



Hansard

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

60th Parliament

Thursday 19 February 2026

Office-holders of the Legislative Assembly

60th Parliament

Speaker

Maree Edwards

Deputy Speaker

Matt Fregon

Acting Speakers

Juliana Addison, Martin Cameron, Jordan Crugnale, Daniela De Martino, Wayne Farnham, Lauren Kathage, Nathan Lambert, Paul Mercurio, Kim O’Keeffe, Meng Heang Tak and Iwan Walters

Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Premier

Jacinta Allan (from 27 September 2023)

Daniel Andrews (to 27 September 2023)

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Deputy Premier

Ben Carroll (from 28 September 2023)

Jacinta Allan (to 27 September 2023)

Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party and Leader of the Opposition

Jess Wilson (from 18 November 2025)

Brad Battin (from 27 December 2024 to 18 November 2025)

John Pesutto (to 27 December 2024)

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

David Southwick (from 28 January 2026)

Sam Groth (from 27 December 2024 to 28 January 2026)

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

Anthony Carbines (from 15 April 2026)

Mary-Anne Thomas (to 15 April 2026)

Manager of Opposition Business

James Newbury (from 13 October 2025)

Bridget Vallence (from 7 January 2025 to 13 October 2025)

James Newbury (to 7 January 2025)

Members of the Legislative Assembly

60th Parliament

Member	District	Party	Member	District	Party
Addison, Juliana	Wendouree	ALP	Lister, John ⁸	Werribee	ALP
Allan, Jacinta	Bendigo East	ALP	Maas, Gary	Narre Warren South	ALP
Andrews, Daniel ¹	Mulgrave	ALP	McCurdy, Tim	Ovens Valley	Nat
Battin, Brad	Berwick	Lib	McGhie, Steve	Melton	ALP
Benham, Jade	Mildura	Nat	McLeish, Cindy	Eildon	Lib
Britnell, Roma	South-West Coast	Lib	Marchant, Alison	Bellarine	ALP
Brooks, Colin	Bundoora	ALP	Matthews-Ward, Kathleen	Broadmeadows	ALP
Bull, Josh	Sunbury	ALP	Mercurio, Paul	Hastings	ALP
Bull, Tim	Gippsland East	Nat	Mullahy, John	Glen Waverley	ALP
Cameron, Martin	Morwell	Nat	Newbury, James	Brighton	Lib
Carbines, Anthony	Ivanhoe	ALP	O'Brien, Danny	Gippsland South	Nat
Carroll, Ben	Niddrie	ALP	O'Brien, Michael	Malvern	Lib
Cheeseman, Darren ²	South Barwon	Ind	O'Keeffe, Kim	Shepparton	Nat
Cianflone, Anthony	Pascoe Vale	ALP	Pallas, Tim ⁹	Werribee	ALP
Cleland, 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 ¹⁰	Warrandyte	Lib
Edwards, Maree	Bendigo West	ALP	Southwick, David	Caulfield	Lib
Famham, Wayne	Narracan	Lib	Spence, Ros	Kalkallo	ALP
Foster, Eden ³	Mulgrave	ALP	Staikos, Nick	Bentleigh	ALP
Fowles, Will ⁴	Ringwood	Ind	Suleyman, Natalie	St Albans	ALP
Fregon, Matt	Ashwood	ALP	Tak, Meng Heang	Clarinda	ALP
George, Ella	Lara	ALP	Taylor, Jackson	Bayswater	ALP
Grigorovitch, Luba	Kororoit	ALP	Taylor, Nina	Albert Park	ALP
Groth, Sam ⁵	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 ^{6,7}	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 ¹¹	Warrandyte	Lib
Hutchins, Natalie	Sydenham	ALP	Westaway, Rachel ¹²	Prahran	Lib
Kathage, Lauren	Yan Yean	ALP	Wight, Dylan	Tarneit	ALP
Kealy, Emma	Lowan	Nat	Williams, Gabrielle	Dandenong	ALP
Kilkenny, Sonya	Carrum	ALP	Wilson, Belinda	Narre Warren North	ALP
Lambert, Nathan	Preston	ALP	Wilson, Jess	Kew	Lib

¹ Resigned 27 September 2023

² ALP until 29 April 2024

³ Sworn in 6 February 2024

⁴ ALP until 5 August 2023

⁵ Resigned 13 February 2026

⁶ Greens until 1 November 2024

⁷ Resigned 23 November 2024

⁸ Sworn in 4 March 2025

⁹ Resigned 6 January 2025

¹⁰ Resigned 7 July 2023

¹¹ Sworn in 3 October 2023

¹² 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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Thursday 19 February 2026

The SPEAKER (Maree Edwards) took the chair at 9:32 am, read the prayer and made an Acknowledgement of Country.

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

The SPEAKER (09:34): General business, notices of motion 65 to 68 and orders of the day 1 and 2, will be removed from the notice paper unless members wishing their matter to remain advise the Clerk in writing before 2 pm today.

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

Education and Training Reform Act 2006 – Order in Council – Amalgamation of the Wodonga Institute of Technical and Further Education and the Goulburn Ovens Institute of Technical and Further Education under s 3.1.11

Family Violence Protection Act 2008 – Report 2024–25 on the implementation of the Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework

Public Prosecutions, Office of – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 – Documents under s 15 in relation to Statutory Rules 10, 12

Victims of Crime Commissioner – Report 2024–25.

PROCLAMATION – Under SO 177A, the Clerk tabled the following proclamation fixing an operative date:

Transport Legislation Amendment Act 2025 – Parts 1, 2 and 5 and ss 4, 5, 7, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15 and 20 – 1 March 2026 (*Gazette S88, 17 February 2026*).

*Motions***Motions by leave**

Danny O’BRIEN (Gippsland South) (09:35): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the member for Ripon for refusing to support a royal commission into Big Build corruption, enabling criminal infiltration of taxpayer-funded projects, turning a blind eye to state-funded strippers and bikies on worksites and betraying Ripon families, who miss out on vital services and funding.

Leave refused.

Jordan CRUGNALE (Bass) (09:35): I move, by leave:

That this house notes that Phillip Island has been the traditional home of the MotoGP for 30 years, condemns the private owners of the MotoGP for demanding Labor move the event to Albert Park, affirms that Victoria could have kept the MotoGP in Victoria if we sold out Phillip Island, but Labor never will.

Members interjecting.

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

Member for Brighton withdrew from chamber.

Leave refused.

Ellen SANDELL (Melbourne) (09:36): I move, by leave:

That this house:

- (1) notes the thousands of Victorians who peacefully turned out last Thursday to oppose the decision by the Victorian government to roll out the welcome mat for a visit by Israeli President Isaac Herzog;
- (2) notes the UN commission's findings that Herzog made comments inciting genocide in Palestine;
- (3) condemns and is appalled by New South Wales Police's violent attacks against similar protests in Sydney, including men who were dragged and shoved while in the middle of their sunset prayers; and
- (4) asserts that the right to protest is a fundamental human right in a democracy and this right must be protected.

Leave refused.

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (09:36): I move, by leave:

That this house calls on the Leader of the Opposition to clarify if her hesitancy to deny a preference deal with the One Nation party is because she supports the racist, divisive and cruel comments made by the leader of One Nation suggesting there is no such thing as a good Muslim, while at the same time being urged by the former Liberal Premier Jeff Kennett to form a grand coalition with One Nation.

Leave refused.

Wayne FARNHAM (Narracan) (09:37): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the member for Bass for failing to stand up for her community, as regional Victoria loses the MotoGP, costing the Bass Coast an estimated \$29 million in economic activity and 284 local jobs. This decision is a serious blow to tourism, local business and workers across the region.

Leave refused.

Michaela SETTLE (Eureka) (09:38): I move, by leave:

That this house:

- (1) stands with Victoria's multicultural communities, including Chinese, Indian and Muslim communities;
- (2) condemns the leader of the One Nation party for her divisive and cruel comments; and
- (3) calls on the Leader of the Opposition to do the same.

Matthew Guy interjected.

The SPEAKER: The member for Bulleen is warned.

Leave refused.

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (09:38): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the member for Bass for failing to inform the Bass Coast shire and Destination Phillip Island that the MotoGP, regional Victoria's largest event, has been cancelled after 30 years, leaving local communities to learn about the decision through the newspaper.

Leave refused.

Pauline RICHARDS (Cranbourne) (09:38): I move, by leave:

That this house notes the widely condemned comments by the leader of One Nation on Sky News regarding Muslim Australians; and

- (1) notes the recently opened branch in Narracan; and
- (2) calls on the member for Narracan to clarify whether they will support such rhetoric and if they have now ruled out jumping ship.

Leave refused.

Roma BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (09:39): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the member for Point Cook for refusing to support a royal commission into Big Build corruption, enabling criminal infiltration of taxpayer-funded projects, turning a blind eye to state-funded strippers and bikies on worksites and betraying Point Cook families, who miss out on vital services and funding.

Leave refused.

Juliana ADDISON (Wendouree) (09:39): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the Shadow Attorney-General for plagiarising a One Nation media release for his unoriginal motions.

Leave refused.

Annabelle CLEELAND (Euroa) (09:40): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the member for Pascoe Vale for refusing to support a royal commission into Big Build corruption, enabling criminal infiltration of taxpayer-funded projects, turning a blind eye to state-funded strippers and bikies on worksites and betraying Pascoe Vale families, who miss out on vital services and funding.

Leave refused.

John LISTER (Werribee) (09:40): I move, by leave:

That this house notes the contradiction of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition sharing press releases condemning Islamophobia at the same time as the Liberal Party are doing backdoor deals with the One Nation party, who only incite division and hate in our community.

Leave refused.

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn) (09:40): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the member for Cranbourne for refusing to support a royal commission into Big Build corruption, enabling criminal infiltration of taxpayer-funded projects, turning a blind eye to state-funded strippers and bikies on worksites and betraying Cranbourne families, who miss out on vital services and funding.

Leave refused.

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (09:41): I move, by leave:

That this house notes the widely condemned comments made by the leader of the One Nation party on Sky News regarding Muslim Australians and notes the recently opened branch in Gippsland East and calls on the member for Gippsland East to clarify whether they support such rhetoric and if they have now ruled out jumping ship.

Leave refused.

Richard RIORDAN (Polwarth) (09:41): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the member for Eureka for refusing to support a royal commission into Big Build corruption, enabling criminal infiltration of taxpayer-funded projects, turning a wanton blind eye to state-funded strippers and bikies on worksites and betraying the people of Eureka, who miss out on vital services and funding as a result.

Leave refused.

Kathleen MATTHEWS-WARD (Broadmeadows) (09:42): I move, by leave:

That this house notes the widely condemned comments made by the leader of the One Nation party on Sky News regarding Muslim Australians –

it is absolutely untrue, and it made me feel absolutely furious but also really sad –

and notes the recently opened branch in Warrandyte of One Nation and calls on the member for Warrandyte to clarify whether they support such rhetoric and if they have now ruled out jumping ship.

Leave refused.

Chris CREWTHER (Mornington) (09:42): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the member for Laverton for refusing to support a royal commission into Big Build corruption, enabling criminal infiltration of taxpayer-funded projects, turning a blind eye to state-funded strippers and bikies on worksites and betraying Laverton families, who miss out on vital services and funding.

Leave refused.

Steve McGHIE (Melton) (09:43): I move, by leave:

That this house notes the widely condemned comments made by the leader of the One Nation party on Sky News regarding Muslim Australians and notes the recently opened branch in Eildon and calls on the member for Eildon to clarify whether they support such rhetoric and if they have now ruled out jumping ship.

Leave refused.

Martin CAMERON (Morwell) (09:43): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the member for Narre Warren North for refusing to support a royal commission into the Big Build corruption, enabling criminal infiltration of taxpayer-funded projects, turning a blind eye to state-funded strippers and bikies on worksites and betraying Narre Warren North families, who miss out on vital services and funding.

Leave refused.

Josh BULL (Sunbury) (09:43): I move, by leave:

That this house notes the widely condemned comments made by the leader of One Nation on Sky News regarding Muslim Australians and notes the recently opened branch in Evelyn and calls on the member for Evelyn to clarify whether she supports such rhetoric and if they have now ruled out jumping ship.

Leave refused.

Wayne FARNHAM (Narracan) (09:44): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the member for Narre Warren South for refusing to support a royal commission into Big Build corruption, enabling criminal infiltration of taxpayer-funded projects, turning a blind eye to state-funded strippers and bikies on worksites and betraying Narre Warren South families, who miss out on vital services and funding.

Leave refused.

Kim O'KEEFFE (Shepparton) (09:44): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the member for Tarneit for refusing to support a royal commission into Big Build corruption, enabling criminal infiltration of taxpayer-funded projects, turning a blind eye to state-funded strippers and bikies on worksites, and betraying Tarneit families, who miss out on vital services and funding.

Leave refused.

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (09:45): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the member for Albert Park for refusing to support a royal commission into Big Build corruption, enabling criminal infiltration of taxpayer-funded projects, turning a blind eye to state-funded strippers and bikies on worksites, and betraying Albert Park families, who miss out on vital services and funding – but nowhere near like the regions who miss out on these vital services and funding.

Leave refused.

Rachel WESTAWAY (Pahran) (09:45): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the member for Werribee for refusing to support a royal commission into Big Build corruption, enabling criminal infiltration of taxpayer-funded projects, turning a blind eye to state-funded strippers and bikies on worksites, and betraying Werribee families, who miss out on vital services and funding.

Leave refused.

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (09:46): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events for turning his back on regional Victoria, noting that under his watch regional Victoria has lost the MotoGP, costing Bass Coast \$29 million in economic activity and 284 jobs, and further noting the \$600 million cost of scrapping the Commonwealth Games in regional Victoria.

Leave refused.

Business of the house

Adjournment

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Women) (09:46): I move:

That the house, at its rising, adjourns until 3 March 2026.

Motion agreed to.

Members statements

Construction industry

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (09:47): Regional Victorians want our roads fixed. We need new schools and hospitals. Thousands of us are languishing on surgery waiting lists. We are unable to get dental treatment or mental health support. Our CFA volunteers are driving around in 40-year-old trucks, and some cannot get new trucks because their stations are so small and out of date they will not fit inside. With all of this, at the same time this government has overseen the corrupt funnelling of at least \$15 billion – that is 'billion' with a 'b' – to criminals and bikies on the Big Build projects. What a disgrace. Just think what could have been done with that money and how it could have improved the lives of everyday Victorians by funding more surgeries, more police, better roads and more support for our emergency services like the CFA and the SES. We need a new Sale College, which the community has been campaigning for for nine years. That money, that \$15 billion wasted, could have built 215 of them. It could have built 3000 new fire stations like the ones needed for Foster and Mirboo North. And yet this rotten Labor government stands back and says, 'Nothing to see here.' Indeed ministers are openly mocking the report. They are shooting the messenger instead of taking action. They are saying that evidence presented by a respected investigator is 'florid ramblings' and 'reckless'. What a disgrace. What an affront to hardworking Victorians, who are seeing their hard-earned tax dollars flushed down the toilet of corruption and graft under Labor.

Niddrie electorate

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Minister for Education, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC) (09:48): I rise today to talk about the conversations I have been having on the ground across the great electorate of Niddrie. Over the summer period I have been out and about in the community, talking to people and getting on the phones. It has been a great way to start this year, doorknocking and phone calling in Gowanbrae, Keilor Park and Airport West. This is just the beginning. Can I say everyone in our local community is super keen to hear more about the key public transport initiatives, from the brand new trams coming to Keilor East station to free weekend travel and airport rail as well. Once we get the Sunshine superhub underway, airport rail will be well on the way too. Residents also wanted to discuss local schools. Having gone from no funding in Niddrie electorate, now millions and millions and millions of dollars are going to local schools. We actually had to bring the door from a local school

in to the Liberal minister for education back in the day – that was how well the Liberals knew where Niddrie was. But what I can say is we have just appointed a builder for the \$19 million redevelopment of Buckley Park College. There is also the cost-of-living support: the power saving bonus, the free kinder, the school saving bonus and the government community pharmacy program. This is what being a local representative is all about. These conversations with the community are invaluable in shaping the future. Listening is vital, but action is what counts: putting public transport front and centre for the Niddrie electorate, making sure we invest in education and making sure everyone in our local community has every opportunity to thrive and gets the power of education to transform their lives.

Country Fire Authority Gruyere brigade

Bridget VALLENCE (Evelyn) (09:50): I wish to pay tribute to Gruyere CFA fire brigade members for their exceptional and longstanding service to our community and Victoria as volunteer firefighters. Congratulations, Andrea Bigham and Matt Sartori, for 40 years of dedicated service as CFA firefighters and being bestowed CFA life membership medals. Andrea Bigham has held many brigade roles, including secretary, first lieutenant and Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria delegate, and is currently Yarra Valley group second deputy group officer and group community safety coordinator. Andrea is an awesome human being, and her commitment to community and road safety especially is second to none. Matt Sartori has held many roles with Gruyere CFA, including first lieutenant, crew leader and strike team leader. Most notably, Matt Sartori was the captain of Gruyere CFA fire brigade for an amazing 18 years, showing strong leadership and tenacity and ensuring the brigade's growth and development, for which our community is grateful. Congratulations, Peter Burgi, for an outstanding and inspirational 65 years of service as a CFA volunteer and being bestowed CFA life membership. After starting at Wandin CFA, Peter Burgi was a foundational member of the Gruyere CFA in 1962 and held brigade roles including third lieutenant and VFBV delegate, and he is still an operational firefighter today. Peter has always been and continues to be a strong contributor to our local community, for which we owe a debt of gratitude, selflessly helping others, including me. Congratulations, Peter, Andrea and Matt, for your dedicated service to the CFA and our community, and thank you for your friendship.

Mill Park electorate early childhood education and care

Lily D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park – Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for the State Electricity Commission) (09:51): I am delighted to speak about the Building Blocks inclusion and improvement grants, which will enable significant upgrades to kindergartens in my electorate. Labor knows the important role that kindergartens play in giving children the best start in life. Marymede Early Learning Centre in South Morang will receive \$200,000 to undertake inclusive outdoor play area improvements and reduce ongoing maintenance at the site. The Mill Park Heights Child Care Centre will receive \$9054 for new sensory and inclusive equipment, including adaptive play structures, sensory panels and inclusive seating arrangements. Blossom Park, Roycroft and Goodstart kindergartens will receive \$1780 each for technological resources, allowing staff greater time to focus on educational outcomes.

Pick My Park

Lily D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park – Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for the State Electricity Commission) (09:52): The Allan Labor government realises the value of free and modern parks, which Victorian families deserve, and the importance of outdoor play and exercise close to home. That is why under the Pick My Park program we are delivering quality upgrades, with \$250,000 for Meadowglen playground, \$110,000 for Golf Links Drive park and \$100,000 for Longwood playground. These improvements will replace ageing infrastructure and create safe, inclusive spaces for families and the local community, because helping families is what this government does. I also want to take the opportunity to encourage residents to suggest parks for the second round of the Pick My Park program. Applications are now open until 2 April, so if there is a local park near you that you think needs an upgrade, contact my office.

Construction industry

Tim BULL (Gippsland East) (09:53): In my time in this place I have never seen anything like what is known as the *Rotting from the Top* report, which outlines the biggest corruption in the state's history. Its allegations of deep corruption outline costs to taxpayers of \$15 billion, which Geoffrey Watson SC said was probably conservative. When our Premier was asked by the media if she was looking the other way before 2024 and how did she not know what was bleedingly obvious, she just answered by saying she referred it to IBAC, but we now know that she was told that IBAC did not have the powers to investigate. So what happened then? Absolutely nothing. Not good enough.

Mary-Anne Thomas interjected.

Tim BULL: Not good enough, Minister for Health. On the \$15 billion in waste, the Premier simply said the claim is not well tested but then would refuse to test it. We need a royal commission. These are claims by a senior counsel, not a newspaper or the opposition, and they need to be investigated properly. We have a government hitting Victorians with a raft of new taxes – \$3 billion on the emergency services levy – whilst wasting \$15 billion on these complete rorts. Premier, you either knew or should have known. It is time for you to go.

Minister for Energy and Resources

Tim BULL (Gippsland East) (09:54): I hear this week the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission is suing Coles over allegations of fake discounts on their Down Down campaign. I wonder if the Minister for Energy and Resources will also be investigated, having borrowed that slogan falsely to talk about power bills in the state.

Noelene Ward

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Women) (09:54): Noelene Ward was a much-loved mother, partner and grandmother and a tireless advocate for compassion, connection and suicide prevention. Following the tragic loss of her son Liam, Noelene transformed her grief into purpose, becoming a driving force behind Live4Life and the Macedon Ranges Suicide Prevention Action Group. Through her courage and kindness Noelene touched countless lives and leaves behind a legacy that will endure. It was always a pleasure to spend time with Noelene. I send my heartfelt condolences to her husband Marcus, to her daughter Lynsey and her partner Anthony and to her little granddaughter Wren.

Steve Wroe

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Women) (09:55): Steve Wroe was fun and dynamic, brimming with ideas and energy. A CEO at Daylesford Macedon Tourism, he completely transformed our tourism economy with his singular focus on increasing visitation and more overnight stays in the Daylesford–Macedon region. He was hugely respected by tourism operators and tourism leaders alike, and it was always a pleasure to spend time with him. From Australia's top tiny town win for Trentham last year at the Australian Tourism Awards to helping implement the visitor economy partnerships, Steve's contribution was enormous. While Steve lived with cancer for over four years, he never lost his optimism or generosity of spirit. To Steve's wife Morgan and their young girls Frankie and Lola: I am so sorry for your loss.

Construction industry

Wayne FARNHAM (Narracan) (09:56): It is unbelievable that this state has overseen \$15 billion in corruption payments through the CFMEU to organised crime. This side of the house tried to bring in police checks; the government ignored it. They said, 'We have done everything we can,' but the government ignored it. How many women were put at risk since we tried to introduce that bill? Everyone on that side of the chamber knew – every member of Labor in this chamber knew – about the corruption. Everyone over there turned a blind eye. It was the worst kept secret in Victoria.

Absolutely everybody knew. Two months into this job I had a guy in my office tell me about it, but he would not go public for fear of retribution from the CFMEU. How come no-one over there stood up? This state has been robbed of \$15 billion – and if it is not \$15 billion, have an investigation into it to figure out how much it is. My community is begging for a hospital, and you let \$15 billion go out the door.

The SPEAKER: Member for Narracan, you will direct your comments through the Chair, not across the chamber.

Seaford Life Saving Club

Sonya KILKENNY (Carrum – Attorney-General, Minister for Planning) (09:57): Last Friday I joined the Seaford Life Saving Club to judge their annual nippers art competition. I can confidently say every single nipper who entered is a winner. The most important thing – they had a go and they put their creativity on display; that deserves recognition. A special thankyou to Samone Cranston for organising this wonderful event and for the energy and enthusiasm she brings to our club. Our community thrives because of people like her. To the families who support these young lifesavers, thank you. You are teaching your children more than beach safety; you are teaching teamwork, resilience and service. To the Seaford Life Saving Club volunteers: you are the spirit of Seaford, and Seaford is a fabulous community because of you – thank you. Samone Cranston, Steve Pogonowski, Ruth Amos, Mark Toussaint, Ryan Amos, Mark Luniss, Jess Kinsey, Ash Campbell, Robin Vaullai, Kate Chapman, Nari Wilson, Adrian Blond, Tim Christensen, Adrian Wyeth, Darren McLeod, Lisa Hoysted, Peter Stones, Sheila Stones and Justin Taylor, thank you for your commitment to the community of Seaford.

Carrum electorate emergency services

Sonya KILKENNY (Carrum – Attorney-General, Minister for Planning) (09:58): Can I also please acknowledge all of my emergency services in the Carrum electorate for all of the work they have done, particularly my CFAs. To the Skye CFA fire brigade, to Carrum Downs fire brigade and to Patterson River fire brigade: you have been called on, you have stepped up and you have represented our community with pride. Thank you.

Construction industry

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (09:59): Victorians are watching a government that has completely lost control. On one hand we have a CFMEU corruption scandal so rotten it beggars belief – allegations of bikie infiltration, criminal elements embedded in major projects and millions in taxpayer dollars flowing through a culture so compromised even the integrity agencies are now calling out the untruths. This is not a minor compliance issue, this is systemic decay. For years the Allan Labor government wrapped itself up in the CFMEU like a political security blanket, and now the blanket has fleas and Victorian taxpayers are paying the price. Every pothole, every underfunded hospital, every CFA brigade, every delayed school build, every infrastructure project that comes in hundreds of millions of dollars over budget, Victorians are entitled to ask: how much of this is because Labor turned a blind eye?

Australian Motorcycle Grand Prix

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (10:00): And while the government is busy managing this scandal, we have just lost the MotoGP. This is devastating for motorsport fans like me, after decades at Phillip Island and after it being raised in here. I raised it in here two years ago that something needed to be done or we would lose it. And to a place like Tailem Bend probably – for heaven's sake, has anyone ever been to Tailem Bend? No, because why would you, except for their amazing racetrack and that amazing facility. This government was told two years ago this would happen, and now it has.

Footscray Hospital

Melissa HORNE (Williamstown – Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Roads and Road Safety, Minister for Health Infrastructure) (10:00): Yesterday was an amazing day and a proud day to be a westie because we opened the new Footscray Hospital on time and on budget. Yesterday at 8 am the old Gordon Street Footscray Hospital was closed and 180 patients were transported very carefully to the new Footscray Hospital. Listening to James, the first patient in there, he said, ‘This is so beautiful. I don’t think I want to move out.’ For the electorate of Williamstown, this means faster, better quality care closer to home. With the opening of the new Footscray Hospital, families will see shorter wait times. They will see more services available at a shorter distance. For the next generation of nurses, midwives and allied healthcare workers from Williamstown who are studying at Victoria University, it has been incredible to hear how you have all been at the new Footscray Hospital and the brand new education and training centre right onsite.

Altona Junior Football Club

Melissa HORNE (Williamstown – Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Roads and Road Safety, Minister for Health Infrastructure) (10:01): I also saw some tough kicks from our girls at the local Altona Vikings junior football club last week. They held an all-girls training session, where they were treated to a visit from Kathryn Chatelier, the Western Jets regional development coach. I also want to particularly congratulate two of the girls: Piper Dickson, who has been drafted for the Western Jets, and Charlie O’Connor-Moreira, who is moving into the AFLW Western Bulldogs. This is really emblematic of how far we have come when it comes to women’s sport.

Richmond electorate housing

Gabrielle DE VIETRI (Richmond) (10:02): At Noone Street in Clifton Hill, the government has announced that they will demolish the low-rise public housing, so long neglected, as well as the basketball courts, playground and open space. However, it is unclear what is going to be built in its place. Are there going to be any public homes, or will it be outsourced to housing associations who provide more expensive, less secure housing? Will there be private, market-rate apartments on this public land? Will the land be sold to private developers, or will it be leased long term for peppercorn rent? What guarantees are there that the developments will be quality, sustainable homes maintained in the long term and remain genuinely affordable into the future? Without answers, the residents who were relocated do not know how secure their return will be. They do not know, if they do return, if they will be paying 25, 30, 35 per cent or more of their income on rent. It is currently open for consultation, but residents feel the government has not even listened to the last round of consultation. Strong community feedback to retain the playground and basketball court has been completely ignored. How can the community actually give proper feedback when they have not got a full picture of what will be built and they do not believe the government will actually listen? I am joining the community in calling for genuine consultation, public homes on public land and open space for everyone to use.

Youth mental health

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Minister for Police, Minister for Community Safety, Minister for Victims, Minister for Racing) (10:03): I am really pleased that residents in my Ivanhoe electorate and across the northern suburbs now have better access to mental health support and care, thanks to investment of \$16.8 million from the Allan government, since we opened our new youth prevention and recovery care centre in Heidelberg on the repat site. It is a voluntary, referral-based centre and it supports young people aged between 15 and 25 to access specialist, round-the-clock mental health care in a residential environment. The YPARCs provide early intervention and clinical care at a really important point in people’s lives. It is stepping in before the crisis escalates and reducing the need for hospital admission. It was co-designed by clinicians, carers and young people with lived experience, and it provides a great therapeutic environment.

I am really pleased that our government has been able to fulfil a key recommendation of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System. This service will be operated by Austin Health in partnership with Mind Australia, and the centre will be staffed by clinicians and lived-experience workers. It is expected to support some 200 young people annually. The purpose-built centre features 10 private bedrooms, a communal kitchen and dining area and breakout spaces, creating a therapeutic home-like environment that promotes recovery and connection for people. It is part of a \$141 million investment across the state in these centres. I am really pleased we have ours opened in Heidelberg. I am really looking forward to the great care the clinicians will provide at Austin Health there in Heidelberg, and I wish them well.

Hawthorn Boroondara Cricket Club

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn) (10:05): On Saturday I had the pleasure of popping down to St James Park in my electorate to catch up with the third XI of the Hawthorn Boroondara Cricket Club as they took on East Malvern. It was a terrific afternoon – good cricket, good conversation – and a great reminder of the role local sporting clubs play in holding our community together. I was very pleased to meet with vice-president Pat Dower and to hear about the club's aspirations and discuss their challenges, which they are working through, and I look forward to working with president Graeme Yole, treasurer Leigh Simpson, secretary Jason Povey and their dedicated coaching and captaincy team to support the club's growth. Importantly, this is a club with real momentum. Formed in April 2024 through the amalgamation of the Hawthorn Cricket Club and the Boroondara Cricket Club, the Hawthorn Boroondara Cricket Club now stands as a strong example of how thoughtful mergers can strengthen local sport. The club's community spirit was on full display through their recent fundraiser for Share the Dignity, raising \$1500 to support the fight against period poverty. I am pleased to say that I have been working with Share the Dignity as well, and they are a great organisation which I strongly support and will continue to do so. This is grassroots sport at its best: competitive, inclusive and community minded. I congratulate the Hawthorn Boroondara Cricket Club on their success and thank all involved for the contribution they make to Hawthorn.

Tim Picton

Steve DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh – Minister for Environment, Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, Minister for Outdoor Recreation) (10:06): I rise to express my deep condolences to the family and loved ones of a friend, colleague, Labor warrior and one of the smartest minds and best people you could meet, Tim Picton. Like many of us in this place I had the privilege of working very closely with Tim, particularly during the delivery of our local level crossing removals. Tim was not just a rock to us during that time, he was essential to getting things done. While he was taken from us at such a young age, it would be wrong just to say that Tim was going places. To us he had arrived long ago. He had made his mark, yet still we knew he would go further and make even more of a difference to Australia, such was his talent. That talent was known not just here in Victoria but in South Australia, in the federal political arena and in Western Australia. In 2021 he led a campaign that delivered a massive victory for the Labor Party. But more than just campaigning, Tim had at his core a deep belief in what it meant to be a part of the labour movement: social justice, equality and opportunity. Even more, he was just one of the nicest people you could know: smart, funny and full of integrity. To Tim's wife Priya, I cannot imagine how difficult this time is. Also one of our friends and former colleagues, Priya is amazing. To their daughter Charlotte, parents Fiona and Michael, sister Johanna, brother Chris and all who knew and loved him, my deepest sympathies.

Hampton Bayside Bowls Club

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (10:08): Hampton Bayside Bowls Club is a cornerstone of the Bayside community. The club deserves special thanks for their support of parliamentary bowls events. The events held over the last three years have become a parliamentary highlight. Thank you to Geoff Magrin, Bryan Dickinson and Haydn Williams for their coaching knowledge and skills, which ensured everyone was able to take part in the events.

Brighton Life Saving Club

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (10:08): Brighton Life Saving Club came together for their Pink Patrol Breakfast to celebrate the amazing role that women and girls have played in the club and the broader lifesaving community. The club is a huge part of our community, serving the Bayside beach community for over a century. Congratulations to president Sam Dimopoulos on the event and the broader achievements of the club.

Firbank Grammar School

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (10:08): Firbank Grammar School recently opened their newly redeveloped Lang science building. It has been designed to bring together people, spark big questions and support the breakthroughs of tomorrow. The school was established by the Anglican Archbishop of Melbourne in 1909. Congratulations to principal Jenny Williams and board chair Jennine Ross on the redevelopment and their wonderful leadership of the school.

Cucina & Co

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (10:09): This week Cucina & Co celebrate their 10-year anniversary. Described by the *Good Food Guide* as charming the folk of Brighton with a flamboyant Italian confidence, the restaurant, proudly owned by Peter Aloï, Francesca Sanzo and Leonardo Alfieri, holds the title of Best Pizza Restaurant in Victoria for both 2017 and 2022. Congratulations on 10 years, and we look forward to many more in Brighton.

Kalkallo electorate community achievements

Ros SPENCE (Kalkallo – Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Community Sport, Minister for Carers and Volunteers, Minister for Treaty and First Peoples) (10:09): I would like to acknowledge two recent examples of community spirit and achievement in my electorate. Local residents Kiran Sidhu and Raj Mann are the founders of the Change Makers Foundation, a not-for-profit organisation committed to improving lives by raising awareness, supporting vulnerable communities and driving positive social change. To this end Change Makers recently delivered a heart health awareness session in Craigieburn that featured presentations from cardiac specialists. The event was free for the local community, well attended and provided practical information to local families. The dedication of Kiran and Raj to improving community health is greatly appreciated, and I wish them well with their upcoming monthly sessions in my electorate.

I also want to recognise 10-year-old Craigieburn resident Abraham Sihombing, who achieved an impressive success as the 2026 Golden Gig junior winner at Tamworth. In a thoughtful letter Abraham expressed his passion for music and his hope to perform at community events and festivals in our area. His talent, confidence and enthusiasm are inspiring, particularly at such a young age. Young people like Abraham add to the vibrancy of our community, and I look forward to opportunities for him to share his music with local audiences. Our community is strengthened by individuals who show initiative, creativity and generosity. Through their efforts, whether by promoting health awareness or pursuing artistic achievement, Kiran, Raj and Abraham each demonstrate the positive impact that one person can make. I congratulate them on their contributions.

Pride events

Vicki WARD (Eltham – Minister for Emergency Services, Minister for Natural Disaster Recovery, Minister for Equality) (10:11): It was a joy to be at Banyule council's Sunset Pride party in Greensborough celebrating our vibrant LGBTIQ+ community. I commend Banyule council on a fantastic event, a safe, welcoming space for our LGBTIQ+ community and allies to come together to dance, connect and, importantly, celebrate and show pride. This was just one of the many fantastic events held over Midsumma, including the fifth annual Victoria's Pride street party. This incredible event is a highlight of Pride season, with around 60,000 people celebrating Pride in the heart of Melbourne – allies and rainbow families of all backgrounds, ages and abilities. Under Labor the street

party is here to stay. I look forward to the ongoing success and growth of Midsumma and congratulate the team on a fabulous season of accessible, inclusive events held right around the state. Celebrating Pride is a powerful reminder that diversity makes our community stronger, and it was wonderful to see so many people from community come together in solidarity, strength, joy and love. Happy Pride.

Victorian Mosque Open Day

Vicki WARD (Eltham – Minister for Emergency Services, Minister for Natural Disaster Recovery, Minister for Equality) (10:12): Thank you to United Muslim Migrants Association mosque in Doncaster East for their hospitality during Victorian Mosque Open Day. This is a great opportunity for the broader community to visit a mosque, socialise and strengthen cohesion and connection across our community. I thank Ahmad and the team from UMMA, who put in a lot of work for this day, for their warmth of care, bringing people together and promoting genuine connections. This is really an important part of community connections and of social cohesion, and it is when we have open days with diverse communities that we really start to come together as a community. I congratulate and thank every mosque that participated.

Highett Reserve

Nick STAIKOS (Bentleigh – Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Local Government) (10:12): Work is beginning on the Highett Reserve pavilion. A few years ago I was over at the ground, and I bumped into Andrew Robinson, who is a well-known figure at the club. He has got a few nicknames, but in Parliament I will refer to him as Andrew. He showed me the very substandard conditions that players and especially umpires had to put up with at the pavilion, so I got to work and secured a grant from the Allan government to fund an upgrade. The project includes two change rooms with amenities suitable for women and girls, an umpire change room with amenities also suitable for women and girls, a new first aid room and storage, a new covered service area, a canopy roof and ramp access and a new separate public toilet facility. With so much more female participation in sport, including women umpires, this upgrade is so vitally important.

Highett Football Netball Club

Nick STAIKOS (Bentleigh – Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Local Government) (10:13): As footy season is fast approaching, I would like to congratulate the good folk at Highett Football Netball Club Juniors on an outstanding year of success in 2025. Highett was recognised for a number of awards by South Metro Junior Football League last year, but I particularly want to congratulate the hardworking Jason McGrath, who was granted SMJFL's administrator of the year. Jason has stepped down after 12 years at the club, including eight years as president, as well as stints as vice-president and coach. Congratulations and thank you to Jason, and best wishes to new president Matt Smallwood.

Edward 'Jack' Carroll

Ella GEORGE (Lara) (10:14): I rise today to express my sincere condolences to the friends and family of Edward Roy 'Jack' Carroll, who passed away on 7 January 2026. Jack's life was one of service, and it is an honour to remember him in this place today. Born in Geelong in 1923, Jack's military career began at just 16 when he joined the air training corps. At 18 he enlisted in the citizen military forces as a volunteer before serving with distinction in the Australian Imperial Force during World War II. His courage and leadership saw him promoted to corporal, with postings in New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, and he later supported the recovery of prisoners of war in Singapore. While away from home Jack kept meticulous diaries that bear witness to both the hardship and the mateship that define the Anzac spirit.

Returning home, Jack channelled his dedication into decades of community work. He was a member of the RSL for years, advocating for veterans welfare and supporting families during the Vietnam War. His commitment earned him an Order of Australia medal, a testament to his selfless contributions.

Beyond his service Jack was a devoted market gardener, a regular at community events and a quiet mentor to many.

Jack told his grandchildren, 'Let us go out of this world having made a contribution toward it being a far, far better place than when we first entered it,' and I cannot think of better advice to members of Parliament. My deepest condolences to Jack's children Ron and Marion Carroll, Heather and Ian Baxter and June Waight and Jack's extended family and friends. Vale, Jack Carroll.

Gordon TAFE

Chris COUZENS (Geelong) (10:15): The Gordon TAFE is highly valued in Geelong, having provided over 130 years of education, and is still going strong. The Gordon is also well known for its innovations for now and into the future, along with its commitment to providing the best TAFE education to meet Geelong's growing population and industry skills requirements. Last week I joined the Minister for Skills and TAFE and the member for Lara to officially break ground for the new Centre of Excellence in Disability Inclusion on the Gordon TAFE Geelong campus. The \$36 million centre is expected to be completed next year, thanks to the Allan Labor government. There is no question about the centre being located in Geelong. We are home to WorkSafe, the TAC and the national disability insurance scheme, and it will create a jobs pipeline for these services, with real and meaningful jobs.

It is fantastic that a co-creation team of past and current students with a disability helped to design the new centre of excellence. It will set the benchmark for providing accessible vocational training and education to people with a disability. I want to acknowledge and thank the co-creation team for their significant contribution, not only for themselves but for those that come after them. They leave such a great legacy. By elevating the lived experience of people with disability we will lift training outcomes, open up pathways to secure jobs and share effective practices across Victoria's TAFE network.

Ramadan

Belinda WILSON (Narre Warren North) (10:17): I just want to wish all of my amazing Muslim community a Ramadan mubarak. It is a very special time, and I hope they have a great – *(Time expired)*

Bills

Energy and Other Legislation Amendment (Resilience Reforms and Other Matters) Bill 2026

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Lily D'Ambrosio:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Matthew GUY (Bulleen) (10:17): Good morning to you, Deputy Speaker. It is nice to see you in the chair again for a meandering presentation of 20 minutes. I tell the Labor Party – I do not know who you have got up first; you might be listening – that I will be about 20 minutes.

Members interjecting.

Matthew GUY: I am going to be 20, not 30 or 29. I do not think there is that much. I give you the heads-up, so go and talk for 19½ minutes and then you can –

Members interjecting.

Matthew GUY: No, no, no. I might shout for the last 30 seconds to get some socials, I will tell the minister, but other than that it will be the Guy show for 19½ minutes. How about that? You can deal with that one.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: At the risk of ruining the mood, member for Bulleen, through the Chair, shall we?

Matthew GUY: Sorry, Deputy Speaker. I like speaking on energy bills. They are quite entertaining, actually. The member for Morwell said to me, ‘Are you going to talk about your grandmother getting the coaldust off the clothes back in Newborough?’ I can and I will. There are many things to talk about in relation to energy. This bill has got a little bit in it to go on about, and I certainly intend to do that and make some comments in relation to it.

The first point to note more than anything else is that the coalition does not intend to oppose this bill in the Assembly. We will make the comments we need to make and then make some further comments around the bill in the upper house. Our Shadow Minister for Resources David Davis will do so when it goes there.

The bill does have a number of provisions – seven of them, in fact. They are to amend the Electricity Safety Act 1998, requiring the distribution companies in the grid to prepare network resilience plans, which I will expand on a bit later – it is very straightforward – and providing for the approval and enforcement of network resilience plans – which you would expect, once they have been prepared; and to amend the Electricity Industry Act 2000 and the Gas Industry Act 2001 to provide increased flexibility for the setting of retailer obligations to life support customers. I do want to talk about that and the gas industry, as you can imagine. There is a lot of debate around the gas industry and the future of the gas industry in Victoria, which I am very supportive of and my side of politics is very supportive of. We see the gas industry as having great potential and certainly believe in the use of our natural resources and natural gas being a key part of that.

The third point is to amend the National Electricity (Victoria) Act 2005, which is in clarifying the eligibility of payments to landholders by limiting it to interests in land in relation to new major transmission infrastructure – very straightforward – making further provisions in relation to the issue of grid impact authorities, conferring further functions in relation to the national electricity market into VicGrid, and making further provisions in relation to the preferred transmission project areas of interest and between renewable energy zones. I do want to talk about renewable energy zones a bit later on as well, because there is always the line from those opposite that when in government the coalition did not approve any renewable energy projects, and that is just completely false. In fact I took quite a bit of heat from – I will not say ‘my friends’ – people on Sky News like Alan Jones, for instance, about projects which I did approve and projects which I expanded as planning minister in relation to wind energy, which was, in my view, the right thing to do.

The bill further amends the Victorian Energy Efficiency Target Amendment (Energy Upgrades for the Future) Act 2025. Repealing certain provisions of that act is point (e) of this bill. Point (f) is making amendments to the National Electricity (Victoria) Amendment (VicGrid Stage 2 Reform) Act 2025, which is a consequential act relating to the transmission project areas of interest within and between renewable energy zones, which I have said I am going to make some comments on. The last point is to amend the Advancing the Treaty Process with Aboriginal Victorians Act 2018 to make further provision relating to the composition, structure and legal reform of the Self-Determination Fund referred to in that act.

On my side of the Parliament, the Liberal–National parties, we have never been hypocrites when it comes to our natural resources. We do not run into the Parliament and say we support one and then put policies in place to oppose it. We do not tell inner-city Victorians of Melbourne that we oppose gas and then run out to Gippsland and say, ‘No, we love it.’ We have a very clear position, and we believe our natural resources, particularly in relation to gas, are an important natural resource that Victoria should be using. We have a natural advantage in that area, which we should be using, and we have said for some time that we should be valuing it as part of our economy, particularly in regional Victoria and of course in a city like Melbourne, with 5.5 million people now, where the vast majority of homes are still on natural gas.

In my electorate, which is heavily of East and South-East Asian background – particularly East Asian – they will tell you straight out that you cannot cook with a wok with electricity. You just cannot get the

same kind of heat, the radiant heat, that a gas flame will give you. A lot of them just cannot believe how the government wants to phase out gas in their homes when (1) we have a good supply of it, if the government will allow that supply to be used, and (2) it is very important culturally for a number of communities. Not just culturally – I would argue that it is economically an important resource for us to use, and I think we have said this on a number of occasions. It is.

Deputy Speaker, I have been around a long time. I have been interested in politics a long time, and no doubt you have too. I do remember in the 1970s when my parents got a colour TV, and the black and white TV was relegated to my parents' bedroom. I do remember seeing the then Labor Party's 1980 campaign jingle *Raise the Standard*. And I know my mum actually voted for Bill Hayden. She thought he was a thoroughly decent individual, and by all accounts he was. The jingle *Raise the Standard* back in 1980 for the Australian Labor Party said:

We've got oil beneath the oceans
We've got mountains made of ore
Industry to build the future
Nature's bounty, shore to shore

That was the Labor Party's jingle. Who would think, 40 years later, that the party that talks about oil beneath the ocean, nature's boundless shores and mountains made of ore is the party that is themselves or doing deals with others who want to stop all of that which has produced such great benefit for our country. And while we do know that, particularly in Victoria, brown coal is being phased out as an electricity generation method – I understand that; these things do change. But particularly in relation to gas, is the Labor Party espousing this? I know things change, but it is fascinating to see how a party which espoused the workers, the families and the economy – which was built off, in their own words back in 1980, nature's boundless shores – comes back to be the party that wants to shut it all down. From our side, we just do not understand this with gas. I know, from the Labor Party's perspective and the government's perspective it might be about preferences with the inner-city Greens. You could make comments about One Nation and make comments about the Greens and their views on multicultural relations in this state. I would not be boasting about that.

But what I would say is that one of my early memories of the Australian Labor Party, particularly through the 1980s, is it talking about natural resources – and now the party is pandering to people who want to shut it all down. That I do not understand, because of the jobs which come with it – working people in the Latrobe Valley, more than 1000 families, nearly 2000 families, who are now without a primary source of income with the premature shutting down of some of our power stations and no plans to replace them in the Latrobe Valley. Some of those could have been looked at as a gas plant, particularly Yallourn W, but they will be shut down under the Labor government. In my view this is just a monumental policy failure from the government. We do not know if the government is opposing gas anymore in residential homes. I mean, let us be clear, the coalition is not, but we see one thing from the Minister for Energy and Resources saying they oppose it, then they do not oppose it, then they are going to shut it all down, then they do not oppose it. Then there is legislation in the Parliament that criminalises plumbers and gasfitters actually installing new gas cookers in people's homes – criminalises it. Can you believe this? Criminalising the concept of installing a replacement gas cooker in someone's home – who actually thinks this up in the department and presents it to a minister and then the minister says 'yes'? That you would actually say that a plumber or a gasfitter simply doing their job in the suburbs could face criminal charges and fines and lose their licence on the possibility of looking at installing a gas cooker, I mean, from our side of the Parliament, we find this quite stunning. The Labor government in New South Wales are intent on phasing –

A member interjected.

Matthew GUY: You can say whatever you like, but they are intent on phasing out coal-fired generation in New South Wales. New South Wales Maitland black coal is some of the best – in fact it is the best – quality black coal in the world, particularly for power station generation, and the Port of

Newcastle is the single largest port in the world for a single export item, and that is black coal. The New South Wales Labor government take the royalties off that Maitland black coal, which is very, very good quality. Even the railways in Victoria used to boast when they got a shipment of Maitland black in as opposed to the Wonthaggi black coal that we would be using, because it was so good and it had such a high temperature and solid combustion, so the gas in the coal would be much purer, and in terms of burning potential the coking coal was not as bad. Certainly it was very, very popular. Yet, again, the government up there is content to phase it out but seeks to increase its export potential for New South Wales. On our side of the chamber we find that quite quizzical. It was the same thing out of Queensland with the Beattie government. In Moranbah, which is Goonyella and the Peak Downs mines, they are very large producing. They are the old Utah company out of Hay Point, where they exported. It was massive potential for Queensland. They were very shallow strip mining methods which produced a huge amount of revenue for Queensland over the years, and Labor certainly has not shied away from that.

Yet in Victoria we have a government that is prepared to shut down our gas industry, which is much cleaner certainly than lignite, which is brown coal, and much cleaner than black coal. But with Labor governments exporting and looking at black coal interstate, they are prepared to shut our gas industries down in Victoria. I find it quizzical that the government wants to shut it all down here, yet its emissions are more than 30 per cent lower than any coal, particularly high-performance Maitland black coal or coal out of, as I said before, Peak Downs or Goonyella. But in Victoria they are prepared to sacrifice the whole thing. This is where I say again that our side of the Parliament is not hypocritical when it comes to this, particularly when it comes to gas. We believe that a number of regional economies are dependent on it or could be dependent on it and certainly could prosper as a result of using gas and expanding the use of gas. But that does not mean you look at one method of generation; we have never said to look at one method of generation. There was all this kind of commotion around how we had setbacks for people with wind turbines. Well, yes, I do not think that is unfair at all for regional communities. I would expect that if someone went to Windy Hill and put up a tower that was as large as Collins Place, you would say to the locals near it, 'We're going to put strobe lighting on it, and it's going to be opposite your house. There should be some setback.' That would be right for someone on, let us say, Windy Hill, so why would it not be right for someone in regional Victoria? It is just the fair and reasonable point of the planning scheme, isn't it, to say that someone in regional Victoria should have the same rights as someone in metropolitan Melbourne? You would not put any structure that is 180 metres tall – 183 in Collins Place's case – or anything of that height next to a residential property without having an appropriate planning mechanism in place, without having a potential setback in place, whatever that might be. You might have some kind of planning law around it, as opposed to a tick and flick from a minister.

You would actually say, 'Let's be fair and reasonable.' I think everyone with a brain would argue that it is fair and reasonable to say, 'Why wouldn't you have the concept of a setback in place?' Why wouldn't you say, 'Okay, we've got wind turbine targets we need to meet.' Sure – there is no problem with that. But make sure you do not disenfranchise people or treat people with disrespect along the way. You have actually got to engage people in the process. I think a lot of people in regional Victoria are fundamentally upset because if something is on one property, then it removes the right of the neighbour to have a say. I am not saying they should veto it, but I am saying they should be included in that planning process. In this bill, particularly with the government looking at specific zoning around this, that is taking away some aspects of regional Victorians' rights to have a say in what goes near their farms. You would not expect that in a metropolitan area. Why should country Victorians be subject to something that is not expected in a metropolitan area? I do not think that is fair and reasonable, and I do not think regional Victorians think it is either.

Solar is obviously something that is coming along the same lines. A lot of solar farms are being put in place, and quite rightly so. We are the sunniest continent in the world; why wouldn't you? They are particularly on the roofs of buildings and apartment blocks, on larger structures and even on things like Southern Cross station. We have these great big structures which could sensibly be used for solar

harvesting, and why wouldn't you, even in Melbourne? All through China they use solar power. I remember getting a train through China and looking at all the little farmhouses with their roofs that have solar panels. It was eminently sensible. But that obviously means that in regional Victoria, where you are having large swathes of land being taken over by solar panels by larger companies, again, given the heat impact that does have in those areas, there do need to be appropriate planning provisions. I am not saying stop it, but I am saying you must at least engage in a planning process with those who do about those farms. That is only fair and reasonable, because that is what you would do in a metropolitan area. If you are doing that in a metropolitan area, then there is no reason why you should not be doing that in a regional area as well.

I think a lot of these issues are not insurmountable when it comes to renewable, either wind or solar. None of these issues have been insurmountable. Some have been highly weaponised, but they should not be insurmountable. It is my absolute, firm view that you will not power cities the size of Melbourne and Geelong, a metropolitan area of close to 6 million people as a conurbation around the Port Phillip and Corio Bay basin, by wind and solar alone – of course you will not – and that is where the baseload discussion comes in. No doubt our Shadow Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction will have more to say on that later in the year. But what we do say is you must have a baseload energy point beyond that, and that is why in the last couple of elections this side of the house has not been ambiguous when it comes to, for instance, using gas. The Newport power station is that, and I think the peaking station in Mortlake is that. They have been used quite successfully and quite reasonably for the last 30 or 40 years. It is quite unique that somehow we would turn away from it on one hand but then use it on the other. But that is the hypocrisy of the current government's attitude to gas, which this side of the house has constantly pointed out. If you are happy to use it for peaking power and if you are happy to use it for other generation methods, then do not turn around and say to average Victorians, 'You can't use it in your home. We're going to criminalise the plumber and gasfitter who comes in to install it.'

In the bill I noticed there are a number of discussion points, as I said, around renewable energy zones. I think, as I said before, Victorians, particularly outside of the metropolitan area, are just keen to know what can go where and what it will look like. Stripping out provisions or local input, even local government input, into projects is very unfair, and that is what has happened under this government for the last 11 years. Regional Victorians are not Luddites – they are happy to accommodate – but they just want to know with a great deal of certainty, like you would in a metropolitan area, what it is going to look like. I think that is a fair and reasonable point to note. This legislation again refers to those renewable energy zones. This government, from my point of view, might achieve one aim, but they are doing it at the expense of regional Victorians, and I do not think it needs to be that way. If you have an aim, then it can be done properly and appropriately by engaging regional Victorians in that process, particularly through the local government areas, which has not been done.

The member for Morwell is not in here. He did say to me, 'Are you going to refer to coal and gas and the Latrobe Valley?' and I think the member for Narracan also asked me, 'Are you going to refer to your grandmother getting the coal dust off the clothes in Yallourn and Newborough?' Now that the member for Narracan is coming through, let me just say brown coal has been a staple of our power generation industries for many, many years, and this was the advantage of Victoria post war. We were a cheap place to do business because electricity was cheap. It is now the complete opposite, and this is what we have been saying on this side of the house for some time. This is what MPs from Gippsland on our side of the chamber – given they are all ours, thankfully – have been saying for some time. Victoria's economic prosperity post war from the migration booms, which many of us in this chamber, including me, have families who came out of and were a part of, was primarily because of the ability for us to provide cheap electricity to businesses wanting to do business and operate in the state of Victoria. From Ford to General Motors to SPC to the Portland smelter, big businesses – and small and medium – had the ability to do business in this state. We were self-sufficient in electricity generation in fact for Victoria and South Australia. We powered most of South Australia for many years.

This is, over the life of this government, something that has now reversed. Many days of the year we are now importing. We are an importer. Yes, there is a national grid, but the point is we went from being self-sufficient to a state that now imports at cost from Queensland or New South Wales, which is producing that power that we are importing off black coal. It is quite the irony that on this side we say you have not got the basics right, you are not considering gas, but you are going to black coal, which is dirtier, to top up power on many days of the year in Victoria when we cannot supply ourselves.

Danny O'Brien interjected.

Matthew GUY: As the member for Gippsland South said, those emissions do not count because they are not here, and that is exactly right – that is the hypocrisy. I say it again: we have never been hypocrites on natural resources on this side of the house. We have been very consistent. Consistency in this policy I think is what industry is looking for from this government, for the remainder of its term of office, till the end of the year, and then hopefully a new government will then be able to give policy consistency for at least, hopefully, four years or beyond. Industry then can reinvest in Victoria, knowing with great certainty that we actually will have targets to achieve and places where we need to be but with industry and community participation that is sincere and real as opposed to just being insincere, which has been the lie for 10 years.

I did say to you from the very start that I would try and keep my comments to 20 minutes on this bill, riveting as it is. I did give the Minister for Agriculture at the table an assurance that I would not be yelling, so much so that, as a Monty boy to a Monty girl, I honour my word and I will not be yelling. I am going to conclude my remarks and say thank you.

Daniela DE MARTINO (Monbulk) (10:38): I did just hear one of the members on the other side of the chamber there say that they were very grateful for the fact that the member for Bulleen did not yell, as am I. I am very grateful for that. I am going to focus on perhaps the most significant aspect of the Energy and Other Legislation Amendment (Resilience Reforms and Other Matters) Bill 2026, which places the responsibility squarely on electricity distribution companies to plan ahead and invest in the upgrades that we need to ensure that we keep the power on when our communities need it most. For places like the Dandenong Ranges, where storms and outages have become all too familiar, this work is absolutely essential. In fact it was actually the storm of June 2021 that resulted in the first network outage review. That was the genesis of what we see today. This is a final tranche. I will come to that more in a bit. But I was personally affected myself by that storm, and evidently everyone who lived across the Dandenong Ranges at the time was also affected, and it was far reaching.

To achieve this very noble aim the bill strengthens the Electricity Safety Act 1998 by requiring every Victorian electricity distribution business to develop a detailed network resilience plan every five years. It is not enough to just do one set and forget – every five years, because we know that things change, the landscape changes. These plans must then be submitted to Energy Safe Victoria, our independent safety regulator, which will have new oversight powers to monitor and enforce compliance. What this means in practice is greater accountability and transparency. These plans will make resilience initiatives visible – not hidden, not optional. They will drive distribution businesses to adopt a more proactive, community-focused approach to strengthening their networks, because our communities, my community, deserve nothing less than a system that is ready for the challenges we know are coming, because climate change is real and climate change is here.

I say to those wanting to dance with One Nation: know this. They categorically state:

Fake Science Drives False Climate Change Claims.

... the United Nations and Pacific leaders urge Australia to commit to stronger 2035 emissions cuts ... they falsely warn of rising seas and existential threats. However One Nation remains united in our fight against this rort and false narrative.

Unbelievable. It is tinfoil hat wearing stuff. But I will say to One Nation and their leader, who likes to visit Mar-a-Lago, that NOAA, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, which is the United States of America's government coastal and ocean agency, also states:

Global sea level has been rising over the past century, and the rate has increased in recent decades. In 2014, global sea level was **2.6 inches** above the 1993 average – the highest annual average in the satellite record ...
Sea level continues to rise at a rate of **about one-eighth of an inch** per year.

Well, the next time the leader of that party goes and visits Mar-a-Lago, she may want to make sure that she does not get her feet wet as the sea levels continue to rise.

In my electorate of Monbulk, we have already experienced some storms unlike any which came before them. On the nights of 9 and 10 June 2021 the Dandenong Ranges were subjected to wind speeds of up to 120 kilometres per hour coming from the south-south-east, the opposite direction to where the prevailing winds normally came from, north-north-west. Unused to wind speeds from this unusual direction, 25,000 trees fell – 25,000 trees fell across my electorate, including the giants of the forest, the mountain ash. They typically reach 70 to 90 metres in height. It was like a giant from up on high was playing pick-up sticks and picked up these trees and just threw them on the ground. When they were lying on their sides, those trees, they blocked all the roads, all the access across the mountain, into the mountain. Emergency services could not get around, and they had trees falling down around them while they were on the road trying to rescue people trapped in their homes. There are – I have seen the photos – trees on their side, and the girth of the trees, the width of them, is higher than the height of 6-foot men and women. I have seen some of our tallest emergency services workers standing in front of those trees – you cannot chop them up with a chainsaw.

It was mass devastation and destruction. Seventy-one dwellings were destroyed and 54 were damaged, and the electricity network collapsed. It absolutely collapsed. There was no power – which means no NBN and no mobile telecommunications, for weeks. The mobile telecoms came back up earlier than that, when generators got to the towers, but they did not have the resilience for the initial time, and it was unsafe for telecoms workers to actually get to those towers and turn them on. The power was out. It took around three weeks to rebuild the network around the mountains. It was a scene of absolute devastation and destruction. The trauma from that storm still resonates. There are people who still feel very, very uncomfortable with the sound of high winds and with knowing that damaging, destructive winds are coming. I can tell you now, it still resonates.

That was not the only storm. There was another one later that year in October, and that actually set a record for the loss of power across the state. In fact, the first one in June 2021 had set its own record, and then we almost doubled it with the number of properties: 525,000 properties lost power across the state in October 2021. We thought, 'My God, that's an incredible number; that was record-breaking.' And then two years ago, on 13 February 2024, the southern and eastern ends of the Dandenong Ranges once again copped it. That was part of a storm event which saw a new record set, with 531,000 properties losing power. Again, across my district, most of us lost power across the Dandenong Ranges, and those at the eastern and southern ends were without power for around a week. The impact was huge. These trees, when they come down, are unforgiving. The lines come down with them. This time there was a better response, and there was a better response, I will submit, because we had been doing the work as a government. The minister had been doing work to ensure that power distribution companies were ready to respond and were more, for want of a better term, responsive in their response.

Now we get to this bill here. We do not own the power grid anymore. We did once. Remember that, everyone? I remember when we owned the power grid, and I have spoken in this place before about the fact that I found some papers released at the time when the SEC was fully sold off. We had what was considered one of the most stable, reliable electricity grids in the world. It was internationally renowned amongst people in the know; you obviously had to be quite excited by electricity to be in the know. But those who did know knew that Victoria's grid was amazing. Do you know why?

Because redundancies were built into that network, wonderful redundancies that meant that if one line failed another one kicked in, so we did not have constant brownouts. That happened at the time, not long after the SEC was sold. Once that was shut down and private companies bought that infrastructure, the stories are countless of those redundancies, that extra work in there to ensure that we had continuity of power, being stripped out of the network and placed into warehouses to be used as spare parts.

I do not know if everyone recalls through the 1990s the constant brownouts that were happening then. I remember because I thought, 'This is new; this is unusual.' There was a reason. As a government, we have had to work so hard in order to ensure that legislation is now compelling energy companies to do the right thing by all of us, by every Victorian – by residences, by businesses, by all of us – to ensure that we can have a more reliable electricity network, because when the power goes out for long stretches of time, it is not just the lights that go out, it is the mobile telecommunications. The NBN stops working, the food spoils. I know someone – she has become a friend now – who I met when she was distressed because she had lost her full fridge and freezer of food for the fourth time in a number of weeks a while ago, and it had such an impact on her. It is a cost-of-living issue. This bill is addressing it. I have not got to the technicalities of it – I know many others will do that – but I wanted to talk about why this is so important. I am thrilled. This is the final recommendation that came out of the network outage reviews. The final tranche is being acquitted in this bill. I am absolutely thrilled because we have actually seen that things are getting better in the responses, but they can continue to improve for all of us, and I am absolutely delighted by this. I commend the minister and her team on their work, and I commend this bill to the house.

Richard RIORDAN (Polwarth) (10:48): I rise this morning to talk on yet another lazy Labor bill that talks about a problem we all know exists but will again fail to really address the problem. What I want to highlight is the constant effect on my electorate, the good electorate of Polwarth, based on this government's inability to build long-term resilience into our power distribution and energy distribution networks. What do I mean by that? In 2018 my electorate was badly affected by the St Patrick's Day bushfires, and three years after the St Patrick's Day bushfires a court found that the offending power company, Powercor, simply had not kept its infrastructure up to date. In fact from that we learned that 50 per cent of Victoria's wooden power poles are more than 50 years old. Just think about that – we have got a piece of wood that is about a foot, 300 mil thick, in the ground for more than 50 years in Victoria, and this government is expecting it to still last and be robust.

We have seen grandstanding opportunity by this government after grandstanding opportunity to talk about electricity, talk about how we are going to have solar power and wind power and we are going to create all this energy, and we are putting it on a horse and cart. We are putting it on infrastructure, in many parts of the state and across my electorate, that was put in before the Melbourne Olympics in 1956. Do you know what the consequence of that is? We will hear speakers from the Labor Party all day talk about climate change, wind, fires, storms and all this tempest. It is knocking down power poles that a two-year-old could push over with their little finger. That is the problem, because this government has refused to accept the advice from the power companies and experts in power distribution. For decades, years, they have ignored the call that we have to improve the quality of our power poles.

It is quite simple. This bill does not talk about allocating money to solve the problem. No, it talks about employing more bureaucrats, more public servants, more people to think about the problem. But the problem is quite simple. Of the 1.5 million wooden power poles in the state of Victoria, 750,000 are over 50 years old. They are older than me, most of these poles. I would get a bit tired standing up there all day, holding the power up. Then as this government has its full-blown attempt at getting people off gas, getting rid of other choices in energy and moving everybody to power, of course there is going to be massive disruption. But the disruption is there anyway, because if the power poles keep falling over and the power poles do not get replaced, it does not matter how many bureaucrats this legislation

dreams up and how many more regulations it puts in place. If this government does not invest the money wisely, then we will have problems.

Why is this so important? Think of the devastation of fire. Eighty per cent of all infrastructure losses caused by fire in Victoria since the 1939 bushfires have been the result of electrical failures, and we can go through them: 1983, Ash Wednesday, massive loss of life, massive loss of infrastructure, thousands of homes lost across Victoria because power poles fell over – we did not learn the lesson then; 2009, most of the losses on Black Saturday were from power poles falling over; the St Patrick's Day bushfire in my own electorate, 40,000 hectares burnt, tens of homes, luckily no lives lost. Guess why: because a power pole put up in 1936 fell over. We do not expect cars to last that long. Heavens above, this government is pulling down public housing towers built in the 1960s and 1970s because it says they are too old, yet we are putting the most dangerous energy source right across our state on infrastructure that was around when we still had horses and carts. That is what this government is doing. They are not investing in it.

What they are finding when this power infrastructure collapses, falls over and causes deaths, destruction, loss of income and disruption for years to communities is that the current methods that this government employs in keeping that vital infrastructure resilient are just archaic. Do you realise that this government has allowed the ludicrous situation of a piece of hardwood stuck in the ground for more than 50 years? Do you know how we test to see if that pole is safe? We drill a hole in it. If you go to 50 per cent of the poles, so only one in two poles, you will find little black plugs all around the bottom. On what planet is drilling a hole every five years into the base of a wooden pole a sensible way to maintain the integrity, strength and resilience of that pole? It is simply not. Water gets into it, ants get into it and termites get into it. It actually makes the problem worse.

There is no mention of just using common sense and going to talk to someone like my friend here the member for Narracan, who is a builder and understands structural integrity. He would tell you that, if you went and drilled a hole in the base of your house stumps every five years for the next 50 years, the chances of the house holding up would not be very good. It is exactly the same for power poles. This moronic government will stand with a hard hat and a fluoro vest at a new battery that, mind you, will keep a community going for approximately 2 hours when the power poles fall over. They will go and do that, but they will not go and do the hard work, the hard yards, the sensible infrastructure investment which is just the basics. Then again, it comes as no surprise, because we have also noticed that in the state of Victoria we do not look after our roads either, so there is no resilience in our roads. Let us face it, our roads were built some time ago, and like our power pole infrastructure this government is perfectly happy having us drive on infrastructure and roads that are so old.

I referenced earlier this week in a members statement the fact that my community has just been devastated by fire – and one of the few fires in my electorate that was not caused by power pole failures, I might add; Mother Nature sorted that one – but it did not destroy too many houses and whatever. But it did find that the two temporary bridges on a state government funded main arterial road collapsed, and we have got no funds to fix it either. When we talk about this innocuous, do-nothing piece of legislation that is so insipid that the opposition is not going to oppose it, because there is really not much to oppose in it, because it is really not going to do anything, it makes us think. Just on power pole replacement alone, on the back of a piece of paper anyone can calculate 750,000 poles at around \$3000 a pole. We are talking some \$2.2 billion to \$2.5 billion. Guess where we could have found \$2.5 billion to make every pole safe in Victoria. We could go and have a look at our CFMEU friends, couldn't we, or some of the Labor Party apparatchiks over here who have been gladly taking donations from the CFMEU. That is some of the money Victorian taxpayers have paid to have this basic infrastructure maintained. It is devastating and will continue to be devastating.

It does not matter how many regulatory changes and it does not matter how many more high-paid ex-Labor union officials or former Labor MPs we appoint to some new governing board or whatever infrastructure we set up to tell Victorians we are doing a good job. It does not matter how much we do that unless we focus on fixing the power poles, making them resilient, making them strong. For

example, in the short time I have left, this government, since the devastating 2009 fires, have gone about trying to do something, but of course they bought a pup. They bought a piece of infrastructure called a rapid earth fault current limiter, which we have had on, which has cost \$1 billion to \$1.5 billion, nearly half the price of just replacing the poles that fall over. We have seen this huge investment in infrastructure. For example, the St Patrick's Day bushfires and some other smaller fires have been caused on lines that this government's so-called safety infrastructure has been put on, because at the end of the day, if you have got a matchstick in the ground and you want it to withstand normal weather conditions, it is just not going to.

It is disappointing, despite court cases, despite report after report – the long-term Auditor-General's report into the resilience and strength and age of our wooden power pole system that we have got here in Victoria – on this vital, absolutely essential piece of infrastructure, which under current government policies of moving us all to electricity you would think they could get right. You would really think that the sole focus would be to make sure the resources and the support are there to make sure that we are not expecting our primary source of energy to be travelling down bits of infrastructure that were put in place in 1936 and even earlier. It is quite insane – it is totally insane in fact. It is a disappointment, and it shows that this government would rather look after its friends in the CFMEU and waste money on things like that than put money where it is needed in Victoria, into decent infrastructure like our roads and like our power infrastructure.

John LISTER (Werribee) (10:58): I thank the member for Polwarth for an engaging discussion on poles, which, yes, are important, and I will go to some of the issues that he raised around the safety of those poles, the structural soundness of those poles. But I will point out the irony of the Liberal Party talking about structural soundness and white-anting, considering it is their business. And it is interesting too that when you think about this physical infrastructure, which part of this bill goes to – in fact quite a significant part of this bill goes to – and you look at that physical infrastructure, which is managed and owned by private companies, you would think the former champions of the free market over there would understand that there are rules in place around how these private companies that operate and own this infrastructure need to be held to account but also are accountable. In fact when it comes to the resilience of the network and power poles in particular, in September last year all the companies, including Powercor, submitted to the Australian Energy Regulator for a determination around what that investment would look like by those distribution companies. The thing that that federal regulator looks for is prudent and efficient investment in those poles and wires and the infrastructure that gets power to where it needs to go. 'Prudent and efficient' you would think the champions of the free market would be all for.

Some of the things that this bill explicitly goes to with the changes that we are bringing in around that are monitoring resilience and making sure that we have some of the things around making sure companies are keeping our network online as much as possible. It is important to know that we do not necessarily want it to be gold plated, because we saw what happened post 2009 with a lot of the work that was being done by the distribution companies and the effect it had on power prices for people who ultimately were consuming that electricity.

To go to the detail in this bill, it is amending the Electricity Safety Act 1998 to have new obligations for these distribution businesses to have those resilience plans every five years and to submit the resilience plans to the independent safety regulator, which is Energy Safe Victoria. This is particularly important when we think of our changing climate and the increasing severity of the different natural disasters that we are seeing across our community, something I know the Labor Party more broadly has been talking about for quite some time, whereas for those opposite and their cousins in Canberra, it has been a little bit confusing around whether or not they actually think climate change is a thing. I respect the Victorian Liberals, who are a little bit more moderate when it comes to this.

A member interjected.

John LISTER: Some of them. I wish they would have a good chat to their cousins. There was a bit of history from the member for Bulleen, which I always love. That is why I chuckled at the start of his contribution, because I always get a little bit of history, particularly if it is the history of coal in Victoria. It is always interesting, and I respect that fount of very particular knowledge about the types of minerals that we are extracting down in Gippsland. It is always particularly interesting, but we have to remember a little bit of history that last time those opposite had the chance to be in government they tilted at windmills. VC82 – remember that? VC82, with those weird restrictions around where you could build wind turbines, meant that half a billion dollars of investment in clean energy was jeopardised as a result of those changes. I also find it quite humorous that the member for Bulleen likened himself to a bit of a Sancho, encouraging those Don Quixotes in his party at the time that the wind farms were not just giants, we needed those wind farms. I liked the little bit of revisionist history there.

It is important not only to look at this history but to look at our current situation. Climate change is real, and we have seen a lot of progress with this government and the subsequent legislation leading into what we are dealing with today. We have seen a 31.4 per cent reduction in our emissions since 2005, and our 2025 target was hit two years early. 42.4 per cent of electricity was produced by renewables in the financial year 2024–25, and I note amazing reports from the minister over summer that we had days where nearly 50 per cent of our electricity was being generated by renewable energy. That is not just wind and solar but battery and hydro as well, so that is fantastic stuff. We have seen the impact of climate change over this summer not only with fires but with floods and high wind events, and I am going to reflect on one in particular in my electorate in just a moment. We know that there are hardworking crews on the ground. My Powercor crews are always there within the hour, and a lot of them are good Electrical Trades Union members. They are out there in all sorts of weather. I know that when we are with the fire brigade and you get on the radio and request Powercor, they are always there within the hour. They say within the hour, but it is usually within 15 minutes. They are fantastic, our local crews – and many of them are locals.

But while we have that fantastic work on the ground and sometimes up in the air too – I do not know how they do it on some nights – we must also acknowledge that the distribution businesses that own those poles and wires have not been prepared as much as they could have been for the new reality of extreme weather. My colleague from up in the hills spoke about some of the incidents they saw in 2021 and more recently with high wind events in the Dandenongs. In 2024 we saw 531,000 homes lose power at the peak of the event – half a million Victorians losing power. While nearly all of those outages were restored by the following day, all these events highlight the need for a proactive approach to the resilience of our network. I also want to reflect that in Werribee on 26 October 2025 we had a mini cyclone. I did not even know a mini cyclone was a thing until October 2025.

We had a lot of call-outs with the fire brigade to jobs all over Hoppers Crossing and the back of Werribee, particularly around Purchas Street and Kookaburra Avenue. In the morning, when I went back out, just as tired as some of those residents, I saw how they helped each other out and the resilience of those neighbourhoods. I thank the CFA and SES crews for their response that night as well. But I think we need to back them up by making sure that these private distribution companies are held to account to make sure that there are a fit-for-purpose network and resilience across the network.

This is bringing about some of those last changes that came out of the review into resilience in the network. While the power companies have to submit annual plans – and the way they are going to do that is over those five-year periods – we want something that is more specific around energy resilience during natural emergencies and climate-related emergencies, because I think it is particularly important to note that even though we are restoring power as quickly as we can, we want to reduce the likelihood of that needing to happen at all.

Our power companies – Powercor and the like – know where these vulnerabilities in the network are. We do not need a gold-plated network. We do not need to have everything absolutely upgraded with

billions and billions of dollars, but we need to make sure that those areas that are vulnerable are addressed – like the Shaws Road transformer. I do not know how many times I have had people talk to me about how when that transformer goes down half of Werribee goes down. When the transformer not far from Watton Street goes down, it means that half of Watton Street – ironically, one side of the street – is without power for hours while they restore that infrastructure. There are points in our network that we know need to be improved. We need to hold these private distribution companies to account, because every time we have a high wind event the Shaws Road transformer will flutter, we will have a brownout and then inevitably it will go out. While they do get it back up online as quickly as they can, a lot of the time that transformer is not doing a good job. That does remind me: I will probably email Powercor again about some of those resilience things in Werribee. They are quite good and responsive to their local members, and I thank them for that. These resilience plans acquit those recommendations from the network resilience review, and they provide obligations for electricity distribution businesses, like AusNet and Powercor, to publish five-yearly resilience plans. It also goes to making sure that those life support arrangements are in place.

We have 150,000 kilometres of wires and 1.3 million poles – which is a lot for the member for Polwarth to try and hold up or push over with one finger, or whatever his analogy was – most of which are exposed to the elements. Network costs make up about 40 per cent of household power bills. So having these plans and having the accountability of these private companies means that we can manage that 40 per cent of the cost on a power bill to make sure that it is not necessarily gold plated – and we are not increasing costs beyond what is reasonable – but that we are looking to those vulnerabilities as we do it. In conclusion, I commend this bill to the house.

Wayne FARNHAM (Narracan) (11:08): It is a pleasure to rise today and speak on the Energy and Other Legislation Amendment (Resilience Reforms and Other Matters) Bill 2026. It is always interesting to follow the member for Bulleen's contributions, with his knowledge of the power industry, what coal is good, what coal is bad and where it all comes from. We are talking today about resilience and essentially putting the energy companies on notice by saying that if there is a problem they need to fix it or have preventive measures in place – even better. That is essentially what this omnibus bill is about.

When we talk about resilience and reforms, we should also be talking about reliability and affordability in the same sentence. On power generation in Victoria at the moment, we used to be an exporter of power; that is well documented. Unfortunately now we do import a lot of power from other states, which has driven up the cost of power in Victoria. What I am concerned about when we talk about power generation in this state is the actual supply of the power and how that supply will be after Yallourn shuts in 2028. Yallourn currently, I believe, supplies about 20 to 22 per cent of Victoria's power.

We know the government is going hell for leather on renewable projects. I do have a concern that we are only two years away from Yallourn power station shutting down, and will we have the reliability of a power supply? I think this is something Victorians are rightly concerned about, and so they should be. In my electorate I have quite a number of battery storage projects scheduled to go to the Minister for Planning for approval. Do I have a problem with battery storage? No, I do not. I do have a problem with battery storage when the builders of these battery storage systems do not consult with the community and put them in relatively stupid locations. One such thing in my electorate is out at a little area called Shady Creek, where they are putting about 25 acres of batteries right into bushfire overlay areas, and in a catastrophic bushfire event the CFA cannot go out to these areas. This is why I say I am not against battery storage but whoever is providing these has to actually look at the locations. I hope that when these these come across the minister's desk she actually takes into account these overlays that exist.

When I look around the state of Victoria – and I understand that the batteries need to be close to those transmission lines, and that is the best way to build them so they can store the energy close to the source – regional Victoria always bears the burden of renewable energy. We do not put wind farms in

the middle of Melbourne. They are out and about in regional Victoria, and it is the same with these battery projects. But what I would encourage the minister to look at is maybe if there are pockets around Melbourne. I understand why they are in my electorate, because the energy travels from east to west in this state, and I have the main transmission lines running east to west right through the electorate of Narracan. But maybe there are other locations. We have a renewable energy zone up at Yallourn, and maybe batteries should be put up in that location. I do not know if there are any there, but at the moment I have four locations in my electorate, and two of those locations I would say are not fit for purpose. The community is actually very, very concerned that if we do have a catastrophic bushfire event these batteries may catch fire. I do understand that these batteries have an internal fire suppression system which, if the batteries are having a meltdown, puts it out. But community concern will always be about external bushfires, because in my electorate we have seen them time and time again and we know how catastrophic they can be.

When we talk about resilience and reliance and all these other things, we cannot go past gas. We on this side of the chamber have made it very, very clear where we stand on gas. We believe there should be more gas exploration in this state. Gas is a good source of power generation and should be used. Some of the legislation that the government has passed through this house in recent years, like if you are a plumber and you install a gas cooktop, you could be up for prosecution – these things are not right. In my building career most of the houses I built – I would actually be safe to say 98 per cent of the homes I built – were on gas. A lot of older Victorians, a lot of pensioners in Victoria, still have gas appliances in their homes. They cannot necessarily afford to transition from gas to power. They just cannot afford it, and we should let them replace like for like. The one thing I do support and I do not necessarily have a problem with is the old gas wall furnaces – probably the worst heating source we could have in this state because they can be quite carcinogenic – being replaced with another system.

We are at a point in this state. We are only two years away from Yallourn power station shutting down, and I do not know – maybe the government does not know either – when we do finally flick the switch on Yallourn whether we will have enough renewables in the system to make sure our power supply is there. This is a very real concern, because I think it is a bit of a hope at the moment that when we turn off Yallourn we will have enough there. Will we or won't we? We are not sure.

The government's whole offshore wind program has been delayed now for years. That has not gone ahead. I have not heard anything. The government was spruiking it when I first got into this chamber back in 2023, but it went very, very quiet when they had a problem down at the Port of Hastings, and I have not heard much more yet about what is happening with that offshore wind program. I know in my area we have got the Delburn wind farm, which still has not started, and for some reason the government has bought that off the private sector. From what I have gathered in conversations I have had with people, the private sector did not want to go through with this wind farm because it was not viable. If the private sector is saying it is not viable, why would the government buy it if there is no viability attached to the project? That beggars belief. Again, that community up there has had very little consultation on that wind farm. This is becoming a bit of a norm with this government – throughout regional Victoria there is a lack of consultation when it comes to the renewable program of the government. It is a little bit 'We're going to bulldoze our way through, and bad luck to the community.'

The community of Shady Creek have a petition running at the moment about the battery energy storage system project in that area, and Baw Baw Shire Council have actually turned around and said they do not want any BESS projects in their area, purely because everywhere they have been nominated is in bushfire overlays. So it does come back to that community consultation. As I said, I do not have a problem personally with battery storage, but I do have a problem when locations are stupid. I do have a problem when there is a lack of community consultation. The providers go out there and talk to the community or let the community talk to them, but whether they listen is an entirely different thing. Part of the problem is that these people that are building the battery storage systems are buying the land or leasing the land up-front to get their project through. So they are pushing very hard, and they

will push the minister very hard on this. I know this, and I have brought it up in the chamber before. I have asked the minister, especially for the Shady Creek battery farms that are out there, not to approve them because they are in the wrong area, although the minister does have the right to remove overlays. But I think if you start removing bushfire overlays or if you start removing cultural heritage overlays to make room for these battery storage systems, that is fraught with danger. The overlays are there for a reason. We do not just create them out of thin air. I implore the minister again in this contribution to look at these battery farms in the locations where they are going.

Anyway, I am nearly out of time. We obviously are not opposing this bill.

Paul Edbrooke interjected.

Wayne FARNHAM: I do not know what the member for Frankston said – ramblings again from that side of the chamber – but I will leave it at that.

Sarah CONNOLLY (Laverton) (11:18): I too rise to speak on the Energy and Other Legislation Amendment (Resilience Reforms and Other Matters) Bill 2026. I can tell you this, and I will pluck this out of thin air: this bill is certainly about strengthening Victoria's capacity to withstand increasingly severe climate change driven weather events. The member for Narracan talked about lack of community consultation. I will say that we have spent 12-plus years in community consultation, not just here in Victoria but across the country. Climate change is real, people. It is real, member for Narracan. That is what you get through listening to the community. Then you come to this place, which is actually your job as a member of Parliament, as a representative of your community, to put through a legislative agenda and changes to the energy industry and energy legislation here in this state that benefit the community, tackle climate change and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, which is exactly what this bill is intended to do. The Minister for Energy and Resources sitting here at the table has worked tirelessly for the last 12 years, having specialised in energy in her four years as a shadow opposition member in this same portfolio and become an expert on this. Those opposite are experts in nothing. They are a jack-of-all-trades. To come here into this place and say there has not been community consultation is absolute nonsense. The bill that we are addressing goes to the vulnerabilities that we have seen exposed by storms, by bushfires, by prolonged outages. It will ensure that communities are better protected and essential services remain operational. We do not need to do community consultation to know they are the basic expectations of our communities, of Victorians right across this state.

We know that climate change is what is driving more frequent and more severe storms, heatwaves, floods and bushfires and that this places communities in Victoria at risk. We have been talking about, in this place, the dangers of leaving the door open to parties like One Nation. It is absolutely imperative that the Victorian community understand that One Nation do not believe in climate change. They are climate change deniers. So when we talk about, in this place, tackling climate change and driving down greenhouse gas emissions, moving towards our targets of net zero here in this state, we are never going to leave the door open to a party that does not believe in climate change in the first place. Those opposite – I do not think the same could be said of them.

Not too long ago at all we had a 45-degree day here in Melbourne. I know if the member for Mildura was here, she would probably start laughing, because at 45 degrees in Melbourne someone like me might be hiding in a dark, air-conditioned room from such heat, but I know in Mildura it nearly reached 50 degrees. That is extraordinary – 50 degrees. That was likely the hottest day on record in Victorian history, and with extremely hot weather like this comes dangerous and severe bushfires. It is true that Victoria has seen her share, too much of it, this summer. We have also had, and I found this quite shocking because we love camping at Wye River, flash floods, these freakish flash floods across parts of the state as well. All of these severe weather events do incredible damage to our distribution network, the poles and wires. That causes areas, sometimes entire townships, to go without power for an extended period of time.

I do want to take a moment in my contribution to acknowledge the absolutely incredible emergency service workers and volunteers. Every summer they do this, but particularly this summer they put themselves on the line to help with fires and flood-affected communities. I know that my friend, the member for Werribee, was one of those volunteers. I have to say, as the member for Werribee is just a little bit younger than me, it was just remarkable watching such a young man out there on the front line fighting these fires and not thinking of himself but putting other communities first. What an amazing attribute that is to have at such a young age. Bravery is one of the ways in which I would describe the member for Werribee – so brave to do that along with his comrades. They went out and they helped communities in regional Victoria with their local branch, and that was the Werribee branch for the member for Werribee.

Disasters like this do not exist in a vacuum. You cannot pretend they exist in a vacuum. We know from previous storms how vulnerable our grid is to extreme weather. In February 2024 storms damaged over 12,000 kilometres of powerlines and poles and over 529,000 homes and businesses were affected. In June 2021 more than 250,000 Victorian households and businesses lost power, and this was followed up in October that year when over half a million Victorian households were also left without power. This is happening more and more regularly at such extreme numbers. In these particular instances, some of those folks went for up to 49 hours without power in cities and as long as 84 days – that is 12 whole weeks – in some rural areas due to the scope of the damage caused.

Following these disasters the electricity distribution network resilience review expert panel concluded that distribution businesses must do more to reduce prolonged outages, and what we know is that communities explicitly wanted stronger, more reliable infrastructure capable of withstanding climate impacts. This work is not new to our government, and a lot has been done over the last decade that we have been in government to strengthen Victoria's energy resilience. We have delivered climate change adaptation plans, sector-based reviews, climate risk assessments and targeted investments as part of this work. And while we continue to address the impacts of climate change through our world-leading emissions and renewable energy targets – they are targets that we are absolutely smashing, by the way – we will also continue to assess and implement measures that mitigate those effects because, and I say this to my kids, the unfortunate reality is that these extreme weather events are happening more and more, and we need to look at ways and think outside the box to make things like our distribution network a whole lot more resilient when it comes to these climate change weather events.

We do know that the government does have a role to ensure that the private network businesses know they need to spend more on increasing the resilience of their networks, and I think we have made that extremely clear to them. We do this because we know that power outages are not just a temporary inconvenience. They impact people's lives, and those impacts are not always recognised by the national framework that governs these private companies, and that is where we get involved. That is why our government initiated the work of this resilience review, and that is exactly what this bill makes good on.

There is a lot to say about this bill. There is a lot I am sure will be said this afternoon, but the bill does position Victoria as a national leader – something we should all be proud of – in embedding resilience planning into electricity distribution regulations. It ensures that our communities, especially the most vulnerable to climate-driven extreme weather events, are better protected from the rising risk of prolonged outages. While we cannot prevent power outages entirely, we can take the right steps to ensure that they are less likely to happen, and to do that we need the power distribution companies to step up. That is exactly what these resilience plans are all about.

Victorians know that when it comes to strengthening energy reliability, improving climate preparedness and supporting the renewable transition, our government has their back. We have almost 12 years on record where we can say our government has their back when it comes to energy. We will also be continuing to make sure that our network is strong and that we are as prepared as we can be for the impacts of these extreme weather events as our state continues to grapple with the disastrous effects of climate change. This is a comprehensive reform package. It is focused on safety, reliability,

accountability and long-term resilience, and it is why I want to congratulate the minister at the table, the Minister for Energy and Resources, for bringing such an important bill before the house this week. I wholeheartedly commend the bill to the house.

Tim READ (Brunswick) (11:28): I rise to very briefly commend this bill to the Parliament. The Energy and Other Legislation Amendment (Resilience Reforms and Other Matters) Bill 2026 will require electricity distribution network companies to publish network resilience plans to ensure our grid can better withstand natural disasters. The Minister for Energy and Resources in her second-reading speech for the bill appropriately recognises that climate change is driving more frequent and severe storms, heatwaves, bushfires and floods, leaving Victorian communities ‘increasingly vulnerable to prolonged power outages caused by extreme weather events’. In the face of these threats it is appropriate that we take the necessary steps to make our grid more resilient to climate disasters. But perhaps more importantly, this bill further consolidates the VicGrid reforms as the foundation for Victoria’s critical transition to renewable energy. Victoria needs to build transmission lines and increased generation capacity – yesterday. As we have seen again this summer, climate change is incinerating our farms. Drought and floods are destroying our crops and roads, and algal bloom has done untold damage to South Australia, particularly its fishing industry. We are not closing climate-wrecking coal-powered generation fast enough.

If evermore frequent and severe droughts, floods, fires and heatwaves are a climate emergency, then we need to act like it is a climate emergency, and if the Allan Labor government does not pick up the pace, Victoria will not hit its target of 95 per cent renewable energy by 2035. We probably will hit our target for renewable energy by 2030, but that is a less ambitious target. The stark truth is that despite evermore renewables coming online, coal consumption is just not falling at the rate we would expect because our power consumption is increasing. Data centres in particular are a threat to further reductions in power consumption. So too is the slow pace of improving the energy efficiency of Victorian housing. Until we make the transition to renewables we are left vulnerable to an increasingly hostile climate and unreliable and ageing coal-fired power plants. Every year of delay in building more transmission capacity means that when we do build it it will cost more, driving higher bills for Victorians when they can least afford them in a cost-of-living crisis.

Finally, before I finish, I want to condemn in the harshest possible terms the baseless opposition to building the transmission and generation capacity that Victoria so desperately needs. When members of the Liberal and National parties associate with and promote opposition to building these essential transmission lines across Victoria, they are effectively delaying the transition from coal. Not only will they have their children to answer to for this, they will have their constituents. A heating climate is the real threat to agriculture and human existence, not poles and wires in paddocks, as ugly as they may be. We refuse to be sidetracked by your manufactured outrage and alarmism, and I commend this bill to the house.

Bronwyn HALFPENNY (Thomastown) (11:32): I also rise to speak in support of the Energy and Other Legislation Amendment (Resilience Reforms and Other Matters) Bill 2026. It is really yet another step, another piece of legislation that in many aspects is continuing the clean-up after the decision of the Liberal–National parties to privatise the electricity industry. While we can say it was a very long time ago, the implication of private companies motivated by profit over what is really in the best interest of Victorians is what we are seeing every day when it comes to electricity generation and the need to change to renewable power in order to do our bit in trying to prevent the continuing devastation of climate change.

As the previous speaker said, the Liberal–Nationals must be condemned for peddling the misinformation, the lies and the incorrect information that are constantly talked about both in this chamber and out in the community. When we look at what has been going on, they oppose electricity generated by wind and they oppose the necessary transmission lines. They oppose everything that really is about converting our state and our country to renewable energy so that we can hope to assist and help future generations in tackling the causes of climate change and not just having to deal with

the terrible consequences and effects that we are seeing every year, whether it is the bushfires, including the devastating bushfires in January of this year in Victoria and other parts of the state, whether it is the floods or whether it is the huge and catastrophic storms, all of which we know are connected to and due to the changing climate as a result of human activity over years and years.

I will mainly talk about the resilience requirements. Because of what has been going on, we have seen many massive power outages as a result of bushfires, floods and so on. With the types of weather events that we are having, it may not be possible to completely guarantee we can protect residents and Victorians from power outages completely, but there are no doubt many things that can be done in order to protect the power infrastructure. This is on power companies, in particular the distribution companies. This legislation talks about a requirement where they will have to develop resilience plans, and those plans will be about what they will do to ensure that power can be secured as much as possible. Victorians worry about not only what is going on with the bushfire or flood in their area but also how they are going to receive the necessary power. Whether it is a clean-up or whether it is fighting fires, power will always be needed in those situations, even if you are not directly affected by the fire or the flood. We are seeing over and over again many thousands of households being affected by the crashing down of powerlines, which means the power has stopped and they cannot get that power into their homes. We all need that power. Whether it is to see what we are doing in our home, whether it is to preserve our food or whether it is to keep us warm or cool, we need that electricity in the home. The economy needs that power as well to power industry, so the cost of power outages is twofold: the cost to individuals and households as well as to industry, and the big hits to our economy when we cannot produce what we need to and therefore create the wealth that then goes back into our economy.

There is a vast combination of wires – 150,000 kilometres in wires – and 1.3 million power poles. These are not all exposed to the elements, but many are during weather events and other events, so it is critically important that power companies do develop their resilience plans, which are then endorsed by government to ensure that our power is protected into the future.

Another aspect of this legislation which is extremely important is around amendments to the Statewide Treaty Act 2025. I recall there was legislation late last year around the Self-Determination Fund, which provides for funds to be distributed back to traditional owners, and this legislation amends the treaty act to ensure that that Self-Determination Fund is fit for purpose and a vehicle to distribute funds generated through the Victorian transmission investment framework to traditional owners and enable traditional owners to apply for these funds for community benefit.

Again, in speaking on this legislation it is so important that we do acknowledge climate change, that we do acknowledge that the extreme weather events that we are seeing are a result of that climate change and that we need to in many aspects change the way we do things – change the way that we live – in order to protect ourselves as well as possible from these situations. We often talk about how legislation debated in and introduced into this Parliament, this chamber, is about responding to what is going on in the world. Legislation is not just a dull, fixed thing. It is something that has to change, has to adapt and has to be flexible in order to meet the changing requirements of society. In this case it is around changing various aspects of energy legislation so that we again can adapt and ensure that people, and Victorians in particular, are protected as well as they can be. Power companies being required to do resilience plans to ensure that they can protect power infrastructure to as great an extent as possible in the event of extreme weather events is a very important and very key aspect of the legislation. I commend this bill to the house.

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (11:40): I am pleased to rise to speak on the Energy and Other Legislation Amendment (Resilience, Reforms and Other Matters) Bill 2026. This is somewhat of an omnibus bill in the energy space, but there is some important stuff in here and some issues that we certainly have concerns with. There are few issues in regional Victoria at the moment that are more contentious than energy in a whole range of factors, and this bill covers quite a few of them. The resilience reforms are of particular importance or concern to my electorate.

The member for Monbulk highlighted the impact of the June 2021 storms on her electorate, and I think October 2021 as well. We had subsequent storms in 2024, particularly the mini tornado that hit Mirboo North, or the Boonado, which the locals sometimes refer to it as, which was far more significant and localised than any of the other storms, which were devastating and did massive amounts of damage, as the member for Monbulk indicated. I think she said 20,000 trees in her electorate – I would be surprised if I did not have 200,000 trees damaged, frankly. There were some parts of the Strzeleckis where entire plantations were wiped out. Again as the member for Monbulk described, they did look like giant matchsticks in that area. But in the Strzeleckis, particularly on the southern side of the Strzeleckis, there were just trees down everywhere and subsequently powerlines down everywhere. It was an unusual south-easterly storm, which the trees and the forests and the farmland do not normally cop in Gippsland. We normally get south-westerlies or northerlies or easterlies, but the south-easterly clearly had an impact and took out many, many thousands if not hundreds of thousands of trees and at the same time powerlines.

It was a wake-up call, I guess, on the question of resilience, for AusNet in our neck of the woods and for other distributors and transmission line operators, because in some areas we had people that were off for a week. We had dairy farms that were off for three and four days, and at that point some still did not have a backup system. I think pretty much every dairy farmer now does, because they cannot afford to be without power for 24 hours or more, and that storm really did impact them. The Mirboo North storm was not just Mirboo North; it did hit quite a wide area, but the intense impact straight through the town of Mirboo North was something to behold. If you did actually go and see it at the time, even if you had seen the photos and the film or the video of it, nothing prepared you for what it actually looked like in person.

I remember talking to AusNet the day after it occurred, about getting powerlines picked up and getting them in there to get it fixed, and the message clearly had not got through. A couple of days later I mentioned there were still powerlines on the road, to which the AusNet staff member said to me, 'Oh, don't be going anywhere near powerlines on the road.' And I said, 'Mate, they've been down on the road for three days now.' Virtually the entire power grid in Mirboo North was taken out. There were concrete power poles that were literally snapped in half, Acting Speaker Addison, and you might have seen them when you visited. There were others that were broken off at the base and teetering, just held up by the wires from other poles, so it was a massive issue.

I did call, back in 2021, for a review. The government did undertake an electricity distribution network resilience review after that, but it was very poorly advertised. Indeed when I asked the minister at the time how it was advertised and who gave feedback, I think there was a public information session or feedback session in Traralgon, and I think it was six people that provided feedback. Given that Traralgon had not been particularly badly impacted, I do not know that they necessarily got the views of those that were most impacted. Nonetheless, this is one of the outcomes of that review. I have no problem with the resilience reforms. I would have thought, as a principle, that the distribution companies would be doing exactly what is proposed here in having a resilience plan and making sure that they stick to it.

The broader issue that I want to raise is that of resilience and the performance of the network more generally. I am getting repeated complaints about blackouts in the network in the electorate of Gippsland South. There are concerns in places like the Tarra Valley, Yarram, Woodside, Mcloughlins Beach and Woodside Beach. I get complaints from Loch and Nyora, the Poowong area, the Buffalo area near Fish Creek and Meeniyan, which have had multiple blackouts over the last period of time. Some of the excuses provided by AusNet are implausible, and some of them are genuine and they have worked to address them, but I am concerned that not enough is being done by the distribution companies to ensure longer term resilience. We saw concerns also in the recent heatwaves that we have had, particularly on the catastrophic fire day, where there were rolling blackouts in certain areas. In one area in particular, Central Gippsland, originally a text message went out to customers that indicated it was the result of a direction by the Australian Energy Market Operator, which clearly got

many of my constituents hot under the collar, who felt that they were losing power for grid stability to ensure that Melbourne was kept on. AusNet subsequently advised that that text had been sent in error and that it was in fact a fault on the line to Bairnsdale that had caused the blackout. There is a fair bit of scepticism in our community about that explanation, I have got to say. There are a fear and a scepticism that country areas, particularly the less populated ones, are the first to be switched off to ensure grid stability and that blackouts do not occur elsewhere in the system. That is something that I think they probably have good reason to be concerned about.

It goes then to the point where in this legislation the government is making some changes with respect to VicGrid's powers. There are probably not too many agencies or organisations that have had more legislation in the last couple of years than VicGrid. Some of that is progressive reform, and some of that is the government messing up and having to go back and clean up its messes. The single biggest mess of course was last year's legislation on VicGrid that gave them and their agents the power to force their way onto private land and threaten farmers with \$12,000 fines if they had the temerity to defend their land from that access. This is after both the Premier and the Prime Minister said, 'We acknowledge we've been doing this wrong and we've been disrespecting regional communities.' Well, Premier, the way to respect regional communities is not to say, 'We've got it wrong, but we're now going to bring in legislation that's tougher and will result in you being fined.' I find that in this legislation as well. We have had the government establish renewable energy zones. This legislation we are debating today will give flexibility to make new renewable energy zones where there is not one yet declared and where there is existing sufficient transmission infrastructure. So in effect the government is saying, 'We can just make a renewable energy zone wherever we feel like it.' In that case, what the hell is the point of them? That really is the question for me. I do not understand what that is.

Second to that are the changes to the assessment process that effectively give the ability for some 'limited class of transitional projects' to not have to go through the same processes that are required, particularly for community engagement, for projects in renewable energy zones. While I understand there might be some that are further progressed and that have got a different set of circumstances, no is our response to that. They should not be subject to different community engagement processes, because it is a very big issue in regional Victoria, and certainly in the west of the state at the moment. It has been a big issue in the south-west and in Gippsland for a long time, and we have been dealing with this. I have said so many times in this place that we cannot continue to have a situation where regional areas bear the brunt of the bad parts of renewable energy development and the city only gets the benefits, and so we need to do better on that. We need to actually make sure that if this is going to happen, firstly, regional communities are respected and, secondly, they get benefits out of these projects and that their communities, their landscapes and their farms in particular are not adversely affected. That is why the Nationals and Liberals have committed to introducing a strong test about the impact on farmland from these projects, and I am concerned that this legislation will actually make that worse.

Matt FREGON (Ashwood) (11:50): It is my delight to also rise on the Energy and Other Legislation Amendment (Resilience Reforms and Other Matters) Bill 2026 and thank previous members for their contributions. I was lucky enough to be in the chair when the lead speaker for the opposition gave his contribution, which was measured, which is good, and I appreciate that the opposition are not opposing the legislation, which is also good. We will have some agreement there. There are a number of things that have been said that we do not quite agree on – but mostly.

One of the important aspects of this bill is about resilience, as other members have mentioned. I take the member for Monbulk's contribution in regard to her area, which I am very familiar with, because as a boy growing up in the gully we were at the bottom of the hills, and if power poles and powerlines go down, it can cause catastrophe and tragedy and a lot of outages over the years. I also take note that the member for Monbulk was talking about the resilience of the old SEC, and I think I have mentioned in this place before, but far be it from me to not repeat myself, that I had an extended family member

who used to work in the SEC back in the day – back in the 1990s – and I think he was a linesman, from memory. I will give a shout-out to the good people of the ETU, while we are at it, who do fantastic work getting our poles and wires back in the ground and working when these things happen, and usually it is under some duress, and further than that, to our SES, who do a lot of work. We had the winds last month. When these things happen they come out at 2 in the morning; they get the call and they come out. So a good shout-out to George Haitidis and everyone down at the Monash SES and the Whitehorse SES; I share both – a fantastic bunch of crew.

Anyway, I digress – SEC. I was talking to my extended family member years ago, and he was telling me that he worked for the SEC and then when it was privatised fully one of the first things they did as the new corporate owner was to remove all of the gold-plated redundancy that our public money had paid for – that they had bought; I mean, it was theirs to do that with, right? They got all the redundant equipment off all the poles and wires and everything else and they put it in a shed, and that was their spare parts for the next decade. So we used to have a system – in, what are we talking, the 1980s – where we had redundancies and we had less issues with things going wrong, and they were quicker to fix. And then all of a sudden they went, ‘You know what, we’ve got an asset here we can protect and we can use that, and then we don’t have to buy spare parts for the next decade, so we’ll put it all in the shed.’ As a result – I think the member for Monbulk was talking about more brownouts in the 1990s, and I take her word for it.

I can also remember similar times. Someone will have to point me out later about the timing, but if you remember when the gas network went off, we all had cold showers. Everyone who was on gas had cold showers.

Josh Bull interjected.

Matt FREGON: 1999. Thank you, member for Sunbury, for reminding me. The gas network went off and there was a while there when we were all having cold showers. Luckily my mother had an electric hot water service, so we were all going to Ferntree Gully to get showers every day.

Resilience is important is where I am going with this speech. It makes perfect sense to expect our distribution networks to not only plan for it themselves but have to be accountable to that by publishing what they are going to do and how they are going to do it. I commend the minister at the table, the Minister for Energy and Resources, for her work not just on this bill but also on a very long time, many years, working in this sector. And I commend her office. I think it is fair to say we as a state are years ahead of other states in our transition to renewable energy, and that is something that we – and I think our children and I think their children – will all get the benefit of, because that is the way the world is going. We can argue – and I will come back to the gas measure – about baseload power. We can argue about the transition speed and where you do this and where you do that and what we need to do first, second, third and where we are going.

But surely we all understand in this place that climate change is a thing, that humans are having an effect, and that therefore it is prudent and responsible, not only to ourselves but to future generations, that we do what we can to cut our emissions. The member for Bulleen did mention that we occasionally – I do not know how occasionally – import energy, from time to time, from other states and that states generate theirs from coal. We also import energy from Tassie, who I think generate a lot of theirs from hydro. We do not have the luxury of the Tasmanian hydro system, but we are years ahead, thanks to the minister, the former Premier and the current Premier for their foresight in doing this work to encourage everyone to transition. Not only is it in the grid, which we are talking about today, but it is also in the Victorian energy upgrades (VEU) program, which is also in this bill, and it is also in the plan that we have to transition away from gas. Yes, we will need gas for a very long time, and this is something the government has said. I noticed the member for Bulleen was accusing us of some hypocrisy. I do not think that is a valid argument, but I do think that it is quite feasible to argue that we need to transition from fossil fuels to renewables where at all possible and, at the same time as

saying that is a fact and that is what we are working on, to also say that, yes, gas is going to play a part of our energy creation for the foreseeable future.

It has been interesting over the last number of years. I remember I had certain constituents telling me off because we had stopped exploration for conventional gas. I said, 'No, we haven't.' They said, 'I read it in the paper.' I thought, 'Well, that's interesting,' because we had not. I vaguely recall it was a former government that stopped it – and I am not arguing why, where or whatever – and then we actually opened it up again. So gas is going to be a part of our future, but that does not necessarily mean that it is in households' best interests – and I will come to the financial equation – to use gas in their homes. I will give you an example of that. In our house we have had the old gas ducted heating, like many, many Victorians, because Victoria had a plethora of gas and 50, 60, 40, 30 years ago that was exactly what we should have been using. But now we all know it is better to go to electricity. In our house we had a look at replacing dying gas ducted heating, which was costing us \$1000 a year to just keep running, with a heat pump system. It was not cheap – I get that – so we spent some money. But, doing the numbers, it will pay for itself in eight years. We are about three or four years in now, so we have half-paid for it already, and then after that it is technically money for nothing. That is based on the figures of gas at the time, which was four years ago. Our eastern seaboard market is the global market, and we are at the whim of the world's gas prices. We can refer that argument to the feds.

So it makes sense to assist people transitioning. And what better way to help with transitioning than to subsidise those that might not find it easy to afford it otherwise? We all in this room are paid pretty well; we can afford it. But there are a lot of people who cannot necessarily afford those things. So programs like Solar Homes and the VEU, which are in this bill, are not only crucial to helping us transition to a cleaner energy sector but also crucial to helping Victorians save money. Cost of living is going up. We all know that. Wages, inflation – these are not new problems, but everyone feels the pinch. So if I can save, theoretically, 100 bucks a month on not paying gas but paying electricity instead, then so can everyone else.

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (12:00): The Energy and Other Legislation Amendment (Resilience Reforms and Other Matters) Bill 2026: whenever there is a bill with regard to energy legislation and more amendments on the government business program, those throughout my electorate, particularly the southern parts of my electorate, get very, very nervous, and with good reason. They should be nervous, because at the moment they are not being consulted. They are angry. They are having legislation that allows VicGrid and AEMO to do whatever they want on land that has been in families for generations, and it is appalling. It is just another thing that adds to the anger on the ground, and I will get to that in a second. But let me begin, because there is a lot to this bill, but it still makes us very, very nervous.

I will begin where we might be able to agree, and that is on strengthening the electricity network resilience in the face of severe weather events. I do note that in fact a few members have spoken about high temperatures in this place today. Being from the northernmost part of this state, when I hear 'It was so hot; it was 42 degrees' I do get a wry smile across my face and think that is pretty cute – 42 degrees. At one point during the heatwave, on farm at our place it was 53 degrees, and then it was followed by another week of over 40 degrees and about 90 per cent humidity. I live in the desert for a reason; the humidity is not ideal. However, strengthening the resilience of the network in weather events like that is important, and I did have many constituents contact me in Mildura about power outages and having to use the hose outside and stuff to cool down because they did not have an air conditioner. Communities that have endured those prolonged outages during weather events like that and storms deserve a system that is better prepared.

But we cannot discuss resilience in isolation from the broader energy planning chaos that is unfolding right across regional Victoria, because while this bill talks about strengthening poles and wires and moving assets out of flood zones and all of that, if we are going to talk about poles and wires, why on earth we would talk about upgrading the existing poles and wires and then putting an extra 250 kV next to the existing power network instead of bulldozing through regional Victoria like they are doing

to construct VNI West, which is completely void of logic, is beyond me. But I have spoken about that plenty of times in this place, and the government continues to just push through with massive transmission projects, particularly through the Buloke shire council. They have got communities now at war with one another – some that would like to host renewable energy projects. I need to make that clear too: communities throughout regional Victoria are not anti transition to renewables. They are not anti renewables. They are anti governments coming in and just bulldozing through without consultation. That is what we are anti. We are not anti the transition; we are not anti renewables. We are anti lack of consultation; we are anti lack of transparency. We are anti the lack of community input, and we are anti the lack of community benefit, if I am completely honest, because at this point there has been no obvious presentation from this government of any larger community benefit – no regional fund, no infrastructure funds, no clear direction on how communities that are being bulldozed over are actually going to benefit from this.

VNI West – that is a trigger term if I have ever heard one for those in my communities – has shattered trust in the very communities it claims to be protecting. It cuts through prime agricultural land, and it affects generational farming families that have been there forever, who are now considering just walking away. It carves transmission easements through productive country that feeds the state, the nation and the world, when there are existing easements there that you could use. Upgrade the poles and wires that need it and just add an upgrade. But what have landholders experienced? They have experienced consultation that feels merely performative – tick the box.

A member interjected.

Jade BENHAM: We got consultold, exactly. In fact I know there is a consultation with VicGrid open at the moment – Leader of the Nationals, you will love this – and that consultation ends on 15 March. In no way has the community been told that that consultation is open – no ads in papers. There might be ads on their website, but unless you are going to that website, you do not actually know. What they have done, though, is they have booked some ads in local papers through the Buloke Shire Council. The *Buloke Times* will be one and maybe the *Sea Lake and Wycheproof Times Ensign*. Those small papers have booked those ads, and guess when they have booked their ads for: 12 March. When did I say the consultation ends? 15 March. Three days – you cannot make this stuff up. It is absolutely mind boggling. So not only do they not consult, they are actively now trying to avoid consultation with the communities that this affects. It is disgusting. It is just another example of how regional communities are being bulldozed over in the name of renewable energy and energy transition. It stinks, and we will not stand for it, not for a second.

Not only does this bill do a lot of other things, it also expands the powers of VicGrid, introducing flexibility in renewable energy zone declarations. We heard from the Leader of the Nationals earlier that these changes were only made recently. VicGrid only had amendments in 2024, I think it was, and now they are changing them – and last year. Again, like I said, every time there are the words ‘energy legislation amendments’ on the government business program, people through my electorate shudder, and we get very, very nervous. It introduces special rules for so-called transitional projects that may be advanced without meeting the full suite of planning and environment effects statement requirements. This is going to cause angst for those not only in the Buloke Shire Council but in Yarriambiack as well – those around Hopetoun, who have wind turbine companies knocking on their doors. There have been rumours – and this is where you should listen to the communities – that I have been hearing through landholders that the EES requirements are going to be swept under the rug. I am the eternal optimist most of the time – this job has changed me, believe me – and I would say, ‘No, they have to.’ This is a government that claims that environmental protections matter and that they want to save the environment, until it is politically inconvenient, don’t they? It is proven that if you listen to the communities, they know what is going on. They know.

If the government has any consideration for these communities or genuine confidence in its transmission planning, then it should welcome the scrutiny and the feedback instead of avoiding it. It should welcome full environmental assessments, I would have thought. Wouldn’t you? It should

welcome robust planning processes so we are getting it done right the first time. Wouldn't that be helpful? It might make sense. It is certainly not the habit here, though, is it? Again, whenever we see the words 'energy legislation amendment' we get very, very nervous. Resilience is not achieved by sidelining landholders. It is not achieved by centralising power and obscuring costs. If energy transition is going to succeed, it has got to be built on trust, and that is the trust of the regional communities that they are going to go straight through. That trust has been completely eroded, and it will continue to be if they insist on using regional Victoria as a transmission corridor rather than a community.

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (12:10): I rise to support the Energy and Other Legislation Amendment (Resilience Reforms and Other Matters) Bill 2026. This is a bill that builds on our ongoing work and ambition as a state Labor government to foster a strong, reliable, renewable, resilient and affordable energy network that keeps the lights on and supply flowing for all Victorians. It is a bill that takes action to ensure our energy supply and infrastructure are strengthened, especially in the face of more extreme and volatile weather events. This summer has shown us the increasing impact that climate change is having on our lives and on our infrastructure. In January alone we experienced widespread bushfires, flash floods and record temperatures. These catastrophic conditions have impacted our electricity distribution network – the small poles and wires at street level – causing a higher than usual number of power outages, including in my community. Crews have been working around the clock in extreme conditions to repair the network and restore power during this time, and I thank and acknowledge every single one of them for that work.

However, while we acknowledge the hard work of the crews on the ground, we must also acknowledge that the distribution businesses that own the poles and wires have not been prepared for the new reality of extreme weather driven by climate change. Victoria's electricity distribution network was privatised by the Liberal government in the 1990s and is now owned and operated by private companies, with network expenditure approved on a five-yearly basis by the Australian Energy Regulator. Along with selling off the SEC, it was the Liberals – the Kennett government – who privatised the electricity distribution network. As climate change drives more extreme weather like January's heatwave, the poles and wires that make up the distribution network are subject to damage. For too long many of these private energy distribution network operators have simply not been making the necessary investments to maintain strong, robust and resilient energy infrastructure, and that is why the Victorian Labor government has intervened to ensure that private businesses do spend more on increasing network resilience to help keep the power on.

The events of this summer are just the latest in a series of extreme weather events that have led to widespread and prolonged power outages. In June and October 2021 Victoria experienced two extreme storms which caused unprecedented damage to the electricity network. The 21 June storm caused the largest electricity outage in the state's history. At its peak there were nearly 250,000 households and businesses without power. The damage caused by the June storm was largely concentrated around the Dandenongs – we heard the member for Monbulk talk to some extent on this – and required an almost total rebuild of the network in very difficult terrain and circumstances.

Following the 21 June storm the Ministry for Energy and Resources initiated the distribution network resilience review, which led to an expert panel and sought recommendations on improving the resilience of the network and the response to extreme weather events. These recommendations centred around improvements to communication with critical infrastructure operators, enhanced public messaging to support community preparedness and faster support for power-dependent customers. The second phase of these changes was led by the expert panel and sought recommendations to improve the resilience of the network and the response to these extreme weather events. The panel made eight core recommendations and 35 subrecommendations. We passed legislation, the Energy Legislation Amendment (Electricity Outage Emergency Response and Other Matters) Act 2023, which allows the government to direct the power companies to provide information to the Victorian public and assist in the delivery of relief activities during and after electricity outage emergencies.

However, this was soon surpassed by the number of outages caused by the storms in October of that same year. At the peak of the October storm more than 525,000 households – nearly a quarter of all Victorian homes – were left without power. This storm affected a much larger area, and prolonged outages were experienced in western Victoria, the Mornington Peninsula and the Gippsland region. A third storm on 13 February 2024 broke the record for the third time, with 531,000 homes losing power at the peak of the event. Following these catastrophic storms the minister initiated the network outage review, again led by an expert panel, and key themes that came out of that included the need for better planning by the distribution businesses, the use of temporary generation in town centres, improving the performance of vulnerable feeder lines and updating customer communication tools.

Just last week, on 27 January, Victoria of course experienced record hot temperatures and record electricity demand. On that day Victoria did have sufficient reserves of generating capacity, but the combination of bushfires, the burning out of poles and wires and heat-related equipment failure saw 100,000 homes lose power. Nearly all of these outages were restored by the following day, but this event again highlighted the need for a proactive approach to increasing the resilience of our network in the face of accelerating climate change. These outages also heavily impacted my community across Pascoe Vale, Coburg and Brunswick West. These local outages, as I said, were caused by a combination of bushfires affecting electricity assets across the regions, trees falling on poles and wires across my community with the high winds and heat-related equipment failure too throughout my community.

As of 8:30 pm on 27 January there were around 2300 homes locally that had remained without power for a prolonged period. Crews of course did work hard overnight to restore power to many as quickly as possible, with more than 4000 homes locally which experienced these outages that afternoon or evening having their power restored by that night. As a result, I was contacted of course by many local residents in real time conveying their concerns, particularly those who experienced those prolonged outages until the morning of 28 January.

Following on from this recent major local incident, but also following other similar related incidents over recent times, I have since taken the opportunity to make refreshed representations to the minister for energy and the CEO of Jemena requesting a specific response and briefing on what exactly Jemena is doing and/or intends to do to invest in and upgrade the resilience of our local energy infrastructure across the northern suburbs and Merri-bek. Along with this, that is why we are moving this bill, which will hold privatised electricity companies like Jemena to account.

Since privatisation in the 1990s the distribution network has been owned and operated by private companies. Across Victoria there are five electricity distributors, including Jemena, which looks after the north-western suburbs; Powercor Australia, which looks after the western suburbs and western Victoria; AusNet Services, which looks after the outer northern and eastern suburbs and eastern Victoria; United Energy Distribution, which looks after the southern suburbs and Mornington Peninsula; and of course CitiPower, which looks after the city and the inner-ring suburbs. In terms of gas distributors, we have AusNet Services, Multinet Gas and Australian Gas Networks as well. Victoria's distribution network consists of 147,900 kilometres of distribution lines and 1.3 million power poles. The network is split into five distribution areas. AusNet control 45,985 kilometres of those lines and 417,000 of those power poles; Powercor, CitiPower and United control around 95,000 kilometres of those distribution lines and 858,000 power poles; and Jemena, which looks after my community, is responsible for 6800 kilometres of distribution lines and 61,200 power poles. Network costs make up about 40 per cent of the typical household power bill, so we have to be careful of course not to gold-plate the network and increase costs beyond what is reasonable for the consumers.

Every five years these companies submit network expenditure plans to the independent regulator, the Australian Energy Regulator, for assessment and approval, and state governments do not fund or control these network upgrades. However, since 2021, when severe storms caused record outages across Victoria, our government has intervened to ensure that private network businesses spend more on increasing network resilience under the national rules. We have done this because we recognise the

impact that outages have on people's lives, and impacts are not always recognised by the existing national framework, but it is also why we are taking further action through this bill.

This bill's primary purpose is to obligate the electricity distribution network companies to publish network resilience plans to ensure investments in network upgrades that reduce power outages. We will do this by amending the Electricity Safety Act 1998 to provide new obligations for Victorian electricity distribution businesses to prepare resilience plans every five years and submit the resilience plans to the independent safety regulator, Energy Safe Victoria, to monitor and enforce compliance. This will increase Victorian electricity distribution businesses' accountability by ensuring resilience initiatives are visible and encourage Victorian distribution businesses to adopt a proactive network and community resilience strategy.

There are quite a number of other amendments throughout this bill as well, but of course this is a bill that builds on our ongoing work to build, as I said, a sustainable, resilient, robust and renewable energy sector network, and it is all about our broader package of work. We are bringing back the SEC. Public-owned power and clean energy are now powering public assets and institutions – our schools, our hospitals, our transport network and our football stadiums as well. Fifty-four solar farms and rooftop solar account for 16 per cent of our electricity. Wind farms contribute 24 per cent of the state's power. As I said in that regard, as of last year 44.6 per cent of the state's electricity generation is from renewable energy, above our legislated 40 per cent target. As well, we have developed a clear vision for an offshore wind sector, and despite what some on the other side may contest, renewables are keeping energy prices low. Victoria's average wholesale price is \$78 per megawatt hour, compared to \$103 in New South Wales, \$96 in Tasmania, \$87 in South Australia and \$85 in Queensland. We are also supporting that with real action for people with the cost of living and the cost of energy through the \$100 power saving bonus; the energy compare website, which saves people an average of \$240 when they change providers; and Solar Victoria rebates, the energy default offer, the energy assistance program, hot water rebates, the savings finder and so much more.

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn) (12:20): I rise to speak on the Energy and Other Legislation Amendment (Resilience Reforms and Other Matters) Bill 2026. Two years ago to the day I remember standing up and asking the Premier why her government would not agree to an upper house inquiry into the storms of February 2024. We all remember those storms. The Premier said she would have none of it. They would not agree to an upper house inquiry, and we as an opposition worked very hard two years ago to corral the support in the upper house to ensure that there could be a proper review of the government's failures and that resilience in our distribution network was achieved. The government refused that. I remember visiting Mirboo North – I think other speakers on this side of the house have spoken about this too – and seeing massive trees that had been just ripped out of the ground like toothpicks, houses destroyed and people traumatised.

Do you know what the saddest aspect is? Much of the damage to the distribution network could in fact have been avoided. Do you know why? Because in June and October of 2021, there were severe storms, as most of us will recall, and some 1 million or so homes in Victoria were without power for substantial periods. There was a review at that time, and the review made a number of recommendations. Chief among those recommendations was a proposal that the government should seek an amendment to the Australian energy rules that would require distribution firms to include, in their investment plans, schemes for building resilience of the distribution network. So just think: five years ago the government was given recommendations about the need and the urgency to build resilience in the distribution network. It did nothing.

Even if you take 2021 as a baseline, why couldn't the government have acted with sufficient dispatch to ensure that when future storms of a severe nature occurred, as in February 2024, the system would have been more resilient? No-one should or can reasonably contend that damage would not have been caused and that people would not have been traumatised; those storms were severe. But we might not – in fact, it is almost certain to say we would not – have suffered as much damage to the distribution

network as that which saw towers collapse in Anakie, north of Geelong. We saw Loy Yang A trip because of the interruptions to distribution and energy supply.

This government, like with so many other bills, brings to this house things we will support, because frankly we were calling for better resilience in our energy distribution network. But it has taken five years for the government to bring this bill to this house. So it is with some frustration that I say this, because it is like the bill we debated in this house yesterday on improving child protection and family services – the government has received warning after warning, and then it brings a bill which deals with only part of it.

It is so important because we have seen the added costs that a failure to invest in resilience has caused the system. I noted with a great deal of interest this week comments by the CEO of Origin Energy, whom I know, Acting Speaker Farnham, you and I have had the pleasure of sitting down with on occasion – Frank Calabria. He made public comments, which I think are a good summary of one of the biggest challenges we face in the transmission journey. He has made the point that although there have been a number of pressures which are exerting downward pressure on wholesale power prices – benign weather, more generation and output from renewables across the national electricity market and fewer interruptions to the coal fleet, so fewer outages amongst the coal fleet operations, which has seen downward pressure on wholesale prices – what he identifies as the biggest risk to affordability of energy is the transmission project. So it is really important that governments act with urgency, and this government has not acted with urgency. You can see what happens when they do not and when they take their eye off the ball.

Last year we debated the fourth increase, if I am not mistaken, in the costings for VNI West. It started off at \$1.8 billion, according to the Australian Energy Market Operator. Now we are looking at \$11 billion. It will probably go above that. There is no reason why it should stop at that when there have been so many revisions to the estimates of the costs. This week Transgrid, which is building EnergyConnect East, an important piece of the transmission project which joins South Australia to New South Wales with a spur down into Victoria, a \$3.5 billion project – it will be more now – has applied to the Australian Energy Regulator to be able to pass on to consumers an extra \$1.1 billion, and that is what is going to happen down here with Transmission Company Victoria and VNI West. It is almost certain to happen with Western Renewables Link. We are seeing across the transmission portfolio just rising costs.

Add to that the mounting community resistance. Acting Speaker Farnham, I know you and others on our side have spoken eloquently about this, and I have certainly addressed this in my comments over recent times. With population growth, with the need to deliver more housing, with the need to achieve greater food security, with the need to support regional and rural businesses, we need to make sure that in terms of community buy-in for these projects we are securing the social licence needed, because there are very real, serious and legitimate concerns in regional Victoria in particular about decisions of government that ride roughshod over the interests and views of the community. What makes it worse is that this government is using – in a cavalier fashion, I would argue – the development facilitation program, and there are a number of projects which the government is rushing through under the DFP which mean that communities and affected stakeholders have no ability to contest those. Those projects just go through, and that is not a particularly fair way to proceed. It is not even a sensible way, because what we are seeing is, if you do not have community buy-in, you will ultimately encounter resistance, which can often mean further delay down the track. Look at the Port of Hastings application to Minister Plibersek on the need to develop a stabling facility for offshore wind. The government did not take into account not only the implications of the Ramsar convention, which was the ultimate ground on which the federal government rejected that initial application, but also the community resistance to that. The government just proceeded. It had not genuinely consulted with the public.

I do think that the government would be better off if it stopped acting so arrogantly and actually took the concerns seriously. My appreciation of the many communities I have spoken to over the years is

that people, in my view, overwhelmingly support an orderly, sensible, affordable transition to renewable energy, because ultimately we all want to bequeath to future generations a world that is sustainable. I strongly believe that. I actually do strongly advocate for that. But I place emphasis on the words ‘orderly, sensible, responsible, achievable transition’. The government here, on whatever front you look at, whether it is offshore wind and the collapse and withdrawal of many project proponents who have withdrawn their feasibility licences, including many that had undertaken advanced works, or onshore wind farms, are imposing them on communities without consultation. I want to make it clear I am not advocating that ‘consultation’ is a code word for not building things. I do support the transition, but that transition will be achievable only if you engage communities responsibly.

To the government I say: you have brought the bill forward. We are not opposing it. We called for greater resilience many years ago. The government was warned many years ago that it needed to invest in resilience. It ignored the findings from its own review. Here we are five years later, after severe storms in February 2024 that visited damage that might have been avoided in substantial ways and recent bushfires. Think about what might have been avoided if the government had acted responsibly and expeditiously.

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (12:30): It is regional and rural communities that can experience the worst impacts of climate change, and the imperative to accelerate the transition is not just for the city slickers, it is actually for everyone in Victoria, not least those who are managing in the agricultural sector. They get hit hard. The increasing severity of storms and droughts et cetera is, without a doubt, impacting our regional and rural communities, so they are absolutely our priority and certainly at the forefront when we are not only thinking about but taking successive action over many years. I do want to refute the proposition that we have done nothing, and I shall do that in a moment.

Firstly, just to set the premise of this bill, the bill’s primary purpose is to obligate the electricity distribution network companies to publish network resilience plans to ensure investment in network upgrades that reduce power outages. The underlying premise is transparency and accountability. It will do this by amending the Electricity Safety Act 1998 to provide new obligations for Victorian electricity distribution businesses to prepare resilience plans every five years and submit the resilience plans to the independent safety regulator Energy Safe Victoria to monitor and enforce compliance. This will increase Victorian electricity distribution businesses’ accountability by ensuring resilience initiatives are visible and encourage Victorian distribution businesses to adopt a proactive network and community resilience strategy.

I do want to put a caveat, because I think there was an inference particularly by the member for Polwarth about who was actually responsible when it comes to the poles and wires. Since privatisation in the 1990s, the distribution network has been owned and operated by private companies. Every five years those companies submit network expenditure plans to the independent national regulator, the Australian Energy Regulator (AER), for assessment and approval. State governments do not fund and control network upgrades, so let that be clear on the record. However, since 2021, when severe storms caused record outages, the Victorian government has intervened to ensure that the private network businesses must spend more on increasing network resilience under the national rules – just to be clear where the responsibility and liability lies. We have done this because we recognise the impact that outages have on people’s lives – very significant impacts. No doubt they have been well articulated in the chamber today and previously. These impacts are not always recognised by the existing national framework.

On a further point that I do want to articulate, the member for Hawthorn said the government has done nothing. Let me refute that point emphatically. There was a review in 2021 following the June 2021 storm. The Minister for Energy and Resources initiated the distribution network resilience review, which was led by an expert panel and sought recommendations on improving the resilience of the network in response to extreme weather events. In response to the review, the government invested \$7.5 million in crucial backup power systems in 24 towns hit by major storms in 2021, including

batteries and rooftop solar on community buildings, henceforth really building that localised resilience and the ability to bounce back quicker. The energy systems provide power to community hubs when damage to the network causes a widespread outage, allowing residents to shower, heat food, charge devices and access information.

We passed legislation, the Energy Legislation Amendment (Electricity Outage Emergency Response and Other Matters) Act 2023, which allows the government to direct power companies to provide information to the Victorian public and assist in the delivery of relief activities during and after an electricity outage emergency. We submitted a rule change request to the national rule maker, the Australian Energy Market Commission, to ensure that network resilience is considered when the AER assesses the expenditure proposals from the distribution companies. This rule change was accepted and will apply to the next five-yearly plans, which will cover the 2026 to 2031 period. It is important to factor in the years that are elicited here, when we are talking about the government doing nothing. Well, I can profoundly and emphatically refute that, and I now have it on the record.

There is further information to be provided here to refute the claims, which were incorrect, of the member for Hawthorn. Following catastrophic storms in February 2024 the minister initiated the network outage review, again led by an expert panel. This second review focused on the operational response of the distribution businesses to prolonged outages. I should note further that the panel engaged deeply with affected communities, distribution businesses, regulators, emergency services, peak bodies and social and community organisations. This included in-person community sessions, which had over 150 attendees across all sessions. The panel made 19 recommendations, all of which were supported in full, in part or in principle by the government. Key themes included better planning by the distribution businesses, the use of temporary generation in town centres, improving the performance of vulnerable feeder lines and updating customer communication tools, and we have seen these measures implemented this summer. For example, AusNet set up a temporary generator to power the Corryong township following the fire that devastated the region and destroyed electricity infrastructure. So fundamentally, when we are looking at resilience plans, measures that have been undertaken will force the distribution businesses to spend money on upgrades that reduce outages, if I put it as a rounded principle.

It is all very well for the opposition to laud how they would do magnificent things when it comes to renewables, but I do not believe it for a second, because we know that the Leader of the Opposition says one thing in Kew and another thing in the regions. She says she supports renewables to her constituents in Kew, but her anti-renewables policies were announced at a misinformation convention headed by Barnaby Joyce. The opposition have said that they will place new restrictions on renewable energy if elected. They will force proponents to undertake independent agricultural and economic impact assessments and allow objectors to delay projects through VCAT.

We know climate change is here now. We know that the cost of energy will only go up, save for the measures that we have already implemented, noting that we have consistently the lowest wholesale prices in the nation – and I already heard a learned colleague speak to this. Renewables are keeping electricity prices low. Victoria's average wholesale price was \$78 per megawatt hour, compared to \$103 in New South Wales, \$96 in Tasmania, \$87 in South Australia and \$85 in Queensland, and I am talking about 2025. But we must do more; we must keep on this trail. We note that in 2025 renewables generated 44.6 per cent of the state's electricity generation – above our legislated 40 per cent – but we are not stopping there. We know that we have legislated renewable energy targets, and these are mechanisms to give the market certainty but also to keep us on track.

When we are talking about the opposition we should say that at their core the measures that the opposition plan to implement, should they be elected, are only targeted at renewable energy and transmission projects – funny that – not the fossil fuel industry. Those opposite have no idea how to plan for our energy future, and they are going back to the future with their renewables policies. When they were last in government their planning restrictions meant 14 wind farm projects were abandoned in 2012, renewable energy jobs were slashed by 25 per cent and retail power prices increased by

34.1 per cent. In today's terms that would mean an extra \$570 on the typical annual power bill, based on the current Victorian default offer of \$1677. This is eye watering: an estimated \$4 billion in investment was lost. While they think they are the party of the free market, \$4 billion in investment was lost – eye watering. Their plan will result in higher power prices and less reliability.

I note that we have incrementally undertaken a number of very significant measures to be able to control the price of electricity in any case: the Victorian default offer, the energy compare website – you can go on there easily, and you can compare prices and make sure that you are getting a fair deal. We have also had the power saving bonus – a number of those. The latest one will acquire by the end of March, so it is important for people to get in there and get their \$100. Through the SEC we have also been able to accelerate our investment in renewables. I will note the Melbourne renewable energy hub, located near Melton, is a major 600-megawatt, 1.6-gigawatt-hour, utility-scale battery storage project that became fully operational in December 2025, so this is building further resilience into the network and particularly in a localised mechanism. This is what we need now, but also into the future. We are doing it incrementally, and we are doing it for the sake of all Victorians.

Roma BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (12:40): I rise to speak on the Energy and Other Legislation Amendment (Resilience Reforms and Other Matters) Bill 2026, which brings together a wide range of reforms, some of which we support, some we question and some that require significant amendment before they should proceed. Let me begin with the resilience reforms. This bill introduces a legally enforceable obligation for electricity distribution businesses to prepare and implement network resilience plans. These plans must be accepted by Energy Safe Victoria and will outline how businesses intend to prepare for and respond to severe weather events. That includes strengthening poles to withstand high winds, reallocating assets from flood-prone areas and deploying mobile generators to support communities when disaster strikes.

The bill also amends life support provisions in both the Electricity Industry Act 2000 and the Gas Industry Act 2001. This is intended to support priority restoration of power after prolonged outages, a recommendation from the electricity distribution network resilience review. However, there are real concerns here as the government has not released the departmental review underpinning these changes and the bill allows eligibility to be altered by regulation rather than legislation. So here we are again: the government amending legislation before releasing the review that supposedly justifies the change. This is becoming a pattern, and it becomes quite chaotic. We will of course not support any reduction in life support categories, and we will be seeking reassurances on that point.

The bill also revisits the Victorian energy upgrades program. The government now concedes that its own 2025 amendments would unintentionally exclude a major business model responsible for a substantial share of the program activity. The state government rushed this in last April, and now they are rushing to take it out. Honestly, this government does not put any thought into the creation of its legislation, and you can see that with these amendments that came in in April and are going out again in less than 12 months. They are not considering unintended consequences, and this is basic policy work. It is embarrassing and it is careless, and the Victorian public deserves better.

The bill also introduces what the government calls 'greater flexibility' in declaring renewable energy zones, even where no transmission project is proposed on the planning horizon. What is the point of creating these zones with research and so-called community consultation – which I question – when they are going to be sidestepped or ignored altogether? Communities like Garvoc in South-West Coast know exactly what this looks like: zones declared without proper justification, without proper planning and without any genuine respect for people who live on and work the land. These are people who rise before dawn to milk the cows, who work hard every single day and who carry the responsibility of feeding our state, our nation and our world. Their diligence, their skill and their contribution deserve respect, not to be brushed aside by decisions made far away from the farm gate. The Allan Labor government's intention to blanket 70 per cent of our state in renewable projects should be ringing alarm bells. It shows unmistakably that farmers are being sidelined and treated as secondary to the government's renewable energy targets. The government should remember that food is vital also. We

want a sensible transition to renewables; it is expected. We are not anti renewable energy, but it should be a transition that is sensible.

The bill also enables VicGrid to adopt new methods of assessing and issuing the renewable energy zones under the REZ scheme. But where is the community consultation? Where is the engagement with the people who farm the land, produce our food and carry the burden of these decisions, the people whose land this government treats as if it is their own? Instead the bill legislates the circumstances in which the government can enter private property – people coming onto your own land, people who have no understanding of the nuance of livestock or crop management. It is extraordinary and frankly offensive that this government believes that it has the right to walk onto a farm as though it were just another parcel of land on a map. The reality is in most cases a farm is also a family home. It is where the children are raised, where generations have poured their sweat and their pride into the soil, and it is where every fence post and every paddock holds a story. To think that the bureaucrats can simply enter that space – a place of work, yes, but also a place of safety, memory and identity – shows a complete disregard for the people who live there. These families are not just running businesses, they are living their lives on that land, and they deserve the basic respect of being treated as people, not obstacles. This is yet another example of decisions being made about communities, not with communities.

An area of this bill I find most concerning is the creation of special rules for so-called transitional projects. These projects, including some in development stage, can skip the planning stage, including the environment effects statement (EES) process. This is alarming, and this is exactly what our community is so anxious about in South-West Coast with regard to the offshore wind project announced a couple of years ago. The federal Labor government announced the Warrnambool and Port Fairy offshore wind project before any environment effects works had begun, so they had no intention of communicating or doing the processes. They said: 'It is going to happen.' It seems that the Allan Labor government, unable to meet their own renewable energy targets, are now providing a pathway for developers to bypass proper process. That is a significant erosion of scrutiny, and it is of particular concern in South-West Coast.

We have already seen what happens when renewable projects are fast-tracked without robust oversight or proper consultation with local communities. Last year we learned that many wind farm turbine towers containing asbestos – banned in Australia in 2003 – are putting farmers, firefighters and the environment at risk when being dismantled or when people are responding to fires. This bill might allow the government to push ahead with projects, but it does so by stripping away the very checks and balances that protect our environment and our communities. It is yet another example of a government more interested in meeting targets they know they are falling short on than safeguarding the valuable land that produces our food, or our whales and their migratory pathway and nursery grounds. This is a failure of environmental responsibility and it is a betrayal of community trust. No wonder the community is sceptical.

We have watched the state government ignore not only community concerns but even the findings of their own federal Labor colleagues when it comes to environmental impacts, including the plans that would see the destruction of the Ramsar World Heritage-listed wetlands near Hastings. They were told to stop, but they say they intend to push on and find a way anyway. It seems renewable targets are more important than the environment, the economy or the services that we are all missing out on. How can communities have confidence when governments treat the environment like an inconvenience and treat people who live and work in and care for these places as though their concerns do not matter? This pattern of secrecy, contempt and disregard has eroded trust. People see the corruption, they see the shortcuts and they see a government that has forgotten who it is meant to serve: the community and the environment, not its own political agenda.

The Allan Labor government's complacency has become impossible to ignore, and the findings in Watson's *Rotting from the Top* report only confirm what communities like mine have been feeling for years. It exposes a culture where accountability has slipped, standards have been eroded and voices of

ordinary Victorians are treated as an afterthought. When a government shrugs off warning signs this serious, it sends a clear message that integrity is optional and community trust is expendable. We deserve better than a government that looks the other way while mismanagement festers at the very top.

Across the bill there are several overarching concerns. The government has refused to reveal the cost impacts of these measures on household energy bills, key reviews have not been released, major changes are being made to legislation that has already been recently amended, and the bill contains powers and certain processes for projects to bypass proper planning and environmental scrutiny. It should not have the transitional project provisions that allow projects to avoid a full EES and planning requirements. This bill contains measures we support, measures we can live with and measures we cannot accept without amendment. Our responsibility is always to ensure Victorians are protected as consumers, as energy users and as a community entitled to transparency and proper process.

Josh BULL (Sunbury) (12:50): I am pleased to have the opportunity just before lunch to make a contribution to this important bill before the house, the Energy and Other Legislation Amendment (Resilience Reforms and Other Matters) Bill 2026. I follow on from a number of members who have spoken on this piece of legislation that is before the house this afternoon and go to the points around certainty, reliability and sustainability across the network and making those improvements as we deal with a number of different, changing factors. Those factors are, as other members have touched on, the increasing number and severity of severe weather events, changing population and changing patterns in usage. What we know as a state, as local members and within our local communities is those changes are occurring each and every day and have occurred over time. As the state grows by around 100,000 people per annum and we of course have differences in where those people move to and where people choose to live, we must also make for reliability and certainty as we grapple with those severe weather events that I mentioned earlier, knowing that improvement to the network is such a fundamental and important role and responsibility. As those matters are dealt with in a really live environment, we know the importance of that reliability when it comes to all of the services and all of the functions across the grid.

What we have set out to do for more than a decade now is invest in renewable energy, back in the Victorian renewable energy target and back in projects that I have spoken of earlier in the house, like the big battery and like those investments in solar panels for roofs and batteries for homes. Making a more resilient, more sustainable network is something that we have focused on and continue to deliver. What we know and understand is that the mechanisms and the functions of the network need to be able to be operated in that dynamic and live environment. We see, Acting Speaker Farnham – and I am sure you know, as a good local member – what happens when we do not have those services, what happens in the event of severe weather, what happens when poles and wires get hit, what happens in those instances where there is a major accident on a freeway and infrastructure gets taken out. That then changes the response and our ability to deal with that response. What we set out to do through both this piece of legislation and other initiatives that I have mentioned earlier is create that framework whereby we improve sustainability and certainty and of course work to drive down cost.

We know that not just here in Victoria and not just across the country but right throughout the globe, the environment is grappling with the cost of energy and the cost of living, which we talk about often in this chamber and outside as well. We know that we need to make these investments to be able to provide for more supply, which goes to driving down the cost of energy. I had the opportunity to have the Minister for Energy and Resources out to the electorate last year to meet Adam and Effie, two terrific local Sunbury residents that do not live too far from my place. We sat down and had a cuppa and talked about the renewable energy targets. Really importantly for them from a household point of view, we had a conversation about the energy efficiency upgrades, the solar panels that were on the roof and the battery that Adam and Effie had just installed at the premises. I think that gives you a really practical realisation of just how important these upgrades can be and the pride that goes with a

lot of the work that is done in providing for that certainty with that additional support and infrastructure.

The bill's primary purpose, as others have mentioned, is to obligate the electricity distribution network companies to publish those network resilience plans to ensure that investment in the network upgrades reduces power outages. It will do this by amending the Electricity Safety Act 1998 to provide new obligations for Victorian electricity distribution businesses to prepare resilience plans every five years and submit the resilience plans to the independent safety regulator, Energy Safe Victoria, to monitor and enforce compliance. This will increase Victorian electricity distribution businesses' accountability by ensuring resilience initiatives are visible and encourage Victorian distribution businesses to adopt a proactive network and community resilience strategy.

I think canvassing those points in terms of the functions of the legislation but setting out the purposes around what needs to happen by way of certainty is really important. There is a recognition, though, and an honesty in understanding there is no way to prevent power outages entirely. I do not think anyone can comfortably get up and say that power outages will never happen again; that is just not reality. But what we can do, across the vast network of 150,000 k's of wires and 1.3 million poles which are exposed to the elements, is consider the impact of network upgrades on bills, with the costs of building and maintaining the network that do in so many instances – and I have heard others speak about this as well – get passed on to consumers. Network costs make up about 40 per cent of the typical household bill, so we have to be careful in how we approach this framework, notwithstanding the matters that I have mentioned before.

Having improved resilience, having improved safety and making those necessary changes in every possible way goes to what we strive to do – that is, to create certainty in the market, to drive down costs and to be able to do so in many different ways. Reflecting on the minister's visit last year that I mentioned earlier, the opportunity to have the conversations at the kitchen table and to listen and understand – and certainly all members in this house are paying a range of different household bills – makes for an understanding as to what those bills go to and how the network effectively operates not just across Victoria but across the country.

I think a fascinating conversation that I like to, in many ways, look at from a more scientific point of view goes to how you move energy across the country, how that energy is used and at what time of the day and certainly knowing and understanding the opportunities that are out there and the technology that has come so far even in the last 10 years. Government has a role and a really important responsibility to provide for incentivised research that goes to improving efficiency, and those matters are very important when it comes to the work of the government, knowing that those technology upgrades give us the chance and the opportunity to improve the network and improve safety. When you boil it all down, it is just about improving local communities and their lives and making for a better and more certain place as we grapple with, as I mentioned earlier, the combined forces of increased population growth and differences in the way energy is consumed and used, certainly in the context of things like AI but also with changing climates and how we manage them as we go forward not just as a state but as a nation.

I think for so long we lacked that leadership that we needed in Canberra to be able to deal with some of these matters. Thankfully, I think we have now got that, but we have still got challenges in the way that we approach this. I would love to see everyone come to the table in the spirit of making a safer, more efficient, more effective energy market, which is something that I think we should all be striving for, because when this is politicised the community suffers. When this is taken forward in the right way, it is the right approach. With those comments I very happily commend the bill to the house.

Sitting suspended 1:00 pm until 2:02 pm.

Business interrupted under standing orders.

The SPEAKER: I acknowledge in the gallery the former member for Lara and former minister John Eren.

Questions without notice and ministers statements

Premier

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (14:03): My question is to the Premier. Why is the Premier bullying journalists who are –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Minister for Economic Growth and Jobs, it is not a good start to question time for you. The Manager of Opposition Business on a question without assistance.

James NEWBURY: Why is the Premier bullying journalists who are asking legitimate questions about the worst corruption scandal in Victorian history?

The SPEAKER: I ask the Manager of Opposition Business to phrase his question so that it relates to government business.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: The member for Eureka can leave the chamber for an hour. The member for Tarneit can leave the chamber for an hour. I will not tolerate this level of disruption in the chamber.

Members for Eureka and Tarneit withdrew from chamber.

Danny O'Brien: On a point of order, Speaker, with respect to your direction to the Manager of Opposition Business, how is this not a matter of government business when the Premier is giving a press conference on the Parliament grounds?

The SPEAKER: Leader of the Nationals, I have ruled on the point of order. I have given the Manager of Opposition Business a chance to rephrase his question.

Members interjecting.

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

Member for Laverton withdrew from chamber.

James Newbury interjected.

The SPEAKER: Manager of Opposition Business, I will eject you from the chamber as well. Through the Chair, on your question.

James NEWBURY: Why is the Premier refusing to answer legitimate questions from journalists about the worst corruption scandal in Victoria's history?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:05): To assist both the member for Brighton and the house, I am not just happy to answer the question. I at the outset, in answering the question, will absolutely reject the premise of the question and the baseless allegations that have been put in the question. It gives me an opportunity to reflect, in being relevant to the subject matter that has been asked, that this is a bit much coming from someone whose party bullied their former deputy leader right out of the place. The member for Nepean could not put up with the bullying in his own party room, so he cut and ran. It is a bit much.

Danny O'Brien: On a point of order, Speaker, the way the Premier is going is not remotely relevant to the question. I ask you to bring her back to it.

Mary-Anne Thomas: On the point of order, Speaker, you did in fact rule the question in order and indeed the Premier is being relevant to the question. She has also rejected the premise of the question. As you know, the Premier is then able to address the question in the way that she sees fit.

James Newbury: On the point of order, Speaker, the Premier cannot debate the question.

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

Jacinta ALLAN: As I said at the outset, I reject the basis of the question. We have programs in our schools to develop, in our youngest Victorians, respectful relationships. Safe Schools is a program that has been opposed by those opposite. I am not going to take lectures on this from an outfit that bullied out their first woman leader of their federal party. The first woman leader of their federal party was bullied out of the job.

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

The SPEAKER: The Premier answered the question at the outset by rejecting the premise of the question. The Premier is entitled to answer how she wishes now.

Jacinta ALLAN: I will finish with this: we will not stand by and let workers' wages be threatened and bullied and cut by those opposite. That is what this is all about – a Liberal outfit that is all about wanting to cut workers' wages and cut the protections for workers on worksites.

Members interjecting.

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

Member for Warrandyte withdrew from chamber.

Jacinta ALLAN: They want to cut the important occupational health and safety protections for workers on worksites. I am proud to be part of a movement that has fought hard for a very, very long time to see workers protected from these sorts of behaviours on worksites around the country.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (14:08): The Premier has said workers should not experience abuse, including bullying, in the workplace. Why hasn't the Premier's own behaviour, when refusing to answer questions about government worksites, lived up to the standard her own government policy sets?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:09): You are very pleased, aren't you, member for Brighton, because you would never bully people on polling booths now, would you? The member for Brighton would never bully people on polling booths now, would he – people who might be a little bit unwell? No, the member for Brighton would not have any of that behaviour reported by journalists now, would he?

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: The Premier and the member for Brighton will cease having a conversation across the table.

Cindy McLeish: On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier is not being relevant and I ask you to bring her back to the question.

The SPEAKER: Premier, come back to the question, through the Chair.

Jacinta ALLAN: As I said at the outset, in rejecting the premise of the question from the member for Brighton, he was asking a question that went to standards around members of Parliament, and I was merely reminding him of his own behaviour and standards, which he does not seem to uphold. But he is prepared to come in here and lecture others. Let us remember what is at the heart of this: a Labor government and a labour movement that are all about backing workers and supporting workers on worksites, and those opposite want to cut wages and cut protections for workers across this state.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Nationals is warned. The member for Bulleen is warned.

Ministers statements: government achievements

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:10): If you go and talk to any family in any suburb or any regional centre, they will tell you the same thing: that the cost of living is real for them and their household. It is the grocery bill, it is the mortgage and it is the power bill, but it is also about something beyond these bills. It is about time – time stuck in traffic, time juggling appointments, time stuck in long commutes, time that is taking them away from their family. It is why our Labor government is determined to support families and to make life easier, safer and more affordable for them. That is why we do not just build big projects that change this state; we build the ones too that change daily life.

Let us start with the Metro Tunnel, which on the very day it opened was called a waste by the Leader of the Liberal Party. She called the investment in the Metro Tunnel a waste. I remind the Liberal leader that that investment means nurses get to work more quickly, more directly, and students from the outer suburbs, particularly from those government schools, get from the outer suburbs into the universities and into health precincts sooner and easier. It means when you travel through the West Gate Tunnel you are getting home sooner and safer and with less time stuck in traffic. Then of course there are the new Footscray Hospital and the new Frankston hospital, which mean there is care closer to home for working people in these communities and mean they do not have to make as many trips across town to get the health care they need – less stress and more time with their families. Then of course, when it comes to delivering more health care and access, there is the free virtual emergency department and chemist care. Then there is free kinder and free TAFE. We will continue this focus on supporting working people and their families, and that is the difference: those who cut and those who back families.

Construction industry

Jess WILSON (Kew – Leader of the Opposition) (14:12): My question is to the Premier. The following have called for a royal commission into corruption on Big Build sites: multiple Labor cabinet ministers, multiple –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Member for Geelong! Members will be removed without warning. The Leader of the Opposition without assistance.

Jess WILSON: I will start again. My question is to the Premier. The following have called for a royal commission into corruption on Big Build sites: multiple Labor cabinet ministers, multiple Labor MPs, the Liberal Party, the National Party, the Greens and every other crossbench MP. Isn't it the case that the Premier will not call a royal commission because the Premier wants to cover up \$15 billion of corruption on her watch?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:14): Again I reject the Leader of the Liberal Party's claims in her question. I was just trying to remember the number of times this week in this place I have answered this exact question, but for the benefit of the Leader of the Liberal Party I will answer it again. Firstly, that claim that she refers to has been ruled out and has been dismissed by the federal administrator.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, this question went to the unprecedented motion that was passed by the Parliament last night. That is exactly what it was about.

The SPEAKER: Manager of Opposition Business, what is your point of order?

James Newbury: Relevance.

The SPEAKER: The Premier will come back to the question.

Jacinta ALLAN: I was asked a question that was based on unfounded claims that have been dismissed by the federal administrator. So I have dealt with that part of the question, and I think I have made that point a number of times this week in the house, so I will say it again for the benefit of the Leader of the Liberal Party. But again – and I think I have said this previously, so I do understand you may have heard this in this place before – we have already said that the calls for a royal commission from the Liberal and National parties are all about cutting into workers’ wages. It is all about cutting into workers’ wages and clawing back workers’ wages. We will not support that. If the Greens political party are supporting that, that is a matter for them as well.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, on standing order 118, I am sure that every member that supported that call for a royal commission would feel that the Premier’s imputation is totally untrue and an imputation across every member who made the call.

The SPEAKER: The Premier did not refer to any particular member of Parliament. The Premier has concluded her answer.

Jess WILSON (Kew – Leader of the Opposition) (14:16): Premier, to confirm to the Parliament, are you ruling out a royal commission?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:16): I will repeat what I said on Tuesday in this place and on Wednesday in this place and what I just said less than a minute ago in this place. We do not support the calls that the Liberal leader is making for a royal commission. We do not support that. We do not support the fact that the National Party, One Nation and the Greens political party have teamed up together, because it is all about cutting into workers’ wages, and that is something we will not support.

Ministers statements: housing

Sonya KILKENNY (Carrum – Attorney-General, Minister for Planning) (14:17): What we will support is building more homes for Victorians, and I am so proud to stand with my colleagues on this side, who want more Victorians to have the opportunity to find a home. Last week we released draft maps for another 23 train and tram activity centres right across Melbourne, showing where more homes can go. Why these areas? Because it makes sense. They are great locations, well serviced by trains and trams and close to jobs, schools and shops. We are doing this because we understand this simple truth: if we want young Victorians to have the same opportunities their parents had, we need to build more homes in the right places with the right infrastructure.

Let us be clear, our train and tram zones are backed by \$4 billion in infrastructure investment across 60 centres, delivering the parks, roads, schools and community facilities that growing communities need. Just recently we approved 795 homes on Springvale Road through our development facilitation program, backed by the fabulous member for Glen Waverley. Thanks to the members for Box Hill, Bentleigh, Mulgrave, Dandenong and Ashwood for backing more homes for Victorians, with community consultation underway right now. They will not lock out the next generation; they will fight for them. On this side of the house we are planners and we are builders, delivering real action, because you either build homes or you block them, and we know which side we are on. Those opposite block, they cut and they leave young Victorians out. We will never do that. We will always support more Victorians with more homes.

Construction industry

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (14:19): My question is to the Attorney. The Premier said 10 times yesterday that if anyone has any allegation it should immediately be referred to Victoria Police. Allegations and evidence of criminal behaviour were put to the Attorney by a labour hire firm on a Big Build site in October 2022. Why did the Attorney first refer it to the then Premier rather than immediately to Victoria Police?

Danny Pearson: On a point of order, Speaker, I fail to see how this question relates to the Attorney's current portfolio. She was not the Attorney-General at the time those allegations were made.

The SPEAKER: If that is the case, the Attorney can rightfully answer in that way.

Sonya KILKENNY (Carrum – Attorney-General, Minister for Planning) (14:21): I absolutely back the calls of our Premier, this government and the administrator of the CFMEU that anyone that has allegations of any criminal or illegal conduct on construction sites needs to refer those to the relevant authorities.

Members interjecting.

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

Member for Mildura withdrew from chamber.

Sonya KILKENNY: The member for Brighton referred to an incident back in 2022, when I was – and I still am – the member for Carrum. I acknowledge that at that time a labour hire firm did raise with me concerns about that worksite on Lathams Road, Carrum Downs. I also confirm to the member for Brighton that at that exact time I raised those matters and those concerns immediately with the agency and the authority responsible for delivering that project, and those matters were referred to Victoria Police.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (14:22): The firm reported allegations 80 times to 15 members of Parliament, including the Attorney. Doesn't this prove the problem is not the reporting but that this government is covering it all up?

Sonya KILKENNY (Carrum – Attorney-General, Minister for Planning) (14:22): As I said in my answer to the first question, I immediately referred that matter to the relevant authorities, and that matter was reviewed by Victoria Police, as it should have been. And I encourage everyone in here –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, the question initially went specifically to Victoria Police. The Attorney has referred to agencies, but the question related to Victoria Police.

Ben Carroll: On the point of order, Speaker, on relevance, I heard the Attorney-General very clearly talk about agencies and Victoria Police being referred to.

The SPEAKER: I do not uphold the point of order. The Attorney has concluded her answer.

Ministers statements: period products

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Women) (14:23): I rise to update the house on how this government is saving Victorians time and money through the delivery of free pads and tampons right throughout Victoria. I am proud to announce that women and girls now have access to free period products from vending machines in every shire and municipality in our state. Anyone that has ever been caught short knows how absolutely important this initiative is. We also know that for many women period poverty is real and they cannot afford to buy essential period products. That is why our government is making period products available in key public locations, like libraries, courts, hospitals and sports centres, and with more than 900 machines now in over 500 venues we are saving money for Victorians where and when they need it. Women and girls can find their closest machine through the Better Health Channel website. The Allan Labor government is absolutely serious about the cost-of-living challenges Victorians are facing. As of this morning, our pads and tampons vending machines have been accessed more than 490,000 times.

This is an initiative that is also about driving down the stigma that is still attached to periods. There is no shame in getting your period. What is shameful, however, is the behaviour of the member for Brighton. The last time the Minister for Women raised this matter in this chamber –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Member for Brighton! I will not tolerate this kind of unparliamentary language across the table. If you wish to raise a point of order, do so respectfully.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker: standing order 118.

The SPEAKER: I ask you not to impugn members of Parliament.

Mary-Anne THOMAS: The member for Brighton just called me a grub, and I ask that you ask him to retract that.

The SPEAKER: Member for Brighton, I ask you to withdraw.

James Newbury: I withdraw. On a point of order, Speaker, I take personal offence at the claim the minister just made and I ask her to withdraw.

The SPEAKER: The minister will withdraw.

Mary-Anne THOMAS: I withdraw. I was making the point that there has been shameful behaviour, and it refers to the member for Brighton. When the then Minister for Women rose in this place to talk about our free pads and tampons initiative, the member for Brighton called her a grub, just as he has called me a grub today. That is shameful, shameful behaviour.

Residential tenancies

Gabrielle DE VIETRI (Richmond) (14:27): My question is for the Premier. Premier, does this government support unlimited rent increases being legal here in Victoria?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:27): When it comes to supporting renters and when it comes to supporting renters to manage the affordability of being able to access a rental property, building more homes is the answer, not blocking the building of those homes, like the member for Richmond did when she was formerly a councillor at the City of Yarra.

Ellen Sandell: On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier knows that question time is not an opportunity to attack other members of the Parliament.

The SPEAKER: This ruling is about attacking the current opposition, it is not about comparing local government or what members did prior to coming into this place.

Jacinta ALLAN: I want to commend the work of the Minister for Consumer Affairs, because we have been implementing a number of rental reforms that are about supporting renters. As I said, a big part of supporting renters is being able to support renters to find a property, and that is how you make renting more affordable. But of course I think the member for Richmond might already know that there is a lot of research around this, and there is a lot of research that shows that policy changes that apply long-term freezes to rental increases, like the Greens political party have proposed, may negatively impact the supply of housing in the private rental market. We will continue to be focused on supporting renters – not blocking the building of new homes, like the member for Richmond has done previously, teaming up with the Liberal Party to not support important planning reforms – and getting on and building more homes.

Ellen Sandell: On a point of order, Speaker, responses are supposed to be factual, and the Premier is misleading the house. It is not actually factual, what she has said.

The SPEAKER: That is not a point of order. The Premier has concluded her answer.

Gabrielle DE VIETRI (Richmond) (14:29): I would agree with the Minister for Consumer Affairs that those reforms secured with the Greens are really, really, really important. But the reality of what I am hearing from renters is that they are still absolutely drowning in rent rises and relying on the goodwill of a landlord not to put the rent up, because they can just jack it up however much they like.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! I could not hear a word the member for Richmond was saying. Members will come to order. Member for Richmond, ask your supplementary question again.

Gabrielle DE VIETRI: In the last five years rents have gone up 2.5 times faster than wages and way, way higher than inflation. It is the same across the country, except in the ACT, where the Greens secured rent controls, just like in 16 different European countries. So the question is: will this government introduce rent controls to stop rents from going up so much faster than wages?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:30): It was a little difficult to hear or decipher the question in that statement that was just made to the house. I again refer to evidence that has been provided in the public domain. The Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute has released a report recently that finds rent freezes are likely to negatively impact the supply of rental housing. We will continue to be guided by the evidence. We will continue to focus on those areas of reform that back in renters and, most importantly, get on and build more homes. More homes is how you support renters. You do not support them by standing up and making wild claims in the house here. You do not support renters by blocking the building of more homes when you are in local government. You back renters by building more homes and supporting them with reforms that give them the quality of life they deserve.

Ministers statements: public transport fares

Gabrielle WILLIAMS (Dandenong – Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for Public and Active Transport) (14:31): Labor do not just talk about bringing down the cost of living, we do it. It has been six weeks since the Allan government made public transport free for kids under the age of 18, and the response has been overwhelming. More than 375,000 youth Mykis have been issued, and tap-ons across our network have now passed 1.8 million. Each one of those tap-ons represents a saving for Victorian families – savings of both time and of course money as well. Right across Victoria young families are benefiting from the youth Myki. Just ask, for example, the member for Glen Waverley about the impact on families in his electorate, with more than 6000 youth Mykis purchased at his local train stations, or the member for Box Hill, with the more than 11,500 youth Mykis that have been issued at local stations in his community.

And it is not just young Victorians. More than 280,000 carers and disability support pensioners and more than 650,000 seniors can now travel for free on public transport anywhere in Victoria every single weekend. Speaker, as a regional MP, you will be as excited as I am by the upcoming three-year anniversary of our regional fare cap, which is saving Bendigo line passengers up to \$50 per return trip and has seen more than 71 million train and coach passengers take up these more affordable fares, encouraging people to get out there and explore our beautiful state. Labor is cutting public transport fares to save families money and give families more options. Meanwhile, the Liberal–One Nation coalition is planning to cut services because they need to fill that black hole somehow.

Construction industry

Jess WILSON (Kew – Leader of the Opposition) (14:34): My question is to the Premier. The Premier knew the CFMEU was a repeat criminal offender, appointed it as the preferred government union, knew corruption and thuggery was occurring, knew underworld figures had turned Big Build sites into a criminal syndicate and knew IBAC could not investigate her referral. Is the reason the Premier will not call a royal commission because she knew exactly what was happening on Big Build sites?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:34): The answer is no.

Jess WILSON (Kew – Leader of the Opposition) (14:35): The Premier is presiding over a rotten government with a rotten culture –

Members interjecting.

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

Member for Footscray withdrew from chamber.

Jess WILSON: I will start again. The Premier is presiding over a rotten government with a rotten culture, and the Premier has confirmed that she will do nothing.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! I would like to hear the question being asked by the Leader of the Opposition. Members will come to order.

Paul Edbrooke interjected.

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

Member for Frankston withdrew from chamber.

Jess WILSON: The Premier is presiding over a rotten government with a rotten culture –

Members interjecting.

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

Member for Wendouree withdrew from chamber.

Jess WILSON: I will start again. The Premier is presiding over a rotten government with a rotten culture, and the Premier has confirmed that she will do nothing. Why does the Premier continue to cover up corruption?

Mary-Anne Thomas: On a point of order on 57(1)(a), Speaker, I ask that you rule the question out of order.

James Newbury: On the point of order, Speaker, to assist the chamber, the Premier is indicating to us that she wants to answer the question.

The SPEAKER: I call the Premier.

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:36): I reject what the Leader of the Opposition has said about my government. I will say this to the Leader of the Opposition about what my government is focused on. We are focused on delivering free public transport to all kids under the age of 18, everywhere, every day of the week. We are focused on delivering the new violence reduction unit, a new solution to supporting young people getting away from a life of crime. We also have, through the member for Mordialloc as the Parliamentary Secretary for Men’s Behaviour Change –

Danny O’Brien: A point of order on the question of relevance, Speaker.

The SPEAKER: The Premier addressed the question at the commencement of her answer.

Jacinta ALLAN: Those opposite do not want to hear about how we are focused on Victorians and focused on delivering the new solutions that Victorians need right now. Free virtual emergency department care, care at the chemist and school breakfasts are just some of the many things that my government is focused on and will continue to be focused on every day.

Ministers statements: education system

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Minister for Education, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC) (14:38): Let me tell you about the sort of government Premier Allan presides over.

Members interjecting.

Ben CARROLL: No, you should listen. Let me tell you about young Toby. I met his mother Moana and him at the Victorian College for the Deaf last year. Toby had poor eyesight; he could not see. But thanks to the Allan Labor government's Glasses for Kids program he got free eye tests and free glasses right there onsite at the school, down at St Kilda Road at the Victorian College for the Deaf. Toby and Moana, his mother, are just one example of the stories I get to hear under the Allan Labor government all around our state.

Can I also talk about the young children that go to school hungry but need a meal – our free breakfast program. Our prep bags – a major cost-of-living initiative, evidence based – are making sure no child goes without the books, reading and all the essentials that they need at school.

Richard Riordan interjected.

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

Member for Polwarth withdrew from chamber.

Ben CARROLL: We have free dental check-ups with the Smile Squad initiative and free public transport for under-18s. Nothing is more important for young children out in Melbourne's growing suburbs than to get access to education. It is an absolute game changer – again, an evidence-based policy from the Premier and our government. We have free pads and tampons and the affordable uniforms policy. A Liberal government would never do the homework to see if they should get rid of the logos, would they. They loved their little Jeff Kennett badges; I am surprised they have not come back. But under our government we make sure every child gets access to a world-class education. There is the camps, sports and excursions program. These are programs that are life changing and set young people up for life and that only ever happen under an Allan Labor government.

Constituency questions

Lowan electorate

Emma KEALY (Lowan) (14:41): (1518) My question is to the Minister for Disability, and the information I seek is: why has it become increasingly difficult to obtain a Victorian companion card for Victorians who have a severe and permanent disability and cannot access community events or travel on public transport without a companion? I was recently contacted by a local constituent, Hayley. Hayley is the mother of Lachlan, who has a severe and permanent disability. Unfortunately, Lachlan has been refused a companion card despite him having this lifelong disability that he lives with each and every day. Lachlan has a functional capacity assessed at 2.5 per cent, placing him amongst the most severely impacted individuals, yet his application has still been unsuccessful. I have written to the minister about this instance on a number of occasions, and yet we are still unable to secure a companion card for Lachlan. I ask the minister: why is this so?

Pascoe Vale electorate

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (14:42): (1519) My constituency question is for the Minister for Small Business and Employment. How can the Victorian Labor government's multicultural business precinct revitalisation program support local shopping precincts, including the Central Coburg, Victoria Street Mall and Sydney Road shopping precinct? The Central Coburg, Victoria Street Mall and Sydney Road precinct has long been the retail heartbeat and cultural epicentre of my community. The Central Coburg Business Association, now led by the outstanding Rania Fayad, represents 280 local traders and has developed a vision to revitalise the precinct so businesses and people from all walks of life continue to be welcomed. As part of this, the Coburg Business Association supported the application via the multicultural business precinct program for the delivery of a Victoria Street Mall improvement project to lift the mall's ambience, amenity and cultural experience for local shoppers, families and businesses alike, with shopfront exterior upgrades, awning beautification, shade structures, new public artworks and the installation of a new dedicated performance space to support a program of activations and performances. The total project cost is

estimated at \$192,000, and they are seeking \$153,000 from the Victorian government and a co-contribution from Merri-bek council of \$38,000. I strongly support this project.

Eildon electorate

Cindy McLEISH (Eildon) (14:43): (1520) My question is for the minister for Public and Active Transport. Why can't students from Mansfield Primary School be accommodated on V/Line services to the city and on to Geelong? Mansfield Primary School has run a successful year 5 outdoor education program, the city to surf camp, for over 10 years. Students would catch the V/Line train from Benalla into the city, then a V/Line coach to Anglesea and back again. This is a big deal and a novelty for country students, who do not get to experience this sort of thing. For the past three years V/Line have stated that they are unable to accommodate the school group due to overcrowding and are no longer taking group bookings for over 10 people. This has caused major issues for students, as they miss out on an experience that gives them confidence, skills and knowledge to use public transport. This year the primary school has been forced to fork out \$4000 for two private coaches while increasing camp fees for families from \$310 to \$440. Staff know this is a major ask for families, particularly after the hardships caused by the recent fires.

Glen Waverley electorate

John MULLAHY (Glen Waverley) (14:44): (1521) My question is to the Minister for Environment. What progress has been made on the ngarrak nakorang wilam park project in the Glen Waverley district? Formerly known as the Healesville Freeway Reserve, this transformative project is creating a significant new green space linking Forest Hill, Vermont and Vermont South and connecting up with the Dandenong Creek Trail. Covering 35 hectares – around 18 MCGs – it represents a major investment in community wellbeing by the Allan Labor government. With shared-use paths, play areas, barbecue facilities and picnic spaces, the park will provide families, walkers, cyclists and young people with a place to gather, exercise and reconnect with nature. It will also recognise Indigenous history and embed cultural significance within the landscape. Equally important is the focus on protecting and enhancing biodiversity, ensuring native flora and fauna can thrive for generations. This will be a lasting community asset for the Glen Waverley district, and I look forward to the minister's response.

Sandringham electorate

Brad ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (14:45): (1522) My constituency question is to the Minister for Education. Late last year, after a two-year battle with VCAT, the Department of Education finally released their school condition report, which underlined the alarmingly poor state of hundreds of schools across our state. Mentone Primary in my community was given a score of just 2.96 and rated as poor. Although that score does not reflect the incredible students, families and educational leadership, it highlights the absolute need for capital investment in that school. When the vice-president of the school council was asked if any repair works had been done at Mentone Primary School, she made it very clear that any works undertaken had been funded by the school itself and not with the assistance of government. I therefore ask the minister: when will the minister take action to ensure that students at Mentone Primary School have access to the facilities that they need and deserve?

Northcote electorate

Kat THEOPHANOUS (Northcote) (14:46): (1523) My question is to the Premier: how will Victoria's new violence reduction unit work with communities such as Northcote to prevent youth violence before it starts and deliver safer, stronger futures for local families? We have seen the success of these units in Glasgow and London: how they work to divert young people away from crime by strengthening the protective factors that keep them connected to education, sport, health care and community; how they employ programs to connect kids with reformed offenders and take a health-led response that stabilises and supports young people; and how this approach has dramatically driven

down crime over time, with some remarkable statistics. There is no excuse for serious crime in our community, and we certainly have serious consequences in Victoria. But as a Labor government we also believe crime reduction means being deliberate about prevention. We back the potential of our young people, and we are determined to see them succeed in our communities. In Northcote I see that every day in our schools and organisations working tirelessly to give kids the best start. We need this evidence-based prevention approach, and I am proud our Labor government is delivering.

Melbourne electorate

Ellen SANDELL (Melbourne) (14:47): (1524) My question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety: what will the government do to reduce rat-running trucks in Kensington and deliver on the traffic-calming promises that they made to West and North Melbourne residents, which have never materialised? Since the state government's West Gate toll road opened, locals in Kensington, West Melbourne and North Melbourne have seen a huge increase in cars, trucks and heavy vehicles on their small residential streets. Some trucks are using the streets as rat runs, and some traffic is actually deliberately funnelled onto small local streets due to the design of the West Gate toll road. This is causing serious safety issues for my local neighbourhoods, and I am deeply concerned it is only a matter of time before there is a serious incident. The Labor government also promised \$100 million for traffic calming in West Melbourne due to the toll road, but unsurprisingly this never happened and now locals are feeling the impacts. For Kensington residents the Labor state government has not seemed to have offered any solutions to the rat-running, but these locals should not have to bear the consequences of the government's poor planning due to the West Gate toll road.

Bass electorate

Jordan CRUGNALE (Bass) (14:48): (1525) My question is to the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events: with the departure of the MotoGP next year, what new opportunities can we explore, support and deliver for alternate major events and ancillary projects and programs, including arts and culture, nature-based ecotourism, wellness and of course infrastructure? The private operator's decision to move the event to Adelaide has been disappointing for a number of reasons. It is our state and nation's biggest regional sports event and has showcased the island to the world while bringing enormous prosperity and hundreds of local jobs. But the operator's insistence on turning the MotoGP into a street racing event has been made, so now we need to roll up our sleeves. We are a determined, innovative and creative-thinking community with renowned vision, ideas, drive and spirit to find new opportunities in all their forms, and we are keen to ensure that the island, Bass Coast and the wider region benefit from future investment and support for local events that continue to showcase the best of all we have to offer. We look forward to working with the minister.

Shepparton electorate

Kim O'KEEFFE (Shepparton) (14:49): (1526) My question is for the Minister for Energy and Resources, and the information that I seek is: how will the government support residents and business owners of Nathalia who are affected by Solstice Energy's decision to cease its compressed natural gas network connections to the township from 16 August this year? The current financial support being offered does not cover the high transition costs, leaving many significantly financially impacted by this transition, and many are deeply distressed. Over 150 residents and local businesses in Nathalia are impacted. Many are expected to pay thousands of dollars that they simply do not have. This is not a consumer choice; it is a government-driven shutdown. The people of Nathalia need the government to understand the significant financial impact, and the current offering is nowhere near enough.

Narre Warren North electorate

Belinda WILSON (Narre Warren North) (14:49): (1527) My constituency question is to the Minister for Education, and my question is: how many prep bags have been handed out in the area of Narre Warren North?

*Rulings from the Chair***Constituency questions**

The SPEAKER (14:50): Yesterday the member for Caulfield asked the minister for an action to inform his constituents about a matter. The matter was related to the member's electorate, but asking a minister to inform a third party about something is a request for action. The member for Warrandyte similarly asked the minister to inform the house about a matter related to her electorate, which again is a request for a minister to inform a third party about something, which is a request for action. The member for Murray Plains asked an admissible question to the minister but then asked two further questions during his contribution. Members must only ask a single question during their constituency question. In August last year I made the point that this is a house of debate, where members should be aware of the meaning of the words they use and be accurate in using them. Members should also be aware of rules and rulings about how to ask questions in the house. As the member for Caulfield and the member for Warrandyte sought actions of ministers, I rule their constituency questions out of order. As the member for Murray Plains asked more than one question, I rule his constituency question out of order.

*Bills***Energy and Other Legislation Amendment (Resilience Reforms and Other Matters) Bill 2026***Second reading***Debate resumed.**

Emma KEALY (Lowan) (14:51): I rise today to speak on the Energy and Other Legislation Amendment (Resilience Reforms and Other Matters) Bill 2026. This legislation touches on a key point of division within our community, a key point which has made my community members feel like their voice has not been heard – that you have a government that is simply trying to railroad through energy infrastructure into our region without an appropriate opportunity for people to have their say. I am continuing to receive messages and emails and verbal feedback from my constituents that they feel completely shut out from this process. This is disturbing when we have got a large-scale, government-funded organisation named VicGrid that has got this imperative set out by the Allan Labor government that they must do this, but it is more about the outcome than it is about taking local people along for that journey and also giving them an opportunity to have their say. Country people are enormously passionate people. They are pragmatic, and they know that when things are not as they should be, they will call them out. But that does not mean that VicGrid should shy away and cut them out from their opportunity to be able to have their say.

I want to share an example in the house of how poorly the announcements of the REZs, the renewable energy zones, have been handled by VicGrid across the west of the state, particularly in relation to the addition of the Dundas Tablelands to the south-west renewable energy zone. At no point in time have the entire community within the Dundas Tablelands been notified that they are within the south-west REZ. This has been fed back through VicGrid on a number of occasions. There was an instance where a single leaflet was dropped to some community members, but the vast majority have received nothing. There has been no consultation with the local community, and while there was a single meeting which not many people knew about, and some of the local people were promised a summary of the community feedback, two months later they are still waiting for that information to be provided. Submissions on this renewable energy zone close on 15 March, and so time is ticking. This community needs to be included in the process. It is unfair and I believe it is undemocratic not to listen to them.

They have some really important local issues around what a renewable energy zone would mean in that area. For those of you who have not visited the south-west, the Dundas Tablelands, I urge you to go out and do so because it is home to some of the most beautiful country you will see in the state. There are enormous river red gums. There are undulating hills. There are creeks feeding into beautiful river systems that are largely untouched. These are areas that are not consistent with putting turbines

in their midst. It is not the home of extensive transmission lines. It is not on Victoria's grid. It is somewhere which has been home to some of the most productive pastoral land in this state. It simply would not be possible to put infrastructure like turbines in some of that area without taking these massive river red gums, these very important 100-year old trees, out of our environment. It is simply not compatible with a renewable energy zone. I quote Claire Wettenhall, who recently contacted me. She stated:

This is an entirely unfair situation for the landholders within this new area of the proposed SW zone. How can it be a fair and proper process if the community is not even aware that it is happening?

So I ask this Parliament and all parliamentarians who are listening to this to take this message on board. Speak to our community, because there are significant barriers in rolling out renewable energy in parts of this state. Please do not think about regional Victoria as a place where not many people live and therefore all of that land is open to infrastructure and development, because that simply is not the case. It does not matter whether it is through the Dundas Tablelands and that south-west renewable energy zone or any of the other renewable energy zones in the west of the state, there simply has not been enough involvement and listening to the community. We have even seen legislation through this place related to VicGrid and the VNI West infrastructure project which Labor have introduced that imposes a financial penalty for farmers who, for even simple reasons like protecting the biosecurity on their property, say no to government employees coming on their land. That is a step too far.

There are enormous issues with the rollout of VNI West, and as I stated in my adjournment matter last night, I call on the government to recognise that there are serious issues with that infrastructure. That project must be stopped immediately so that a proper process can be followed and evaluate how much that project will actually cost. How much will the cost, which will be put on energy bills for every single Victorian family and for every single Victorian business, be? How much are they going to have to pay for this project? It started off as \$7 billion. It is now \$11 billion. It is projected to be \$20 billion, and we still do not have landholders signed up to it yet. The cost just keeps increasing. This is not taxpayer dollars; it is pushing up the cost of living and the cost of energy bills in this state.

There is a much easier solution in the meantime while you work out what happens with the resilience of the grid, and that is to upgrade the existing lines. We know the lines in western Victoria are aged and brittle and send energy in the wrong direction. It is for that reason that I believe the government should get on with upgrading those existing lines, and of course that would have a flow-on benefit for every single Victorian. Those Victorians who want lower energy bills would get them because there would be less infrastructure required, and there are already existing easements in the west of the state if you look at doing that job first. If your focus is you want to see more renewables in this state, then upgrade the existing lines because far more renewable capacity would be able to come online through upgrading the existing infrastructure in the west of the state than there would be unlocked through VNI West. It stacks up on every metric, and particularly for people who are farming, where agriculture has always been the jewel in the crown and the driver of Victoria's economy. That is what we need to see. We need to see that we have agriculture put front and centre for these sorts of decisions, which are around how we use our land and how we prioritise agriculture in this state.

To put agriculture to the side and not give it priority, not consider it as part of the planning process, is negligent by any government. It is negligent of the Labor government to just ignore agriculture and how important it is as a driver of the Victorian economy. That is why the Liberals and Nationals have committed to ensuring that we prioritise and recognise the value of agricultural land as part of planning processes to roll out any project across the state. We do an environment effects study; we value that, and we should too. We do a cultural heritage study to ensure we look at the cultural heritage. We should also value our agricultural land and make sure that that is included in our assessments on where major infrastructure is rolled out and how there are changes to land use across our state.

We have committed to that policy of making sure that agricultural land is protected and that agricultural producers are included in the conversation, but more importantly we want to make sure

we go back to first principles. Let us make sure that all Victorians can access reliable energy. Let us make sure that all Victorians know what they are going to be charged at the end of the day and that they do not have the cost of energy infrastructure quietly put onto their energy bills and see their bills go up and up and up. As the member for Brighton stated, our energy should be affordable. Without having affordable energy, we are just going to see the cost-of-living pressures and the cost of doing business in Victoria continue to increase. The Nationals and the Liberals understand this. We have got policy which is consistent on delivering for rural and regional Victorians when it comes to energy infrastructure, looking at how we can make sure we can bring online cheap, affordable and reliable energy infrastructure, and that is what we will stand for each and every day.

While this bill is debated I urge government members to consider some of the challenges that are happening in rural and regional Victoria. Farms are not simply vacant blocks that are ready to put whatever infrastructure you want on. They are very, very important for our Victorian environment. They are very, very important drivers of the Victorian economy. They are supporting very important communities that may not be as big as Melbourne, but they are the heart and soul of Victoria. They are pragmatic people. They should be heard. They are coming to the table with solutions. But please give them an opportunity to be part of that conversation, because at the moment there is wilful negligence and wilful ignorance of key issues, which are going to make it impossible for these projects to go ahead without there being a significant impact both on the environment and on our net agricultural land in this state.

Colin BROOKS (Bundoora – Minister for Industry and Advanced Manufacturing, Minister for Creative Industries) (15:01): I move:

That the debate be now adjourned.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (15:01): The government have just again, on a Thursday afternoon, sought to adjourn debate on a bill that at the start of the week they said was important and needed to be debated throughout the week as one of the government business program bills – one of the three bills – and that the government would not want to use the Parliament's time to sledge. The government have informed me that they do intend to adjourn this bill to sledge – to take away from the government business program the bills that should have been debated and use this Parliament's time instead to sledge.

I would say to the government members, who can hear me, I hope – I am happy to speak louder if they cannot – that last sitting week the Leader of the House attempted to move two motions, which were I think the most embarrassing display of fumbling of this chamber in my time as Manager of Opposition Business; it was the most embarrassing tactical behaviour I have seen in my time as manager. When we spoke at that time about those motions I made the point – I was very clear about the point – that the government had mismanaged the chamber and, frankly, mismanaged the tactics of this chamber. So what have they done right now with this motion? They are doing it again – the same mistake of last sitting week they are doing again. They are going to attempt to move this house into dealing with, clearly, sledge motions instead of proposed legislation, purely for politics because of how poor the government's week has been and, frankly, because we are witnessing the worst corruption scandal in our state's history.

I would say that of course we must oppose what the government is proposing to do now. We must oppose it, because why should this house be debating a sledge motion? That is what the government have advised me they want to do, and that is why they want to move the adjournment motion. To everybody in this chamber that feels like they have heard this speech before, they have, because only one sitting week ago the government tried to do the same thing. I will put on the record that as I walked out of the chamber just after 5 o'clock in the last sitting week, I was surprised by how many Labor members of Parliament said to me, 'Gee, the Leader of the House has had a really bad day' – absolutely. So what has the government done again through the Leader of the House? It has fumbled that ball again, and it has tried the same trick twice. And, do you know what, where is the Leader of

the House? The Leader of the House is getting her poor ministry up like bunnies to move these motions, embarrassing as they are, and is not fronting the chamber to speak on the procedural motion.

I would say to the chamber that the Leader of the House's job is to lead this house. And the Leader of the House does not speak on procedural motions. Other than the government business program, the Leader of the House refuses to speak on any procedural motion. In fact I challenge any speaker after me to find instances – any instance – where the Leader of the House has spoken on a procedural motion as Leader of the House. I challenge you to find that for me. Instead the government backbench are sent out and the ministry are sent out to move these motions. I have never in my time in Parliament or before, working in politics, ever seen a Leader of the House so invisible on managing a house. You can see why. The government is saying to me, 'Ridiculous.' Show me the example where the Leader of the House has spoken, because the Leader of the House is gutless. We will be opposing this motion; of course we will. Shocking motion that it is, we will oppose it.

Gary MAAS (Narre Warren South) (15:07): Goodness me, what was that? The Minister for Creative Industries is well within his rights. As a minister in our government, he is allowed to –

Members interjecting.

Gary MAAS: No, the Minister for Creative Industries is well within his rights to put forward the motion to adjourn the debate, and that is what is being put forward. In fact I think it is fantastic that we are proposing to condemn the Leader of the Opposition for her plan to make \$11.1 billion –

James Newbury interjected.

Gary MAAS: That is what will be moved, and I understand that the opposition was given notice that this motion would be debated. Yet again what we see is an opposition that is too afraid to have these types of debates in the house. What we have, quite frankly, is a petulant child that sits in this chamber every single week, a petulant child that is supposed to be, one day, according to him at least, the Attorney-General of this state.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker: relevance.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Narre Warren South to continue on the adjournment motion.

Gary MAAS: It is well within the rights of the Minister for Creative Industries to move to adjourn the debate. We have had a terrific debate on the Energy and Other Legislation Amendment (Resilience Reforms and Other Matters) Bill 2026. We have heard from all sides of this Parliament. We have heard from the Greens, we have heard from the Liberals and the Nats and we have heard from several members on this side of the chamber as well, members of the government. It has come up to 3 o'clock on Thursday afternoon, and the thing is, you have got to have the privilege of government, don't you, to be able to seek to adjourn debate. You have absolutely got to be in government. And what a precious gift it is too. When you come to government, you have got to make sure that you are out there, that you are doing things.

James Newbury interjected.

Gary MAAS: No, we are not about sledge motions here at all. What we are about is making sure that every single Victorian is looked after and that we take every single Victorian with us in this place. If there is going to be an \$11.1 billion black hole, then we think that Victorians should know where the money is coming from to fill that black hole. Where are the cuts going to be made? I support the Minister for Creative Industries in seeking to adjourn this debate.

Peter WALSH (Murray Plains) (15:10): I would remind the previous member speaking that yes, it is a privilege to be in government, but unfortunately some governments use that privilege to rort the system, and \$15 billion has been proven to be rorted. I wonder if the member wants to take credit for

that as being part of the government as well. Or is he going to actually speak up and demand a royal commission?

A member interjected.

Peter WALSH: Where is the proof, you ask? You are calling a senior counsel into disrepute about a report that he wrote. That is the issue.

Gary Maas interjected.

Peter WALSH: You have had your time, mate. The government moving to adjourn this debate is an absolute slap in the face to regional Victoria. There is a long list of National Party MPs that want to speak up for their electorates on the particular bill that is being adjourned. If you go through this bill, it legislates away the powers of people to have a say on what happens on their farms and in their communities. It is legislating away their rights and their privileges as citizens of Victoria to have a say about whether they have transmission lines on their farms, whether they have renewable projects put next door to their farms and whether they have a wind tower that shades their farm, flickers next to their farm and creates noise for their farm or their house. To say that the government wants to move away from this bill after it was on the business program and with very short notice, with a long list of speakers that want to speak on this bill, is a disgrace and an insult to regional Victorians that they are going to adjourn this debate.

Yes, as the member for Brighton and Manager of Opposition Business said, this is a sledge motion. The government is going to have a bit of sport sledging. I think the government needs to have a long, hard look in the mirror at their own actions in recent times – the fact that, as I said to the member for Narre Warren South, \$15 billion has been rorted out of this state on major projects. They are just going to have an attack motion to try and cover up their own corruptness, which is an absolute insult, again, to Victorians.

When I go through the bill before the house, which I would have had a contribution on if the government was not going to adjourn it, I am really, really concerned about what it is going to do to people's rights and the fact that it gives VicGrid the power to effectively set up a renewable energy zone anywhere they like, without any consultation, and that it gives the Governor in Council the right to tick off projects and put conditions on those projects. There is no transparency in that. Those of us that have been in government know how the Governor in Council works – that on a Tuesday morning four ministers by rotation go to the Old Treasury Building and they go through the list of things that are being ticked off. It happens all of a sudden, without anyone knowing until they read the *Government Gazette* every week. And I am sure that is on the kitchen table of every household in Victoria; every household is reading the *Government Gazette*! They will not know what has happened to them. Their rights will have been traded away. The fact that the government is stopping regional Victorian MPs from speaking up on behalf of their community is a disgrace.

I will end with a contribution I made in a members statement recently congratulating the people of regional Victoria and particularly those people that are being impacted by VNI West. They are actually standing up for their rights. They are actually stopping people going on to their farms, and I commend them for doing that. The movie *The Castle* is alive and well with those people who are standing up for their rights and stopping the government from just marching over their rights. They should have the right to a third-party appeal for these decisions. This bill, which should be debated instead of moving to the sledge motion, actually takes away more of those rights. I say to the government and I say to the minister at the table that moved the motion, on behalf of regional Victoria: have a long, hard think about what you have done in shutting down this debate today. It is an absolute disgrace, and I thought better of you.

Paul EDBROOKE (Frankston) (15:15): I rise to support the motion. I was looking at notice paper 154, and this is for everyone in the house to consider: with the former deputy leader who quit or was bullied out, what happens to his orders and motions on the notice paper?

James Newbury: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker: relevance. This is an adjournment motion.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I appreciate the member for Frankston had just started, but that was varying from the adjournment topic. Member for Frankston, bring it back.

Paul EDBROOKE: We know that the Manager of Opposition Business does not like variety, and every Thursday afternoon we have this debate where we have apparently over the last two days not prosecuted the argument enough and we need to drag that out. I have heard very, very respectful debate over the last two days on this bill, and this motion is something we should be talking about as well. This Parliament should be able to adapt to different debates which cater to lots of different members and their constituencies in this house, and I think that was put across by all the Labor government members before me. When we hear those opposite talking about how they have not had their say, it is absolutely laughable in a lot of ways. There are four people in the house today that are coalition One Nation–Liberal.

James Newbury: The Leader of the House isn't here.

Paul EDBROOKE: What has that got to do with anything? How many of you are here? We think that we should be able to adapt. We think we should be able to be flexible and actually debate different things on the same day. I think everyone on this side of the house believes that. It is absolutely silly to be arguing anything different. To say that we cannot adjourn this debate at this time is something they seem to argue every week. It is a matter of inflexibility, and it is why those opposite will never form government. They cannot adapt to what is happening around them. They have got high self-confidence but low situational awareness and low self-awareness. I must admit I found it really funny when one of my children was watching question time recently and said, 'Who is that bloke that keeps on getting up?' They called him Elmo because apparently he goes red in the face and they cannot understand what he says. I said, 'That's the member for Brighton.' Now they are starting to call him Elmo, and I am not sure if that will stick. I hope it does not stick. But we do not think this is a sledging motion.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, this just shows how juvenile he is. Relevance.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I think the member had strayed. Please come back.

Paul EDBROOKE: I find that really nasty. I think we should have the flexibility in this house to debate different things. I know there are members on this side of the house that would like the opportunity to debate something else today, to talk about something else that is important to their constituency. For me personally, Frankston hospital opened a month ago. We are already having babies born in that hospital. It is serving our community, and it is the light on the hill in Frankston. You can see it, coming down the Monash. It is something that is transformational. I would love the opportunity to talk about that today. To talk about that, though, requires adjourning this. I think the argument has been well prosecuted by this side of the house, and I am sure that during the division we will be able to prosecute those numbers pretty well as well. For those on the other side of the house, this is democracy. They can have their say, they can argue and they can get up. But does it get tiresome every Thursday afternoon, turning the volume up on the member for Brighton, who cannot seem to regulate his voice like a normal human being at times and gets very shouty? It is like teaching again. I know we have got a former teacher here in the member for Sandringham.

Brad Rowswell: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, I draw the house's attention to standing order 118.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I did not hear an imputation on a single member. The member's time has expired.

Brad ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (15:20): I do agree with the member for Frankston on this part: this is democracy. It is a democratic act of the government to come in here and choose to adjourn debate for the purposes of a sledge motion. Notice of motion 2 on today's notice paper is an attack on the opposition. But there is an action related to democracy, and then there is a constructive and a

productive and a community-building action of democracy, which is the bill that we were on, to enable the member for Murray Plains, the member for Morwell, the member for Euroa, the member for Gippsland East and the member for Ovens Valley to have a say on the government's Energy and Other Legislation Amendment (Resilience Reforms and Other Matters) Bill 2026. That was the bill we were on. According to the opposition's speaking list, those are the members who have still not had the opportunity to contribute to that debate. They have still not had an opportunity to have their say on that bill in this place on behalf of the tens of thousands of electors that they represent in this place.

I put it to the house, Deputy Speaker, to you and to the member for Frankston, who raised the point that, yes, this is a democratic act, that the government are choosing to adjourn debate for the sake of attacking the opposition but they are adjourning debate for the sake of attacking the opposition when they could simply continue with the Energy and Other Legislation Amendment (Resilience Reforms and Other Matters) Bill 2026 and enable those members, those colleagues, those men and women elected to this place, democratically representing regional and rural communities right around this state, to have their say on behalf of their communities on this bill. But no – no, no, no.

Where did we hear that recently, actually? I would have thought that the government had learned, but clearly they have not. I will just remind them of what happened last sitting week. Last sitting week they tried to do the same thing, as the member for Brighton, the Manager of Opposition Business, actually raised. They tried to do this in the last sitting week, and they tried to adjourn debate for the sake of adjourning to a sledge motion. They have got form on this. It is the second sitting week of 2026 – yes, an election year – and it is the second sitting week in a row on a Thursday afternoon where they are seeking to adjourn debate to pour a bucket of you-know-what on the opposition –

A member interjected.

Brad ROWSWELL: 'Because we can,' says the government member. But that does not make it right. Amnesia seems to be the broadbrush response by members of the government whenever their feet are put to the flame. But let me remind them: it did not work so well last sitting week, did it? No, no, no. It did not work so well for them last sitting week. In fact they were hoping to have, what, an hour and a half, 90 minutes, a couple of hours to introduce this sledge motion. And who stopped them? We got caught up in procedural debates. You would have thought that they would have learned. You would have thought that the manager of government business would have learned, but no, she has not, and no, the government has not.

Debate must not be adjourned, for the sake of the Victorians impacted by the government's legislation that we are currently debating relating to energy policy. I think of the member for Morwell: the heart and soul of his community is in effect categorised by the energy industry. We are talking about jobs in the member for Morwell's seat. We are talking about the future prosperity, economic and otherwise, of constituents within the member for Morwell's seat. But no, the government, by introducing this adjournment of debate, is effectively saying to the member for Morwell and his community, 'We don't care. Stuff you.' But of course this is a democratic process, and the government is actively choosing to exercise its right in the democratic process by saying to the member for Morwell's constituents – good, hardworking Victorian families, hardworking Victorian taxpayers – 'Stuff you.' That is just not good enough.

Assembly divided on Colin Brooks's motion:

Ayes (49): Juliana Addison, Jacinta Allan, Colin Brooks, Josh Bull, Anthony Carbines, Anthony Cianflone, Sarah Connolly, Chris Couzens, Jordan Crugnale, Lily D'Ambrosio, Daniela De Martino, Steve Dimopoulos, Paul Edbrooke, Eden Foster, Matt Fregon, Ella George, Bronwyn Halfpenny, Katie Hall, Paul Hamer, Martha Haylett, Mathew Hilakari, Melissa Horne, Natalie Hutchins, Lauren Kathage, Sonya Kilkenny, Nathan Lambert, John Lister, Gary Maas, Alison Marchant, Steve McGhie, Paul Mercurio, John Mullahy, Danny Pearson, Pauline Richards, Tim Richardson, Michaela Settle, Ros Spence, Nick Staikos, Natalie Suleyman, Meng Heang Tak, Nina Taylor, Kat Theophanous,

Mary-Anne Thomas, Emma Vulin, Iwan Walters, Vicki Ward, Dylan Wight, Gabrielle Williams, Belinda Wilson

Noes (27): Brad Battin, Jade Benham, Roma Britnell, Tim Bull, Martin Cameron, Annabelle Cleeland, Chris Crewther, Wayne Farnham, Will Fowles, Matthew Guy, David Hodgett, Emma Kealy, Tim McCurdy, Cindy McLeish, James Newbury, Danny O'Brien, Michael O'Brien, Kim O'Keeffe, John Pesutto, Richard Riordan, Brad Rowswell, David Southwick, Bridget Vallence, Peter Walsh, Nicole Werner, Rachel Westaway, Jess Wilson

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.

Colin BROOKS (Bundoorra – Minister for Industry and Advanced Manufacturing, Minister for Creative Industries) (15:31): I move:

That debate be adjourned until later this day.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (15:31): Firstly, I do note the government has just moved to adjourn debate till later this day, and it was not the Leader of the House again. We have had two procedural motions and a missing Leader of the House. The Leader of the House has not spoken on one procedural motion that I am aware of other than the government business program. I do not know what we are paying her for. What are we paying her for? Unfortunately, we have a government that for two sitting weeks in a row has tried the same trick and has failed twice. And we have lost the Leader of the House again. She has left the Minister for Creative Industries in the chamber. Here he is. He is about to say more than the Leader of the House ever has.

Colin Brooks: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, I am not sure what is going on over there at the moment. The member for Brighton seems to be obsessed with the Leader of the House.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The point of order is?

Colin Brooks: This is a procedural motion about when the debate is adjourned until.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Brighton will continue on that procedural motion.

James NEWBURY: I very much appreciate the minister's point of order and feel that he would make a great Leader of the House. He would be a far more capable Leader of the House. The government, as we know, has again tried to debate an important bill. There are many members on our side of the chamber who want to speak on this bill because they know their communities are being screwed over and are having no say in what the government is doing to regional Victoria again. We on this side of the house know that when it comes to what is happening in regional Victoria, those communities are having all of their rights and all of their say ripped away.

The government is moving from a bill that deals with the rights of regional Victorians when it comes to the energy rollout and instead is trying to waste the Parliament's time again on a sledge motion for a second week in a row. When they moved this motion and tried this trick in the last sitting week, I thought to myself at the end of the day that that was the last time they would try and adjourn debate so they could deal with a sledge motion. I thought it was not possible for them to do it twice.

Members interjecting.

James NEWBURY: The government tells me I am not speaking loudly enough. I am only too happy to oblige. I thought to myself, 'How can the government possibly be so tactically stupid?' But here we are again, and when you look at what happened outside the doors of this Parliament this morning I can understand why they are moving an adjournment motion. Wasn't the Premier's press conference a train wreck? Wasn't that a train wreck?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I think I can pre-empt the point of order, Minister for Creative Industries.

Colin Brooks: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, I can pre-empt what you were thinking I was going to raise, but I was actually going to raise something I think is probably different. This is not on the adjournment motion that we have spent the last half-hour debating, this is on the motion that has been moved for this to be considered later this day, and what the Premier did on the front steps is not relevant to the debate that is being put in front of the house.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The point of order, as would be appreciated, is succinct. Member for Brighton, back on the adjournment question of when.

James NEWBURY: However, the reasoning why the government is adjourning until later this day is entirely relevant. The reasoning for ‘until later this day’ is entirely relevant, and to deflect from the Premier’s train wreck would be the reason that I put to the chamber.

Members interjecting.

James NEWBURY: It was a train wreck. What would you call it? You guys are all briefing the media.

Paul Edbrooke: On a point of order, this is a train wreck, Deputy Speaker. Please bring the member for Brighton back to the subject at hand.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I take it that is relevance. Member for Brighton, continue with the –

James NEWBURY: I can understand why the members are touchy about what has happened with the Premier this week.

Josh BULL (Sunbury) (15:36): I am pleased to have the opportunity to make a relatively brief contribution on this procedural debate and just take it down a few decibels from the sort of ranting and raving that we are seeing from the other side. Talk about theatre on a Thursday afternoon. What is really critical and what is before the house at this current point in time is of course a conversation about what happens in terms of the management of the house when it comes to both the Energy and Other Legislation Amendment (Resilience Reforms and Other Matters) Bill 2026, which I had the opportunity to speak on just before lunch, and the very important debate that goes to health in this state. What we have seen, particularly just this week, member for Footscray, is the significant investment in the amazing Footscray Hospital. That of course builds on the significant investments that have been made in health right across the state. I was just having a chat before to the member for Frankston on the outstanding projects in his electorate when it comes to investments in health. All of those investments that this government has delivered it continues to deliver, and of course it will work very hard through the budget process and others to continue to support our healthcare workers in this state and, most importantly, all Victorians.

We know and understand that all of those things are potentially at risk, and what we need to ensure is that that debate can be brought on, as well as recognising the importance of the energy legislation that has been debated in the house throughout today. As I mentioned earlier, having the opportunity to speak on that and having the opportunity to make comments about safety and resilience, poles and wires and the changes and mechanisms contained within that legislation is very, very important as well.

What is before the house right now in terms of the next 22-plus minutes is an opportunity to have what will be a very important debate and a very important conversation in terms of the government’s ability to continue to invest in health services across the state and of course make those necessary changes that we have outlined in detail in the legislation that was before the house this morning and through the course of the early afternoon. We have got an opportunity to be able to frame those conversations in a way that is most important to all Victorians. What I know as a local member – and you, Deputy Speaker, in your role and I think all members of the house should know and understand – is the importance of health care and that investment. The ability to get seen by a doctor when you need it and the ability to get treated with good local health care and, importantly, a structured, resourced and

well-managed system that will not be fundamentally damaged by more than \$11 billion in cuts are things that are of serious consideration for people within my terrific community and indeed right across the state.

We need to ensure that those fundamentals are in place. We need to ensure that through the course of the work that is done by the Minister for Health and by her office, but most importantly by the incredible workforce of nurses, doctors and healthcare staff, who do just an outstanding job. And to know and understand that these things are on the table and that that pipeline of investment can indeed be at risk is something that we are not prepared to gamble with. That is something that we will fundamentally prosecute through the course of this debate and every single day, member for Frankston, just as you are very proud, as you ought to be, of the investments in Frankston and the amazing Frankston hospital. These are really important commitments and really important investments. We need the opportunity to be able to discuss those. That is what is before the house right now, and that is why we remain committed to being able to have this debate, to bringing this debate on, meanwhile having the important discussions that I had the opportunity to reference earlier, just before lunch. With those comments I am going to park my contribution there, but I want to take the opportunity to thank the house for its consideration.

Martin CAMERON (Morwell) (15:41): I rise to stand with the Manager of Opposition Business on this attack, this sledge motion that is being brought up against the opposition. We were perfectly debating the Energy and Other Legislation Amendment (Resilience Reforms and Other Matters) Bill 2026. I am not sure if they were trying to gag us regional members, especially me as the member for Morwell, which is in the heartland of where these lights that are functioning at the moment would be coming out of – Loy Yang A and Yallourn. Whether they are charging batteries around the state somewhere, we can truly confirm that these lights will be running off power that is generated in the Latrobe Valley. They are trying to adjourn the debate on the energy legislation and not give us a chance to actually talk about what these amendments in this legislation are going to mean for the Latrobe Valley. Since I arrived in this place we have been talking daily and trying to bring up that what it means is costing people their jobs in the Latrobe Valley, and enough is enough.

We have had rhetoric from the Minister for the State Electricity Commission, saying and confirming ‘We will be looking after those workers in the Latrobe Valley.’ Well, so far we have not seen a real lot happening down there. We have got a nice new shiny building, bringing back the SEC with some workers in there. I might add there are some good people working in that office trying to sell the government rhetoric about what the SEC means. But it is meant to bring 59,000 new jobs. It is meant to be now, as the minister said I think, 63,000-plus new jobs that our renewables and bringing back the SEC are meant to bring. We are not seeing those jobs flow through into the Latrobe Valley at the moment.

The Latrobe Valley was the heartland of Labor. If they were going to win elections, 99 per cent of the people in the Latrobe Valley would vote Labor. But now it has flipped. I am not sure what the actual number will be down there in Latrobe voting for Labor come November 2026, but they are disillusioned down there. They have sat by, as I have, looking at our work and our jobs not only in the power industry but in our manufacturing industry and looking at our roads and what we are missing out on. We talk about being able to access mental health facilities, health and that type of stuff. What they are seeing from this Jacinta Allan-led Labor government is this state Jacintegrating in front of our eyes, right across the board. It is Jacintegrating. It is as simple as that. They want to make sure that their livelihoods and jobs are guaranteed, but at the moment we are not seeing anything at all. We see maybe some batteries being built, we see solar panels going in. The government stand and tell us how many jobs that is going to create, but they only create jobs while they are being built.

There are no ongoing jobs of any significance. We are talking about thousands of workers whose jobs are on the line in the power industry, and for those thousands of workers that work in those jobs it is the village around them, it is the person that is supplying the food, it is the person that is fixing all the trucks and doing the dry-cleaning – something as simple as that. There are thousands and thousands

of workers around that initial hub whose jobs this government has put on the line. I can see the looks on some people's faces. They are thinking, 'Oh no, it's not.' Well, mark my words: yes, it is. There is no infrastructure going in there. We have timelines of Yallourn shutting in two years time. We have timelines of Loy Yang A shutting in 2035. It is crunch time now for this government. Judgement day will be on 28 November this year, and as we see, the house of cards is going to fall because this state, as I said, is just Jacintegrating in front of our eyes.

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (15:46): I am a little bit surprised, because I know that the Leader of the Opposition has put health as one of the four pillars of issues that she is seeking to focus on and yet there is such reluctance by those opposite to speak to that today. When you compare this to our side, because we actually delivered the beautiful Frankston hospital, Footscray Hospital and a massive increase in our health workforce – 950 medical interns cracking into their careers in our Victorian hospital system – I kind of get why those opposite maybe do not want to talk about it. They know they cannot deliver and they might actually cut. If they were to get in, what would they snip? They would probably snip those jobs, the nurses' jobs, the medical interns and other critical people in terms of maintaining the health of Victorians. That is why we would contend it is a really important matter to discuss, and we would urge those opposite to join with us in adjourning debate on the current bill until later this day, because health matters to Victorians and it certainly matters to our Allan Labor government. I mean, I get that there is some sensitivity by those opposite. They only have to look in the mirror when they have got a by-election pending because of the ejection of the member for Nepean.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker: relevance.

Colin Brooks: On the point of order, Deputy Speaker, with the previous speaker from the opposition and maybe the member for Sunbury, the debate has been wideranging. I think we got to dry-cleaning on that side of the house. I think the member is entitled to respond.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The debate did get much wider than it probably should have. If we could continue it around the adjournment debate, that would be appreciated.

Nina TAYLOR: Thank you for your guidance, Deputy Speaker. But, again, why wouldn't they want to talk about health? Certainly it would be a lot more comfortable than talking about cuddling up to One Nation. Focusing on that has got to be embarrassing for them. Talk about health, for goodness sake.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker: relevance.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Where is the context?

James Newbury: Attacking the opposition.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member to continue on the adjournment.

Nina TAYLOR: Again I thank you for your sound guidance. On this side of the house we would consider health to be a really important topic, and one other thing I just want to add, when it comes to the bill that we are seeking to adjourn, is there was a period where it was just government member after government member after government member. Arguably some came back in a bit later, but if there is such a sudden passion to speak on it, they certainly have had a lot of opportunity. I am just putting that out there. If we are going to look at this procedural motion and we are going to really examine it thoroughly, we should look at the opportunities that the opposition have had to transact the bill thoroughly today – certainly no pushback from here. But that being said, we on this side of the house do prioritise health. We are absolutely keen to speak on that matter and we are concerned for the welfare of all Victorians, because there is an \$11.1 billion gaping black hole from those opposite. Where will those cuts come from? We have just really built up the health workforce, really upgrading our hospitals in this state. We do not want to put any of those at risk and we certainly do not want Victorians to be worse off as a result of that.

So you can see that there are really compelling reasons to properly transact this issue, because it could mean a real difference in the lives of Victorians across the state in all our communities. Again, I just do not understand why they would not want to transact it. Maybe it is because they would have to cut were they to come in, so it is better to avoid that topic and then they do not have to deal with that uncomfortableness. But then maybe the opposition leader might just take health off as one of those key issues if it is not a topic that the opposition really want to transact. I am just putting it out there. It is just something to be considered.

Certainly, as I said, on this side of the house we prioritise the health and wellbeing of Victorians, and we would urge those opposite to actually come forward and be really clean and up-front about what they would do were they to be elected as the government when it comes to our magnificent health system in Victoria. I have some concerns about it, so, yes, I can kind of see why they are baulking at that discussion today.

Bridget VALLENCE (Evelyn) (15:51): We will be opposing this procedural motion to adjourn this debate to later this day, the reason being we actually want to save this Labor government from themselves and the embarrassment on display. This Labor government wants to shift the debate to talk about health. Let us talk about health. There are 64,000 Victorians on the elective surgery waitlist, waiting for vital surgery to help them in their everyday lives, but this Labor government are failing these Victorians. Let us talk about health. They talk about the Liberals cutting hospitals. We cannot cut the funding to hospitals if you have not funded the hospitals you have promised in multiple elections. Look at the Maroondah Hospital.

Colin Brooks: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, your previous ruling about this being a wideranging debate was correct, but the member is now debating the notice of motion on the paper, not the procedural motion that is in front of the house.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I think the member was rebutting other members, so I will not uphold the point of order. However, I would encourage her not to jump into any motion that may be in the paper in the future.

Bridget VALLENCE: I really like the Minister for Creative Industries, but I think he has done himself a disservice. He knows how embarrassing it is that the Labor government is seeking to delay to later this day a very important piece of legislation, which I personally have not had a chance yet to discuss. I know the member for Sunbury, in his contribution on this procedural motion, said, 'Well, I've had a chance to talk about the Energy and Other Legislation Amendment (Resilience Reforms and Other Matters) Bill 2026,' as if that is a reason for us to move on, because he is so important, being a man over there. But, you know what, I want to be able to talk about that for my community.

Just like the member for Monbulk, we have shared challenges in the Yarra Ranges region when it comes to energy and resilience through the Yarra Ranges. We saw through those 2021 storms through the Yarra Ranges the devastation, and energy was at risk for so many people for weeks and weeks on end – they had no electricity. It was only through embarrassment that the former Deputy Premier James Merlino actually then came to assist his own community with generators, because he was copping so much backlash. The Black Saturday royal commission said that we should underground powerlines, but this Labor government has done nothing about that for my community. These are the kinds of things that I would like to be able to discuss in the energy bill.

Paul Edbrooke: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, as someone who actually sat through the Black Saturday royal commission, I ask: what is the relevance? This is a procedural debate.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member had strayed a little bit. Come back, please. I know it has been wide.

Bridget VALLENCE: I oppose going to later this day because 'later this day' is disingenuous. There will not be enough time later this day for people like me to talk about the Energy and Other

Legislation Amendment (Resilience Reforms and Other Matters) Bill, which is what I want to do on behalf of the people that I represent, the Victorians that I represent. I hear that over there they are saying that we are wasting time. It is the Labor government wasting time by moving these silly adjournments to move to something else.

They are trying to gag us. They are trying to gag members on this side from talking about important energy legislation that might help us take a small step forward to improve the resilience of energy in my local community, through the Yarra Valley and the Dandenong Ranges, because it is fragile. It is not just the significant storms that we are exposed to, the natural disasters; we have blackouts too. In my home we have blackouts all the time. There is absolutely a failure of this Labor government when it comes to energy resilience, and that is precisely why I oppose the minister's move to adjourn this debate to later this day. Again, as I say, it is entirely disingenuous for the Minister for Creative Industries to say 'later this day', because he knows full well it is nearly 4 o'clock and we adjourn at 5 o'clock. There will not be enough time for those members on this side of the house, for non-government members, to be able to represent the people in their communities in this people's house when it comes to energy and this legislation. I do not know why they are trying to hide from this legislation and why they are trying to gag people on this side of the house. It is just astonishing that what they want to move to is a bill about health, when in my community they are failing with the Maroondah Hospital.

Assembly divided on Colin Brooks's motion:

Ayes (48): Juliana Addison, Colin Brooks, Josh Bull, Anthony Carbines, Anthony Cianflone, Sarah Connolly, Chris Couzens, Jordan Crugnale, Lily D'Ambrosio, Daniela De Martino, Steve Dimopoulos, Paul Edbrooke, Eden Foster, Matt Fregon, Ella George, Bronwyn Halfpenny, Katie Hall, Paul Hamer, Martha Haylett, Mathew Hilakari, Melissa Horne, Natalie Hutchins, Lauren Kathage, Sonya Kilkenny, Nathan Lambert, John Lister, Gary Maas, Alison Marchant, Steve McGhie, Paul Mercurio, John Mullahy, Danny Pearson, Pauline Richards, Tim Richardson, Michaela Settle, Ros Spence, Nick Staikos, Natalie Suleyman, Meng Heang Tak, Nina Taylor, Kat Theophanous, Mary-Anne Thomas, Emma Vulin, Iwan Walters, Vicki Ward, Dylan Wight, Gabrielle Williams, Belinda Wilson

Noes (27): Brad Battin, Jade Benham, Roma Britnell, Tim Bull, Martin Cameron, Annabelle Cleeland, Chris Crewther, Wayne Farnham, Will Fowles, Matthew Guy, David Hodgett, Emma Kealy, Tim McCurdy, Cindy McLeish, James Newbury, Danny O'Brien, Michael O'Brien, Kim O'Keefe, John Pesutto, Richard Riordan, Brad Rowswell, David Southwick, Bridget Vallence, Peter Walsh, Nicole Werner, Rachel Westaway, Jess Wilson

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned until later this day.

Motions

Health infrastructure

Melissa HORNE (Williamstown – Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Roads and Road Safety, Minister for Health Infrastructure) (16:02): I move:

That this house condemns the Leader of the Opposition for her plan to make \$11.1 billion in cuts and calls on them to rule out cutting, downgrading or closing the pipeline of new hospitals to fill their budget black hole.

On this side of the house, no matter where you live, no matter what you earn, you deserve the very best in health care, and that is why Victorians know that only Labor can build hospitals. Only Labor invests in our healthcare workforce and in the facilities and technologies our hardworking healthcare workers need to save lives.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Member for Evelyn, I ask you to come back and apologise. The minister will resume her seat. The member for Evelyn will go to the microphone and apologise.

Bridget Vallence: I apologise.

Melissa HORNE: We know that Victorians depend on our government to invest in and strengthen our healthcare system, which is why we are making sure that every single family has the healthcare services they need close to home and when they need them most. That is exactly what this government is doing.

Do you know that in the first 50 days of this year the Labor government opened the brand new Footscray Hospital. I spoke about it yesterday and I have spoken about it today, and I will keep speaking about this incredible legacy that will serve generations to come of families in the west. It is an absolute game changer. Yesterday I was joined by my very good friend the member for Footscray and the Premier and the Minister for Health to open this hospital as they seamlessly moved 180 patients from the old Footscray Hospital in Gordon Street down to the brand new Footscray Hospital. As I mentioned in the house earlier, the very first patient who came in was an elderly gentleman. His name was James, and what James said on coming into the this brand new hospital was, 'This looks like a 5-star hotel, and I never want to leave.' The local community has pride in this hospital. I met Olga, a theatre nurse in Footscray who had spent 50 years working in Footscray Hospital. On her last shift in the old Footscray Hospital they formed a guard of honour to show to her just how valued her service was.

But it is not just there that we have been building hospitals. We have completed and opened the brand new Peninsula University Hospital, and on the same day we welcomed the birth of a first baby boy into the brand new maternity and birthing suites. This is incredible. This is such a game changer for the people in Melbourne's south-east. The member for Frankston and the member for Hastings know just how important this is for their growing communities right across the peninsula. We have also appointed Icon, the builder which will deliver the Casey Hospital ED expansion, so we can slash wait times and enable 52,000 more patients to be treated each and every year.

I am sure the member for Berwick is stoked about this, but perhaps not as much as the surrounding members for Narre Warren South, Narre Warren North, Pakenham, Cranbourne and Monbulk are. They have been such powerful advocates for this project. We have also started major construction on the Austin Hospital ED expansion, one of the biggest and busiest EDs in Victoria. We have really put the hard work in to deliver this deeply needed upgrade right between the Austin and the Mercy Hospital for Women, ensuring that both hospitals will remain open during construction. I know the member for Ivanhoe, you, Acting Speaker Lambert, and the member for Northcote are so excited for this ED to have the capacity to treat 30,000 more patients, not to mention a special dedicated paediatric zone for kids.

We are delivering for the west, as I said, the new Footscray Hospital. I know the member for Footscray is eager to talk on this as well, so I do not want to pre-empt what she is going to say, because she can talk so passionately about what exactly this means for her community. But for my community too in Williamstown this is an absolute game changer. The hospital has got unbelievable technology. In fact it puts us within the top 20 hospitals with this sort of technology in the world. Patients can be there in bed, and they can see their diagnostics right up on the screen in front of them. At the same time the partnership with Victoria Uni is going to be an absolute game changer for local students, who for the very first time can stay in their community, grow up in their community and go to school in their community. They can choose to have a career in allied health, they can choose to become a nurse and they can train right in Victoria University, which has partnered with Footscray Hospital. And they can stay in their own community. They do not have to travel to the east; they can stay in the west and they can stay with their families, and this is absolutely a game changer.

Let us not forget too – I see the member for Point Cook here – that we have also started building the Point Cook community hospital, which is going to be an absolutely wonderful facility. We do not have

the member for Werribee here, but he is pretty excited that we have got that expanded ED that is occurring in Werribee. This absolutely is our track record, unlike those on the other side, who closed hospitals. They sold them off. They sacked nurses. This is not what Labor governments do. Labor governments deliver the best healthcare outcomes for people right across Victoria. Indeed there is not a corner of Victoria where we are not delivering great healthcare outcomes for all Victorians. But I do know I have many excited members on the government side who wish to make a contribution about just what delivering great health care means for their community, so I will leave my contribution there.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (16:09): I rise to speak on the government's sledge motion, and I move:

That the following words be inserted to the end of the motion: 'while noting the impact of \$15 billion of corruption on services for Victorians'.

What we have seen is the worst instance of corruption our state has ever seen. And whilst we are having the depth of this corruption unfold, we are also seeing the biggest cover-up of that corruption. The depth of the corruption that we are seeing in Victoria is unprecedented, so much so that for the first time in this Parliament's history yesterday we saw the Parliament pass a motion in relation to that corruption, seeking the government to call a royal commission. That was not just a motion that was passed by one political party; that was a motion that was supported by every single member of this place, other than the government. Other than the Labor Party, every single member of this Parliament voted; the bedfellows of the government, the Greens, supported it. Every single member of this place supported it.

You could see the reaction to that motion. The Premier's press conference today was the reaction to that motion getting passed. It was a train wreck of a press conference today, attacking a journalist, which, by the way, was a worse attack than the attack yesterday. The attack yesterday was bad. You know what, on this terrible corruption, which I speak about in my amendment, and the cover-up that follows, it is not just the attacks on journalists that have occurred in press conferences. The Premier's press office is bullying members of the press by booting them off the press chat group. Publicly, in front of all the other journalists, they are kicking members of the gallery off that the government does not like. That is what this government is doing. The depth of corruption –

Danny Pearson interjected.

James NEWBURY: The government member says that person should be named publicly. There is the bullying behaviour writ large. The minister wants to name that member publicly.

Mathew Hilakari: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, it was hard to hear, but was the member for Brighton admitting that he bullied the member of Nepean out of this Parliament? Was that what he was doing? It was very hard to hear.

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

James NEWBURY: I understand why we just moved from a bill to this motion, and for context, in terms of what just happened, the government moved to this motion after 1 hour of procedural debate because they did not understand that they could not just do it. The government moved to this motion –

Katie Hall: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, standing order number 157, 'Motion to amend', section (2) says:

An amendment must be relevant to the question it is proposed to amend.

I would put that this is entirely irrelevant nonsense from the member for Brighton.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Nathan Lambert): We have commenced debate, and I have effectively ruled that this amendment is relevant, so the member for Brighton may continue.

James NEWBURY: How disappointing. The amendment is what we are going to be debating. What I would also say is, by the time we got to this motion, the minister had the chance to get up and do 30 minutes on this motion. So we have spent an hour fighting to get to this sledge motion, and guess how long the minister gave? Eight minutes. So the minister gave up over 20 minutes on a sledge opportunity, and has given me 30 – I have a full 30 minutes on my amended motion.

It is so astonishing how poor this government is at managing this chamber. In fact from failed move to failed move, it surprises me. For the minister to come in on a sledge motion after fighting for it to go for an hour and then speak for 8 minutes – I am going to be honest; I felt bad for the minister because I think the minister did not want to be put up to it. She knew that she had to speak on it because it was there. Last week we had a sledge motion moved and then the minister would not even speak to it. They sent out the member for Bentleigh, and that is like being hit with a wet lettuce. Instead they moved the minister out today, who spoke for 8 minutes on their own sledge motion. Well, I am going to speak for 30. I am going to speak for every single second of that sledge motion, and then I would be happy to support the government moving to extend my time. I ask them to extend my time, because I will happily and gladly accept it. Their speakers do not want to use their time, so give me my time.

I have moved an amendment to this motion because the most important and pressing issue facing this state is the \$15 billion of corruption exposed and the government's refusal to do anything about it, so much so that we have members of the government reportedly telling the executive to call a royal commission. Multiple news outlets are now getting phone calls from Labor MPs, which I will admit is not always normal, but it appears everybody has found the phone numbers for the journalists to call for a royal commission. Well, we absolutely agree with you, like every other member of Parliament last night agreed to the call for a royal commission. The coalition called for a royal commission because it is the only way to get to the bottom of the dirty deals, the \$15 billion of corruption and the criminal syndicate that is being run from Big Build sites. That is the allegation: a criminal syndicate is being run from Big Build sites. How could you not want to call a royal commission?

As the member for Laverton said herself, the community is raising it. The member for Laverton said it. I agree with the member. I am sure she got media training afterwards, but she admitted it for all to see. We all saw it headline on the news that her own community was raising corruption with her. Of course they were. The member did the right thing by saying corruption was being raised with her, because it is being raised by the community. The community is outraged.

The point that this government does not understand, and I have made this point repeatedly, is that Victorians work hard and pay part of their earnings in tax. Tax comes from the sweat of hardworking Victorians. They know that governments spend too much of their money, but in this instance they have been caught wasting \$15 billion. It is not buying a few too many paperclips or a couple too many HB pencils; it is \$15 billion going into the pockets of crooks. Can you believe it? Then the Premier had an opportunity to stand up and do something about it, and what happened – she attacked the people asking the questions. But to be fair to her, she followed her ministry, who had just done the same. The Minister for Police, who has the job of managing law enforcement in this state, attacked the integrity expert who blew the whistle on the quantum of corruption. How could you have a police minister who would attack an integrity expert who has blown the whistle? How could you be so morally bankrupt as a government that you would attack an integrity expert? You must be so morally bankrupt.

Mathew Hilakari: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, the member continues to reflect on the Chair, and I would ask him to desist.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Nathan Lambert): I ask the member for Brighton to direct his comments through the Chair.

James NEWBURY: How could the government be so morally bankrupt? I apologise to the member, who did not feel that I was adequately making clear that he is part of the government and part of the moral bankruptcy that would allow a police minister to attack an integrity expert for blowing

the whistle. What I can say is that every Victorian saw it. The government thinks it is clever, but every Victorian saw it. Like the member for Laverton said, they are watching, they are aware of it and they know what is happening, and this one will not be covered up.

Then we saw the Attorney-General of this state, the chief law officer, firstly reported as doing exactly the same in caucus, attacking the integrity expert as reckless, and then putting out a statement using exactly the same word. How can government members not see how shocking a state we are in when the police minister, the chief law officer and the Premier are attacking integrity experts who have blown the whistle on the quantum of corruption in this state? How could it possibly be? But this is where we are, and that is why you can see how it has gone so badly. The Premier effectively crashed the car in her press conference today. You can see the pressure. You can see that they are trying to break the glass and fix this problem, and they do not know how to do it. That is why former Premier Bracks is currently in the Premier's office. Former Premier Bracks has been brought in this afternoon –

Members interjecting.

James NEWBURY: It turns out the government members were not aware. That is why the Premier was not in the last division. The Premier was not in the last division because former Premier Bracks has been brought into the Premier's office to try and help the flailing Premier.

Members interjecting.

James NEWBURY: Well, the first piece of advice I would give is: do not bully journalists. Do not kick them off group chats. The Premier's office, the media team, was booting them off in front of all of the other journalists.

Members interjecting.

James NEWBURY: Again the minister says, 'Name them'. Can you believe that we have a minister who is saying to publicly name and attack a journalist who is being bullied by the Premier's media team? Are you serious? This is all just part of the problem. This is absolutely part of the problem.

Anthony Cianflone: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, we can see why the member for Brighton did not get the shadow treasury portfolio – absolutely demoted. I will bring him back on relevance here, Acting Speaker. This substantive motion is about the pipeline of hospitals and the \$11 billion in cuts. The member has gone nowhere near the substantive motion whatsoever, and I urge you to bring the failed Shadow Treasurer back to the substantive motion.

James Newbury interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Nathan Lambert): Member for Brighton, take your seat. I need to hear the point of order from the member for Pascoe Vale.

James Newbury interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Nathan Lambert): Member for Brighton, I have asked you to take your seat so I can hear the initial point of order from the member for Pascoe Vale. When he has finished, you can rise on the point of order. Has the member for Pascoe Vale made his point of order?

Anthony Cianflone: Would you like me to repeat the point of order?

The ACTING SPEAKER (Nathan Lambert): If you can, thank you, member for Pascoe Vale.

James Newbury interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Nathan Lambert): Member for Brighton, you spoke over the top of him.

Anthony Cianflone: The point of order went to relevance. The substantive motion, I put to you, Chair, is about the hospital pipeline of investment of this Labor government and the \$11 billion in cuts

and closures of hospitals that the Liberal government would do. He is not going anywhere near the substantive motion, because he is the failed Shadow Treasurer.

James NEWBURY: On the point of order, Acting Speaker, for those who have not been following the procedure of the house, I have moved an amendment and I am speaking on my amendment. I have moved an amendment, as everybody else in the chamber seems to know. Acting Speaker, it seems that the member is unaware that when you move an amendment it is moved in the chamber and you can get it from the Clerk's table.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Nathan Lambert): Member for Brighton, I have taken your comments on the point of order. I now need to rule on the point of order. I ask the member for Brighton to have a mind to the relevance of his own amendment, but I rule that there is no point of order.

James NEWBURY: Of course. At no point have I spoken about anything other than \$15 billion of corruption, which is my amendment. That is what I have spoken about. At no point have I done otherwise, Acting Speaker, so I thank you for your ruling, which confirms that is exactly what I have done.

This week we have seen the biggest betrayal, perhaps, of Victorian taxpayer money that we have ever seen. It is not only the exposure of the worst corruption scandal and not only the exposure of the worst instance of cover-up by a government; what we have witnessed over the last week is shameful. I am sure every Victorian feels ashamed by how their money has been funnelled into the pockets of criminals. When you see a level of corruption of that nature, you would expect any good government to immediately call for an investigation into where that money has gone, that \$15 billion that I speak about in my amendment. But we have seen the government refuse to look into where that \$15 billion of money has gone, and part of the debate over uncovering where that \$15 billion of corrupted money has gone to has been a conversation about providing the chief anti-corruption agency with the powers they need to uncover where that money has gone. That is entirely relevant to the \$15 billion, because you need to understand when it comes to that level of corruption where the money has gone.

Not only has the government refused to back a royal commission into where that \$15 billion has gone and catch the crooks that need to be caught, but the government has refused to provide the anti-corruption agency with the powers they need to look into third-party activity and investigate where that money has gone. We have seen the government refuse to provide IBAC with follow-the-money powers they have been calling for, and I suspect that the Parliament later this day will be dealing with amendments to do with follow-the-money powers for IBAC. The coalition, of course, has committed to providing IBAC with follow-the-money powers, but I feel very, very certain that the government will not support it. In fact the government have said publicly they will not support it. They will not support providing an anti-corruption agency with the powers they have called for to chase down money that has been corrupted. It makes you ask yourself, as this amendment is directly about \$15 billion of corrupted money: why wouldn't a government want to understand where the money has gone, chase it down, claw it back and make sure Victorians have access to that money? Why would you not want to claw it back?

At the end of the day it is their money. It is Victorians' money. It is not Mick Gatto's money – well, actually, part of it is right now. Part of it is in his pocket. Mick Gatto, who said yesterday the Premier was a good person – can you imagine getting a character reference from Mick Gatto positively? I tell you what, when I saw that, I thought, 'Mick Gatto has just said the Premier is a good person.' If Mick Gatto says anything other than 'I hate the member for Brighton's guts', I am failing in my job. I am absolutely failing in my job, because to have a person like that providing you a character reference tells you everything about what you are doing, or not doing, as a government. Mick Gatto has spent two days –

The ACTING SPEAKER (Nathan Lambert): The member for Tarneit, on a point of order?

Dylan Wight: Acting Speaker, I do not have a particular point of order. I just thought we could all use a rest.

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

James NEWBURY: Acting Speaker, I am sure you will appreciate that vexatious points of order should be called out by the Chair.

This is a very, very important amendment, and that is why I felt it was so important to move it and speak for the entire allocated time. Again I note that the government spent 1 hour of procedural time, and they certainly did not have to. We spent an hour of this chamber's time debating procedurally whether we would move to a sledge motion. We, of course, did not support the government spending time on a sledge motion. When we did move to this original motion, the substantive motion that the Minister for Roads and Road Safety moved, I thought to myself as the first responder that I would be waiting half an hour, because of course if we have spent an hour of time to get to here, you would think the first speaker would want to actually put the case. You would think a mover, the person who wrote a motion, would want to put the case. Do you know how long they spoke, member for Berwick? Have a guess.

Brad Battin: I wasn't here – 5 minutes.

James NEWBURY: No – 8 minutes. I was concerned.

Anthony Cianflone: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, standing order 110, 'Irrelevant material or tedious repetition', states:

The Chair may warn a member speaking in the House for continued irrelevance or tedious repetition.

I put to you that he has been repeating himself the same way for, what, 23 minutes straight now about the same topic, the same theme. He is not talking to the substantive motion.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Nathan Lambert): I remind the member for Brighton he is now speaking on the motion and his amendment, not any previous procedural motion. There is no point of order.

James NEWBURY: Of course we all would understand that providing context on the substantive motion is entirely relevant to the substantive motion too – of course it is. And I was providing context to that substantive motion, because we do not just speak on the amendment, we also have the right to speak on the substantive motion, which I was doing. It is entirely within my remit to respond to the mover of the motion and what they have drafted, which is exactly what I was just doing. I can understand why the government would not want me to, but I think we should all be reminded that it is important when we take points of order to try and have some level of intellect to them, though I am not sure that is always the case.

There was a substantive motion moved. I will repeat again because the house interrupted me. I want to make the point again, and I am entitled to make the point again. The mover of this motion spoke for 8 minutes after we spent 1 hour getting there. And of course I will respond for my entire time. We will have spent, I would say, nearly 1 hour and 40 minutes of this chamber's time, which I would argue was mostly wasted, other than the contributions that related to the need for a royal commission and the \$15 billion of corruption. That, to me, was an essential part of the debate in this chamber this week, and it is actually the only time this week that this Parliament has spoken about the need for a royal commission in substance in government business time. Can you believe we are seeing the worst instance of corruption our state has ever seen, and in the parliamentary week the government has afforded no time in government business to consider it? Every Victorian I think is now saying, '\$15 billion of our money going to crooks' – at a cost of \$5000 to every household.

The member for Laverton said – this was not just us saying it – that it was being raised with her. It was absolutely being raised with her, and I believe her, because it is being raised with every member of

Parliament, which is why every member of Parliament, other than the Labor Party, last night called on the government through a motion in the Legislative Council to call a royal commission. The fact that we are not seeing this government considering a royal commission, frankly, should scare every Victorian. I can understand why members of Parliament from the government benches then are reported to have been talking to the media about the need to call a royal commission. Government ministers and government backbenchers are saying to the media, 'Call a royal commission.' I can understand that; I agree with them. We agree with them.

There is a big difference of course between a government member secretly calling a journalist and then voting against it in the chamber when they were called to vote on it in the Council last night, and any member who voted against the royal commission motion –

Anthony Cianflone: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, the failed Shadow Treasurer probably deserves a breather, but on standing order 110 again – irrelevant material, tedious repetition – I draw to you that he is repeating himself time and time again with the same talking points. It is totally repetitious. I ask you to sit him down, please.

Peter Walsh: I move:

That the member no longer be heard.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Nathan Lambert): Member for Murray Plains, you cannot move that at this point. I need to rule on the member for Pascoe Vale's point of order. There is no point of order.

James NEWBURY: I can understand why the member for Murray Plains was feeling so terribly aggrieved, because in this place, as a member as learned as he would know, it is actually quite painful when people who do not know what they are doing try to do something. It is actually quite painful. You are actually measured by what you contribute in this chamber. The Premier and I have spoken about that very thing, and it is one thing that I agree on. The chamber respects people naturally for what they are able to contribute to this chamber, and I would respectfully remind new members of that.

This amendment is so very critical. It is the first time to reinforce, because we are getting to the end of my short contribution, and the first time this chamber in government business has had the capacity to talk about the issue that is not just on the minds of every Victorian but on the minds I think of most Australians. I said recently this is certainly the worst instance of corruption this state has ever seen. This may well be the worst instance of corruption that Australia has ever seen. So it is no wonder that Australians more broadly would be looking on and saying frankly, 'What the hell is going on in Victoria?' I think most of us feel like that: what the hell is going on in Victoria? Because we are seeing allegations of \$15 billion of corruption that is going into the pockets of crooks and a government that is saying, 'I don't want to do anything about it. Let's tough it out. Let's try and paint any call for a royal commission as some kind of weird attack on workers.' What an indefensible argument, and that is why, by the end of the week, you have seen the Premier yesterday, but worse today, fall over effectively in a press conference. The footage today of attacking a journalist I think says, when it comes to what has occurred, what is being uncovered, that the Premier knows she has made the wrong call.

I would say to the Premier: the Prime Minister was able to admit that he got it wrong and called a royal commission after saying that he would not. He stood up, and I will give him credit. He was wrong, and then he admitted he was wrong and he called the royal commission. So I would say to the Premier: stand up. Admit you have got it wrong. We need to clean up Victoria, because if you do not, we will say to Victorians that if they vote for us, we will clean up Victoria, and Jess Wilson and our coalition team are going to do just that. We are going to fix Victoria.

Katie HALL (Footscray) (16:39): Every time the member for Brighton opens his mouth, there are a group of motivated teals out there in Brighton who are thinking about how they can organise against him, because he is disgraceful. The way he speaks to women in this place is appalling. The way he speaks to me is appalling.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Acting Speaker: standing order 118.

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

James Newbury: Acting Speaker –

The ACTING SPEAKER (Nathan Lambert): I have ruled on the point of order, member for Brighton.

James Newbury: And I am taking another point of order.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Nathan Lambert): The member for Brighton on another point of order under a different standing order.

James Newbury: Acting Speaker, the member just named me and attacked me. I take personal offence – standing order 120 – and I ask you to ask the member to withdraw.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Nathan Lambert): I ask the member to withdraw.

Katie HALL: I withdraw, and I reiterate that in Brighton every time the member for Brighton opens his mouth there are a group of teals who are getting more and more motivated every day –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, under standing order 120 it is a requirement of this house that when a member is asked to withdraw they do so unconditionally, not repeat exactly the same thing they just said, and that is what the member just did. Further, on relevance, clearly this is not relevant to the motion.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Nathan Lambert): I will rule on your first point of order: there is no point of order. I will rule on your second point of order: I do ask the member to return to the motion and amendment before the house.

Katie HALL: I am absolutely delighted to be speaking to the motion, because this week we opened the \$1.5 billion new Footscray Hospital, and it is something that the Liberal Party never would have built, because they could not find Footscray on a map. I remember actually asking the long-suffering Liberal candidate for Footscray at the last election whether he would commit to supporting the new Footscray Hospital, and he could not answer me. The last time the Liberal Party built a hospital was when Henry Bolte was running the show. That was the last time. We are building new hospitals across Victoria, and I am so enormously proud of the new health service we have built in Footscray.

Peter Walsh: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I know there is an assumption in this house that all contributions are factual, but I draw the member for Footscray's attention to the fact that the Bendigo Hospital was built by a coalition government, the Swan Hill upgrade was built by a coalition government –

The ACTING SPEAKER (Nathan Lambert): A point of order is not an opportunity to make a statement to the house.

Katie HALL: I was, in my first term, absolutely amazed to learn that the Liberal Party had privatised the Mildura public hospital and that we had to bring it back into public hands, but that is how they roll. I will get back to the new Footscray Hospital. The new Footscray Hospital was built on time and on budget. It was shaped by my community, and it will continue to be the people's hospital for Footscray and Melbourne's western suburbs. The people of the west are so excited. It will treat an extra 20,000 patients per year in world-class facilities with 16 brand new operating theatres and a magnificent intensive care unit, the kind of facilities that are the best in the world and everything that the people of my community and the western suburbs deserve.

What is absolutely appalling is that those opposite cannot bring themselves to speak about public health care in this place, because they do not support it. They do not support our nurses, they do not support our doctors and they do not support public health care. One of the things that has been so

extraordinary about this week is seeing that after two consecutive Labor governments we have got this job done. I remember when I received a phone call from the then Minister for Health Jill Hennessy, a magnificent person who cared so deeply about health care in Melbourne's west. She rang me when I was the candidate for Footscray and said, 'I've got some good news. We're going to build the hospital this community needs.' And now eight years later, after working through a pandemic, when the people designing and planning the buildings had to do it online, we have this magnificent facility which is an absolute game changer for our community. From the 55,000 plants and trees that have been planted at the hospital, from the cardboard hospitals that the children of the primary schools in Footscray were building in anticipation of this incredible feat of engineering coming to life and from the work that the Western Health staff put in over years to plan, what happened on Wednesday was the biggest thing in health care in our state. They transferred 180 patients from the old Footscray Hospital to the new, and they did it with the utmost patient care. It was a magnificent thing to witness.

The first patient who was moved into the ward was an elderly man named James. James said when he went into the ward, 'I'm never going to want to leave. This is beautiful.' And it is beautiful to see the views, to see the light and airy spaces that have been designed into this best practice facility, purpose built and designed for my community and those in the western suburbs. I know that the member for Laverton in here is absolutely excited for her electorate as well, as her constituents will of course use the new Footscray Hospital as their local hospital. But it is so much more than a hospital. The community group I chaired to help shape this hospital talked about their aspirations for it to be so much more than a healthcare facility, so we have childcare, we have a gymnasium and we have a magnificent new public park that sits in the centre of the new Footscray Hospital.

I hate to think what would have happened if the Liberal Party had been elected in 2022. I reckon they would have stopped it. They would have left a hole in the ground. It would have been like an episode of *Parks and Recreation*. They would have just walked away from it, because they have no commitment to the western suburbs and they have no commitment to public health care. The community hospital that we are building in Point Cook; the upgrade at Werribee; the Joan Kirner hospital, where there are 6000 babies being born every year; the brand new Melton hospital, which is coming out of the ground – with that policy-free zone over there, their lack of imagination and their lack of interest in people in the western suburbs, none of this would have happened under their watch, because they simply do not care. But public health in Footscray has now gone to the next level.

We also have public pathology in that beautiful new facility. We are bringing back public pathology, which the Napthine government – I mean, they did nothing, but one of the things they did manage to do was scrap public pathology. We are bringing it back. Our commitment to universal public health care – world-class health care – is now on show in my electorate in Footscray, and I could not be prouder of it. For the member for Brighton to diminish the impact that this has had on the western suburbs by failing to mention the new Footscray Hospital once says everything, because this is the biggest health infrastructure project in the state's history and it happened this week. But have they mentioned Footscray Hospital once? No, they have not, and that says everything. Their mates in the Greens political party often say that –

Members interjecting.

Katie HALL: They preference them, of course. They got the member for Richmond elected with their preferences. Their mates in One Nation are another troubling thing. But the Greens political party like to say, 'Oh, we had aspirations for a Footscray hospital.' Well, they never would have delivered it either, because they could not. The only political party in this state that could deliver the new Footscray Hospital – and it has been delivered on time, on budget – is the Allan Labor government. From day one our aspiration has been to deliver world-class health care for the people of the western suburbs, the people we proudly represent. And I am proud of the workers. I am proud of the people who built that facility. I am proud of the workers who are in there now providing world-class care to my community. I am proud of the community members who helped shape it, and I am enormously proud to be a member of the Allan Labor government, who funded it and built it and got it done.

Brad BATTIN (Berwick) (16:49): I rise to speak on the motion. I will probably focus more on the amendment put forward by the member for Brighton while noting the impact of the \$15 billion of corruption on services for Victorians. And how does it impact those services? Well, tomorrow I am going to be going into Berwick – back to my electorate – and I am going to go and visit Johnny. If you do not know the name Johnny, then you were not watching the news in the last day or two. Johnny owns a jewellers in Berwick. He has come over here from Syria and he is a refugee. He thought he was going to come to a nice, safe place and use his skills as a jeweller and open his business with his daughter and develop it and grow that business. What a wonderful place to do it. I am very proud of Berwick.

But yesterday we saw the worst of what happens when you waste \$15 billion on corruption and you end up with over 2000 vacancies on Victorian police rosters. Youth think they can get away with anything. They went into that jewellery store with machetes and other weapons, smashed it up, hit Johnny in the head and stole whatever they wanted. Do you want to know why? Because they knew they could get away with it under an Allan Labor government. They knew that they were not going to have the police turn up quickly, because the resources are not there. As of today there are over 1500 vacancies directly on rosters, as we speak right now – over 1500. This government promised 1720 police would be available on the beat under their watch. In the last six years it has continued to drop. More than 800 are on leave, whether it is long service leave or mental health leave. That is because of the pressure the Victoria Police are under at the moment with the lack of resources, because this government continues to cut the funds and make less police available to respond to crimes here in our state.

We saw the report just this week. If you want to see where \$15 billion could go, here is a simple answer: the mental health crisis we have here in our state. Over 40,000 shifts of Victoria Police officers are sitting in Victorian hospitals waiting to hand over patients who are there for mental health issues. I have to put it to you: how is it helping a person who has a mental health breakdown to be put in the back of a divisional van and taken to hospital to sit with police for 8 hours? How is it helping the community having a van off the street for an 8-hour shift to sit there and wait for that handover? We all remember when it was the Premier at the time Daniel Andrews, backed by his entire cabinet, who went out and said, 'We're going to fix this crisis. We're going to change the whole system so Victoria Police can drop them off and go, like they do in other states in Australia.' But we have not seen that, because the government has not funded not just Victoria Police – we are seeing the crisis in the health system, the one that the member for Footscray just got up and spoke about, where we now have more than 60,000 people waiting for essential surgeries here in this state – over 60,000. I know that the government will say the lovely words 'It's 60,000 for elective surgeries.' Explain that to someone who is waiting for a back operation at the moment who cannot work, who cannot go out with their friends, who is suffering social isolation and who is probably going into depression because they cannot get elective surgery under this government.

But what the government can do is they can spend \$15 billion that goes directly into the hands and pockets of criminals here in this state, and they take no responsibility for it. This Premier could at any time, without any interest at all, call a royal commission – sign a piece of paper and call a royal commission. The member for Brighton said it. I am not a fan of Anthony Albanese as Prime Minister, I am not a fan of a lot of the things he does, but at least he had the courage to admit he was wrong. He came out and actually put that royal commission in place. Do you want to know why he did that? He did it because of political pressure but, in the end, because it was the right thing to do. We say the same to the Premier here in this state: we all know – everyone is hearing it – the royal commission's time is now. We need to get this in place as soon as possible. We need to get the rot out of the building industry, because the problem is the more you let it go, the more you let this corruption happen, the more it festers and the more it costs, the more it impacts services.

But one thing worse is it starts to influence the opinions of people who work on these Big Build sites. The reality is that – we know on this side – it is a small cohort of absolute scumbags who think that

they can run this system, steal the money from Victorian taxpayers and use thuggish behaviour to control other workers, but most tradies across this state are genuinely hardworking, good people, which this government is ignoring. I will assure you, Acting Speaker, you have had some of the emails the same as I have, in fact that everyone in the house here would have, from the good, honest tradies who say, 'Enough's enough. We need to have an investigation into what's happening. Why do I have to feel unsafe going to work?' Well, you have to feel unsafe because the party for workers has failed you yet again. And it is not just them. This government has failed workers across the whole state. Ask the retail workers. Ask how many retail workers feel safe going to work at the moment, because the amount of crime happening in retail theft and assaults is not just the highest, it is that high that every other state has gone backwards in its figures yet the average across the country has gone up because of Victoria. Bunnings, IKEA, Coles, Woolworths, Aldi – all of them are speaking up and saying their staff are unsafe because of this government, because this government will not put in.

Members interjecting.

Brad BATTIN: You should check what it is before you ask about it. The government should put in and make sure that there are the police resources there to protect those people in those workplaces, but they are not there. And why aren't they there? Because the government is broke. They have literally spent every last dollar, but they are putting those dollars –

Danny Pearson interjected.

Brad BATTIN: We have read the budget papers, but I will actually say to the minister at the table that I went through those budget papers. Do you know what I could not find? I could not find where you were hiding the corruption money. You have managed to hide that really well. It is up to this government –

Dylan Wight: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I would just ask the member on his feet to direct his comments through the Chair, not to the minister at the table.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Nathan Lambert): I uphold the point of order. The member to address his comments through the Chair.

Brad BATTIN: I am still having trouble finding the line item for corruption for \$15 billion. Maybe if that was in there we could start to work out exactly what is happening here in this state. But when I go and speak to frontline workers in almost every emergency service here in our state they all say the same thing: 'This government continues to cut our funding. We can't get the resources we need to ensure we can protect Victorians.' During the fires recently we saw trucks that were over 30 years old out on the firegrounds. We had stories of trucks that were breaking down and brake systems not working. We had firefighters that were put in unsafe positions because this government has lost the plot and spent money on corruption rather than fixing the issues we have here in our state. We have seen it over and over again. And it is not new, because with these fire trucks, I have been to stations where firefighters have to turn the engines on and sit there for 4 to 6 minutes to get enough air into the brakes before they can leave the station. Worse than that, they then get told they are not responding on time. They ring up the mechanics, who come out and fix it, and it fixes it for a week or so and it is back to square one. That is not a truck in Melbourne, that is a truck in the Dandenong Ranges, where one day we will want that truck to respond in 30 seconds, not in 6 minutes, because that can be the difference that leads to a fire spreading to such a state that we end up seeing fires like Ash Wednesday or Black Saturday or the fires we have had recently.

Corruption in this state is out of control, and that has an impact on our services. No person on the government side could realistically defend the fact that \$15 billion was better off in the pockets of someone like Mick Gatto than putting it into the resources that we need so that Mike Bush, who has come across here from New Zealand, can actually have the resources to put not just the response out there but the crime prevention and we can finally start to turn the corner on the crime crisis here in this

state, rather than us having to stand up in here and call on the government over and over again to cut the corruption here in Victoria.

Paul EDBROOKE (Frankston) (16:59): Usually I would say those opposite have got the economic credentials of a toaster, but the member opposite has just said that he cannot find what he is looking for. They have been talking about this figure for so long, but he cannot find it. That is remarkable. I would just remind those opposite that I was a firefighter. I was a firefighter during a Liberal tenure of government, and we used an icy pole stick in that truck to keep it working. We actually had VicRoads come out and say that it was not roadworthy. So to hear this absolutely fundamentally flawed argument from their side when we are on a health motion is very confusing for everybody, I think. But it has been entertaining, and I think that if they read the budget papers –

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

Bills

Children, Youth and Families Amendment (Supporting Stable and Strong Families) Bill 2025

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Ben Carroll:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

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

Entities Legislation Amendment (Consolidation and Other Matters) Bill 2025

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Danny Pearson:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The SPEAKER: The question is:

That this bill be now read a second time and a third time.

Assembly divided on question:

Ayes (75): Juliana Addison, Jacinta Allan, Brad Battin, Jade Benham, Roma Britnell, Colin Brooks, Josh Bull, Tim Bull, Martin Cameron, Anthony Carbines, Anthony Cianflone, Annabelle Cleeland, Sarah Connolly, Chris Couzens, Chris Crewther, Jordan Crugnale, Lily D'Ambrosio, Daniela De Martino, Steve Dimopoulos, Paul Edbrooke, Wayne Farnham, Eden Foster, Matt Fregon, Ella George, Matthew Guy, Bronwyn Halfpenny, Katie Hall, Paul Hamer, Martha Haylett, Mathew Hilakari, David Hodgett, Melissa Horne, Natalie Hutchins, Lauren Kathage, Emma Kealy, Sonya Kilkenny, Nathan Lambert, John Lister, Gary Maas, Alison Marchant, Tim McCurdy, Steve McGhie, Cindy McLeish, Paul Mercurio, John Mullahy, James Newbury, Danny O'Brien, Michael O'Brien, Kim O'Keeffe, Danny Pearson, John Pesutto, Pauline Richards, Tim Richardson, Richard Riordan, Brad Rowswell, Michaela Settle, David Southwick, Ros Spence, Nick Staikos, Natalie Suleyman, Meng Heang Tak, Nina Taylor, Kat Theophanous, Mary-Anne Thomas, Bridget Vallence, Emma Vulin, Peter Walsh,

Iwan Walters, Vicki Ward, Nicole Werner, Rachel Westaway, Dylan Wight, Gabrielle Williams, Belinda Wilson, Jess Wilson

Noes (4): Gabrielle de Vietri, Will Fowles, Tim Read, Ellen Sandell

Question agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

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

Energy and Other Legislation Amendment (Resilience Reforms and Other Matters) Bill 2026

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Lily D'Ambrosio:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

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

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

Adjournment

The SPEAKER: The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

Clyde rail line

Brad BATTIN (Berwick) (17:07): (1539) My adjournment is to the Minister for Public and Active Transport and Minister for Transport Infrastructure, and I request the minister's action to fund the Clyde rail line, which has been promised by Labor since 1999. In 1999 they came out with their promise to fund the new rail down to Clyde. They came out with the new funding to come through for 2002. They came out in 2006, they promised it in 2010 and they promised it in 2014. What we do know is the railway line still has not been completed at all, but during that time there has been growth through that area, with thousands of families moving into Cranbourne North, Clyde and Clyde North. Not only do they not have a railway line, the road infrastructure is that bad in that area that it can take 25 to 35 minutes just to get to the freeway to start the trip into the city. Parents have been complaining about driving around to go to the local schools. They have got to drive along Thompsons Road, Clyde Road and Cranbourne Road. The roads down there are nearly all blocked, and it is taking them up to an hour in a return trip to get their kids to school. It is frustrating for parents who then have to go into the city and work, and they do not have the opportunity to catch a train from out in Clyde. So I ask the minister: can we please act on this as soon as possible and ensure that funding is available asap?

Geelong Specialist Family Violence Court

Alison MARCHANT (Bellarine) (17:09): (1540) My adjournment matter is for the Attorney-General. Last month in Geelong we opened the Geelong Specialist Family Violence Court. It was a significant milestone for our region, ensuring that people across the Bellarine and the wider Geelong and Barwon South West region have support and specialist services in the justice system that are closer to home for them as well. As a government we have invested more than \$77 million to establish these purpose-built facilities, which we got to tour with the Attorney-General, with a beautiful space that has safe waiting areas, separate entry points and exit points to minimise contact between victim-survivors and perpetrators, remote witness facilities, private interview rooms and child-friendly spaces.

The delivery of this specialist court, along with others across Victoria, is from a key recommendation of the Royal Commission into Family Violence, and we continue to do the work around this space and lead the nation in strengthening both prevention and the response to family violence. We have invested more than \$4 billion in reforms and implemented all the 227 recommendations from the royal commission. The action that I seek from the Attorney-General is for her to provide an update on how the Geelong Specialist Family Violence Court is benefiting the people of Bellarine in my community, and particularly keeping people safe and supported, ensuring victim-survivors and their children are protected every step of the way through the justice process.

Rail freight services

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (17:10): (1541) My adjournment matter this evening is for the Minister for Transport Infrastructure, and the action I seek is for her to maintain the Sunshine regional link crossovers during the development of Sunshine station. I have had every council in my electorate write to me about this issue, and I am hoping that some common sense will prevail here. The latest letter that I received was from Cr Andrew McLean, who is the mayor of Yarriambiack Shire Council, and I want to read this letter to you because I think it is very succinct and very clear. Cr McLean says:

We are extremely concerned about the future of rail freight in Victoria.

As part of the redevelopment at Sunshine Station, it is proposed that the regional link crossovers are to be removed.

If these crossovers were to be removed, the primary access to the Port of Melbourne would be via the congested Geelong / Werribee Line.

The Geelong Line is a mix of standard, dual and broad gauge lines and is part of the Australian Rail Track Corporation corridor. Passenger Rail services have priority over freight services in Victoria.

Funnelling additional freight through the Geelong corridor will add to congestion on a rapidly growing passenger line.

Rail Freight Operators would be required to travel an additional 47 kilometres, increasing train cycles times, fuel and crewing costs.

In addition to that, rail freight from Mildura and coming down the Mildura line is already redirected because the Murray Basin rail project has not been completed. With the standardisation of the Maryborough freight corridor, once they get to Maryborough – no, they do not even get to Maryborough; they have to go via Ararat, which is like driving to Melbourne via Shepparton. It makes absolutely no sense. Adding an additional 49 kilometres to that trip will congest it and make it completely unviable for rail freight from Mildura. It is already inefficient, which is why we are having bigger trucks every single year – because we are being more productive every single year, with improved farming practices producing greater yields. If we do remove the Sunshine regional crossovers, that will just add more trucks to the road, and we know that this state government cannot maintain the roads anyway with the way they are. I am sure the member for Lowan will be well aware of an affectionate term called the ‘Wimmera wave’, which I know the Sunraysia Highway has and the Hattah-Robinvale Road has. They all have that wave because of the very, very heavy trucks. Why on

earth would we push more freight onto the roads rather than try to not only maintain the rail freight that is there but actually improve it?

Preston electorate housing

Nathan LAMBERT (Preston) (17:13): (1542) My adjournment is for the Minister for Housing and Building in the other place, and the action I seek is for the minister to review public housing sites in Preston and Reservoir, particularly those where there are multiple dwellings, and look into how we are managing those properties that are ageing or reaching their end of life. What actions are being taken, both short term and long term, to ensure that homes can be tenanted as much as possible? Where homes are vacant, sometimes for very understandable reasons, what monitoring and support services are being implemented to address some high-risk behaviour that can take place in those untenanted buildings in order to protect both at-risk individuals and those living in neighbouring homes and the neighbouring community?

I ask that because, in the first instance, Preston and Reservoir do have a large amount of public housing, and some of it is 60 or 70 years old. Some of those buildings are now reaching their end of life – not all of them, but some are – partly sometimes because they have designs that are now outdated for modern use and sometimes because they are damaged, just as can happen with private properties. We as a government are building fantastic, good-quality new social housing and upgrading some of that public housing through our \$6.3 billion Big Build. I have remarked before in this place that one of the great things about that work is that the new housing is indistinguishable from private housing. It is often very high quality. I have to be very clear in this place: we are definitely building more of it, and there is certainly more social housing in Preston and Reservoir than when I was elected and indeed when the government as a whole was elected. But we do, as I said, have that challenge that we have older buildings. Some of those older buildings do need to be rebuilt or refurbished in a way that requires people to move out of them for an extended period of time, and when you do that there can be this real challenge, particularly with the larger buildings with lots of tenants in them. Tenancies are not renewed when someone finishes them up. Often those apartments or dwellings are boarded up, and over time you get a smaller and smaller cohort living in those buildings, who are just surrounded more and more by these boarded-up properties.

As we have seen at Eric, McComas and McColl streets and at some parts of the housing between Strathmerton, Boldrewood and Dunolly, we have this situation where a very small number of tenants are left. There are a lot of boarded-up dwellings around them, and we are seeing some very high risk behaviours within those untenanted buildings. I spoke yesterday about some child protection matters that can arise. Also, some drug-related matters can arise. We can have fires, which fortunately our professional firefighters attend to – they do a great job. But all those things are cause for concern both for the at-risk individuals themselves but also for a number of public housing residents who live in those particular areas and have spoken to me about them. So on behalf of those public housing residents I put this proposition to the minister and hope she can take some action to ensure that they can go to their homes and live there safely and securely.

Melbourne High School

Rachel WESTAWAY (Pahran) (17:16): (1543) My adjournment this evening is to the Minister for Education, and the action that I am seeking is for the minister to provide the house with a full report on the maintenance backlog at Melbourne High School and to commit to a long-term master plan for its facilities ahead of the school centenary in 2027. Yesterday I had the honour of attending the sod-turning ceremony that officially launched those centenary celebrations. The castle on the hill turns 100 years old in 2027, and it was a wonderful event. Students, staff, old boys and the MHS Foundation came together with genuine pride and affection for this institution, and I congratulate everyone that made it possible.

However, yesterday's celebration also exposed a serious problem: the buildings are falling down, the classrooms are stuck in the past and the government has absolutely no plan to fix it. Melbourne High

is one of only a handful of selective entry government schools in Victoria, and around 1600 students sit the entrance exam for Melbourne High School each year for just 338 places in year 9. It selects primarily on merit, with a small principal's discretionary category. Brains, not money, get you in the door of this school, and that is the point – a profound principle for those of us on this side of the house. And its record is extraordinary. From those halls have come Nobel laureates in Sir John Eccles, a foreign minister in Gareth Evans, a moral philosopher known around the world in Peter Singer, cricket immortals Keith Miller and Bill Woodfull, Olympians, Brownlow medallists and the male members of the Seekers. Melbourne High is not just a school, it is a factory for Australian leadership, generation after generation, which makes what is happening to its buildings all the more shameful.

The iconic main entrance, installed when the building opened in 1927, is falling apart and in need of urgent restoration, and the swimming pool needs repair and is currently unable to be used. Classrooms in the heritage-listed Twenties Building have not been meaningfully updated in decades. Students and teachers are working in conditions that do not reflect the standard of the school that has been set. Here is the heart of the problem: it is listed on the Victorian Heritage Register, and that listing is right and proper, but it means maintenance is harder, more complex and more expensive, and the government's funding formula simply makes no allowance for that. It is a 100-year-old heritage-listed landmark, and it is being starved of the resources that it needs.

The school community have had to fill the gap themselves. The MHS Foundation runs giving days. Alumni donate. Parents are asked for about \$3000 a year, in part to maintain buildings and government grounds that should be funded by the government. A Nobel Prize-winning school is passing the hat around to fix its front door, and that is simply not acceptable. With the centenary two years away, the moment to act is now. A full maintenance report is required, a credible master plan and a commitment to funding what heritage status demands. Melbourne High has given the state 100 years of extraordinary education. It deserves more.

Linden New Art

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (17:19): (1544) My adjournment is for the Minister for Creative Industries. The action I seek is for the minister to visit Linden New Art in St Kilda to celebrate its 40th anniversary and to recognise its significant contribution to Albert Park's creative and cultural life. Founded in 1986 and located in the historic Linden House, Linden New Art has been a cornerstone of contemporary visual arts in my electorate for four decades. It has provided generations of emerging and midcareer artists with vital exhibition opportunities and meaningful engagement with audiences, as well as spotlighting and celebrating the works of local First Nations artists. Linden New Art plays an essential role in the cultural vibrancy of the local community while also contributing to Victoria's broader reputation as Australia's creative state, with our government providing support through the creative enterprises program. Linden offers free public exhibitions, public programs, artist talks and education initiatives that make contemporary art accessible to all Victorians. As the gallery marks an important milestone this year, a ministerial visit would not only honour Linden's legacy but also reaffirm the Victorian government's commitment to supporting independent and community-based arts organisations that nurture talent and enrich our creative industries. I therefore ask the minister to visit Linden New Art in St Kilda during its 40th anniversary year and join my community in celebrating this remarkable achievement.

Construction industry

Will FOWLES (Ringwood) (17:20): (1545) My adjournment this evening is directed to the Premier, and the action I seek is for the government to establish a royal commission into allegations of systemic corruption on CFMEU-controlled worksites associated with Victoria's Big Build. The recently released Watson report details very serious allegations of criminal infiltration, coercion and misconduct within the Victorian construction sector. That much is undisputed; the allegations are there. It outlines claims of outlaw motorcycle gangs exerting influence on major projects, enterprise bargaining processes being manipulated and labour hire arrangements being used to extract unlawful

payments. It further documents allegations of ghost shifts, the sale of positions on worksites and intimidation of contractors.

I do not know whether those allegations are true or not. We are not investigators in this place. But the only way to determine the truth of them, given the scale and the breadth and the seriousness of these allegations and given that the people making the allegations are credible actors, is to call a royal commission. These matters go directly to the heart of government administration. More than a hundred billion dollars of course was committed to the Big Build, and Victorians are entitled to confidence that this investment has not been distorted by criminality, extortion or systemic misconduct. Plenty of us have heard the rumours, and plenty of us have read the papers. There have been lots and lots of allegations made. I do not say that they are true, I merely say that they ought to be properly and credibly investigated by a body that has coercive evidentiary powers.

The Premier stated that aspects of the report are untested. That is true. We should test them. The seriousness and scale of the allegations demand that independent examination, and coercive powers are the minimum needed to get to the bottom of them. Only a royal commission can compel witnesses, examine financial flows and determine the extent to which public projects have been compromised. This is not about relitigating industrial relations policy. It is not about wages. It is not about cutting entitlements. It is about restoring integrity and public trust in the administration of Victoria's largest infrastructure program – a program that is frankly too big and beyond the means of the government and serves only as a shrine to the former Premier's ego. I call on the Premier to establish a royal commission into these allegations so that the Victorian public can have full transparency and confidence in the management of their taxpayer-funded projects.

Hastings electorate ministerial visit

Paul MERCURIO (Hastings) (17:23): (1546) My adjournment matter tonight is for the Minister for Industry and Advanced Manufacturing, and the action I seek is for the minister to come down to my electorate to visit with several businesses that are doing amazing work both within the local community and throughout the world. I appreciate that the minister has come down to my electorate on several occasions under his portfolio of creative industries, visiting the fabulous McClelland Sculpture Park and Gallery, and I have no doubt we will pop in there for a coffee and a quick view of whatever the current exhibition is. However, as he is the Minister for Industry and Advanced Manufacturing, I would like to focus this visit on three businesses in my community that are doing amazing work, the first being BlueScope in Hastings. BlueScope began operating in Hastings over 50 years ago and is one of the biggest employers of local people in Hastings. They make and ship product out of the Hastings factory to various countries around the world. They are always looking at and meeting the changing dynamics of conducting their business and their footprint in respect to climate change.

Additionally, I really look forward to taking the minister to visit Yaringa boat ramp and Hart Marine. Founded by Mal Hart, who is really quite a character, Hart Marine is an Australian boat builder with a history spanning over 40 years, evolving from a family-run yard building high-performance racing yachts into a global leader specialising in high-performance, self-righting pilot boats that are in huge demand around the world.

Lastly, I look forward to the minister meeting with Chris Procter to talk through his very exciting project based in Somerville, the Mornington Peninsula Technology, Industry and Business Park. When built, it will be a clean campus-style community asset, providing up to 1100 jobs and attracting high-tech businesses into the local area, which will of course benefit local small businesses. Things are happening in my electorate, and I look forward to sharing these stories with the minister.

Canterbury train station

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn) (17:25): (1547) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Public and Active Transport, and the action I seek is for the minister to join me for an inspection of Canterbury

station so that together we can assess a number of maintenance and accessibility concerns that have been raised by local residents and in particular Wendy Wilkinson, who is a champion for our local area. Canterbury station is a vital transport node in my electorate. It serves commuters, school students, older residents and families every single day. It is also architecturally something of a modernist incarnation within our rail network, a station that reflected the design ambition of its era and the civic importance once attached to public transport infrastructure. It deserves to be properly maintained.

In recent days my office has received correspondence from residents concerned about the condition of the track adjacent to platform 1, including timber sleepers that are conspicuously aged and a rail joint beyond the city end of the platform that clearly warrants attention. Moreover, there are longstanding accessibility challenges at the station. Canterbury station remains difficult to use for many elderly residents and people with disability. The ramp access is steep. There is no lift, something I began campaigning for more than 10 years ago. For some passengers the gap between the train and the platform can be difficult to negotiate, particularly for those with mobility aids or for parents managing prams. In a community with a significant ageing population these are not minor inconveniences. They affect independence, safety and confidence in using public transport. In addition, sections of the platform surface are cracked, with uneven bitumen. While this may seem minor in isolation, for someone unsteady on their feet, uneven surfaces present real health risks. I campaigned on this issue four years ago, and while some work was done at the time, the repairs have not been maintained.

I therefore ask the minister to attend Canterbury station with me for this purpose: inspecting the tracks' condition, the platform surfaces and accessibility arrangements firsthand. Together we can outline what steps can be taken to ensure the station is safe, accessible and properly maintained. Our community values this station not only as infrastructure but as part of our local identity and midcentury heritage. It is reasonable to expect that it can be maintained to a standard befitting both its heritage character and its essential role in Melbourne's transport network.

Point Cook electorate housing

Mathew HILAKARI (Point Cook) (17:28): (1548) My adjournment is for the Minister for Planning, and the action that I seek is to confirm that there are no plans to expand the urban growth boundary in relation to the RAAF base in Point Cook. The Labor government have consistently said we have no plans to expand the urban growth boundary. The RAAF base in Point Cook is outside of the urban growth boundary, meaning that the type of housing that we see across our community today is not appropriate for the RAAF base, regardless of who owns that land.

But not everyone in this Parliament thinks that way. The Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party, the member for Caulfield, said that I am a hypocrite for 'opposing future housing in Point Cook' and specifically at the RAAF base. Point Cook has done its fair share, and we will continue to do our fair share in relation to homes. But housing growth must be fair, and what does unfair look like? It looks like the suburbs of Point Cook and Caulfield. Between 2001 and 2021, Point Cook grew by more than 65,000 residents over 20 years. In the exact same time period Caulfield grew by less than 1000 residents. That is what is unfair. That is why this government has changed the planning system to see more homes built around places like Caulfield station, because it is unfair when Caulfield has a major transport hub, many tram lines, a university, employment precincts, major road infrastructure and sporting infrastructure. Of course that is the place where more people should be living because of those investments that have been made directly linking them to these services and the employment that they need. That is a good use of infrastructure.

While we are doing more work on Point Cook Road, including at the intersection with Central Avenue, the Liberal Party have no plan to fix Point Cook Road if elected. They have no plan for the infrastructure for our community, and they never have. We continue to suffer from the legacy of the Liberal member for Bulleen Matthew Guy, when he was planning minister, because he rezoned Aviators Field inside the urban growth boundary. He should never have done this. It is going to add

20,000 extra residents to the community that I represent, and we cannot turn that decision back. We cannot unscramble that egg. Do you know what the Liberal member for Bulleen said about that? He said, 'I am the king of housing approvals,' something he was so proud to yell in this Parliament. It is a disgrace. The Liberal Party should be about fairness in this place around housing. They should accept that their community should grow like the community that I represent has grown. Minister, I look forward to your response.

Responses

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Women) (17:30): The member for Berwick raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Transport Infrastructure, and the action he seeks is that the minister fund the Clyde rail line. The member for Bellarine raised a matter for the attention of the Attorney-General, and the action that she seeks is that the Attorney-General provide an update on how the Geelong Specialist Family Violence Court is benefiting her constituents. The member for Mildura raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Transport Infrastructure, and the action she seeks is that the minister seek to maintain the Sunshine regional link crossovers in the redevelopment of the Sunshine station. The member for Preston raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Housing and Building, and the action he seeks is that the minister review the public housing sites in his electorate with an eye to those that are ageing and in need of maintenance as well as those where people are no longer living and the impact that this is having on their neighbours.

The member for Prahran raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Education, and the action she seeks is that the minister ensure that Melbourne High School is appropriately maintained. The member for Albert Park raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Creative Industries, and the action she seeks is that the minister join her at Linden New Art in her electorate. The member for Ringwood raised a matter for the Premier, and the action he seeks is the establishment of a royal commission. The member for Hastings raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Industry and Advanced Manufacturing, and I am sure the minister looks forward to taking up the member's invitation to visit his electorate and specifically to visit three very innovative and dynamic local businesses.

The member for Hawthorn raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Public and Active Transport, and the action he seeks is that the minister join him at Canterbury station to survey some of the needs that his constituents have expressed for upgrades at that station. The member for Point Cook raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Planning, and the action he seeks is that the minister confirm that there are no plans to expand the urban growth boundary into the RAAF base. I thank the member for his contribution, where he was at pains to outline the difference between our government's planning policies and those of the opposition.

The SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Thank you, members. I also thank the Clerk and the parliamentary staff once again for their support to members this week. The house stands adjourned.

House adjourned 5:33 pm.