the budgetary cuts to Court Services Victoria – \$19.1 million in the current 2024–25 year and a further \$58 million cut in the 2027–28 year. On those cuts, I remember asking questions of Court Services Victoria, and it was clear that despite their best endeavours, this would lead to service changes within the courts and clearly put more pressure on the courts.

I think this is where the dividend of bad financial management is delivered. When the government does not handle the budget well and when it overspends – particularly in this case on infrastructure and infrastructure blowouts, and we have seen \$40 billion-odd of infrastructure blowouts – there is a dividend for that, and it is not a pleasant dividend, it is a negative one. It is these cuts to areas like Court Services Victoria and it is cuts, like we heard in question time, to the Department of Education budget and to the proposed Gonski rollout, with it being delayed by three years and costing the sector \$2.4 billion. That is the dividend of poor financial management, and we are seeing that now with this – another delay in these reforms, nine years after they were first proposed and seven years after they were first proposed or scheduled to actually commence these de novo reforms. If the government is serious that these reforms will deliver more efficiency, one wonders why it keeps putting them off.

There are other aspects to this legislation that I will not go into detail on, but there are clauses that improve the operation of the case management system in the Magistrates' Court. There are amendments to the Worker Screening Act 2020 in relation to NDIS checks and working with children checks, there are amendments to the Social Services Regulation Act 2021 and further there are some obsolete regulation-making powers being removed from the Magistrates' Court Act 1989. While I do not have any issue with any of those, I would highlight that the references to NDIS checks and working with children checks are yet another area of poor public service at the moment, where we are seeing very, very slow turnaround in some of those checks and frustration from people who are seeking to work particularly in the NDIS but also those wanting to get a working with children check. That is the consequence of a government that does not put public service first within its bureaucracy, and that is a criticism that I hear almost daily from my constituents.

I think when we are talking about the Magistrates' Court we cannot ignore the fact that we have seen a significant increase in crime in this state under this government. In my own electorate it is more than significant in some areas. South Gippsland shire is a beautiful place and a beautiful place to live, and it is a predominantly very safe place, but the Crime Statistics Agency Victoria reports have actually shown that we have seen a 72 per cent increase in crime in South Gippsland shire, year on year, in the 10 years that Labor has been in office – a 72 per cent increase. In Wellington shire crime has increased 23 per cent in that time.

In the most recent statistics the number of criminal incidents reported in the three local government areas that make up my electorate show that it is continuing to rise. Wellington Shire criminal incidents reported rose 17.5 per cent in the 2024 year, 6.3 per cent in South Gippsland and 11.6 per cent in Latrobe, of which I have some coverage along with the member for Morwell. These are concerning statistics for my constituents, but they are far more than just statistics. Behind each of them is a victim, and there have been plenty who have contacted me, particularly from South Gippsland – from Leongatha and Korumburra – in the last year or so in respect to youth crime, home invasions, aggravated burglaries, theft from cars and theft of cars. That has been a significant issue, and the government's bail laws passed recently, while the government likes to claim how successful they are, still will not address those youth issues. That is a significant concern for my constituents.

**Katie HALL** (Footscray) (15:11): It is a pleasure to follow the Leader of the National Party. I am pleased to see they are maintaining the rage against big margarine; I sort of lost track there during the butter versus margarine battles. I am also pleased to make a contribution to the Justice Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2025. As mentioned by previous speakers, this bill makes a series of amendments to existing legislation to implement time-critical reforms, enhance administrative efficiency and amend technical errors in the current legislation. I am also pleased that it is not being opposed by the opposition.

My contribution today will be focused on part 5, division 2, of the bill, which amends the Justice Legislation Amendment (Criminal Appeals) Act 2019. This bill will postpone the commencement of summary appeal reforms contained in the criminal appeals act from 5 July 2025 to 1 July 2028. The proposed reforms are vital to building a fairer and more effective justice system. The value of these reforms is such that their implementation should be carefully considered. One of these reforms



includes strengthening the test for cross-examination in committal hearings. This reform will significantly reduce the amount of pretrial evidence given by victims and witnesses. I spoke on this specific reform when it made its way through this chamber, and I want to reiterate its importance. Making our justice system accessible to victims in a way that does not facilitate unnecessary retraumatisation and without compromising on standards of proof is a commendable and very important reform. Like anything worth doing, it is important that we get this right. This is especially true with regard to changes made to our legal and judicial systems, where the consequences of getting it wrong are grave. The government has listened to judicial experts and is delaying this reform to provide the courts with the necessary time to amend complex systems and processes.

Additional changes requiring delayed commencements include provisions in the Youth Justice Act 2024 that introduce more options for restorative justice, allowing offenders to hear directly from victims about the harm that they have caused to help victims heal and to give offenders insight into the impact of their offending. The benefits of these reforms will not be achieved if the courts are not prepared for implementation, and deferring commencement will allow for more time to be spent on critical pre-implementation activities, including further analysis of resourcing impacts.

This bill also makes a series of technical amendments to existing acts, including the Criminal Procedure Act 2009 and the Sentencing Act 1991. These amendments remove outdated requirements for criminal proceedings in legislation, such as requirements for making certain applications in person or by post. These changes will improve administrative efficiency and reduce the burden on the Magistrates' Court. This will allow the court to expand its case management system to automate various high-volume administrative functions in criminal proceedings, such as the filing of applications and documents. Improvements to the administrative efficiency of our courts are vital to ensuring that our justice system serves the community fairly and in a timely manner. These improvements are supported by approximately \$435 million in funding over the previous four budgets, which has helped to promote swifter resolution of court cases, with backlogs reducing by 14 per cent in 2023–24 and a decrease of 30 per cent since pending matters peaked in January 2022.

Other such amendments are to the Worker Screening Act 2020, where this bill seeks to correct some technical errors. The bill will correct the following errors: section 17 includes an incorrect reference to section 38, which should be 37; section 36 includes an incorrect reference to section 36, which should be section 35; and section 61 includes an incorrect reference to section 77, which should be section 72. These changes are not intended to alter the operation of these sections but will correct these minor drafting oversights, improve clarity and enhance the readability of the act.

Technical amendments are not the most exciting part of our job here in Parliament, and nor do they make room for much in the way of impassioned debate – but I am hoping to hear more about margarine and butter. But as I have previously mentioned when speaking on similar bills in the past, accessibility and clarity are essential to good governance, and legislation that governs us all should be accessible to us all. The Leader of the Nationals mentioned his university subject, legal studies 101. I did year 12 legal studies, but legal jargon and drafting errors contribute to a system in which understanding of the law becomes too difficult for a layperson, and the laws that govern us all should be accessible and understandable to us all. An egalitarian society should not be held hostage by lawyers and legal experts, and any act of Parliament that seeks to avoid this should be commended by all, as I anticipate this one will be.

I just want to take a moment at the conclusion of my comments to thank people in our community who help to bring the justice system out to people in the western suburbs who need support to access the justice system. In particular I would like to acknowledge the work of Westjustice, which is our community legal service. I spoke about Westjustice in my first speech in this place and the extraordinary work they do to make the legal system accessible to victims, to people who are pursuing matters through the courts who may have other challenges in doing so. I think particularly of the work that Westjustice does with McAuley social services, who are a very important family violence service in my community. In the context of this bill, where we are talking about not retraumatising victims by

having them give too much testimony ahead of a trial, the work Westjustice does with McAuley social services is absolutely extraordinary. They have a clinic at the refuge in Footscray, where they help victim-survivors deal with a very complex range of matters, whether it be fines that are unpaid, a range of bills or the legal complexity that people find themselves in, where they should not be in the court system. They also assist victim-survivors to deal with important matters and to keep themselves and their children safe. I commend the work that they provide to victim-survivors in Footscray. This bill makes some important reforms in terms of making sure that the implementation and the intent of the legislation is protected and that it is well implemented. I commend the bill to the house.

**David SOUTHWICK** (Caulfield) (15:20): It is a pleasure to rise to make some comments on the Justice Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2025. This is another bit of justice legislation – we seem to be having lots of legislation around justice bills. Unfortunately, there have been a lot of missed opportunities as well, because we know we are in the middle of a crime crisis. When initially you start to read these bills, you think, ‘Great, here’s an opportunity to outlaw motorcycle gangs and what they’re doing in our state, particularly with the tobacco wars. Here’s a way to be able to crack down on crime, particularly on youth crime. Here’s an opportunity to potentially further strengthen our bail laws, on which the government again continues to fail and not go as hard as it should.’ When you look at this bill, there are certainly some things that, whilst they might be important to look at, are missed opportunities. Probably when you look at the Liberal–Nationals’ side of politics and Labor’s, you can see the difference between them: one, the Labor Party, has been soft on crime; and ours, the Liberal–Nationals, are the ones that are in the corner of victims and ensuring that if you commit serious crime, then you have got to do serious time. I think that is not what would be happening under the Liberals compared to what the Labor Party have been doing. We know when the bail laws were wound back by this Labor government that they had a crack at trying to fix it, failed again and then had another go, and we are here again.

The government just has not gone far enough. A lot of the exemptions do not deal with youth crime, and that is so important when we are seeing young people, young offenders, waving around machetes on the streets. There are no consequences in terms of that. Those bail laws, those machete laws that are meant to come into effect and should have come into effect immediately, are not going to come into effect until September. There were reports in the paper yesterday about victims that were screaming and pleading with the government, saying, ‘Please bring in these laws today.’ What are we waiting until September for? Why are we waiting any longer? Why are they selling these weapons? Why are they selling them on the streets? Why are they being allowed for sale, full stop?

I did a Google search for some of these machetes only yesterday and found that many outlets are discounting them. They are discounting machetes, which means that a young offender can get a machete at a discount. They should not be able to get them at all. It is an absolute black stain on the Allan Labor government to actually outlaw something and ban something and then to give the opportunity for people to buy it at a discount and go out there and use it on the streets and threaten families. That is just a disgrace. No wonder we have got victims that are waving their hands in the air and saying, ‘Why? Why do you do something on the one hand but then not follow through on the other?’ I think we all know, and it is also in this bill, that it is because this government has run out of money. They put up ideas, but they have got no money to implement the ideas.

We have got a change to the Magistrates’ Court and the way that it works, the de novo change, which has been pushed forward three times because the government has got no money to do it. The government themselves have said, ‘Yes, we’re going to change the way the Magistrates’ Court operates and in terms of evidence being reheard when it gets to a County Court so as to streamline the system and to save on costs. We’re going to do all of that, but we do appreciate that it’s going to cost a great deal of money to do that, so we’re going to delay it, and we are now going to delay it another seven years’ – another seven years. Nothing could be clearer than that the government has absolutely run out of money. We know that the member for Malvern, the Shadow Attorney-General, has quite

rightly pointed out a \$19.1 million cut in the current 2024–25 budget – who knows what the cut will be in the next budget – and a \$58 million cut in the 2027–28 year as well.

We know justice delayed is justice denied. In many situations we have Magistrates' Courts that are backlogged up to 15 months, and if you have a scenario where you have a judge that is hearing somebody and potentially looking at putting them out on bail say, 'You know what, it could be 15 months before we actually can hear this case; we better give them bail,' that is why this system is failing. That is why it is a bail fail, because we do not have enough money in the justice system to get speedy process. The quicker you get the case through the courts, the more chances you have got of better justice for everybody and better outcomes for everybody. I cannot begin to think what victims would be going through having to wait 15 months before cases are heard and what hearing the evidence 15 months later means in terms of accuracy of evidence. People's lives change in 15 months. The quicker we get these cases through the courts, the better it is for everybody.

When people are out on bail and they are breaking bail, that is a whole other situation as well, and that is why we have outlined policies around that – you break bail, you face jail. That is really, really important. It is clear and it is what people expect. It is what everybody expects. That is not, unfortunately, what this government is doing at all. I know the member for Malvern and the Leader of the Nationals pointed out that some of the changes this bill deals with around secret commissions for trustees go back to 1905 and, as the Leader of the Nationals was talking about, the butter industry. There were obviously issues back then. It is a great product, butter. But the thing is, butter can be quite soft, and we will not be soft when it comes to crime. We will not be soft at all, unlike those opposite.

We want to ensure that there is smooth sailing when it comes to families and victims being able to go on with their lives and not have to deal with the kinds of issues that this government is creating – real, big, serious issues. We saw an announcement today. The government turned out and said, 'Fantastic, there's going to be a 20 per cent uplift or thereabouts in people that are going to be locked up because of the serious crimes that they're committing' – machete-wielding criminals out and about in the streets, turning up outside your car, taking your car, carjacking or in your bedrooms in the middle of the night waving a machete. How horrible must that feel for a victim. That needs to be taken care of, and this government says, 'Well, no worries, what we'll do is we'll ensure that there are more prison beds.' Wouldn't that be a great idea – in a crime crisis to actually have somewhere to lock dangerous criminals up.

Guess what this government is doing. They are closing a prison – 1100 beds off the system, off you go – and at the same time spending \$727 million on building some new beds and who knows what. Seriously, it is a government that could not manage a chook raffle, a government that just spends money like there is no tomorrow. We have got a budget coming up, and here is a government that could very simply say in the middle of a crime crisis, 'Let's just keep Port Phillip Prison open. Let's just ensure that we've got the beds there.' You do not actually have to do much. It is not rocket science. Just keep them open until one day, hopefully, we get the crime crisis under control – it certainly will not be under the Allan Labor government, but one day hopefully we do – and we do not need the extra prison beds. Wouldn't it be absolutely wonderful if the government did their work at the early stages to make sure people do not graduate to a life of crime. Wouldn't it be wonderful if, rather than ripping money out of crime prevention, we saw more money invested in crime prevention so young people could stay at school, look at work opportunities and job opportunities and not turn to a life of crime. Wouldn't that be wonderful. Well, none of that is happening, is it?

**Jade Benham** interjected.

**David SOUTHWICK:** Not at all. It is not happening under this government. It is quite the opposite. We are spending money at the back end because we have done no work at the front end, and that is what this government does time and time again. They fail when it comes to managing everything. Labor, as we know, just cannot manage a thing. They cannot manage money. We are all paying the price. We are all paying for it.

I say to this government: we are not opposing this bill. Hopefully we get some serious bits of legislation coming in that get the opportunities going so that we crack down on the crime crisis that we have in Victoria, get the dangerous bikies off the streets, end the tobacco wars, end the problems with the drug issues that we have got in our state and fix the youth crime crisis so ultimately those that commit serious crimes in Victoria do serious time and, once again and finally, families will not have to look over their shoulders and can feel safe. That is very important. It is a fundamental job of every single government, and unfortunately the Allan Labor government has failed when it comes to keeping the community safe.

**Iwan WALTERS** (Greenvale) (15:30): There were a lot of metaphors in the member for Caulfield's speech – more than you could poke a stick at – but he also touched upon the importance of early intervention, something I am on a unity ticket with him on, about its importance. I would be happy to assuage him of concern that that is not being done. As a former teacher in our state schools, I have seen firsthand the important work that is being done on a daily basis to intervene early to ensure that we do not have children and young people who are diverted unnecessarily into that life of crime, into the justice system, that we have wraparound services that are tough on the causes of crime as much as we are tough on crime. That experience as a teacher and working in community as a sport coach and in other forms of community showed me the importance of early intervention and the practical impact it can have to keep people out of the justice system who might otherwise end up there. It is an incredibly important dimension of our government's approach. It informs the record funding that we provide to our education system, not just in the physical sense that the Deputy Premier talked about earlier but also in terms of programs that divert young people away from crime.

I will return to those themes later in my contribution, but I want to come back to the Justice Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2025, and it is indeed a collection of miscellany. It goes from amending the Crimes Act 1958 to narrow that trustee secret commission offence issue, to amending the Justice Legislation Amendment (Criminal Appeals) Act 2019, to amending the Criminal Procedure Act 2009, to correcting section reference errors in the Worker Screening Act 2020, to amending the Social Services Regulation Act 2021 and to amending the Magistrates' Court Act 1989 to remove an obsolete regulation-making power to prescribe areas where police officers are not required to serve civil process. There is a lot in that, and we do see bills of this nature come before us from time to time that seek to make minor amendments to existing legislation and to correct for oversights in drafting and also issues that were once relevant – like the prohibition of trustee inducements that emerged out of that 1905, I believe, Royal Commission on the Butter Industry – but are now a hindrance, without any good or well-founded reason, to the operation of the economy and to trustees' work.

The dimensions that I want to talk about briefly in my contribution relate to, firstly, the Worker Screening Act 2020 – that is part 4 of the bill – and part 5, the amendments to the Social Services Regulation Act 2021. I do so having been the co-chair, along with Susan Pascoe as the independent co-chair, of the Social Services Regulation Taskforce, which the Minister for Children and Minister for Disability initiated as part of the process of ensuring that our social services regulatory frameworks are fit for purpose and not unduly onerous and burdensome upon either individuals who work in our social services sector or their employers and those who are providing, partnering with government-funded organisations. These are incredibly important human services – often to Victorians who are incredibly vulnerable for a number of reasons but very often Victorians who are living in an aged care setting or who may have disability which impacts their life in a very profound way. My experience of having co-chaired that SSR, or the Social Services Regulation Taskforce, process really emphasised to me the way in which the vast majority of providers and individuals working in our social services sector do take their responsibilities – incredibly diligently – seriously around the importance of safeguarding.

Ensuring that we have appropriate worker screening and appropriate regulation of those working in out-of-home care is extraordinarily important. Firstly, in that out-of-home care dimension children

who, because of their life circumstances – because of their family environments or lack thereof – find themselves living in out-of-home care are often some of the most vulnerable young people in our community. Therefore it is incredibly important that the workforce that is caring for them in those out-of-home care settings are appropriately screened, and the worker and carer exclusion scheme is an initiative that the government has put in place to seek to do that. So while in this bill it is superficially a small thing, it is actually important. The repeal will make it clear that a person can only be subject to an exclusion decision if they have both engaged in misconduct and been found to pose an unacceptable risk of harm to children and young people, which addresses, I think, the risk of unjust outcomes for carers while also preserving protections for children in out-of-home care.

That points to the reality that in this space of social services regulation there is a continual balance between de-risking and protecting the vulnerable to the greatest extent possible without unduly penalising those who are working in the system or placing regulatory burdens that are unduly costly and burdensome on the organisations that are employing people, which are often not-for-profit organisations and other altruistic bodies doing incredibly important work in partnership with government – really acting as the third sector – to improve society and communities. So you do not want unduly burdensome and onerous requirements being placed upon organisations of that nature. And yet, as far too many instances of harm have come to light, which processes like the royal commissions into our disability sector and into our aged care sector have shown, the risk of abuse is real. So striking that balance that always seeks to protect the vulnerable while not placing undue burden on the dedicated workforce which cares for those people is a very important thing.

As I say, it is superficially quite a small tweak, but actually there is a real purpose to that provision in the bill, much as there is to the amendment of the Worker Screening Act 2020, because the vast majority of those who work in our disability system, who are funded either through the NDIS or through other forms of, often government, funding to deliver disability services, are incredible people. The members of the Health and Community Services Union and the other members of our disability workforce – with whom I had extensive dealings in my time as Parliamentary Secretary for Disability and in a prior life in a personal capacity having had a deep interest in, connection to and involvement with the disability sector – are incredible people who are motivated by a deep sense of mission and purpose.

Yet there are inevitably in the context of our community a very small number who do not do the right thing, who do not always seek to put first the needs of those for whom they are caring. We have seen that in the context of some of those horrific instances that emerged in the disability royal commission I spoke of earlier. I have talked, in this place in fact, before about the very harrowing and indeed horrific case of Ann Marie Smith in South Australia, who was left in effect to rot and to die in a wicker chair despite having a number of workers who were funded, who ought to have been regulated and who ought to have been providing care to her and who did not. Their failures were not just an abrogation of their contractual arrangements with government or their employer, which was funding them to provide those services, but resulted very directly in the death of somebody who was, as I say, an incredibly vulnerable member of our national community. She was in South Australia, but that does not diminish the point in any sense whatsoever. So those amendments to the Worker Screening Act 2020 and the amendments to the Social Services Regulation Act 2021 are important.

In concluding my remarks today, I come full circle to where I started, which is in relation to the work that this government is doing to ensure community safety. Just this morning the Minister for Corrections, the Minister for Police and the Premier announced a \$700 million increase towards ensuring that we have adequate custodial space and the wraparound support services that are needed because of the reality that, as a consequence of the legislation we passed here just a couple of months ago – which I spoke on in full support – to toughen bail and to move away from the presumption of bail in all circumstances, we will ensure that people are held to account for their actions. That funding will make sure that there is space within our justice systems for those people who will not be given

bail as a consequence of our changes. This is important. One has to have a holistic approach. That is what this government is doing. I commend this bill and its provisions to the house.

**Jess WILSON** (Kew) (15:40): I rise to speak on the Justice Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2025. From the outset can I thank the Shadow Attorney-General, the member for Malvern, for his diligent work on this piece of legislation, which really is an omnibus miscellaneous amendment bill amending a number of justice acts. Most of the provisions are minor and administrative changes, with the exception of the further delay to changes to the Magistrates' Court criminal appeal processes that the Shadow Attorney-General spoke at length about and which I will return to shortly.

Changes to the Crimes Act 1958 contained in this piece of legislation are being made to clarify the trustee secret commission offence in response to recent court decisions. The purpose of the bill comes to a number of different points but, first, to amend the Criminal Procedure Act 2009 and the Sentencing Act 1991 in relation to procedures in the criminal jurisdiction of the Magistrates' Court, to amend the Worker Screening Act 2020 to make minor and technical amendments, to repeal an outdated regulation-making power in the Magistrates' Court Act 1989, to amend the Justice Legislation Amendment (Criminal Appeals) Act 2019 to delay the default commencement and repeal of that act, and to amend the Social Services Regulation Act 2021 in relation to deemed exclusion provisions.

The first of the main provisions of this bill before us today is the narrowing of the definition of the offence: to give or receive a secret commission to a trustee in return for a substituted appointment. As we heard, the member for Malvern spoke at length in reference to the 1905 Royal Commission on the Butter Industry, but the bill amends section 180 of the Crimes Act 1958, which currently makes it an indictable offence for a person to offer or give to another, or for that other person to solicit or receive, any valuable consideration as an inducement or reward for appointing or otherwise authorising a person to be appointed as a trustee or to act in their place as a trustee without the assent of the persons beneficially entitled to the estate or the Supreme Court of Victoria.

The bill before us today narrows that offence by requiring the relevant conduct to have been done with a dishonest or otherwise corrupt purpose. It also removes the requirement for consent of beneficiaries or the Supreme Court. The government argues that the absence of a requirement for a dishonest or otherwise corrupt purpose puts trustees acting in good faith at risk of criminal liability for a range of transactions that have no dishonest or otherwise corrupt purpose. We have seen recent Supreme Court decisions that have held that a corrupt purpose is not an element of the offence. There is a risk that certain non-corrupt – and in many cases, good-faith – conduct could actually contravene the current provision. As I said earlier, the original offence was introduced following the 1905 Royal Commission on the Butter Industry, which found widespread evidence of bribery and secret commissions by agents. The view is that the offence is no longer fit for purpose, and the amendments will ensure that it captures dishonest and or corrupt conduct relating to trustees but, importantly, will not inadvertently capture benign conduct.

I return to the issue in this bill about delaying the commencement of abolishing de novo criminal appeals. We know that in 2019 the government proposed to abolish the current system of de novo criminal appeals from the Magistrates' Court. At present an appeal from a criminal conviction in the Magistrates' Court is by way of a completely new hearing, or de novo, in the County Court. This allows for new evidence to be admitted and new legal arguments to be made, different from those first heard in the Magistrates' Court.

This is a different process to that of appeals arising from criminal convictions in the County Court, which can only be made to the Court of Appeal on the basis of legal error, meaning there is no rehearing of that evidence. The government argued – in 2019, I might add – that these changes will lead to a more efficient appeals process and one that imposes a lower burden on witnesses, as, except in limited circumstances, the evidence given in the Magistrates' Court will form the evidence considered by the County Court on appeal. The Liberals and Nationals, while not opposing the

changes, did place on record some concerns at the time. The 2019 amendments were scheduled to come into force no later than 3 July 2021. The default commencement date was initially postponed to 1 January 2023 by the Justice Legislation Amendment (System Enhancements and Other Matters) Act 2021. The reason put forward at that time was the court system required more time to prepare for the change, as well as the impact of the COVID pandemic on the justice system. The default commencement date was then postponed to 5 July 2025 by the Justice Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. The government again blamed the effect of the pandemic and the need for additional resources. The bill before us today now seeks to delay the default commencement date of these changes for a third time – until 1 July 2028. These are changes that were proposed in 2019 and have been delayed three times – now until 2028. The government claims the impact of the other criminal law reforms and resources requirements as driving this decision, noting that:

In light of the significant time and resources required to implement the summary appeal reforms on top of these other reforms, it is necessary to further delay their commencement.

While the government continues to claim that the implementation of these changes will require additional resources, the government, as the member for Malvern spoke to, is currently slashing funding to Court Services Victoria. We will see in the coming years tens of millions of dollars being slashed from the courts budget. Is it any wonder that we see, time and time again under this government, delays when it comes to important reforms in the justice system and the delay time and time again of reforms that would see, in this case in particular, the need for witnesses to once again turn up and provide evidence, putting them under undue stress. We have recognised in the Parliament and the government has recognised – the opposition has not opposed this – that that is something we want to move away from. We want to move away from the current system, and we have time and time again supported that here in this place. We have passed these reforms, but this government, because of its inability to manage budgets, has had to delay the reform for a third time. This is something we do have real concern about in this bill before us today.

While the bill is largely administrative, buried in the detail of procedural changes and other minor matters is really just more evidence of the Labor government's chaotic and dysfunctional approach to justice reform in this state. I refer to the measures that I just spoke about to abolish the current system of de novo criminal appeals from the Magistrates' Court. If these measures sound familiar, it is because we understand that these are important reforms that we have to put in place. We have to stop ignoring the fact that we have come into this place time and time again and said we need to pass these reforms. They need to be put in place, but we are unable to do so, because this government cannot manage reforms through the justice system. Once again blaming the COVID pandemic for their inability to manage court budgets is simply unacceptable. Those opposite in fact cut \$19.1 million from the current 2024–25 year and will be cutting a further \$58 million in the 2027–28 year.

This is just another example of this government's inability to manage money. In this case it is those witnesses that have to come before the courts, before the Magistrates' Court and then now again before the County Court, that will have to deal with this because of the government's inability to manage the courts budget. It should be no surprise, as we see time and time again the government's inability to manage the justice system. We have seen it countless times this year, with the government's inability to manage bail laws in this state and the government's inability to manage machete laws in this state delaying the implementation of these laws or failing, in the case of the bail laws, to actually make sure that the laws were as strong as the ones they changed only two years ago.

This government talks a big game when it comes to governing for all Victorians, but what we see time and time again is the 10 years of financial mismanagement under the Labor government coming home to roost when it comes to core government services. It is the justice system today with the piece of legislation before us, and it is the fact that we are delaying for a third time an important reform that this Parliament has recognised on three occasions needs to be put in place. But because of their inability to manage money and because of the record debt and the fact that we are going to be paying over a million dollars an hour in interest repayments, the court budget has to be slashed. It is the same when

it comes to our bail laws. We are seeing time and time again this government's inability to manage basic core services, because it cannot manage money, and time and time again Victorians are paying the price.

**Sarah CONNOLLY** (Laverton) (15:50): I too rise to speak on the Justice Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2025, and I am so glad that the member for Kew from the party who is currently in a state of absolute crisis has mentioned bail reform. The bail reform that this Labor government introduced a couple of months ago is the toughest in the country – so tough indeed that we know that it is working and that we are having to invest more into our prisons here in Victoria. My community loves the fact that we have the toughest bail laws in this state, so I thank the member for Kew for raising that.

Whilst this bill may not deliver major reforms or improvements, there are a number of time-sensitive changes and administrative improvements, which are always really important if you work in this sector and which need to be made in order to ensure that Victoria's justice system is operating effectively. That is why time and time again here in this place we bring bills and legislation before the house to debate in relation to justice. We need it to be operating efficiently. We need it to meet modern-day standards and community expectations, which is why time and time again we have bills before the house. I would encourage those opposite, for the first time in their lives, to get behind these bills and to get behind what Victorians want to see. We bring them before the house because Victorians tell us that is what they want to see their government doing.

We need our legislation to be concise and clear, and that is always really important. That is what this bill is actually about. It is not about anything else. Indeed there are a number of massive changes that are coming to our courts this year, with our government having passed some of the toughest bail laws in the country. I cannot talk about courts without giving a big shout-out to just how fabulous the Wyndham law courts are looking at the moment. I was down not at the law courts but at Werribee police station with the member for Point Cook, the member for Tarneit and the member for Werribee to talk to the local police recently and to talk about some of the work that they are doing in youth crime. This is what local members in communities like ours in Wyndham do. We talk to folks on the streets. We are talking to victims of crime. We are talking to the local police about perpetrators of crime, perpetrators of youth crime and what we can do better. They cannot wait for these bail laws to come in place. They know that they will make a difference.

But the great thing in being there at that police station was that we also spoke about the tremendous work that the police are doing to work with young people that are interacting with the criminal justice system – whether they are perpetrators, victims or even missing persons – to find out what is going on in these people's lives and what, if there is anything, the police can do with youth workers or the government or what it is they need in their lives to get on and find a pathway that diverts them away from the criminal justice system. This is just some of the great work that our local police are doing, and I have to give them a big shout-out and say thank you. The types of work that they are doing are quite often not the things that make the front pages of local newspapers and state and national newspapers. They are certainly never talked about by those opposite, who claim to be the best friends of Victoria Police and to know everything there is to know about Victoria Police. It was absolutely insightful and very much a rewarding experience to be there with my colleagues in Wyndham talking to our local cops about what is happening on the coalface.

We also have our government's nation-first machete ban coming in, which the member for Caulfield was just talking about – well, misinterpreting, I do have to say – and we are going to do that in a third of the time that it took the United Kingdom to do that. There is always so much discussion about these measures in the media, but I do want to remind everyone listening that implementing a ban on objects such as machetes takes time; it cannot be done immediately. We know that because we have actually been guided by Victoria Police on this and in banning them. If we were to make machetes illegal right now, starting today, then thousands upon thousands of Victorians who currently own machetes for appropriate reasons and not criminal reasons – including our farmers out in the regions, local Landcare



groups or gardeners – would suddenly be in breach of the law. That is not the intention of bringing forward legislation in this place, passing it in this house and rolling it out in the local community – to suddenly be enforcing laws and fining locals who have no intention of breaching the law but who find themselves on the other side of it. There will be an amnesty scheme set up, and this will allow folks to do the right thing and dispose of these weapons, most importantly – what those opposite continually fail to recognise, time and time again – in a safe and secure manner. We have asked Victoria Police what that is, and we are following their guidance on this.

It is also worth noting in this debate that our government's bail laws are already having an effect. Like I said, we are seeing more people having bail denied to them for offences that we have targeted with our bail laws. We know that it is working; the numbers for those on remand do not lie. I look forward to seeing what these rates look like 12 months from now. Sadly, those opposite, with their announcement last week, seem to want to go back in time to when folks were being thrown in remand for months for nonviolent offences like petty shoplifting and left there. But this is diverting away from the bill at hand.

The changes that I have just talked about have already been made, and they are coming into effect. But this bill is about reducing administrative inefficiencies so that our courts, most importantly, can accommodate these changes. The first change off the bat is an amendment to the Crimes Act 1958, which deals with secret commissions of trustees. This change has been introduced as a result of recent Supreme Court decisions which have told us that the offence in its current form may inadvertently capture innocuous or good faith replacements of trustees. As a result of this, there is a likely chance that there will be more applications made to the Supreme Court for ordinary routine matters, because trustees who are doing the right thing will not want to run afoul of or break the law.

This will be a really significant administrative burden. What it will mean is that the court will be clogged with applications it may not actually need to hear. That is why this bill breaks down the single offence of commissioning a trustee in secret to five separate offences, which ultimately narrows the scope of each to better capture conduct that may be done dishonestly or with an otherwise corrupt purpose. It also means that there will not be a requirement anymore for trustees to obtain permission from the beneficiaries or the Supreme Court to appoint a trustee – for the purposes of these offences – which will have the benefit of streamlining routine transactions.

The Supreme Court already deal with a number of important matters and court cases, and this change would reduce their workload of approving trustee activities and give them more time to hear the cases that come before them. These changes would also, most importantly, bring us into line with New South Wales – we always like to think we are leading New South Wales with anything that happens here in this state – and the intention is to stamp out corrupt behaviour from trustees. Of course these changes will have appropriate safeguards as neither trust beneficiaries nor the court would consent to dishonest or corrupt conduct on the part of the trustee.

Another important change with this bill is the removal of several outdated requirements for criminal proceedings. I am talking about things like requiring certain applications to be made in person or by post, for example. In the digital age we know that all these requirements do is place further administrative burden on our courts. In this case we know that that burden is felt by the Magistrates' Court. What these changes will do is allow the court to expand its case management system to automate many of its high-volume functions for criminal proceedings, such as the filing of applications or certain court documents.

As I have said, this bill does not deliver major transformational reforms. It may be more technical in the scope of some of its changes than in its substance. But these changes are still really important and necessary, and they need to come before the house if we want our courts to operate efficiently and effectively, which overall is ultimately this government's objective. It means less time hearing administrative inquiries and applications and more time resolving cases and matters before the courts, which means that people spend, most importantly, less time waiting for their disputes to be resolved.

Administrative efficiency and clearing backlogs are always important goals for our court system and this government, and this bill will help them in achieving exactly that. That is why I commend this bill wholeheartedly to the house.

**Martin CAMERON** (Morwell) (16:00): I rise to talk on the Justice Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2025. As a tradie from Traralgon, listening to our Shadow Attorney-General articulate certain sections of the bill does pique one's interest. I will come to one part that the shadow attorney picked up.

The purpose of this amendment bill is to amend section 180 of the Crimes Act 1958 in relation to offences for the replacement of trustees. As a lot of members have said when they have gotten on their feet, we do need to move with the times and make sure that our legislation is in sync with the date and the year that we live in now. The bill will amend the Criminal Procedures Act 2009 and the Sentencing Act 1991 in relation to procedure in the criminal jurisdiction of the Magistrates' Court, amend the Worker Screening Act 2020 to make minor and technical amendments, and that is very important – that is our working with children checks, making sure that we are ticking that off. That has been very important for a lot of years now, but we need to make sure that we are keeping on the front foot and making sure there are no loopholes for anybody to be able to breach the laws that are needed and the standards that are needed, so it is great that it does that. The bill amends the Justice Legislation Amendment (Criminal Appeals) Act 2019 to delay the default commencement and repeal of that act.

As I said before, the Shadow Attorney-General picked up one point coming through. I think a lot of the people on this side of the chamber will talk about this, because a change that we are making today as we read through this bill is pretty interesting. I do say that we do not oppose this bill coming through; we are very happy with this. The original offence was introduced following the 1905 Royal Commission on the Butter Industry, which found widespread evidence of bribery. When you see that, you think, 'Well, you've got to go to the source and find a little bit more out.' I went knocking on the doors of the member for Murray Plains and the member for Rowville, because it was back in 1905 and I thought they may have had their fingers on the pulse there, but it was a little bit before their time.

**A member:** Was it really?

**Martin CAMERON:** It was, but we need to make sure that we cover off all the boxes. As I said, we do not oppose this coming through. But as we are talking about justice, and we have had people talk about bail laws, it is just interesting to touch on a few things that are happening in my community at the moment. We have a court case that is running in Morwell at the moment which is getting worldwide attention. I know we cannot go into that a lot because it is a running court case. Ever since I have come into the chamber I have been asking for PSOs to be at our regional train stations, and one of the things that I want the PSOs there for is that presence on the street. We do have it at every metropolitan train station in Melbourne but at only four regional train stations. I just want to highlight one of the things that have happened with the court case.

A couple of days before that court case started, the police – and we love our police – came down. They had put in place to have stop-and-search powers on the streets of Morwell, in and around the bus interchange in Morwell and at the train station, because we have been having some issues on the streets. It was interesting that they came down for two days and enacted these stop-and-search powers. They could actually search people on the street for concealed weapons – and, yes, I am led to believe that many concealed weapons were found. Also, the flow-on of that was that virtually – you may not believe this, Acting Speaker – within an hour or so the streets had gone quiet and been cleaned up, because people coming into the streets trying to be unruly could see the presence of that uniformed officer on the streets. This is why we have continued to ask the government for the presence of PSOs in hotspots around regional Victoria. That presence on the streets (1) makes people feel safe and (2) actually takes out of the way the people that are there to cause grief and to cause dramas. It is amazing. I have been talking for two and a bit years in here to get the PSOs there, and that is my

example. If we have those PSOs in uniform on the streets, it is going to make a huge difference. The point has been proved while we have had this court case and trial happening in Morwell.

Also, we talk about diversionary programs, because it is a big picture, trying to fix our youth crime. We need to have places for our youth to engage with. It was only last Friday that the member for Caulfield and I visited Mountain Track, which is in Jumbuk, which is just outside of Morwell. Laura and David, who run Mountain Track, encourage youth that have come from troubled backgrounds. They take them under their wing and they give them another outlet in life – a different view on life – to try and break that cycle of kids that are in our country towns. It happens in my area of Traralgon, Morwell, Moe and outer Churchill: they hang around the streets and they break the law. We need to be able to not round the kids up but give them another look on life that says, ‘You don’t have to go down that track that you’re on now of being in trouble with the police all the time’. It just proves that we need good funding for these diversionary programs. Gippsland Youth Space is another one – we have diversionary programs there. Sandy and her team have to go cap in hand to the government all the time to get funding. It is one thing to have these wonderful services, but we do need to make sure that we are funding them properly.

We talk about the bail laws. Down in Morwell I deal with the Gordon family all the time, and we have had the Gordon family in here. They have paid the ultimate price of youth crime and bail laws with the loss of their son Dr Ash. You sit down with that family and you live for an hour or so what they deal with on a daily basis. It is certainly like groundhog day for them. Every day they wake up and their much-beloved Dr Ash – their son, their brother – is not there. They live with it every single day. That is why when the government came out with newer and tougher bail laws I spoke with the family. We moved through and talked about what the bail laws meant, and the way the bail laws are changing would not have helped their son. That is why as a coalition we did release our own plan for tougher bail laws.

If you talk to a majority of people in the street in your electorate, they say they want tougher bail laws. They do not want someone that is reoffending to be able to come out and take their son’s or their brother’s life. They do not want that, so that is when we say, ‘If you break bail, you face jail.’ That is resonating with people. They need that tough love that needs to happen sometimes. When you are on a path of self-destruction you need to be pulled up and not be allowed back on the streets. You cannot go back on the streets, because at the end of the day you will cost someone their life. That has been proven with the Gordon family. It was also proven with the family of Harry Wright. Harry was a 91-year-old gentleman who lived in Morwell. They have gone through the same thing of his life being taken. If you break bail, you will face jail under a coalition government.

**Jackson TAYLOR** (Bayswater) (16:10): It is a great pleasure to rise and speak on the Justice Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2025. It is very miscellaneous in title and in detail. Can I start by thanking the Attorney-General for all of her fantastic work in preparing this legislation, which goes to a number of issues that will make our justice system work better, make it easier to access and make it more efficient. You could argue that two of those three things are the same, but I am running with three because that is what we tend to do in here; we tend to say things in threes.

I would also like to thank the minister’s office for their work and of course all of the staff across departments, who, let us be honest, do a great deal of the legwork. They make it happen. They draft the legislation. They are very good people. The wonderful adviser over there – who I am not sure would appreciate me mentioning her in *Hansard*, so I will not mention her name – is a lovely person. I know she would have worked very, very hard on this piece of legislation, so thank you very much.

Can I also thank our frontline emergency services workers, who have a great deal of interaction with our court system and indeed will see some of the impact from these changes being made in this place today, which very refreshingly have the support from those opposite. It is nice. It does not happen every day. If this was a piece of energy or environment legislation, it would be a little bit different, but that is okay. We have got bipartisan support today. I am very, very excited.

I would also like to thank our court staff. I have a great deal of respect and appreciation for our court staff. I remember being a police officer and trying to list charges at the last minute and stressing them out no end, and they were always lovely. They had smiles on their faces 99 times out of 100. There was the one time when they were like, 'Come on, mate.' But they are lovely people. They do a great job, and they make the wheels of justice turn ever so swiftly. I would just like to thank them and acknowledge all of their fantastic work.

I have mentioned those opposite not opposing, which is great. I would just like to acknowledge a few members who spoke previously. The member for Albert Park is always fantastic – always extremely articulate.

**Mathew Hilakari** interjected.

**Jackson TAYLOR:** The member for Point Cook is acknowledging that – nodding away and hear, hearing. The member for Albert Park is always fantastic, and she explained how this will impact her community. She is very well versed – I believe she is a former parliamentary secretary if not still current in the legal justice space. The member for Laverton gave a very good contribution and is always very passionate. It is great to hear her talk about legislation in this place and what it means for her community and for all Victorians. The member for Footscray did a wonderful job. Hands in the air, I think she knows she nailed this one, so thank you very much to the member for Footscray for all her work. On the member for Greenvale, what can you say? He makes us all look bad. He is always extremely articulate and always makes me wonder if I should be doing better. Thank you very much to the member for Greenvale. I do greatly appreciate it.

What I also appreciate is being part of a government that really has a proud record of supporting our court staff – not being stagnant but supporting change. Even if it is not the biggest change in the world, we are making sure there is change and we are moving forward, making the justice system easier, making it more approachable and making it simpler for our frontline court staff, for people who work in the offices, for our police officers and everyone who may come into contact with the justice system. I am very proud to be part of a government that is making these necessary reforms and that is not sitting idly by. We get on with the job. We are very, very busy. We have got a great Attorney-General, we have got a good team, we are up and about and we have got a proud record of supporting not just in words but also in deeds and actions. You can measure a government by its priorities through its budget and its priorities of getting things done. This government, each and every single day, backs in our court staff.

We back in our frontline emergency service workers and in particular in this case the fantastic work of our police officers – some 3600 extra, funded by this government. Obviously part of the detail and efficiencies go to family violence, and it has been wonderful to see our government's investment in the specialist family violence courts, which have made a huge difference at 13 locations across this state. I know from working with a local stakeholder of mine, the Eastern Community Legal Centre, and talking to their CEO Michael Smith just the huge –

**John Mullahy** interjected.

**Jackson TAYLOR:** He is a wonderful guy, member for Glen Waverley, and a fantastic advocate for his organisation, which does great work not just in the legal space but in social justice as well. But hearing his passion for the difference this makes and the role this plays in making our courts a safer space – a more inclusive and protective space for affected family members, for children and for people who are the victims of family violence – is incredibly powerful. It is something that I believe has bipartisan support as well, but I am very proud that our government has been part of this work and has established these courts. And we will continue to work with court staff, work with the front line and work with our not-for-profits to make it an even better system and fairer for everyone and to make sure we protect as many victims of family violence as we possibly can and support them through that court process. We obviously worked with police on the EBA recently. That is another measure of our

support of Victoria Police and acknowledgement of the incredible work they do. It is a very dangerous job. Everyone deserves to come home from work safely. But there are inherent risks with Victoria Police, and our police do a wonderful job. It is no small feat for those who choose to take the path of being a police officer, and I thank them for all their work.

I note today there has been a bit of conversation around the reforms we have made in terms of passing Australia's toughest bail laws. Being a former prosecutor I can tell you these are very, very tough. We have immediately, as per the first tranche of legislation, changed the overarching principle for bail decision making, where remand is no longer a last resort. In terms of accused youth offenders being remanded only as a last resort, that was changed; the tough bail laws will remove the principle of remand as a last resort. That was a significant change to the overarching principle. The amendments to schedule 2 of the Bail Act 1977 introduce new offences to provide that the onus is on the accused, taking some of those offences from schedule 2 and putting them into schedule 1, and that higher bail test – exceptional circumstances is a really high bar to pass.

The government has also made commitments in terms of a second piece of legislation, which is looking at the New South Wales model in terms of the high-degree test. The high-degree test will be applied in Victoria but applied more broadly. The results they have seen in New South Wales for the types of offences that we have seen, tragically, highlighted in many parts of our state have come down in the New South Wales example. They will be applied more broadly in Victoria. It is all part of the response of this government in listening to people and making the changes that we need, because governments need to listen to people. Of course we do, and that is exactly what this government has done through the fantastic work of the Attorney-General, the police minister, the corrections minister and every member on this team.

Politics can sometimes get in the way of these types of matters and topics, but I like to think that people all come here for a purpose – we have just got different ways of doing things. But it is always great to see the passion from all members of Parliament for making sure we have got a safe community. I am proud of the work that the Allan Labor government is doing in terms of making our community safer and supporting our police and our frontline staff. This legislation substitutes section 180 of the Crimes Act 1958 to narrow the trustee secret commission offence so that it only applies to dishonest or otherwise corrupt conduct. I think that was the one in terms of the butter references that the member for Morwell was making. I enjoyed that. I heard some churning of the butter behind me from the member for Glen Waverley. Fantastic.

It will amend the Justice Legislation Amendment (Criminal Appeals) Act 2019 to defer commencement of summary appeal reforms and allow justice agencies adequate implementation time to ensure these reforms achieve their intended benefits. It will amend the Criminal Procedure Act 2009 and the Sentencing Act 1991 to enable the Magistrates' Court of Victoria to carry out certain administrative functions within its criminal jurisdictions more efficiently. It will make technical amendments to the Worker Screening Act 2020 to correct section-referencing errors. It will amend the Social Services Regulation Act 2021 to correct an error that has the unintended consequence of expanding deemed exclusions for out-of-home care workers and carers in the out-of-home care sector, and it will amend the Magistrates' Court Act 1989 to remove an outdated regulation-making power to prescribe areas where police officers are not required to serve civil process.

It is not unsurprising at all that the government has consulted widely and been out there with key stakeholders. Of course we know key legal and financial industry stakeholders were consulted on the proposed reforms. Court and key government stakeholders, including the Office of Public Prosecutions, Victoria Legal Aid and Victoria Police, have been consulted about the summary appeal reforms and the proposed changes, which is great to hear. The Magistrates' Court of Victoria, Supreme Court of Victoria, County Court of Victoria and Victoria Police were also consulted of course on the proposed Criminal Procedure Act and the Sentencing Act reforms. The Department of Government Services was consulted on the technical amendments to the Worker Screening Act, and the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing was consulted with the Social Services Regulator and

the suitability panel on development of the proposed amendments to the Social Services Regulation Act. All in all it is a fantastic piece of legislation. It is great to see bipartisan support, and I am proud to be part of a government that backs in our frontline court staff, makes Victoria safe and supports Victoria Police.

**Wayne FARNHAM** (Narracan) (16:21): I do not know if I could ever talk that quick; that was amazing. I am very happy to rise today to talk on the Justice Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2025. As the previous member pointed out, we do not oppose this bill, and it does have bipartisan support in this chamber as it is at the moment. There has been some interesting discussion about this bill today, and nothing more interesting than the 1905 butter industry scandal. Apparently it was widespread. It caught out some slippery figures who ended up with sticky fingers in the end. That is the way the story from 1905 goes.

This bill has various miscellaneous items.

**A member** interjected.

**Wayne FARNHAM:** Thank you. It is always good to have a fan in the room. I will just go through the purposes of the bill, which are to amend the Criminal Procedure Act 2009 and the Sentencing Act 1991 in relation to procedure in the criminal jurisdiction of the Magistrates' Court; amend the Worker Screening Act 2020; repeal an outdated regulation-making power in the Magistrates' Court Act 1989; amend the Justice Legislation Amendment (Criminal Appeals) Act 2019; and amend the Social Services Regulation Act 2021.

The debate has been fairly wide today. I will go to a few points, but I think one of our main concerns in this bill, although we do not oppose the bill, is delaying the commencement of the abolition of the de novo criminal appeals. This has been going on since 2019, and now it seems with the delay it is not going to come through until 1 July 2028. If I went down the pub and explained to people that a bill that started in 2019 was going to take nine years to do –

**John Pesutto:** That is nine Labor years.

**Wayne FARNHAM:** Nine Labor years – I do not know if that would ever pass a pub test, I really do not. I do not understand. I am going to go through the reasons in a minute, but to say to the normal person out on the street, 'This bill has taken nine years,' I do not think would ever pass any pub test. There seems to be excuse after excuse. It was scheduled to actually come in no later than 3 July 2021, but we did not make that date. The default commencement date was initially postponed to 1 January 2023 by the Justice Legislation Amendment (System Enhancements and Other Matters) Act 2021. The reason at the time that was put forward was COVID, so the COVID pandemic apparently delayed that bill. I do not know why, but it did. Then it was changed again. It was postponed to 5 July 2025. That is coming up very soon. I am reading the reason here. Again we have blamed the pandemic for this along with additional resources into court maintenance, the ongoing effects of COVID-19 on the court system and the significant time or resources required to implement the reforms. We cannot keep using COVID as an excuse for bad governance. We actually cannot. I do not think that passes community expectation.

Now we are out to the extension of 1 July 2028. The government claims the impact of other criminal law reforms and resource requirements are driving the decisions, noting:

In light of the significant time and resources required to implement the summary appeal reforms on top of these other reforms, it is necessary to further delay their commencement.

Come on, give me a break – nine years. We are going on nine years. There is absolutely no way I can ever think of any valid reason for something to take that long. I really cannot. It just baffles me. Why would this take nine years? Yes, the government has put in excuse after excuse for why this has happened, but those excuses are pretty lame at best. As I said, it really does not at any point in time pass the pub test when we are talking about making our court systems more efficient. Essentially what

this bill does is take the work of the Magistrates' Court – it used to be that you could probably do a half-baked job in the Magistrates' Court, throw it all out and then go to the County Court for an appeal – and actually make people do a half-decent job in the Magistrates' Court. They can go to the County Court, but they take all that with them. It does not get thrown out like it did last time. I do not understand this. I am not the Attorney-General, I am not the Shadow Attorney-General and I am not a lawyer; I am just a normal person scratching my head thinking, 'Why does this take nine years?' I do not get it. I do not understand it. I do not know the reason for the delay. I cannot accept the reason for the delays, because to me they seem, as I said, fairly lame.

But when we are trying to make our court system efficient, why are we cutting money out of it? \$19.1 million was cut in the current 2024–25 financial year. If our court system being under so much pressure and our legal system being under so much pressure is the reason why we have to delay these things, then why are we taking money out of that system? Why aren't we investing in that system? Then there is going to be a further \$58 million cut in the year 2027–28. With the growing population and with the bail law reform, we are assuming, as has been stated today, that people are being apprehended, people are being incarcerated and the figures are up. We are going to need more resources in this space, so why are we cutting money out of this space? None of this makes sense, and at no point in time does it make sense for something to take nine years to go there.

When we were sitting here today in question time, the Minister for Police got up and gave a statement, and he said, 'Incarceration figures are up X per cent here and X per cent there.' Well, when the bar was set so low, it was not hard to go up. When there was no-one being incarcerated and the bail system was a revolving door, the bar was set so low that it was not hard to go up. It is like if you are playing in a footy game and you lose, 100 points to zero, and then the next week you come out and lose by 100 points but you kick one goal and then you go, 'Well, we increased our score by 600 per cent.' The bar was too low. I think any time we introduce legislation into this chamber and anytime we introduce anything around justice and amendments and bail et cetera, we have got to make the most of the opportunity. We have got to make the most of the opportunity in this place to make things better. That is the community expectation. That is what we should be doing.

I do not think it is happening as well as the government thinks it is. If I reference our crime numbers in the Baw Baw shire for the last year, if I just flip to them, the most recent crime stats for Baw Baw show the total offences recorded are up 29.8 per cent, total criminal incidents are up 18.2 per cent, theft of a motor vehicle is up 59 per cent, breaches of family violence orders are up 20 per cent and criminal damage is up 24 per cent. Warragul incidents are up 24 per cent overall, Drouin is up 14 per cent and Trafalgar is up 28 per cent. When we talk about bail and crime in this state and when I read those figures from my local area, I do not think the government is doing that good a job. I do not think they are setting any marvellous goals. When things keep going up and when they are cutting budgets, that is not responsible government. Obviously there is work that needs to be done. When everything seems to be going up in relation to crime stats in my area, how can people in this chamber sit here and say straight to my face, or to my constituents, 'We're doing a great job'? You are not.

This bill will go through today; it has got bipartisan support. But I actually think the government is missing an opportunity again. When we talk about machete laws and how they take time, well, if the government had listened to us, we tried to pass bills twice on machetes – twice that the government knocked back. The previous member said, 'Isn't it great to have bipartisan support? Sometimes politics gets in the way.' He was 100 per cent correct – politics got in the way on machetes, because it came from this side of the chamber. Now we have got to wait until September for machetes to actually be banned from this state. We have got to do it in a controlled way. But the government had that opportunity months and months ago. They had the opportunity months ago, and what did they do? They missed the opportunity again.

**Eden FOSTER** (Mulgrave) (16:31): I rise today to speak in support of the Justice Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2025, and I thank the Attorney-General for introducing this bill. This bill is not merely a collection of amendments. It is a thoughtful response from our government to

the evolving needs of our justice system and the society it serves. It addresses critical gaps, corrects outdated provisions and ensures that our laws are fit for purpose in the complexities of the 21st century.

Firstly, this bill proposes narrowing the scope of the trustee secret commission offence under the Crimes Act 1958. This reform is both pragmatic and principled. Currently existing legislation criminalises certain transactions involving trustees without requiring proof of dishonest or corrupt intent. As a result, trustees and professionals engaged in routine good-faith transactions face the risk of severe criminal liability, which was never the intended outcome of this law. This bill in front of us today introduces a much-needed refinement by requiring that the offence only applies to conduct undertaken with a dishonest or otherwise corrupt purpose.

For the people of Mulgrave and indeed everyone else across the state who routinely engages in transactions in good faith, they can be assured that they will not face unjust repercussions for doing the right things. Moreover, this bill removes the requirement for trust beneficiaries or the Supreme Court to consent to the exchange of valuable consideration related to trustee replacement, such as reimbursement of reasonable costs. By streamlining these processes, we save time and resources for all involved while maintaining safeguards against dishonesty and corruption.

Another crucial aspect of this bill that I would like to highlight is the continuing development of summary appeal reforms. Six years ago Victoria introduced transformative changes to our state's summary criminal appeals system. These reforms aimed to abolish summary appeals to the County Court and replace them with streamlined processes that enhance efficiency and reduce trauma for victims and witnesses. These commendable changes will require significant implementation, careful planning and adequate preparation, and thus this bill will extend the fourth commencement date for these reforms by three years to 1 July 2028. This additional time presents an opportunity to ensure that justice agencies and courts are ready to embrace these changes without causing undue disruption. In recent years our justice system has faced unprecedented challenges, including the impacts of the pandemic and the introduction of other legislative reforms. From enabling judge-alone trials to address the effects of the pandemic, our agencies have been stretched in adapting to new procedures. This bill recognises the need to prioritise resources and implementation efforts carefully. By extending the commencement date we demonstrate our commitment to a smooth transition that benefits all stakeholders.

For the people in my electorate of Mulgrave, especially those who are currently involved in legal proceedings, our reforms mean that they can have a more streamlined process and a quicker resolution for their cases. In addition, it also highlights the Allan Labor government's commitment to protecting victims and witnesses, fostering a more compassionate justice system. This legislation also enables the extension of the court's case management system to its criminal jurisdiction, modernising the Magistrates' Court.

This reform paves the way for electronic filing of certain documents, a simple but powerful step forward towards efficiency. Modern registry services reduce paperwork, improve accessibility and save valuable time for both court staff and the parties involved. We understand that legal language and the judicial system can be challenging for your average Victorian to navigate. It gets an order of magnitude harder if you do not come from an English-speaking background, like thousands across our state but particularly in my electorate of Mulgrave. Through such incremental improvements the Allan Labor government aims to build a more effective justice system. Victorians can navigate the system with greater ease thanks to user-friendly electronic filing systems and options. In addition, this bill corrects technical errors in previous legislation, ensuring that references to sections related to the national disability insurance scheme checks and working with children checks are precise and functional. These corrections may seem minor, but their impact is so significant. They eliminate confusion, improve administrative processes and uphold the integrity of systems designed to protect vulnerable members of our community. By addressing these errors we demonstrate our commitment to vigilance and attention to detail in our legislative work.



Our bill also rectifies an unintentional exclusion that could affect out-of-home care workers. Under the amendment a person can only be excluded from working in the sector if the suitability panel finds both that they engaged in conduct and that they pose an unacceptable risk to children. This change restores consistency to exclusion decisions and ensures that workers are not unfairly penalised. For parents, care workers and the broader community this reform helps balance fairness with the crucial need to protect children, ensuring that only those who genuinely pose a risk are prevented from working in the sector. As the experts have pointed out, balance is key. It is key to maintaining an effective and ethical system.

The bill also repeals an obsolete regulation-making power in the Magistrates' Court Act 1989 concerning municipal areas where police officers are not required to serve civil process. This provision is no longer relevant as police officers no longer perform this function. By removing outdated regulations we simplify the legislative framework and ensure that it remains focused on current practices.

This Allan Labor government has taken sweeping steps to make sure our policing and judicial institutions have the necessary resources and power to keep our community safe. From Mildura to Mulgrave, Bendigo to Brighton, Shepparton to Springvale, that is exactly what we are achieving. This bill is another step on our path to a more efficient justice system and a safer Victoria for all Victorians. I know this will help further reassure my constituents in Mulgrave that they have a government looking out for them and their families, their property and their community. Only Labor governments are prepared to fully fund and support the services that provide that reassurance and tackle issues Victoria faces in justice. From the bill being considered today to the landmark tough bail law amendments passed earlier this year, it is pretty clear which side of this Parliament is all talk on crime and which side is prepared to take action and get the job done.

When I am speaking to friends, colleagues and constituents in my electorate, I get the overwhelming impression that the efficiency, fairness and good working order of our justice system is a top priority. When I have shared our priorities in this space, particularly the important work and extensive consultation we have done on this bill, the responses have been excellent. From new parents ensuring that there is a strong law and order regime in the areas they are raising their children in to elderly couples wanting and expecting to feel safe when they are doing the weekly groceries, Mulgrave residents appreciate the changes we are making to justice in Victoria and understand our plan for policing and for law and order in our communities and in our state more broadly. They know and agree that our tough-on-crime approach is the right one for Victoria in 2025. The introduction, consideration and passage of this bill is a simple, elegant and significant next step in our journey to deliver on our priorities, further reducing crime and delivering safer communities under the Allan Labor government.

By supporting this bill we take concrete steps to enhance trust in our legal system. We protect honest professionals, simplify court processes and uphold the integrity of worker screening and social services regulations. We enable careful implementation of transformative reforms and modernise Magistrates' Court operations. This bill in front of us today represents progress in our judicial system. For the people of Mulgrave these reforms mean a more efficient, fair and accessible justice system that better serves our community's needs. I commend this bill to the house.

**John PESUTTO** (Hawthorn) (16:40): I am pleased to rise tonight to speak on the Justice Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2025. I will not address matters concerning trustees and the other miscellaneous changes. I would rather focus my comments tonight on the de novo appeals part of the bill and what that says about the performance of the Allan Labor government. De novo appeal abolition from the Magistrates' Court to the County Court is something I have always supported. It makes sense; it streamlines processes and it avoids subjecting witnesses and other participants in the trial process to a second hearing. But it goes beyond just some of the obvious efficiencies like that. De novo appeal abolition in place of a direct appeal to the County Court means that you impose what I would call a benign discipline on the judicial process. It means that practitioners appearing in the Magistrates' Court will all understand that they have to bring their absolute A-game –

they cannot keep aces up their sleeve for appeal; they have to bring it and leave everything on the field for the trial in the Magistrates' Court, knowing that it would be assessed on the materials in the County Court. That makes sense.

The question is: why are we seeing a bill, which we are not opposing, that will delay for the third time such an obvious reform? It is clear that there are a couple of reasons for that. Obviously there is a level of incompetence by the government. It must be said and cannot be denied that a government that has had since 2019 to put in place the systems to accommodate this reform has not been able to do so. It was scheduled to commence in 2021, delayed to 2023 and delayed to 2025 and has now been delayed to 2028. Goodness knows whether we will see another bill at some point which will delay this further. The problem with all of this, apart from the obvious incompetence that surrounds it, is that it highlights the pressures that our justice system is increasingly facing, and there are a number of reasons for that. Not only do we have population growth, which itself is imposing obvious pressures on the justice system, but we have the financially straitened circumstances of the state budget – due to the mismanagement of the Labor government, it must be said. But there is also a structural problem in the way our justice system is being mismanaged.

When you look at the report on government services and in particular the ROGS data for 2025, it points out a number of things about how Victoria's justice system in the criminal jurisdiction compares to other jurisdictions. There are two key data points that I do want to alert the house to. When it comes to the number of judicial officers in the criminal jurisdiction per case finalisation, Victoria ranks the highest out of all the jurisdictions. When it comes to recurrent net expenditure per case finalisation in Victoria, in the Magistrates' Court we are the highest spending for each case processed. You have to ask yourself why we have got the most judicial officers per case finalisation and it is costing us more than any other jurisdiction to process cases, yet we have got a government faced with an obvious reform it has spruiked as early as 2019 and which has long held support, certainly in the legal community, delaying yet again a measure which can ameliorate some of those mounting pressures on the justice system.

It is a very serious set of numbers in the ROGS data, which demonstrate that Victoria's judicial system is falling behind. That is not to say that the officers are not doing their best and that those who work in the justice system, in particular in our courts, are not working as hard as they can. Responsibility, rather, lies at the feet of the Allan Labor government for why that data continues to deteriorate, with no sign that it is actually going to improve anytime soon.

So if we look at the ROGS data, it is not great. It shows that our justice system is under mounting pressure. Then you go to the budget. Recent budgets have shown gradual but increasing cuts in the justice portfolio and the court services. As the Shadow Attorney-General and the member for Kew, among other speakers, have pointed out, we have got a cut this year of \$19 million to our courts – from \$832 million to \$813 million – and that is slated to increase to the point where, in 2027–28, it will go to \$58 million. Again, who knows what the size of that cut will be by that time, given where Victoria's gross debt is headed, with no sign that that debt trajectory is going to be moderated anytime soon. We will see next week, but there is no indication that this government has that in hand. In fact it is getting worse.

We have seen a government that has been cutting. Whether it is youth justice custodial services, prisoner supervision and support, youth engagement, crime prevention – all of these programs have been cut. Yet the government is pretending that it can turn a blind eye to the need for obvious reforms like this one, which will just help ease the burden on the system we face. As for what the government does in the face of that, it is anyone's guess. What we have is a situation where the government is claiming that its bail changes – I will not say reforms – will see more offenders who are facing trial being on remand. We will see whether that actually is the net effect of the changes the government has passed through the Parliament in recent weeks.

I make these points. As I said, the government has been cutting vital services in that area, but it cannot expect to deal with the increasing demand that will come from those changes – if they are to materialise – on top of the measures and pressures I identified before, and have the system operate without heaving under that mounting pressure. So we have got this problem. We have got a government that is cutting – cutting because it has mismanaged the state's finances to the extent that it has – but also a system which is under what I would call increasing pressures through population growth and the like, which mean you have to introduce whatever reforms you can to ease those burdens.

One of the problems that I have identified and others have identified in recent years is with the net effect of these cuts, particularly in what I call the areas that are not as exposed to public attention in our justice system: the parole officers, the post-sentencing corrections officers, those officers who deal with people on bail and all of the community-based organisations that liaise with people, often kids, on bail who are awaiting trial. The problem we have got is that increasingly case loads are becoming unmanageable. As members of the CPSU who work in the corrections space have said when they have blown the whistle on these problems, how can you expect to keep the community safe, as a government, when those people working in those areas of justice – parole supervision, bail supervision, post-sentencing supervision – have case loads that have gone from, say, 20 in some cases to around 50 in other cases? How can you expect those corrections officers to be able to safely monitor the movements of people on bail and on parole? What you have got is a combination of pressure points, which means that the government cannot meet the challenges that its own mismanaged budget situation has created, but ultimately, and most importantly, the government cannot keep our community safe.

So the question has to be asked: in the face of all that, how can the government, with a straight face, come into this Parliament and say that yet again they have to delay what I would call low-hanging-fruit reform? This should be easy. It is beneficial for just about every participant I can think of in the trial process – from witnesses to defendants to practitioners and to magistrates and their staff, not to mention the equivalent counterpart staff in the County Court as well. It is an obviously low-hanging piece of reform, and yet those opposite glibly, blithely say to this Parliament, and through us the Victorian people, 'We haven't prepared the system for this reform,' having announced it some six years ago, 'We don't have the money for it, obviously, and by the way, we'll throw in' – that universal excuse that we are accustomed now to hearing from the government – 'COVID and the pandemic lockdowns.' They have somehow been invoked to excuse what is clearly an indefensible failure of the government to proceed with justice reform.

We on this side of the house will not stand in the way of this bill, but I do think the government stands condemned. It stands condemned for not getting basic reforms right but also, behind the reforms, for mismanaging those constituent elements of the justice system that mean ultimately that it cannot keep the Victorian people safe. Next week we have Jaclyn Symes in the other place delivering her first budget. Let us hope that the new Treasurer can deliver some relief and some sign of optimism that they have heard the lesson.

**Kathleen MATTHEWS-WARD** (Broadmeadows) (16:50): I rise to support the Justice Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2025. The bill is the kind of legislation that makes our justice system better every day. It makes necessary, practical and targeted amendments across a range of legal and justice frameworks. These amendments ensure our laws remain relevant, efficient and fair. The amendments contained in the bill may seem technical, but they speak directly to our government's commitment to a legal system that is responsive, modern and capable of meeting the needs of Victorians. The bill makes amendments to several acts, including the Crimes Act 1958, the Criminal Procedure Act 2009, the Sentencing Act 1991, the Worker Screening Act 2020, the Magistrates' Court Act 1989, the Justice Legislation Amendment (Criminal Appeals) Act 2019 and the Social Services Regulation Act 2021.

One of the key reforms in this bill is to section 180 of the Crimes Act 1958, which deals with the offence of secret commissions by trustees. The current law is too broad and could wrongly apply to people who have not done anything dishonest or corrupt. The amendment will fix that. It will make it a criminal offence only if someone deliberately acts dishonestly or corruptly. That is an important step to ensure that our criminal laws are targeted and consistent with modern principles of justice. We want to criminalise what is truly wrong, and this amendment does just that.

The bill also includes amendments to the Criminal Procedure Act 2009 and the Sentencing Act 1991 that will streamline administrative processes in the Magistrates' Court. These changes will allow the court to deal with certain procedural matters more efficiently, freeing up judicial resources and reducing delays. For example, the amendments will make it easier for the court to vary or revoke certain sentencing orders without requiring a full rehearing. This will reduce the amount of trauma for all involved.

Also, the court will be able to expand the electronic case management system to automate various high-volume administrative functions for criminal proceedings, including the filing of applications and the filing and forwarding of documents. These amendments are needed to remove outdated requirements that prevent the court from using the case management system to carry out administrative functions for criminal proceedings more efficiently. For example, there are some provisions that require certain applications or documents to be filed with the registrar or forwarded by the registrar and that require applications for a summons or arrest warrant to be made in person or by post. In this electronic day and age, being able to utilise the available technology to improve processes is highly valuable. Anyone who has worked in or interacted with the courts knows how precious time is and how even minor administrative issues can cause major delays. These amendments are a small change with a big impact. They reflect what people working in the system have been asking for: more flexibility, less red tape and a focus on resolving matters promptly and fairly.

One of the things I hear time and time again from my constituents is how frustrating and intimidating the legal system can be. What this bill does is chip away at those barriers. Other reforms worth highlighting are the technical amendments to the Worker Screening Act 2020. This legislation plays a vital role in protecting vulnerable Victorians, particularly children and people with disabilities, from harm. The amendments in this bill will clarify and streamline aspects of the worker screening process, helping to ensure that those who pose a risk are kept out of sensitive roles while allowing safe, suitable workers to engage in critical services without unnecessary delay. As the member for Greenvale was saying earlier, it is really important to keep vulnerable people safe. We absolutely need worker screening, but you do not want to burden not-for-profit systems in ways that are not actually helpful in keeping people safe, so I think these are really important amendments. As we continue to professionalise and regulate our social services sector it is crucial that the laws supporting that sector are up to date, clear and effective. These amendments do just that.

The bill also repeals an outdated regulation-making power in the Magistrates' Court Act 1989. Removing unnecessary or outdated provisions is part of keeping our legislation modern and coherent. It shows that the Allan Labor government is paying attention and that we are committed to best practice in legislative drafting.

A further change in this bill is to the Social Services Regulation Act 2021. Specifically the bill improves how deemed exclusion decisions are handled. These are decisions where a person is excluded from a role or profession due to serious past misconduct. The amendments will ensure that such decisions are managed consistently and with proper safeguards. I want to take a moment to thank the many stakeholders who have contributed to the development of this legislation – court staff, legal professionals, community advocates, justice agencies and departmental officials. Good law reform happens through listening, through consultation and through a deep respect for the people and communities our laws are meant to serve. I am reminded of a conversation I had with a young woman in my electorate who had been involved in the court system, trying to get a fair outcome in a family law matter. She told me how even the smallest delays made her feel powerless and how every

postponed hearing and every confusing procedural step added to her stress. What she wanted most, she said, was to feel like the system saw her and worked for her, and that is what this bill is ultimately about. It is about making the system work for her and for everyone like her.

Another significant change in this bill is the postponement of the commencement of the summary appeals reforms under the Justice Legislation Amendment (Criminal Appeals) Act 2019. These reforms are important. They aim to streamline appeal processes and improve justice outcomes. The bill extends the forced commencement date of summary appeal reforms in the Justice Legislation Amendment (Criminal Appeals) Act 2019 for three years to 1 July 2028, allowing additional time for implementation and planning and for affected justice agencies to prepare for the commencement of these significant changes to criminal procedures. In 2019 Parliament passed laws to modernise Victoria's summary criminal appeals system. These laws, currently set to commence on 5 July 2025, will abolish summary appeals of criminal cases to the County Court and replace them with new processes aimed at enhancing efficiency and reducing trauma for witnesses and victims by no longer requiring them to reattend court and give evidence a second time on appeal. We know how harmful it can be for people to tell their traumatic stories over and over again, and this process will really help reduce that.

Since the criminal appeals act passed, Parliament has passed several other pieces of legislation which have made or will make significant changes to other aspects of criminal procedure. The Labor government recognises that significant time and resources will be required to implement the critical changes to the justice system, and further delays to the commencement of the summary appeals reforms are needed to ensure that implementation of all reform activities can be prioritised and delivered in a staged manner to minimise disruptions to the court system. The postponement allows time for justice agencies, including Victoria Legal Aid and the courts, to be fully prepared. It is about ensuring that when we make changes we do so with care, with planning and with the goal of better outcomes. I spoke recently with a local legal practitioner who told me how valuable this deferral is. He said, 'These reforms are necessary and welcome, but they are complex. Getting the systems in place, training staff, adjusting procedures, updating templates takes time. This deferral gives us the breathing space we need to do it properly without risking justice for the people we serve.' This bill supports the courts. It improves procedures. It protects the vulnerable. It reflects a government that is committed to good governance and to delivering for all Victorians.

The Allan Labor government has a proud record of strengthening our justice system. The recent changes to the Youth Justice Act 2024 introduced more options for restorative justice and for rehabilitation. The addition of the sentencing principle of impact on victims will allow youth offenders to hear directly from the victims about the harm they have caused. We have seen how powerfully this can affect all involved, and seeing the impacts of their crimes can absolutely help to turn lives around. Restorative justice both helps the victims heal and gives offenders insight into the impact their offending has as well as providing an opportunity to restore any harm and an important chance for victims to feel heard.

I will quote from a restorative justice case study published by the Queensland Department of Justice about a 14-year-old boy, Tyrone, which is not his real name. One victim stated that it put her at ease being able to speak with Tyrone. Another victim provided positive feedback to Tyrone on his ability to engage in the conferencing process. They also commented on the level of respect in the room. All participants commended Tyrone on owning up to his actions and his behaviour during offending. The success of this case was enhanced at the conference. Tyrone completed the voluntary work and the two written apology letters within one week of the conference.

Restorative justice conferencing should not be considered a soft option for young offenders. Facing up to what they have done and to the people they have harmed can be a confronting experience. The restorative justice process could also assist in helping to reconcile marginalised young offenders with their communities while minimising stigmatisation and social inclusion. Research indicates that victims often provide feedback that they feel better for having met with the offender and that the

restorative justice process helps to reduce their level of fear and improve their perceptions of safety in their community. The rehabilitation principle includes a holistic focus to ensure positive outcomes, including family relationships, living arrangements, wellbeing, education, training and work, and I commend the bill to the house.

**Jade BENHAM** (Mildura) (17:00): I too rise to contribute to the Justice Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2025. As the member for Caulfield pointed out earlier in the debate, when a bill around justice is introduced some of us become hopeful or could be forgiven for thinking that the Labor government are going to remove their collective heads from the sand and admit that there is a problem with justice and law and order in this state and make Victorians feel safe in their homes again, but no. That could be bringing forward the implementation of the bail laws or reinstating them to what they were. It could be outlawing machetes today. There are no provisions for police to issue AVOs on the spot for family violence offenders. Instead they are delaying, and as the member for Caulfield pointed out, justice delayed is justice denied.

As always, I do like to bring firsthand accounts from my community into this place, because ultimately that is my job. It is all of our jobs in this place as local representatives. Justice, law and order and the court process are extremely delayed, and we are having budget cuts year after year after year – \$19 million extending to over \$50 million in the 2027–28 year. I have had meetings in my office in Mildura over the break with community representatives from Red Cliffs and Merbein, which are the smaller towns on the periphery of Mildura that are deemed service towns. I think if you spoke to any of these community members they would say that they are anything but; they are thriving little towns. I was actually out at Red Cliffs on Sunday. I know there are members of the Clerk's team from Red Cliffs. It is a beautiful little town, but there are issues. In Merbein it is the same thing. It is where you can go for the Great Australian Vanilla Slice Triumph these days.

However, in towns of this size and magnitude and in the Mildura local government area the crime stats are continuing to rise and rise and rise, and we are not seeing that data go down. I know you can make data sing any way you want it to. But the community are feeling it and they are really concerned, so they come to me to express those concerns. Their concerns are that these towns have police stations that are not manned – and they are not. They should have 24-hour police stations, and they do not have capacity to, because obviously we know that the Victorian police force is so under-resourced at the moment. Again, you can talk about how many recruits are coming into the force, but without supervising officers and without retaining those supervising officers how is that going to play out?

The member for Morwell also spoke about the presence of police and PSOs. We do not have PSOs in the Mildura electorate anywhere, but this seems like a solution that needs to be explored as a matter of urgency. This was one of those solutions that these community members brought to me. Why can't we just get PSOs? They understand that it is no fault of the Mildura police. The local constabulary do a great job, but it is like playing whack-a-mole. If there are people rostered on at Red Cliffs and Merbein they are almost immediately called out to other jobs, usually in the Mildura CBD, whether it is in the mall or in the plaza. We have seen on social media, unfortunately, that they are hotspots. It is an awful situation, and they came to me to express those concerns and they came with solutions as well. It is something I will be taking up with the Minister for Police – to get some PSOs or even turn vacant shops into cop shops branded with the Victoria Police branding to offer some sort of police presence.

There are planning issues that also contribute to the social issues, particularly in Red Cliffs. That includes worker accommodation for Pacific Australia labour mobility scheme workers, who we need, as it is a vital program for agricultural centres like Red Cliffs. There is an application at the moment for 109 beds in the middle of Red Cliffs, where there has already been criminal activity. We have seen historically that there have already been a lot of issues, and there are noise complaints that would keep the police busy, but they are not there. Again, community safety is paramount. It is one of the fundamentals that any state government should be providing to their community.

This bill is largely administrative and technical in nature, but I was listening to the member for Morwell and other members on this side of the house referring to the secret commissions for trustees in return for substituted appointments. This means that we do not want that corrupt behaviour with trustees – trustees being appointed for the wrong reasons and being compensated et cetera – which came out of the 1905 Royal Commission on the Butter Industry. We know that corruption in the butter industry was spread thin. The member for Morwell, as I am sure a lot of us on this side of the house like to do when something is that historical, from 1905, went to elder statesmen like the member for Murray Plains and the member for Rowville to get firsthand accounts on what actually happened in this royal commission. There was corruption spread throughout the butter industry. I was fascinated with this part of the bill report. It was a very corrupt industry, exporting sub-quality cream for butter. I am not sure if the member for Murray Plains still makes his own butter, but I imagine, given where he resides now, that there are still a few butter factories around in the dairy industry there, which is hurting at the moment. The lack of water, the land tax bills and the proposed emergency services and volunteers tax are just making it harder for farmers, like dairy farmers, broadacre farmers and irrigated horticulture food producers. It is just making life harder and harder. But that is where this piece of legislation originated, and it was great to have some firsthand accounts from that royal commission.

**Peter Walsh:** Labor's taking a long time to bring it in.

**Jade BENHAM:** They are taking a long time to bring it in and to amend it correctly. It has taken a long time, but we know that Labor work in dog years. That brings me, obviously, to the delaying of the commencement of abolishing the de novo criminal appeals. This was a bill that was introduced in 2019 to propose the abolition of the current system of de novo criminal appeals from the Magistrates' Court. This is something that we could be amending today to help the efficiency of the Magistrates' Court, because we know it is not just bail laws that are letting the community down and having Victorians feel unsafe. It is also that court system, because it does not work efficiently. We could be changing this today, six years on from when it was first introduced. However, it was delayed the first time because of COVID, and it was delayed again because of the pandemic. When do we get to a point where we cannot use COVID and the pandemic as an excuse to delay things? It is not the pandemic; it is not COVID anymore. We need to stop blaming COVID. It is absolutely laughable that this should be delayed again. It should have been pushed through as quickly as possible. We know that the delay in this is because Labor cannot manage money. They cannot manage the justice system, they cannot manage the Victorian police force, they cannot manage community safety and they cannot manage themselves to bring this in. By the time this is introduced, now on 1 July 2028, it will be seven years on from when it was first introduced. Come on – it is laughable. We know that we cannot trust Labor to manage money and manage the justice system. Victorians cannot trust Labor to keep them safe in their own homes.

We do not oppose this bill, but obviously there are concerns with these sorts of delays. I thank the Shadow Attorney-General for his thorough work on this omnibus and miscellaneous bill, and I thank the member for Murray Plains and the member for Rowville for their valuable insights into the historical workings and where this all came from. It is very valuable. History always is.

**Mathew HILAKARI** (Point Cook) (17:10): I rise to speak on the Justice Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2025. I might just follow on from the member from Mildura for a moment. I do appreciate the conversation about butter and the butter act, but I felt she was a little way off when she was thanking the Shadow Attorney-General for his contribution and work on this bill. Being a government bill, I thought it was introduced by the Attorney-General and the Attorney-General's team and department, and I thank them for the work that they have undertaken on bringing forward this piece of legislation. The critique, as it was, is always appreciated from those opposite, but I did not think there was a lot of thanks for the effort and the work that were put in.

The bill itself goes to amending the Crimes Act 1958 and narrows the trustee secret commission offence so that it only prohibits dishonest or otherwise corrupt conduct. I will come back a little bit later in my contribution to that. It amends the Justice Legislation Amendment (Criminal Appeals)

Act 2019. That is about extending the default commencement date of summary appeal reforms by three years, all the way out to 1 July 2028, to allow for additional time for implementation and planning. This bill, as it is a miscellaneous bill, also goes on to a number of other acts that it seeks to amend: the Criminal Procedure Act 2009 and the Sentencing Act 1991. That allows the Magistrates' Court to achieve efficiencies in their case management. We know for the Magistrates' Court that every efficiency we can find in that space is important because of the volume of work that they do on behalf of Victorians. This bill also seeks to correct the section reference errors in the Worker Screening Act 2020. I will come back to those a little bit later and go into some of the details. In the main, and as this is not a particularly controversial bill and it is supported so far by all sides of the house, that goes really to some of the reference points that need to be cleared up in the bill so that we are getting the right reference points. Second last, it amends the Social Services Regulation Act 2021 to rectify an unintended deemed exclusion for out-of-home care workers. Finally, it amends the Magistrates' Court Act 1989 to remove an obsolete regulation-making power to prescribe areas where police officers are not required to serve civil processes. As we know, Victorian police do not undertake those civil processes, so those processes should appropriately be removed and not imposed upon the Governor in Council in a way which is unnecessary.

I do want to note a number of contributions that have been made. The member for Laverton is always talking about community safety and the importance of it, including holding forums in the community that she represents. I was with her, the Minister for Police, the member for Tarneit and the member for Werribee recently at the Werribee police station, which is the largest police station outside of the CBD. It was great to hear from police directly about some of their challenges and some of those really rewarding aspects of their roles. I certainly thank them for all the efforts that they are making across the community, and I thank Acting Inspector O'Connell, who gave us some time, and all those officers who gave us some fairly frank views around what is going on in the Wyndham area. We always appreciate that frankness of advice but also advice about how the community can remain safer as well. One of the interesting things that the police said on that occasion was that it is important to lock your doors and lock your car – you know, that old classic. That was one of the things that they recommended Victorians undertake and do to make sure that they are not victims of crime. I thought it was really important just to reiterate that that is their best advice for people across the community as a starting point to prevent crime.

I want to say a few things about community safety in general. Many of us on this side of the house have been engaging with the Premier and the police minister and others within government on what is happening in our communities and beyond, addressing those real issues around community safety and how people feel in the community at the moment. This government has been working very hard on making sure that people do feel safer and people are safer in our community, and one of those changes has been to the bail laws. Those bail laws place community safety above every other consideration. For those people who are looking at and undertaking the processes around bail, they have increased the bail test to make sure that it is harder to pass for those people who are repeat offenders and committing the worst crimes. These changes are really about reducing the risk of someone on bail reoffending in the community. They create a new offence when people are undertaking criminal activity while on bail. Particularly they go to some of those really distressing crimes that we have across our community like non-aggravated home invasions and carjackings. It is important that we undertake that work and there are real consequences for people.

I will come back to some of those other changes, but we also know that there is the other side of the equation, which is about our earliest interventions and what we can be doing to make sure that people are engaged with their community and they themselves feel safe in the community. People are carrying edged weapons fundamentally because they are not feeling safe themselves, so how do we build up those really important cultural aspects, those community aspects that make sure people feel really close to their community and part of it? That includes making sure that we have got the facilities that we need across our community, and councils have a big role to play in that. I have concerns about one of



my local councils in particular not providing those community facilities, and I hope that they start to really pick up their game on that.

In the community that I represent we have seen 144 new police dedicated. After we built the largest police station outside the CBD, in Werribee, we included extra police and extra police sometimes in some of the most important areas. There are 19 family violence specialists, because that is a really significant crime that travels across our community, and police do spend a lot of time on family violence. I particularly want to thank the police who make such an effort in that area, because it is important for a good community and a good community over time.

I also want to talk about the Point Cook police station, which is being built at the moment. It is a fantastic investment in the community. It is alongside our new SES facility that has just opened, and we know how the SES and Victoria Police work hand in hand so often, because the SES are such a support for a whole range of matters but particularly significant traffic accidents and being there to support our other emergency services workers. A big shout-out to the SES and all the crew down there. The police station in Point Cook, which is the first police station in Point Cook, is a really big deal for the community. These new stations top and tail the east and west of the electorate. The Point Cook police station is at the far eastern end of the electorate and the Werribee police station is at the far western end, meaning that we will have access to police from across the community. No-one will be more than 5 kilometres from a police station. I cannot wait to see that police station really take shape. There was involvement of police in the design and making sure that that police station is really set out for the community need. I look forward to that opening and I thank the police minister, who dug the first piece of soil out of the ground. The sod was turned, which was wonderful to see, but I just cannot wait for that to be opened.

Banning machetes – I know there has been some contention by those opposite, ‘Why not today and why not quicker?’ It is a very quick process, a process taken on advice from Victoria Police, but there are some complications relating to some farm workers in the community I represent, who do an amazing job in terms of their farm tools, their edged blades, to cut cauliflower and broccoli. They give out those farm tools at the start of the day and they collect them at the end of the day. They sanitise them. They do all the work that you want responsible farmers to do, because you do not want knives being ground up into the fields. They do a lot of that work, but we have got some more work to do with that community. We have got some more work to do with the Sikh community as well. If I think about the effort that we are making here, it is three times as fast as what they did in the UK, so I look forward on 1 September to that opening up. I do thank the Auditor-General for the important work on this bill and many other bills, and I look forward to its speedy passage through the house.

**Tim BULL** (Gippsland East) (17:20): It is a pleasure to rise on this Tuesday afternoon and make a contribution on the Justice Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2025. Others before me on this side have gone over the changes that the bill makes, and as has been stated, they are relatively minor changes, but there is of course that one exception, that being the change to the Magistrates’ Court criminal appeal processes and to a larger degree the changes to the Crimes Act 1958 to clarify the trustee secret commission offence in response to recent court decisions. In relation to the latter, the bill narrows the offence by requiring the relevant conduct to have been done with a dishonest or otherwise corrupt purpose – you can certainly understand the nature and the reasoning and the rationale behind that – and also removing the requirement for consent of beneficiaries or the Supreme Court.

I want to make a few comments on the delaying of the commencement of abolishing the de novo criminal appeals. There is a bit of history to this that I would like to touch on.

**Brad Rowswell:** Tell us.

**Tim BULL:** In 2019, member for Sandringham, the government proposed to abolish the current system of de novo criminal appeals from the Magistrates’ Court. The reasons for this have been outlined, but the point I wish to make is that these changes that were made in 2019 were scheduled to

come into force no later than 3 July 2021. The default commencement date was pushed out to 1 January 2023, and that was when another bill came into this chamber, the Justice Legislation Amendment (System Enhancements and Other Matters) Bill 2021. The reason put forward was that the court system required more time to prepare for the change as well as the impact of the COVID pandemic on the justice system. That sounds like a fair enough piece of commentary in 2021, because there was a little bit going on at that time. The default commencement date was then postponed to 5 July 2025, and that was done courtesy of the Justice Legislation Amendment (Trial by Judge Alone and Other Matters) Bill 2022. So in 2022 we sat here, it was an election year, and we agreed that we were going to put it out to 2025 and give ourselves three years to get this job done.

**Brad Rowswell** interjected.

**Tim BULL:** Despite this being post COVID, member for Sandringham, the government again blamed the pandemic and the need for additional resources to be provided to the courts. In that commentary at the time, the minister said:

... the ongoing effects of COVID-19 on the court system and the significant time and resources required to implement the reforms ...

were key factors. The keywords there are ‘resources required to implement the reforms’. But here we are again today, and this bill that is before us now seeks to again delay the timeframe of implementation – until 1 July 2028. So we started all that time ago, and now we have pushed it out to beyond another term of this government. After almost two full terms of this government we have not had it implemented.

The government claimed that the impact of other criminal law reforms and resourcing requirements – again that term pops up, ‘resourcing requirements’ – were driving the decisions and noted:

In light of the significant time and resources required to implement the summary appeal reforms on top of these other reforms, it is necessary to further delay ...

the commencement date of these changes.

**Brad Rowswell** interjected.

**Tim BULL:** Yes, seriously. So in that commentary over the three periods where we have delayed the commencement date, we have noted that the rationale is that the resources required are not there. But here we are today, and at least, thank goodness, we have stopped blaming COVID. It is incredible that it is almost two full terms away and this has not been implemented.

I want to make a very valid point that was raised by the member for Malvern in his contribution – that is, that each time this has been delayed we have had references to resources being required, but we have a government that has currently cut funding to Court Services Victoria. How can we blame a lack of the resources required to implement these changes and then cut funding to Court Services Victoria? This is the fund that, obviously, funds Victoria’s courts and tribunals. What those reductions have been – and these are the government’s own budget papers, not our commentary – are a \$19.1 million cut in this current year, 2024–25, and, cop this, in the out years a \$58 million cut in the 2027–28 year. That is in the budget papers. But we have a bill before us now and we are saying this has not been implemented because we do not have the resources required to do it. That is hypocrisy at a level that you simply cannot imagine. You cannot cite resource requirements while you cut a budget so severely. This government cannot have it both ways.

Whilst the reforms to abolish these criminal appeals were designed to speed up processes in the County Court – that was the commentary we were given – and they were also going to relieve the burden on witnesses, the continual delay to these reforms by Labor means one of two things. Either these benefits have been grossly overstated or Labor’s funding cuts to the Victorian courts have been given a higher priority than putting these reforms in place. If you are going to say that it is resourcing and then make cuts, clearly you are giving more credence to the bottom line than you are to actually implementing

these changes. I will conclude my comments on the bill with that – by highlighting the extraordinary level of hypocrisy that is coming from the other side. You cannot have it both ways. If resourcing is the issue, do not cut the budget to our court system.

**Anthony CIANFLONE** (Pascoe Vale) (17:28): I rise to speak in support of the Justice Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2025. We know that all Victorians deserve the right to feel safe in their homes, their communities, their streets, their neighbourhoods and their workplaces. That is why, along with ensuring that we provide Victoria Police with the powers, tools and resources they need to keep us safe, we also need to continue investing to address the root causes of crime through measures that support housing, employment, skills, education, health, wellbeing and socio-economic outcomes for all of our communities. It is also why fundamental to maintaining a fair, safe, accessible and resilient justice system for all is ensuring we continue to reform and modernise our criminal justice, courts and social services sectors to suit contemporary settings and community expectations. That is what this bill is all about.

The justice legislation amendment bill implements these critical forms to achieve administrative efficiencies and correct technical errors across numerous pieces of legislation. The bill will, one, amend the Crimes Act 1958 to narrow the trustee secret commission offence so that it only prohibits dishonest or otherwise corrupt conduct, amend the Justice Legislation Amendment (Criminal Appeals) Act 2019 to extend the default commencement date of summary appeal reforms by three years to 1 July 2028 to allow additional time for implementing and planning, and amend the Criminal Procedure Act 2009 and the Sentencing Act 1991 to allow the Magistrates' Court of Victoria to achieve efficiencies following investment in its case management system. It will correct the section references errors in the Worker Screening Act 2020. The bill will amend the Social Services Regulation Act 2021 to rectify an unintended deemed exclusion for out-of-home care workers and, finally, the bill will amend the Magistrates' Court Act 1989 to remove an obsolete regulation-making power to prescribe areas where police officers are not required to serve civil processes. When combined, these reforms will strengthen and modernise a number of Victorian acts to support the courts and improve the operation of Victoria's justice and legal systems.

In terms of the amendments to the Crimes Act 1958, the bill will replace section 180 of the act relating to secret commission of trustees. The changes break the old offence down into five separate offences, making them clear and narrow to only capture conduct done with dishonest or otherwise corrupt purposes. The changes will also remove the requirement to obtain assent of trust beneficiaries or the Supreme Court for the proposed conduct, which will streamline routine transactions. These reforms to the Crimes Act are important, as recent Supreme Court decisions demonstrated that the current offences may capture routine good-faith and standard transactions associated with the replacement of a trustee.

In terms of the amendments to the Criminal Procedure Act 2009 and the Sentencing Act 1991, the changes will allow the court to expand its case management system to automate various high-volume administrative functions in criminal proceedings, such as filing applications and documents. The amendments to the Worker Screening Act 2020 will make technical amendments to correct section references and errors relating to processes or required definitions for working with children checks and national disability insurance scheme checks. Amendment to the Social Services Regulation Act 2021 proposes to repeal section 330G(2)(a) of the act to ensure out-of-home care cannot be subject to an exclusion decision under the worker and carer exclusion scheme unless they have both engaged in misconduct and pose an unacceptable risk of harm to children and young people. This approach addresses the risk of unjust outcomes for carers while preserving protections for children in out-of-home care.

The amendments to the Magistrates' Court Act 1989 are changes technical in nature, and the amendments to the Justice Legislation Amendment (Criminal Appeals) Act 2019 will postpone the commencement of summary appeal reforms contained in the Justice Legislation Amendment (Criminal Appeals) Act 2019 from 5 July 2025 to 1 July 2028. Commencing the reforms in July 2025

would cause significant disruption to the court system, as the legal sector and courts are not yet prepared to implement these changes. This will ensure that the reforms do not impact court efficiency and the implementation of other recent significant reforms, including bail, youth justice and committal processes, which also promote victim interests.

A recent victim-centric reform includes strengthening the test for cross-examination and committal proceedings. This reform will significantly reduce the amount of pre-trial evidence given by victims and witnesses. The recent changes to the Youth Justice Act 2024 introduced more options for restorative justice, allowing offenders to hear directly from victims about the harm they have caused, to help victims heal and give offenders insight into the impact of their offending. The new bail laws as well, for example, will put community safety front and centre of every bail decision. We are cracking down specifically on the crimes that are on an upward trend while people are out on bail – that is, aggravated burglary, home invasion, armed robbery and carjacking. These crimes have a real and serious impact on victims, and it is completely unacceptable that alleged offenders were being bailed time and again previously for these crimes. The benefits of these reforms will not be achieved if courts are not prepared for their implementation. That is why deferring the commencement of these reforms will allow additional time for them to be implemented.

In terms of court funding, the opposition has had quite a lot to say as part of this debate, but going back through the budget figures, the facts speak for themselves. We are continuing to invest more in the courts and legal systems than previously was the case. The 2024–25 budget provided a total investment of \$164.9 million to support the ongoing operation of therapeutic court programs, court holding cells, improving court access and undertaking repairs and maintenance of court buildings. This investment builds on the approximately \$435 million in funding over the previous four budgets, which has helped promote the swifter resolution of court cases, with backlogs reducing by 14 per cent over 2023–24 and a decrease of 30 per cent since pending matters peaked as a result of COVID in January 2022.

These reforms will build on those ongoing investments we have continued to make to support community safety: \$4.5 billion for Victoria Police and 3600 new police officers recruited since 2015, making Victoria home to one of the largest sworn police forces in the nation. 180 new police officers have been recruited across Merri-bek in recent years and 21 additional dedicated family violence prevention officers across Merri-bek have also been recruited. We have finalised the new police enterprise bargaining agreement – a 4.5 per cent annual increase for officers, a 0.5 per cent increase for general duties officers and other improved standards and workplace conditions. And we heard the Minister for Police today highlighting the appointment of the new commissioner, Michael Bush, at the helm of Victoria Police. We have introduced stronger bail laws that place community safety first and cracked down on those dangerous and violent repeat offenders, and of course today there was the huge announcement of \$727 million through this year's budget to improve and expand our corrections and justice system's capacity and to keep corrections staff safe. It is also about the other reforms: tobacco licensing, illicit tobacco trade crackdowns, organised crime reforms and crackdowns, outlaw motorcycle gangs, unexplained wealth and our crackdown on dangerous weapons such as machetes. Combined with the bill today, each of these reforms will help keep people across Victoria and my community of Merri-bek safe. Victoria Police officers across the Fawkner and Brunswick police stations do an outstanding job in that regard.

On Thursday 3 April local police held a neighbourhood policing forum at the Coburg town hall that was attended by over 100 local residents, with locals receiving a really comprehensive update on key safety and crime trends over the last 12 months and beyond, including overall offences recorded being at 13,700 in 2020, up to 15,300 in 2024. The top five recorded crimes across Merri-bek were reported as stealing from a motor vehicle, general and other thefts, criminal damage, breaches of family violence orders and motor vehicle theft. Family violence, sadly, continues to remain one of the biggest contributors to police call-outs: 2004 incidents were reported in 2020 but that reduced to 1839 incidents in 2024. Breaches of family violence orders and various types of family violence

incidents were highlighted: verbal abuse, emotional abuse, physical abuse, economic abuse, sexual abuse and other abuse. The three most common drug offences recorded included cannabis, methamphetamine and prescription drugs. Youth offending has gone down across Merri-bek, with the incident rate for young offenders in 2020 being at 25 per cent and as of last year, 21 per cent. Road safety continues to remain a top issue across our community. The community safety survey that was highlighted on the night identified a number of concerns from 382 respondents, including safety in public places, road safety, drugs and alcohol, safety of property and possessions, serious organised crime, prejudice or hate-motivated crime, sexual harassment or offending, family violence and cybercrime and online safety.

It is in that regard I particularly commend the work of local police in improving safety in public places through local area commander Inspector Andrew Markakis and his team, which launched Operation Priority in central Coburg, which is focused on central Coburg, Sydney Road and Victoria Street Mall. It is an operation that is very much about supporting local crime prevention and community safety outcomes for traders, families and shoppers through increased police visibility, presence, patrols and proactive community outreach. Operation Priority is directly helping to respond to local community safety and antisocial behaviour concerns that have increasingly been raised with me and many others over previous months.

Local Victoria Police officers were recently wonderfully recognised for their work at Pascoe Vale Rotary Club's 14th 'Monty' Montgomery community policing awards: Sergeant Andrew Thomson, who took out the lead award for his fantastic work with youth; Acting Sergeant Adam Biderman; Sergeant Geoffrey Kwist; and Acting Senior Sergeant Kristie Givney. There were also commendations to Superintendent Wayne Cheeseman, Superintendent Lorna McCarthy and many others.

**Cindy McLEISH** (Eildon) (17:38): I rise to make a contribution on the Justice Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2025, and it is indeed miscellaneous. There is not terribly much to it, and it is fairly interesting what they have included in this. Despite the number of tidy-ups and minor amendments that are being made – and the opposition are not opposing this – I want to focus most of my contribution on the abolition of de novo criminal appeals. We have an extraordinary situation with the delays in bringing this forward.

Despite criticism from the Law Institute of Victoria and the Victorian Bar Council, who opposed this reform with concerns around miscarriages of justice, this reform passed this place in 2019, with the regular fanfare and cheering from ministers as well as the backbench. We have a current system in place where if you are accused in the Magistrates' Court, you can seek a right of appeal, as of right, to have that appeal heard virtually as new – de novo – in the County Court. It is heard again in its entirety. The prosecution has to re-prove its case, all of the evidence needs to be put back before the court, all of the witnesses have to be recalled – it is a complete retrial. Witnesses have given their evidence once, and then have to give it again. You can imagine the level of trauma that could be associated with that. It could be the case that maybe the lawyers in a case have not gone the full hog and put everything on the table because they know that if they have not quite got it right, if they have missed something, they can appeal and they can bring that evidence forward. This is a change that was put forward in 2019 to be implemented no later than 3 July 2021.

Look at where we are now in 2025. We are six years on from when this was first raised – 5½ years from when this was first raised. It had to be implemented no later than 3 July 2021. It was delayed again through another bill until 1 January 2023. That was giving it an extra 18 months, and then a few things happened. We had a bit of COVID. Different things happened along the way, and the most recent delay has pushed that date to 5 July 2025. That is just around the corner. That is only a few weeks away, probably just under a couple of months. This is something that was brought in in 2019, put before the Parliament, voted on and agreed to go forward with, but now it is proposed to be delayed until 1 July 2028. That is seven years from the initial implementation date and nine years since it was first argued in this chamber. I find it extraordinary that it is being delayed by that period of time –

seven years at least it is being delayed, and probably nine years. This is because the government have not got their act together – not at all. They are arguing that things need to be done: ‘We need some time to line the ducks up to make sure that the courts have the resources and the equipment and the systems in place.’ Give me a break. How long has it been? Seven years, and they could not get that sorted out.

I want to comment on the contribution that was made by the current Attorney-General back in October 2019. She made note of the additional resources that are required to run a complete retrial, arguing why the de novo appeal should be got rid of, and she talked about the significant impacts that a retrial would have on witnesses who were recalled and required to come back again, essentially to tell their story again in a different judicial setting. You would think that she understood the impact and the trauma that could cause – it does not allow somebody to move on and to deal with it, knowing that it is going to come up again in another couple of years. She also made comment that the de novo appeals:

... came out of the 17th century, and one would hope that things have certainly moved on and that our judicial system has certainly modernised and updated since then.

One would have hoped that since 2019, when this was put on the table, the government would have made sure these things happened, but apparently not. Apparently we are not ready. Again I will quote from the current Attorney-General back in October 2019. She noted:

A lot of the safeguards that are in place today that were not in place then means that the de novo appeal is no longer necessary and is in fact quite an extensive burden on our judicial system and on a lot of people personally.

It will be nine years, when this comes in, since she noted that this is an extensive burden on our judicial system and on people. But does she care? No, because she is the one that is now putting the delay in place for another three years. She either does not get it or does not care. Or there is a third reason, which I will come up with in a moment. She also argued that:

... this is a really beneficial development in our judicial system.

But it was not just the minister and current Attorney-General who was singing its praises. The Deputy Premier went on to commend the government for bringing the legislation forward to ensure that:

... Victoria has, to the best extent possible, not only a fair, transparent justice system but an effective justice system as well.

So he was thinking this should be done. The Deputy Premier is over there; I am sure he must be thinking that if he was in that key role, he would be doing things a bit differently. It was cheered on by the Minister for Agriculture and our current Minister for Environment. The member for Bayswater was today speaking about a new streamlined and modern appeals process. The mouth for Mordialloc – of course he was in there as well. But we know that the government is not ready. They are slashing funding everywhere. The government cannot manage money, and we are paying the price.

Hot on the heels of reports published just a couple of days ago that the state government secretly ripped \$2.4 billion from state schools after delaying by three years its commitment to provide the funding required to pay for the long-promised Gonski reforms – so we know that that secretly was done – conveniently members of the government have forgotten about the slashing and burning that has taken place in court services, and you can find this in the budget papers. It is not something that we have come up with here; you can find that in the budget papers. At Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearings even 12 months ago \$77 million worth of cuts was confirmed, with a \$19.1 million cut in 2024–25 – that is this current financial year – to be followed by a massive \$58 million cut in 2027–28. There we have got an extensive cut to court services, so this means further delays. The backlog remains and grows. It means job losses. The government have not got the money to invest in court services, so what we are going to see is that this reform of repealing de novo appeals is going to be nine years down the track because the government cannot manage their money and they have made such massive changes to funding to the court services. You look at the County Court

backlog – it does not get any better; at the Administrative Appeals Tribunal – there are so many things that the government have done that make it harder for those working in those systems. The staff and the lawyers who work across our court services do their best, but what happens when the funding is slashed? They have got to make changes. They are under a lot more pressure. Especially when you have less staff, you cannot do the same amount of work.

It just beggars belief to hear the member for Mulgrave say that they are the government prepared to fully fund – well, she is clearly not familiar with the budget papers and how to read those, and she also made that comment about the opportunity to make sure the courts and systems are ready. I mean, give me a break. You have had since 2019 when this was first introduced into this place to get it ready, and it is not. That is a massive failure by this government.

**Paul EDBROOKE** (Frankston) (17:48): Ninety-three – I am just looking at the abc.net.au website for the federal election. Ninety-three seats; we need 76 for majority. Interestingly enough –

**Cindy McLeish**: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, the member on his feet has already veered a long way from the bill. He could at least start by talking about it in the introduction.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Paul Mercurio)**: I thank you for your point of order. I have sat here amazed at how far and wide this debate has been today. There is no point of order.

**Paul EDBROOKE**: I think it is closer than the butter war. Ninety-three seats, and the federal colleagues of those opposite were spouting the same lines about managing money and all this kind of stuff. We heard that for weeks and weeks and weeks and months. And I mean, I am never satisfied, but I would have been satisfied with 76. But 93 – I think there is probably a lesson to be learned from those opposite in that, a lesson that the Australian people taught the Liberal Party and the Greens comprehensively on the 3rd, and that is that you need to know what you stand for. You need to be able to stand for something, in fact. You need to have good policy and you also need to back good legislation and good policy, regardless of what side of the chamber you are on.

I have heard some really some brilliant contributions from people on this side of the house – the member for Albert Park, the member for Pascoe Vale and the member for Mulgrave, who I can assure those opposite can read a budget very well, and she will be delivering for her community, I am sure, in the upcoming budget. We have heard some very, very well thought out contributions. What we have heard from those opposite is just a cacophony about the butter battle, the butter war, the butter industry, some widespread rubbish about butter. There was a margarine in there as well; I am not quite sure what that was about, but from those opposite I kind of stopped listening a little bit there.

I know that this bill does quite a few things. It narrows the Crimes Act 1958 trustee secret commission offence to only capture dishonest or otherwise corrupt conduct, and I think that had something to do with butter in 1905. It defers the commencement of summary appeal reforms in the Justice Legislation Amendment (Criminal Appeals) Act 2019. It improves the operation of the case management system in the Magistrates' Court. It corrects technical errors in the Worker Screening Act 2020. It rectifies an unintentional deemed exclusion for out-of-home care workers in the Social Services Regulation Act 2021 and it removes an obsolete regulation-making power from the Magistrates' Court Act 1989, which I am assured is not used today.

We have heard the condemnation of our Magistrates' Court and of the way our police force works, and standing here as a member of the Allan government, who have recruited record numbers of police, resourced those police and are now giving them the bail laws to support them, their decision-making and their operations, I am proud to stand here to further enhance our offering to the community of Victoria. We have heard others say that this bill is an omnibus bill that does not really deliver much. Again, with the butter, I do not know what they were talking about there. But anyway, I know that the police that attended the Frankston community morning tea were very much on board with what this government is bringing to the table, and so is the community. I heard the member for Point Cook talking about a community event that he was at where the police attended, and I think my experience

was much the same in Frankston. We had a lot of people interested in talking about perceptions of safety – that they may feel unsafe – but then the police were talking about actual threats and actual safety.

One of the things I will pick up on is those basics, like the member for Point Cook pointed out. When people said, ‘How can I make myself safer?’ there were some very, very obvious answers, and they were things like lock your car doors, lock your back doors and keep your windows locked, things that I think are very general. You do not need to be a spy to work those ones out, but it keeps those people away that would be looking for opportunities to steal from people.

The other thing the police imparted to people in my community was to a couple of older community members there who had seen in the news some information about home invasions, and it kind of was a trigger for me because I realised that there are people in our community that actually think that some of those home invasions are not focused and that they are random, and the police in our area said, ‘Well, that isn’t the case.’ If you want to keep safe from home invasions, the best way to do that is do not deal drugs, do not be a criminal and do not hang around with criminals, because mostly these are targeted. People do not go to that level of crime, usually, without a reason, because it is an offence, and now we know that with the bail laws the likelihood of actually getting bail after committing an offence like that is much lower. Of course that is not exclusive, and the police said that, but they said generally we can explain sometimes why these things happen. They certainly did not talk down the fact that there are trends that go up and down. They were very straightforward with that, but in those opportunities to talk to our local police and even the meeting I had the other day when I spoke about this bill and asked them what they thought about some of these changes, they were not backwards in coming forwards in what they say. They work at the coalface every day. They have to deal with some amazing community members; they have to deal with some very, very difficult community members as well, and I am proud to be standing here and giving them the resources they need to do that, and tidying up some legislation at the same time with this omnibus bill.

In Frankston we have also got the new Department of Justice and Community Safety building and a Magistrates’ Court that has only just been redeveloped. That was on the back of the recommendations from the Royal Commission into Family Violence, and that has made that Magistrates’ Court much friendlier to people that have to go in there and do things that they would never have found themselves doing in their normal lives. There are things that are very uncomfortable – having to face offenders and having to have conversations that are very, very uncomfortable – and I guess it flies in the face of some of the dialogue we have seen today from those opposite about how we are going to lose jobs. That is just made-up heuristics. It is a bias that comes out of being in opposition, I think, because what we have not heard today is any data or any foundation of evidence from people opposite telling us that this is a fact and that they are basing their assumptions on evidence. Indeed most of what we have heard today were assumptions, even if they were about butter.

We have heard, as I said, some really, really good contributions from people on this side. People have shared their lived experience about working in the justice system, about operating in the justice system and about how these changes will improve the interaction of their community with police, with Magistrates’ Courts and with other checks as well. I just want to say thank you to everyone on this side of the room that did that. Yes, this bill does correct some technical errors. From time to time we have that, but it is something that must be done. It does not make it any less interesting, in my opinion. Yes, this bill is rectifying the unintentional deemed exclusion for out-of-home care workers in the Social Services Regulation Act 2021. From time to time we find that, whether it is that laws need improving, that federal laws interfere with state laws or that there is some friction there, things have to be improved. We have to adapt and have to overcome to make our system as efficient as possible, and I think that that is what this bill does. For those on this side of the chamber that recognise that, I applaud you. Well done, and thanks for your contributions. For those on the opposite side of the chamber, I feel a little bit sad that everything always has to be through that bias of ‘It must be bad



because it's the government bringing it in, and we don't like the government. We don't like the colour of the T-shirts they wear.' This is a good bill, and I commend it to the house.

**Peter WALSH** (Murray Plains) (17:58): I rise to make my contribution on the Justice Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2025. In starting off, I am disappointed in the member for Frankston. His contributions are usually a lot better than the one he just delivered. What I found really surprising was that he doubled down at the end by saying how the contributions from his side of the house had all been fantastic. I might remind the member for Frankston to look over his shoulder and to watch everyone reading the cheat sheet that was given out on this particular piece of legislation. I was tempted to raise a point of order about reading from documents, but I thought, 'No, I'll just let them go. Let's just see what happens with this legislation.' There were a lot of them reading the cheat sheet, member for Frankston, so if you think the contributions were fantastic, I think you should actually be complimenting the ministerial advisers who wrote those cheat sheets rather than the members who delivered them over that particular time.

Like some others on this side of the house when they saw a justice bill coming in, I thought this might have been something out of the Minister for Police's bottom drawer. We heard several months ago when there was an issue about having a review of how bail was working that the police minister said, 'We don't need a review. I've got all the answers in my bottom drawer.' If this is the best that comes out of the police minister's bottom drawer, I am very, very disappointed on behalf of the people of Victoria. If you are someone that is living in fear of a home invasion – if you are one of the older people in our community who actually really worry at night about aggravated burglaries – this bill will not give you any comfort at all that Victoria will be safer into the future. I would urge the police minister, if you have got those answers in your bottom drawer as you say you have, get them out, dust them off and let us actually bring legislation to this house that makes a meaningful difference to the safety of the population of Victoria.

The main, centre part of this bill is just to kick down the road the implementation of one particular part – the de novo appeals between the Magistrates' Court and the County Court. Everyone says that the wheels of justice move slowly. The implementation of these changes is actually glacial. Think about the fact that these amendments were actually introduced in 2019 and were supposed to have a date of no later than 3 July 2021 to be implemented; then there was legislation that came in to kick that 3 July 2021 down the road to 1 January 2023. They could not make that. When you press a computer to start writing a document in the Labor government I think the default words are 'blame COVID'. It is about blaming COVID. Everything is about blaming COVID. The reason COVID is such an issue is the fact that we had a Premier and a government that made COVID a lot worse for all Victorians, effectively worse than anywhere else in Australia or anywhere else in the world, with the record lockdowns and with what they did to businesses here in Victoria. Yes, there is a lag from COVID, but it is a self-inflicted lag by the then Andrews Labor government, and it has been carried on by the Allan Labor government. It was kicked down the road to January 2023. Then we had a postponement to 5 July 2025, and now we are dealing with another postponement until July 2028. It is nearly a decade from when this legislation was first introduced to amend the de novo criminal appeals between the Magistrates' Court and the County Court to when we might see that change implemented. I would not hold my breath. I have no doubt there will be some legislation somewhere in the future that actually delays it even further.

Some of the things that came to light out of the second-reading speech talked about these reforms:

In light of the significant time and resources required to implement the summary appeal reforms on top of these other reforms, it is necessary to further delay their commencement.

I wish the Allan government would have the same sympathy for small business or for business in Victoria when they introduce changes to how business operates. They do not get a decade to adapt to it. When there is a new tax introduced it is introduced immediately because the government wants the money so desperately, because they cannot manage money.

What we are finding here is nearly a decade to implement this. One of the reasons it is being held up is because there have actually been cuts to the funding of the court system here in Victoria: \$19.1 million has been cut in the current financial year in the budget, and there will be \$58 million in further cuts in 2027. The government can find billions for cost blowouts on projects. We look at the Metro Tunnel and another \$700 million-and-something going into that particular project. They are saving pennies by cutting the court system and how the court system functions and cutting the implementation of what everyone believes will be positive changes to the court system while they blow billions somewhere else. That money – \$19 million, \$58 million – is small change compared to the cost blowouts in major projects but would make a significant difference to the functioning of the court systems here in Victoria.

We all, I think, are in heated agreement in this house, where we are very complimentary of what our police force do to protect us in light of the challenges they face every day – and they do. The stressors the police are under and the things they have to face – it is a very difficult job they face, and no-one is going to criticise the police. But what the police will say is that they do their job, but the court system lets them down, because these people get out again and these people are reoffending. There is a spinning wheel of recidivism in the justice system here in Victoria. Small reforms would actually make a difference to the whole process and make life better for the police, but again, a small budget cut and the police do not get the support of this government as we go through that.

I come back to the police minister's bottom drawer. I am sure the police force in Victoria is just as interested as we are as to what is in the police minister's bottom drawer to make their life better and their job easier to do to protect all of us for what they actually do in the community. What I hear constantly from that side of the house is how there has been record recruitment of police. I know from the police stations in my electorate that they have record vacancies. Yes, there might have been a lot of police recruited, but there are a lot of police leaving the police force through stress, through burnout and through just the severe challenges of doing the job, and no amount of recruitment is making up for the numbers of police that are leaving. There have been more police recruited, but we still have record vacancies. I know there are stations in my electorate that have the highest vacancies ever, and that is a similar story across regional Victoria, and I assume there are some of those issues in Melbourne as well. The government constantly stands up and crows about how they have recruited record numbers of police and how they are giving the police force all the resources they need, but it is not true. Yes, they are recruiting police, but there are a lot more going out the other end, and we are finding we have got significant vacancies all the way through.

As they say, the wheels of justice do move slowly, but it will take nearly a decade to implement changes to the court systems that would be positive and would speed up the process in the court system rather than having it bogged down by having to do a full appeal – effectively a retrying of a case in the County Court if someone wants that appeal. This legislation should be brought through a hell of a lot quicker than July 2028, because I just think it is appalling that the government cannot get the system to do it as quickly as it should.

As I said, if you own a business in Victoria and the government changes the rules, you have to do it immediately. If you own a business in Victoria and there is a change in the tax regime, you have to pay it straightaway. I am sure there are a lot of people that come into all our collective offices who are now getting land tax bills from the changes that have been made to land tax who would have loved to have a 10-year implementation of those land tax changes rather than having them done effectively immediately and then finding the tax increasing by 50 and 100 per cent within the first couple of years.

They had nothing to say to those out on the steps this morning, who are finding their emergency services tax is going to go from \$10,000 or \$15,000 to \$30,000, \$40,000 or \$50,000 on 1 July. That is how quickly they can implement revenue legislation, but it takes nearly a decade to get changes to the courts. The Liberals and the Nationals will not be opposing this legislation, but we are appalled by the fact that we are spending time debating something that is going to take nearly a decade to implement.

**Josh BULL** (Sunbury) (18:08): I am pleased to have the opportunity this evening to make a contribution on the Justice Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2025. Although the changes that are contained within the bill before the house this evening are quite technical and do go to some quite specific components of legislation, these changes will make a significant difference to the justice system. The other mechanisms that are contained in the bill specifically relate to the social services provisions that I will go to a little further in my contribution.

What we know and understand is that the legislation before the house and the changes that relate to the Crimes Act 1958, the Justice Legislation Amendment (Criminal Appeals) Act 2019, the Criminal Procedure Act 2009, the Sentencing Act 1991, the Worker Screening Act 2020, the Social Services Regulation Act 2021 and the Magistrates' Court Act 1989 go to providing for a more streamlined and efficient process, which a number of members on this side of the house have made some fantastic contributions to. I particularly want to acknowledge the contributions made by the members for Pascoe Vale; Footscray; Greenvale; Mulgrave, who I can see in here; Bayswater, who always gives an outstanding contribution; Point Cook; Broadmeadows; and Frankston. I have no doubt that the member for Clarinda, who is up next, will be outstanding as well.

Listening to those contributions I understand that they are working with their local communities and having those discussions with constituents – whether it be at a street stall or whether it be in a meeting or over a coffee – and getting a sense and understanding from constituents about the changes that are needed within the justice system to make it fairer, more streamlined and better for those that are in, in many instances, incredibly vulnerable situations within their lives and the lives of their family. Those changes are very welcomed and are important changes which are contained within the bill that is before the house this afternoon. Other members have spoken about, as I mentioned, the streamlining of processes, the better use of technology, reducing red tape and burdens, improving flexibility, those numbers of reforms which go to better and fairer access and outcomes, and of course making sure that we are working right across the justice system to provide the very best outcomes for those that are in so many instances dealing with what are incredibly complex matters.

A number of members have spoken about individual circumstances and cases. I indeed want to thank and put on the record my thanks and appreciation for all of those that do terrific work within the legal system who work and in many instances live in my community, and I acknowledge the work of places like Northern Community Legal Centre and Westjustice, who do really important work within the legal space to provide fair representation for those within our community who need and deserve it and who make up some of the work that goes on each and every day. I cannot remember which member made the point around constant listening and feedback in working with places like Northern CLC and of course Westjustice and a whole range of other legal services, but making for a better system is something that is very warmly welcomed within the community and is indeed something that goes to a very important matter that the government needs to deal with and is dealing with by process of legislation.

I want to touch on social services and the social services reform taskforce that I had the opportunity to co-chair a couple of years ago in a parliamentary secretary position. I have spoken about the group before, and I acknowledge the incredibly important work that has been done in this space at a time where there are both changes from a federal level and changes within the state with what is a really dynamic, fluid situation. Over those 12 to 18 months that I had the opportunity to co-chair the group, I got a sense of the understanding, the passion, the hard work and the dedication of those individuals and their organisations, and that is something that I want to put on the record and say a massive thanks for, because these are pieces of work that go often unnoticed within the community. They are people who often do not get the appreciation that they deserve, and indeed that process, I believe, has yet again led to another significant and important reform.

The government understands that the justice system and our corrections system are not just viewed in isolation; they are viewed in many respects right across the whole gamut of all portfolios. That is a fairly clunky way of saying that if we invest in education, if we invest in TAFE, if we invest in health

and if we provide wraparound services to give local communities the very best chance in life and the best start, we are equipping both individuals and communities to be their best. We know and understand that the justice system is complex. People do break the law and they do do the wrong thing, and that is why the other end of the spectrum goes to provisions that were provided for both the powers and the resources for Victoria Police. There were announcements, such as right up until just this morning, made of course by the Premier, and they are providing those additional resources within the corrections facility and the work that has been done around bail. We know and understand that making sure that communities feel safe is a top priority and one of the most important things we can do as a government. Making those provisions and providing that resourcing is incredibly important, and making the changes to the system as we go, yes, to make it more robust but also to make it more streamlined and efficient is something that we need to do as a government. I want to take the opportunity to thank every single person that has worked hard to bring these reforms to the house.

As I mentioned at the start of the contribution, in many ways some of these provisions are very specific and in their nature quite mechanical, but what we know is that they relate to individuals, and when they relate to individuals that are in many instances in a very important period of their life and effects that go to both their personal circumstances and also those of their family, we need to make sure that, as one of my fantastic colleagues said earlier, we are always listening and we are always providing for that support each and every day. Both the changes that are contained within the references to the specific acts but also broadly the work that is done in the social services review and the provisions that are provided within those changes go to an opportunity for the system to serve the Victorian community better. As a government we are guided by those values and that framework of providing for a better system – and for what is a very complex system – and of course by making sure that we are listening to those that are in a very vulnerable position and we are constantly reviewing and working with people that have got lived experience and experience within the field for the changes that relate to the social services that I mentioned earlier.

This piece of legislation builds upon what is a whole series of projects, initiatives and announcements that go to providing for a stronger, more effective, better justice system, and it is why listening to the contributions particularly of those members on this side of the house often puts in stark contrast the views of this side compared to the views of others. We know and understand that when you listen to Victorians, you get the best outcomes for Victorians. When you work hard to support local communities, you get the best outcomes. We will always work hard to make sure that we are listening to bring legislation before the house that serves Victorians, that keeps them safe and supports them this day and every single day that we are in government. I commend the bill to the house.

**Sam GROTH** (Nepean) (18:18): I am going to make a brief contribution the Justice Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2025. Just following on from what the member for Sunbury said, we know this government is one of announcements, not outcomes, and this bill is just another example of that. It exposes yet another case of mismanagement and broken promises by this government, and although at the first glance it makes minor and technical adjustments, it also pushes out the timeline around those crucial judicial reforms, due, honestly, to this government's catastrophic budget mismanagement. This is the third time this government has delayed the move to abolish de novo criminal appeals from the Magistrates' Court. They originally announced it back in 2019, and they had cross-party support at that time. These reforms aimed to streamline court processes, enhance efficiency and reduce the trauma experienced by witnesses, and this bill, as we said, now pushes these needed reforms back to July 2028, seven years behind schedule. As the member for Murray Plains said, I think we can expect that it will be more than a decade before these are actually introduced.

The government continues to claim that these repeated delays are due to resource constraints, but to be clear, it is a direct consequence of this government's chronic budget mismanagement. Court Services Victoria is facing further cuts – \$19.1 million was slashed from this year's budget and there is a staggering \$58 million planned reduction in 2027–28. It is astonishingly hypocritical that the Labor government continues to cite resource shortages as justification for delays while systematically gutting

court funding by \$77 million. It is a pattern of delay, and defunding reveals a government incapable of properly managing the state's finances and prioritising essential services.

Courts across Victoria are already buckling under excessive case loads and insufficient resources, and instead of addressing these issues, Labor prioritises short-term budget fixes over long-term judicial reform. The very reforms Labor heralded as essential have now been conveniently shelved because of their financial mismanagement. Additionally, these persistent delays severely impact the integrity and effectiveness of Victoria's criminal justice system. Victims, witnesses and defendants remain in limbo, denied the promised relief of streamlined processes. This government's inability or unwillingness to allocate the necessary funding reflects poorly on their commitment to justice and to public accountability, of which we know they have none. These delays create confusion and uncertainty within the legal community and the broader public. Stakeholders across the sector remain frustrated and demoralised by this government's inability to implement reforms that they have championed in the past.

This bill is not just about administrative adjustments, it is a clear symbol of Labor's fiscal irresponsibility, and it highlights how badly the Allan Labor government has mismanaged this state's budget. It prioritises political expediency over our essential court system reforms. The delays encapsulated in this bill reflect a disturbing lack of transparency and accountability and demonstrate Labor's preference for financial bandaids rather than genuinely addressing the systemic issues plaguing our judicial system. This state deserves a government that can manage the public finances responsibly and deliver on critical justice reforms, and this bill makes it abundantly clear that Labor is failing on both counts. It is time Victorians demanded better. They should demand justice reforms implemented on schedule, supported by adequate resources and free from political gamesmanship. As I said at the start, this is a government all about announcements, not about outcomes, and this bill is another example. While we will not oppose this bill, it will be the job of the people on this side of the house to hold this government to account for its cuts and broken promises.

**Meng Heang TAK** (Clarinda) (18:22): I rise today to join with the member for Sunbury and the previous speakers – especially on this side of the house – to speak in support of the Justice Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2025. This is another important bill, one that makes various legislative amendments to support the courts and improve the operations of the various justice and legal acts. As we know, there has been a great deal of work taking place this year to improve our justice system, particularly around bail and youth justice, and this demonstrates that community safety is an important priority for this government.

I was happy to be involved in the debate on our tough bail bill, a bill that put community safety above all in bail decisions, removing the principle of remand as the last resort and creating the toughest bail laws ever for serious offences, including a new bail test that is extremely hard to pass, and targeting repeat offenders of the worst of crimes. For that reason, I thank the Premier, the Minister for Police and all involved for making this bill possible. It is a really important measure, and we are seeing the results. The latest remand rates show an almost 75 per cent increase in remand use from this time last year, and they also show an increase of almost 350 more adults on remand from this time last year. These numbers show that our new bail laws are clearly working and that bail decision makers are listening.

In a similar line to the previous speaker, the hardworking member for Sunbury, we do listen to our community. It is really important, because there is a really clear expectation from our community on this. It is one of the most common concerns in my community. When I am out doorknocking in Clarinda – as I have been over the last couple of months, except for a short period of time – in Cheltenham, in Mentone and in Dingley Village, it is always great to hear the positivity about the electorate and also to acknowledge the concerns of our constituents. Crime is still a major concern for many, along with the importance of quality public health care, major infrastructure projects and local development and also ensuring amenity for local residents. We will keep working hard and also listening to our constituents, particularly around community safety, and will continue to work around

the government's new tough bail laws to keep Victorians safe, putting community safety above all and creating the toughest bail laws ever for serious offences, targeting repeat offenders of the worst crimes. I thank all my constituents who raised community safety with me as always. Feedback is very important to me and very important to the government. Those were positive changes which sent a clear message that community safety must be placed above all, and we will keep working on making sure that that is the case – making sure that we have the legislation to keep our communities safe and to keep our justice system operating efficiently and effectively.

That will continue here with this Justice Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2025. This is another important bill that makes a host of legislative amendments to support the courts and to improve the operations of various justice and legal acts. The first of those changes is an amendment to section 180 of the Crimes Act 1958 to narrow the trustee secret commissions offence so that it only applies to dishonest or otherwise corrupt conduct. This is an important and necessary change following recent Supreme Court decisions on the interpretations of the offence and interstate Supreme Court decisions on the equivalent offences in those jurisdictions. I am sure I do not have to go into details, but these interpretations create a real risk that trustees and associate persons may be criminally liable for routine, good-faith transactions that facilitate the replacement of a trustee, such as the payment in favour of or transaction costs and expenses to an outgoing trustee. So that needed to be sort of rectified, and it will be addressed here by this amendment.

Further, we have changes to amend the Criminal Procedure Act 2009 and the Sentencing Act 1991 to enable the Magistrates' Court of Victoria to carry out certain administrative functions within its criminal jurisdictions more efficiently. These are necessary changes that will enable the court to expand its case management system and to automate various high-volume administrative functions for criminal proceedings, including the filing of applications and filing and forwarding of documents. These are important changes that will allow for a much greater flexibility for the courts and in the longer term enable the court to adopt other systems or approaches to carry out administrative tasks more efficiently as new circumstances or new technologies emerge.

We have heard from colleagues, especially on this side of the chamber, that there are changes to amend the Justice Legislation Amendment (Criminal Appeals) Act 2019 to defer the commencement of summary appeal reforms and allow justice agencies adequate implementation time to ensure that these reforms achieve their intended benefits as well as technical amendments to the Worker Screening Act 2020 to correct referencing errors.

Finally, I would also like to mention the changes to the Social Services Regulation Act 2021 to correct an error as well as to the Magistrates' Court Act 1989 to remove outdated regulations, making powers to prescribe areas where police officers are not required to serve civil process. There are a whole host of various legislation amendments to support the courts and improve of course the operations of various justice and legal acts. Therefore it is important that we make these amendments to avoid any disruptions of the court system and to make sure that there are no impacts to court efficiency and the implementation of other recent significant reforms, including as mentioned, our bail, youth justice and committal processes.

The new bail law will put community safety front and centre of every decision on bail, and we are cracking down specifically on the crimes that are on an upward trend while people are out on bail – namely, aggravated burglary, home invasion, armed robbery and carjacking. These have real and serious impact on victims and on the community, and it is completely unacceptable that offenders are being bailed time and time again on these crimes. The benefits of this reform and others will not be achieved if the courts are not prepared for their implementation, so I commend this bill to the house.

**Annabelle CLEELAND** (Euroa) (18:31): I also rise today to make a contribution on the Justice Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2025. This bill makes a series of changes, mostly technical and administrative, to legislation across the justice portfolio. Many are straightforward. Some modernise existing provisions and others tidy up outdated cross-references or correct

inconsistencies, and on paper this is nothing controversial. But just because these are housekeeping measures does not mean that they are unimportant. Every piece of legislation that comes through this place should contribute to making our justice system fairer, faster and more accessible.

One of the key amendments in this bill is to section 180 of the Crimes Act 1958, which currently makes it an indictable offence to offer or receive a secret commission for appointing or substituting a trustee unless that has been approved by the beneficiaries or the Supreme Court. Recent court decisions have clarified that the current wording of the law does not require a corrupt or dishonest motive for someone to be convicted, and that means someone acting in good faith, without any malicious intent, could technically find themselves on the wrong side of the law. This bill fixes that by narrowing the offence so it only applies when there is a dishonest or corrupt purpose. It also removes the need for court or beneficiary consent in situations where there is no misconduct. That is a reasonable update, and it brings some needed clarity to the way we treat trustees who are doing the right thing. This change will apply retrospectively to 1 April 1959, which does sound a bit dramatic, but the government has said it will not affect any existing convictions. Again, I support this. It is a sensible correction to what was clearly an overreach.

Another part of this bill postpones the already long-delayed rollout of reforms to abolish de novo appeals – full retrials in the County Court following conviction in the Magistrates' Court. These reforms were supposed to streamline the system, reduce delays and, most importantly, spare victims and witnesses from having to go through the trauma of repeating their evidence all over again. The plan was to stop these full retrials back in 2021. That got pushed to 2023 due to COVID and again pushed to 2025. This bill kicks the can down the road to 2028; that is almost a decade of delays. The government says it needs more time and resources to make these changes, but that does not stack up when you look at what is happening behind the scenes. Court Services Victoria, already under enormous pressure, is copping cuts – \$19.1 million this year and a further \$58 million by 2027–28. That is a \$77 million reduction in funding to a system we are told cannot move forward without more support. It does not make sense. If you need more resourcing to implement justice reforms, why cut the budget for the very body responsible for making it happen?

This kind of decision-making is frustrating for everyone, but it is especially devastating for those of us in regional Victoria. Let us be honest: justice in regional courts like Benalla, Seymour, Shepparton and Wangaratta is not delivered the same way it is in the city. In Benalla crime has risen by nearly 11 per cent in the last year. In Mitchell Shire, which includes Seymour, it is up 36 per cent. In Strathbogie it is up 37 per cent from last year. Greater Shepparton, Greater Bendigo and Campaspe are all showing upward trends. Family violence incidents are climbing in every local government area in my electorate – every single region and every single town. I have had constituents contact me from Violet Town after their cars were stolen and dumped. Farmers near Colbinabbin are reporting break-ins in sheds and machinery theft, and the Murchison community house, a place meant to bring people together, was robbed. In Mitchell shire we have seen terrifying crimes involving young offenders, machetes and home invasions. In Seymour a young mum has told my team that she is scared to let her kids play in the front yard after a string of aggressive incidents occurred next door and there were no police follow-ups. This is what is happening; this is the lived reality of my community. And what makes it worse is the response – or rather, lack of response.

Instead of urgent investment in community policing, court access or victim support, we get piecemeal legislation that does not touch the core issues. Instead of speeding up court processes, we get delays dressed up as reform, and instead of listening to regional communities, we get budgets that make it harder. And let us not forget, local police stations are already stretched to the limit or closed entirely. Officers are working double shifts just to keep a presence in some of our towns. Courts are often sitting only a few days a month, and cases are delayed not by weeks but by months. If you are a victim in regional Victoria, it is a roll of the dice as to whether you will get a swift response or even a response at all, and all the while people are losing faith. They are turning to Facebook groups to warn neighbours

instead of calling 000, because they do not believe help will actually come. They are sending screenshots to my office saying, 'What more do we have to do to be taken seriously?'

I do not oppose the bill. These are necessary updates, but this government needs to stop patting itself on the back for fixing commas and crossing out obsolete clauses while the bigger problems go ignored. We need a justice system that works for all Victorians and not just those within reach of a Melbourne courtroom. That means funding our courts properly. That means listening to frontline police and prosecutors, and that means ensuring victims in Benalla, Seymour, Kilmore and Broadford get the same respect and responses as those in the city.

This government must stop ignoring the justice crisis in the bush. While the technical changes in this bill are fine, they are absolutely not enough. We need more legislation, we need more leadership and we need investment. We need a government that recognises regional Victorians deserve the same standard of justice, safety and accountability as anyone else in this state. Justice delayed is justice denied, and for people living in regional Victoria that denial is becoming far too familiar.

**Paul MERCURIO** (Hastings) (18:38): I rise to give my contribution to the Justice Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2025, which implements time-critical reforms to achieve administrative efficiencies and correct technical errors and legislation. I am not really sure where to go after saying that much, it being almost at the end – well, I was meant to be one of the last speakers. I have heard everyone talking about everything else. It has been a very wideranging debate, and there have been some really lovely lines. I did like what the member for Euroa said. It is only a very small bill – there is not much in it – but I love the way that everyone interprets what is being said.

I do like the statement, 'delays dressed up as reform', which is one way to look at it. The other way to look at what we are doing in this bill is getting it right, taking the time, being careful, being curious and looking after the people that this bill supports. I think they are all really interesting things. I also like that song *From Little Things Big Things Grow*, and there are just a lot of little things in this bill; they are important things. I do not know why – it is because it is late on Tuesday – I look at this bill and keep thinking of that milk commercial where the guy goes to the shops and says, 'I want milk,' and the lady says, 'Light milk, skim milk, almond milk,' and on and on, and he says, 'I just want milk that tastes like milk.' It is the same thing for this sort of bill. It is just the small things in this bill that in the scheme of things might not seem to be all that important, but they are.

I also apologise because I am sure I am going to say the same things that a lot of other people have said during their debates, such as that this bill will amend the Crimes Act 1958, the Justice Legislation Amendment (Criminal Appeals) Act 2019, the Criminal Procedure Act 2009 and the Sentencing Act 1991. It will correct errors in the Worker Screening Act 2020, amend the Social Services Regulation Act 2021 and amend the Magistrates' Court Act 1989. What does that mean, really? It just means that we want to look after everyone that works in the courts system. These amendments make things easier, make things fairer, make things equitable, support people that work within the courts and justice system and can make their lives a little bit easier, which is good for their health and wellbeing. Again, these little changes might not seem like much, but to some people they mean a lot.

It also is the same thing – we are supporting people that are going through the courts system and the magistrates system. We are trying to make it fairer, more equitable, again to help people go through what they are going through. As I said, I have heard a lot of different things. The member for Mildura I am not really sure spoke about anything on the bill, which was good. It is always entertaining. I like the member for Murray Plains, who commented that some people were reading notes that might have been given out to us or not. Then he proceeded to read notes, and that is okay. I do not begrudge that. I am going to refer to my notes. These bills are minor, and it is trying to get your head around it, to make sense. Again, there is the way we interpret the bill. I was disappointed that the member for Nepean came in and spoke for 4 minutes and was very negative. Again, that is okay; I guess that is politics, and we have got one side of the chamber and the other side. But there are good things in this



bill, and there are more important things in this bill than just doing the political thing of slamming each other from across the way.

I find some things amusing about the bill too, and I might just talk quickly about the bill. It corrects mistakes in the Worker Screening Act 2020, and they are just technical fixes. I do not know how people do this, how they sit in their offices and they go through all this legislation and find these points. I really say this to people – not so much to everyone in this chamber, but to people at home. God bless them if they are looking at *Hansard*; there have got to be better things to do. But if you are, a good example of correcting what one might call minor errors is in part 4 of the bill, which is amending the Worker Screening Act 2020. To not go too far into what the bill actually says and what is being changed, section 17 includes an incorrect reference to section 38, which should actually in fact reference section 37, section 36 includes a reference which actually belongs to section 35 and section 61 includes an incorrect reference to section 72 which actually should be in section 22.

I love it. It does not sound like much, but as I said, this goes to supporting people working in the justice system and the courts system. That to me is an example of important but necessary and mundane changes happening as part of this bill, and it is part of our work. It is part of what we do here. It is really great when we get really exciting bills that we can sink our teeth into, but that is not always our job. In other debates I know we have talked about the clerks or officers out in the back room with their many coloured pencils going through all the bills, acts and legislation. How on earth do you find out that section 35 was actually meant to be 36, and then 71 was 72 but 61 talked about it? I do not know, but again, I know many people have thanked the officers and the people that are doing this really important work. I thank them. I think being able to do that is really quite insane.

I want to make sure that I leave a little bit of time to talk about butter. I know that is going to really upset the member for Frankston. A lot of people have talked about butter, and I know the member for Werribee is really keen to get up and have a chat about butter. But I have got something that no-one else can say about butter and also the reason that it is in this bill, because obviously there was some nefarious activity going on in the butter industry and there was a royal commission in 1905. I note that the royal commission into butter report in 1905 was 13 pages long. The royal commission into mental health report was five volumes and over 3000 pages long, so they did not really work that hard back then. I should not say that. My great-great-great-grandfather Evan James came out from Wales when he was a young kid and he actually moved to Benalla – I do not know if you know this story, member for Shepparton. He actually ended up being the shire president of Benalla for quite a number of years, but he also owned a butter factory. He used to make butter and send it off I guess to Melbourne, and they would then send that off to London. Unfortunately – I looked it up – my great-great-great-grandfather died in 1904, but the royal commission started just around that time. So I am happy to say that there is a reason I can talk about butter in this chamber, because I had a family member involved in probably the corruption of the butter industry. Or maybe not. I should not say that – I want to call him an uncle.

I think I have only got a minute and a bit left, which is a relief for everyone. I do want to just go back quickly and say –

**A member** interjected.

**Paul MERCURIO:** Bread? Yes, I am earning my bread right now. Look, there is a lot of work. I just want to say too that there was a lot of consultation with the powers that be in making sure that this bill was discussed and agreed to. I would like to very much thank the people and the stakeholders who that were engaged in this: the police, the court system. These people helped shape the clear and more focused offences in this bill. Victoria Legal Aid, the Office of Public Prosecutions, the Magistrates' Court and the Supreme Court – they were all involved in talking about this bill and the small changes that it makes.

I would just like to reiterate again as we debate these bills, in conclusion, these things are really important. Sometimes they do not make sense, but they are really important.

**Kim O'KEEFFE** (Shepparton) (18:48): The member for Hastings was criticising the member for Mildura about being a little bit all over the shop. I am sorry, I think I might have to call you out as well on that one. But I did enjoy your contribution –

**The ACTING SPEAKER (John Mullahy)**: Through the Chair.

**Kim O'KEEFFE**: Back to the bill. I rise to stand to make a contribution on the Justice Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2025. The bill amends a number of acts to support the courts and aims to improve the operation of the Victorian justice and legal system. It amends the Crimes Act 1958, the Criminal Procedure Act 2009, the Worker Screening Act 2020 and the Sentencing Act 1991, to name a few. The bill extends the forced commencement date of summary appeal reforms that were made in the Justice Legislation Amendment (Criminal Appeals) Act 2019 for three years to 21 July 2028.

In 2019 the Parliament of the time passed laws in relation to Victoria's summary criminal appeal system. These laws will see the abolishment of summary appeals of criminal cases to the County Court and replace them with new processes that will seek to enhance the overall efficiency and reduce trauma for witnesses and victims, who will no longer have to re-attend court and give evidence a second time on appeal. Currently an appeal from a criminal conviction in the Magistrates' Court is done by way of a new hearing in the County Court, which process allows for new evidence to be admitted and new legal arguments to be made. The government has argued that these changes will lead to a more efficient appeals process and one that seeks to impose a lower burden on witnesses. Except in limited circumstances, the evidence given in the Magistrates' Court will form the evidence considered by the County Court on appeal.

Whilst we on this side of the house do not oppose the changes, we do have some concerns. The 2019 amendments, which I already mentioned, were scheduled to come into force by no later than 3 July 2021. The default commencement date was initially postponed to 1 January 2023. At the time the government argued that the court system required more time to prepare for the change as well as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the justice system. The default commencement date was then postponed to 5 July 2025. The government again blamed the effect of the pandemic and the need for additional resources into the courts, noting the ongoing effects of COVID-19 on the court system and the significant time and resources required to implement the reforms, making it necessary to further delay the commencement of de novo appeal reforms until July 2025. The bill that we are now debating seeks to delay the default commencement date of these changes for a third time – until 1 July 2028. This time around the government claims the impact of other criminal law reforms and resource requirements as driving their decisions, noting that in light of the significant time and resources required to implement the summary appeal reforms, on top of these other reforms, it is necessary to further delay their commencement. The bill before this house now seeks to further delay the commencement of these reforms to seven years after they were originally scheduled to commence. While the reforms to abolish de novo criminal appeals were designed to speed up processes in the County Court and relieve the burden on witnesses, a continual delay to these reforms by Labor suggests that either these benefits have been overstated or Labor's funding cuts of the Victorian courts have been a higher priority than reforming criminal appeals.

The bill makes technical amendments to the Criminal Procedure Act and the Sentencing Act to allow the Magistrates' Court to extend the use of its case management system in its criminal jurisdiction. The minister in the second-reading speech alluded to this amendment seeking to modernise registry services and improve the overall efficiency of court operations by enabling certain documents to be filed electronically.

Section 180 of the Crimes Act 1958, currently in force, makes it an indictable offence for a person to offer or give to a trustee, or for a trustee to receive or solicit for themselves or any other person, valuable consideration for the appointment of a new trustee in the trustee's place without the consent of all trust beneficiaries or the Supreme Court. The bill will narrow the trustee secret commission offence by requiring the relevant conduct to have been done with a dishonest or otherwise corrupt purpose and remove the requirement for consent of beneficiaries or the Supreme Court. This offence was first introduced in 1905, more than 120 years ago, after the Royal Commission on the Butter Industry had found widespread bribery and corruption involving agents, including the receipt and payment of secret commissions. I know there has been quite a bit of discussion around the butter story. That was a long time ago, 1905, and I must say we had a very successful butter factory in Shepparton, which still has the heritage building used, as a cafe. So there is a long history when it comes to the butter industry across my electorate as well. I had to add some stories in there.

As a result it was later consolidated into the Crimes Act. Recent decisions made by the Supreme Court on the application of section 180 have held that a corrupt purpose is not an element of the offence. This has left trustees and other persons engaged in routine, good faith transactions relating to the replacement of an outgoing trustee at risk of serious criminal liability. Because of this it follows that the offence is no longer fit for purpose. The amendments made under the bill will seek to ensure that only conduct done for a dishonest or otherwise corrupt purpose will be captured by section 180 itself. Hopefully, through the amendments the bill makes to section 180 of the Crimes Act, it will save those involved, as well as the court, time and resources.

One brief amendment that I would like to mention is that the bill makes amendments to the Worker Screening Act 2020 to correct errors in cross-references in the act relating to the national disability insurance scheme and working with children checks. As previous speakers have mentioned, there are currently significant delays when it comes to both NDIS and working with children checks. This can cause significant restraints across the board. We need to have the right protections in place and processes that are efficient and effective. While the reforms to abolish de novo criminal appeals were designed to speed up the processes in the County Court and relieve the burden on witnesses, the continual delay to these reforms has been ongoing.

While the government claims that the implementation of these changes will require additional resources, the government is currently slashing funding, which has been raised in this house today. As it was revealed during the PAEC hearings after the release of last year's budget, this government is cutting more than \$77 million to the state's justice system, with a \$19.1 million hit to be in this financial year, followed by a massive \$58 million cut in 2027–28. It is clearly inconsistent with the implementation of these reforms for the government to undertake a budget-slashing exercise at the very time they are now supposed to come into operation. Labor's funding cuts to the Victorian courts have been a higher priority than reforming criminal appeal. It was also revealed during the hearings that the very successful County Court backlog reduction program has been axed by the government.

With an already two-year delay to VCAT's digital transformation program and a dispute with IT contractors, it continues to hinder the modernisation of VCAT's operations altogether. Victoria has the worst court backlogs in the country, and what we see is a slash to the budget significantly impacting the state's justice system. Delaying access to and the lack of managing the state's justice system is having a significant impact. We are all very aware of the delay in the VCAT system. This has been an ongoing issue where people who need to have their cases heard are having to wait for long periods of time, which can be very distressful.

The justice system across the board has so many issues. We know that crime in this state is out of control, and we are seeing the escalation right across the state. Bail has become weaker and weaker under this government time and time again, and every week we hear of criminal activity that is leaving communities feeling disillusioned and unsafe. We are in the midst of a youth crime and bail crisis, and our bail laws are weaker now than they have ever been before, all because of this government having their priorities all wrong.

Last week I met with Senior Inspector Simpson from the Shepparton police station, and we are currently organising a community crime forum. Crime is a huge topic and concern across the community, and bringing community together and ensuring they are informed and heard is so important during these times, as is making their safety a priority. People do feel frightened, and they also are really concerned about the increasing rates of crime. Inspector Simpson also raised his frustration with having to let reoffenders back out into the community time and time again. There is a significant breakdown in the justice system.

I also want to acknowledge that the police are doing their job. They are working as hard as they can. As my police officer noted to me last week in my office, he feels that he is doing the best he can, but he has very hard restraints. They are doing their best to keep their community safe. Victorians are paying the price for Labor's broken bail laws, which are forever continuing to fuel a crime crisis across the state. We are seeing more and more cases where offenders who breach bail or reoffend whilst on bail are walking free onto the streets and youth offenders remain exempt from any penalty for ignoring their bail conditions. Serious crimes such as burglary and robbery are not even listed as serious offences under the Bail Act 1977 by this government.

The government should be condemned for its budget cuts to the Victorian justice system. Victorians expect a government that protects them, not one that neglects them and cuts critical resources from the state's justice system.

**John LISTER** (Werribee) (18:57): I rise to speak on the Justice Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2025. I know we have had a lot of miscellaneous conversation from people on all sides, but I really want to get down to one of the reasons why we are looking at these particular changes in this legislation. Justice Kirby is cited as saying that 'regular law reform is vital to a civilised society'. In this place I have also emphasised that reforming our laws and the settings they create is not just set and forget. I was reflecting earlier with some of my colleagues about some of the reasons why we do this regular law reform, and I noted that in Western Australia it is actually still an offence to possess 50 kilograms of potatoes. I think it is something that is a bit of an anachronism from a time when there might have been people who were smuggling potatoes across the border and not paying the tariffs that we had pre Federation. It is really important that we do have these laws, and thinking about those potatoes makes me also think about butter. We have had a lot of conversation about butter in this chamber. There have been some slippery slides into discussion that is not necessarily about this legislation.

This legislation is an example of government working with our legal system to make necessary changes. Regularly consulting with people like the Office of Public Prosecutions, Victorian Legal Aid, Victoria Police, the Magistrates', County and Supreme courts, Court Services Victoria, the Department of Government Services and all these different agencies means that we can find where our law is lacking and where we need to strengthen it. Quite often we hear those opposite talking about how we are not doing enough. They cite the machete ban as one of those examples of not doing enough quick enough. Well, that comes about because we are bringing this in with advice from Victoria Police about the timeframes that they need to bring this in safely, and to go and counter that advice in this place is pretty shameful. We listen to Victoria Police. It was only earlier last week that I was out with the Minister for Police and with my other Wyndham colleagues at the Werribee police station to talk to our police. It has been something that –

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! I am required by sessional orders to interrupt business. The member will have the call when the matter returns to the house.

**Business interrupted under sessional orders.**

*Adjournment*

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

That the house now adjourns.

**Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund**

**Sam GROTH** (Nepean) (19:00): (1121) My adjournment tonight is for the Treasurer, and the action I seek is for the Treasurer to immediately halt the implementation of the new emergency service and volunteers tax. This is a huge new tax; it is projected to extract more than \$50 million from Mornington Peninsula ratepayers next financial year. We will see significant rises of more than 100 per cent on residential property owners, up to 189 per cent on primary producers and 100 per cent on commercial property owners. This tax places an undue burden on our residents, especially our farmers and our small business owners, who are already grappling with the rising cost of living.

The Mornington Peninsula has a mix of residential, agricultural and commercial properties, and it will be disproportionately affected. The significant increases in charges threaten the viability of our local businesses and the livelihoods of our farmers, many of whom also serve as volunteer firefighters. The state government's approach to funding emergency services through this tax is flawed. It shifts the financial responsibility onto local communities without adequate consultation or consideration of the economic impact. Emergency services are a fundamental responsibility of the state and should be funded accordingly. I urge the Treasurer to stop the implementation of this tax. There must be a fair and equitable funding model developed, one that does not disproportionately affect the residents of my community and other regional areas. Our communities deserve transparency, fairness and a funding model that reflects the shared responsibility of providing essential emergency services.

**Mount Dandenong Tourist Road, Sassafras**

**Daniela DE MARTINO** (Monbulk) (19:02): (1122) Last July a significant landslide occurred in Sassafras, on Mount Dandenong Tourist Road near Mason Grove, which resulted in one of the two lanes being closed for a section of the road. I understand that the first priorities were to stabilise the landslip, cap and divert an existing gas main service and clear as much debris from the roadside as needed to ensure that one lane of the road was safe to open. The Department of Transport and Planning have explained that once those initial works were undertaken, experts completed a range of investigations, including geotechnical, hydrological, underground services, pavement and visual inspections, to inform the detailed design. DTP has also explained to my community that the damage caused to this section of the road means that major retaining wall works up to 70 metres long are required to properly repair the landslide and that the site is further complicated by multiple underground utilities, steep drop-offs, its close proximity to the Sassafras Creek, which sits within a national park, and the narrow road width.

With all this taken into consideration, my constituents are concerned about the time being taken for these repairs. There is significant frustration with the length of time taken thus far. The queues as cars wait for one direction to clear before they can move through can be long and time consuming for residents and the many tourists that visit the hills. Most of us are pretty patient, and I do thank all the constituents for their patience, but there is deep frustration when it appears from the outside that the progress is not moving as quickly as it could. Could the Minister for Roads and Road Safety please provide me with an update on the works, with an assurance on the timeframe for completion of the repairs?

**Patient transport**

**Tim BULL** (Gippsland East) (19:03): (1123) My adjournment tonight is to the Minister for Health, and not for the first time the action I seek is for her to fix the broken Victorian patient transport assistance scheme, or VPTAS as it is known. Patients in East Gippsland are still waiting five months to be reimbursed for travel that they made to essential medical appointments. Most of these people

have multiple reimbursements outstanding. There are long gaps between when the claims are submitted and when the patients are notified that their application has even been received, let alone processed. When payments finally come through there is no clear reference as to which trip they relate to, so for patients to sort out what they have been reimbursed for and what is still outstanding is indeed a nightmare. Patients have also been made to feel like a nuisance just for following up on the reimbursements that they are entitled to. One resident was told quite bluntly by a staff member, 'If I didn't have to take your call, I'd be able to process the claims faster.'

Here are some examples of the situations. A constituent travelled to see a specialist on 5 December – an appointment in Melbourne, 5 December; the claim was submitted the following day, 6 December; VPTAS did not confirm receipt of that application until 19 February. Why does it take nine weeks for a patient just to be notified that their claim has been received? And then the payment was not paid until 8 May – 8 May. This patient still has other claims outstanding that they have not been reimbursed for. Another resident, who I have raised an issue on behalf of previously in this chamber, has said that they finally got their payment, but now their second one has blown past the 12-week timeframe. It is just simply not good enough.

East Gippsland residents and many in rural and regional Victoria face enough barriers to get to their medical appointments without having to put up with these delayed reimbursements that they are entitled to. The government is expecting patients to carry the costs as to what is rightfully owed to them, all at the same time as increasing taxes in a whole range of areas on these very same people. The minister has committed to fixing this in the past; it has not happened, and I urge her to make sure this is fixed properly and country patients are reimbursed on time.

### Suburban Rail Loop

**Meng Heang TAK** (Clarinda) (19:06): (1124) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop. Can the minister please provide the latest information on how the Suburban Rail Loop – Australia's largest housing and transport project – will benefit my constituents in the Clarinda district? It was fantastic to have the Premier, the minister and colleagues out to my electorate last week to visit the tunnel-boring machine launch site in Clarinda, where major construction is steaming ahead, with tunnelling to begin next year. Tunnel-boring machines will arrive this year before they start carving out the southern sections of the twin Suburban Rail Loop tunnels. I thank the minister for visiting and for her continued investment in the Clarinda district. It is not her first time. She also attended the electorate office last week to meet with several of my constituents living near the SRL stabling yard site in Heatherton to hear their concerns and to discuss ways to mitigate construction impacts on residents. I thank the minister for taking the time to engage with residents. I really appreciated her visit, and I know the community did too. It was a positive discussion, and I look forward to continued engagement.

The Suburban Rail Loop is powering ahead with major work, and I understand that the construction of the Suburban Rail Loop East from Cheltenham to Box Hill is creating up to 8000 direct jobs, with more than 3000 people already working on the project, and trains will be taking passengers on board by 2035. With major construction underway on the Suburban Rail Loop, we are closer every day to delivering more homes and better connections so people can stay close to family where they grew up and spend less time on the road. I thank the minister for her work and for her engagement, and I look forward to hearing more.

### Drought

**Roma BRITNELL** (South-West Coast) (19:08): (1125) My adjournment matter is to the Minister for Agriculture, and the action I seek is for the minister to provide relief to south-west farmers affected by drought. The Allan Labor government needs to step up to the plate, like the South Australian government have with their relief package. The autumn rains have not come. The Bureau of Meteorology recently confirmed that rainfall in South-West Coast is at record lows. This is not just a bad season, this is a crisis that has been unfolding for over two years. In my 25 years on the land I

have never seen a failed spring followed by a failed autumn, following a year of low rain. We have had it tough, but this is worse than the 1967 drought. The dams are dry, paddocks are bare, water is being trucked in and hay is unavailable. Livestock are being sold off, not by choice but by necessity. Families are watching generations of work slip through their fingers. Farmers are inundating me with their cries for help. Stock agents, feed suppliers and truck drivers are distressed by the suffering of the farming communities they serve. This drought is not just breaking the land, it is breaking people, and while they are proud and stoic, they should not be left to face this alone. The drought is a natural disaster, just like a fire or flood; it needs an emergency response. The minister says she has visited, listened and assisted – well, a visit eight months ago demonstrates a lack of care. Conditions have deteriorated massively since then.

So poor is the Allan Labor government's understanding of the plight of our farmers that all they have done is allocate \$5000 co-contribution grants for water and storage facilities, despite the fact there is no water or food to put in these storages. Our farmers need assistance now to keep their stock alive; there will be no food provided otherwise. The Allan Labor government can prevent the cost of milk and meat from rising if they support our drought-stricken farmers now. This government must hear the pleas and act with urgency and compassion. Our farmers need support, and they need clarity, and above all, they need to know that they are not forgotten. The South Australian government have come to the aid of their farmers who border Victoria's south-west by increasing their initial package from \$18 million to \$73 million of funding. This compares with the Allan Labor government's paltry co-contribution grants of just \$13.5 million, and there is no money to co-contribute. Why are the pleas of our struggling farmers in south-west Victoria falling on deaf ears? If ever there was a time to stand with our farmers, it is now.

### Westgarth Primary School

**Kat THEOPHANOUS** (Northcote) (19:11): (1126) My adjournment is to the Minister for Education. The action that I seek is that the minister joins me in visiting Westgarth Primary School to officially open its newly completed competition-grade gymnasium and modern classrooms and meet some of the remarkable students, educators and families who helped shape this achievement.

Westgarth Primary has come a very long way since its foundation stone was laid by John Cain Sr on 12 March in 1924, 101 years ago. The original Clarke Street building was plagued by unstable ground and flooding that deteriorated the building over time. As a result, in the early 1970s the school expanded onto neighbouring Brooke Street, once known locally as Smith's Paddock, where local children would play. The Clarke Street building was eventually demolished and a new cream brick building was built, serendipitously opened by John Cain Jr in 1992. Over the decades, across the two sites new classrooms, a kindergarten and a kitchen garden were added. Enrolments grew, as did Westgarth Primary's reputation for excellence. Now, in a full-circle moment, a stunning new gym and classrooms rise on the very site of the original building, a powerful symbol of renewal. It is amazing to think how Westgarth Primary has transformed over time and how our Labor government has contributed to this next chapter of its story. This is a school of spirit and soul built not only from bricks and mortar but from decades of community care, ambition and aspiration and a belief that every child deserves the best education no matter their background or where they live.

It has been one of my greatest honours to support Westgarth Primary through years of advocacy. There were setbacks and challenges, but we stood together, and we never gave up on our mission to grow support for this project, to secure the funds and to get it built. Now generations of Westgarth students will learn in light-filled, inspiring spaces. The ageing portables have been removed. Students will perform and play in their full-sized indoor gym, explore beautiful outdoor areas and collaborate in superb classrooms.

It was a special moment in 2022 when we announced nearly \$13 million in funding for this major capital project. In fact every time I have fought for our local schools in the inner north, dreaming big and delivering vital improvements, it has been special, because these are not just physical upgrades;

each project is a testament to our shared values. They represent our Labor government's belief in our children, in our educators and in the enduring value of public education. That commitment is not abstract; it is in the tangible improvements we are making across infrastructure, curriculum, student wellbeing, workforce support and helping families. That is what I will always fight for: more support, more resources, more projects and more initiatives that give students the chance to be nurtured and uplifted. Our upgrade to Westgarth Primary is part of that, and I know the school community would be honoured to welcome the minister to visit us. To the Westgarth Primary community: thank you. This is your achievement, and I could not be prouder to see how far you have come since that first foundation stone.

### Family violence

**Gabrielle DE VIETRI** (Richmond) (19:14): (1127) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, and the action I seek is to find a permanent home for the *She Matters* memorial and for investment in real solutions to family and domestic violence.

128 – that is the number of Australian women and children who have been killed since the start of 2024, 25 of them this year alone, overwhelmingly at the hands of male partners or family members. And for every murder, there are countless more women and children who commit suicide after experiencing family violence. On Saturday I joined thousands to march through the streets calling on our governments to do more to stop men from killing women and to keep women and children fleeing family violence safe. As we named the women one by one, teenagers nearby held each other, their shoulders shaking with grief. One father called out, 'That's my daughter.' Enough is enough – too many names, too many vigils, too many lives taken too soon.

We must acknowledge that men's violence against women disproportionately impacts First Nations women, migrants and refugees, queer women and women with disabilities. As the epidemic of violence grows, support services are being stretched. But the worst thing is that they are facing cuts, with family violence and Koori Court jobs being identified as cost-cutting opportunities by this government when what we need is clear – more prevention, more education and housing security for the women who need it. Please, more must be done.

The memory of these women must spur us to do better. Yet, not far from here, a commemorative mural in their names, the *She Matters* mural, was defaced just last week. That is why I am calling on the state government to help find a permanent public home for the *She Matters* mural, to honour the women murdered and to remind us every day to do better. To the ones we have lost, to those who carry the weight of survival: you are not alone. We fight with you.

### Australian Tapestry Workshop

**Nina TAYLOR** (Albert Park) (19:16): (1128) My adjournment matter is directed to the Minister for Creative Industries the honourable Colin Brooks. The action I seek is for the minister to visit the Australian Tapestry Workshop in Albert Park to engage with local creatives, to showcase the remarkable creative works in my community.

Albert Park is home to a vibrant and diverse creative community, and the Australian Tapestry Workshop stands as a testament to the skill, innovation and dedication of our local artists. The workshop is currently producing a significant and ambitious work titled *Welcome to Country – Now You See Me: Seeing the Invisible*, designed by renowned artist Maree Clarke, a Yorta Yorta/Wamba Wamba/Mutti Mutti/Boonwurrung woman, and Mitch Mahoney, Boonwurrung/Barkindji. Commissioned for the new Footscray Hospital, this landmark 10 by 4.2 metre tapestry, to be displayed in an immersive, elliptical form, is amongst the most meaningful pieces the workshop has ever undertaken.

Created over the course of a year by a team of 12 weavers, *Welcome to Country* represents a remarkable collaboration. A visit by the minister would highlight the importance of supporting our



creative industries and celebrating the outstanding artists involved in this project. I look forward to the minister's response and hope to welcome him to Albert Park soon to experience the exceptional work of the Australian Tapestry Workshop and our broader creative community.

### **Curyo wind farm**

**Jade BENHAM** (Mildura) (19:18): (1129) My adjournment matter this evening is for the Minister for Planning, and the action I seek is to ensure that Cubico Sustainable Investments are required to prepare an environment effects statement and go through the proper process before a planning permit is granted. Many residents in my electorate have contacted me, particularly over the last week or so, very concerned about the plan for a wind farm project. They have requested advice with regard to an environment effects statement under section 8 of the Environment Effects Act 1978 from Minister Kilkenny's office and from Buloke Shire Council. I have spoken to the CEO of Buloke Shire Council. Of course, they are not the statutory authority here; it goes directly to the minister.

Because of the lack of consultation that the community have had – particularly with Buloke Shire Council and the neighbouring council of Yarriambiack – with regard to these wind farm projects and buffer zones et cetera and the lack of communication and transparency, community members are really concerned. They are of the understanding that if an application is made to the minister to not have to provide an environment effects statement, then it does not have to be done. They are of the belief that it absolutely should have to be done, as I think we all would be, because of the threat to native species, particularly in the Mallee, and of course the offsets, the buffer zones.

We have come across this issue a few times, particularly in this part of the world, and honestly, it is putting community members, neighbours, generational farmers and families at war with one another. One may want a wind turbine on their farm, but they are not aware of the complications and the issues around the buffer zones with regard to their neighbours' dwellings. There is a lack of transparency with these renewable projects, and again, these community members are not saying they are against renewables – quite the contrary; they are against the lack of transparency. There has been none from the government as far as VNI West goes. There is none here. And when more than two people turn up to a community consultation session, then it does not happen and it is shut down. It is not good enough. Community members deserve to be communicated with, and I urge the minister to please consult with these community members before any further action is taken.

### **Ripon electorate health services**

**Martha HAYLETT** (Ripon) (19:20): (1130) My adjournment matter is for the attention of the Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services. The action I seek is that the minister joins me in my electorate to meet with healthcare workers and paramedics about our region's healthcare needs. Our state Labor government has invested so much into health care across Ripon, including upgrading the Ararat hospital and ambulance station; bringing MICA paramedics to Ararat and the Grampians; opening a new women's sexual and reproductive health hub in Ararat; upgrading the Ballarat Base Hospital; building new ambulance stations in Avoca and Inglewood and putting more ambos on shift; doing critical upgrades to the St Arnaud hospital, Inglewood hospital and Beaufort hospital; building student accommodation for future nurses and doctors in Maryborough; and building a new ambulance station in Wedderburn very soon as well. We have just completed the \$115 million redevelopment of Maryborough hospital as well. So many people told me that this would never happen, that they would believe it when they saw it. Well, now it is done with world-class health care close to home for Maryborough families. The new hospital includes a 32-bed inpatient unit, two operating theatres, a new maternity unit, a day medical centre, an urgent care centre, dialysis imaging, pharmacy services and more.

Despite all these incredible investments, there is still more to do, including funding more capital upgrades at our rural hospitals, building new ambulance stations in our growing communities and making more ambulance stations 24-hour stations. I would welcome the minister to visit again soon and discuss these projects further so that we can continue to deliver incredible health care across Ripon.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Mildura, there were two actions in your statement. Just for clarification, the first was asking the minister to require an environment effects statement (EES), if I remember, but at the end of your statement you asked for consultation with the community. Is it the first one?

**Jade Benham:** The first one.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you. So to clarify, it was Cubico Sustainable Investments required to produce an EES?

**Jade Benham:** Required to prepare an environment effects statement and go through the proper process before a planning permit is granted.

### Responses

**Natalie SULEYMAN** (St Albans – Minister for Veterans, Minister for Small Business and Employment, Minister for Youth) (19:23): The member for Nepean raised a matter for the attention of the Treasurer, and the action that the member seeks is for the minister to review the fire services levy. The member for Monbulk raised a matter for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and the action the member seeks is for a review in relation to updated works on the landslide matter in her electorate. The member for Gippsland East raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Health, and the action the member seeks is for a review of patients at Gippsland East in relation to the medical appointments and the reimbursements of these that should be made in a timely manner and for the minister to respond to the member.

The member for Clarinda raised a matter for the Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop, and the member seeks for her to provide an update on the latest information on how the Suburban Rail Loop, Australia's largest housing and transport project, will benefit the constituents in the Clarinda district. The member for South-West Coast raised a matter for the Minister for Agriculture, and the action that the member seeks is for the minister to provide an update on the matter of the recent drought and to provide relief for farmers affected by the drought in her electorate. The member for Northcote raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Education, and the member seeks for the minister to join her to officially open the newly completed major upgrades at Westgarth Primary in her electorate.

The member for Richmond raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, and the action the member seeks is for the minister to find a permanent public home for the *She Matters* mural. The member for Albert Park raised a matter for the Minister for Creative Industries, and the action the member seeks is for the minister to join the member in visiting the Australian Tapestry Workshop in her electorate of Albert Park. The member for Mildura raised a matter for the Minister for Planning. The action the member seeks is for the minister to ensure that Cubico goes through the appropriate planning process, including conducting an environmental plan for their application. The member for Ripon raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services, and the action the member seeks is for the minister to join her in her electorate to meet with healthcare workers and paramedics and discuss the region's healthcare needs.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The house stands adjourned until tomorrow morning.

**House adjourned 7:26 pm.**