



# **Hansard**

## **LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

### **60th Parliament**

**Wednesday 13 May 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**

<b>Member</b>	<b>District</b>	<b>Party</b>	<b>Member</b>	<b>District</b>	<b>Party</b>
Addison, Juliana	Wendouree	ALP	Lister, John <sup>8</sup>	Werribee	ALP
Allan, Jacinta	Bendigo East	ALP	Maas, Gary	Narre Warren South	ALP
Andrews, Daniel <sup>1</sup>	Mulgrave	ALP	McCurdy, Tim	Ovens Valley	Nat
Battin, Brad	Berwick	Lib	McGhie, Steve	Melton	ALP
Benham, Jade	Mildura	Nat	McLeish, Cindy	Eildon	Lib
Britnell, Roma	South-West Coast	Lib	Marchant, Alison	Bellarine	ALP
Brooks, Colin	Bundoora	ALP	Matthews-Ward, Kathleen	Broadmeadows	ALP
Bull, Josh	Sunbury	ALP	Mercurio, Paul	Hastings	ALP
Bull, Tim	Gippsland East	Nat	Mullahy, John	Glen Waverley	ALP
Cameron, Martin	Morwell	Nat	Newbury, James	Brighton	Lib
Carbines, Anthony	Ivanhoe	ALP	O'Brien, Danny	Gippsland South	Nat
Carroll, Ben	Niddrie	ALP	O'Brien, Michael	Malvern	Lib
Cheeseman, Darren <sup>2</sup>	South Barwon	Ind	O'Keeffe, Kim	Shepparton	Nat
Cianflone, Anthony	Pascoe Vale	ALP	Pallas, Tim <sup>9</sup>	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 <sup>10</sup>	Warrandyte	Lib
Edwards, Maree	Bendigo West	ALP	Southwick, David	Caulfield	Lib
Famham, Wayne	Narracan	Lib	Spence, Ros	Kalkallo	ALP
Foster, Eden <sup>3</sup>	Mulgrave	ALP	Staikos, Nick	Bentleigh	ALP
Fowles, Will <sup>4</sup>	Ringwood	Ind	Suleyman, Natalie	St Albans	ALP
Fregon, Matt	Ashwood	ALP	Tak, Meng Heang	Clarinda	ALP
George, Ella	Lara	ALP	Taylor, Jackson	Bayswater	ALP
Grigorovitch, Luba	Kororoit	ALP	Taylor, Nina	Albert Park	ALP
Groth, Sam <sup>5</sup>	Nepean	Lib	Theophanous, Kat	Northcote	ALP
Guy, Matthew	Bulleen	Lib	Thomas, Mary-Anne	Macedon	ALP
Halfpenny, Bronwyn	Thomastown	ALP	Tilley, Bill	Benambra	Lib
Hall, Katie	Footscray	ALP	Vallence, Bridget	Evelyn	Lib
Hamer, Paul	Box Hill	ALP	Vulin, Emma	Pakenham	ALP
Haylett, Martha	Ripon	ALP	Walsh, Peter	Murray Plains	Nat
Hibbins, Sam <sup>6,7</sup>	Prahran	Ind	Walters, Iwan	Greenvale	ALP
Hilakari, Mathew	Point Cook	ALP	Ward, Vicki	Eltham	ALP
Hodgett, David	Croydon	Lib	Wells, Kim	Rowville	Lib
Horne, Melissa	Williamstown	ALP	Werner, Nicole <sup>11</sup>	Warrandyte	Lib
Hutchins, Natalie	Sydenham	ALP	Westaway, Rachel <sup>12</sup>	Prahran	Lib
Kathage, Lauren	Yan Yean	ALP	Wight, Dylan	Tarneit	ALP
Kealy, Emma	Lowan	Nat	Williams, Gabrielle	Dandenong	ALP
Kilkenny, Sonya	Carrum	ALP	Wilson, Belinda	Narre Warren North	ALP
Lambert, Nathan	Preston	ALP	Wilson, Jess	Kew	Lib

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

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

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

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

<sup>5</sup> Resigned 13 February 2026

<sup>6</sup> Greens until 1 November 2024

<sup>7</sup> Resigned 23 November 2024

<sup>8</sup> Sworn in 4 March 2025

<sup>9</sup> Resigned 6 January 2025

<sup>10</sup> Resigned 7 July 2023

<sup>11</sup> Sworn in 3 October 2023

<sup>12</sup> Sworn in 4 March 2025

**Party abbreviations**

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

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**Wednesday 13 May 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****Notice given.**

**The SPEAKER (09:34):** General business, notices of motion 14, 30 to 34 and 62 and order of the day 6, will be removed from the notice paper unless members wishing their matter to remain advise the Clerk in writing before 2 pm today.

*Petitions***Prahran electorate planning**

**Rachel WESTAWAY (Prahran)** presented a petition bearing 223 signatures:

**Issue:**

This petition of residents in Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Assembly that across the state, fast-track planning pathways are stripping away basic safeguards that protect communities. Developments are being approved without local government oversight and residents are being denied their long-standing right to appeal through VCAT. When due process is removed, poor planning follows, leading to lasting problems with safety, access and amenity. Ministerial Planning Application PA2604170 at 674 High Street, Prahran shows exactly what can go wrong. This fast-tracked, six-storey, 50-unit social housing proposal bypassed council oversight and removed appeal rights. Serious concerns with the development include: a single lift for older residents; all servicing and waste collection forced through a narrow one-way street with no loading bay; just five car spaces for 50 dwellings; excessive height and overshadowing; and a Traffic Impact Assessment based on New South Wales data rather than local conditions. Community input and independent reviews ensure developments are safe, functional, and appropriate for their surroundings. Removing these checks undermines outcomes for both current and future residents. By signing this petition, you are supporting the Prahran community and helping secure better planning outcomes across Victoria.

**Action:**

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly calls on the Minister for Planning to meet with affected local residents before any final decision is made on Planning Application PA2604170.

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

## Auditor-General:

Free TAFE – Ordered to be published

Responses to Performance Engagement Recommendations: Annual Status Update 2026 – Ordered to be published

*Interpretation of Legislation Act 1994* – Notice under s 32(3)(a)(iii) in relation to Statutory Rule 26 (*Gazette G19, 7 May 2026*)

*Planning and Environment Act 1987* – Notice of approval of an amendment to the Victoria Planning Provisions – VC309

Victoria Police, Chief Commissioner – Report 2025 under s 96 of the *Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981*.

*Bills***Building and Plumbing Administration and Enforcement Bill 2026****Cladding Safety Victoria Repeal Bill 2026***Council's agreement*

**The SPEAKER** (09:36): I have received messages from the Legislative Council agreeing to the following bills without amendment: the Building and Plumbing Administration and Enforcement Bill 2026 and the Cladding Safety Victoria Repeal Bill 2026.

**Dangerous Goods Transport Bill 2026****Occupational Health and Safety Amendment (Dangerous Goods) Bill 2026***Concurrent debate*

**Anthony CARBINES** (Ivanhoe – Leader of the House, Minister for Police, Minister for Community Safety, Minister for Victims, Minister for Racing) (09:36): I move, by leave:

That this house authorises and requires the Speaker to permit the second-reading and subsequent stages of the Dangerous Goods Transport Bill 2026 and the Occupational Health and Safety Amendment (Dangerous Goods) Bill 2026 to be moved and debated concurrently.

**Motion agreed to.**

*Motions***Motions by leave**

**James NEWBURY** (Brighton) (09:36): I move, by leave:

That this house dissents from the Speaker's ruling of 12 May and notes ejection should not be used as a tool for personal payback.

**Leave refused.**

*Members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER:** Would you like to be removed from the chamber again, Manager of Opposition Business? I ask members to cease interjecting across the chamber.

**Anthony CIANFLONE** (Pascoe Vale) (09:37): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the Leader of the Opposition for her plan to cut \$40 billion from services Victorians rely on, including back office staff at the Department of Health who coordinate Victoria's mental health system, undermining Labor's landmark mental health reforms and leaving Victorians without the support they need when they need it most.

This needs to be debated.

**Leave refused.**

*Members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The person who just spoke while I was on my feet will remove themselves from the chamber for half an hour. Leave was not granted.

**Member for Pascoe Vale withdrew from chamber.**

**Josh BULL** (Sunbury) (09:38): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the Leader of the Opposition for her plan to cut \$40 billion from services Victorians rely on, including staff at the Department of Education who deliver Labor's free kinder program, putting three- and four-year-old access to early childhood education at risk.

**Leave refused.**

*Members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! If members continue to interject, they will be removed from the chamber. Members will wait until the question is put.

**Gary MAAS** (Narre Warren South) (09:39): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the Leader of the Opposition for her plan to cut \$40 billion from services Victorians rely on, including workers at the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing who support Victorians living with disability, cutting the hands-on help families depend on every single day.

**Leave refused.**

**John MULLAHY** (Glen Waverley) (09:39): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the Leader of the Opposition for her plan to cut \$40 billion from services Victorians rely on, including staff at the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing.

**Leave refused.**

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

That this house condemns the member for Kew –

**Leave refused.**

**Mary-Anne THOMAS** (Macedon) (09:40): I move, by leave –

**Leave refused.**

*Members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER:** I will not tolerate this misbehaviour in the chamber. Members will be removed from the chamber.

**James Newbury:** On a point of order, Speaker, the government have been frivolously moving motions this morning, which we have been happy to debate one by one. Every time the opposition previously moved a motion which the government had not agreed to, they said no, and before the motion had finished you stopped the motion from being read out. Knowing that their motions are frivolous, we are now calling no to every single motion because they do not have the guts to debate it.

**The SPEAKER:** I am not sure what the point of order is, Manager of Opposition Business.

**James Newbury:** The point of order is that once we call no, that is the end of it.

**The SPEAKER:** I am the Chair. They are my rulings.

**Anthony Carbines:** Speaker, on the point of order, it is difficult for members to make a determination on whether to grant leave or not if they cannot hear the notice in the first instance or a member is not allowed to put their notice for a consideration to be made. I also make the point that these matters rely on cooperation. This cuts both ways to the Manager of Opposition Business if that is the way he wants the house to operate.

**The SPEAKER:** I ask members to show some respect across the chamber. If a member is on their feet and they want to give a motion by leave, then they should be entitled to be heard. That motion by leave should be heard. I cannot hear, and I ask members to at least wait until I put the question.

**Tim RICHARDSON** (Mordialloc) (09:42): I move, by leave –

*Members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I have not put the question yet, as I just asked members to wait until I put the question.

**Leave refused.**

*Members interjecting.*

**Nina TAYLOR** (Albert Park) (09:42): I move, by leave:

That this house condemns the Leader of the Opposition for her plans to cut \$40 billion from services Victorians rely on, including the Victorian Skills Authority and the department –

**Leave refused.**

**James Newbury:** On a point of order, Speaker, I refer to your previous rulings where you have ruled that at any time from the point at which a member has been given the call, a no can be called and they must immediately stop. Your ruling today is contrary to that.

*Members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER:** I remind members that until I have actually heard a little bit of the motion by leave at least, it is very hard to know what that motion by leave is. I ask members again to show some respect to members on their feet. Member for Broadmeadows!

**James Newbury:** On a point of order, Speaker, your ruling is not contained within the standing orders. At any point when a member stands, a no can be called.

**The SPEAKER:** That is correct, Manager of Opposition Business.

**Belinda WILSON** (Narre Warren North) (09:44): I move –

**Leave refused.**

**Pauline RICHARDS** (Cranbourne) (09:44): I move –

**Leave refused.**

**Juliana ADDISON** (Wendouree) (09:44): I move, by leave:

That we condemn the Liberal leader –

**Leave refused.**

### *Members statements*

#### **Sale College**

**Danny O'BRIEN** (Gippsland South) (09:45): Labor might like to label Victoria the Education State, but it seems to be a pretty geographically limited state if that is the case after the government's failure to fund a new Sale College in last week's budget. The Sale College community, Wellington shire, Committee for Wellington and I have been campaigning for a new Sale College for nearly 10 years, combining two ageing, dilapidated campuses into one new site to deliver better educational outcomes for Sale kids in our community. We have a master plan, we have a site purchased and we have a community on board; we have just been left behind by a government that fails to consider the needs of country kids. Even when the government makes commitments, it fails to follow through. The 2022–23 budget allocated \$7 million for Yinnar Primary School, but four years later nothing has happened. Before the 2022 election Labor committed \$11 million to Leongatha Secondary College; again, not a single sod has been turned. Labor talks a big game on education but repeatedly lets Gippsland down, and I and the Nationals will keep up the fight.

### Fish Creek Tea Cosy Festival

**Danny O'BRIEN** (Gippsland South) (09:46): This weekend begins one of the quirkiest and best festivals on the calendar you will ever come across, the Fish Creek Tea Cosy Festival. Running from 16 to 24 May, the tea cosy festival celebrates the humble pot warmer with an extraordinary array of craft work, imagination, design and skills. The festival is supported by local galleries, sculpture and artists, offering plenty to see and do in the Fish Creek area. This year's theme of 'Life on the farm' is sure to generate some stellar entries. Get on down to Fish Creek in the next two weeks, enjoy the tea cosies and take advantage of some wonderful country hospitality.

### Budget 2026–27

**Ben CARROLL** (Niddrie – Minister for Education, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC, Minister for Medical Research) (09:46): This Victorian budget delivers, and it delivers for the people of Niddrie, my electorate. This is a budget that focuses on local families, better schools, improved public transport, safer roads, stronger health care and real cost-of-living relief.

In education we are investing \$24 million to upgrade Essendon North Primary School, delivering a major classroom wing upgrade and modernising the learning spaces for the local students. In Keilor East there is \$10.5 million for the Keilor Heights Primary School, while students at Essendon Keilor College will benefit from upgraded facilities and improvements.

The Minister for Public and Active Transport visited the electorate recently, where we are funding the 476 bus service, providing more services more often to better connect people right across our growing community. The new trams are on their way, and that is why this budget also has new development funding for the new accessible level crossing tram stops that will be required.

Community strengthening is also at the heart of this budget, with more funding for Avondale Heights Football Club to do their pavilion master plan and for the Avondale Football Club as well, the soccer club, to support them, and Horseshoe Bend at Brimbank Park, a wonderful community that is growing so much. We are continuing to really invest in the people of Keilor.

We are also making sure the Calder and the Tullamarine freeways are getting the maintenance upgrades they need. Cost of living – 20 per cent off vehicle registration and half-price public transport. This is a Labor budget that has practical improvements for the local community of Niddrie, and I am proud to be part of a government that knows and invests in the north-west.

### Anzac Day

**Bridget VALLENCE** (Evelyn) (09:48): It was wonderful to join local veterans and members of our community to commemorate Anzac Day with services in Lilydale, Mount Evelyn, Seville, Wandin, Montrose and Mooroolbark. I want to pay special tribute to Bill Dobson, the president of Lilydale RSL, Matt Crymble, the president of Mount Evelyn RSL, and our veterans and volunteers for their incredible work running these services attended by thousands.

Tragically, yet again we saw several war memorials across Victoria desecrated and attacked in the lead-up to Anzac Day, causing considerable distress to our veteran community and local families. An attack on a war memorial is an attack on the sacrifice of those who have died defending our country and freedoms. It is an attack on former and current service men and women, who I value and respect so much. Since 2020 there have been dozens of attacks on memorials and culturally significant sites, yet under the Labor government's weak laws, nothing is being done to stop this. Under the plan that I announced with leader Jess Wilson, the Victorian Liberals and Nationals will introduce new laws to crack down on war memorial vandals with a new criminal offence of destruction and damage of war memorials and other protected sites in the Crimes Act 1958. Our laws will be the toughest in the country. Not only will cowardly offenders face jail, with up to 10 years for desecrating war memorials and other significant cultural sites, our solution will also impose mandatory orders on vandals to pay for the costs of repair and restoration. The names etched on those war memorials preserve the

memories of those men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice, and we must do more to protect and honour their legacy. Lest we forget.

**The SPEAKER:** I remind members to call other members by their correct titles.

#### **Doveton Pool in the Park**

**Gabrielle WILLIAMS** (Dandenong – Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for Public and Active Transport, Minister for Women and Girls) (09:49): I rise today to welcome a budget win for locals in Doveton, with this year's state budget committing half a million dollars towards upgrades at the Doveton Pool in the Park. The Doveton pool has a very special place in the heart of the local Doveton community. It was a pool that was born out of advocacy of that local community many decades ago following the tragic drownings of local young children in the Eumemmerring Creek. This led to the community advocating for somewhere safe for local children to swim, and so the Doveton pool was born.

Recently the pool was under threat after Casey council made some decisions to effectively remove it. This gave rise to a huge community campaign to save the Doveton pool, which saw a change of heart by council, and there is now a joint effort by Casey council, the federal government and the state government to invest in the redevelopment of the pool to modernise an important piece of community infrastructure so that it can serve local children for generations to come and continue to be that safe place for kids to swim, which was at the heart of the story of Doveton pool to begin with. It is a great win not only for me as a representative in this place but, more importantly, for the local community, who have fought so hard to see this local community asset preserved and enriched.

#### **Maroondah Hospital**

**Nicole WERNER** (Warrandyte) (09:51): A PSA to everyone in the east of Melbourne: the Labor government have abandoned the Maroondah Hospital rebuild, which they promised not once but twice. In 2018 the government promised to build an emergency department for children. In 2022 they promised \$1 billion to rebuild and refurbish Maroondah Hospital from the ground up. They promised a new emergency department, new operating theatres, more than 200 extra beds, expanded imaging, specialist care spaces and thousands of construction jobs. In fact it was Labor's own candidate for Warrandyte who told our local paper, the *Warrandyte Diary*, that this investment was crucial. The government promised to commence construction in 2025, and then the hospital would open in 2029. After promising it at two elections, what do we have to show for it? Nothing. The Allan Labor government has axed this hospital rebuild. There is zero money for construction in the budget and not one shovel in the ground. People in Warrandyte and the eastern suburbs were sold a pipedream of deception, because Labor will do and say anything to win an election, hoping Victorians will forget and move on, but Victorians will not forget that they have been deceived. Labor promised regional Victorians stadiums, sports fields and thousands of houses for a fake Commonwealth Games, which was a scam. They were promised Melton rail electrification, which has been delayed and delayed, as well as housing. Labor promised 800,000 new homes, yet every year since then they have missed their targets. Victorians deserve a government – (*Time expired*)

#### **Seaford Football Netball Club**

**Sonya KILKENNY** (Carrum – Attorney-General, Minister for Planning, Minister for Violence Reduction, Minister for Finance) (09:52): Congratulations to the Seaford Football Netball Club A-grade netball team on being crowned the Mornington Peninsula Football Netball League's division 2 A-grade premiers for 2025. It was a pleasure to join netball president and 2025 A-grade player Iris Bentley, coach Meagan Dell, club president Steve Harvey and the premiership team at RF Miles reserve in Seaford to proudly unfurl the premiership flag. This achievement reflects more than a decade of hard work, resilience and perseverance by players, coaches, volunteers and supporters, who helped build this success.

**Bonbeach Auskick**

**Sonya KILKENNY** (Carrum – Attorney-General, Minister for Planning, Minister for Violence Reduction, Minister for Finance) (09:53): It was a pleasure to attend the season launch of Bonbeach Auskick and meet the many enthusiastic young Auskickers and their families. Thank you to all the volunteers in the canteen, on the barbecue and out coaching on the field and especially to coordinator Cam Smith for his enthusiasm and encouragement of our little AFL superstars.

**Carrum electorate student leaders**

**Sonya KILKENNY** (Carrum – Attorney-General, Minister for Planning, Minister for Violence Reduction, Minister for Finance) (09:53): Congratulations to the Belvedere Park Primary School 2026 school captains Mia Parmenter and Ryan Phillips; congratulations to the Seaford Park Primary School 2026 school captains Michael Bragg-Bernal and Summer McFarland; and congratulations to the Seaford North Primary School 2026 school captains Asher Wyeth, Zac Watson, Isabelle Coates and Isabelle Walker. You will be outstanding role models and ambassadors for your schools. I know you will work hard to support your peers to be the absolute best they can be. All the very best for the year ahead.

**Mornington-Tyabb–Racecourse roads, Mornington**

**Chris CREWETHER** (Mornington) (09:54): I rise to raise ongoing concerns about the safety at Mornington-Tyabb Road and Racecourse Road intersection in Mornington. The issue has been raised repeatedly by locals over many years, yet meaningful action has still not occurred. Despite repeated correspondence to the state Labor government’s Minister for Roads and Road Safety, families continue to receive what feel like generic responses while the danger remains unchanged. I particularly acknowledge residents like Adam Kelso, Paddy Fricker and Tony Oliver, who have continued to advocate strongly and constructively on this matter and who have now set up a hard-copy petition, which is sponsored by me, which can be found at the link [bit.ly/racecourserd](http://bit.ly/racecourserd). Anyone who wants to download that, share it and sign it can then return it to my office or to one of those three people.

Their concerns are urgent. This intersection is used by schoolchildren, who are walking, cycling and scooting along Racecourse Road. Locals continue to report near misses and dangerous crossing conditions, particularly during peak school times. Children along with older residents are being expected to cross where vehicles pick up speed downhill, several traffic movements converge and morning glare can reduce visibility. It is not reasonable to expect young people and indeed older people to navigate these conditions. Residents are also frustrated that road and public transport changes, including new bus stops, while needed, can proceed without proper consideration of pedestrian safety. The community has put forward sensible ideas, such as temporary portable traffic lights during school drop-off and pick-up periods, while permanent works are assessed.

**Budget 2026–27**

**Anthony CARBINES** (Ivanhoe – Leader of the House, Minister for Police, Minister for Community Safety, Minister for Victims, Minister for Racing) (09:55): Easier, safer and more affordable – the Allan Labor government’s budget. There is half-price public transport from 1 June for the rest of the year, saving daily commuters up to \$850, and the 20 per cent off car registration from 1 June, saving \$186 per car in metropolitan Victoria. Can I say there is the free public transport already announced for under-18s every day and seniors, carers and disability support pensioners on weekends, saving families some \$755 per child every year, and locally on the Hurstbridge line on weekends every 20 minutes there are train services and on the Mernda and Eltham lines all weekend and services every 10 minutes between the city and Clifton Hill. These are significant announcements that we have been able to make. Can I say also the 551 bus service between Heidelberg station and La Trobe University will be running on weekends, thanks to our government, out of resources provided in this budget. There is some \$600,000 too for upgrades to Chelsworth Park in Ivanhoe, particularly around lighting upgrades. At Ivanhoe Park – I was down there for our 6 am run with

Ivanhoe running group – we are going to provide further upgrades for our sporting clubs in the Ivanhoe electorate. We have already upgraded Macleod Park and Ford Park, we have seen great work done at the De Winton reserve and at Olympic Park and now we are going to take on some further upgrades at Ivanhoe Park and Chelsworth Park, because in my community getting outdoors, getting out in our environment – people love it, and our sporting clubs do a great job.

#### **Mildura electorate health services**

**Jade BENHAM** (Mildura) (09:57): After a disastrous state budget and last night's federal budget, regional Victorians are sick of getting less and simply being forced to accept it – less access to health care, less access to specialists, less access to sealed and safe roads and less access to timely treatment. There are some things we want less of, like less time spent in the emergency department. Let us talk about Mildura Base Public Hospital and regional healthcare funding. We are just expected to do more with less time and time again, but the staff at Mildura Base Public Hospital have actually been innovative. They really are. They have decided that instead of waiting for this government to fund the hospital adequately and provide them with a new hospital or an extension or 30 new beds they are going to do it themselves. There are plans in place, shovels in the ground and buildings ready to be delivered on time and under budget. That is what regional Victorians want.

We have heard the members on the other side recently: 'less with Jess'. This is the narrative they are running now: 'less with Jess'. You know what, that is another thing regional Victorians want: less tax with Jess, less waste with Jess, less corruption with Jess and less Labor MPs with Jess. That is what Jess Wilson will deliver for Victoria. Let us go, let us really lean into that 'less with Jess' narrative.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Mildura will resume her seat. I remind her once again – and I know she has only been in this place for almost four years – to call members by their correct titles.

#### **Terry Awad**

**Melissa HORNE** (Williamstown – Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Prevention of Family Violence) (09:59): Firstly, I want to congratulate Terry Awad on her first gallery exhibition at the South Kingsville Community Centre last month. At the age of 75 Terry had her first painting exhibition. She is an emerging artist, and her work is an inspiration to all.

#### **Women's health**

**Melissa HORNE** (Williamstown – Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Prevention of Family Violence) (09:59): Also at the start of this month I held a women's health forum at the Louis Joel Arts and Community Centre. Thanks very much to the member for Northcote Kat Theophanous, the Parliamentary Secretary for Women's Health, who opened the forum and shared such insight into Victoria's inquiry into women's pain, which last year taught us that the health challenges women face are unique and more work needs to be done. It was really interesting listening to key women community leaders talk about the industry and their experiences. Thank you to Catherine Langford and Gracy Wu from BreastScreen Victoria, Justine Brogna from TreeHaus, Kristy Fennessy from Western Health, Dr Liz and Louise from Thrive 26, Amanda Thompson from Endurance Financial and Rosie Camilleri from the Orange Door.

#### **Williamstown Cricket Club**

**Melissa HORNE** (Williamstown – Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Prevention of Family Violence) (10:00): I am also pleased to have secured \$85,000 in the budget for Downer Oval in Williamstown to go towards new lighting for the Williamstown Cricket Club. Cam Smith, who has been a passionate and tireless advocate for this project, was so delighted when I rang and shared the news with him. Thank you, Cam and the club, for all your advocacy.

### Rowville electorate planning

**Kim WELLS** (Rowville) (10:00): I rise today to give voice to deeply frustrated residents in my electorate of Rowville, whose local amenity and neighbourhood character is now being systematically destroyed by this tired and arrogant state Labor government. Last week Knox City Council was forced to approve a highly inappropriate residential multiunit development in Murray Crescent, Rowville. The local community strongly objected. Most local Knox councillors objected. However, their hands were tied and they were completely silenced by the state government's draconian Victorian state planning amendment VC267, which inserted a new clause 55 into all LGA planning schemes, introduced in March 2025. Under Labor's new clause 55 deemed-to-comply pathway, if a developer merely ticks a box, the council is stripped of its power to consider local neighbourhood character policies. Worse still, this pathway entirely strips my constituents of their third-party review rights, barring them from taking their objections to VCAT. Rowville has a unique and highly valued neighbourhood character, defined by spacious backyard open garden settings and deliberate transition zones. Victorians deserve better. Under a Liberal–Nationals government, we will implement our 'more homes, more choice' policy for the 2026 election and restore the local voice to planning in our middle and outer suburbs.

### Anzac Day

**Ros SPENCE** (Kalkallo – Minister for First Peoples, Minister for Roads and Road Safety, Minister for Community Sport) (10:01): Today I recognise all involved in the Craigieburn Anzac Day service. I was honoured to attend and pay tribute to our veterans alongside local residents, including Iwan Walters, the member for Greenvale, and Basem Abdo, the federal member for Calwell. I want to particularly acknowledge Kevin O'Callaghan OAM, whose dedication ensures that the Craigieburn service is conducted with dignity and respect every year.

I am also grateful to Kevin for assisting with the annual project by me and the member for Greenvale in highlighting the life story of a local veteran. This year it was Dudley Crowe, who joined the army in 1978. Initially assigned as a storeman in Campbellfield, Dudley later transferred to the Royal Australian Corps of Transport and, through his love of watercraft, became an army sailor. In 1987 his training ensured that crews did not hesitate when lives were at risk during a severe storm while supplies were being unloaded at the Australian National Antarctic Research Expeditions station at Macquarie Island. The storm was so severe that the Danish supply ship *Nella Dan* ran aground and was seriously damaged, with holes in the hull, the engine room flooding and a serious risk of the vessel turning on its side. Dudley and five other members manned three LARC-V vessels and worked through dangerous waters to rescue the 50 crew and passengers whilst heavy seas crashed over them. In recognition of their bravery the six LARC-V operators were awarded a group bravery citation, albeit 22 years later.

### Homelessness

**Gabrielle DE VIETRI** (Richmond) (10:03): Augie, a year 7 student from Collingwood, has noticed that there are way too many people without a home. He wants to do something to help people sleeping rough in our community. He says:

A house is not meant to just be a roof over your head, it is also meant to be a safe place, but homeless people don't have that.

He is urging the government to hand vacant homes to those in need and provide free fresh fruit for anyone who needs it. I think these are great ideas, so Augie and I are going to run a free fruit stall in Collingwood, and we invite the Minister for Housing and Building to join us to hear Augie's ideas to address the housing crisis.

**Richmond electorate public transport**

**Gabrielle DE VIETRI** (Richmond) (10:04): Mark is disabled. He lives in Fitzroy and he is one of many of my constituents who cannot use public transport because Smith Street and Gertrude Street trams are simply not wheelchair accessible. Despite Labor committing to upgrades in 2022, four years and two consultation rounds later, nothing has happened. Now, in the lead-up to the next election, Labor has just promised the same thing in Northcote and Brunswick without having actually delivered on their election promise from four years ago. How can we trust Labor if they keep making and breaking their promises?

**Michael Frazer**

**Colin BROOKS** (Bundoora – Minister for Industry and Advanced Manufacturing, Minister for Defence Industry, Minister for Skills and TAFE) (10:04): I rise to honour the life of Michael Frazer, who passed away a few weeks ago at the age of 88. Michael was a devoted family man and a lifelong contributor to our community. Born in Warrnambool in 1937, Michael moved with his family to Fitzroy and then Reservoir, where he grew up as the eldest of seven boys. Early experiences shaped his deep belief in fairness, opportunity and community.

Michael joined the Bundoora branch of the Labor Party in 1974, beginning more than 37 years of service to the party. Across that time he held key roles, including federal electorate assembly secretary in Diamond Valley, Scullin and Jagajaga and later president in Jagajaga. He also contributed to the Victorian ALP training committee and played an active role in countless campaign committees. In 1982 Michael authored the local branch executive guidelines, distributed to more than 300 branches across Victoria, a document that continues to influence party organisation today. That same year, through the Scullin FEA, he helped establish a badge-making initiative that produced tens of thousands of campaign badges through the 1980s.

Michael's late wife Beth Gleeson was the member for Thomastown here from 1985 to 1989, and his political highlights included the victories of 1972, 1974 and the election of the Cain government in 1982, moments he held with great pride. A man of quiet dedication, thoughtfulness and hard work, above all Michael was a family man and will be deeply missed. My condolences to Lisa, Martin and Megan, grandchildren Liam and Oliver and partner Elaine.

**Government performance**

**Michael O'BRIEN** (Malvern) (10:06): I do wonder whether Labor Premier Jacinta Allan and her Labor government actively despise the people of Malvern, because that would seem to be the only logical explanation for the constant attacks of this Labor government on my community. Fact 1, Malvern police station: under the Liberals Malvern police station was open 24 hours a day, seven days a week to keep the community safe. Then Labor cut the police budget so the station only opened during business hours. Now opening hours have been cut again to just three days a week, all of this while aggravated burglaries have gone up by 94 per cent since Jacinta Allan became Premier. Fact 2, protective services officers: Labor has stripped PSOs away from nine train stations in the Malvern electorate. Commuters who use Armadale, Darling, East Malvern, Glen Iris, Hawksburn, Heyington, Kooyong, Toorak and Tooronga stations have now lost PSOs at night, putting their safety at risk. Fact 3, activity centres: while Labor imposes 14 of its high-rise, high-density activity centres in the Malvern electorate alone, guess how many of them the Minister for Planning and the Premier have in their patches – none. This morally and financially bankrupt government seems to take pleasure in hurting my community and making them less safe. I look forward to the election in November, when the people of Malvern will respond at the ballot box to the absolute contempt this Labor government shows for them.

**St Albans electorate bus services**

**Natalie SULEYMAN** (St Albans – Minister for Veterans, Minister for Small and Family Business, Minister for Employment, Minister for Tourism) (10:07): There is fantastic news for my locals, with

more bus services for the west. There has been a big win for bus route 408 from St Albans to Highpoint and of course bus route 476 at Keilor Downs, which will benefit the local students at Keilor Downs College. This has been a real feedback campaign by locals, and I want to thank everybody who has participated in our petition and our surveys in the last few months to make this a reality. On top of the new bus services, we will soon see a brand new bus service through Cairnlea, and again this has been through feedback by locals and hard work together with the local member and of course the member for Kororoit as well, who has been working with me to deliver this service for Cairnlea.

#### **St Albans youth advisory council**

**Natalie SULEYMAN** (St Albans – Minister for Veterans, Minister for Small and Family Business, Minister for Employment, Minister for Tourism) (10:08): On another matter, I want to give a huge shout-out to the St Albans youth advisory council. These young leaders are stepping up and shaping the future of our community. Thank you to Edward, Ethan, Aarshiya, Eliza, Minh, Hermela, Kirthik, Sophia, Neili and Navya. They will be joining me tonight in Parliament, and I want to thank them for their activism and really being on top of local issues and providing important feedback for us all.

#### **Fongs Chinese Restaurant**

**Nick STAIKOS** (Bentleigh – Minister for Housing and Building, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop) (10:09): For at least 65 years, until just a few weeks ago, Fongs Chinese Restaurant stood prominently on Centre Road, East Bentleigh. For all that time Fongs has been owned by the same family, and owner Betty Yung has been a well-known local figure in the local area for many years. Fongs was started by Betty's uncle and aunty, who arrived in Australia in the 1950s. Betty once showed me a menu from that time, and the first thing I noticed was that it was in pounds and shillings, but the second thing I noticed was that one side read 'Chinese menu' and the other side read 'Australian menu', and had things on it like pies, steak and chips and lamb's fry. It showed that Fongs was around when Chinese cuisine was still considered pretty exotic, but all these years later Chinese cuisine is typical Aussie fare. In fact my family over the years have taken our relatives visiting from Greece to Fongs to enjoy a succulent Chinese Aussie meal.

Fongs opened in East Bentleigh at a pivotal time for our community. It was when the market gardens that for many years fed the rest of Melbourne were becoming housing, bought off the plan by young families. In the many years since our Chinese community has contributed immeasurably to the cultural and economic life of our state. Fongs has been a fixture in our community for that entire time, hosting countless celebrations of birthdays and wedding anniversaries, creating precious memories. In fact my electorate office has been located next to it for the last 21 years – handy for staff lunches. All the best to Betty and her husband for their retirement.

#### **Frankston electorate bus services**

**Paul EDBROOKE** (Frankston – Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Cost of Living, Minister for Renters, Minister for Men and Boys) (10:10): The state budget 2026–27 is delivering for Frankston, with increased weekend frequencies for services between Carrum and Frankston, which is route 833, and the combined extended Karingal to Seaford via Carrum Downs–Skye services – those are routes 777 and 778 – to get more people where they need to go.

#### **Anzac Day**

**Paul EDBROOKE** (Frankston – Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Cost of Living, Minister for Renters, Minister for Men and Boys) (10:11): I just want to tell the house too about an amazing day I spent before Anzac Day at Vasey RSL in Frankston. I was treated to an abundance of hospitality as some of the residents and I cooked Anzac bickies. But there is one particular resident who I am not sure I can name but I do want to talk about. You do not know who you are talking to sometimes, but there is an international documentary crew coming to Australia to document this person's story. This particular veteran used to translate Japanese radio and signals up in northern Victoria during World War II and for 50 years, because of the statute of limitations around the

intelligence, was unable to talk about it. Now we have got internationally renowned documentary teams coming over to speak to our veterans. It was an amazing day. The bickies were okay – their bickies were a bit better – but just to see the way that my community embrace the legacy that is Anzac Day is something to behold and something that I think we should be very, very proud of.

### **Cost of living**

**Lauren KATHAGE** (Yan Yean) (10:12): At the Laurimar Lakeside Community Market on Mother's Day, watching people go past, it was amazing to see the most common thing that stood out, which is that so many people had bought a double punnet of raspberries. It is a bit of a luxury item at the best of times, but with cost-of-living pressures as they are, the chance to buy cheap raspberries was something that people could not resist. It really stuck out to me, and it made me think about when the Minister for Cost of Living came and held a community forum with me in my community. An older woman in my community spoke about the time that a friend of theirs had won a meat raffle and so came to their house and gave the family two steaks, and the family cut each steak in half so that each person could have a bit of steak. People are doing it really tough and there is concern about the war in the Middle East and what that is going to do to fuel prices, so I am really proud that our government has 10 million litres of diesel in reserve for farmers. It is good for farmers but it is also good for food prices for all Victorian families, so that raspberries and steak can be something that people enjoy without considering them a luxury.

### **Volunteers**

**Luba GRIGOROVITCH** (Kororoit – Minister for Youth, Minister for Carers and Volunteers) (10:13): Today I rise to acknowledge and thank the incredible volunteers across Victoria, whose compassion, generosity and dedication continue to strengthen our community every single day. Over recent weeks I have had the privilege of visiting local organisations which are powered by volunteers and support people facing hardship, food insecurity and social isolation. These visits reminded me that some of the most important work in our community is being led, both quietly and selflessly, by volunteers.

I recently visited the Hub at INChurch led by pastor Craig Maher, where volunteers work tirelessly to provide food relief, support and a welcoming environment for local families and individuals in need. I also want to recognise the outstanding work of the Woodlea Islamic Network, whose volunteers come together every Friday night to serve a hot meal to those in need and support vulnerable members of our community with compassion, kindness and care.

Behind every meal served, every donation packed and every conversation shared is a volunteer choosing to make someone else's life just that little bit easier. Volunteers are the backbone of our communities. They give their time not for recognition or reward but because they genuinely care about helping others and strengthening the community around them. To every volunteer across Victoria: I want to thank you. Thank you for your kindness. Thank you for your compassion. Thank you for your unwavering commitment to helping others. Our community is stronger, kinder and more connected because of you.

### **Monbulk College**

**Daniela DE MARTINO** (Monbulk) (10:15): Just a quick shout-out to Monbulk College students who are visiting today.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Before we move on, I remind members about the use of correct titles. We do not have names as members in here; we represent our communities. There is a bit of wriggle room for the use of surnames in regard to government or opposition that has been accepted in the past, but please, let us stick to titles.

**Bills****Building Legislation and Treasury Legislation (Tax Relief) Amendment Bill 2026***Statement of charter compatibility*

**Nick STAIKOS** (Bentleigh – Minister for Housing and Building, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop) (10:17): Under the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006, I table a statement of compatibility:

In accordance with section 28 of the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* (**Charter**), I make this Statement of Compatibility with respect to the Building Legislation and Treasury Legislation (Tax Relief) Amendment Bill 2026 (**Bill**).

In my opinion, the Bill, as introduced to the Legislative Assembly, is compatible with the human rights protected by the Charter. I have formed this opinion for the reasons outlined in this statement.

**Overview of the Bill**

This Bill makes amendments to the *Building Act 1993* (**Building Act**) in relation to places of public entertainment, emergency orders, building notices and building orders, decennial insurance and designated flood-prone areas; to the *Building and Construction Industry Security of Payment Act 2002* (**SOP Act**) in relation to the liability of authorised nominating authorities; to the *Building Legislation Amendment (Buyer Protections) Act 2025* (**Buyer Protections Act**) in relation to the statutory insurance scheme and minimum financial requirements for building practitioner registration; to the *Building and Plumbing Administration and Enforcement Act 2026* (**BPAE Act**) in relation to designated flood-prone areas; to the *Sale of Land Act 1962* in relation to matters to be disclosed in section 32 statements and to the *Water Act 1989* (**Water Act**) in relation to floodplain management relevant to the determination of designated flood-prone areas.

Throughout this document, there are references to the Victorian Building Authority (**Authority**) which is currently trading as the “Building and Plumbing Commission”. The Authority is established by Division 2 of Part 12 of the Building Act but will be replaced by the Building and Plumbing Commission (**Commission**) established under Part 3.1 of the BPAE Act when that Act commences in 2027.

Where clauses in the Bill will commence before the BPAE Act and thus before the Commission replaces the Authority as the building regulator, the document makes reference to the Authority. Where clauses in the Bill are intended to commence after the Commission replaces the Authority, this document makes reference to the Commission.

**Human rights**

This Statement of Compatibility provides an outline of the rights generally engaged by the Bill and then discusses the compatibility of the relevant Parts of the Bill with those rights.

The human rights protected by the Charter that are relevant to this Bill are as follows:

***Right to privacy (section 13(a))***

Section 13(a) of the Charter provides that a person has the right not to have their privacy unlawfully or arbitrarily interfered with. An interference will be lawful if it is permitted by a law which is precise and appropriately circumscribed, and will be arbitrary only if it is capricious, unpredictable, unjust or unreasonable, in the sense of being disproportionate to the legitimate aim sought. The right to privacy is broad in scope and encompasses rights to physical and psychological integrity, individual identity, informational privacy and the right to establish and develop meaningful social relations.

***Right to freedom of expression (section 15(2))***

Section 15(2) of the Charter provides that every person has the right to freedom of expression, which includes the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds.

However, section 15(3) provides that special duties and responsibilities attach to this right, which may be subject to lawful restrictions reasonably necessary to respect the rights and reputations of others, or for the protection of national security, public order, public health or public morality.

***Cultural rights (section 19)***

Section 19(1) of the Charter provides that all persons with a particular cultural, religious, racial or linguistic background must not be denied the right, in community with other persons of that background, to enjoy their culture, declare and practise their religion, and use their language. Section 19(2) of the Charter further provides specific protection for Aboriginal persons, providing that they must not be denied the right, with other members of their community, to enjoy their identity and culture, maintain and use their language,

maintain kinship ties, and maintain their distinct spiritual, material and economic relationship with the land and waters and other resources with which they have a connection under traditional laws and customs.

The rights in s 19 are intended to protect and promote the cultural, religious, racial and linguistic diversity of Victorian society. The rights are concerned not only with the preservation of the cultural, religious and linguistic identity of particular cultural groups, but also with their continued development.

***Right to property (section 20)***

Section 20 of the Charter provides that a person must not be deprived of their property other than in accordance with law. This right requires that powers which authorise the deprivation of property are conferred by legislation or the common law, are confined and structured rather than unclear, are accessible to the public, are formulated precisely and do not operate arbitrarily.

***Right to a fair hearing (section 24(1))***

Section 24(1) of the Charter provides that a person charged with a criminal offence or a party to a civil proceeding has the right to have the charge or proceeding decided by a competent, independent and impartial court or tribunal after a fair and public hearing. The concept of a 'civil proceeding' is not limited to judicial decision makers but may encompass the decision-making procedures of many types of tribunals, boards and other administrative decision-makers with the power to determine private rights and interests.

The right may be limited if a person faces a procedural barrier to bringing their case before a court, or where procedural fairness is not provided. However, the entire decision-making process, including reviews and appeals, must be examined in order to determine whether the right is limited.

***Presumption of innocence (section 25(1))***

Section 25(1) of the Charter provides that a person charged with a criminal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law. The right is relevant where a statutory provision shifts the burden of proof onto an accused in a criminal proceeding, so that the accused is required to prove matters to establish, or raise evidence to suggest, that they are not guilty of an offence.

**Human rights issues**

***Place of public entertainment permits***

Place of public entertainment permits are to be required for certain public events or meetings that fall under the definition of public entertainment, held in temporary or permanent places, to ensure appropriate safety standards are in place to protect attendees. The permits are event-specific and issued for temporary public entertainment events, including sports events, business events and live music events. The place of public entertainment permit may cover public entertainment that is held over a single day or multiple days (consecutive or non-consecutive). Clause 4(3) of the Bill substitutes the definition of 'public entertainment' in section 3(1) of the Building Act to mean 'an entertainment event, including a meeting, that is accessible by members of the public and meets any prescribed criteria'.

Division 1 of Part 2 of the Bill amends the provisions of the Building Act that regulate place of public entertainment permits. Clause 17 of the Bill substitutes sections 49, 50, 51 and 52 of the Building Act. Section 49 provides that a person must not provide public entertainment in a place of public entertainment unless the required permits have been obtained. Section 50 provides that the owner or occupier of a place of public entertainment must not permit the place to be used for the purpose of providing public entertainment unless the required permits have been obtained. Sections 51 and 52 require that the use of a place of public entertainment or a prescribed temporary structure complies with the relevant permit.

The Bill substitutes sections 49 and 50 of the Building Act to reflect the repeal of the definition of 'conduct' in section 3(1) of the Building Act. Currently, 'conduct', in relation to public entertainment, means 'to have a direct pecuniary interest in the proceeds or profits of the entertainment'. The intention behind the repeal of this definition is to remove the concept of financial gain from the regulation of places of public entertainment. This allows for the adoption of a risk-based criteria to determine whether a place of public entertainment permit is required, instead of relying on whether financial gain is being obtained. Clause 17, therefore, amends, among other things, the reference to 'conduct' in section 49 of the Building Act and the reference to 'fee or reward' in section 50 of the Building Act.

***Freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief (section 14), right to freedom of expression (section 15(2)) and cultural rights (section 19)***

These changes, particularly the repeal of the definition of 'conduct' and the substitution of the definition of 'public entertainment', are likely to broaden the circumstances in which a place of public entertainment permit may be required for public entertainment. For instance, a free concert held at a public park may be captured by the new provisions, thus requiring a place of public entertainment permit. The changes may also capture free, publicly accessible community events or meetings such as church services. Currently,

regulation 206(1)(b)(i) of the Building Regulations 2018 exempts places used for the purposes of conducting an event or activity which is organised and controlled by a community-based organisation. 'Community-based organisation' includes a body that is not established primarily for the purposes of profit or gain and operates in a community wholly for a philanthropic or benevolent purpose, which includes the promotion of, amongst other things, culture or religion (regulation 206(2)). This likely captures many churches and community groups who conduct religious or cultural events and activities. However, the changes introduced by the Bill will likely require that the exemptions under the Building Regulations 2018 are given fresh consideration based on the amended permit scheme.

To the extent that the amendments may prohibit public entertainment from being provided without a permit which would otherwise be permitted, the right to freedom of expression may be interfered with, in terms of both the right of persons to receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, including by way of art or another medium. To the extent that 'public entertainment' involves religious or cultural beliefs, it may interfere with the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief in section 14 of the Charter. It may also interfere with cultural rights in section 19 of the Charter to the extent that it denies persons with a particular cultural, religious, racial or linguistic background the right to enjoy their culture, to declare and practice their religion and to use their language in community with other persons of that background.

The exact extent and nature of this interference will be determined by the content of any future regulations and, in particular, the risk-based criteria that is adopted in the regulations. The policy intent behind the changes is to move from a profit-based approach to a risk-based approach to better support public safety at public entertainment. This shift means that public entertainment events and meetings may be captured that were not previously captured. The exact thresholds and exemptions that will determine whether a particular activity is subject to the permit requirement will be determined by regulation. That regulation will be subject to an ordinary process under the *Subordinate Legislation Act 1994* involving a Regulatory Impact Statement, public consultation and the preparation of a Human Rights Certificate certifying the compatibility of the regulations with the Charter.

I otherwise consider that any interference with the above rights, to be ultimately determined by regulation, is reasonable and justified for the following reasons:

- the nature and extent of the limit – the amendments are limited to places of public entertainment, and will not affect the freedom of expression, religious or cultural rights in private or in other places;
- the importance of the limitation – being to improve the places of public entertainment scheme to better support public safety at public entertainment and to reflect the growing diversity and complexity of public events, to which public safety risks may be just as significant with regards to a community-based event as a commercial one;
- the relationship between the limitation and its purpose – the purpose is supported by establishing clear criteria for determining whether a place of public entertainment permit is required, which includes defined triggers and exemptions that are based on the risk level of the public entertainment;
- any less restrictive means – subject to any exemptions, the risk-based criteria will ensure that no single consideration, such as financial gain, is determinative of whether a place of public entertainment permit is required, rather, the focus is shifted to the risk posed to the public by the proposed public entertainment; and
- the criteria for determining whether the public entertainment requires a public entertainment permit is to be prescribed by regulation (see clause 4(3), definition of 'place of public entertainment'), which will require the Minister to produce a Human Rights Certificate certifying the compatibility of the regulations with the Charter. The same applies for any regulation made exempting places of public entertainment from the provisions of the Act and the regulations.

For these reasons, I consider that clause 17 is compatible with these Charter rights.

### ***Powers of inspection***

Clause 15 inserts new section 48A into the Building Act, which provides that the municipal building surveyor of a municipal district or the Commission may cause any place of public entertainment, for which an occupancy permit has been issued, to be inspected from time to time to determine whether the permit is being complied with. The municipal building surveyor may only inspect a place within the relevant municipal district.

Clause 18 inserts new sections 52A and 52B, which permit persons to apply for early certification of a prescribed temporary structure prior to the prescribed temporary structure being erected. The early certification will detail how the prescribed temporary structure must be erected and may contain a condition

which requires the verification of the prescribed temporary structure after it is installed through an inspection process. After the prescribed temporary structure is installed, section 52B provides that the verification must be undertaken by a prescribed person or person in a prescribed class of person which will be specified in regulations.

*Right to privacy (section 13(a))*

While powers of inspection are generally considered to interfere with the right to privacy, in my view this provision is unlikely to impact privacy in a material way. There would be a low to negligible expectation of privacy in relation to a place of public entertainment, particularly in the context where a person has applied for an occupancy permit with conditions of inspection. In these circumstances, the person has voluntarily assumed special obligations which attach to the permit or the early certification.

To the extent that it constitutes an interference, I consider it would not be arbitrary. The provisions are precise and appropriately circumscribed and are proportionate to the legitimate aim of ensuring compliance with the permit scheme to support public safety in public spaces. The inspection powers are limited to circumstances where the relevant person is ensuring compliance with an occupancy permit, or with the conditions of an early certification of a prescribed temporary structure. I am thus satisfied these provisions are compatible with the Charter.

***Immunities for building surveyors***

Clause 38 of the Bill inserts new sections 128B and 128C into the Building Act to provide for statutory immunities for certain building surveyors. New section 128B(1) provides that a municipal building surveyor or private building surveyor is not personally liable for acts or omissions done in good faith in reliance on certain certifications and verifications given in relation to a prescribed temporary structure. Subsections (1) and (2) of new section 128C provide that, where a building surveyor (the ‘original building surveyor’) issues an occupancy permit and another building surveyor (the ‘subsequent building surveyor’) decides an application to amend the occupancy permit, the subsequent building surveyor, in issuing any amended occupancy permit, is not personally liable for anything done or omitted to be done in reliance on the matters which the original building surveyor was satisfied of in issuing the original occupancy permit.

New sections 128B(2) and 128C(3) provide that these liabilities instead attach to the certifier, verifier or original building surveyor (as applicable), which, in effect, provides for an indemnity for building surveyors in the specified circumstances.

*Right to a fair hearing (section 24) and right to property (section 20)*

The fair hearing right is relevant where statutory immunities are provided to certain persons as this right has been held to encompass a person’s right of access to the courts for determination of a civil claim. Similarly, insofar as a cause of action may be considered ‘property’ within the meaning of section 20 of the Charter, clause 38 may also engage this right by depriving a claimant’s ability to obtain effective relief.

Clause 38 will not interfere with the right to a fair hearing or property because parties seeking redress are instead able to bring a claim against the specified parties to which the provision attaches that liability to (new sections 128B(2) and 128C(3)). Additionally, in relation to new section 128B, the building surveyor remains liable for any conduct not performed in good faith. Accordingly, this provision does not limit the right to property or a fair hearing under the Charter.

***Emergency orders, building notices and building orders***

Division 2 of Part 2 of the Bill amends the provisions of the Building Act that relate to emergency orders, building notices and building orders. The Bill proposes to expand the scope of the existing powers to enable emergency orders, building notices and building orders to be issued in relation to ‘condition-altered land’. Clause 45 of the Bill defines ‘condition-altered land’ as land on which a building is situated and the condition of which has been impacted by a condition-altering event. ‘Condition-altering event’, as defined, means an event or activity that fundamentally compromises the integrity and stability of the land.

Division 1 of Part 8 of the Building Act is concerned with the making of emergency orders for the enforcement of safety and building standards. Section 103(1) provides that an emergency order may direct an owner or occupier to evacuate a building or land or a place of public entertainment, and if an order is given, to direct any person to evacuate the building, land or place. Section 103(2) provides that an emergency order may prohibit any person from entering, using or occupying the building, land or place for a specified period unless permitted by the municipal building surveyor. Clause 47 of the Bill proposes to expand the scope of the powers in section 103 to include ‘condition-altered land’.

Section 104(1)(a) of the Building Act provides that an emergency order may require the owner or occupier of a building or land or a place of public entertainment not to conduct, or not to allow the conduct, of public entertainment or immediately cease to conduct public entertainment. Section 104(1)(b) provides that an

emergency order may require the owner or occupier to stop building work or other work necessary to make the building, land or place safe or to secure the building, land or place from access. Clause 48 of the Bill amends section 104 to include ‘condition-altered land’.

Division 2 of Part 8 of the Building Act is concerned with the making of building notices and building orders. Section 111(3) provides that a building order made in accordance with this section may direct an owner or occupier to evacuate a building or land or a place of public entertainment within a specified time or times and if an order is given, direct any person to vacate a building or land or a place of public entertainment within a specified time or times. Section 111(4) provides that a building order may prohibit a person from entering, using or occupying a building, land or a place of public entertainment for a specified period unless permitted by the municipal building surveyor. Clause 52 of the Bill amends section 111 to include ‘condition-altered land’.

Section 112 of the Building Act provides that a municipal building surveyor or a private building surveyor may make a building order in accordance with that section that requires an owner or other person to stop building work. Clause 53 of the Bill amends section 112 to include ‘condition-altered land’.

Section 113 of the Building Act provides that a municipal building surveyor or a private building surveyor may make a building order in accordance with that provision that requires an owner of the building, land or place to carry out work that is of a minor nature. Clause 54 of the Bill amends section 113 to include ‘condition-altered land’.

Clause 55 amends section 118(2) of the Building Act, which provides that a person must not occupy a building, land or place in contravention of an emergency order, to extend that offence to occupation of condition-altered land in contravention of such orders, consequential to the inclusion of that land in the powers outlined above.

*Right to property (s 20) and right to privacy (section 13(a))*

Emergency orders, building notices and building orders made in relation to ‘condition-altered land’ may interfere with the following rights under the Charter:

- the right to property under section 20 of the Charter, to the extent that a decision under these provisions deprives a person of their property because it interferes with a person’s enjoyment of their property and restricts how a person may use their property; and
- the right to privacy under section 13(a) of the Charter, to the extent that ‘condition-altered land’ encompasses a person’s private property or private residence.

However, I consider that these rights are not limited. First, any deprivation of property must be in accordance with the law because the legal authorisation for the deprivation is publicly accessible and governed by a clear and accessible process. Second, the clauses of the Bill serve the important purpose of enabling building surveyors to make emergency orders and serve building notices and building orders in respect of land on which a building is situated and the condition of which has been impacted by a ‘condition-altering event’, such as a landslide. Finally, building surveyors can only make orders for the clear purposes provided for in the Building Act, and in accordance with the provisions in Part 8 of the Building Act, which supports public safety in emergency and endangering scenarios. Ultimately, these clauses promote the right to life by enabling building surveyors to make orders in circumstances where they form the opinion that the order is necessary because of a danger to life or property (section 102 of the Building Act). For these reasons, I consider that any limitation on these rights is lawful and not arbitrary.

*Directions to provide information to the Commission*

Clause 65 of the Bill inserts new section 137ZZZI into the Building Act, which provides that the Commission may direct a designated insurer offering an approved decennial insurance product to provide information prescribed under new section 137ZZZI(1), which relevantly includes:

- details of contraventions by a developer in relation to a decennial insurance policy;
- the name of the developer of the residential apartment building to which the policy relates;
- identifying details of the residential apartment building to which each policy relates, including the name of the insured owners corporation; and
- prescribed information.

*Right to privacy (section 13(a))*

To the extent that information obtained by the Commission includes personal information, new section 137ZZZI will engage the right to privacy. This is especially relevant to new section 137ZZZI(1), where the Commission may direct a designated insurer to provide the details of any contravention by a developer of a provision of the *Insurance Contracts Act 1984 (Cth)* in relation to a decennial insurance policy

or proposed decennial insurance policy. While a developer will generally be a body corporate, it may extend to information about a natural person.

In my opinion, any limit on the right to privacy is lawful and not arbitrary. The information that can be requested by the Commission is limited to information that is relevant to the performance of the Commission's functions. The functions of the Commission, as discussed above, relate to protecting consumers of domestic building work by administering the statutory insurance scheme effectively and ensuring compliance with building legislation, including the decennial insurance scheme under Division 9 of Part 9B of the Building Act.

Under section 137ZZZI the Commission is required to issue a written notice to a designated insurer. New section 137ZZZI(1) limits the type of information the Commission can request from a designated insurer in these circumstances. These provisions are precise and appropriately circumscribed to their purpose.

Under Part 10.1 of the BPAE Act (specifically, section 461 of that Act), the Commission is prohibited from using or disclosing to another person any building and plumbing information which the Commission holds or obtains in performing a function under the building legislation. Also, under Part 10.1 of the BPAE Act, use and disclosure of such information may only be done in the circumstances specified in Part 10.1.

These provisions establish an appropriate balance between enabling the Commission to perform its functions and achieve its statutory objectives, by ensuring the Commission can access the information needed to understand the issues faced by insurers and by developers arranging for the issue of decennial insurance policies for the residential apartments they construct, while protecting the rights of individuals to have their privacy and reputation protected.

Consequently, I consider that these provisions under the Bill are compatible with the right to privacy under section 13 of the Charter.

***VCAT power to make orders to access a property in relation to decennial insurance***

Clause 65 inserts new section 137ZZZR into the Building Act, which provides that a prescribed person ('the applicant') may apply to VCAT for an order requiring the occupier of a lot in a residential apartment building to grant access to the lot to the applicant for a prescribed purpose.

***Right to privacy (section 13(a))***

If VCAT grants the order, the power to enter and inspect a lot in a residential apartment building may interfere with the right to privacy, to the extent that the lot is private property or a private residence.

However, powers of entry are generally compatible with the Charter where the power is appropriately confined and subject to independent oversight. Here, a person must apply to VCAT for an order to grant access. VCAT will be a public authority when determining the application and will be obliged to consider privacy rights when granting access. The order can only be granted for the purposes of inspecting the property in accordance with the terms of the relevant decennial insurance policy, to determine if there is a relevant defect, or to carry out work under the decennial insurance policy. This serves the important purpose of protecting the interests of other persons in circumstances where there is a relevant defect in the residential apartment building. Further, under new section 13ZZZR(4), VCAT may grant the order only if it is satisfied that:

- there is a defect that can only be reasonably inspected, determined or rectified by accessing the lot;
- the applicant has given written notice to the occupier of the lot advising that access is needed for a prescribed purpose and requesting the occupier consent to the applicant being given access to the lot for the prescribed purpose; and
- not less than 14 days after the notice is given, the occupier has not consented to giving access to the applicant for the prescribed purpose.

I therefore consider that any interference with the right to privacy will be in circumstances which are neither unlawful or arbitrary. Accordingly, I consider that the provisions are compatible with the right to privacy in section 13(a) of the Charter.

***Property rights (section 20)***

Powers of entry for the purpose of undertaking rectification work may amount to a deprivation of property if they substantially restrict a person's exclusive possession, use or enjoyment of their property, particularly if such work is prolonged or poses a significant interference with a person's ability to use and enjoy the building, land or lot.

However, I consider that any interferences with these rights would be neither unlawful nor arbitrary and would be 'in accordance with the law'. This is because the powers are subject to appropriate safeguards. For example, as discussed above, VCAT may only grant an order under new section 137ZZZR if VCAT is satisfied of the requirements prescribed under new section 137ZZZR(4). Further, these powers serve the

important purpose of enabling rectification work to be carried out. As such, they are aimed at ensuring the safety and compliance of the building and land pursuant to the relevant decennial insurance policy, thereby protecting the safety of the occupier, other land users and the general public.

***Protection from liability for authorised nominating authorities***

Clause 79(2) amends section 46 of the SOP Act to extend the protection from civil liability already afforded to adjudicators to authorised nominating authorities (ANA) for the duties and functions they perform under the SOP Act in good faith. ANAs are persons authorised by the Authority under section 42 of the SOP Act to nominate persons to determine adjudication applications (see definition in section 4 of the SOP Act). Their functions are set out in sections 43A and 43B of the SOP Act and include the function of nominating adjudicators for the purposes of the SOP Act, to receive and refer adjudication applications to adjudicators, to serve copies of adjudication determinations on certain persons, to provide adjudication certificates and to provide certain information to the Authority. These functions may be altered by requirements imposed by the Authority as conditions of authorisation under its powers in sections 43 of the SOP Act.

***Right to fair hearing (section 24) and right to property (section 20)***

As above, where an immunity clause restricts a person's ability to access a court by effectively removing their ability to bring an action in court and depriving them of their ability to obtain effective relief due to the absence of an appropriate defendant, the right to a fair hearing and right to property may be engaged. As the immunity for ANAs in clause 79(2) acts as a complete bar to bringing a civil claim in certain circumstances, the fair hearing right and property right will be limited by this clause. However, for the reasons that follow, I consider that this clause is compatible with these rights.

In relation to fair hearing, such immunities are commonly provided for persons who perform quasi-judicial roles requiring fast, impartial and independent decisions. Immunity from personal liability allows decisions to be made in the good faith discharge of the person's functions without fear of litigation from a party subject to an unfavourable decision. Without such immunity, the capacity for ANAs, who manage and oversee adjudicators' performance under the SOP Act, to discharge their functions could be compromised. This clause will also bring Victoria's SOP Act into alignment with other states' and territories' security of payment legislation, which confers such immunity on their ANAs. The clause also implements a recommendation made by the Legislative Assembly's Environment and Planning Committee in its November 2023 report, concluding its 'Inquiry into Employers and Contractors Who Refuse to Pay Their Subcontractors for Completed Works'. This recommendation was also widely supported by stakeholders during subsequent consultation undertaken by the Department during 2025. The immunity conferred deviates from the State-approved model immunity clause in that it does not transfer ANAs' liability to another appropriate person. However, this is justified because ANAs remain subject to regulatory oversight by the Authority, which can alter or revoke their authorisation if they fail to properly perform their functions. The scope of the immunity conferred is also limited to good faith actions and omissions such that it is proportionate to the legitimate aim sought. As such, there are no less restrictive means of achieving the Bill's objectives.

In relation to proprietary rights, any deprivation of the ability to bring an action will be 'in accordance with law' as these provisions are drafted in clear and precise terms and are reasonably necessary to achieve the important objective. Accordingly, the protection from liability provision in clause 79(2) is appropriately granted and so, compatible with the rights to fair hearing and property.

***Declaration of flood-prone areas***

Division 4 of Part 2 of the Bill will insert new section 188B of the Building Act, to enable the Minister to determine that specific areas of land are 'designated flood-prone areas' where, in the Minister's opinion, there exists a 1% or higher risk of the land flooding in any 12-month period.

Section 188B of the Building Act will be inserted into the Building Act by clause 67 of the Bill and will be repealed and replaced by section 20A of the BPAE Act (to be inserted by clause 84 of the Bill) when the BPAE Act commences (see clause 95 of the Bill and section 775 of the BPAE Act for the repeals and clause 94 for transitional arrangements).

Under both section 188B and section 20A of each Act respectively, a determination of the Minister that land is a designated flood-prone area must be described by reference to a plan or plans of those areas that will be lodged in the Central Plan Office (new sections 188B(3) / 20A(3)) and must be made publicly available (sections 188B(7), (8) and (9) / 20A(7), (8) and (9)). Once made, a determination of the Minister will become relevant in a number of ways, including in the assessment of applications for building permits by building surveyors and the relevant local councils. It must also be disclosed by a vendor in a section 32 statement (clauses 130 and 131) for the sale of the land.

The Minister's new power is intended to provide a centralised, state-based method for declaring areas of land that are flood-prone (see also clause 94 and amendments to the Water Act in Part 9 of the Bill). It will replace

the current methods of determining the areas of land that are 'liable to flooding' by the Minister administering the Water Act under section 205 of that Act (see clause 134 of the Bill) and by local councils under regulation 5(2) of the *Building Regulations 2018*. A Minister's determination is to be based on the advice of the floodplain management Authorities who will be required to prepare and give their advice about flooding and controls on development to the Minister administering the BPAE Act and the Minister administering the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* (in addition to local councils, the Secretary to the Department and the local community) (see clause 133 of the Bill which amends section 202 of the Water Act).

The new scheme is designed to ensure that the determination of flood-prone areas of land is carried out as comprehensively and promptly as possible, and then consistently applied to applications for building permits.

*Right to property (section 20)*

Although the precise impact of the Minister making a determination will vary according to the circumstances of each area in question, this power is likely to affect a person's use or enjoyment of their property, including residential property. For example, the making of a determination may contribute to the imposition of restrictions on building permits or to an application for a permit being refused. It may also have a consequential impact on the value of the land.

Noting that a person's property rights may be impacted by clauses 67 and 84, and that the impact may constitute a deprivation of property, I consider that any such interference would be 'in accordance with the law' and so would not limit the right to property. Any interference will be authorised under legislation and drafted in clear and precise terms and is reasonably necessary to achieve the important objective of ensuring that areas of land that have a 1% or higher risk flooding in any 12-month period are identified in an accurate and timely manner and so will be subject to appropriate building controls. This ultimately mitigates against risks to public safety and buildings on the land, and ensures all parties, including for example, a land owner and a potential purchaser of a property, are aware of the risk of flooding on that land. Accordingly, I do not consider that clauses 67 or 84 limit the Charter right to property.

***Disclosure of information in relation to minimum financial requirements***

Clause 101 inserts new section 41A into the Buyer Protections Act, which inserts new section 316A into the Building Act. New section 316A deals with the determination of minimum financial requirements for registration under Part 11 of the Building Act, and the determination of whether an applicant for registration as a building practitioner or registered building practitioner meets those requirements. The minimum financial requirements may differ according to the class or classes of applicant or registered building practitioner or any other circumstance relating to the application for registration or the building practitioner. Section 316A(4)(a) provides that, for the purposes of determining whether an applicant for registration or a registered building practitioner meets the minimum financial requirements, the Authority may request the applicant or practitioner to provide any information or document that the Authority considers relevant.

*Right to privacy (section 13(a))*

To the extent that the information requested by the Authority includes personal information, the Bill will engage the right to privacy. While the provision, which gives the Authority the power to request *any information or document that it considers relevant*, is broad in scope, the information or documents that may be requested is nevertheless limited to such information or documents the Authority considers relevant for purpose of determining whether the applicant or practitioner meets the minimum financial requirements for the purpose of supporting the Authority's statutory insurance scheme functions and enabling the identification and mitigation of risks associated with a registered building practitioner's financial insecurity.

Although this provision allows the Authority to gather and analyse what may be personal identifying information, I do not consider the power to be unlawful or arbitrary, as it is for the limited purpose of determining whether an applicant or practitioner meets the minimum financial requirements. The Authority being able to ascertain whether an applicant or practitioner meets the minimum financial requirements ultimately serves the purpose of providing for appropriate regulation of the building industry and enhancing consumer protection and will impact builders who have voluntarily undertaken to practise in a regulated industry where special duties and responsibilities attach. Further, the Authority is a public authority under the Charter and is required to comply with relevant privacy laws in the handling of any personal information collected, ensuring that any interference with the right to privacy will be lawful and not arbitrary.

Accordingly, in my opinion, any limit on the right to privacy imposed by new section 316A(4)(a) inserted by clause 101 of the Bill is reasonable and justified.

***Strict liability provision – payment of statutory insurance scheme premium***

Clause 108 amends section 56 of the Buyer Protections Act to insert new section 137OA into the Building Act. New section 137OA provides that a building owner who enters into a prescribed insurable domestic building contract must pay the applicable statutory insurance scheme premium to the Authority before the

building owner enters into a contract for the sale of the land on which the domestic building work under the insurable domestic building contract is carried out. This is a strict liability provision, imposing 500 penalty units for contravention by a natural person and 2,500 penalty units in the case of a body corporate.

*Presumption of innocence (section 25(1))*

By imposing a strict liability offence, new section 1370A engages the right to be presumed innocent under s 25(1) of the Charter. This being so, strict liability provisions will generally be compatible with the presumption of innocence where they are reasonable, necessary and proportionate and in pursuit of a legitimate objective. Strict liability offences are considered legitimate where directed at preventing loss in particular contexts. This provision will enhance compliance with regulatory requirements and support the Authority to provide assistance to subsequent building owners by strongly incentivising a building owner who enters a contract of sale for land on which domestic building work is carried out under a prescribed insurable domestic building contract, to pay the insurance premium associated with that domestic building work. Where the applicable insurance premium is not paid by the building owner when required, the Authority may incur financial loss in providing assistance to subsequent building owners who are entitled to make a claim under the statutory insurance scheme. This may lead to an increase in insurance premiums more broadly to cover that cost and therefore may financially impact other consumers entering insurable domestic building contracts. Further, the strict liability provision is reasonable in that it does not exclude the common law defence of honest and reasonable mistake of fact.

New section 1370A provides that a failure to pay the applicable insurance premium will attract a penalty of up to 500 penalty units for a natural person. While this is at the high end of the liability spectrum for what a strict liability offence would generally attract, this is reasonable and proportionate, noting the very large values of contractual commitments by parties to domestic building contracts. It is also reasonable and proportionate considering the significant costs to the community where buildings with major faults are sold to subsequent building owners. Accordingly, this maximum penalty provides a significant incentive to comply with the requirements of the statutory insurance scheme, in order to support the Authority to provide assistance to address identified practices of undertaking defective, non-compliant or incomplete domestic building work.

For these reasons, to the extent there is any limitation to s 25(1) of the Charter imposed by this strict liability offence, these limitations are reasonable and justifiable within the meaning of s 7(2) of the Charter.

***Protection of expressions associated with the statutory insurance scheme***

Clause 117 amends section 56 of the Buyer Protections Act by substituting proposed section 137ZG(1) and (2) of the Building Act. New sections 137ZG(1) and (2) provide that a person must not use a prescribed expression, or any variation of a prescribed expression or word similar in sight or sound to a prescribed expression, in connection with selling insurance cover or any kind of warranty under a scheme relating to domestic building work to which the statutory insurance scheme applies unless the scheme is the statutory insurance scheme and the person does so on behalf of the Authority.

*Right to freedom of expression (section 15(2))*

While the prohibition in new sections 137ZG(1) and (2) on the use of prescribed expressions, or any variation of a prescribed expression or word similar in sight or sound to a prescribed expression, may restrict the right to freedom of expression in section 15(2) of the Charter, I consider that any such restriction is a lawful restriction reasonably necessary to protect public order and the rights of others within the meaning of section 15(3) of the Charter.

'Public order' is a wide and flexible concept which extends to laws that enable the public to engage in their personal and business affairs free from unlawful interference to their person or property. Respecting the rights of others is a similarly broad concept and would include restrictions reasonably necessary to protect the property rights of others.

Further, any restriction on the right to freedom of expression caused by the prevention of the use of prescribed expressions, or variations thereof, is confined to the very limited circumstance of using the prescribed expression, or variation thereof, in connection with selling insurance cover or any kind of warranty under a scheme relating to domestic building work to which the statutory insurance scheme applies. I consider that this restriction is closely tailored to its purpose of deterring and preventing fraud or other misleading behaviour which may undermine the integrity of the statutory insurance scheme and risk consumers and builders being without the proper insurance. I consider there are no less restrictive means of achieving the purpose of protecting consumers and builders from purchasing insurance covers that renders them at risk.

Finally, I note that any expression to be prescribed will be assessed for compatibility with the Charter through the requirement for the Minister to certify a Human Rights Certificate.

For these reasons, I consider proposed new sections 137ZG(1) and (2) of the Building Act to fall within the ambit of section 15(3) of the Charter as it is reasonably necessary to protect public order and the rights of others. As such, this provision imposes no limitation on the freedom of expression.

**The Hon. Nick Staikos MP**  
**Minister for Housing and Building**

*Statement of treaty compatibility*

**Nick STAIKOS** (Bentleigh – Minister for Housing and Building, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop) (10:17): Under the Statewide Treaty Act 2025, I table a statement of treaty compatibility:

1. In my opinion, the Building Legislation and Treasury Legislation (Tax Relief) Amendment Bill 2026 (the Bill) is compatible with the matters set out in section 66(3)(d) of the *Statewide Treaty Act 2025*. I base my opinion on the reasons outlined in this statement.

**Overview of the Bill**

2. The Bill is proposed to make miscellaneous reforms to building legislation, related amendments to the *Water Act 1989* (Water Act) and the *Sale of Land Act 1963* (Sale of Land Act) and separate amendments to the *Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund Act 2012* (ESVF Act) and the *Land Tax Act 2005* (Land Tax Act).

Building legislation and other related amendments

3. The amendments to the *Building Act 1993* (Building Act) in the Bill include amendments to –
  - 3.1 clarify and streamline processes relating to applications for permits to use a building or place for the provision of public entertainment and relating to prescribed temporary structures;
  - 3.2 ensure that emergency orders and building notices and orders can be issued in appropriate circumstances relating to land the condition of which has been fundamentally altered by a natural hazard or human impact;
  - 3.3 introduce a decennial insurance scheme for certain new residential apartment buildings;
  - 3.4 expand the power to apply, adopt or incorporate documents by reference in any regulations under the Building Act to allow incorporation of any document, including the Building Code of Australia and other documents unrelated to building standards.
4. The Bill also amends the Building Act to give the Minister for Housing and Building power to designate land that is at one percent or higher risk of flooding in any twelve-month period as a flood-prone area, based on assessment of the land prepared by the relevant floodplain management authority, and makes related amendments to the Water Act.
5. The Bill amends the Sale of Land Act to require the fact that land is in a designated flood-prone area, and the particulars of any applicable cover under the statutory insurance scheme, to be communicated at the point of sale of land.
6. The Bill also amends the *Building Legislation (Buyers Protection) Act 2025* (Buyers Protection Act) to ensure that the amendments in that Act to the Building Act operate as intended. These include amendments to enable regulations to be made allowing a limited exemption from, or the delay of, the payment of insurance premiums under the statutory insurance scheme and to require the Building and Plumbing Commission to consider issue of rectification orders prior to deciding a claim under the statutory insurance scheme.
7. It also amends the Buyers Protection Act to provide for transitional arrangements during the first two years of the statutory insurance scheme in relation to the scope of premiums orders for the calculation of insurance premiums, the determination of the minimum financial requirements for building practitioner registration and guidelines for assessing whether those minimum financial requirements are met.
8. The Bill also makes amendments to the *Building and Construction Industry Security of Payment Act 2002* to improve the operation of that Act by requiring the Minister to complete three yearly reviews of the Act's operation and to expand an immunity from civil liability held by adjudicators to authorised nominating authorities.
9. The Bill also corrects two technical drafting issues contained in unproclaimed amendments to the *Building and Construction Industry Security of Payment Act 2002* made by the *Building Legislation Amendment (Fairer Payments on Jobsites and Other Matters) Act 2025*.

10. The Bill also makes a number of consequential and technical amendments to the *Building and Plumbing Administration and Enforcement Act 2026* and the *Cladding Safety Victoria Repeal Act 2026* (which are both currently Bills before Parliament).
11. The amendments with respect to the issue of emergency orders or building notices or orders in relation to condition-altered land and enabling the designation of flood-prone areas may directly impact First Peoples who are owners of the land, hold native title over the land or are a party to a Traditional Owner Settlement Agreement in respect of the land. However, the powers may affect all owners (and where applicable lessees) of land equally.
12. The amendments to requirements for places of public entertainment permits may impact First Peoples involved in the organisation of cultural events or events held by First Peoples organisations but the reforms seek to better support such events and their safety by improving flexibility and providing for clearer and more proportionate regulation.

#### ESVF Act amendments

13. The amendments to the ESVF Act in the Bill provide for the deferral of an increase in the emergency services and volunteers funding levy fixed charge for residential land, an exemption for Homes Victoria and a levy offset for community housing organisations. First Peoples are not directly impacted by the operation of the ESVF Act amendments, but as a broader class of people may be positively indirectly impacted.

#### Land Tax Act amendments

14. The Land Tax Act amendments correct anomalies in and improve the operation of the principal place of residence land tax exemption in cases of construction delay. First Peoples are not directly impacted by the operation of the Land Tax Act amendments, but as a broader class of people may be positively indirectly impacted.

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

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

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

16. I have considered whether the Bill is compatible with the objects at section 66(3)(d) of the *Statewide Treaty Act 2025* of:
  - 16.1 advancing the inherent rights and self-determination of First Peoples; and
  - 16.2 addressing the unacceptable disadvantage inflicted on First Peoples by the historic wrongs and ongoing injustices of colonisation; and
  - 16.3 ensuring the equal enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms by First Peoples.
17. In my opinion the Bill does not affect any of the objects specified in section 66(3)(d)(i) to (iii) of the *Statewide Treaty Act 2025* and is therefore compatible with each of those objects.

**The Hon. Nick Staikos MP**  
**Minister for Housing and Building**

#### *Second reading*

**Nick STAIKOS** (Bentleigh – Minister for Housing and Building, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop) (10:17): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

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

#### **Incorporated speech as follows:**

The Bill amends the *Building Act 1993* (Building Act), the *Building Legislation Amendment (Buyer Protections) Act 2025* (Buyer Protections Act); the *Building and Plumbing Administration Enforcement Act 2026* (BPAAE Act), the *Building Legislation Amendment (Fairer Payments on Jobsites and Other Matters) Act 2025* (Fairer Payments Act); the *Building and Construction Security of Payment Act 2002* (SOP Act), the *Cladding Safety Victoria Repeal Act 2026* (CSV Repeal Act), *Water Act 1989* (Water Act), the *Sale of Land Act 1962* (Sale of Land Act), the *Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund Act 2012* (ESVF Act) and the *Land Tax Act 2005* (LT Act).

The main purposes of the Bill are to:

- modernise legislation to reflect current industry practices and support improved regulation by:
  - resolving key challenges with the Place of Public Entertainment scheme;
  - making further amendments to the SOP Act to enable its effective function; and
  - enabling any regulations made under the Building Act to incorporate any documents by reference;
- improve protections for consumers in Victoria for housing and building matters by:
  - establishing a scheme for the private market to provide 10 years of insurance cover in relation to relevant building elements of new residential apartment buildings;
  - enabling building surveyors to issue emergency orders and building notices and orders in relation to land the condition of which has been altered due to natural or human impacts, including if it presents risks to life, safety or property; and
  - supporting the risk-mitigation of flood-prone areas through designation powers for the Minister of Housing and Building;
- enabling regulations to be made which allow for limited exemptions from, or delay of the payment of, insurance premiums under the Statutory Insurance Scheme;
- providing transitional arrangements over two years during the establishment period of the Statutory Insurance Scheme, including by:
  - enabling the Building and Plumbing Commission to specify, in a Premiums Order, the method, process or approach for calculating insurance premiums and any other amounts payable under Statutory Insurance Scheme;
  - enabling a transition to minimum financial requirements in a way that minimises disruption while continuing to control risks; and
  - enabling the Premiums Order to be exempt from the requirement to prepare a regulatory impact statement for a period of 12 months;
- expanding exemptions and rebates for the emergency services and volunteers funding levy; and
- resolving various issues relating to the land tax exemption for an owner's principal place of residence that is unoccupied due to construction or renovation.

#### **Reforms to the Place of Public Entertainment permit scheme**

Events and festivals are an important part of Victoria's cultural, social and economic fabric. The Bill will help to reduce the administrative burden on both event organisers and regulators by enabling a new framework for approvals required under the Building Act and Regulations. This supports a vibrant events industry while continuing to ensure attendee safety.

Under the Better Approvals for Business Program, the then Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions conducted an Events and Festivals Approval Review in June 2023. The review was conducted as part of the Victorian Government's broader regulatory review program which aimed to identify obstacles for event and festival business approvals in Victoria. The review identified key challenges from stakeholders that included event organisers, industry groups, regulators and government agencies.

One of the key challenges identified was for event and festival approvals under the Building Act. These approvals are intended to ensure public safety at events and gatherings, cover both permanent venues and temporary spaces and focus on risks such as crowd-safety, emergency access and the safe use of structures including stages and marquees.

The Bill addresses key challenges related to uncertainty about when approvals are required, inconsistency in how requirements are interpreted and applied, duplication with other event approval processes, and late-stage uncertainty around whether approvals will be granted. It enables a risk-based framework, supporting proportionate regulation and giving event organisers and regulators certainty and clarity for event approvals under the Building Act.

The amendments to the Building Act will be supported by detailed reform to the Building Regulations. This approach will support more flexible and responsive management to the fast-paced and changing events and festival industry.

The Bill enables the definitions of "place of public entertainment" (POPE) and "public entertainment" to be detailed in the Building Regulations. This will clarify when permits are required for public entertainment events and promote the consistent interpretation of permit requirements. Event organisers face limited ability

to secure early assurance of structural compliance. The Bill establishes an optional early certification pathway for prescribed temporary structures, reducing the risk of late-stage rejection of structures and delays in approvals due to unforeseen approval conditions, and easing the burden on the permit issuer.

The Bill enables a report and consent process to reduce duplication where decision-makers within the POPE approvals framework may consider matters already assessed by other authorities. This process will streamline application processes and better connect requirements under the building framework with other agencies and processes involved in event approvals.

Applications for permits in the scheme are often assessed through the professional judgement of individual approvers, without statewide guidance. This has led to inconsistent decision-making across local government, uncertainty for event organisers and varying levels of attention to safety risks. The Bill will enable the Minister for Housing and Building to issue binding Guidelines setting out the matters that must be considered when assessing permit applications. The Bill also enables the Minister for Housing and Building to prescribe requirements and include prescribed conditions that may be imposed by the prescribed approver. These may be tailored for factors including but not limited to event type, scale, location or season and can be updated as new risks emerge.

The Bill enables timeframe notifications for permits to be prescribed through the Building Regulations, ensuring the adaptability to the fast-changing events industry.

The existing approvals framework can result in overlap between occupancy permits issued under Division 1 of Part 5 of the Building Act and those related to public entertainment. This overlap can create duplication, inconsistent enforcement and confusion – particularly when organisers must seek multiple, disconnected permits for a single event. The Bill enables flexibility for existing buildings to be used for public entertainment where they are in a prescribed class of building by retrospectively having an occupancy permit approved or allowing amendments to be made to an existing occupancy permit.

#### **Security of Payment Act Tranche 2 Reforms**

The Bill continues reforms to the Security of Payments Act, which helps ensure that building contractors, subcontractors, workers and suppliers get paid on time and in full.

Two of the 12 ‘Tranche 2’ reforms recommended in the Legislative Assembly Environment and Planning Committee Inquiry Report, *‘Employers and contractors who refuse to pay their subcontractors for completed works’* are being implemented in this Bill.

To implement recommendation 14, the Bill amends the SOP Act to add a new section requiring that the responsible Minister conducts regular reviews of the SOP Act’s effectiveness in improving financial conditions for those working in the construction industry. The new provision also enables the responsible Minister to consider reforms in other jurisdictions, including internationally, that might be adopted in Victoria to improve the SOP Act’s operation. These reviews will be conducted every three years, with a report on the review’s findings and any recommendations to be tabled in Parliament. This amendment will put Victoria at the forefront of Australian states and territories, none of which require regular reviews of their security of payment legislation. Victoria will be the leading jurisdiction in ensuring that security of payment laws maintain their effectiveness in an evolving construction industry.

To implement recommendation 23, the Bill amends section 46 of the SOP Act to extend to authorised nominating authorities (ANAs), the immunity from personal liability that is currently conferred on adjudicators who discharge their functions in good faith. ANAs play a critical role in security of payment legislation, managing the process for adjudicating disputed claims and overseeing the adjudicators who resolve those disputes. Victoria is the only state that does not confer immunity on its ANAs. The amendment will ensure ANAs are better supported when performing their critical role, by removing the financial and operational burdens they face as a result of not being covered by section 46’s immunity.

The Bill also makes minor amendments to resolve technical issues with two provisions of the Fairer Payments Act, which were to amend the SOP Act but have not yet commenced. The Bill amends section 23 of the SOP Act to ensure that adjudicators properly consider all relevant matters in determining a dispute involving a performance security claim and section 45 of the SOP Act to ensure that an adjudicator can recover fees in appropriate circumstances. These amendments ensure that adjudicators are incentivised to accept and resolve disputed claims and further, that all relevant materials related to those claims are considered in making their determinations. The Bill repeals the two provisions of the Fairer Payments Act that are inconsistent with these amendments and are no longer required.

#### **Expansion of incorporation by reference powers for building regulations**

The Bill makes minor amendments to the Building Act to expand the regulation-making power to enable all regulations made under the Act to incorporate any document by reference.

**Decennial Insurance for residential apartments will be introduced**

The Bill further delivers the Government's commitment to strengthen financial protections for apartment owners by introducing a decennial insurance scheme. Buying an apartment is often the single largest purchase a Victorian will make in their entire life, and they deserve to move into the safe and high-quality home they paid for, without the burden of self-rectifying costly defects. Historically, some off-the-plan and other apartment purchases represented a greater consumer risk than buildings with a rise of 3 storeys or less, and the introduction of this decennial insurance scheme is part of the Government's consumer-focused building reforms to reinforce confidence in Victoria's apartment market.

The Government has already introduced a mandatory developer bond scheme for newly constructed residential apartment buildings (of four or more storeys) to strengthen protections for these homeowners. This Bill takes it a step further by introducing a decennial insurance scheme for these buildings. Decennial insurance is a private market insurance policy taken out by a developer for the benefit of an owners corporation and will provide cover for any relevant defects in a relevant building element of a residential apartment building for a 10-year period after an occupancy permit is issued for the building. Decennial insurance will help to lift the quality of building work on new apartments in Victoria, will help reinforce consumer and investor confidence in these apartments, and will reduce the need for complex and costly litigation to resolve disputes. While consumer protection is the focus of this reform, decennial insurance will also encourage and assist developers and builders to identify and rectify defects early, when they are easiest and most cost-effective to fix.

When the decennial insurance scheme commences, developers will be able to arrange for a decennial insurance policy to be issued, as an alternative to arranging for the issuing of a developer bond. This will give the building industry more flexibility without compromising on consumer protections. Introduced by the Buyer Protections Act, the developer bond scheme requires developers to issue a bond prior to applying for an occupancy permit with the money secured used to cover the cost of rectifying defective work. In the long term, when the decennial insurance market in Australia matures, the Government proposes that the developer bond scheme will be wound down in favour of a mandatory decennial insurance scheme to reinforce Victoria's consumer protections framework in the building industry.

To the extent possible, the decennial insurance scheme has been modelled on the decennial insurance scheme introduced in New South Wales in 2022 to support the development of a competitive and affordable decennial insurance market for residential apartment buildings in Australia.

The Bill requires that a designated insurer must first obtain approval from the Building and Plumbing Commission of a decennial insurance product before it can be marketed to developers.

The 10-year period of cover, commencing from the issuing of an occupancy permit for the building, will apply to major building elements of the common property of a residential apartment building and any relevant building elements in private lots that are prescribed as a relevant building element. It is a first resort, no-fault policy, meaning that an owners corporation may make a claim for a relevant defect without having to prove who is liable for the defect.

If the claim is accepted, the insurer will arrange for or pay for rectification of the relevant defect. Payouts will be permitted in prescribed circumstances, and the insurer may recover its costs from at-fault parties. If the insurer refuses a claim, the Bill allows regulations to be made that will prescribe a consistent dispute resolution process.

To support robust regulatory oversight of the decennial insurance scheme, the Bill introduces certain requirements for developers to notify the Building and Plumbing Commission when they have arranged for the issuing of a policy, and if the insurer has cancelled a policy. A designated insurer is also required to notify the Building and Plumbing Commission if it cancels an insurance policy in accordance with Commonwealth legislation regulating insurance contracts. The Building and Plumbing Commission will also be able to direct developers and insurers to provide certain information about issued decennial insurance policies.

**Amendments to the Buyer Protections Act to allow for regulations to be made with respect to the insurance premium payable under the Statutory Insurance Scheme**

The Bill amends the Buyer Protections Act so that, once it amends the Building Act, it will be possible to make regulations under the Building Act that delay or remove the requirement to pay the insurance premium under the Statutory Insurance Scheme (SIS) in appropriate cases, such as where entities like Homes Victoria or other social housing providers act as a developer but retain ownership of the homes they build. Such entities are not eligible to make a claim under the SIS because they are subject to exclusions aimed at preventing developers from benefitting from the SIS. The amendment to the Buyer Protections Act will permit regulations to be made under the Building Act that will enable prescribed entities to only pay the relevant premium for the SIS if they sell an applicable property within the warranty period, which will allow

subsequent owners to benefit from the protections provided by the SIS. This ensures homeowners remain protected, without unnecessarily adding to the cost of delivering these homes.

The Bill will also amend the Sale of Land Act to ensure particulars of any applicable cover under the SIS are referenced in statements under section 32 of that Act.

#### **Premiums order**

The Bill will also amend the Buyer Protections Act to enable the BPC to specify a method, methodology, process or approach to calculate premiums under the SIS for the first two financial years. The amendment is an interim arrangement while the SIS is being established and will give the BPC the flexibility to ensure premiums structures reflect the claims activity in a first resort insurance product. The amendment will exempt the premiums order from the requirement to complete a regulatory impact statement under the *Subordinate Legislation Act 1994* for 12 months. This approach is consistent with the setting premiums for Workcover and the Transport Accident Commission in Victoria.

#### **Amendment in relation to minimum financial requirements**

The Bill includes provisions for a transition into minimum financial requirements. The purpose of the amendment is to enable the minimum financial requirements to broadly replicate the process the Building and Plumbing Commission currently follows to determine if a builder is eligible to take out domestic building insurance cover. For an initial period of two years, the minimum financial requirements determined under this provision will serve as the financial probity requirements under the Building Act. The Bill also enables guidelines to be issued to support the Building and Plumbing Commission's administration of the minimum financial requirements, following consultation with stakeholders on the proposed minimum financial requirements regulations in early 2026, and this amendment is an interim measure until 1 July 2028 to ensure consumers are protected by Rectification Order powers and first-resort domestic building insurance as smoothly as possible, and to reduce uncertainty for the building industry at a time of global economic disruption.

#### **Issuing a rectification order**

The Bill clarifies that the Building and Plumbing Commission must consider whether to issue a rectification order before deciding a claim under the SIS. The rectification order is critical to the financial sustainability of the SIS.

#### **Minor and technical amendments resulting from the Buyer Protections Act**

The Bill makes several minor and technical amendments to provisions in the Building Act.

#### **Emergency orders, building notices and building orders**

The Bill will improve community and environmental safety by enhancing the regulatory tools available to municipal building surveyors where condition altered land, such as a landslide, undermines the stability of private property.

The Bill makes amendments to the power to issue building orders, emergency orders and building notices to deliver recommendation 30 from the Report of the Board of Inquiry into the McCrae Landslide (McCrae Inquiry). These amendments will improve how local government and private landowners manage risks to the community and the environment on and from private land susceptible to landslides and other natural hazards, or which is fundamentally affected by human impacts.

Both the McCrae Inquiry and a 2025 Building Appeals Board decision in relation to it highlighted a gap in the current legislation. Currently a building surveyor cannot require landowners to undertake rectification, or stabilisation works when condition altering events – such as landslides, erosion, floods or owner or occupier activity – compromise the integrity of land and pose risks to occupants or the wider community.

The Bill amends the Building Act to close this gap by creating a new category of “condition-altered land”. This will give building surveyors the power to issue emergency orders, building notices or building orders in circumstances where the condition of the land is fundamentally altered but a building on said land is not affected. This will include circumstances where land on which a building is situated has been affected by a condition-altering event and the condition of the land poses a danger to life or property.

#### **Designated Flood-prone Areas**

Poor quality or out of date information about flood risk has severe impacts on building design requirements during the land development process. In some cases, this has resulted in development being subject to delay due to the need to undertake redesign work to meet flood risk mitigation requirements or due to costly or time-consuming appeals to the Building Appeals Board.

In October 2025, the Government announced a package of planning and building reforms to better manage flood risk. These reforms will implement a hazard-based state-led approach to provide better flood risk

information and enable faster decision-making during development. To ensure land development decisions will account for new information about flood risk, the Government will use new modelling data to inform amendments to the planning schemes through its new streamlined planning scheme amendment process and is amending the Building Act to introduce a new ministerial power to determine which land is in a flood-prone area.

The Bill gives the Minister for Housing and Building the power to declare areas of land that have a 1 per cent or higher risk of flooding in any 12-month period as being designated flood-prone areas. The Minister's decision is to be based on the advice of floodplain management authorities about which land is in a flood-prone area. The Bill amends the Water Act to require floodplain management authorities to provide their advice about flooding and controls on development to the Minister for Housing and Building and to the Minister for Planning.

Land that is determined to be at a lower level of risk is generally safe for vehicles, people and buildings, provided any development of the land accounts for the risk of flooding. Under a flood-prone area designation for a parcel of land, the Australian Building Code Board's building and construction standards are to be applied under a building permit, to mitigate the risk of flooding. For developments requiring a planning permit, planning schemes will continue to be used to regulate land use and development in areas that have a moderate to very high-risk of flooding. This new state-led approach will also reduce the costs and administrative burden for councils.

The Bill also amends the Sale of Land Act to require that a vendor's section 32 statement must state if the land is in a designated flood-prone area, so that a purchaser of the land will be informed of this.

The new power to determine flood-prone areas of land and improved vendors statements will ensure that land owners, developers, building surveyors and councils will have the most up-to-date information on flood risk, and that appropriate construction standards are applied to new builds at the start of the development process.

#### **Emergency services and volunteers fund**

The Bill amends the ESVF Act to expand exemptions and rebates for the emergency services and volunteers funding levy (ESVF). The ESVF is an annual property levy collected by local councils via rates notices to fund a range of Victoria's emergency services.

As part of reforms to the ESVF Act in 2025, the Eligible Volunteers Rebate Scheme was introduced allowing eligible emergency services volunteers or life members to access an annual payment to offset the ESVF on their principal place of residence (PPR) or farmland. The reforms also legislated an increase in the fixed charge component of the ESVF for residential land not used and occupied as the owner's PPR, which is scheduled to commence from 1 July 2026.

As part of the 2025–26 Budget Update, it was announced that the increase in the fixed charge component for residential land not used and occupied as the owner's PPR would be delayed by 12 months to 1 July 2027. The Bill gives effect to this delay and provides for the Treasurer to determine the date that the increased fixed charge applies, through notice published in the Victoria Government Gazette. This will provide flexibility for the change to be delayed beyond 1 July 2027 should further time be necessary to finalise and test information-sharing arrangements.

The Bill also introduces a partial ESVF offset for community housing organisations, which will operate similarly to the Eligible Volunteers Rebate Scheme. Community housing organisations will be eligible for an offset of 50% of the ESVF fixed charge for residential land owned or managed by the organisation, in recognition of their role in providing not-for-profit housing to Victorians on a low income or with special needs. The Treasurer will also be able to determine the date that the community housing organisation offset commences through notice published in the Victoria Government Gazette, allowing the new scheme to commence in conjunction with the fixed charge changes.

The Bill will also expand access to existing ESVF exemptions and offsets from 1 July 2026. The Bill broadens the existing ESVF exemption for Homes Victoria so that all land owned by Homes Victoria is exempt: currently, land owned by Homes Victoria is only exempt if leased to an individual or registered agency for the purpose of public housing. This will simplify administration by councils as most land owned by Homes Victoria is used for public housing. The Bill further enables authorised representatives of eligible volunteers to apply for and receive a rebate under the Eligible Volunteers Rebate Scheme, so that an executor, administrator, assignee or agent may apply on behalf of a deceased volunteer. Finally, the amendments extend the Eligible Volunteers Rebate Scheme to volunteers who hold a right to occupy premises in a retirement village who are liable to pay the ESVF under an arrangement with the retirement village owner or for any other reason.

**Land tax**

The Bill amends the LT Act to resolve various issues relating to the land tax exemption for an owner's principal place of residence (PPR) that is unoccupied due to construction or renovation. The amendments simplify the exemption and addresses areas where it is not operating as intended and will commence from 1 January 2027.

It provides that an owner may nominate the date of issue of a planning or building permit as the start of works for determining when the exemption begins to apply. This amendment will provide landowners more control and flexibility over the timing of the exemption, especially in cases where there is a delay between issue of a planning or building permit and the actual start of construction or renovation. If no nomination is made, the exemption period will start from actual construction, which is the latest possible commencement date.

The Bill also simplifies the exemption's intention requirement, which currently requires owners to intend to use and occupy the land as a PPR within 4 years of the start of construction or renovation. The exemption was previously available for a maximum of 4 assessment years, but since 2024 the exemption may be extended for up to 2 additional years where additional time is required to complete construction due to builder insolvency. The Bill amends the occupation requirement to be timed within 6 months of completion of construction or renovation to cater for cases where the exemption period lasts longer than 4 years.

The Bill also relaxes the existing requirement that owners are required to start use and occupation of their PPR by 31 December where construction started and completed in the same year, so that owners will have until 1 July in the following year to start occupation. The amendment will support homeowners who undertake quicker constructions or renovations.

Finally, the Bill amends the 'dual' land tax PPR exemption so that a joint owner who has departed their former PPR and obtained the exemption to construct or renovate their new PPR will not be able to obtain the exemption for their interest in the former PPR in the second year after they ceased to occupy it. This amendment ensures that a dual PPR exemption is only available for a second year if the person is not benefiting from a PPR exemption for other land.

**Commencement**

The Government's intention is that some provisions of the Bill will commence on the day after Royal Assent and others upon proclamation when certain supporting regulations have been made.

The default commencement date is approximately 18 months after the Bill is introduced into Parliament, to provide sufficient time to manage the interaction with the BPAE Act and to develop the required complex supporting regulations. Supporting regulations are to be developed for the POPE reform amendments and decennial insurance amendments, which will be technically complex, require extensive stakeholder consultation and involve a number of critical matters to be prescribed under the Bill's enabling provisions. POPE reform amendments will also involve a high volume of matters to be prescribed in regulations under the Bill's enabling provisions.

The Bill modernises legislation to reflect current industry practices, supports improved regulation, and improves protections for consumers in Victoria's housing and building system.

The Bill will also expand exemptions and rebates for the emergency services and volunteers funding levy and resolve various issues relating to the land tax exemption for an owner's principal place of residence that is unoccupied due to construction or renovation.

I commend the Bill to the house.

**James NEWBURY** (Brighton) (10:17): I move:

That debate be adjourned.

**Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.**

**Ordered that debate be adjourned for two weeks. Debate adjourned until Wednesday 27 May.**

**Victoria Police Amendment (Police Reservists) Bill 2026***Statement of charter compatibility*

**Anthony CARBINES** (Ivanhoe – Leader of the House, Minister for Police, Minister for Community Safety, Minister for Victims, Minister for Racing) (10:18): Under the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006, I table a statement of compatibility:

In accordance with section 28 of the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* (**Charter**), I make this Statement of Compatibility with respect to the Victoria Police Amendment (Police Reservists) Bill 2026 (**Bill**).

In my opinion, the Bill, as introduced in the Legislative Assembly, is compatible with human rights as set out in the Charter. I base my opinion on the reasons outlined in this statement.

**Overview of the Bill**

The Victoria Police Amendment (Police Reservists) Bill 2026 includes reforms to establish a modern police reservist framework that enhances operational flexibility and Victoria Police frontline workforce capacity. The Bill reinstates the Chief Commissioner of Police's (CCP) power to appoint reservists and makes supporting and consequential amendments to enable the effective operation of the reservist scheme.

**Human rights issues****Human rights protected by the Charter that are relevant to the Bill**

In my opinion, the human rights protected by the Charter that are relevant to the Bill are –

- a. The right to privacy and reputation (section 13); and
- b. The right to property (section 20).

For the reasons outlined below, I am of the view that the Bill is compatible with each of these human rights.

***The right to privacy and reputation (section 13)***

Section 13(a) of the Charter provides that a person has the right not to have their privacy, family, home or correspondence unlawfully or arbitrarily interfered with. The proposed amendments in the Bill empowering police reservists to perform support functions may engage this right.

An interference with the right to privacy and reputation is justified if it is both lawful and not arbitrary. An interference will be lawful if it is permitted by law which is precise and appropriately circumscribed and will be arbitrary only if it is capricious, unpredictable, unjust or unreasonable, in the sense of being disproportionate to the legitimate aim sought.

**Proposed amendments**

The Bill engages the right to privacy as this reform allows police reservists in the course of their duties, to perform administrative and support tasks including asking members of the public to provide personal information such as their names and address as well as making initial inquiries in supporting investigations. However, the Bill does not provide an express statutory power for police reservists to request this information, nor does it establish an offence for failing to provide such information. Therefore, there is no compulsion for a person to provide their personal information and if a person does not wish to provide their personal information, they may elect to leave the police premises or cease the communication with the police reservist.

In my opinion the Bill is consistent with the right to privacy and reputation.

***Property rights (section 20)***

Section 20 of the Charter provides that a person must not be deprived of their property other than in accordance with law. This right requires that powers which authorise the deprivation of property are conferred by legislation or common law, are confined and structured rather than unclear, are accessible to the public, and are formulated precisely.

The right to property under section 20 of the Charter will be limited when all three of the following criteria are met: the interest interfered with must be “property”, the interference must amount to a “deprivation” of property, and the deprivation must not be “in accordance with law”.

**Proposed amendments**

To the extent that police reservists, once appointed, may be involved in receiving property and exhibits seizure or the handling of property in the course of performing their support functions, this right may be engaged.

However, the Bill does not confer any new powers to seize or otherwise interfere with property. Accordingly, the Bill does not limit property rights protected by section 20 of the Charter.

**Conclusion**

I consider that the Bill is compatible with the Charter because no human rights are limited by the provisions in this Bill.

**The Hon. Anthony Carbines MP**  
**Minister for Police**  
**Minister for Community Safety**  
**Minister for Victims**  
**Minister for Racing**  
**Leader of the House**

*Statement of treaty compatibility*

**Anthony CARBINES** (Ivanhoe – Leader of the House, Minister for Police, Minister for Community Safety, Minister for Victims, Minister for Racing) (10:18): Under the Statewide Treaty Act 2025, I table a statement of treaty compatibility:

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

**Overview of the Bill**

1. The Victoria Police Amendment (Police Reservists) Bill 2026 includes reforms to establish a modern police reservist framework that enhances operational flexibility and Victoria Police frontline workforce capacity. The Bill reinstates the Chief Commissioner of Police's (CCP) power to appoint reservists and makes supporting and consequential amendments to enable the effective operation of the reservist scheme.

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

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

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

3. I have considered whether the Bill is compatible with the objects at section 66(3)(d) of the Statewide Treaty Act 2025:
  - 3.1 advancing the inherent rights and self-determination of First Peoples; and
  - 3.2 addressing the unacceptable disadvantage inflicted on First Peoples by the historic wrongs and ongoing injustices of colonisation; and
  - 3.3 ensuring the equal enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms by First Peoples.
4. In considering the compatibility of this Bill, I have considered the effects of the criminal justice system on First Peoples, which may result in the unequal enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms by First Peoples as compared to other Victorians. For example, despite efforts under the Closing the Gap National Agreement and related efforts under the Aboriginal Justice Agreement, First Peoples remain significantly overrepresented across the criminal justice system. The Yoorrook Justice Commission's *Yoorrook for Justice* report found this was in part driven by a 'pattern of systemically racist policing' noting that while this 'does not characterise the whole of policing in Victoria, it is widespread and ingrained'. To address any unequal enjoyment of rights that result from the disproportionate effects of the criminal justice system on First Peoples in progressing any policing reforms the government has regard to the role of policing in driving contact with the justice system. This requires a continued focus on working closely with First Peoples communities to ensure appropriate recruitment, training and standards to improve cultural capability throughout Victoria Police.
5. Having regard to these considerations, I have considered whether the reforms in this Bill compound the effects set out above and increase unequal enjoyment of rights for First Peoples, and I have formed the view that they do not. The reforms in this Bill are constrained to addressing police resourcing allocations, rather than the training and capability of the police workforce and its related impact on overrepresentation. The proposed scheme will involve the recruitment of reservists performing support and administrative tasks rather than frontline functions.

6. Accordingly, in my opinion, the Bill does not affect any of the objects specified in section 66(3)(d)(i)–(iii) of the *Statewide Treaty Act 2025* and is therefore compatible with each of those objects.

**The Hon. Anthony Carbines MP**  
**Minister for Police**  
**Minister for Community Safety**  
**Minister for Victims**  
**Minister for Racing**  
**Leader of the House**

*Second reading*

**Anthony CARBINES** (Ivanhoe – Leader of the House, Minister for Police, Minister for Community Safety, Minister for Victims, Minister for Racing) (10:19): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

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

**Incorporated speech as follows:**

The Victorian Government is committed to continuing to support Victoria Police to effectively and efficiently perform its duties and protect our community.

The Victoria Police Amendment (Police Reservists) Bill 2026 introduces reforms under the Police portfolio to enhance Victoria Police frontline capacity by introducing a police reservist scheme.

These reforms are aimed at addressing the administrative burdens that impact frontline policing capacity. Police officers are often taken away from frontline duties to undertake non-operational duties including responding to public enquiries and other administrative tasks. These tasks are important and necessary to ensure the proper functioning of Victoria Police, however, they do not need to be undertaken by police officers who could be otherwise used to prevent and respond to crime in our community.

The introduction of a police reservist scheme will provide an additional pool of resources to complete non-operational duties. By introducing this scheme, Victoria Police will have access to an operationally-trained workforce that can appropriately support the delivery of policing services. This means that more police officers will be out patrolling the streets and responding to the needs of the community, rather than sitting behind desks.

Further, the presence of uniformed police reservists at police stations performing non-operational work will also enhance community confidence.

This is not a new scheme. A previous police reservist scheme existed under the former *Police Regulation Act 1958* (PR Act). There are also provisions in the *Victoria Police Act 2013* to manage existing police reservists. We know that employing police reservists to perform administrative duties works to ease pressure on frontline police officers. That is why we need to reintroduce the power of the Chief Commissioner of Police to appoint new reservists.

I turn now to the detail of the reforms in the Bill.

The Victoria Police Amendment (Police Reservists) Bill 2026 will empower the Chief Commissioner of Police to appoint police reservists as considered necessary to perform non-operational duties in support of sworn police officers.

When on duty, police reservists will have the general duties and powers of a constable at common law and may perform non-operational duties such as, but not limited to, tasks to support commencement of an investigation, assisting with public enquiries and other front counter duties at police stations such as taking crime reports at the front counter or over the phone.

Police reservists will perform their functions under the direction or control of the Chief Commissioner of Police, or any other police officer or reservist determined by the Chief Commissioner.

The legislative scheme allows for the making of regulations to prescribe criteria for the appointment of police reservists. It is anticipated that criteria that will be prescribed will include that for a person to be employed as a police reservist, they must have been a former police officer with a minimum of 2 years' cumulative service in a police force. However, becoming a police reservist will not be solely limited to former members of Victoria Police. Police officers who have served in other jurisdictions can be appointed as a police reservist, if they meet the other required criteria.

Further proposed criteria include that the person is of good character and reputation and that the person is a citizen or permanent resident of Australia. It is also intended that prospective police reservists will have to complete a medical examination to the satisfaction of a registered medical practitioner nominated by the Chief Commissioner of Police and meet requirements for general intelligence and physical fitness.

Police reservists will be able to be appointed on a part-time, full-time, fixed-term or ongoing basis.

An example of a person who may become a police reservist is a police officer who may have instead considered retirement due to the strenuous impacts of frontline duties. Following this example, the police reservist scheme means keeping the knowledge and wisdom of experienced police officers within Victoria Police for longer.

The Chief Commissioner will have the power to require police reservists to attend training as and when deemed necessary. The Chief Commissioner will also have the power to suspend or terminate the appointment of a police reservist at any time.

I commend the Bill to the House.

**James NEWBURY** (Brighton) (10:19): I move:

That the debate be adjourned.

**Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.**

**Ordered that debate be adjourned for two weeks. Debate adjourned until Wednesday 27 May.**

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

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

#### *Second reading*

**Debate resumed on motions of Sonya Kilkenny and Anthony Carbines:**

That this bill be now read a second time.

**Chris COUZENS** (Geelong) (10:20): I would like to recommence my contribution to this bill and just draw attention to the fact that we are hearing so much from the opposition about debt and how horrible it is. I really want to make a comment about that, because I want to remind the house that we experienced a pandemic, and this government, along with many other governments across this country, saved lives. We put food on people's tables, we stopped people from losing their jobs or losing income, and that cost a lot of money to do. That pandemic was something that we invested in to save people's lives. To now say that the debt is there without even mentioning the fact of the pandemic is just totally wrong. I think we need to be reminded that that is why Victoria has the debt. However, we put in strategies to deal with that debt, and they have been working and we are now in surplus. So I think it is important that we all remember why that debt was incurred. The arrogance of the opposition to continue banging on about the debt in Victoria without mentioning that is just wrong. I think they are more concerned and panicked about One Nation than they are about anything else at the moment. But in saying that –

**A member** interjected.

**Chris COUZENS:** No, I do not think we have got more to worry about – sorry, through the Chair. I will add too that in 2022, after the pandemic and all the support that we gave Victorians, Labor won the election. It is simple: we won the election after the pandemic. You were all so smug on that side, expecting you were going to win, and Victorians had no faith in you.

I want to go back to talking about the support that has been given to my electorate, and I mentioned a lot of that in my previous contribution. I just want to go back to free TAFE and the importance that free TAFE has, not only in my community but right across Victoria, and the opportunities that it offers to people, ensuring they do not have to pay to be able to get an education through TAFE, which expands their opportunities into good employment, good jobs, giving them a much better opportunity

in terms of salary and opportunities within the community. I am a huge fan of free TAFE, and I think it has been an incredible policy strategy of this government.

I also want to mention QHub, which received \$2 million in funding. QHub, which is based in Geelong and across to Ballarat, offers such a valuable service to families in my community. The LGBTQI+ community have welcomed this service, because what it is doing is supporting those young people. We know statistically that many of these young people either take their own life or attempt to take their own life. This service is now dealing with the issues they are confronted with. They feel safe in that environment. Marcus and the crew at Geelong QHub are doing an incredible job and deserve every support that they get in providing supportive spaces for young people and their families.

There are many other commitments that have been made in Geelong, but one in particular I want to mention is the Geelong BMX Club, who for many, many years have been advocating to get their facilities up to scratch so that they can host national and international BMX competitions. At the moment other areas across the state are able to do that, but Geelong has not been able to do that. And it is a growing club. Many, many families from not just my electorate but across the Geelong region are members of that club and are just delighted that we have been able to commit \$200,000 for them to seal their track, which will make an enormous difference to their competitors. And they actually have international champions in that club, so we want to make sure that those opportunities are there for other young children and young people to be able to get into that elite sport at that elite level and enter competition right across Australia and also internationally.

Funding of the Geelong Authority, again, is another important one for me. They do an enormous amount of work in our community, working with developers, working to make sure that central Geelong is supported with what they need. I think all the other cost-of-living areas, such as free public transport, rebates on regos, affordable school uniforms, outside school hours care for young people with disabilities, Glasses for Kids, breakfast clubs, Get Active Kids vouchers, kinder kits, more financial counselling, the energy assistance program, a boost for allowances for kinship, foster and permanent carers, and more to strengthen food security, are things I am really pleased that we are continuing to support. We had the social supermarket open in my electorate a couple of months ago, and it has been a game changer for people in my community. We have more emergency accommodation, support for vulnerable renters, more social housing growth and \$100 million to continue our nation-leading efforts to respond to family and sexual violence. There is so much in this budget.

Moving around my electorate after budget day people are saying this is a sensible and a good budget. They are not saying it is wrong, they are not saying anything negative about it. They are saying it is a good, sensible budget, which I agree with. For those opposite canning everything that we do anyway, I think they need to understand that communities like mine are not supporting their position on our budget. They are supporting it a hundred per cent in my community, and it makes such a difference to be able to have those cost-of-living benefits right across the state, not just in my electorate, but also in my community to ensure people get what they deserve.

**Tim BULL** (Gippsland East) (10:27): I rise to make my contribution on the Appropriation (2026–2027) Bill 2026 and the Appropriation (Parliament 2026–2027) Bill 2026. I just want to very briefly respond to a couple of comments from the member for Geelong, who mentioned that it would be remiss to talk about the budget situation and our financial situation without mentioning COVID. I will simply make this point: blaming events like COVID, overseas conflicts or international politics at this stage is not the reason we are in the situation that we are in, and it is poor form. The member for Geelong talked about the pandemic. We are four to five years on from the pandemic now, but even in this budget's futures we are still seeing debt rising in the financial years in two, three and four years time. All other jurisdictions have gone through these challenges, and they have dealt with it a lot better. The finances of every other state in this country are in much better condition, so to blame them is wrong, and I will get on to that in a short moment.

**A member** interjected.

**Tim BULL:** I will take up that objection. When I was sitting in my office yesterday listening to some of the contributions on the budget, I could not help but notice much of the commentary from the other side was about us. I have been in this place for a little while, and it is the first time that I have heard government members standing up criticising the opposition with the majority of their speech. Normally we get all of this commentary around how good their own budget is, but that has been seriously lacking in relation to this. What we needed to see here was a pathway out of debt. We needed to see that. We needed to see a pathway out of debt, and we have not got it. Instead we are handed a set of documents that confirms the state's finances are indeed going south. What this is is a statement outlining –

*Members interjecting.*

**Tim BULL:** In this budget we needed to see a plan for the future to reduce net state debt, but the government's own budget papers are forecasting a continued massive increase. The most alarming element of this is forecasts showing that net debt is climbing to \$199.3 billion. Goodness knows what that is really going to be when someone else gets hold of the books – effectively \$200 billion now or around, if we break that down, \$70,000 per household. Those figures alone should raise serious concerns about the state's financial trajectory. However, even more troubling is the cost of servicing that debt, and we have interest repayments, which have to be repaid, heading towards \$32 million a day – \$11.8 billion annually in interest repayments only. Such is the quantum of those figures it is very difficult to even get your head around them. It is money that is not being spent on hospitals, schools, roads and community services, and then on top of that what galls people – it was interesting that the member for Geelong said the budget was lauded by 100 per cent of her community. It is very different in mine. I cannot walk down the street without people saying, 'Hey, Bully, when do we get the \$15 billion back? What about the Commonwealth Games money?' It just goes on and on and on.

Post budget we heard commentary from various industry sectors – housing, business and industry, agriculture, local government was another one, to name three or four of many – saying they have been grossly underfunded. Why are we hearing that commentary? The simple answer is the level of debt is constraining this government's ability to invest where it is needed. As a shadow minister – I am sure this applies for ministers, although they probably will not admit it, and even local members on both sides of the chamber – we have got stakeholder groups constantly coming to us, wanting more money for this project or this program, saying, 'We need this. It's vital to the community. You need to fund it.' But when you have got interest repayments of \$32 million a week, the hard, cold reality of it is you cannot fund these programs that need to be funded. It just cannot be done.

I will take just one example of many: fire trucks. We have the oldest firefighting fleet in the country, and we are in one of the three most fire-prone areas in the world. Just think about that: we are in one of the three most fire-prone areas of the world, and we have got the oldest firefighting fleet. You would think: why not just renew it? We have had funding announced to the CFA in that regard of \$10 million, but it is over 10 years. The CFA itself came out and said, 'Why don't we just fix it? Why don't we just renew the firefighting fleet?' The reason why we cannot is the level of debt that we have and the level of interest we are paying on that debt.

The biggest disappointment in this whole budget is it does not forecast debt reducing. According to these budget papers, the government's own budget papers, in comparison to the 2014 financial year budget papers, net debt from \$21.8 billion is now going to \$199.3 billion, interest repayments are going from \$2.1 billion annually to \$11.8 billion and total tax revenue on Victorians is going from \$17.9 billion to \$50.2 billion – three times the amount of tax. What makes this budget even more concerning is that government members have spoken about having a surplus. I will not get into the deal that was done. Other members have mentioned the deal that was done that shows the surplus in the budget papers, but we should not be talking about a small surplus. We need to be talking about the

state's net debt. We know that a surplus simply means that the government is forecasting that it will have more money coming in than is going out in that one financial year.

But if your net debt, according to the budget papers going forward, increases by \$20 billion, the small surplus is superfluous. We have got to start focusing on net debt. The government had an opportunity to present a budget that forecasts savings that will equal a reduction in our net debt, and it has not done that. The budget papers continue to forecast debt blowing out, and this is a result of very poor decisions in the past. It is not a result of COVID; it had an impact, for sure. But we stand up time and time again and we talk about the cost overruns, the Commonwealth Games, the CFMEU rorts. There is too much money going out the door that is simply a waste. The surplus does not go anywhere near what is required to reduce our net debt, and that is the figure we should be concentrating on. We just go further and further down the tube as a state.

In defending this budget, the Treasurer described it as 'disciplined' – that was her adjective. Let us examine that. Debt is rising and payment on interest is exploding, and as a result of that new investment in the areas we need is lacking. Budgets like agriculture, roads and regional development are significantly less than they were eight years ago – significantly less, not just a little bit. It is very difficult to see where the discipline is when your budget is blowing out to that extent. In relation to net debt, we are the worst performing state in this country. But I would ask what we have to show for this, because an outsider looking in might say, 'Well, okay, the state has incurred that level of debt. Surely they've got some good things to show for it. Surely they've got some Rolls-Royce funding agencies.' But what have we got to show for it? Our roads are crumbling; all of our freight companies say they are the worst they have ever seen them. We have a health crisis. Hospitals have been put on hold. The budget showed a number of announcements that have been kicked down the road and delayed. West Gippsland Hospital is one that has been mentioned, but the list goes on and on and on. And this is all while we are paying more taxes. So not only have we got this massive debt, but we do not have much to show for it.

I caught the member for Mordialloc's contribution, where he spoke to the importance of a strong business sector. Well, if he believes that, why are we taxing business more than ever before? Why has payroll tax nearly doubled? You cannot stand up here and say you support business and then tax it into oblivion. You just cannot do that. Victorians deserve better.

I want to talk about some local matters before I finish. I have got several health services that need investment, as I outlined in this chamber last week. Bairnsdale hospital, Buchan Bush Nursing Centre – nothing in there. I have three schools in the electorate on the Department of Education's poor condition report, Omeo, Lindenow South and Lakes Entrance – nothing for them. I have police and fire stations that need rebuilding – nothing for them.

I stand here having heard some contributions over recent weeks from some members – I think it was the members for Tarnet and Werribee – who spoke about the increased capacity on their train lines and how they have got more carriages. Well, on the Bairnsdale line we have got people standing for 4 hours going to Melbourne. We need six-carriage sets on every train, and we are regularly left with three. People are standing for 4 hours – same carriages. We have got increased services on the Tarnet and Werribee lines to carry more people. They do not have to stand for 4 hours from Bairnsdale to Melbourne because everyone was expecting six carriages and three turn up. And it is not a one-off; it is a regular occurrence. It is unsafe to have passengers standing for that long. It is just ridiculous.

Many other MPs have made similar comments about what they have missed out on in their communities, but the bottom line is: how can you fund what really needs to be funded? As a shadow minister I am getting emails every day from groups saying, 'We haven't had a funding increase for 10 years, not even CPI.' In the last little period I have heard from neighbourhood houses, the Men's Shed Association and different groups involved in the portfolios that I hold, and the reason that they have not had any funding increase is that we are heading towards paying \$32 million a day in interest. Can we just get our head around what that would do and what that would fund. It is just incredible.

I heard the Shadow Minister for Roads and Road Safety saying just six weeks of the interest repayments would double our roads budget. That is how insanely poorly we have managed the state's finances – that six weeks of interest repayments would double our state roads budget. This budget is not responsible. It has no plan to get us out of the mire that we are in. It only outlines how much further our debt is going to increase. So with the greatest of respect to members opposite, if they want to get up and talk about a small budget surplus, they need to get up and talk about the state debt and where that is heading, because when it is blowing out by \$20 billion, a small budget surplus is irrelevant. Victoria cannot keep borrowing from the future to pay for the present. You just cannot keep doing that. It is a one-way path, and you cannot build a strong future with weak financial foundations, and when we present budget papers that show the debt blowing out, that is what we have.

It is a horrible budget, particularly in an election year. An election year budget should be the government's crowning glory, where it outlines a really strong plan for our financial future. But this budget just forecasts debt increasing in this state, and we have very, very little to show for it. It is an appalling budget, and particularly for an election year budget.

**John LISTER** (Werribee) (10:42): Communities in the electorate of Werribee are often the first to register economic pressure, before much of Victoria. For decades it has been Labor governments and our local Labor members of Parliament who have been there to support people in Wyndham Vale, Manor Lakes, Mambourin, Little River and Werribee. During the global financial crisis our local Labor MP Julia Gillard helped to deliver an economic stimulus package and projects across Wyndham to support working people, like the redevelopment of many of our schools. During the pandemic it was the state Labor government that ensured there were packages to support businesses in Werribee to keep employees working and funding to make our hospitals safe. And now, while an unnecessary war wages in the Middle East, it is on Labor again to support working people in communities like mine.

We are delivering a budget focused on making the lives of people in electorates like mine easier, safer and more affordable. I remember doorknocking on houses in Wyndham Vale in the first few weeks of the global oil crisis we are in at the moment. Many acknowledged there was little the state could do about the situation in Iran. But many pointed to getting people off the road and onto our buses and trains, and others brought up having just had to pay their rego bill and that rates notices were also making their way to letterboxes. The labour movement has always been about using the levers of government to make the lives of ordinary people better. In this time of uncertainty it was clear that we had levers we could pull to have a direct impact on the amount of money people had in their household budgets to cope with this crisis. We are running an operating surplus this year, which is projected to grow over a billion dollars in this operating surplus over the coming years – the only state on the east coast to achieve this. So when we are in a financial situation like this, let us use these levers to make it easier for people in communities like mine.

For those people I met who raised the issue of their registration costs, we are giving them a 20 per cent rebate on what they have paid for this financial year. For many families, that cash back can go towards other bills, or for some of the people I spoke to on the doors this last week it can even help them save up for driving lessons for that teenager still stuck at home. For the Werribee and Wyndham Vale line commuters who spoke to me about how free public transport has benefited them or made them make that choice to leave their car at home, we are helping them put that money back in their budget with half-price public transport for the rest of the year, from June.

As many of my constituents know, I love a survey. It probably comes from my time as a teacher, when we would use qualitative and quantitative data to understand the point of need. This year I asked people about their experience on the Wyndham Vale line. Jennifer from Manor Lakes told me that we need more evening trains and we need a better spread of trains throughout peak hour – something I would definitely agree with having taken the train home from Southern Cross during the last few parliamentary sitting weeks. So, with the help of my fellow Labor MPs in the Wyndham area, we helped secure \$14 million towards more nine-carriage trains, which will boost capacity in those peak periods, allowing Wyndham Vale commuters to get a seat at Southern Cross.

As a former secondary school teacher, I understand all too well the growth in enrolments that we have seen. However, I wanted to hear how increasing the number of high school places would help our growing suburbs. For example, one constituent wrote, 'Education is a very important part of our lives and I would like my son to go to a school close to home in which he is comfortable to go to.' We have built seven new schools in the Werribee electorate and upgraded many more, but in this budget I am most proud to see that we are delivering what those survey respondents wanted: a brand new secondary school for their community in Wyndham Vale. To take up what the previous speaker from the other side said before about robbing the future of what is possible with what we are doing with building these sorts of facilities, this is literally building facilities for the future of those kids in Wyndham Vale. This budget is about the things that matter to working people in places like my electorate.

We are building a safer community, and in this electorate, building on our previous \$4.5 billion towards recruitment of police, we are also funding more police prosecutors at the Wyndham law courts. We are funding reservists. We have just seen a bill introduced here to bring them on to help relieve those front desk pressures and administrative duties at stations like Werribee. And we are funding the violence reduction unit, which is already out working in places like Manor Lakes P-12 College. We are building a healthier community, and I am especially proud that we have got \$95 million in this budget to open the new emergency department at the Werribee hospital. We have got funding to access local mental health services and a huge boost to maternity services, which my partner and I will be utilising in August with our baby on the way.

When times are tough, Labor governments have been there for the people of the Werribee electorate. Meanwhile the Liberal Party continues to neglect the western suburbs. The only policies they have announced so far have been to cut capacity on the Wyndham Vale and Melton lines and to dump more housing in our greenfield areas without infrastructure. They have no vision for our community because they do not care about us. For nine years of a federal Liberal government the member for Kew's mentor Josh Frydenberg and others invested nothing for infrastructure in our growing suburbs – nothing, zero. In a short time under a federal Labor government we have seen a partnership that is delivering infrastructure for our community, like Ison Road, the Ballan Road upgrade, a new bridge between Wyndham Vale and Tarneit and an upgraded main road interchange – all made possible with a partner in Canberra. I welcomed seeing them in the budget papers last night.

The only economic plan the member for Kew has put forward is a glossy brochure at a Liberal Party fundraiser last week. At the heart of this is a commitment to cutting one in seven public servants' jobs. The member for Kew may think they are just surplus, but these public servants all play a role in our state. The teachers may be on the front line, but I know firsthand it is the VPS 3 or 4 at the regional office who helps fix an enrolment or a Victorian assessment software system entry for a VCE student. They could lose their job under the member for Kew. The staff member at Unison Housing over the railway line in Werribee may be on the front line, but the VPS 3 or 4 at the Footscray housing office that they call to help someone on a priority waiting list would be gone under the member for Kew. The clinical director at Werribee hospital may be on the front line, but the public servant at Hospitals Victoria that they call to discuss an ordering process for surgical equipment could be gone under the member for Kew. These public servants live in communities like mine in the western suburbs, with the vast majority of the 29,000 or so professionals in the Wyndham area in the last census working in a public sector role. The member for Kew does not understand the west. She has neglected to put forward any ideas for our community in her budget reply and instead wants to cut services for our growing community, all while her special envoy for the west is busy at the Supreme Court or surveying swans in Williamstown.

I want to return to where I started this speech, talking about the people of the Werribee electorate. Growing up and living in our community, I understand the pressures families face. My family was not that well-off either, living on a single income for a very long time, and it was those Labor members of Parliament and those Labor governments through those years that helped deliver the things for communities like mine. To reflect on a few more of those things, I remember Julia Gillard coming to

my school when they did the laptops in schools program to help us get ahead during that global financial crisis. During COVID – and there is a lot of discussion around debt and things like that – the debt incurred from helping support those businesses to keep their employees on had a direct impact on the vast majority of workers in the Wyndham area that had to go to work during the pandemic. They had no choice – they were essential workers – and supporting them to be able to do that was so important.

The reality of the budget and what the Treasurer outlined just last week is that we are not borrowing money to pay for these services. The services that we have announced in this budget are being funded through what the state is earning as revenue. Instead, we are borrowing to build for the future. We are borrowing to build things like the new high school for Wyndham Vale. We are borrowing to build things like the West Gate Tunnel, which saves us up to 10 minutes every day on our journey here to Parliament as Wyndham MPs coming in, as well as a vast majority of other people driving from the western suburbs. We have used this money to invest in the west. Those opposite bleat about neglecting the west at by-elections, but they have failed to put forward a plan. I note at the recent Nepean by-election they had plenty of plans for Rosebud Hospital, but during the Werribee by-election there was nothing. The Labor government and this budget continue our commitment to use the levers of government to make communities like mine better. I commend these bills to the house and reaffirm my commitment to working every day in a Labor government, fighting for my community in Melbourne's west.

**Brad ROWSWELL** (Sandringham) (10:52): I also rise to address the appropriations bills, the state Labor government's 12th budget, having been elected now over three terms to govern this state, having had the opportunity to deliver in that time 12 budgets. This year's budget is titled 'Easier. Safer. More Affordable.' Of Victorians I speak to, not just in my community but right around the state, I often ask a pretty simple question: do you feel like you are better off after 12 years of a state Labor government or do you feel like you are worse off? The response that I hear time and time again, certainly in my own community but in communities right around our state, is that 'We don't feel like we're better off, we feel like we're worse off.' The government have had a crack. Labor have had a crack, they have given it a go. Good on them. But I think that over those 12 years, if Victorians feel like they are worse off today, then some responsibility should be taken by this Labor government for that sentiment within our community.

In this budget there are a lot of pages – Deputy Speaker, you would be familiar with this – and there are lots of words, lots of numbers, lots of spreadsheets. But in essence a budget is an opportunity for a government to demonstrate, to the people that they seek to serve, what their priorities are and who they are. I contend at the outset that this is not a budget for Victoria's future, this is a budget of excuses without solutions. This is a budget that could have addressed the significant challenges that our community is facing at the minute, and it simply does not.

As the member for Kew yesterday in her budget reply mentioned, it is not a budget, it is in fact a credit card statement for the last 11 years of failure by this government. There is no credible plan to pay down debt. There is no credible plan to proportionately spend the tax dollars received from hardworking Victorians. There is no offering of a serious, disciplined plan, as the Leader of the Opposition on behalf of the opposition, the alternative government, has offered.

When the member for Malvern was the Treasurer of this state, our state's debt was some \$21.8 billion, around 6 per cent of gross state product. If you are having trouble sleeping, please have a look at my first speech, where I suggested at the time that there should be a cap, a legislated cap, on our debt-to-GSP ratio. It was edging in the direction of 6 per cent. I thought it was a concern at that time that our debt-to-GDP ratio was heading in the direction of 6 per cent, and I thought that it should be capped to set some sort of ceiling, really, on what the government should be enabled or allowed to indebt future generations with. With debt heading in the direction of \$200 billion, that is no longer 6 per cent; it is more than 25 per cent.

The difficulty I have with all of this is that these are not just numbers. The impact of these decisions and the impact of these numbers is the thing that deeply concerns me. It deeply concerns me that all policing services, all kinder services and all ambulance services could be paid for in the funding envelope that has been allocated in this budget to pay the interest on the debt that Labor has racked up, and there would still be a billion dollars of change left over. This is the missed opportunity from financial recklessness after 12 years of Labor. These are the real-life consequences of the decisions that this government has taken that are impacting the lives of Victorians every single day. \$199 billion of debt is not a good thing, and Labor are ignoring it; in fact they are not just ignoring it, they are blaming others for it. 'Take responsibility' is my encouragement to the Allan Labor government after 12 years of Labor in this state – all excuses, no solutions.

There was no funding for West Gippsland Hospital, no funding for Maroondah Hospital and no funding for Wonthaggi Hospital, and the funding line for the Suburban Rail Loop still remains TBC. TBC: is that 'to be confirmed', or does that mean 'too bloody costly'? I think it is a fair question. As Labor's Suburban Rail Loop starts in my electorate, I have some earned authority to speak on the matter. 2029 was the timeframe that Labor had originally put on removing all level crossings on the Frankston line. This was not in a press statement; this was not in a media release. I will be up-front and honest with the Victorian people and members of my community now where Labor have not been honest with them: that is no longer the case. That commitment in this budget has been extended out, pushed out to something like 2032.

The financial recklessness of spending in a way that is disproportionate with your revenue, not getting on top of your debt and having an incredible amount of interest to pay – edging in the direction of \$1.35 million per hour for just the interest on the debt; that is not the principal, that is just the interest – has real-life consequences for the services that Victorians legitimately expect their state government to provide. In my portfolio area of education, that has had real-life consequences for schools. I think it is about time that the state Labor government here in Victoria faces up to reality and in fact changes the tagline on the numberplate. Labor cannot continue to credibly claim that Victoria is the Education State. We cannot credibly claim that. Victoria has the lowest amount of funding for schools in the country. Victorian teachers are the lowest paid. There was no response to that in this budget. We are not the Education State, and Labor cannot credibly continue to claim that we are the Education State when in fact we are not.

In fact it gets worse. The public education sector found little cause for celebration in the budget. There are a number of infrastructure projects – some of them underway, some of them yet to be started – that have been pushed back and delayed in this budget, at Albert Park College, at Ashwood High School, Beechworth Secondary College, Camp Hill Primary School, Clayton South Primary School, Eildon Primary School, Eastbourne Primary School and Epsom Primary School. Again, there are consequences for financial recklessness. It is Victorians that are paying more through the inclination of this government to tax and tax and tax and tax and tax and tax and tax more, and yet they are getting less for it. If I know Victorians, as I believe I do, Victorians do not want to be ripped off – in fact they do not like being ripped off. But when you pay more and you get less for it, you are being ripped off. I contend that this Labor government is ripping off Victorians, and these are the hard realities and consequences of 12 years of financial recklessness.

I would like to spend the last portion of my time reflecting upon the impact of Labor's financial recklessness in my own community. I have already mentioned the Suburban Rail Loop and the fact that the costings are marked 'TBC', and that is just utterly disgraceful on a number of levels, firstly. Secondly, the level crossing removals at both Highbett and Wickham Road have been pushed back. There was a great fear in my community that this would happen. The Labor government promised 2029. They only promised that these things would be gone by 2029 about a month or so after I made the commitment that that is what would be undertaken by a Liberal government, in the final months of the 2022 election campaign. The Labor government came in on the back of that and made their own commitment. Of course there was a fear in my community that it would not be delivered by this

government, and it is not being delivered by this government. Again, those residents of Highett have been forgotten. They are looking to the Labor government, who say they govern for all but again have demonstrated to the members of the Highett community that they in fact do not govern for all. In fact the members of the Highett community have again been forgotten by this Labor government, because those level crossings – we should not have had to wait until 2029. They should have been gone earlier. I would invite you and any members who sit on the government benches to visit my community. I will happily take them to the Highett Charcoal Chicken. Nick can give us a quarter-chicken and chips, and we can sit down right there on the corner where that level crossing is and you can understand firsthand why that level crossing needs to go. They did not want to wait until 2029, and because of Labor's financial recklessness it has been pushed out again.

Sandringham College – the master plan is done; stage 1 has been delivered. The former Labor education minister came out to the school and gave the school an assurance: 'Once we get these projects underway, stage 2 funding will be delivered, and stage 3 funding – we'll get this project done.' That was the sentiment expressed to that school community, and not one dollar has been delivered. Again, another 12 months of uncertainty for that school community. It is not right. They deserve so much more from this Labor government.

Mentone Primary School – on a school condition report list that the member for Kew fought for practically two years in VCAT for this government to release, Mentone Primary School was identified for the infrastructure issues there, and it deserves funding. Beaumaris North Primary School deserves funding. Beaumaris Primary School deserves infrastructure funding. Again, great schools, great teaching, great learning, great principals, great families – but they deserve support from their government. They deserve to be learning in world-class facilities. Again, another year has gone by without a commitment from this Labor government to doing the right thing by those school communities, and frankly, it is just not right.

Sandringham Hospital – yes, I declare an interest; I was born there. It deserves ongoing investment and funding from this government. The federal Labor government granted Sandringham Hospital a licence for an MRI machine, and I have been asking, in corridor conversations in this place and formally of the Labor government, for them to provide the infrastructure funding to support the payment for an MRI machine and the infrastructure that goes around it. In this budget, crickets – nothing. It is important for my community and the region that uses the Sandringham Hospital to have the certainty that they need and access to a publicly funded, Medicare-funded MRI machine. But again, this budget did not deliver that at all.

At Bay Road in my community, it is only a matter of time until there is an accident there again, and potentially – and I hope not, I pray not – a fatality. But it is likely. If we are to be honest about these things, it is likely. Time and time again I have sought that a traffic study be undertaken there and that traffic interventions be considered along that road. Again I encourage the Labor government to do the right thing by my community, because there is no funding in this budget for that.

The opportunity of this budget was for Labor to do the right thing by the Victorian community. It was the opportunity for the Labor government to do the right thing by teachers and principals and students and schools. It was the opportunity for the Labor government to do the right thing by my community in Sandringham, in Highett, in Black Rock, in Beaumaris, in Cheltenham, in Mentone and in surrounding suburbs as well, and they have failed to do so. It was a budget of excuses and not solutions, and no plan for Victoria's future.

**Sarah CONNOLLY** (Laverton) (11:08): I do not know what budget the member for Sandringham was talking about, but it is certainly not the budget that was delivered here in this place quite recently. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to rise and speak on this year's appropriation bills and to speak on this year's budget, which was delivered last week. Like other members in this place, when I look at the budget every year, I am specifically looking for things that are going to be delivered in my electorate, to be able to tell them about the great things that Labor is doing for them. What I will say

to folks in my electorate, the electorate of Laverton, and I will say to westies more broadly is: this budget delivers for you. This budget is for you.

There are some great local initiatives that were funded in this year's budget, and I will talk about them in just a moment. But I want to start my contribution today by talking about Victoria and talking about how and where we are tracking, because we all know right now we are facing some significant challenges. There are challenges with the cost of living. The cost of fuel is on the rise, making it harder for folks to get around. Inflation is on the rise, promoting interest rates to do the same. It feels like everything else is getting more expensive as a result. I know it feels like that. What I am glad that our Premier and our government have done in this budget is name one of the key drivers of this inflation and cost-of-living pressure, and that is President Trump and his war in the Middle East. It is the war in the Middle East, and I think Victorians understand that. That is in direct contrast to what the Leader of the Opposition said yesterday here in this place, that the Treasurer's speech focused too much on foreign wars and President Trump. But Victorians know that these foreign wars are the biggest reason that costs have gone up, and that Trump's reckless war in the Middle East is the reason that fuel costs have spiked.

I will remind those opposite – I certainly will be saying this time and time again to my community because I think it is something that has not been said enough in this place – that it is the Leader of the Opposition who has said her party will deal with and preference One Nation and Pauline Hanson. There needs to be a reminder in this place and a reminder more broadly to Victorians that Pauline Hanson supports President Trump and the war in the Middle East. She has openly conveyed that and her support of him. She has been to his home and visited him and is very much supportive of what he is doing. What he has done has led to absolute devastation in families across Victoria. Regardless of what party you are in – we have heard from members of Parliament from the National Party talking about the cost of diesel and the fuel hikes – that has happened because of what Trump has done in the Middle East, yet the coalition and the Liberal Party and the Leader of the Opposition have openly not ruled out secret deals with One Nation. I think that is deeply, deeply concerning. In my community we have been hit really hard by the latest fuel crisis, and that is exactly why our government's biggest focus in this budget, and it should be our biggest focus, is to address the cost of living – to do our bit to make things easier, to do our bit to make things more affordable and more safe and to give Victorian families just that little bit more stability that they need in this time. We are focused on real help right now, with over \$2.5 billion in cost-of-living supports.

When I sat here this week and listened to the Leader of the Opposition's budget reply, I tried to count the number of times that she mentioned the cost of living, and I only counted it once. She definitely only mentioned it once. That is just incredible because when I am out and about in my community it comes up in every single conversation. Regardless of what we are talking about, the cost of living is at the front of mind and front and centre for all families in Victoria right now, which is why we have delivered the \$2.5 billion in cost-of-living supports. But we have also done this whilst delivering another operating surplus and continuing to invest in the projects that will transform our community. That is what Victorians would rightly expect of us and of any government.

Already many Victorians are making the most of our free public transport policy. I think on this side of the house we know, because we are out and about talking to people in our communities, the free public transport policy has been so popular, and that is exactly why we have extended it until the end of this month. From 1 June this will shift to half-price fares for the rest of the year. Folks I talk to down at the train stations in my electorate have been extremely happy about this, and do you know who else has been happy about this? People who commute by car, the drivers, because the roads are less congested. I know that because I happen to do a lot of driving in my electorate of Laverton. The roads are definitely less congested. But what people know is that this will make a real difference not only to their commutes but also in their weekly savings so that money that they save can go towards something else for their family. Whether they are putting away for a holiday or whether they are hoping to go out

on the weekend and have a family meal somewhere together, this is good for our local business economy. They know it makes a real difference to weekly savings.

This is also true of what this budget is delivering when we announced the 20 per cent off people's registration. Two weekends ago I was out in Sunshine at one of our busiest shopping centres in my electorate, the Sunshine Marketplace, for one of my regular Saturday morning street stalls, and when I was talking to people about the 20 per cent off their rego, their eyes were literally lighting up. I was watching a huge line-up at Australia Post, and people standing there, who probably would not normally come up and talk to me or take one of my DLs or take one of my gorgeous red shopping bags that are very popular in Melbourne's west, came up after they had done whatever they needed to do at Australia Post, took the DL and said, 'I'm putting this on my fridge,' because 186 bucks per car for up to two cars is a lot of money. It is real help right now back into the weekly savings of families.

There is a lot more support in this budget across a variety of different initiatives to help with the cost of living. We are looking at \$24 million for expanded out of hours school care for young Victorians with a disability. This is something that may not make the front page of the *Herald Sun*, but this is actually really meaningful assistance for families with children with a disability, including in my electorate at Western Autistic School. This will save families struggling with the afternoon pick-up for students with special needs more time and money. There is \$28 million for the affordable school uniforms program, supporting families to purchase new uniforms for their kids. There is \$15 million for free admissions for under-16s to visit the many zoos and animal parks that we have in Victoria. My children now are not asking me every weekend to go to these zoos – they are a bit older – but when we did go these places were absolutely packed. If families are having to pay for their children on top of their own admissions, that really does add up. In a time when there is a tightening of the family budget and people are struggling to afford those extra activities, this is a really great initiative to let families be together and have fun and for kids to be kids and, most importantly, enjoy and embrace the incredible animals that are at zoos like Melbourne Zoo and, most importantly, one of my favourites, Werribee Open Range Zoo. Get Active Kids vouchers: these are, again, so more kids can play the sport that they love. There is just so much more. I could go on and on with them all, and I know I listed a lot of them in the matter of public importance debate yesterday, when the Leader of the Opposition said that her son would be worse off because of what Labor has spent during its time in government.

On a local level we have funded some really great supports for the Laverton electorate. Perhaps the biggest one – it is one of my favourites, one of my top five that we are funding – is more nine-car VLocity trains on the Wyndham Vale line. I know that for a lot of folks in my electorate who use this line, who catch the train at Tarneit station – or they can go and catch the train at Tarneit West station when she opens later this year – it can be a real pain to get on the train in the morning, and they would be lucky to get a seat. That is why we are making sure that all peak-hour services that start or stop at Wyndham Vale in the morning and end in the afternoon will have a nine-car VLocity train. Why are VLocity trains and the nine-car carriage service so important? That is because it offers 50 per cent extra capacity for locals, and they will not have to wait years for it.

Another local bid I was super happy to see get up was the funding for upgraded signalisation at the Dohertys and Woods roads intersection in Truganina, and I have talked about that intersection previously here in this place. That intersection is incredibly and increasingly busy and dangerous, and we needed pedestrian signalisation so kids can get to school and grandparents and parents can cross the road safely to get over to Truganina Central shopping centre, or maybe they are going to the pool, or maybe they are going to the community centre that we helped co-fund alongside Wyndham City Council. This is such a great initiative. It sounds small, but it is so meaningful to so many families in Truganina. When I shared this with my local community on social media there was actually a bit of confusion. Some people said, 'Why is this one getting an upgrade?' and some people said, 'There are already traffic lights there.' Yes, there are, people, but what this will do is create additional pedestrian crossings at this intersection on the north and western legs of the intersection so that locals who live

nearby, including local school students, can now use a brand new footpath to walk to Truganina Central, to the nearby community centre or even to school in the morning. That is really important because it saves people time and it saves them money. They do not need to use their cars to drop off or pick up their kids at school.

On the other side of my electorate we have got something sensational happening in relation to buses. We are going to improve and give an uplift to the service of the 408 bus, which goes from St Albans through to Sunshine and Braybrook and up into Maribyrnong for a bit of shopping at Highpoint shopping centre. The uplift in services is not just for weekdays but for weekend services, especially on Sundays. It turns out people love getting out and about, having something to eat for lunch, but also shopping there at Highpoint on a Sunday. This is truly fantastic. I have been down to the pick-up stop, the bus stop there at the Sunshine bus interchange, next to the station. It is incredibly busy. I know when I went down there to do a bit of SCTV filming, there were a bunch of school students who were heading off to Highpoint shopping centre. They were not from Sunshine, they had bussed it into Sunshine. But they were there at the 408 bus stop. They asked what I was doing, and I said, 'It's very exciting. I'm advocating for more services.' They were so excited, because they said they will not have to wait as long to get on a bus to head on over to Highpoint shopping centre to do some shopping. It was great to see local westie kids having a great time together, getting out and about and heading to another fabulous shopping location in the western suburbs.

Another really important funding boost that I was really glad to see was that we are funding \$17 million to expand support for homeless Victorians, with nine new outreach teams to operate across Victoria. This is the stuff that never makes the news, but I can tell you I have had so many conversations over the past 12 months about locals' concerns in relation to homelessness in the western suburbs but also particularly in Sunshine. Through their advocacy and the advocacy of a bunch of western suburbs MPs, I am so pleased to see that \$17 million is in this budget to expand support and outreach services for homeless people that are doing it really tough at the moment. I am really happy to say that two of these new teams will be based in my electorate, with one servicing the Brimbank–Melton region and the other for the western Melbourne region which stretches from Wyndham all the way to Maribyrnong. These teams really are critical to supporting rough sleepers in our community and linking them to services that can actually help them.

This is an incredible budget. It is a responsible budget. It is a surplus budget. It is a budget that delivers for all Victorians. It particularly delivers for working families and busy people that are really struggling at the moment. It offers cost-of-living support to give people a little bit more money back, week to week, whether it is just under 100 bucks or just under 200 bucks. There is so much in this budget for Victorians, and I absolutely commend it to the house.

**Will FOWLES** (Ringwood) (11:23): I encourage members of the Labor government to spend a bit of time, if they have not already, looking at Jim Chalmers's budget speech and his post-budget interview with Sarah Ferguson on 7.30. That was an example of a political leader coming clean with the electorate about the decisions they have taken and the reasons they have taken them. It is very, very different to the approach being taken by this government in relation to the Maroondah Hospital commitment: too mean, too tricky, too evasive, too insincere, simply not coming clean with voters in the eastern suburbs that the project has been shelved. Clearly it has been shelved. You cannot have a \$1.1 billion project simply disappear from the budget and then continue to pretend that the thing is still on foot. The Minister for Health in the other place yesterday was asked repeatedly about the status of Maroondah Hospital, and she took the opportunity to speak about every single other hospital project the state government has underway, without mentioning Maroondah at all. And my plea to the government is: do not duck and hide on this – come clean. Come out, as you should have done before the budget, once the decision was taken to cancel the Maroondah project, and simply say, 'We've come to a different view. Yes, we made a commitment in 2018 to a new children's emergency department. Yes, we made a commitment in 2022 to a \$1.1 billion rebuild that was going to see shovels in the ground by 2025. We did all that. We made those commitments and, do you know what, we've formed

a different view. Circumstances change.' I do not adhere to the view that government should blindly be bound by every single election commitment when circumstances change.

If there is a material change in circumstances, I think it is okay for governments to go out and say, just as the federal Treasurer did last night, 'We've formed a different view. We're taking a different approach, but we're going to come clean with the Australian people, as Treasurer Chalmers did, and we're going to explain the reasons why.' I think that is a reasonable approach. Regrettably the Allan Labor government has not taken that approach in relation to Maroondah. They are simply ducking, weaving, hiding, being mean and tricky, being insincere, not giving the voters of the eastern suburbs the basic respect and recognition to say, 'Do you know what, we've formed a different view. We are now going to sandbag seats in the west. We are now writing off Glen Waverley, we are writing off Bayswater, we are writing off Ringwood and we are writing off Monbulk. We simply don't care about those eastern suburbs seats anymore. We've taken a political decision to sandbag other seats to hang on to our majority, and we're simply not prioritising them anymore.' Now, that is a political calculus that is a matter for others, some of them in this room, some of them not. I do not necessarily dispute the political logic. I think it is unethical, but I do not dispute the raw, pragmatic and political logic that sits behind a decision like that if your goal is to retain government at all costs. But at a minimum what I think you need to do is come clean with the voters about the decision you have taken.

The government has not even owned the decision. They are still pretending that there is a project that is on foot, a project that four years after the announcement has had little to no money spent on it, has no provision in the budget papers, has no plan, has no business case and has no study. There is nothing to show for four years of a key election commitment for a \$1.1 billion project. This is not a playground in a local park. It is not one classroom at a local primary school. It is an absolutely fundamental commitment in health of a very, very large capital project that has advanced exactly not at all over the course of the last four years. It has not advanced at all in that time. As I say, the political calculus clearly is that Labor can retain its majority in this chamber whilst losing the seats of Ringwood, Bayswater, Glen Waverley, Monbulk and others. It can lose all of those seats and retain its parliamentary majority – that is the political calculus that has clearly been arrived at. As I say, whilst I think it is unethical and is an awful, awful, awful outcome for my community, the political analysis may very well hold. But at a minimum you have got to front up and say it is what you are doing – and clearly it is what the government is doing.

You cannot pretend with a \$1.1 billion project that has completely disappeared. If you press search on the budget papers and type in the word 'Maroondah', you get zero hits. That is the reality. It is nowhere to be found in the budget papers. There was a dedicated Hospital Infrastructure Delivery Fund that had \$115 million-odd that has been soaked up by the delivery of a hospital in Dandenong, and all the other money – the other residual money, which was about \$20 million – was spread over three hospitals, Wonthaggi, Maroondah and one other over the preceding three years. That money is gone, and there is zero, nothing, to show for it. And prospectively there is zero, nothing, not a nickel, being allocated to Maroondah. A \$1.1 billion commitment is completely gone. What does that do to Rachel Halse, who is out in the field in her scrubs every day talking about the importance of health and now has had completely pulled from underneath her this core commitment that was made in 2022, this commitment from 2018, which she herself featured in the marketing of in her capacity as the spouse of the then member for Ringwood? She was in the marketing for the 2018 commitment. Eight years ago Labor goes out and says, 'We're going to have a children's emergency department.' It does not exist. There is no planning, nothing, not even a mention.

As I say, governments are within their rights to change their minds when circumstances change. Clearly there has been a massive deterioration in the government's budget position, and that is self-evident in the fact that peak debt in the state is now beyond the forwards. The forward estimates do not even get you to peak debt. But at a minimum you have got to go out and own it. Come clean, I say to the government. Come clean with the constituents of my electorate and the constituents of the surrounding electorates and say, 'Hey, sorry. We made a commitment. We can't honour it. We don't

have the money. We've decided to spend the money elsewhere. The budget reflects the priorities of the government, and Maroondah is no longer a priority – whoopsie,' and then own the political consequences of that, and the political consequences are pretty obvious.

Ringwood is right on the margin for the coalition to be able to form government in Victoria. It might very well be the 45th seat, depending on how One Nation tracks, and you need to be realistic about the possibility of being able to win Ringwood when you are the coalition, despite the 7.5 per cent margin. You have got no incumbent contesting, and you have got a major commitment for that electorate being torn up privately, being torn up in secret – not actually someone walking out the front and saying, 'Hey, by the way, we've decided to tear up the project'; they have just disappeared it off the map.

What are we seeing in this budget? It saddens me that not just has that massive project been disappeared for my community but we are seeing cost overruns, we are seeing delayed infrastructure, we are seeing scaled-back projects and broken promises. Governments can survive isolated mistakes. They can even survive changes of mind if they own them, which this one does not. But when enormous spending is repeatedly accompanied by waste, by delays, by poor planning and by an overwhelming lack of transparency, then public confidence begins to collapse, and it actually collapses not just in the ruling party – in this case the Labor Party – but in the system itself. We ought not to extrapolate too much from what went on in Farrer last weekend but for this: that was a coalition seat that was held on a comfortable two-party preferred majority, the primary vote. Let us just set aside two-party preferred for a moment. The primary vote in Farrer for One Nation went from 6 per cent to 39 per cent in one year. I cannot remember a time when any party in any election went from 6 –

**James Newbury** interjected.

**Will FOWLES:** No, it went from 6, so they had to have contested the previous one. It went from 6 to 39 per cent in 12 months, member for Brighton. That is a phenomenal political result, and it is terrifying. It is terrifying for the future of politics in Victoria too, because there are a whole bunch of Nationals seats up there that are clearly going to fall to One Nation and there is a lot of pressure on Labor seats in the north and the west of Melbourne as well.

I have made the point previously in this place that One Nation has not changed in the 25 years since I protested against Pauline Hanson attempting to hold a One Nation party meeting in Hawthorn town hall. I linked arms with thousands of people to help prevent that meeting occurring in 1998 outside Hawthorn town hall. Pauline Hanson's world view and her politics have not changed. Clearly the electorate has. Clearly there is gross dissatisfaction with the major parties, and it is the sort of dissatisfaction that frankly is fomented by actions like not owning your decisions, not actually coming clean with the people of Ringwood that you have binned a project. It is all you need to do. There are cameras here everywhere. You need only walk out the front and say, 'Do you know what, we changed our minds,' and then leave it to the voters to decide. But to pretend that you have not changed your minds is too tricky, too mean, too silly.

What do we have in Victoria? We have an infrastructure pipeline that we cannot afford. It is a shrine to the rampaging ego of Daniel Andrews, and it is basically in the process of giving this government zero flex – no ability to respond to changes in circumstances, no meaningful ability to respond to a war in Iran, and no meaningful ability, apparently, to respond to a bushfire in Longwood. The response to the Longwood fires, which were almost exactly the same in scale economically as the fires of 2019, has been a pittance compared to the response in 2019. In 2019 there was budget capacity, and the government went out – rates deferrals, rates discounts, stamp duty discounts, tourism promotion. None of that has been seen this time around, and that is a very great shame. That is what happens when you allow the rampaging ego of the former Premier to drive the government off a cliff with a massive overcommitment to infrastructure.

I do not think there is a single infrastructure project that on paper does not have merit as a project. But when you lose control of the funding of it, when you lose control of the running of it, when you lose control of the cost outcomes, then you start having very, very real impacts on the ability of the government to respond to unforeseen circumstances and even to meet its core commitments. Interest payments become the third-biggest line items over the forward estimates: health, education, interest – not housing, not roads, not a whole bunch of other very, very worthy activities. You have just got to be really careful when you go down this path, and Daniel Andrews held this government hijacked to his own ego and as a result delivered up an infrastructure program that, regrettably, Victorians can no longer afford.

I have spoken about Maroondah Hospital. I want to speak a little bit, in my remaining 2½ minutes, about cost of living generally. Clearly there are rising housing costs, rising energy costs, rising insurance costs, rising taxes and charges. There is a very simple expectation in public finances, and in private finances, frankly: if you pay more, you should get more. Yes, infrastructure has been delivered. Metro Tunnel – great project, really good project. It has been delivered – fantastic. But the cost overruns on a whole range of other projects are going to make it harder and harder and harder for the government to provide the cost-of-living relief that my constituents and constituencies right across this great state of ours so desperately need. Many communities feel they are moving backwards. And the absurd housing target that this government committed to – 800,000, I think, over 10 years – they are going to fall miles short of, because you cannot live in a permit. Changing permits is only a tiny, tiny part of the problem. There has been no meaningful microeconomic reform in the construction industry. This is an industry that has had 20 years of zero productivity growth. You have got corrupt actors like the CFMEU poisoning the well every day, making it increasingly difficult for the Labor government to get anything done even remotely near the initial price estimates. Without micro-economic reform, the construction industry will continue to fail not just the government but Victorians more generally.

Finally, in my final minute, budget honesty matters, transparency matters and realistic commitments matter, because eventually reality catches up with governments. You cannot just endlessly announce billion-dollar projects, mega infrastructure promises and new spending commitments without having a sustainable financial underpinning. Clearly it is not sustainable. If you have to walk away from a core and obvious and public commitment like the commitment made in relation to Maroondah Hospital, clearly there is a sustainability problem sitting at the very, very heart of your budget. Long-term economic plans must be realistic, they must have proper priorities, they must have disciplined spending and they must reduce waste, or you simply will not be able to do the things that the voters of Victoria expect you to do and the matters upon which you will be most soundly judged come November of this year.

**Ben CARROLL** (Niddrie – Minister for Education, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC, Minister for Medical Research) (11:38): This year's budget is delivering real outcomes for the people of Niddrie and the surrounding community, with practical investments focused on the things local families need and care about: better schools, improved public transport, safer roads, stronger health care and meaningful cost-of-living relief. When I joined this place back in 2012 I said I wanted my legacy to be building education and fundamentally investing in every school in my community, beginning with Essendon Keilor College, and we have come so far it is incredible. Every time I speak to local parents they want their children learning in modern 21st-century facilities, and with the member for Essendon, it was wonderful to go out to Essendon North Primary School last week to see firsthand this school that has been around for more than a hundred years. It was built in 1920, but this \$24 million investment is the biggest investment this school has had in a century. The member for Essendon and I met with Kate Barletta, the principal, and you could see that this \$24 million investment is going to mean so much for this school, with its upgraded classroom wings and, importantly, new classrooms for the school students.

I also had the great pleasure to phone call and speak with the Keilor Heights principal Victoria Graham. It is a fantastic school. We have invested already in an upgrade of its synthetic oval and its sports

facilities, and to be now providing a \$10.5 million upgrade to improve the learning environment for local children gives me such heart. Under the great leadership of Adam Potter, the principal at Essendon Keilor College, students are also getting upgraded facilities and improvements. Adam has brought a real culture of improvement and excellence to Essendon Keilor College, with their core values of 'Be respectful, be engaged, be aspirational, be a learner'. I congratulate Adam and the great team he has built behind him on continuing to do such great work at EKC. To be out at the year 12 graduation earlier this year was a very proud moment. I am also proud of our investment in the Niddrie Autistic School. We have invested as a government – every single state specialist school has received upgrades, and Niddrie Autistic School has also been included.

This budget also continues the funding for the outside school hours care initiative. This program has a double dividend of supporting parents, particularly mothers, to get back into the workforce and take up additional training and TAFE while their children are getting that outside support and care in the environment they know well: their local specialist school. It also dovetails so well with our record investment in disability inclusion. We have invested record investment in a program that began in 2021, making sure every child's needs get met in every classroom in every corner of our state. That began in 2021 and has continued under this budget with more than \$2 billion invested.

When I meet with families and when I meet with parents, as the Premier herself did on budget day, we know this is something only Labor governments do. This is the transformative impact of real, good, cutting-edge social policy. When the Commonwealth looks at the NDIS reforms announced in the budget last week, I can tell you a place they look at is Victoria, because of the work we are doing in early education, in our primary schools and beyond, making sure every child gets the wraparound services and support they need. That leads me to the record investment we are continuing to make in health care. The new Footscray Hospital, the Joan Kirner Women's and Children's Hospital, the Sunshine Hospital – these are transformative investments for Melbourne's western suburbs.

Public transport is something I am passionate about delivering for the people of Niddrie. This budget gives a significant uplift to the route 476 bus service. It goes right through my electorate all the way up to Watergardens, and I am very proud of that. As a former public transport minister, I was passionate about the fact that the only steel wheels I knew out in Niddrie were the tram wheels. To be getting those next-generation trams that are now out to market, out running on route 59 for testing, is critically important. But more than that are the accessible level stops to make sure people of all abilities get to get on the new G-class trams. There is development funding in this budget for Keilor Road to get the tram stops that the locals will need.

We know how important local sports clubs are to real community strengthening. Out in my electorate of Niddrie everyone is passionate about their sport – their local football, their local soccer, their local basketball. That is why in this budget too there is funding for the pavilion upgrade at Avondale Heights Football Club. There is the Avondale soccer club – more upgrading for them. One of the great initiatives that have been growing in the community of Niddrie is Horseshoe Bend community farm – the century-old farm at Horseshoe Bend in Brimbank Park. That was a disused farm. Thanks to locals and volunteers it now is a thriving place where the community come, grow vegetables and distribute them to night markets. I have been there firsthand with the Minister for Environment on a Friday night and seen the volunteers, and volunteerism is something our communities need more of. To everyone out at Horseshoe Bend, I am so proud to be delivering over \$100,000 to support your important work to continue supporting everybody.

Local roads – the Niddrie electorate is bound by major highways from the Tullamarine to the Calder. We are delivering important funding and maintenance upgrades for those important freeways. We also note the significant cost-of-living investments in this budget. Wherever I travel, wherever I move around the community, everyone says to me that has been a game changer – the half-price discount for public transport. It has seen a real uptick on our bus services, our trams and our trains. That is a great thing for bringing people together and getting people on public transport. It is also tackling transport emissions as well as helping people with their hip pocket. We know too the price of car

registration is a real big expense that rolls into people's letterboxes and online, and that 20 per cent discount is a real cost-of-living measure that makes sure everybody gets that opportunity to access it.

I also want to just address one issue that I think we do need to address. Sadly, the alternative Premier yesterday only spoke about non-government schools, and I remind the opposition that we run a world-class public school system with 18 of 20 –

*Members interjecting.*

**Ben CARROLL:** The member across knows that we have funded many schools across his electorate and across Kew, because under the previous government I as the member and the member before me used to have to bring schools in to see Martin Dixon, the former education minister. You could not get him out into the community. This government has put record investment into more than 2300 upgrades.

And while the opposition talk about debt, I remind them it was a Liberal Premier by the name of Henry Bolte that ran gross state product at 50 per cent. Under our government it is at 24 per cent, the gross state product to debt ratio. What we know too is – they like talking about debt – \$460 billion of assets is what we have built as a government, which is record infrastructure investment. We have gone from a Liberal government that spent all its time looking for a black cat and promised to bring the Red Bull race to Victoria – those were their two big priorities. They spent four years trying to find a black cat and bring the Red Bull race to Victoria. Look at what the Andrews and Allan Labor governments have done. We have transformed this state. We are continuing to invest in it, and we always will continue to make sure that every child, every person gets every opportunity.

I commend Anthony Albanese and Jim Chalmers for what they did last night, because they are making sure that we back young people, as we are doing for housing as well. We know the naysayer opposite me put his résumé in to be the Shadow Treasurer and it was rejected out of hand, and that is why he is now where he is. And we all know Mr Trustworthy over there. Every time he talks to a member on his own side his numbers go backwards in the party room, and Jess Wilson got him hook, line and sinker. We know he thinks he has still got a future, but we also know he is obviously nervous about the teals. He has been talking about the teals all through my speech, because they are coming. They are coming for him, and they know his party is lining up with One Nation. With the preference deal they have done in Nepean, the preference deal they did in Farrer, we all know that he is lining up with One Nation, and I would love to see what the people of Brighton and the people of Kew think of an alternative government that has already said, 'We'll rip up treaty without even giving it a chance.' We know the people of Kew and the people of Brighton will be dismayed that that is the moral leadership that is coming from those opposite.

**James Newbury** interjected.

**Ben CARROLL:** I have got a very good primary, mate. I would compare my primary to yours any day. I know under the Allan Labor government we will continue to make record investments. We know what we have already done. In health – world-class infrastructure. In transport – world-class infrastructure. In education we have gone from being at the halfway mark on NAPLAN results all the way up to 18 out of 20. We are leading on every measure. One in two schools built across the nation is built right here in Victoria, and that is what we will continue to do.

I am very proud to be part of a Labor government that makes sure we leave nobody behind. As I said yesterday in the chamber, to be with the Premier on budget day with families and parents of kids with disabilities spoke to the values of this Premier and this Labor government. Compare that to the alternative Premier on the other side, who spent her budget week talking to a bunch of Liberal Party donors, discussing how she is going to cut one in seven public servants. Cutting one in seven public servants – and I noticed the Department of Education is at the top of the list – will have a real impact on NAPLAN results. Every movement in NAPLAN adds about \$50 billion to our gross state product. It increases everything, and we are continuing to do what we need to do, while those opposite will cut

the public servants. We know the role models, whether it is Jeff Kennett or Josh Frydenberg, are all pulling the strings behind the scenes. We know that, and they are already lining up for their cuts. And it was great to see that more people on the nightly news paid attention to us highlighting the cuts that are going to occur under a Wilson-led government compared to that shocking speech that was delivered yesterday, which had nothing on public education, nothing on public schools. It was all about what they will do for private schools.

I remind the Leader of the Opposition: there is nothing more important for our economy and for our society than investing in education. It is the fundamental, most important resource we have in the state. We are not a resource-rich state. It is a knowledge-based economy that will always drive Victoria. That is why we are continuing to make sure we do all the investments we need to do. I want to commend the Treasurer for the speech she gave in this chamber, which spoke about the values. It spoke about getting the budget and making sure we made the tough decisions through this process. This budget is actually smaller than what it was last year by around \$10 billion, but that is because we are doing more with less. We are also making sure that we do not take the knife to essential frontline services. We have been through that before, whether it was the government's sustainable initiative under Premier Baillieu or whether it was Jeff Kennett's savage cuts. Jeff Kennett said he would not –

**James Newbury** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Juliana Addison):** You will have the opportunity to make a contribution next. Could you please listen to the Deputy Premier.

**Ben CARROLL:** In my own electorate of Niddrie at the Niddrie Autistic School that we have invested in, if you go out there now you will find the oval is a housing development thanks to Jeff Kennett. Jeff Kennett sold the oval off of this most vulnerable primary school. Do you know what else he tried to do in Niddrie? He tried to make what this Labor government did – the beautiful Valley Lake estate – a toxic waste site. Jeff Kennett came out to Niddrie and said, 'I'll turn Valley Lake into a toxic waste site.' We went all the way to the Supreme Court to fight Jeff Kennett, and we will go everywhere we need to go to fight Jess Wilson and her cuts too.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Juliana Addison):** I remind the Deputy Premier to use correct titles.

**Ben CARROLL:** We know under our Labor government that we will invest in every corner of the state, that postcode will not be destination, that education will be destiny. We will back in the federal government too, on making sure young people can get into the housing market. I notice Angus Taylor has not said he will reverse any of those changes already. He has already come out trying to have a bet each way: 'I'll oppose them, but I don't think I'll change anything when it comes to an election.' And that is why under our Labor government we are speaking to that next generation, making sure we make those critical reforms to make sure wealth is spread evenly, that equality of opportunity drives every policy decision. What you saw from our Treasurer's budget speech to the Chalmers budget speech speaks to Labor governments and why they matter. In a world that is changing so rapidly at the moment, Labor governments matter because Labor people leave nobody behind.

**James NEWBURY (Brighton) (11:53):** I rise to speak on the budget bills, the Appropriation (2026–2027) Bill 2026 and Appropriation (Parliament 2026–2027) Bill 2026. Victoria needs fixing. In November this state will have the opportunity to be fixed. I would say to every Victorian, 'Here is your chance. In November you have that chance. You have the chance to fix this state. If you elect a Liberal–National coalition, we will fix this state.' This state really needs fixing. We have seen it both over the time of this term and over the last 12 long years of Labor, but you can put this most recent budget at the top of the list in identifying a government that has both lost its way and fails to have a plan to fix the serious issues that all Victorians are now facing. When it comes to a record of economic mismanagement that is, by contrast across this entire nation, the worst government in Australia, this budget clearly showed why that is the case. But more than that, when it comes to sentiment, when it comes to business, when it comes to cost of living and when it comes to crime and lawlessness on the

streets, we have problems in this state, and in November we will have an opportunity to turf out this government as they deserve to be turfed out and elect a Liberal–National Jess Wilson–led coalition government.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Juliana Addison):** Excuse me, member for Brighton, correct titles.

**James NEWBURY:** This budget is shameful – absolutely shameful. It is a \$200 billion debt bomb that this government is gifting not only to every Victorian but to every future Victorian. Paying back this debt bomb, which is now going off because of the baked-in interest that it is costing every Victorian, is unfairly shaping how Victorian taxpayers money can be used not only today but into the future. I mean, there is something so incredibly offensive about a government that would recklessly use Victorian taxpayers money in the way that they have. This government has forgotten that every single dollar that comes into a government coffer was first earned by a taxpayer – I often say the sweat and hard work of a taxpayer. This government treats the private sector and people who earn money with absolute contempt. Over the life of this government what they have done is move the public sector into the centre of the economy and move the private sector out, crowding them out and treating them with contempt. The private sector has now across many sectors fallen to its knees. Is there any surprise? You look at the way the economy is now not operating and you say to yourself, ‘Well, that is an obvious outcome of that decision.’

On the specifics of this budget, we have a \$7.7 billion cash deficit and, as I said, a \$200 billion debt bomb. \$32 million in interest payments per day is what we will soon be paying. That is dead money. So Victorians are working to pay interest on an unsustainable level of debt. They are working to pay taxes to pay that debt, and their money is being flushed down the toilet. It is absolutely offensive. We see billions in tax revenue growth but at the same time cuts in things like public order and safety. At a time when we are in a crime crisis, the government is cutting public order and safety. It is absolutely outrageous. You would think that when more money is coming in and taxpayers are being taxed more, we would have the best services in the nation. It only makes sense that if you are taxing everyone more than every other state, you would have the best services in the country. What a joke. No Victorian thinks that. Most Victorians think we are being taxed the most and getting the worst services; that is how every Victorian feels. I will tell you what, if we are marking people on this government’s service delivery, well, I do not think they are going very, very well. People are angry – they are absolutely angry – and so they should be, because their money is being wasted and the services are not up to standard.

On top of that, they are not safe in their own homes, as we know. Over the life of this government, the reason we have got to this point is because we have seen this government introduce or increase 67 taxes. We have seen a doubling of payroll tax and a quadrupling of land tax, and property taxes of course are now going to be increased following the broken promises of the federal government’s Anthony Albanese and Jim Chalmers. I will tell you what, you certainly would not trust them to keep their word – their word is worth nothing – but we know with Labor prime ministers that is always the case. We have seen many, many Labor prime ministers committing to never, ever, ever introducing taxes. Keating, Gillard and Albanese are all cut from the same lying cloth.

In terms of the new taxes, there are some big ones: emergency services tax, GP payroll tax, schools tax, short-stay tax, windfall gains tax, vacant residential land tax – all taxes introduced under this shameful government. I want to talk about our alternative, and our leader outlined our 10-year economic vision. It is a vision that Victorians can believe in, rely on and trust. It is a vision that they can see from us, I hope, and feel sure about. They can see an opposition who will deliver good government, who will fix the books and, in doing so, fix the state. What we have committed to is delivering a cash surplus by 2032, responsibly and in a way where we can make broader decisions to make sure we fix this state – not a fake surplus that has only been written into the books because of a dodgy backroom deal with a Labor donor, and we know that is what Labor has done, but a real surplus.

We have also committed to expanding upon our five strong tax cuts that we have previously announced with two more. I want to spend a moment talking about those, because they are significant announcements, frankly game-changing announcements, that build to a tax cut narrative that Victorians have been hoping for and that business can rely on. If we can get the private sector to trust this future coalition government to bring money back into this state, this state will absolutely fly. We have committed to an increase in the payroll tax threshold of \$1.1 million in year 1 and \$1.2 million in year 2 and a reduction in metropolitan payroll tax to 4.8 per cent in year 4, which will deliver relief to 23,000 Victorian businesses. For the most part that is 23,000 families, so you are talking about the best part of 100,000 people who will be positively affected by that. It means the cost of hiring someone else is lower, bringing another Victorian into a job, because that is what we should be aiming for – encouraging the private sector to grow so they can hire more Victorians. Everyone wins, except the Labor government and the public sector.

Secondly, our land tax relief package. This is important because there have been immoral decisions taken by this government on land tax – not just wrong, not just financially wrong, but immoral. We will lift the land tax threshold back to \$300,000 progressively. That will help 270,000 taxpayers. I have spoken about it in this house. I remember receiving contact, when the government made that change, from a nurse, a single mum of a primary school aged boy, who bought a one-bedroom apartment for her son. Her hope was that if she did extra shifts, by the time he became 20, in her mind, she would have paid off that one-bedroom apartment and she could give that to her son. The threshold change meant she was forced to sell it. I remember talking to her on the phone and she was crying her eyes out because she was a hardworking nurse who was doing extra shifts to give something to her son, and that is what this government took away. We talk about numbers in this place, but our announcement on land tax means a nurse in my community has hope that they can build for their family's future. That is what we believe in as a coalition. We want to say to people like that constituent of mine: 'If you work hard, we'll back you. If you work hard, we're not going to tax you.' That is the difference: Labor taxes you; we will back you. That is why this particular commitment means so much to me, because I know how much it means to residents, not only in my community but more broadly. The average saving from that commitment is \$975 a year. That is a big, big saving to mum-and-dad investors, and we know that it is mum-and-dad investors, mostly, almost solely, who will be affected by that.

We have also talked about a hiring freeze in certain sections of the back office of the public service. The government has tried to start a scare campaign on that, but we know that Victorians can see straight through it. The public service has grown by 60 per cent in 10 years. At the same time population growth has been just under 20 per cent. Victorians know there is a problem. In fact the Premier and Treasurer have admitted there is a problem, and not only have they admitted a problem but, as the Premier said, she has cut thousands of public service workers.

More than that – this is one of the most immoral parts not only of the budget but of budget management and economic management more broadly – we know, in terms of budget management, the government has also overseen at least \$15 billion, but up to \$30 billion, of corruption of government money on government projects and has a Premier who has refused to look at where the money has gone and find it. How can you admit to corruption and corrupted money under your watch and then refuse to look for it? I think every Victorian knows the answer why. We will hold a royal commission, and I have said this: we will hunt people down and we will find the money, because it is not anyone's money other than Victorians'. Every corrupted dollar has come from a hardworking Victorian, and we will find it. That will be a big difference when people go to vote at the end of this year: this government does not want to find the corrupted money; we will. We will find the culprits who took that money, and that is a commitment to Victorians.

On top of that, we have committed to acting strongly on the crime crisis with more police. If you break bail, you will face jail; adult crime, adult time – important commitments. But at a local level I would say to the government: again my community has been let down. Brighton Primary School – shocking.

We have had a primary school bathroom without a floor for a year – disgraceful. We have got no police station open at night. PSOs have just been ripped off our train stations, and the government is trying to shove 20-storey towers into my community because of how much this government hates my community.

This government has got it wrong, but Victorians have a chance in November to fix this state. A Liberals–Nationals coalition will fix this state. This budget is a shameful disgrace, but in November every Victorian will have the chance to fix Victoria.

**Anthony CIANFLONE** (Pascoe Vale) (12:08): I rise to support the 2026 Victorian state Labor budget, and I do so following the member for Brighton, who, mind you, was the failed Shadow Treasurer in the previous opposition shadow front bench. He did such a great job of developing alternative finances that they sacked him as the Shadow Treasurer, so he has got absolutely no credibility whatsoever to come in this place and to lecture us about what it means to develop a budget that helps Victorians.

It is a budget that is all about making life easier, safer and more affordable for all Victorians. It focuses on the things that matter – all the things that the Leader of the Opposition did not say anything about in her budget reply speech yesterday: cost of living, frontline and essential services, jobs, education, transport, health and wellbeing, the tourism sector, sports, creative and cultural economies, environmental open space, sustainability and affordable energy, social justice and of course community safety. But it is also a budget that stands in stark contrast to the alternative and the ignorance of the Liberal, National and One Nation coalition that would like to govern Victoria as the alternative. Our budget is a genuine Labor budget that is grounded in the economic challenges and realities of what is occurring internationally, nationally and locally.

Around the world and here at home families are making those hard choices. They are weighing up what they can go without and holding tight to what matters most. The war in the Middle East has been pushing up prices and punishing many Australians and Victorians. We did not decide when this war began and have no control over when it will properly end, but how we respond and how we help the community through this is up to us as a Victorian government. Since late February 2026 the Middle East conflict, whether those opposite want to accept it or not, has led to a surge in those global oil prices, intensifying cost-of-living pressures. Oil production – the Treasurer touched on this in the federal budget last night – fell by 8 million barrels a day in the first month of the war, almost eight times more than any of the other oil shocks since the 1970s.

The global oil price started the year at around \$60 and now has been above \$100 for the bulk of the past two months. A third of the world's seaborne fertiliser has been stuck, putting pressure on food production, food security and supermarket prices, all because of Donald Trump's war in Iran and the Strait of Hormuz's ongoing consequences. Victorian petrol prices reached an average of \$2.50 per litre in late March 2026, an increase of 85 cents per litre. This has continued to compound pre-existing international and national inflationary and interest rate pressures and is affecting every facet of our community. Our Labor budget recognises this and makes the appropriate provisions in helping families and households to combat these price rises. But what did the Liberal opposition leader say to all this yesterday?

A budget is not an exposition on geopolitics, on Ukraine, the conflict in the Middle East or the President of America.

Of course they are denying what is happening internationally, just like they denied COVID. They are now denying the war in the Middle East is having an impact on the state's finances and the state's budget.

**Cindy McLeish:** On a point of order, Acting Speaker, the member for Pascoe Vale is quite excited, but he does need to be factual. I ask you to make sure he is.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Wayne Farnham):** It is not up to me to determine what is factual and what is not. The member is being relevant to the debate.

**Anthony CIANFLONE:** I am being factual by quoting literally the words of the opposition leader and what she is implying. We know they want to deny that this is a war that was started by Donald Trump, because they have to pander to that right-wing extremist group of One Nation that they are increasingly threatened by. We saw what happened in Farrer, we saw the major swing that happened in Nepean and we know the Liberals and the Nationals are shaking in their boots. They are shaking in their boots, so they are denying.

This is a budget that recognises those challenges, and contrary to some claims of those opposite, it is built on strong, stable and resilient economic foundations, which allow us to keep helping people. Our budget confirms a surplus of more than \$727 million in 2025–26, \$1 billion in 2026–27, \$1.9 billion in 2028–29 and \$2 billion by 2029–30 over the forward estimates. It is a \$1.7 billion average surplus over the forward estimates. I draw that as a contrast. We are the first state on the eastern seaboard to arrive at a surplus. That is a fact, whether the Liberals like that or not. Look at what is happening in New South Wales, for example. They are handing down a deficit of \$3.4 billion. Their Liberal mates up in Queensland are handing down an \$8.6 billion deficit at the same time, and we in Victoria are in surplus. It is also why we are investing, though, building on that economic foundation to keep doing more.

We have created 900,000 jobs since 2014 and added \$138 billion to the Victorian economy. More than 646,000 jobs have been created in the last six years alone. Employment growth in Victoria is 21 per cent up, compared to 17 per cent for the rest of Australia over the last six years, and there is a 67.7 per cent employment participation rate across Victoria – historic highs. That is in contrast to the Libs, who left us in 2014 with an unemployment rate at almost 7 per cent, whereas we have contained unemployment with a ‘4’ in front of it consistently. Business investment is up, at 44 per cent over the last six years versus 30 per cent across the rest of Australia. 123,000 new businesses have opened up in Victoria over the last six years. Government infrastructure investment has reached the peak of \$24.2 billion, and it continues to taper down to more sustainable and comparable historic levels, to \$15.3 billion by 2029–30. Net debt to gross state product as well is reducing from 24.7 per cent in 2025–26 down to 24.4 per cent over the end of the forward estimates. This is all consistent – we have been saying this all along – with our fiscal strategy, where step 1 was to create jobs and keep unemployment down, step 2 was to return to an operating cash surplus, step 3 was to return to an operating surplus, step 4 then goes on to look at stabilising the net debt level as a proportion of GST and step 5 is about reducing net debt as a proportion of GSP overall.

What is the Liberals’ position in contrast to these economic foundations? It is \$40 billion in cuts across the state budget and the economy. It is sacking one in seven public service workers. I draw the attention to today’s *Age* –

*Members interjecting.*

**Anthony CIANFLONE:** Have a read of today’s *Age*. I do not know if you read the *Age* or just the *Australian*. But I quote:

The Coalition’s promised cash surplus could only be achieved through major infrastructure or service cuts, a leading economist has warned ...

...

... the Coalition would need to find savings of \$26.4 billion to reach its promised cash surplus by 2032.

...

Economist David Hayward said the opposition’s path to cash surplus did not stack up, and they had not yet shown a credible path to achieving it.

...

“One of the problems is they’re going to depend on pretty significant cuts to infrastructure to achieve it,” he said.

The reality is the Liberals have no solutions, they just have cuts. You cannot make \$40 billion worth of cuts without affecting frontline services in health, in education, in schools and in other essentials. The last time they were in office they promised there would be ‘no cuts to public services, full stop.’ They proceeded to then cut \$250 million per year from the public service. There were 4128 public service jobs cut or replaced between 2011 and 2013. And of course the Kennett years were all about cuts, closures and sell-offs of every public asset and public job they could get their hands on. In stark contrast, we are investing in those services and cost-of-living relief supports that people need. \$2.5 billion is contained in this budget towards cost of living. There is 20 per cent off car registrations, which people are warmly welcoming right across my community and many other communities. On the doors, people love it. They will be able to save about \$180 per car and up to \$300 for two cars –

**Paul Edbrooke** interjected.

**Anthony CIANFLONE:** \$370, there you go. Thank you, member for Frankston. It is \$370 for two cars, and they can apply over June and July. They are welcome to contact my office. We would be happy to assist them. The federal government of course complements this with the fuel excise cuts they have introduced. We have continued to roll out the Servo Saver app, which saves people \$333 per year, and we are capping petrol price rises for 24 hours, which participating service stations need to report publicly as well. There is free public transport over April and May and half-price public transport from June to December. We are continuing to support free public transport for youth and seniors on an ongoing basis as well. There is \$14 million for school breakfast clubs, and there is the affordable uniforms program, which saves families about \$93 on average for each application. We are retaining and expanding free TAFE, free kinder, the free Glasses for Kids in schools program, the free dental in schools Smile Squad program and free admission for under-16s to the Melbourne Zoo, Healesville Sanctuary, Kyabram Fauna Park and the Werribee zoo as well. The Victorian default energy offer is saving households an average of \$100 per energy bill. We are continuing the hot water, solar panel and battery rebates as well. The Victorian Energy Compare website helps people change electricity providers and save, and of course there is the council rate cap.

But when it comes to jobs, as I said, this budget is about growing the number of jobs in the community – 900,000 since 2014, 600,000 jobs created since 2020. It is all about investing in those frontline services of education and health, more nurses, doctors, police, paramedics, emergency services workers, social workers, child protection workers and much more. We are also looking to protect and solidify the right for people to work from home two days a week, which we will be progressing later this year. The central Coburg activity centre is all about homes, but it is also about jobs, skills and cultural and community outcomes. To that degree, along with the activity centre plan that we finalised, we are investing \$153,000 towards revitalising the Victoria Street mall in the heart of Coburg.

But the biggest headline announcement for my local community out of the budget is \$6.18 million towards delivering the Merri-bek Primary School concept master plan. It will be going towards realising that plan, which includes building a new covered outdoor learning area and outdoor learning spaces. Commendations to Maria Giordano, the principal; Alan Coates, school council president; Joseph Hess, the assistant principal; Belinda Slomo, business manager; and the whole school community, who campaigned so strongly for that. There were over a thousand signatures on the parliamentary petition that I tabled last sitting week. This budget contains \$143,000 over 2027–28 to help kickstart and progress that work and \$6.036 million over the remainder of the forward estimates to deliver the project.

We are supporting all of our local high schools as well through the Merri-bek North education plan. There is funding to deliver and complete the Coburg High technology hub, \$17.8 million, which we are hoping to complete by the end of this year. We are progressing the Bachar Houli Aspire Sports

academy in Coburg. There is \$1 million, and commendations to the member for Broadmeadows, for Glenroy secondary college towards detailed design and the essential preparatory work for the new STEAM centre at the Glenroy centre of excellence. At John Fawkner College there is \$154,000 for place-based education programs and a new science and visual arts building which we are also looking to finish in the near future.

There is \$2 billion towards disability inclusion funding. We are continuing, as I said, free kinder and building that new kinder in Coburg North at the old Coburg special school site. Free TAFE will continue as well. But what is the Liberals alternative to this in education? There was no mention about 100 more new schools in the opposition leader's speech yesterday. There was nothing about free kinder, nothing about Merri-bek Primary upgrades and nothing about free TAFE. They closed 12 schools in the community of Merri-bek when the Kennett government was last in office. They would do the same across the state again if they got back in.

On transport, Metro Tunnel, West Gate Tunnel, North East Link, Melbourne Airport Rail Link – these are all projects delivered by this Labor government and which this budget continues to make provision for, progressing \$675 million to fund 25 new X'Trapolis 2.0 trains, which will be rolling out across the Upfield, Craigieburn and Frankston lines as a matter of urgency and priority in the near future as well. There is \$3.6 million towards finalising the northern rail program business case and towards planning that necessary work we need to improve the services, particularly along the Upfield line but also the Craigieburn and Seymour lines through Wallan. Brunswick level crossing removals: we have committed to removing a further eight by 2030, at Albion Street, Hope Street, Victoria Street, Albert Street, Dawson Street, Union Street, Brunswick Road in Brunswick and Park Street in Parkville as well. That work will continue. That is on top of the four we have removed already throughout Coburg.

Upfield services have continued to improve: the 20-minute services on weekends have rolled out, and 20-minute frequencies on weeknights will be rolled out from later this year as well. There is funding towards improving local tram services, the Brunswick tram depot and accessible tram stop planning funding along Sydney Road, which is long overdue, and I look forward to progressing and delivering new G-class trams along route 58 on Melville Road as well. There is \$100 million to improve local bus services as well, which was announced in my community. I would like to mention the 526 bus route particularly, from Coburg to Newlands, which will go to a seven-day service with 20-minute frequency, including Sundays and public holidays – thank you, Minister. And there was the petition by almost 700 locals, including Cate Hall, Maggie Cowling, Erin, William, Jo and Li, the school crossing supervisor from Coburg Primary, who so passionately advocated for that outcome. There are also upgrades to the 561 bus route, 542 bus route, 503 bus route and 508 bus route and \$1 billion for road repairs and road safety measures as well.

In health, we are investing \$32 billion across our entire health system to continue improving services and outcomes. Regarding funding for local sport, I want to particularly acknowledge the Brunswick Hockey Club and the \$468,000 to build that long-overdue pitch at McDonald Reserve on Bell Street. There are 40 teams and 560 players, with a huge rise in women and girls, and the member for Eildon will be very interested in this, I know for sure. It is a brand new, full-size, environmentally friendly hockey pitch. It is PFAS-free to prevent environmental contamination, and there are 350-lux LED hockey lights, new hockey goals, coaches boxes, spectator shelters and fencing as well. The project will also benefit Coburg High and Brunswick Juventus soccer club, and an additional 150-lux lights will be accompanying the project as well. Commendations to Sheena Watt, member for Northern Metro; Gabe Steger, the Labor candidate for Brunswick; Cr Helen Politis; all of the Merri-bek council; Graeme Kennedy, the president of the club; Dean Paatsch, the club advocate; and all the club families and members. This is a budget also about the environment of course. It is about social justice, community safety and, importantly, cost of living.

**Tim McCURDY** (Ovens Valley) (12:23): I am delighted to rise and make a contribution on the Appropriation (2026–2027) Bill 2026 and the Appropriation (Parliament 2026–2027) Bill 2026. Let me talk about the budget that was delivered last week by the Allan Labor government. It demonstrated

a few things to me – certainly that the Allan Labor government is still living in fantasy land. They talk about a surplus. It is an operating surplus, it is not a cash surplus, but you would not hear ‘operating surplus’ come out of their mouths. It has been propped up by the lotteries deal, and we all know there must have been a hell of a panic when they realised they were going to be in deficit, so they quickly extended that lotteries deal – for 40 years, no less.

The other thing we worked out is that Labor literally do not care about the size of the debt. Victoria’s debt is headed towards \$200 billion, and they simply do not care. They want to talk about a surplus, an operating surplus, but they do not want to talk about the debt. We know that Labor is continuing to fiscally destroy Victoria. The economy of Victoria is going down the gurgler at a massive rate, and our debt is just out of control. We know that is in their DNA. We saw that last night with the federal budget heading towards a trillion dollars in debt. It is in their DNA. They do not know any other way but to continue to borrow money and hope that somebody will pay it back in the future – certainly not them.

There are those of us who remember those long, dark Cain–Kirner years – they were very, very dark. We were in all sorts of trouble with the economy, and we were literally broke. Well, we are headed to that same situation now under the Andrews and Allan Labor governments. I heard the Minister for Education say before, ‘Let’s look at what we’ve done.’ He was very proud of what they have done. I tell you what, they have put us in \$200 billion worth of debt, with no plan to get us out of it but just to continue sending that sending that figure north. That is really quite unbelievable. Victoria has seen the biggest corruption scandal in Australia’s history when you look at the \$15 billion that has been siphoned off. The Allan Labor government do not even want to go looking for it; they do not even want to start the search for it, which is frightening.

We have had 12 years of mismanagement. We have had 12 years of corruption. We have had 12 years of deceit, with 67 new or increased taxes. We should be swimming in cash and we should be the envy of other Australian states, because with the taxes that have been applied there should be so much money in Victoria’s coffers. But the actual fact is the Allan Labor government is now the laughing-stock of the other Australian states. You started with a \$20 billion –

**Belinda Wilson** interjected.

**Tim McCURDY:** You are the laughing-stock. You need to have a bit of –

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Wayne Farnham):** Through the Chair, member for Ovens Valley. The member for Narre Warren North will come to order.

**Tim McCURDY:** Look on your own Facebook pages, and you will see what people are saying. Or don’t you read the comments?

**Belinda Wilson** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Wayne Farnham):** Order! Member for North Warren North, could you please stop interjecting across the chamber.

**Tim McCURDY:** That is right. You started with a \$20 billion debt in 2014, and you are now headed towards \$200 billion in debt in the forward estimates. That is 10 times the amount of debt that you started with – absolutely disgraceful. Acting Speaker Farnham, what do we have to show for it? It is certainly not in our roads – not in my roads, not in the roads in Narracan or any other regional seat. It is certainly not shown in ambulance response times, and we do not have better education outcomes or better paid teachers, because our debt is so high. The teachers are still screaming out because they are not being paid well enough, so our debt has not fixed that crisis. It is certainly not in reduced crime in our streets, certainly not in the reduction of illicit tobacco or firebombings and certainly not in more housing. So with this \$200 billion that we are in debt that our children and our grandchildren will be paying as we go forward, they are going to go without services as we try to bring this debt down, because Labor has no intention of bringing this debt down. All we have seen is crime

and corruption go up, and this government have their fingerprints all over it. Hospital elective surgery wait times have gone up as well. Victorians are embarrassed about the corruption and the mismanagement, and there is no plan to change this – that is the embarrassing part. It really is frightening that the Allan government has no intention of trying to reduce the debt. They just talk about a surplus and do not worry about the debt, because it is always someone else's fault.

If you look around and listen to those on the other side, it is always somebody's fault. Even the member for Pascoe Vale – I had to stop myself from laughing out loud. We have heard them talk about it being Scott Morrison's fault at one stage and then it was Jeff Kennett's fault – well, Jeff Kennett gets blamed a lot of the times – but now it is the Ukraine war, it is the Middle East war and it is also the President of the United States of America. That is why Victoria's debt is as bad as it is! Well, I think our debt has been going up ever since Labor got into government, so it is time for them to get their head out of the sand and start to understand that they are the ones creating the debt. They are spending the money, and they need to at least look in the mirror and start to think it could be their fault, rather than blaming somebody else every time. Victoria will never recover financially under Labor, because they will not even acknowledge there is a problem. If you cannot acknowledge there is a problem, you will never do anything about it. The first step in any situation is acknowledging there is a problem, and if they cannot see the \$200 billion, and the \$11 billion a year that we are paying in interest only – if that is not a problem, well, you do not deserve to be on the government benches. Denial is not a river in Africa; denial is the Andrews and Allan Labor governments, who repeated the behaviour of corruption, waste and mismanagement.

The Liberals and Nationals have a plan to fix this fiscal mess, reduce crime, fix the roads, reduce the cost of living for families and fix the housing crisis. If you really want to understand the community views, as I say, look on the Facebook pages of some of the backbenchers, some of those trying to suggest that the Leader of the Opposition is going to cut. We know that is not correct at all. We have been very, very clear about a freeze on backroom bureaucrats. And if you look at those on the government benches, at their Facebook post comments, you will see that most of those agree that this is what needs to happen. It is not a cut at all, and if you are in the Victorian public service, if you have got a job, you will still have a job come 29 November. If you retire, resign or move on, then that position will not be replaced until we get down to the level that there should be. When the Premier was asked last week if she would cut hundreds of jobs, she snapped back and said, 'Not hundreds, thousands of jobs.' In the Premier's own words she said that she is prepared to sack thousands of jobs, and then they have the gall to come along and talk about the so-called cuts that are going to occur under a Liberal–Nationals government, which is simply a mistruth. It is not a lie, it is a mistruth.

Victorians are tired of this corrupt and incompetent government, and they want a change, they want a sound economic plan and they want transparency, because they are certainly not getting it under this government. They are getting deception and corruption, and it has cost Victoria dearly. The Nationals and Liberals plan is not just for next week, and it is not just for next year; it is a 10-year plan to secure Victoria's economic future. That means fixing the budget, lowering taxes and bringing accountability and transparency back to Victoria, because that is not what we have seen for the last 12 years. Fixing the budget and returning to a genuine surplus – that is where you spend less than you make and do not have to sell something to prop that budget up. That is a cash surplus, not an operating surplus. We know with the forward selling of the lottery for 40 years that billion dollars has certainly propped up the budget. We are running out of things to sell in Victoria, so Labor will have to go because there is not much else left to sell. That is why Labor will have to leave the government benches, because there is nothing left to sell.

We are going to cut the waste and mismanagement. Look at the \$13 million we spent on machete bins, which obviously were made by one of Labor's mates – nobody needed to spend \$13 million on those machete bins – and of course the \$15 billion in corruption and saving \$22 billion on the hiring freeze. In the first hundred days we will repeal the treaty, which will be a billion-dollar saving. Capping executive salaries – I saw another one yesterday. I forget the figures, but it is just eye-watering what

they are prepared to pay their mates to do a job – \$700,000 or \$800,000. It is hard to quantify that any public servant is worth \$700,000 or \$800,000. Then, when they do pay them that much, they still overspend and the projects still blow out of budget. We will be shifting infrastructure priorities from megadebt-funded wasteful projects to local community-focused infrastructure, and infrastructure that supports all of our communities and not just Labor's mates.

We do need a fresh start; we have heard that said a lot. Victoria is desperate for a new start, and we have had enough. We have seen in the Nepean and Farrer by-elections that things are changing. People are telling us. I was on the booth at Barooga, just across the river from my hometown in Cobram, and we heard that people have had enough – people have had a gutful. They are sick of Labor's deception and the corruption that goes on at both the state and the federal level. Regional Victorians want our fair share. We know we have 25 per cent of Victoria's population and we get 12 per cent of the capital infrastructure spend. Look at our roads, look at our hospitals, and you will see they are all below par and below a safe standard. Whatever happened to having some sort of vision for regional Victoria? At the moment we have got the federal government doing buybacks in our neck of the woods up in northern Victoria, and that is hurting our communities. The environment cannot even handle the water. The river systems with constraints cannot even handle that water.

You have got a state government who will not even consider looking at dams to secure water into the future and in the long term. I have asked over the last five years about building Big Buffalo, because that land was bought back in the 1960s. I think it was Bolte that bought that land, and that land sits idle. In conjunction with other states and the Murray–Darling Basin plan, we could build Big Buffalo, and it would be a great saving of water and evaporation from some of the other lakes that are out in New South Wales – again, not trying to take their water but doing a deal with them to be more economical with the water, with less evaporation. It is about having a vision for regional Victoria, but I know Labor will not even look at that because their Greens mates, who give them supply in the upper house, will not let them even consider looking at dams. This is the type of vision that Victoria needs to see regionally, because Victoria does not stop at the tram tracks in Melbourne. We are absolutely tired of tunnels to nowhere, corruption for Labor's mates and debt that we cannot justify, and we are all paying that price.

I mentioned earlier a 12 per cent investment on 25 per cent of the population. To make matters worse, they have underinvested in my community. I look at Yarrawonga high school. When I first came into this place in 2010, within 3½ years we had an investment in both Wangaratta and Yarrawonga high schools. Yarrawonga is the fastest growing town in regional Victoria. We have been waiting 12 years to get another investment for the final stage of the Yarrawonga hospital; we need stage 3 funded. Three years ago we were told that it was going to be \$18 million to complete stage 3. I think it is fair to say, with the way costs are going, it is probably a \$20 million spend at the moment, and they handed us \$9 million to make improvements to the Yarrawonga school. Whatever happened to doing it once and doing it right? This will be just another prop-up. They will do part of the project when they could have actually finished that project. For a community that is growing as fast as Yarrawonga, it is a shame that they did not really take the bit in their teeth and say, 'We can actually fix this and solve this problem,' and then we would not have to revisit it, because Yarrawonga would be finished. So after 12 years of fighting for this school and all the advocacy, I will keep it up, because as far as I am concerned it is only half a job, and we have got to make sure that we do that job properly. As I said, we have waited 12 years for a half-baked announcement.

We look at our CFAs. The government announced \$100 million for the CFAs. Well, that is over 10 years, and \$10 million a year is not going to go anywhere to help our CFAs, to keep them safe, to give them new equipment, to give them sheds. It really is just a drop in the ocean. Again, it just shows more smoke and mirrors. Ten million dollars a year will not go anywhere. Of course we are going to take it. We have just got to do the best we can and ask our volunteers to do more with less.

Victoria does need a new start, a fresh start, and in the regions we need our fair share, so it is important that we change government in November, because we do desperately need our fair share. Twenty-five

per cent of Victorians know that we need that change so that we can start to get investment in the regions, some vision for the regions, and not just tunnels and all sorts of things in Melbourne. Victoria does not stop at Kalkallo, and – *(Time expired)*

**Mathew HILAKARI** (Point Cook) (12:38): It is my pleasure to rise on these bills, and in support of them of course. I follow on from the member for Ovens Valley. He had a terrific day last Saturday at the Farrer by-election. Wasn't that a real showing for the Liberal and National parties? He mentioned he was at the Barooga polling booth. I had a quick look at it just a moment ago, just to check how those numbers went down up there in Barooga. He spends a little bit of time in New South Wales; a lot of the Liberals and the Nationals talk about the quality of being over the border north of this state. But you would be surprised to hear that the Nationals did not go so crash-hot in this election. It was a very sad day in Barooga; less than one in 10 voters put a 1 in the box for the National Party. Overall, you would be shocked to hear they did not even feature in regional New South Wales on the 2PP count. They did not even bother adding them to it, because the 2PP count was between One Nation and the independent candidate, and One Nation at the Barooga booth actually smashed it in, with 64.69 per cent of the 2PP vote. So I do worry.

The member for Ovens Valley started in fantasy land; that was his quote. The Nats existing after this election is fantasy land. The National Party existing as a party in this state is fantasy land. They talk about a 10-year plan; they do not have a 10-month plan. They need to work out what is next. Each and every one of them needs to look at themselves. Some of the best booths for One Nation in this state – all over Gippsland. Acting Speaker Farnham, I would not reflect of course on your own seat, but there are some real challenges ahead. There are some challenges that the Nats need to meet, and they are not meeting them for punters in regional Australia or regional Victoria. So a 10-year plan – I would be a bit more focused on the here and now.

The member for Ovens Valley has been around for a while, and he talked a little bit about debt. We would of course talk about infrastructure builds, the investment in the future of this state, the new hospitals, the schools – a hundred schools in Victoria – the tunnels, the level crossing removals, the trains. He talks about backroom bureaucrats. Who does he think plans all these things? He talks about the hospitals. Who does he think is going to put together the plans for the hospital that he would love to see in his community? They will not be there – one in seven bureaucrats gone, \$40 billion ripped out. Do not even worry about the bureaucrats being there because you are never going to fund the hospital when you take the \$40 billion out. You would know all about this because you were part of the last Liberal government in Victoria, which built nothing for the community that I represent.

*Members interjecting.*

**Mathew HILAKARI**: She says it is untrue. The average spend – I would just love you to talk about one thing in the west of Melbourne built in that period of 2010 to 2014. Nothing – nothing in Melton, nothing in Frankston, nothing in all these places, nothing in the regions. The Nats should be standing up for the regions, demanding that something get built. But do not worry, they will not be there. It will be a One Nation-led coalition on the opposition benches after the next election, because of the abject failure of the Nationals and the Liberal Party.

Of course I would like to talk about some of the wonderful things in the budget for the community that I represent. I will start off with Point Cook Road. As the Acting Speaker knows, Point Cook Road is one of the most important things for the community that I represent, and we have been getting on with the job. Sneydes Road intersection has been built, with traffic lights and duplications either side of the intersection, and we are onto Central Avenue–Point Cook Road right now. I appreciate for my community there are some really challenging roadworks going on from 28 June all the way through to mid-September. There will be roadworks going on and the closure of the bridge over the freeway. I appreciate this is a challenge for people getting around the community, but it is something that should have been done 30 years ago. We are getting on with that job right now. The next part of that project of course is the Central Avenue duplication.

I want to thank the federal government, because the federal government has finally turned up in this state. Those in the opposition: in 2010–14 I never heard a single word about the federal government not turning up, about the federal government ripping off Victorians and not spending on the infrastructure that we needed and that we deserved in this state. There was not a boo from over there on the other side, but now this federal government, a Labor federal government, has turned up and is delivering for communities like mine.

For the next project – and I thank the federal government for this as well – there is \$3 million to plan the duplication of Point Cook Road between Jamieson Way and Dunnings Road. Of course this is incredibly important. It is the next part that needs to get done. Our community deserves this infrastructure spend. We need this infrastructure spend.

I want to talk about one of the things that I talk about every day when I am out doorknocking in the community that I represent: the 20 per cent car registration rebate. People appreciate that this is a challenging time and that every little bit can support them. They know that we cannot control what Donald Trump does. We cannot control the Iranian regime – of course we cannot. We cannot control access to the Strait of Hormuz. In those circumstances we are doing everything we can as a government to ease the cost of living just that little bit more, and so people appreciate it. We talk about the \$186 rebate that will be available from 1 June to 31 July. For anyone listening from the community of Point Cook: please reach out to the office. I am happy to let you know, as we know, how to access that rebate. It will be for the 12 months of payments prior, so please make sure you get in touch, because that is so important for the community that I represent.

I also want to talk about the Education State. We heard the Minister for Education a few moments ago talking about the hundred new schools that we have built, and some of those schools are in the community that I represent. Yurran school is a P–9 that was built and at the moment is open on the Ngurruga special school site in Point Cook, a specialist school in the community, again something that is so needed in the western suburbs. We are so proud of the school and the opportunity for people to get the best start in life and the best support in their education. That means new schools but also great teachers; I want to shout-out all those great educators across our community. Yurran P–9 and Ngurruga school both opened this year and they are making a real difference. At the start of next year the P–9 Yurran campus will be open in its entirety alongside a kindergarten. This is because the schools are being built better, built together. If you build a kindergarten alongside a school alongside a specialist school, all on the same site, with room to grow to the 10-to-12 part of the campus later on, it means a single drop-off for so many of our parents. It is an important thing that we get those structures right. The other MPs from the south-west of Melbourne and I often talk about getting the planning right, and I am so pleased that we have got a Minister for Planning engaged in that. We want to get that right. That is part of our job and we seek to do it every single day.

We have works underway at Alamanda K–9 College, the largest state school in Victoria. People love it. They have great education there. They have great educational leaders there, and we are building the infrastructure around it. We have done stage 1; we have opened that up. It is probably the most amazing building I have seen in any school ever. It is a fantastic facility there. We have got that up, and stage 2 is on the way. We are building up at that school because it is a constrained site, so we will keep doing that. Down at Saltwater P–9 College we have funding to build two additional facilities, more spaces for another great education site in the electorate that I represent. At Homestead senior college right across the road, a few hundred metres away from there, the senior school for that part of the community, we have committed more than \$21 million to build on that site too because we are about making sure that that infrastructure is in place for the community. Yurran and Ngurruga school are in a field which until last year had sheep in it. We are building the infrastructure for our community. That is something so important to those members of Parliament in the south-west of this state, making sure that the infrastructure comes in and meets the needs of the population.

We have got lots of supports for students, and the education minister is rightly proud of the effort there. I particularly note some of those things that support people with the cost-of-living challenges that we

have today. We have the affordable school uniforms program that is saving \$93 on the average uniform cost per application, \$24 million for out-of-school care for young Victorians with disability and \$16 million for the Glasses for Kids program. We have had 68,000 vision screenings and 13,700 pairs of glasses. The member for Narre Warren North and I often speak about our own kids and the challenges that they have had. They are truly life-changing, these sorts of programs. We also heard earlier the member for Pascoe Vale mention the zoos program. For my community that is one of those amazing things. Werribee zoo has been well supported by this government. We have just had a couple of baby cubs born, so get out there. I do not think you can have a play with them. You would love that.

**Paul Edbrooke** interjected.

**Mathew HILAKARI:** They are lions there, member for Frankston. You are welcome to come across the bay anytime and visit and get out there to the elephant –

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Wayne Farnham):** Through the Chair.

**Mathew HILAKARI:** Thank you, Acting Speaker. You are also welcome to visit the lion cubs and the new elephant enclosure anytime you want.

**Paul Edbrooke** interjected.

**Mathew HILAKARI:** That is right. Do not pat those lion cubs too closely.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Wayne Farnham):** The member for Frankston will come to order.

**Mathew HILAKARI:** I will move on before you pull me up and sit me down. I want to talk about a couple of other really significant changes that are going on in the community that I represent as a result of this budget. The 496 and 498 bus routes for a long time have not got to the train station as quickly as they could. A very simple change – instead of turning right at an intersection, just going over the bridge and getting to Aircraft station – is a big win for our community, to see those buses more efficiently getting people where they need to go. I can say to those people in our community who live along Central Avenue: do not be concerned; we will make sure those buses continue on that road. We are working with the Department of Transport and Planning at the moment, but there will be access along that road all the time, because it is important that people can get to Central Square, to their medical appointments and to the schools that are along Queen Street and Central Avenue. They will be remaining in place. This is a big win for commuters, knocking off 10 minutes per commuter per day – that is a really significant thing when you are in the morning rush.

I would like to talk a little bit about the Williams Landing train station lift and Parkiteer. If you are travelling along the freeway alongside Point Cook at the moment, you will see the big pedestrian bridge that leads to Williams Landing station. Williams Landing station is in the top five in the state in terms of peak-hour morning travel, so it is a hugely well used station, but the station has not had access to elevators on the Point Cook side.

**Cindy McLeish** interjected.

**Mathew HILAKARI:** We are building it. There has been an elevator in on the other side. If only the Liberal Party would build an elevator somewhere in the western suburbs. If only they would build something in the western suburbs. If only they would turn up before 5 minutes before the election – if only. They have not even heard of the western suburbs. They have never been there. Whenever the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party turns up to the western suburbs, he gets the electorate wrong. Whenever the Liberal Party turn up in the western suburbs, do you know what they do? They cannot even find the electorate on a map. So I would love it if they built an elevator or if they built a pathway. If they knew where the western suburbs of Melbourne were without a map, without having to be told where they are, that would be incredible. I would love them to turn up at some point, and I would always welcome them with a cup of tea at the office. I am always happy to be there.

The Queen Street cycling and pedestrian bridge is under construction right now. For the Liberal Party: that is over the Laverton Creek. It is on Queen Street. It is near the big basketball stadium. Put it into your GPS and you never know, you might find it. That will provide safe cycling and pedestrian access for all members of our community. That is another thing that we are doing to make sure that we have safer roads across our area.

Finally, in the 30 seconds left, Point Cook community hospital is going up and up. It is an amazing facility: chemo, dialysis, public dental and 160 car parking spaces. It is going to be fantastic when it is done. And finally, there is \$95 million for Werribee Mercy emergency department staff. We are funding those staff now because the build is almost complete. I commend this bill to the house.

**Nicole WERNER** (Warrandyte) (12:53): I rise to speak on the Appropriation (2026–2027) Bill 2026 and will do so probably over the course of my time now, and then I will get to speak after lunch. This budget is not a plan for Victoria's future, it is a credit card statement for 11 years of Labor failure. It is a budget built on higher debt, higher taxes, higher interest repayments, blowouts and delays and probably some money for corruption on the side we have not even found yet. The Allan Labor government are not serious and have no serious plan to grow the economy – they have cooked the books. They have no plan to fix it, and they have stolen from the future to pay for today.

The numbers tell the real story of this government. When Labor came to office in 2014, Victoria's net debt sat at \$21.8 billion. Labor is now driving Victoria towards nearly \$200 billion in debt. Interest repayments have exploded from \$2.1 billion a year to \$11.8 billion by the end of their budget, and that means \$32 million on interest every single day in this state. In fact right now, every single hour we are paying \$1 million in interest on the debt that the Allan Labor government and their predecessors have created. In fact next year, Victoria will spend more money paying its interest bill than it will on Victoria Police, Ambulance Victoria and all kindergarten services combined and still have \$1 billion left over in change. The line items in the budget for paramedics, police and kindergarten teachers are less than Labor's interest bill. If you imagine your household budget, when you are going through each item and you have got each line item, imagine that for the Allan Labor government's state budget. The Victorian government has line item after line item for paramedics, police and kindergarten teachers. For each of these items the amount of money that goes towards funding these services is less than the line item for what has to be paid for their interest repayments. That is absolutely financially reckless. These are the essential services we pay our taxes to receive, and instead those taxes are going to the big banks to pay interest on the debt that Labor has no plan to pay back.

As we all know, the government have also found no money to build the hospitals that they promised four years ago as well as eight years ago and all of these election commitments that they have never actually followed through on. But what they have found is a \$10.3 billion pre-election slush fund. That is what the recent state budget has revealed. Victorians will see with their own eyes that there is not enough money to pay down this debt, surging towards \$200 billion – a bill that future generations will have to pay back. They will see that we have to pay \$29 million in interest repayments every single day, not with the government's money but with taxpayers money.

Not only do they have that, but what they do have in this budget is a \$10.3 billion slush fund, a credit card that the Treasurer can use at her discretion, at her pleasure, to swipe here, swipe there, spend on this, spend on that, spend on her pet project, spend on pork-barrelling, spend on jobs for mates, spend on corruption money – as if \$15 billion was not enough – to waste Victorian taxpayers money. It is an unchecked credit card, thanks to the Victorian taxpayer, that they get to spend and to waste money with day in and day out. Victoria deserves better than this. That is why I rise to support the Leader of the Opposition's amendment to require that any spending from this slush fund from the Treasurer's advance must be made public within 30 days.

Victorians deserve to know the truth; they do not deserve secrecy. But we know that the Allan Labor government hates accountability. We know that they have no interest in transparency, and that is exactly why we have moved this amendment. You just look to even their federal counterparts, with

the federal Minister for Sport charging taxpayers for business-class flights all over the world, charging taxpayers for flights to friends' birthday parties. Look at the way the Allan Labor government has blocked and voted down our calls for a royal commission into the \$15 billion that has gone missing to crime and corruption. That is the question that we get every day in our communities, on every social media post – not just ours but theirs also. Every single Victorian is asking, 'Where has my \$15 billion gone?' Where is our \$15 billion? Where is it? We want to see it. Where is the transparency? Where is the accountability? Victorians deserve better than this.

In 1 more minute I do not know if I have time to outline our 10-year economic plan, but we certainly have one. A Liberal government will make Victoria the best place in Australia to do business after being ranked the worst two years running. Unlike Labor, who have burdened businesses with taxes and red tape, the Liberals will lift the payroll tax threshold from \$1 million to \$1.2 million over two years and then lower the rate, delivering a tax cut to 23,000 businesses. We are on the side of small businesses because, when it costs less to employ people, businesses create more jobs, the economy grows and paying down Labor's debt becomes easier. We will start reversing Labor's 2023 land tax changes, lifting the threshold back to \$300,000 over five years and putting nearly \$1000 a year back into the pockets of 270,000 small businesses and everyday property owners. We are on the side of small businesses. We believe that here in Victoria a young person starting their first business does not need to get crushed by taxes before they have even found their feet and that a tradie expanding their team, a young couple buying their first home or a graduate starting their career can get ahead. Where investment flows, jobs are created and hard work is rewarded.

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

**Business interrupted under standing orders.**

*Questions without notice and ministers statements*

**Suburban Rail Loop**

**Matthew GUY** (Bulleen) (14:02): My question is to the Premier. With net debt approaching \$200 billion, why did the government spend taxpayers money to paint artwork on a tunnel-boring machine only to have it permanently buried underground?

**Jacinta ALLAN** (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:02): Of course the member for Bulleen can only ask this question because we are delivering the Suburban Rail Loop. The member for Bulleen can only ask this question because he knows he secretly loves the Suburban Rail Loop and because he has already admitted he wanted to see the project go ahead, but he has been comprehensively rolled by the Liberal leader, who has said she would pause and cut this project.

**Matthew Guy**: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, yesterday you correctly cited Westminster convention, and Westminster convention determines that a minister or leader of a government answer a question and, if they cannot, that they take it on notice and sit down. I ask that you uphold that convention on this occasion.

**The SPEAKER**: Thank you for reminding me of the standing orders, member for Bulleen. The Premier was being relevant to the question.

**Jacinta ALLAN**: I was. He doth protest too much – Matthew, you really do. Sorry, that is against the standing orders as well – member for Bulleen. We are delivering this project. There are two tunnel-boring machines sitting there in Burwood ready to get going, and what is also fantastic to say this week about the Suburban Rail Loop is we have a partner in Canberra getting on and delivering a project that is creating thousands of jobs.

**Danny O'Brien**: On a point of order, Speaker, on the question of relevance, I ask you to bring the Premier back to the actual question, not just broadly speaking about trains and tunnels.

**Anthony Carbines:** On the point of order, Speaker, the Premier is being completely relevant to the question, which went to the significant investment from our government and the Commonwealth in the Suburban Rail Loop.

**The SPEAKER:** I cannot direct the Premier how to answer the question. She was referring to the words that are in the question. The Premier was being relevant.

**Jacinta ALLAN:** As the member for Bulleen knows so well, which is why he was a big backer of this project previously, this is a project that is exactly what Melbourne in the future will need, what Victoria in the future will need – an orbital rail loop that not only will deliver more train services to places like Monash University and to Deakin University; it is delivering thousands and thousands of jobs right now.

**Danny O'Brien:** Speaker, I renew the point of order on relevance. The question was about the painting of a tunnel-boring machine.

**The SPEAKER:** I am aware of the question, Leader of the Nationals – it is in front of me – but the Premier was being relevant to the question.

**Jacinta ALLAN:** I was, because the tunnel-boring machines are going to get going later this year. Also of course let us remember this is a project that is going to deliver more homes next to train stations, next to services, next to hospitals and next to universities in exactly the right locations. It is for these reasons that the member for Bulleen was backing this project until he got rolled by his leader.

**Matthew Guy:** On a point of order, Speaker, for the fourth time on relevance, the question was about why the government painted a TBM. It was not about the project; it was about the painting of artwork on a tunnel-boring machine.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Bulleen, I am aware of the question. I remind members that I cannot tell the Premier how to answer a question. She is being relevant to the question that was asked in relation to tunnel-boring machines.

**Jacinta ALLAN:** This is a project that is building today for Victorians into the future – investments made today that will benefit families into the future, investments today that are bringing home pay packets to thousands of workers. We are getting on and delivering the Suburban Rail Loop. And here we are on day 2 – nothing positive to say about Victoria yesterday, and nothing positive to say about Victoria today.

**Matthew GUY (Bulleen) (14:07):** The government spent \$7500 to paint the front of this tunnel-boring machine. \$7500 dollars is the average Australian's wage for one month. How many other pieces of taxpayer-funded artwork has the government invested in only to be permanently buried underground?

**Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:08):** To stand in this place and talk about workers wages when you have just announced \$40 billion in cuts, sacking one in seven public servants, is another demonstration –

**Danny O'Brien:** On a point of order, Speaker, very clearly the Premier is not being relevant to the question asked.

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

**Jacinta ALLAN:** I think it is entirely relevant when discussing workers wages to reference the one in seven public servants those opposite would scrap.

**James Newbury:** On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier is being deliberately evasive. On relevance, this is just an abuse of the relevance rule.

**Anthony Carbines:** On the point of order, Speaker, a bit like an uninvited guest, the Manager of Opposition Business needs to be drawn to *Rulings from the Chair*, page 133, ‘Repeating the same point daily’. Speaker Plowman made the point that:

Raising the same point of order ... each day simply wastes the time of the House.

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

**Ministers statements: renewable energy**

**Lily D’AMBROSIO** (Mill Park – Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for the State Electricity Commission) (14:09): I rise to talk about cuts – not cuts to jobs but cuts to emissions. Victoria leads the nation in climate action, delivering on our climate targets, all while having the strongest economic growth in the country and delivering thousands of new jobs as we do it. Two weeks ago I was out in Gippsland at the build start of the SEC’s third renewable energy project, the Delburn wind farm. There I met four young workers – Tahlia, Jack, Tom and Grace – who have got jobs building that very wind farm. They were excited to be there on the job, gaining those valuable skills, building our state’s energy future just a few minutes drive from where they live.

The Clean Energy Council last week said that our ambitious build of renewables in Victoria will deliver \$3.9 billion in wages, three-quarters of which will be right across regional Victoria, \$3.2 billion in procurement for local businesses and \$93 million in payments in lieu of rates to local councils. All of this is real money at the kitchen tables, at the local butcher shops and at the footy and netball clubs right across the regions in this state. This is what the Allan Labor government is about: delivering these jobs where people live – good-paying jobs. It is about the future.

The Clean Energy Council also commented on alternative policies that have been floated that would stop the build critical to providing that cheap new replacement supply of electricity needed to keep the lights on and power bills down. They said these alternatives would rip billions of dollars out of the pockets of regional Victorians – \$3.9 billion in wages. Whether it is Jess Kennett, or rather Jess Wilson, nothing has changed over there. Only a Labor government will deliver creation of jobs for all Victorians.

**The SPEAKER:** Minister, I will not tolerate members not being correctly addressed by ministers or any members. Members will use other members’ correct titles.

**Public lottery licence**

**Jess WILSON** (Kew – Leader of the Opposition) (14:11): My question is to the Premier. The Premier claims her dodgy deal with the Lottery Corporation ‘went through a tender process’. Can the Premier name a single operator other than the Lottery Corporation that was invited to bid?

**Jacinta ALLAN** (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:12): I addressed this question on budget day last week. There was a process, it was governed by the appropriate probity arrangements and it was consistent with arrangements in place in other jurisdictions.

**Jess WILSON** (Kew – Leader of the Opposition) (14:12): I do not think the Premier quite knows what a tender is. Why should –

*Members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER:** The Leader of the Opposition and the Premier will come to order. The Leader of the Opposition will ask her question without assistance.

**Jess WILSON:** Why should Victorians believe the government has received value for money when only one business was invited to bid?

**Jacinta ALLAN** (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:13): As I said in my earlier answer, I have addressed the issue of the process for this lottery licence. But I will also be clear that as a result of the process I

am advised it has delivered the highest price ever paid to operate an Australian lottery licence. I appreciate that is perhaps inconvenient advice for the Leader of the Opposition. That is a matter for the Leader of the Opposition. But of course what is also inconvenient –

**Danny O'Brien:** On a point of order, Speaker, I wonder whether to assist the house the Premier could provide that advice to the house.

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

**Cindy McLeish:** On a point of order, Speaker, on the Premier's response, the Premier was mid-sentence when she sat down. She had not concluded her answer.

**The SPEAKER:** That is not a point of order.

*Members interjecting.*

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

### Ministers statements: budget 2026–27

**Sonya KILKENNY** (Carrum – Attorney-General, Minister for Planning, Minister for Violence Reduction, Minister for Finance) (14:14): Last week the Allan Labor government delivered what we promised we would deliver: an operating surplus, the first since the pandemic. Our Labor budget has delivered that surplus while also helping Victorians with immediate cost-of-living support. This is what good governments do: they back working people and they invest in the future. They make responsible decisions now, while continuing to plan for and build the roads, rail, hospitals and schools this great state needs. That is exactly what this budget does, and we are up-front about that.

But, as the *Age* reports today, not everyone seeking government is being up-front and honest with Victorians about their plans – plans independent economists have said 'did not stack up' and do not show 'a credible path' forward. Some seeking government choose to hide out in lavish penthouses in nice hotels, with the big end of town, bragging and laughing about how, if given the chance, they would cut, slash and burn thousands and thousands of Victorian jobs. Some seeking government want to block investment, slam the brakes on our economic growth and cause catastrophic damage – outright sabotage – to the vital work of our nurses, teachers, ambos and police.

Victorians know better. Victorians know that economic growth and future prosperity do not come from cuts and chaos. Victorians know better than to trust someone whose only plan for this great state is to rip out \$40 billion with no credible or honest detail about what would be slashed and how much it will hurt.

### Public lottery licence

**James NEWBURY** (Brighton) (14:16): My question is to the Premier. Under the Gambling Regulation Act, the government is required to appoint a review panel into the process for issuing a lottery licence, which the minister confirmed occurred. Did any member of the review panel have links to the Labor Party?

**Jacinta ALLAN** (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:16): I remind the member for Brighton that the minister is a member of the Labor Party.

**James Newbury:** On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, the question asked whether any member of the review panel had any links to the Labor Party.

**The SPEAKER:** It is not for me to determine whether – the Premier.

**Jacinta ALLAN:** These processes are managed independently, and if the member for Brighton has an allegation to make –

*Members interjecting.*

**Jacinta ALLAN:** I am answering your question.

**James Newbury:** On a further point of order, Speaker, on relevance, I asked a question, which is allowed in question time, and I would hope that the Premier has the capacity to answer the question.

**The SPEAKER:** The Premier still has 2½ minutes to answer the question.

**Jacinta ALLAN:** I am also reminded of allegations the member for Brighton made around donations. As it transpires, the company has made significant donations to the Liberal Party.

**James Newbury:** On a further point of order, Speaker, the Premier is required to be direct. This question asked whether any member of this hidden panel had links to the Labor Party. That was the question.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Brighton, I ask you not to repeat the question in your point of order. The Premier has concluded her answer.

**James NEWBURY (Brighton) (14:18):** Why has the government hidden and failed to release the review panel's report?

**Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:18):** Given the member for Brighton's record, I will have to check that question.

*Members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER:** Member for South-West Coast, this is your second warning.

#### **Ministers statements: TAFE funding**

**Colin BROOKS (Bundoora – Minister for Industry and Advanced Manufacturing, Minister for Defence Industry, Minister for Skills and TAFE) (14:19):** Recently I had the privilege to join the Premier, the Minister for Regional Development and the member for Wendouree at Federation Uni in Ballarat to announce our support in the budget for free TAFE as part of a \$459 million investment in skills and training. We had the chance to meet some fantastic local apprentices and some students doing a free TAFE course in the electrical trades – some young up-and-coming sparkies. TAFE, and in particular free TAFE, is literally changing lives, and we heard that in speaking to these young people. There are more than 60,000 people across Victoria doing a free TAFE course this year across 80 priority courses. Free TAFE has saved more than 245,000 Victorians around \$3300 each in course fees, so that is a really big saving in terms of cost-of-living relief.

The Allan Labor government created free TAFE as part of our rebuilding of TAFE, investing \$16 billion in base and new funding, in new campuses and in upgrading campuses – some 45 across the state. What we will not do is what the previous Liberals and Nationals did: cut \$1 billion from TAFE, sack 2000 TAFE teachers and close 22 TAFE campuses. We all remember the padlocks on those TAFE campus gates. We know that some are planning \$40 billion worth of cuts in this state and they will be coming after TAFE again, and that can only mean pain for Victorian families. Forty billion dollars in cuts means cuts to TAFE, it means cuts to free TAFE, it means sacking more TAFE teachers and it means closing more TAFE campuses. Under the Liberals and Jess Wilson's cuts, every Victorian will suffer.

*Members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER:** I know what your point of order is, member for Brighton. I again remind ministers to refer to members by their correct titles, and I would have thought a former Speaker would know that. In future I will be seeking apologies.

**Bridget Vallence:** On a point of order, Speaker, the minister is required to be factual, and the fact is that TAFE teachers are the lowest paid in the country.

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

**Energy policy**

**Darren CHEESEMAN** (South Barwon) (14:21): My question is to the Premier. From 1 July Australians living in New South Wales, South Australia and south-east Queensland will access 3 hours of free midday power under the federal solar sharer program. Victorians must wait until 1 October, from your announcement. Premier, given the rising cost of living because of the Iran war, will you bring forward the 3 hours of free power or bring forward a power saving bonus to cover the gap?

**Jacinta ALLAN** (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:22): I thank the member for South Barwon for his question. I was very pleased a few weeks ago to be with the Minister for Energy and Resources and the SEC to announce that we will be bringing in midday free power saving for 3 hours in the middle of the day to Victoria. We did acknowledge at that time that we would be bringing that in from 1 October. The minister went at some length to the reason for this at the press conference, which is because of both the different market here in Victoria and the advice from the market to do this properly to make sure the benefit flowed to Victorians. This was the timeframe to be able to deliver this to bring more benefit for more people than is being experienced in other jurisdictions. This comes off the back of the significant work that has been led by the minister. Through the Victorian default offer we have the lowest energy prices here in Victoria in the national market. That is a benefit for households. That is a benefit for businesses. Why do we have this position here in Victoria? Because we are backing renewable energy. We are doing that through bringing back the SEC and delivering renewable energy. We are doing that through building wind farms, solar farms and big batteries right across the state.

Of course Victorians know that those opposite want to literally pull the plug on the renewable energy industry. They announced this last week. Do you know what this means? There would be no midday power saver. There would be no renewable energy. It risks our economic security to have a policy position that is more in pursuit of One Nation votes than it is about what is in the best interests of our state. Renewable energy is part of our energy security into the future, and I was quite surprised to hear the Leader of the National Party talking against a project that brings jobs to regional Victoria. He is against jobs in regional Victoria. He is against households and businesses in regional Victoria having energy security. To top it off, this risks driving billions and billions of dollars of investment away from our state. The message from the Liberal–National–One Nation coalition to the energy industry is that the shutters would come down, the lights would go off and jobs would be lost as they drive investment away from our state.

**Darren CHEESEMAN** (South Barwon) (14:25): Given the global energy shock that we are all going to experience this winter, how should Victorians manage their energy bills this winter?

**Jacinta ALLAN** (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:25): I can understand why the member for South Barwon would be asking a question that is in the context of the pressures that household budgets are under right now when energy bills make up a big component of people’s household budgets. It is one of the things we do know that households are feeling under pressure to pay those bills. There are a range of programs, and part of the answer to the question is to go and check out the SEC one-stop shop to find ways you can use the Victorian energy upgrades program to, if you can, go all-electric and take advantage of those cheaper prices – as I referenced before, the lowest prices in the national energy market. It is also why we are delivering real cost-of-living relief: public transport half-price till the end of the year and 20 per cent off car rego – initiatives opposed, again, by those opposite.

**Ministers statements: cost of living**

**Paul EDBROOKE** (Frankston – Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Cost of Living, Minister for Renters, Minister for Men and Boys) (14:26): Victorian families are facing new challenges. The cost of living is putting pressure on family budgets and family time. I recently spent time with the amazing member for Yan Yean to hear directly from her constituents about the cost-of-living pressures that they face. We have listened to Victorians, and that is why we have acted. We are putting more than \$2 billion back into the pockets of Victorians: 20 per cent off your rego, free then

half-price public transport, free kinder, free TAFE and free dental check-ups for kids. Only Labor is focused on making life easier, safer and more affordable.

The same cannot be said for some other parts of this chamber. There are over \$40 billion worth of cuts on the horizon: cuts to the Department of Education, cuts to the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action and cuts to the Department of Health. Let that sink in for a minute. Free kinder, free TAFE and new schools gone and 17,000 nurses and midwives gone, on the chopping block. But they are not alone, because another party has called for those same departments to be cut – not just frozen but cut. Different method, identical destination: higher power bills, more costs at the school gate, fewer services when families need them most. One Nation says ‘abolish’; the Liberals say ‘freeze’. It is the same thing to Victorian families; they will feel it either way. Only Labor has new solutions. Only Labor is delivering free kinder, free TAFE and 121 new schools. Only Labor is making energy cleaner and more affordable. And only Labor is on the side of Victorian families, not on a unity ticket with One Nation.

### Emergency services

**Danny O’BRIEN** (Gippsland South) (14:28): My question is to the Minister for Emergency Services. Victorians are being slugged \$6.8 billion in emergency services tax over the next four years, double the amount under the fire services levy. Will the CFA, SES and FRV budgets also double?

**Vicki WARD** (Eltham – Minister for Emergency Services, Minister for Natural Disaster Recovery, Minister for Equality) (14:29): I thank the member for his question, and I remind the member that, as I have said in this chamber many times before, we have already doubled investment in emergency services since coming to government. We continue to build on that investment in emergency services, which is why there is another \$2 billion from my portfolio alone in this budget, why there is additional funding for forest fire management, for example, in this budget and why this budget more than exceeds the amount that is raised by the Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund, which we have already heard from those –

**Danny O’Brien**: On a point of order, Speaker, the question was very clear on whether the CFA, SES and FRV budgets would also double, and I ask you to bring the minister back to answering the question.

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

**Vicki WARD**: I am sure the shadow minister is very happy with the news that his own brigade was funded in this budget. I am sure that the shadow minister is very happy to hear about the \$100 million in funding for CFA appliances that is in this budget, building on the \$40 million that we invested last year in our previous budget. I am sure the shadow minister is very happy with all of the investments that we are putting into this budget, which exceeds the amount we invested last financial year in the last budget. To be clear with the shadow minister, we have doubled the funding in emergency services. We have the highest investment in fire services in the nation in this state. We will continue to invest in our emergency services, unlike those opposite, who would rip \$1.6 billion out of emergency services should they have the honour of being elected.

**Danny O’BRIEN** (Gippsland South) (14:31): The minister announced funding for new CFA trucks pre budget but neglected to mention that it is over 10 years. If Victorians are being asked to pay double what they used to in tax, why are CFA brigades being asked to wait 10 years for new trucks?

**Anthony Carbines**: On a point of order, Speaker, I might just make available to the house the 10-year plan to cut services that Victorians rely on.

**The SPEAKER**: That is not a point of order.

**Vicki WARD** (Eltham – Minister for Emergency Services, Minister for Natural Disaster Recovery, Minister for Equality) (14:34): Again, if the shadow minister had been paying attention, he would

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know that over the last 12 months a new appliance has been delivered to CFA on average every four days. He would also know that there are 167 already in the pipeline. He would know that there is up to \$53 million available this year alone for CFA to invest in new appliances. I completely dismiss and disregard the claims made by the shadow minister, because he is completely wrong and he is not paying attention at all.

### **Ministers statements: health system**

**Jacinta ALLAN** (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:32): Our Labor government backs the hospitals and health care that Victorian families rely on. We do this through investing \$250 million to open and expand hospital services across the state, and we can do that because we have invested in the health and hospital infrastructure through which these services are being delivered. There is \$50 million to get more kids surgery sooner: 4000 more planned surgeries for kids, 45,000 more specialist clinic appointments. Of course we have backed our nurses. There are 17,000 more nurses and midwives today, and we have backed them with a 28.4 per cent pay rise because care and cost of living are not separate ideas.

When your child needs surgery, every delay matters, every appointment matters. Every extra trip, every day off work and every anxious night waiting up for that care all adds up. I certainly know that feeling because when our daughter Peggy was little she needed a lot of hospital care and surgery. I will never forget the care that the nurses gave to our family. When I talk about backing nurses, hospitals and children's surgery, I know from my own experience what that means for families. That is what drives me and our government: making sure that we are backing the people who care for us and the services that families need.

We know that there are some who have a different approach, an approach to cut \$40 billion out of this state. That would cut nurses. That would cut surgery. That would put those nurses left under more pressure, families under pressure, services at risk. That is what is at stake. You cannot cut without impacting families and impacting kids, and that is why our Labor government always invests in health.

### *Constituency questions*

#### **Narracan electorate**

**Wayne FARNHAM** (Narracan) (14:35): (1638) My constituency question is for the Minister for Emergency Services, and my community want an update on where the promised new CFA tanker is for the Erica and district fire brigade. A year ago this week the Treasurer announced funding for a new tanker for this brigade, and since then they have had no update about when it will arrive or if it has even been ordered. Their current tanker was made in 1995. It is over 30 years old. This is a critical piece of equipment. Not only is it for fighting fires, it is potentially, in a worst case scenario, a place of last refuge if this brigade is caught on the fireground and needs to be protected. I just heard the minister talk about her significant investment into appliances being delivered, and she stated there is one every four days. Well, maybe this brigade can get theirs in the next four days.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Narracan, would you like to rephrase your constituency question to ask a question? An update is an action.

**Wayne FARNHAM:** My question is: when will the tanker be delivered?

#### **Ripon electorate**

**Martha HAYLETT** (Ripon) (14:36): (1639) My question is to the Minister for Environment. Minister, what steps is the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action taking to clear up the Creswick Creek? The creek runs through the heart of our town and has a long history of flooding, most recently in February 2022. Today it remains choked with gorse, blackberry and dense overgrowth, limiting not only its environmental health but its potential as a real asset to our community. In recent months locals have begun cleaning up the creek themselves. The Creswick Anglers Club, working alongside the North Central Catchment Management Authority, has started

working bees by Ring Road to clear the gorse. I want to thank David McPhee, Dave Voigt, Alison Birch, Sophie Ellis, Tom Quinn and all the volunteers who have helped. But they should not have to do this alone. I am eager to confirm what long-term action the department is taking to address the condition of the Creswick Creek into the future.

#### **Shepparton electorate**

**Kim O'KEEFFE** (Shepparton) (14:37): (1640) My question is to the Minister for Energy and Resources, and the information I seek is: why was the Central North renewable energy zone, which captures prime agricultural land between Shepparton East and Dookie, added to the proposed energy zone without adequate consultation? In the original draft planning process these communities were excluded and now have been blindsided by this inclusion. An independent review shows that this area was introduced without adequate consultation, and it contradicts VicGrid's own principles of avoiding high-value agricultural land. Dookie has one of the highest producing farmlands in the state and must be protected. The Dookie community demanded VicGrid run community consultation sessions following the outcry from the community, with hundreds turning up at each of the three sessions. Many of their questions are still to be answered. This is absolutely the wrong location.

#### **Pascoe Vale electorate**

**Anthony CIANFLONE** (Pascoe Vale) (14:38): (1641) My constituency question is for the Minister for Local Government. What obligations does Merri-bek council have to ensure local roads and streets are properly maintained and upgraded to safe and expected standards for local ratepayers and residents? I rise today regarding the ongoing and growing concerns of residents on Glengyle Street in Coburg, who are increasingly frustrated by the deteriorating and substandard condition of the street. Following my visit with local resident Maurice Serrutto on 27 February 2025 and subsequent contact from other neighbours and households, residents have continued to raise serious concerns regarding potholes, uneven road surfaces, bumps and deteriorating bitumen alongside poor drainage and repeated flooding issues during moderate to heavy rainfall. Locals say the patchwork repairs undertaken over many years to date by council are no longer adequate and fail to address the deeper structural deterioration of the road, which continues to impact safety, vehicle access, neighbourhood amenity and overall livability. Residents regularly report needing to navigate around potholes and uneven surfaces simply to avoid damaging their vehicles. Mr Serrutto has 40 years experience as a civil engineer working with councils across Victoria on local road infrastructure projects and believes the street now requires major reconstruction rather than simple resurfacing works, with evidence of deeper structural failure.

#### **Prahran electorate**

**Rachel WESTAWAY** (Prahran) (14:39): (1642) My question is to the Minister for Planning. When will the minister guarantee that any planning changes that allow Windsor Community Children's Centre to be lost will be refused? Windsor Community Children's Centre sits on land gifted by the Baillieu government to Swinburne for educational purposes. Swinburne now seeks to sell the site for development, despite the centre supporting around 80 local families and childcare places in the local area already being scarce. The Commonwealth has committed \$4.3 million and Stonnington council up to \$4.6 million to preserve the site, yet the threat of rezoning and change of use is forcing ratepayers into an impossible position, made worse by local Labor councillor Meghan Hopper, the doctor of spin, trying to blur the lines of responsibility for this failure.

#### **Cranbourne electorate**

**Pauline RICHARDS** (Cranbourne) (14:40): (1643) My question is to the Minister for Community Sport. My question is: how does the Allan Labor government's investment in community sport infrastructure benefit clubs in my electorate, like the Casey Warriors? Last week I had the great pleasure of telephoning the Casey Warriors president Numa Daniel to let him know that we believe in the power of sport and we believe in the power of league, and that means ensuring they have the

facilities they deserve. That is why our budget has allocated \$250,000 to upgrade their beloved club in Cranbourne East. I happen to know that the Casey Warriors are the largest rugby league club in Victoria. This vibrant club has huge numbers of children, men and women all supporting each other and playing topnotch league, but there is something else, a secret sauce, and that is their connection to each other. I am proud of this club, their success, the way they play the game, but more than that, I am proud of the culture of the club. I look forward to working with the club and the City of Casey on their aspirations, and I look forward to the minister's response.

#### **Brunswick electorate**

**Tim READ** (Brunswick) (14:41): (1644) My question is for the Minister for Transport Infrastructure. Tram stops on Sydney Road in my electorate north of Brunswick Road are not accessible for wheelchairs, despite years of advocacy from residents, particularly the Sydney Road Accessible Tram Stops Campaign. This excludes people with disability, parents with prams, elderly individuals and others and instead forces them to rely on the Upfield train line, which will be closed in 2028 during the Brunswick level crossing removal project. I welcome this year's budget funding planning for level-access stops on Sydney Road, but I note that a similar announcement for route 86 trams along Gertrude and Smith streets, made nearly four years ago, has not yet resulted in any new tram stops. When will Sydney Road actually get accessible tram stops?

#### **Macedon electorate**

**Mary-Anne THOMAS** (Macedon) (14:42): (1645) My question is for the Minister for Mental Health in the other place. Mental health and wellbeing locals are playing an important role in providing free and accessible support for Victorians experiencing mental health and wellbeing challenges, which is particularly important for communities in regional Victoria. These services are helping people access care and support closer to home for free, without the need for a GP referral or Medicare card. That is why my community was thrilled last year when the minister announced that a mental health and wellbeing local would be coming to the Macedon Ranges. Whilst telehealth services are already available, my question is: when will the mental health and wellbeing local open in the Macedon Ranges?

#### **Morwell electorate**

**Martin CAMERON** (Morwell) (14:43): (1646) My question is for the Minister for Energy and Resources. My question is: what is the cost of the subsidy the state government is providing the owners of Yallourn power station to continue operating until 2028? The Yallourn power station in my electorate of Morwell has long provided and still provides 20 per cent of Victoria's base load power every day. As we know, it is slated to close almost exactly two years from now, in 2028, yet AEMO and the Auditor-General and energy experts have warned Victoria will face certain power shortages when Yallourn comes offline because there will not be enough base load power generated by renewables to make up for the shortfall. All this is because the minister and the Labor government have led with ideology ahead of common sense and are hell-bent on ripping the state off reliable, affordable, coal-fired power before alternative power sources have been shored up. Minister, what is the cost of the subsidy the state government is providing the owners of Yallourn power station to continue operating?

#### **Northcote electorate**

**Kat THEOPHANOUS** (Northcote) (14:44): (1647) My question is to the Minister for Public and Active Transport. How is the minister ensuring that stationeers in my community are supported to undertake their volunteer work now that the program has been transitioned to VicTrack management? I have been proud to support the Northcote stationeers for many years, including advocating successfully for Metro to install taps so volunteers do not have to lug buckets of water to keep young plantings alive. Led by Sharon, Alun, Ann, Stewart, Susan, Cathy, Jill and many more active volunteers, they have spent over a decade transforming Northcote station. They have planted, pruned,

weeded, watered and mulched to make a lush garden cherished by our community. Recently I met with Sharon to discuss concerns around the onboarding requirements, confusion about responsibilities and the risk of volunteer disengagement because of increased barriers to participation. Stationeers support rail safety, but they need more clarity and backing in the significant volunteer role they play caring for our station grounds.

### *Bills*

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

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

#### *Second reading*

#### **Debate resumed.**

**Nicole WERNER** (Warrandyte) (14:45): I rise again on the appropriation bills. As I was last saying, we will start reversing Labor's 2023 land tax changes, lifting the threshold back to \$300,000 over five years and putting nearly \$1000 a year back into the pockets of 270,000 small businesses and everyday property owners. We believe in a Victoria where a young person starting their first business does not get crushed by taxes before they have even found their feet, where a tradie expanding their team, a young couple buying their first home or a graduate starting out their career can get ahead, where investment flows, jobs are created and hard work is rewarded. That is what Victoria under a Wilson Liberal government will look like. Why is it that we need to fix the land tax? It is because – PSA – the Victorian government is now targeting everyday people who run small businesses from home by charging them land tax. Labor has lowered the land tax threshold, forcing nearly 400,000 extra Victorians to pay up. Under Labor's changes, if your business earns more than \$30,000 a year and uses part of your home, you may receive a land tax bill. That includes startups, side hustles, freelancers, hairdressers, personal trainers, physios with home studios, Airbnb hosts, online businesses and allied health workers seeing clients from home offices – people who are just trying to earn extra income to make ends meet. It is no wonder Victoria has been ranked the worst place in Australia to do business year after year.

A Liberal government will fix this. We will start reversing Labor's land tax changes, lifting the threshold back to \$300,000 over five years and putting nearly \$1000 a year back in the pockets of 280,000 small businesses and everyday property owners. For many, that means no longer paying COVID levy surcharges of between \$500 and \$975 per year. We want to see business growth exploding across the state, creating more jobs and more prosperity for Victorians so they can continue to keep more of what they earn. This is what Victorians can hear loud and clear: we on this side of the house back startups. When someone wants to innovate, go out on their own, take a risk or do something new, we on this side of the house back entrepreneurs – young business owners who want to give something a crack and build something for themselves and their families. We back small businesses. We back the side hustle, the people who want to get ahead and who are sick and tired of the Allan Labor government ripping them off and punishing them with taxes. To every Aussie battler in the burbs doing their best to make it work, we stand with them. We have a plan to fix this state, repair the budget and outwork our 10-year economic plan so that they can finally get the fair go that they need to get ahead in life.

The Liberals 10-year economic plan will deliver real cost-of-living relief not just for now, not just as a sweetener or an election commitment trying to buy votes in an election year, but for years to come. We have sensible measures for Victorians, who are sick of being smashed by the Allan Labor government's taxes. In total our measures will put back \$534 in the pockets of Victorian families every single year. Families will have that money to keep instead of being taxed and taxed and taxed. Families who send their children to non-government schools will save up to \$1500 per child. Every household in Victoria will save an average of \$84 a year when we scrap the Emergency Services and Volunteer Fund levy. For families who struggle to get into a bulk-billed clinic, we are scrapping the GP tax. A

family with two kids who visits the GP six times a year will save up to \$360 a year. Young Victorians buying their first home could save up to \$55,000 in stamp duty.

Our land tax changes will deliver between \$500 and \$975 per year for property owners with holdings valued up to \$300,000. Many of these are small business owners or everyday mum-and-dad investors. It is worth pointing out as well that the ATO's own data shows that more than 70 per cent of private rental providers own just one investment property. So these people that we are protecting and that our economic plan will deliver for are the everyday mums and dads who are trying to get ahead. These are not the wealthy property barons that the Allan Labor government tries to pretend that it is targeting with higher taxes. Lower land tax means downward pressure on rents, which helps everyone, including renters. Lower land tax – I will say that again – means downward pressure on rents, which helps everyone, most especially renters, so that there is the supply on the market for renters to be able to rent at affordable prices.

Our payroll tax cuts reduce the cost of doing business directly. A business with a \$1.5 million payroll saves more than \$30,000 a year under our economic plan. This is money that can go towards new staff, growth and investment into the future, and this is just the start. These measures are part of a broader plan to fix Victoria's budget and deliver cost-of-living relief so that life will be easier and cheaper under a Wilson Liberal government.

Then we have got to ask the question: how did we get here? How did Victoria arrive at the place of this debt ballooning towards \$200 billion? How did Victoria arrive at being the most taxed state in the whole nation? How was it that on the eve of the 2014 election the opposition leader of the day, who was then to become Premier Daniel Andrews, promised that there would be no increased or new taxes under a government he led? Well, there again was another broken promise from another Labor minister, who then went on to increase and introduce not one, not two, not three but 67 new or increased taxes. Under the Andrews–Allan Labor government there is broken promise after broken promise. Payroll tax has more than doubled. Land tax bills have skyrocketed. Victorians have been sluggish with new taxes on emergency services, GPs, schools, short stays, vacant land and windfall gains. Every year Labor introduce another tax because they run out of money.

Families are under enormous pressure. Small businesses are struggling. Investors are leaving Victoria. Housing supply is slowing and rents are rising. But perhaps the most frustrating part for Victorians is that they are continuing to pay more while services continue to deteriorate in our state. Ambulance wait times are worse than they were a decade ago. Elective surgery waitlists have nearly doubled. Graduate nurses cannot find funded positions. Teachers are marching in our streets because they are the worst paid in the nation. Crime is rising, roads are crumbling and billions of taxpayer dollars have been lost to waste and project blowouts, not to mention corruption and criminality. Next year Victoria will spend more on interest repayments than on Victoria Police, Ambulance Victoria and every kindergarten service in this state combined with a billion dollars to spare, and that is the true cost of Labor's debt.

*Members interjecting.*

**Nicole WERNER:** To answer the Attorney-General's question – what is our solution – we have a solution. It is our 10-year economic plan. It was tabled by the minister earlier today in question time.

**The SPEAKER:** I remind members that props are not allowed in the chamber.

**Steve DIMOPOULOS** (Oakleigh – Minister for Economic Growth and Jobs, Minister for Sport and Major Events) (14:54): Thank God that is over. It gives me great pleasure to rise and speak. I will not use my entire 15 minutes.

**Nicole Werner** interjected.

**Steve DIMOPOULOS:** It is a character reflection on the speech, not on you. Sorry, Speaker, that was to the member for Warrandyte, who is very happy to throw accusations one way but not very happy to receive them from the other. Her speech was a rant of disproportionate spin versus fact.

We are a government that is serious about the job at hand here. There is global uncertainty, there are global interest rate rises in advanced economies and there is a global fuel shortage, concern across stock markets right around the world, including in this country, and pressure felt by every advanced economy.

What you get on that side is literally a lot of hot air, frankly, but also no real solution. The Attorney-General and Minister for Finance at the table was right to ask, 'What is your solution?' Their solution is one example. If my quick numbers serve me correctly, they announced yesterday, in the Leader of the Opposition's budget reply speech, that they would increase the payroll tax free threshold to \$1.1 million. That is \$100,000 more than what it is right now. On a million-dollar payroll that is a \$500 saving a year. That is not an economic driver; that is a press release. That is next to useless in relation to economic drivers. What is an economic driver is investing in public infrastructure that has productive value. We do not borrow to pay nurses' salaries. We do not borrow to pay police officers' salaries. We do not even borrow to pay the interest on government debt. We borrow for productive infrastructure – that is what we do – and that has enormous value for the private economy of this state. I could speak for hours about how many businesses have come to me on just one project, on the 90-odd level crossings removed, where they do not have to wait in traffic to get their business done for the day – not just truckies, not just couriers, but literally tradies and people who are running to a business meeting. Nonetheless I will get to that in a moment.

The appropriation bills are important, clearly, because they are the expression of values of any government, and ours are clear in terms of the fiscal management that we have got in place to pay debt down in a way that is sustainable, both for everything the Victorian community values but also –

**Michael O'Brien** interjected.

**Steve DIMOPOULOS:** The member for Malvern, the former Treasurer of Victoria, says it is going up. Over the forwards as a proportion of gross state product (GSP) it is going down. This is what tricky politics will have the Victorian public believe. It says \$200 billion – that is a figure without context. If I give you a figure of the US economy – the US government is in \$39 trillion in debt. If the state of Tasmania was in \$39 trillion of debt, that would be a problem. You cannot compare the debt of one country with the debt of another just by raw number. This is the tricky politics.

**Michael O'Brien:** The highest of any state in the country.

**Steve DIMOPOULOS:** Because we have done more than anyone else in the country.

**The SPEAKER:** Through the Chair, Minister. I ask the minister not to respond to interjections, and I remind the member for Malvern that he is not in his place.

**Steve DIMOPOULOS:** When you talk about a figure that is a measure, you have to talk in proportion to the economy that is supporting that borrowing. In Victoria it is about 24 or 25 per cent of the Victorian economy. As other commentators have said, imagine having a home loan and your home loan being able to be paid back literally by 24 per cent of your annual income. If your annual income is \$100,000, you would effectively owe \$24,000. That is the only way to measure debt in relation to anything. It is in relation to the economy that it serves: \$39 trillion in the US, \$200 billion in Victoria. Just to be clear, the US debt is 130 per cent of the US economy. Here it is 24 per cent. That is the only way you can measure it, but tricky politics would have you believe the place is in ruin.

This brings me to my point in terms of the budget reply to our appropriations, to our budget. I get that there is a role for holding governments to account when you are in opposition, but what we saw by the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Kew, was a masterclass in talking down Victoria. It was a masterclass in ruining the reputation of Victoria, from business to services to public accountability to

everybody in between. It was just an attack on Victoria. It went well beyond holding governments to account. We see an opposition that is so unsophisticated, that is not only untried and untested but fundamentally inexperienced in grappling with and guiding an almost \$500 billion globally connected economy, as is the Victorian economy.

We have a government here that has a sensible plan to reduce debt as a proportion of GSP, and by the end of the forward estimates, that is exactly where we will get to. But we are not going to take a knife and tear down everything that Victorians value. If you just take the simple concept that 58 per cent of the budget is health and education – the budget, in output, was \$88 billion last Tuesday, and 58 per cent of that is health and education – how can you achieve a \$40 billion saving if you do not cut into health and education? This pretence about back office public servants, as if there are reams and teams of people sitting in some back blocks somewhere, where you open the door and there are just rows and rows of public servants doing back office things is just a rubbish argument. If you rely on that argument to find \$40 billion, you are lying to yourself and by default you are lying to the Victorian community. What you are effectively going to find here is you are going to have to cut into nurses, teachers, hospital workers, police officers, everything the Victorian community value. On the other side, the contrast is we have got debt repayment as a proportion of GSP already evidenced in our forward estimates over the next four years. We also have a stable, continued investment in things that people value.

Frankly, when the opposition talk about borrowings, they always neglect to say why we borrowed. We borrowed because effectively, over many generations, Victorian governments have not done enough to keep up with population growth. In schools, in public transport, in roads and in social infrastructure like kindergartens and schools, they have not done enough, and I would broadly say it is Labor and Liberal, but worse when it comes to the Liberal Party. In the four years that the Liberals were in power from 2010 to 2014 nowhere near enough was done to cater for that population growth. This government, from 2014 to today, has done 50 years worth of social and economic infrastructure in 11 years. So when I ask myself about that silly response from the member for Kew, that ‘It’s completely unreasonable that my grandchildren pay for’ – effectively what she is saying are the Metro Tunnel, Footscray Hospital, Peter Mac centre and Royal Children’s Hospital. Why is that? Why is it unreasonable that they pay for it? Why? Of course they will use it. In fact it is unreasonable that I pay for it today entirely, because we are building it for the 50 years of Victorians living here.

This rubbish about debt – there are two arguments. One is, as the size of our economy, it is 24 per cent. In the US, it is 130 per cent, right? Forget Europe – they are in the 200 per cent in some countries. That is one. The second argument is: why did you borrow? Did you borrow to pay nurses? No. Did you borrow to pay police officers? No. Did you even borrow to pay interest on the debt? No. That all comes from our output side. We borrowed for productive infrastructure. I am not ashamed of that. I am proud of that, and I tell my community every single day. If I am doorknocking and someone says ‘debt’, I will say, ‘Carnegie Primary School.’ If I am doorknocking and someone says ‘debt’, I will say, ‘Oakleigh Primary School.’ If I am doorknocking and someone says ‘debt’, I will say, ‘children’s hospital at Monash’ – things that we rely on. That is the absolute tricky politics played by that side, scaring people into believing the place is in freefall. The place is not in freefall.

In fact if I turn to some economic stats supported by our government, not just in this budget but in previous budgets – there have been 646,000 new jobs created by the Victorian economy. Of course that is not just the government creating jobs but the government creating an economic climate where businesses feel encouraged to invest and create jobs. We have got the lowest payroll tax of any state in regional Australia, right? We have a well-calibrated business investment portfolio in my patch, where Global Victoria does extraordinary work in supporting businesses to find new export markets. There is a medical laboratory in St Kilda Road called 360biolabs. They have had to expand their labs significantly because they have secured new contracts in US and China to do extraordinarily high value job work here in Melbourne, with heaps of investors coming in from overseas. The other day a German appliance manufacturer set up its head office for Asia-Pacific here. A Dutch food

manufacturer set up its manufacturing plant for Asia-Pacific here near Horsham. These are stories that I find every day in this job with the Premier. I am privileged to be serving after the Premier gave me economic growth and jobs. Like predecessors like the member for Essendon and others in this role, we see real business stories of confidence, investment and growth. I am not saying it is perfect, but this economy is strong and it is growing, and there are so many proof points.

Over the last 10 years we have had the highest rate of growth in business investment – 44 per cent – of any state. Someone said to me the other day, ‘But that’s 10 years. What about last year?’ Well, the last quarter, October to December, of last year we had a business investment growth rate higher than any other state – 2.2 per cent. Our population growth is higher than the national average. People are choosing to be here. Our participation rate is about six percentage points higher than the national participation rate. People have not given up looking for work in this state; they have in the rest of the country. So that is confidence both from the consumer and from the business.

I do not buy one thing that the member for Kew is selling. I do not buy it because it is anti-Victorian, it is anti-business and it is literally going at everything we value with a big, big knife. We are not in for that, and I will fight her and the Premier will fight her every single day from now till the election to demonstrate to people that what they are selling is not worth buying.

**Michael O’BRIEN** (Malvern) (15:06): I am surprised that the Minister for Economic Growth and Jobs at the table could not actually finish his full 15 minutes. That is a surprise. You would think that he might have had something more to talk about, but given the appallingly embarrassing economic record of his government, I am not surprised he cut it short.

I grew up reading a lot of books as a kid. I liked *The Famous Five*. The Famous Five were George, Dick, Julian, Anne and Timmy the dog. Well, there is another famous five when it comes to economic data here in Victoria. It is the famous five that is the legacy of this Labor government, which fortunately we only have another 199 days to endure. Here are the famous five of this Labor government after 12 long years: the worst unemployment in the country – that is where Victoria is under Labor; the worst debt in the country – that is where Victoria is under Labor; the worst credit rating in the country – that is where Victoria is under Labor; the highest taxes in the country – that is where Victoria is under Labor; and the highest interest payments in the country – that is where Victoria is under Labor. That is the economic legacy of this Labor government. It is why Victorians are poorer. It is why Victorians are feeling the pain of the cost of living, because this is a hopeless government that has dropped the ball when it comes to managing the economy.

It was not like this when this government was elected back in 2014. They inherited one of the strongest budget positions in the country. We had a budget that was in surplus. We had the strongest – not the weakest, the strongest – credit rating in the country, AAA stable. This Labor government has taken us from having the best, the strongest credit rating in the country to the worst, the weakest in the country. That is what those opposite have done. When this government came to office net debt in 2014–15 was projected to be \$21.8 billion. They have now got us getting to \$199.3 billion – let us round it up and say \$200 billion. From \$21 billion to \$200 billion by the end of this forward estimates period – nearly a tenfold increase in debt. Do we see a tenfold increase in the number of police officers? No. In the number of nurses? No. In the number of teachers? No. This has been an absolute disaster.

Interest payments have more than tripled and will more than quadruple by the end of the forward estimates under this Labor government. In the 2026–27 year we are going to see interest payments of over \$1 million every hour. Every time that clock above you does a lap, over another million dollars is going to go out of Victoria’s coffers into the hands of bondholders whose debt they are holding. In fact the interest bill is going to be so high that we are going to spend more in interest – Victorians are going to be paying more in interest – than this government will spend on police and ambulance services and kinders. More on interest than on police and ambos and kinders: that is the real consequence of this Labor government’s shocking financial mismanagement. It means that the interest bill and the debt crowd out the things we should be investing more in. We are spending more money on our

interest, which means we have less to spend on the things Victorians want us to spend on. Victorians want us to spend on public services that benefit them, that they can feel the benefit of and that are there when they need them. They do not want to be waiting for an ambulance, but they are. They do not want to be waiting for admission to a public hospital for needed surgery, but they are. They do not want to be waiting for the police to turn up to their home when an intruder or a group of intruders is in there with a machete, but they are.

Victorians are waiting and they are sick of waiting, and they are sick of being told they have never had it so good. And the contribution before me by the Minister for Economic Growth and Jobs was a classic example of that. It goes back to that famous Paul Keating saying, 'What are people going on about?' That was the attitude of the Minister for Economic Growth and Jobs: 'What are people going on about? You've never had it so good.' Well, I can tell you, my constituents do not feel like that. And I think if members opposite were honest, their constituents do not feel like that either. They do not feel like they have never had it so good. They think it has been tough, really tough, and they do not see that it is getting better. If you look at whatever your favourite opinion pollster is and the classic question of 'Is Victoria on the right track?' the majority says, 'No, we're not. We're not on the right track.' That is because this government has taken us on the wrong track over 10 years and accelerated over the last two years under the current Premier.

Over the last two years the number of aggravated burglaries in my electorate of Malvern alone has gone up by 94.5 per cent – a near doubling of aggravated burglaries in my patch alone. I have spoken to many of the victims of those agg burgs, and I can tell you, it is not about losing the car or losing whatever has been stolen; it is about losing peace of mind. It is losing the security of going to bed at night knowing that you are going to wake up and that your kids are going to be safe. That is the loss. It is not just the material loss; it is the sense of security and safety. And what has been the response of this Labor Premier and this Labor government over the past two years, as agg burgs have gone up by 94.5 per cent in my electorate? Closing hours at the Malvern police station. Malvern police station used to be open 24 hours a day and seven days a week. It was there to keep people safe. It was a visible presence of security in the community, and people knew it and they relied on it and they wanted it. People opposite have said, 'Oh, well, a police station doesn't keep you safe – police do.' Yes, well, tell that to the young mum fleeing domestic violence, who just wants to get out of the house, is worried that someone's going to follow her and wants to go somewhere safe. The last thing they want to do is turn up to a closed police station, with a sign that says 'Sorry, we're closed. Try Prahran' or 'Try Caulfield'. It does not cut it. Tragically, earlier this year we heard of a woman who was in a very similar situation to that. She was being pursued on the roads, went to a police station that was closed and was attacked and assaulted. That would not have happened if the police station was open.

My police station went from being 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to business hours, seven days a week, and that is great if crooks work business hours, but they do not work business hours. Then it gets worse, because just recently a new sign went up outside Malvern police station that says, 'Sorry, we're only open three days a week' – three days a week, during business hours. That is what this government has done to my constituents. They have taken away that visible police presence. They have taken away that sense of security. They have taken away that safe refuge. It used to be open 24/7; now it is three days a week during business hours, if you are lucky. That is what this government and this budget do to my people.

It does not stop there. One of the initiatives that I was very pleased to be part of when I got the privilege of serving in government was to put PSOs out on our train stations and to do it from 6 pm to last train, seven days a week. That was important not just for people taking the trains at night but also, I can tell you as a parent of kids, if you know your children are coming home on the train late at night, you want there to be PSOs at that station when that train arrives, to be that visible presence of security, to be that deterrence, to be somebody who can actually escort people to the car park – to their car in the car park if they need to. That is what the PSOs did. And we know that Labor has never liked PSOs on train stations. In fact the former Deputy Premier and former Minister for Police, ironically, referred to them

as plastic police. James Merlino referred to PSOs as plastic police. I think it is a huge insult, because every day we come into this place we are looked after and protected by Victoria Police protective service officers in the gallery and outside. They do a fantastic job. For anybody to attack and demean PSOs in that way is appalling, but that is what the former Labor police minister and Deputy Premier did. My constituents love their PSOs, but unfortunately in nine of my train stations they are being taken away. They are being stripped away by this Labor government, who has decided that my constituents do not deserve to have PSOs at train stations from 6 o'clock. At Armadale station, Darling station, East Malvern station, Glen Iris station, Hawksburn station, Heyington station, Kooyong station, Toorak station and Tooronga station – nine of them – the government is taking the PSOs away. They say, 'There might be some PSOs roving the trains. If you feel like playing PSO lotto, your luck might be in. You might have a PSO there when you need it, but there's no guarantee and you've got to be lucky.' Safety should not come down to luck, it should be a right. This government has taken that right away and not just from my constituents but from 120 stations across Victoria. This government cannot manage money and cannot manage safety.

We have seen public services deteriorate. It does not have to be this way. This government can try all the tricks it likes, but I have been quite interested to see that the response on social media when members opposite try and put up their scare campaign videos has been fairly brutal. It has not been brutal towards the Liberal Party, not brutal towards the Leader of the Opposition. It has been fairly brutal towards the Labor government. Victorians have cottoned on to them. Their scare campaigns are not working anymore, and they are getting increasingly desperate. They do not know what to do. They cannot run on their record, because as I have outlined, their record is horrible. The famous five: worst unemployment, worst debt, worst credit rating, highest taxes, highest interest – that is the famous five. That is this government's economic legacy, so they cannot run on their record. The Leader of the Opposition and our team have put forward policies to actually make life easier: to cut payroll tax, not increase it; to cut land tax, not increase it; to scrap the emergency services levy and restore the fire services property levy; to get rid of the Airbnb tax, the GPs tax and the school fees tax; and of course to give first home buyers a real chance, to lift the limit on stamp duty up to \$1 million for first home buyers in Victoria. That is real tax reform that makes a real difference in people's lives.

We will protect essential frontline services by making sure that the back office does not grow out of control, by implementing a hiring freeze on the back office. Do you know what a hiring freeze means? It means that everyone who still wants a job, keeps a job. That is what it means. It is why the attempted scare campaign by members opposite is just not resonating. People are not buying it. The previous speaker used the phrase that he was not buying what the opposition leader was selling. I can tell you, the Victorian public are not buying what those opposite are trying to give away. They are not even trying to sell it, they are trying to give it away and no-one is taking it.

I have been here – some would say too long – long enough to remember the last time there was a change of government from Labor to Liberal. It was in my first term in Parliament, the period from 2006 to 2010. I can tell you, it has got a very similar smell about it. It has got a feel in the public. It has got a feel in business. It has got a feel in the community. It has got a feel in the Parliament. As this is my last response to a budget, I want to set out some of the contrast between what this government inherited in terms of our budget and our economy and where we are today. But I am pleased that as we race towards the election in November this year I do think Victorians are ready for a change.

**John Mullahy** interjected.

**Michael O'BRIEN:** The member for Glen Waverley wants to talk about legacy. Two hundred billion dollars in debt, member for Glen Waverley – that is your legacy. Interest payments of \$1 million an hour, member for Glen Waverley – that is your legacy. The West Gate Tunnel that no-one is driving on – that is their legacy. This has been a government that has been the worst fiscal manager in our state's history. This government makes the Cain–Kirner government look like Kennett–Stockdale – it makes them look that frugal. That is how bad this current mob is. We come in here wanting to leave Victoria in a better place than we found it during our period of service. I do not

know how those opposite can sleep at night, because by any objective reckoning, this government has made a mess of Victoria's books and Victorians are poorer for it.

**Brad Rowswell:** On a point of order, Acting Speaker, by leave, I move a time extension of 15 minutes for the member for Malvern.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Wayne Farnham):** That is not a point of order.

**Paul EDBROOKE** (Frankston – Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Cost of Living, Minister for Renters, Minister for Men and Boys) (15:21): As much as hearing the member for Malvern's voice is like honey coming through a speaker – so smooth – and as much as I would like to give him 15 minutes, I am just not that tolerant, although he did also acknowledge that this was his last budget contribution and he talked a little bit about legacy there. The legacy I see in Victoria has been all about choices in the last decade. Everywhere I look in Victoria, there is infrastructure coming out of the ground. In Frankston, Frankston hospital, there is \$1.1 billion worth of hospital coming out of the ground. In Broady – how many level crossings? I cannot even remember how many level crossings we have removed, but I do remember a time where we could.

*Members interjecting.*

**Paul EDBROOKE:** How many? Nearly 90. Let us go 90.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Wayne Farnham):** Minister, can you please not beat up the furniture. It has done nothing to you.

**Paul EDBROOKE:** No worries, Acting Speaker. I do remember a time when we did have the highest unemployment rate on the mainland, and not one inch of rail was actually laid in Victoria.

**Kathleen Matthews-Ward** interjected.

**Paul EDBROOKE:** Yes, the bureaucrats were putting their feet up. As I said previously, budgets are all about priorities, they are all about values, and our budget speaks a lot to our values. This budget makes something abundantly clear, and that is that this Labor government is on the side of ordinary Victorians, on the side of families doing everything right but feeling the pressure, on the side of renters trying to keep a roof over their heads, on the side of workers facing rising bills and on the side of consumers being targeted. We are on the side of young people searching for opportunity, for aspiration and for security in what can be at times an uncertain world as well. We are certainly on the side of communities like mine in Frankston and communities that for too long were overlooked, underestimated and underinvested in. Throughout the past small period, we have seen newspaper articles with Frankston as the highlight – the place to develop; the place to live; the place to move to; the place to work, live and play – and that is not by accident.

As the minister for consumer affairs, renters, cost of living and men and boys, I see every day the pressures Victorian families are under. I hear from young people wondering about whether home ownership is drifting further and further away. I hear from parents who are juggling bills and trying to stretch pay packets so that they no longer have to choose between a school excursion and food on the table. This budget says something very simple, and that is that this government sees you, that this government understands the pressure and is prepared to act – not with slogans and not with outrage politics but with practical help. We have done that. You have seen over the past couple of weeks some really innovative initiatives have been launched. One of course was the 20 per cent off rego, which people in in my community were ringing my office about to see if that was some kind of rumour they had heard that they did not believe – 20 per cent off their rego. That is \$186 straight back into our community members' pockets, or \$372 if you have got two cars registered in your name. I think you will admit that is a fair amount of money back in your pocket to spend on things you need to spend money on, whether that be bills, whether that be food or whether that be rent.

We have also seen over the last couple of months the changes to public transport fares – free last month, free this month and half-price public transport fares up until the end of the year. This is real, practical help that feedback suggests is being taken up. Certainly a friend of mine who works in the education part of the Melbourne Museum has said in the last stage of the school holidays, the last four days of the school holidays, they had over 2700 students go through the museum. She blames – well, ‘blames’ is the wrong word, but she was busy and she was run off her feet. But she said she thought that that was because of the free public transport and being able to get into the city for free to do what you need. That is anecdotal, but it is from someone I trust. It is not data that might be presented to us; that is a real story from people at the coalface saying, ‘Look at how this is affecting our community,’ not only in the way that government expects – that is, giving people dollars back in their pocket and a bit of relief – but also for some of our institutions in Melbourne, being able to see them being utilised even more than ordinarily.

Fairness does not happen by accident. Fairness is a choice, and fairness requires governments who are willing to step in when systems stop working for ordinary people. A strong economy means nothing if people cannot participate in it. Growth means little if families cannot pay their bills. That is why this budget focuses strongly on cost-of-living relief, because right now families certainly are feeling the pressure. I think I have even heard you mention this, Acting Speaker Farnham. At the supermarket, at the petrol station and when energy bills arrive in your mailbox, it is these initiatives that the government has put in place that really give practical relief for families. We have also seen around \$566 million in concessions available for energy rates and water, including up to 17.5 per cent off electricity and gas and 50 per cent off council rates at some times. We have seen a lot of initiatives, and no doubt we will see some more. We have been listening to our community, and there are plenty of suggestions about how we can make life easier and more affordable.

This budget certainly recognises those pressures and responds accordingly – as I said, not with ideology, not with lectures to people, but with practical support, because that is what responsible governments like ours do when you cannot solve every global economic challenge overnight. Certainly we have had people across the aisle scoff at the global political issues that are happening, that are on the front page of every paper, which seem to change from day to day. That is certainly something that a state government in Australia cannot have influence on, but governments can choose to help people through difficult times. The alternative is to leave them to struggle alone, and we will certainly not do that.

We have heard across a couple of question times now, and certainly we heard it on Friday last week, that the alternative government, the Liberal–National coalition opposition, have been talking about some statistics. They see them as statistics, but they are 7000 jobs, or one in seven public servants, and they are not just statistics. Let us actually put it into perspective. These are people that are not just retiring; they are not just leaving their jobs. They are people whose contracts, when they come up for renewal, are not renewed, and they have to go into the job market and find another job. That is 7000 people. If the coalition gets into government in November this year, by December we will have people who will not be putting much in the Santa sack this year, because they will not have jobs under that government. There are \$40 million in cuts also. Look, I am no economist. I have done a couple of courses and I fancy myself as a bit of a mathematician, and there are some things that just do not add up. I do rely on the opinion of economists like David Hayward, who said in the *Age* this morning:

... the opposition’s path to cash surplus did not stack up, and they had not yet shown a credible path to achieving it.

I do not think you have to be Einstein or a mathematician to know that when you are not relying on that revenue anymore, you cannot meet that cash surplus – you just cannot do that. So those 7000 everyday Victorians, if they are not there, that makes me also question: how are we building Rosebud Hospital? There was a commitment to build Rosebud Hospital from the Leader of the Opposition, and I wonder how the new member for Rosebud will be feeling about that now, because certainly he could not be too confident. So we are going to knock off 7000 public servants and bring

us back to a cash surplus, which will cost at least \$40 million, while we have got an \$11.3 billion black hole. Where is the money for this hospital coming from? He cannot be feeling too confident now. In fact if I was him, I would be feeling a little bit nervous.

Locally we know that the investment in Frankston has driven growth in Frankston and confidence in Frankston. We have got the extraordinary Peninsula University Hospital redevelopment, which former members of this place said would never happen. They could not read the budget book at the time and said there was no money for it there. That was not 1.1 dollars; that was 1.1 billion dollars in the budget. It is not simply a construction project, though. It is transformational. It is nation-building for Melbourne's south-east and puts us on the map. It means better health care close to home. It means jobs for apprentices coming from the over \$100 million that has been invested for apprentice training in the Chisholm TAFE over the two stages of that construction. It means training the next generation in healthcare workers locally. It means that hopefully in the future we can have a centre of excellence for workers in health care and for clinical trials. And it means that hopefully we will have surgeons, we will have clinicians coming down to train here on the peninsula. It means dignity for people in Frankston as well.

It would be remiss of me not to speak about the education reforms that have happened in Frankston. Of course there have been education reforms around the state which have made huge impacts on the level of education that we are able to provide. It means that we have been able to provide teachers with the infrastructure that reflects the level of the education that they are giving our children. But also seeing our schools in Frankston flourish with new infrastructure that they have required for years and they have fought for really, really gives me that warm feeling in the chest, because you can see it in their eyes: they see the hope, they see the future, they see the vision for Frankston that I share.

Once again, I am afraid, frightened, very nervous and anxious for what the challenges ahead for my community would mean if we had the coalition in government – cuts, reductions, winding back, the vision for Victoria becoming small government, small ambition, after everything we have built in our community. I know there are members on this side of the chamber that are thinking exactly the same thing, because communities like Frankston's know what happens when governments stop investing in people. I gave a little spiel to the media yesterday, but I will say it again: I grew up in the Latrobe Valley, and they have got a good member now with Mr Cameron over there, the member for Morwell; I get along with Mr Cameron – but I would say that it is hard to disagree that what happened to the Latrobe Valley almost overnight with the power industry was a bad thing. It changed the environment of that community overnight. The last thing we want to see is anything like that happen again. The issue there is that if we are looking at cuts of up to \$40 billion over 10 years, if we are stopping infrastructure programs to meet a cash surplus, that means that we will be going backwards. That means that we will be reducing the number of services. We will be reducing the number of infrastructure projects we are building, and they will be delayed for decades. We remember what happens when government walks away from our communities, and we cannot go back – we cannot go back to abandoning prosperity where things are broken.

Today I see newly trained nurses in hospitals. I see families building their future. I see communities growing stronger, and I see a government prepared to invest in that future and give families some help along the way when times are tough, because budgets are not merely financial documents – budgets are a statement of our values. They are moral documents. They reveal what we truly value, and this budget says clearly that we value fairness; we value security; we value health care, education and housing; we value opportunity; and above all, we value people. This budget ultimately is about dignity – the dignity of housing, the dignity of being able to get affordable health care, the dignity of meaningful work and the dignity of belonging. And that means that you need to make choices to make that happen. We build, we protect, we invest on this side of the house, and above all, we govern for our communities. I know there are other people that would like to speak on this bill, so I will not take too much more of your time up, but I certainly commend this appropriation bill to the house, and I wish it a speedy passage. It would be remiss of me, being the former Parliamentary Secretary to the

Treasurer and knowing how much work goes into the particular documents of the budget papers, not to thank the Treasurer, thank her team and say g'day to them. I will bring my coffee around sometime soon. They have done a great job with this budget, and I commend the bill to the house.

**Martin CAMERON** (Morwell) (15:36): It is great that the new minister at the table, the Minister for Consumer Affairs, pulled his speech up with 20 seconds left, but it is always good to talk about the Latrobe Valley. I rise today to talk on the Appropriation (2026–2027) Bill 2026. In doing so, listening to everybody in the chamber that has spoken on both sides, I think it is clear-cut that on one side of the chamber there is nothing wrong in Victoria, and on the other side of the chamber we have people talking about the issues affecting our constituents, especially where I live in the Latrobe Valley and right around Victoria and regional Victoria, and we are hearing how hard it is at the moment. So the question, I think – and there is only one question that needs to be asked – is: are we better off? Are we better off after the budget that was read in last week? Are the people of Victoria better off?

We have heard about the job losses that Labor are worried about moving forward if the coalition get into government, which are fictional, I feel, after the way that the opposition leader articulated and laid out our plan moving forward. I will give a synopsis of my four years in the role that I hold now, being from the Latrobe Valley. If we are going to talk about jobs, the hard facts and the true facts are that in the last four years – well, three and a bit years – this government have gutted the timber industry and shown disrespect and no regard for the workers that worked in that industry, generations of families that have worked there for 80, 90 years in the timber industry. They have shown no regard at all. They shut it overnight – bang; gone, sorry. ‘Let us try and see if we can keep it going.’ No, it is deadset shut.

So we have got a government that tell us they want to listen to and look after the people of Victoria, but overnight they shut an entire industry. Mums and dads and kids no longer have jobs. But the government in their haste did not see the ramifications moving forward. They did not see that in these tiny communities up in East Gippsland the timber industry is the heart and soul. People had to move away. ‘Here’s a free voucher to go to TAFE to learn something, to get yourself into a new job 300 or 400 kilometres away from here in the city.’ The jobs up there were timber industry jobs. The government then could not even realise that shutting the timber industry – and this still baffles me – was going to shut the white paper industry. How can people that are meant to be running the state – the Premier, the Treasurer and ministers that are at the forefront of protecting Victorians – not see that shutting the timber industry means there is no timber to make white paper? So what happens? The white paper industry falls over. For those in the chamber that do not know, that white paper industry, along with the timber industry, is in my electorate. The heart and soul of the paper industry, Opal, is in my electorate.

We move on from there. The government, who love and want to protect all Victorians, have been ruthless – there is no-one else to blame – in stopping people from living in their communities or even having a job, with no opportunities to transition. They love that phrase ‘transitioning out’ – no opportunities at all. Then we have Hazelwood, which is shut, which is virtually in the seat of Morwell – I drive past it every single morning – with their workforce that was closed overnight. The government decided that they would open up the Latrobe Valley Authority and throw an enormous amount of money at it to try and make sure that we could have a decent outcome for our Hazelwood workers. That failed miserably. Money was spent on virtually providing jobs for a few that worked inside the Latrobe Valley Authority, while workers, their families and people around the township of Morwell suffered because their jobs, once again, overnight were taken away. I reiterate: this is from a government that stand loud and proud and that protect the Victorian public.

In two years time Yallourn power station will shut. There are lot of workers that work at the Yallourn power station. Not only will that rip 20 per cent out of our power grid, but it will also once again take an enormous number of workers out of the Latrobe Valley. The minister that was at the table just before, the Minister for Consumer Affairs, was talking about the Latrobe Valley and the closures that we have seen, all under the guise of a Labor government. This is Labor heartland I am talking about in the Latrobe Valley. Generationally people have been Labor supporters and voters and have been in

the union. I hope this is not unparliamentary, but they have had an absolute gutful of what is going on down here. They are leaving in their droves. They will not be voting for Labor. I am happy to put that on the table now. These are proud people in the Latrobe Valley, and they have had a government rip their livelihoods away. It does not matter if it has been in the timber industry or in the white paper industry or now in the power industry, they have ripped it out. Then we get a budget from the Labor government saying, 'We are going to look after you people in Victoria.' I am still looking at stuff that is significant for the Latrobe Valley that was in that budget. There was not a lot. There was some money that has gone in, and where that money went is a story for another day, but it did not go to the people of the Latrobe Valley. It did not go to them to make their lives easier.

On the other side they talk about their free TAFE and their free kinder. Acting Speaker Farnham, you are a former businessperson. Nothing is for free. How do the government afford to pay for the free TAFE and pay for the free kinder and pay for the free public transport? I must say, the only reason that is going is because there is a little issue with the Myki system at the moment: it does not bloody work. That is the only reason why we have free travel at the moment.

**Danny Pearson** interjected.

**Martin CAMERON:** You may laugh, member for Essendon, but it is not working down there. You need to talk to the real people, not listen to the boffins down in here.

**Danny Pearson** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Wayne Farnham):** Member for Essendon, that is enough. Member for Morwell, you will go through the Chair.

**Martin CAMERON:** This just shows the government does not know there are issues. They do not know there are issues. They say they are embedded in their communities, but they are not. We see them a little bit now walking around with one photo with a flyer, because they know they are in a world of hurt in 198 days, because that is when the people of Victoria get to actually voice their opinion and their disapproval. That is when they get to do it. They can stand on the other side of the chamber and talk to me about looking after workers and making sure that Victoria is safe, but I look at people in my community that still have people breaking into their houses and stealing their cars. And why is this? Because we do not have enough police officers on the ground. The ones that we do have, I do not know how they are continually showing up to do their role, because they arrest people and then they are just through court and they are back out once again. I thank all our police officers in the Latrobe Valley for going above and beyond most of the time, but we need more help down there.

We talk about PSOs and hope to continue to have PSOs in the Latrobe Valley, but they are stationed at Traralgon. We need those PSOs mobile, up and down the Latrobe Valley line, being able to get off at Moe and being able to get off at Morwell. Do not tell these people that are committing crime and give them the heads-up that the PSOs can only be in Traralgon. Let us change the narrative. Let us make sure that we do get these PSOs mobile. We talk about the ones that are now being taken off stations down here in the city. In regional Victoria we have only got three stations that actually have acting PSOs. That is how far behind we are.

Then we look at infrastructure. I go on about these two railway crossings. I think the number was 89 level crossings being removed in the city, which has obviously caused impact on regional rail lines. But at the moment I have got two: one in Moe, the Lloyd Street–Waterloo Road railway crossing; and the Bank Street railway crossing. On the one in Waterloo Road, we have B-double trucks pulled up over the level crossing because it is dangerous and they cannot do a right-hand turn. Every single day we have got people in these trucks and the train drivers – everyone forgets about the train drivers – heading into Moe have to cross this intersection. I reckon they would be taking a deep breath as they get a kilometre and a half away from this level crossing, thinking, 'Is there going to be a truck there? Is there going to be a school bus there that is stuck on this level crossing?' They cannot move across because the government has failed. This is a program or a commitment from the Labor government,

which is nearly a decade old, I think, to get this level crossing fixed. There is an issue there with that level crossing.

Then we move to the Bank Street crossing in Traralgon, where the federal government paid to make sure that the intersection was upgraded. Our hold-up there is wholly and solely on the state government, which needs to install traffic lights to make it safe. At the moment we have got a major highway with no traffic lights. We have the Traralgon Golf Club and golf carts that are pulled up in the middle of this highway have been, unfortunately, accidentally nudged. How long is it before we have a major accident there? We have had a school bus involved in an accident there. But the government continues to fail the people of the Latrobe Valley (1) with jobs but (2) with safety – public safety on our roads and safety on our streets. We can sit and look at the budget that has been presented here by the government and decide: are we better off with it, or are we better off with the coalition's answer of what we are going to do?

People will get their chance. It is 198 days until they can vote to say, 'Are we feeling safe in our own homes, on the street, on our railway lines? Am I going to my hospital and getting seen to in the appropriate time? Am I on a waiting list for an operation?' And I am not saying yes to all of these things. In my seat of Morwell in the Latrobe Valley, we look at the budget, and what did we get? We did not get a lot. There will be something, I am sure, hidden in a budget line somewhere that something is rolled out statewide. I reckon there will be a line.

We are not as safe as we should be, our jobs are diminishing and, as I said, we have another round of job losses in two years that this government has mandated. Who do we blame? Who do we point the finger at? We point the finger at this Allan Labor government because they have let us down, they have let our mums and dads down and, you know what, they have let our kids and our grandkids and their kids down with this budget.

**Eden FOSTER** (Mulgrave) (15:51): I am delighted to stand in support of the Appropriation (2026–2027) Bill 2026. This is a budget and a government focused on delivery, delivering high-quality education across our state, delivering world-class health services and hospitals that Victorians expect and deserve, delivering the roads and public transport that we need to move around and delivering emergency services that we rely on. This is also a budget that delivers for my electorate of Mulgrave, with local services and facilities being improved where we need it most and cost-of-living relief to support Victorians.

Donald Trump's war in the Middle East is resulting in higher prices at the fuel pump, and this is putting Victorians under increasing pressure. This comes as the Reserve Bank has just increased interest rates further due to re-emerging national inflationary pressures. That is why this budget is focused on making life easier. With \$2.5 billion in cost-of-living support, this government is delivering real help that supports the lives of all Victorians. We provided instant relief with \$155 million to make public transport free for everybody in April and May, taking the pressure off fuel demand and price at the pump.

This budget invests a further \$278 million to halve the price of public transport until the end of the year. This includes trams, trains and bus services across the state. This is on top of the previous reforms that this government has made, such as introducing free public transport for under-18s and seniors on weekends and bringing V/Line fares in line with the Metro daily fare cap. When I am out in the community, whether it be station stalls or community events or doorknocking in my community, they love the free public transport and they love and appreciate the half-price for the rest of the year from June onwards. They know that this will take pressure off their families' household budget. It puts a little bit extra into their pockets for other things, like putting food on the table and paying for other everyday items that they need. The little bits count.

But we know that not everyone is able to use public transport, so we have provided rebates on rego payments for light vehicles at a cost of \$759 million. That is a 20 per cent rebate of up to \$186 for

people with one car and \$372 for people with two. Again, this is really appealing, and people are loving it. I talk to people when I am out and about. I talk to them about what we are doing to help take the pressure off the cost of living. With these measures we have made sure that no matter their circumstances, our communities will have support available to them from the state government.

This is on top of other existing measures to support families. This includes the affordable school uniforms program, saving families \$93 on average on uniform costs per application, and more for kinder kits, which contain free books and educational toys to help three-year-olds starting kinder to learn at home through play and reading. We know how important that is for that early learning. Little ones' brains are like sponges; they absorb so much and they develop so much in those early years.

We are also continuing and expanding the Glasses for Kids program to more students, delivering free vision screening and glasses for kids who need them. We know the risks to kids and their learning when they are visually impaired and cannot see the board or the projector – it has been a while since I have been at school, but I think it is the projector now – or the whiteboard or a TV screen that is in the classroom. We know that there are great risks when kids cannot see or cannot read because of vision impairments. There are behavioural issues because of it and learning issues because of it. This is significant for so many kids across Victoria.

We are also continuing to fund the school breakfast clubs to provide free healthy breakfast for those in need, and again, we know how important this is for families because a lot of families cannot afford that breakfast. They cannot afford to put food on the table. They are trying to make ends meet. They are rationing food at times, so this puts food in the tummies of kids that might not be eating breakfast. As someone who worked at a school, there are many, many students who would not eat breakfast before coming to school. This helps them not just by putting food in their tummy but also with focus and with concentration. We know the benefits of it; it is quite significant. While we are investing record amounts for Victorian kids, we know the track record of the coalition. When they were last in office, they did not just cut funding, they cut free fruit Friday, so imagine what they will do to the cost-of-living pressure support of everyday Victorian families. Heaven forbid that school breakfast clubs get cut under those opposite if they were to come into government.

Speaking of schools, I am also very happy to say that this government and this budget deliver when it comes to education. There is no greater investment a state can make than guaranteeing a world-class education for every child, no matter their socio-economic status. This budget delivers \$1 million in school upgrades in my electorate for Carwatha college and Wheelers Hill Secondary College, and speaking to residents in these school communities after the budget was announced, I can confidently say that my community is delighted with these upgrades, as are their respective principals. My phone calls to the principals of the two schools were very delightful conversations, and they were very excited to hear about the upgrades.

Statewide the 2026–27 budget delivers record investment in education in our state, and this includes more broadly more than \$300 million for the construction of new schools across our state to support growing communities and over \$65 million for upgrades to existing schools. This budget also includes \$266 million for disability inclusion, making sure that no matter your circumstances there is a school that is able to support you in the best way possible. Other commitments from this budget include \$180 million in grants to deliver 27 new and expanded kindergartens and childcare centres; \$9.8 million for grants to improve and upgrade early childhood infrastructure, enhancing the quality and amenity of learning environments; \$62 million to provide interpreting and translating services and to continue to support the English as an additional language program, which many in my community greatly benefit from; and of course \$244 million to deliver government-subsidised training, including free TAFE, in up to 80 priority courses. We know those opposite do not like free TAFE, and I can bet they will cut that too if they win later this year.

This budget is also investing the resources we need to put into our health system so that it is easier and cheaper to get high-quality health care. We are providing a record \$32 billion to our health system in

2026–27 alone. Through this budget we are providing \$3.9 billion in new investments. I am particularly excited for the brand new development that has been announced at Dandenong Hospital to upgrade the intensive care unit, and I was there with a number of my colleagues just recently.

The redevelopment focuses on expanding capacity for the busiest departments: nine new operating theatres, a new intensive care unit and a brand new ICU featuring 16 beds. The design includes larger patient cubicles, private rooms and modern equipment storage to improve patient privacy and care. It includes upgraded day surgery admissions as well. This is great for my community. On top of that, the tower expansion at Monash Medical Centre announced in 2024 continues as well. This project is even larger in scale than the Dandenong upgrade and is centred around the new seven-storey medical tower being built directly above the existing emergency department. This means that both public hospitals that support my community are getting the funding and upgrades they need to be there for my community. I would like to thank the Minister for Health and her predecessor, the member for Macedon, for the work that they have done delivering for my community in this portfolio.

This budget also provides support for the secondary school immunisation program, saving families time and money on trips to the doctor. It also includes funding for immunisations for meningococcal B for year 10 students. The budget invests \$109 million to deliver 45,000 more specialist paediatric appointments and 4000 additional planned surgeries for children. This will mean children and young people get specialist care and treatment faster in a world-class public health system that families can rely on.

I mentioned free public transport, but also more services have been called for. I have received a number of emails and phone calls from my constituents to increase services in the area of my electorate, and we have delivered on that with the 802, 804 and 885 buses having a seven-day-a-week service and more reliable connections. I want to give a bit of a shout-out to Peter Parker, who is a strong advocate for great public transport. My conversations with Peter have been quite productive since I have been elected to this place, and because of those conversations I have been able to advocate on his behalf but also my community's behalf. So it is not just the 800 bus in 2024, but we now have got the 802, 804 and 885 bus routes delivering more services for my community.

There is so much more, and I will keep going. This government has responded to increased rates of violent crime by tightening our bail laws and introducing tougher sentencing, but also by introducing the violence reduction unit, which tackles the root causes of crime at an early age to stop it before it begins. This budget is backing this approach with new investments such as \$62 million to recruit up to 200 police reservists for police station counter duties, freeing up additional frontline police; \$55 million to support Victoria Police operations, including replacing critical policing equipment; \$51 million to deliver 50 new protective services officers to support Victoria Police with intelligence-led deployment and to continue Operation Pulse in shopping centres; \$229 million to increase capacity in the corrections system, including youth justice, ensuring that we have facilities to hold offenders accountable and keep the community safe; and \$23 million to provide educational support and guidance for young people who are at risk of, or are already in contact with, the justice system, and assist schools to re-engage students transitioning between custodial youth justice and educational settings.

There is so much more, and I could continue. And I will. I do want to touch on, though, the contrast – looking at the alternative. We have heard the Leader of the Opposition talk about fiscal responsibility. But in the south-east in my electorate we know what that is code for: it is code for cuts. We have seen it before. We have lived through it. We have lived through that era. It was a nightmare then, and – heaven forbid the coalition get into government at the end of the year – it will be a nightmare again.

When the coalition look at a budget, they do not see people, they see a ledger to be slashed. If they were to come into government, I just wonder what Mulgrave would lose. In regard to transport, will they scrap free PT for under-18s and for seniors on weekends? I imagine so. In regard to health, would they return to the days of efficiency dividends that hollow out our community health centres and leave

hospital wards closed? For local jobs, we know they have got a track record of cutting public service positions that many families in my electorate rely on. And they talk about the debt, but they never talk about the social debt created when you stop building schools, when you stop upgrading hospitals and when you stop supporting the most vulnerable. Whether it is cost-of-living support, education, health, community safety or more, the Allan Labor government is delivering the services that Victorians expect from our government, and we are working hard to deliver for working families doing it tough. I would like to thank the Treasurer and the Minister for Finance for their work on this budget, and I commend the bill to the house.

**Wayne FARNHAM** (Narracan) (16:06): I am pleased to rise on the Appropriation (2026–2027) Bill 2026 and Appropriation (Parliament 2026–2027) Bill 2026. I have obviously listened to a fair bit of debate today, because I have been sitting there in the chair for 2 hours, and it really is becoming a budget of haves and have-nots. It has been very clear for me today that there are a lot of people on this side who have the have-nots and the government side has the haves – it is really quite simple. When I hear government members talking about health care, like the member for Mulgrave just speaking about it, the member for Frankston talking about the Frankston hospital and the member for Footscray talking about the Footscray Hospital – I have heard all that all day – it does not take away from the fact that yesterday in this chamber I talked about truth, and there is a reason for that. I will not say the l-word today, because I think everyone will explode, but I will talk about truth, because truth is important – very important.

When we talk about health care and when we talk about community and communities getting left behind, there is no bigger community left behind than mine in West Gippsland, in the seat of Narracan. We have been waiting since 2015 for a hospital. That was when the health department recommended that a new hospital be built in West Gippsland – 2015. We get to the 2018 election: the Liberal–National party committed to building a new hospital. We get to the 2022 election: the Liberal–National parties committed to building a new hospital in May 2022. The then Premier Daniel Andrews, on one of his very, very, very rare trips into Warragul – I think it might have been the first one – made an announcement in the backyard of someone’s house with no-one there. They did not even have a candidate at the time. They actually had the candidate from Morwell sitting at the announcement for a hospital in Narracan – completely different seat. He sat up there like the Messiah he thought he was, and he quoted this:

... construction will begin in 2024, it will be completed by 2028, patients and staff would move into that brand new hospital in 2029.

In yesterday’s question time, when I asked the Minister for Health Infrastructure why the government has broken this promise, the Minister for Health Infrastructure said, ‘We didn’t break a promise.’ That is the ultimate gaslighting, in my opinion. You cannot turn around and claim straight up and down, ‘We’re going to start construction in 2024,’ and then have the Minister for Health Infrastructure say, ‘We didn’t break a promise.’ How does that work? It is actually very poor form by this government that they pick and choose which communities get quality health care, and that is what they have done in this situation. Not even Wonthaggi – they missed out, and Maroondah as well. That is very, very poor from this government.

When people on that side get up and bang on about how good this budget is – this budget is not good. This budget is pathetic. There will be members over that side that I believe are going to be very, very nervous. You can see by their body language now that they are thinking, come 28 November, they are not going to be here anymore. And there is good reason for that. People on that side –

**Belinda Wilson** interjected.

**Wayne FARNHAM:** The member for Narre Warren North can mouth off at me all she wants. I am happy to take up her interjections. But there are going to be a lot of members on that side that will not be here after 28 November. That is white noise over there. It always is, and that is the problem. But Victorians have caught on to this. I follow a lot of government MPs on their social media and I

have noticed the comments that are coming through from the general public, and I can tell you now they are not very complimentary.

*Members interjecting.*

**Wayne FARNHAM:** I do not follow you, mate. Do not worry about it. I would not bother. You come out with irrelevant comments or something like that.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Nathan Lambert):** Through the Chair, member for Narracan.

**Wayne FARNHAM:** I am sorry, Acting Speaker, I will go through the Chair. This comment was on the Premier's own social media page:

Start dusting off your résumés. How are those machete bins working out, Jacinta? You're weak on crime and heavy on corruption.

Victoria has caught on to the Labor Party. They have caught on. The general public has caught on to the Labor Party. They have caught on to the gaslighting. When Labor comes out and says this is a good budget, most comments say, 'Where's our \$15 billion? Where has our \$15 billion gone?' That comes up all the time, because Victorians are sick and tired of the corruption and the cover-ups in this state that have got us in the position of \$200 billion worth of debt and \$24 million a day in interest.

The member for Malvern said it earlier. He talked about the top five things in Victoria: unemployment, debt, a credit rating at the lowest it has ever been, taxes at their highest and interest payments at their highest. Talking about the interest payments, they got brought up in last year's Public Accounts and Estimates Committee, and it was a very good question from Richard Welch in the other place: have you done the modelling if we lose our credit rating? The answer was no, because the credit rating agencies are telling this government to pull their head in. They have been very, very clear about it. They have told this government: if you keep spending, we will downgrade your credit rating. What will that do to the interest bill? Has any modelling been done on that? I doubt it. I doubt it very much, because this government does not listen to people. That is the problem with the government – it does not listen to anyone.

When we talk about fiscal responsibility, our leader has been very clear and very honest with Victorians, which is more than I can say for this government. Our leader, the member for Kew, was very clear in her budget reply. She stated that we do not have a magic wand and we cannot fix this debt overnight, but we will take responsible steps to reduce the debt. Again, those on that side like to throw numbers in the air, and wherever they land, that is the number they will talk about – there are a lot of numbers. But the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Kew, was very clear, especially when it came to the public service. She said we will freeze the public service – not sack anyone, not cut anyone, like those over there running the scare campaign will say for the next six months. But the Victorian public know they are full of it. So it was a very clear commitment: no-one will lose their job. She stated that three or four times in the media, very clearly and very concisely: no-one will lose their job, but if you retire or you leave, we are not going to replace that job.

**Anthony Carbines** interjected.

**Wayne FARNHAM:** It was good to hear the Minister for Police speak up then, because another commitment we made to keep Victorians safe was to put an extra 3000 police on the beat, because we know the Minister for Police has failed on policing. We get that that has happened. We know our crime is up and we know our police numbers are down, so our shadow minister, along with our leader, came up with a solution. We will also have more PSOs, and they will be at every station, unlike the government that has ripped them off the stations and put them elsewhere. The member for Malvern talked earlier about crime in his electorate and how he had a 24-hour police station open seven days a week which is now back to three days a week and business hours only. How does that protect the public? How does that keep Victorians safe? It actually goes to the budget paper's title itself. The first thing it says is 'safer'. That could not be further from the truth. This community is not safe. People

know it. People are scared. The member for Malvern's example is a very good example of the mismanagement of this state and why we are where we are today – a very good example.

I have not even started on my electorate when it comes to crime. I have one police station – one 24-hour police station for 4500 square kilometres. Trafalgar is on reduced hours, Rawson has no-one there and there is no-one at Drouin. They all come out of Warragul to service these other areas, but it is not like the city. We are not 10 minutes away from an area. If you have to drive from Warragul to Rawson, for example, that is over an hour, so how can that community be safe with no presence? That is what has happened with the government. They have managed this economy so poorly that they have cut our police numbers and they have shut our stations. That is irresponsible. That is moral irresponsibility.

The saddest thing about this state is that the government does not give a stuff. They just keep gaslighting and gaslighting every opportunity they get. When we talk about an interest bill of \$8.9 billion increasing to \$11.8 billion in interest, how is that responsible? People will say, 'Well, we have built infrastructure for that. We borrowed the money for infrastructure, but we have a surplus.' I love this magic word 'surplus'. A \$727 million surplus, but we are going to be \$200 million in debt and paying \$1 million an hour. It just does not work and it does not compute. I will tell you why, because most normal people, any household in this state who scrimps and saves – and they are doing it tough – if they get a bit of a windfall or they have been really, really disciplined in what they have done in that year, they get a bit of a windfall. What they do is they grab that money and they put it onto their mortgage to reduce their interest – that is what normal people do. But this government is not normal; they are far from it. What they do is go, 'We've got a surplus, we're going to spend that, borrow more, and we will throw you another \$500 million in debt and pay more interest on that.' That is the mentality of the government. I have said it before: they do not run a business, they have never known how to work in their lives, and all they do is spend. And when they have spent it all, they come after you again and again and again. It is typical of this government, and that is why we are in very, very big trouble in this state.

One thing that no-one has spoken about today or yesterday is housing. They have given up on it. The government have missed their targets year in, year out. Housing is unaffordable. They have been beating up the construction industry for the last two years. I even noticed that the new Minister for Housing and Building is backflipping on the minimum financial requirements now, but that is too little, too late when builders have had a gutful of the government. Every metric this government has tried to achieve, it has failed – it is really that simple. They are not smart fiscal managers, and Victoria have woken up to it. Finally, Victoria have woken up to it.

There is nothing 'easy' in this state, there is nothing 'safe' and there is nothing 'more affordable'. The fact that the government now want to blame Donald Trump for the problems shows me that they are just looking for another scapegoat because of their incompetence. Donald Trump did not increase our emergency services levy. Donald Trump did not create the lack of investment in our roads and the terrible state of our roads. Donald Trump did not close down the timber industry. It is all on them. It is not on the orange-haired man, I can tell you right now. This government's incompetence is why we are where we are today – absolutely hopeless at managing an economy. You cannot spruik a surplus when you are paying a million dollars an hour in interest – it is a false narrative. Victorians have woken up to this government. They know we are in an absolute fiscal –

**James Newbury** interjected.

**Wayne FARNHAM:** Mess. Thank you, member for Brighton, mess – because of this government. Come 28 November, there are a few over there that are going to have to dust their résumés off, pack up their offices and move on, because I, along with Victorians, have had enough.

**Vicki WARD** (Eltham – Minister for Emergency Services, Minister for Natural Disaster Recovery, Minister for Equality) (16:21): I move:

That the debate be now adjourned.

**Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.**

**Ordered that debate be adjourned until later this day.**

*Business of the house*

**Adjournment**

**Anthony CARBINES** (Ivanhoe – Leader of the House, Minister for Police, Minister for Community Safety, Minister for Victims, Minister for Racing) (16:21): I move:

That the house, at its rising, adjourns until 2 June 2026.

**Motion agreed to.**

*Bills*

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

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

*Second reading*

**Debate resumed on motions of Sonya Kilkenny and Anthony Carbines:**

That this bill be now read a second time.

**Gary MAAS** (Narre Warren South) (16:22): I rise today to speak on the appropriation bills with regard to the Victorian state budget. This budget, as we know and as has been said many times today, delivers on the things that matter most to people in the state of Victoria, but it especially matters to people in my community of Narre Warren South towards making their lives easier, safer and more affordable. This year's budget delivers cost-of-living measures that give people money back in their pockets and provide that little bit of relief, which takes the pressure off where it is needed most. We are able to invest in the things that matter to communities across Victoria and, importantly, not cut those vital services, which those opposite have pledged that they will cut. They have promised, we know, to cut billions from the services that we all rely upon – cuts to schools, cuts to police and cuts to hospitals. We know who will be impacted most by those cuts, and it is Victorians – it is people in my electorate of Narre Warren South. They are nowhere on the side of Victorians.

While they propose, if they ever get the gift of governing, to cut crucial services and cause by-elections because of their own infighting, we are concentrating on delivering a budget that is responsive and responsible to meet Victorians needs. The Allan Labor government is helping locals in my electorate of Narre Warren South, and that 20 per cent off the rego is really going down a treat. I was out doorknocking on the weekend and spruiking that, and people were very, very happy to know that they would be getting back \$186 per car from 1 June. Many of the households in my electorate actually have two cars, and I know they will be taking up the offer of saving on the regos of two light vehicles, saving up to \$372. By delivering free public transport as well throughout April and May and then half-price fares from 1 June until the end of the year, we are making it easier for those who can travel by public transport to do so, and leaving the car at home saves on their fuel costs. This will save average commuters more than \$1300.

Those who do commute to work tell me the free and reduced fares have made public transport even more accessible to them. And families of course are already saving through the state Labor government's free public transport for under-18s and for seniors on weekends too, and these great initiatives will continue. With the level crossing that has been removed at Webb Street, the upgraded

Narre Warren station and the Metro Tunnel opening up, there are dozens of new services every week on the Cranbourne and Pakenham lines, and it has never been easier to use public transport in our area.

The budget also invests \$2.3 million to expand the incredible Bring Your Bills program statewide, putting financial experts and businesses in the same room as families who need it most. Last year I was really privileged to join the Premier at a Bring Your Bills event in Hampton Park. That particular day families walked away with \$3 million in debt that was waived, and all of those savings were found. It is investment in programs like this that is very, very important in my community. To give you a sense of what a Bring Your Bills day actually looks like, think of a recreational space like a basketball court, and think of that basketball court filled with representatives from our major banks, from our major telcos, from our major utilities companies, that are all there with the ability to strike, there and then, money that you may be in deficit for paying. They are able to say, 'You're in arrears in paying these bills; we're able to strike that today. You can't afford to pay that bill and you're able to show us this – these bills are cut off.' So Bring Your Bills day matters to my community. To know that it has been as successful as it has been in Hampton Park and regional Victoria, and to know that it will now expand throughout Victoria so that people can have that kind of debt wiped off their bills, is real cost-of-living relief. As I said, it was a privilege to have the Premier come and see exactly how that event works. It is really terrific as well when you have the regulators that attend these events too – the financial ombudsman was there as well – and it just kind of keeps the whole show ticking along nicely. The very idea for this was the brainchild of Peter McNamara, who is the CEO of South East Community Links. Peter McNamara is known to many of us, and he and his team have done fantastic work with this brilliant initiative. This investment from the government of \$2.3 million will help ensure that it reaches even more people across the state.

The budget takes pressure off families, and with school-aged kids in my community, we have done that by investing \$59.4 million to continue the programs that families rely upon. That includes those Get Active Kids vouchers, the free school breakfast clubs, the affordable school uniforms program and the expansion of the Glasses for Kids program to reach 330 more schools. These are long-running programs that have made a real difference in our communities and reduced school and sporting costs.

When it comes to education, our government continues to invest in education in the state budget because we know the importance of education in setting up students for the rest of their lives. A good education leads to opportunities, good jobs and citizens who can continue to contribute to our society. So we are continuing free kinder, saving families up to \$2700 per child every year and helping more kids access quality early childhood education while supporting parents to return back to work.

The budget backs free TAFE as part of a \$459.4 million investment in skills and training, supporting 15,000 additional students. I am very proud to see that \$525,000 will go towards expanding the Academy Movement program to new schools to continue their fantastic work, improving school engagement and academic outcomes through sport. It is so terrific for kids at those schools to keep engaged with their academic learning but also to get fit – doing something that they love but keeping themselves and their minds busy as well. It is a really excellent program. One example of Academy Movement is that they run a very popular rugby program over at Narre Warren South P-12 College in my electorate, and they run a cricket academy at Alkira Secondary College, helping many young people to stay engaged at school. Depending on the facilities of the school or the area, they are now branching out into other sports as well, including adding golf, I believe, to the program this year.

This adds to other significant investments in education in my electorate that I have advocated for over the years, including the opening of the brand new Kala Primary School in Cranbourne North in term 1 this year, and that school is supporting our growing community with its state-of-the-art facilities, with capacity for up to 500 students and an onsite kinder. It is just one of the schools that was opened across the state this year, with a total of 121 schools opened since 2017. Lyndhurst Secondary College received \$13.6 million in the previous budget, which will see that being upgraded. I do know that those works are beginning soon.

In terms of our local roads network, this year's budget is delivering \$600,000 to resurface Pound Road in Hampton Park. It is a really busy thoroughfare, and this work will help improve safety and ease congestion through that area. I know how important that investment is in my community, as I have spoken to many of the locals around that stretch of Pound Road. The conditions can be quite dangerous around there. We know that there is still more to do, but having this resurfacing occurring is a very important step towards better road conditions for Pound Road.

In 2026–27 the Allan Labor government will spend over a billion on fixing potholes and resurfacing roads, and that is the highest in the state's history. We are also cleaning up the busiest freeways, including the South Gippsland Freeway and the Monash Freeway, making them safer and cleaner for motorists. It builds on other work we have done to improve local roads in the area, like work which is currently taking place to remove the roundabout at the intersection of Berwick-Cranbourne and Thompsons roads to make journeys safer.

The government continues to back our local community sport as well. The wellbeing that it brings to our areas is very important, and the ability to invest in facilities via the Local Sports Infrastructure Fund is something that is a fantastic part of the budget. It is an exciting win for Berwick Springs Recreation Reserve, because that budget invests \$250,000 for new female-friendly change rooms at the ground. I know that local council, the City of Casey, which is delivering that project, was very excited to hear about the funding allocation there to allow that to occur. Whilst the Berwick Springs Recreation Reserve is home to the Berwick Springs Cricket Club, it has also expanded now to include the Berwick Churches Soccer Club, and that upgrade will help remove the barriers and improve participation for women and girls to play the sports that they love at that fantastic reserve. I started to hear from many other clubs that wish to use those facilities as soon as that upgrade was announced. These local clubs are growing at a rapid pace, and with more women and girls participating than ever before, it is really crucial that our facilities keep up with that. Local sports clubs in my electorate have continued to be bolstered under the Labor government, with new pavilions at Robert Booth Reserve and Hampton Park Bowls Club and the recently completed pavilion at Grices Road Recreation Reserve, as well as the upcoming completion of the Hampton Park Tennis Club. I guess you could say it is all happening over in Narre Warren South.

This government also continues to invest in our healthcare system, a core Labor value. I was delighted again to see that in this year's budget an urgent care centre will be opened over at the brand new Cranbourne Community Hospital, which services my local area too. We know how great these clinics are in helping people get the care that they need when they need it and also in taking pressure off our emergency departments. Having a new centre in addition to the one in Narre Warren will mean more people can access care that is closer to their home. We have also committed to other health programs, like the successful Chemist Care Now program, the Victorian Virtual Emergency Department and the Virtual Women's Health Clinic. These initiatives support a responsive and really holistic healthcare system while we continue to upgrade our hospitals. We also delivered a \$135 million expansion to Casey Hospital in 2020, and the upgrade to improve the emergency department at Casey Hospital is currently underway. Like many in my community, I am also looking forward to this starting to take shape. I know investments in health care are as crucial as anything as our area does continue to grow.

This is a good budget, and I commend the government appropriation bills, but the budget does not have any black holes to fill. It is timely and it is responsible as we face international challenges beyond our control. But together we can get through these times while still preserving our incredible schools, our incredible health system, the jobs and the services, all while delivering a budget surplus. We know what others would do. If they get in, they will slash and burn – cuts for all and a return to a stagnant economy and a state that will be stale, not fresh. I commend this bill to the house.

**Cindy McLEISH** (Eildon) (16:37): I think the title of this budget is a bit of a joke actually. I think the government is having a lend of regular Victorians: 'Easier. Safer. More affordable.' I think if you talk to just about everybody, life is certainly not easier, and with the increase in crime rates, life is certainly not safer. In fact when you are out talking to the regular person on the street, not just in my

electorate but all over the place, people are worried about the huge increases in crime, and they are not feeling safer at all. 'More affordable' is quite laughable when we have seen the absolute waste, whether it is painting the front of a tunnel-boring machine, whether it is pot plants for the Suburban Rail Loop Authority, whether it is strippers on Big Build sites. People see all of these wasteful products, and they know that this government are having a lend of them when they are telling us that the budget is easier, safer and more affordable. Those comments certainly do not gel with me.

There is a message for Victorians here, and that message is about debt. The debt levels are absolutely extraordinary. For the last two years, when we have had the budgets handed down, I have thought, 'Surely it can't get worse than this.' And then the government continue to spend, and they continue to spend with borrowed money. Last year I thought, 'Surely – we're at \$196 billion in debt in the forwards – it can't get worse.' But now we are a smidgen, just a smidgen, under \$200 billion in debt. It is something that is very difficult to get your head around, how much money that actually is. But I guess when you take it down a little bit and look at that being \$32 million a day – for a lot of people \$32 million is an amount of money that is never achievable for them in their lifetimes. Have a think about \$32 million – \$96 million over three days in interest. There are 88 seats in this house, so every three days I would be pretty keen to have \$1 million invested in my local electorate, because at the minute I think it looks like there is just about \$440,000 in the entire year that is going to be invested, which is pretty scary.

I think everyone would agree that \$32 million a day is an extraordinary amount to be paying in interest payments. If this was your credit card at home, if the levels of debt were like this, you would be absolutely concerned. You would be worried that the receivers were coming in. You would be worried about every interest rate rise. I remember the former Treasurer saying to this house one day, 'It's cheap to borrow money.' Of course it is cheap to borrow money when the interest rates are really low, but that changes and it has changed. We have got Moody's and S&P waiting, watching Victoria, because they could change our credit rating at any minute. Last year in the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee it came out that the government had not done any modelling on how much extra they would have to pay if our credit rating was downgraded, and I think that is a failure of due diligence. I expect very much that the Department of Treasury and Finance have done some of this, but the government are not interested, because I think that that would be an important component of the work that they needed to do.

Victoria is the worst performing state economically in the country. We have heard the government members with their talking points, talking about the surplus and how wonderful it is to have this surplus. That is a bit of a fake surplus, and I will go to that a little bit later. But Labor now is borrowing from future generations to pay for today's spending, today's spending just gets worse and worse and the credit card has to be maxed out. I do not know how they managed to get the debt forecast to stay under \$200 billion, but for all intents and purposes I think we are safe to say that it is \$200 billion. Compare that to when the coalition was in government: when we left the debt was \$21.8 billion with a downward trajectory. Now we have got this debt and we have got record sell-offs. The government have flogged off just about everything that they could think to sell off, whether that is parts of VicRoads or the ports – different areas – or Births, Deaths and Marriages Victoria. They claim that the coalition are the ones who sell off everything, and the record that Labor has shows that it is them. We have just seen the lotto licences. We have seen previously in that space as well they had a fire sale of some of the gaming machines way back when they first were elected.

The Transport Accident Commission has been interesting, because that has been propping up the budget, and the surplus you can very much attribute to raiding of the TAC. If you have a look at what has been paid in dividends, the actual amounts that have been paid in the last two years according to the TAC's annual report – the most recent annual report 2024–25, on page 89, where the dividends paid are outlined – are \$1.135 billion and the year before it was \$1.082 billion. For the last two years \$1 billion has been taken out of the Transport Accident Commission. The forecast in the budget for the coming financial year is to take \$1.108 billion out. The following year – they have really been

fiddling with the books here, fudging the books, looking at the different amounts – it is \$1.108 billion, compared to \$8 million the next year, \$708 million and then \$608 million. For some reason this year it is all coming out to prop up the budget to make it look like it is a surplus, and as I said, for the last two years that has been the case.

If we have a look at the Transport Accident Commission, the insurance funding ratio, which around about means how easily they can pay their bills, the revenues that are coming in and what they have got to pay, it is pretty high. It has been 152.5 per cent and 151.6 per cent the last couple of years. TAC is travelling well compared to WorkSafe Victoria, which had been at the very low scary end of about 105 or 106 per cent, which meant that they were struggling to pay their bills. The only reason they could pay their bills was because the government propped up I think it was about \$1.2 billion or \$1.3 billion over three years to keep them afloat.

But at the other end we have the TAC, which is doing well. Where is the TAC funded from? Well, that is from road users. At the same time, while they have got this very strong insurance funding ratio, the client satisfaction has dipped. That tells me maybe the TAC should be doing a little bit more to help those that are victims of motor vehicle accidents, whether they were in a car travelling, whether they were a pedestrian or a motorbike rider, for instance. There are a number of things I think the TAC could be doing, but I think their hands are tied, because it is the Treasurer who determines how much is going to be paid from the TAC to prop up the coffers. I was interested, actually, in the annual report. One of the notes mentions that of the \$1.135 billion that was taken out last year, \$748 million was recognised as a dividend and \$387 million was a tax payment. So we are propping up the state's bottom line with the TAC. At the same time, I have mentioned that client satisfaction is down, we are paying very high registration fees and I see problems with the roads. I see many dangerous intersections, and I see opportunities all the time for the TAC to help out to make our roads safer. I think that they are hamstrung, because the government says, 'You can do a little bit, but you can't do perhaps what you would like to because we want to use you as our cash cow.' That has been happening year on year, and I find that quite offensive to those that have been victims of road accidents.

There are a couple of other big omissions here in the budget in the health area, and this comes back to my area a little bit. Maroondah Hospital seems to have disappeared off the radar. That was going to have some significant investment, but that is not going to happen. Eastern Health, which Maroondah is part of, in Box Hill – Alexandra hospital is now merging with them. I think the people of Alexandra thought that things were going to be good, being part of Eastern Health, but did not realise the debt that these health services are carrying because the government does not have the money to help out the hospitals. Of that \$32 million a day that is going into interest payments, I could think of multiple health services that would like an injection every few days of a million dollars to help them get over the line. We have community hospitals, and one of the community hospitals that I want to talk about is the Eltham community hospital, which has been scrapped. The member for Eltham, on her Facebook page, has said:

**Where will the Eltham community hospital be located?**

The Eltham community hospital will be a new development at 405 Ryans Road, Diamond Creek.

I think that is fake news now, and I am sure that the member for Eltham is bitterly disappointed that the government have shortchanged her and her electorate – also, community hospitals in Torquay and South Melbourne.

In other areas my electorate has missed out completely – other than \$440,000 for Mansfield Primary School for a toilet block, because they have got 1970s-era toilet block that is going to be redeveloped. I am constantly surprised at the cost of toilet blocks – how they go up so quickly from what would have been \$80,000 a number of years ago when they did the toilet block at Healesville to what they are now. I have many sporting clubs that need pavilions or surfacing, and they have missed out. CFA stations have missed out. In particular, it disappoints me that again the Yarck CFA station has missed out. It was a decade ago that land was purchased around the corner, off the main road in Yarck. The

CFA station is a little tin shed in amongst a whole lot of quaint little buildings and next to Bucks bakehouse, which I can highly recommend, and just up from the pub in Yarck, which I can also highly recommend. The land has been purchased. The government, by building the Yarck fire brigade a new station, could sell the one that is in the main street. They might even be able to make a little bit of money out of this. This year, Yarck was decimated in the bushfires, and I thought it would have been a wonderful opportunity for the government to show the community that they care and that they will invest in a new station, rather than just tarting up the toilets and maybe the shower area.

Also on the bushfire response, it is a little bit disappointing about what is not here, because councils in my area have missed out considerably, Murrindindi in particular – 70 per cent of the Longwood fires burnt in Murrindindi. Of the entire state footprint of all of the fires over January, 50 per cent was in the Murrindindi shire. They got the same level of funding as other councils that were not decimated even anywhere close to them, and the council are really concerned about this and their ongoing viability. Great, tip fees have been reduced. Well, it is the councils that actually get the money from that. The government have said, ‘Oh, you know, free tip fees.’ It was part of the revenue for the council. They now do not have that because the government have not said, ‘We’re going to top you up because you miss out on that.’ Rate revenue – they have to re-rate all of the properties because paying rates on a property with a dwelling or shed is different than when it is all gone, so now they have to revalue all of the rates. So again, for the Murrindindi shire, they are going to miss out significantly on rate revenue. The government are not putting their hand up to say, ‘We will help you. We care about what has happened here.’ The clean-up – there are so many concerns about the clean-up process, the government’s contribution and what they are going to do. When are they stopping? There is talk that it is going to stop very soon. If you have not had your property cleaned up, well, bad luck, you are going to miss out.

Fencing is the biggest issue at the moment. Some people were insured, some people were not insured. Sometimes they have a border fence with Crown land. The rail trail on the Tallarook to Mansfield rail trail runs through lots of properties where it has been fenced off. Those fences have been destroyed and the bridges on the rail trail have been destroyed – multiple millions of dollars. The council cannot afford to fix this up themselves. They need a big helping hand from the government. The people still need a helping hand from the government, and I think they have failed them on this point.

The roads in my community are always in an appalling state. Again, I could talk for 20 minutes about the issues facing just about every major highway in my electorate. The government here has failed Victorians.

**Alison MARCHANT** (Bellarine) (16:52): It is a pleasure to rise to speak on the 2026–27 Victorian budget, which really is a budget that at its heart is helping people and families through those pressures that they are feeling right now. We are going to continue to invest in the services and the infrastructure and those opportunities that our communities really rely on.

I want to talk a little bit more about what that means for the Bellarine. I know that Bellarine families and working people all across the Bellarine are working extremely hard at the moment, but they are still having to balance their own family budgets. It might be mortgages and rent. They feel it when grocery shopping. Maybe it is with health care or fuel prices. People that are struggling or people that are doing it tough want to know that their government cares, that they understand those pressures and that they are willing to act. That is exactly what this budget does.

I was recently at the Point Lonsdale school market, and I was providing lots of information. I had a stall there, and I was able to have conversations with the community around the things that this budget was delivering. What was particularly really positive, and the feedback that I got, was that 20 per cent rebate on car rego that we have announced. Most people who took the little flyer are going to put it on their fridge so they remember to apply. They always took it, and they said, ‘Every little bit helps, so thank you very much.’ There is the free public transport as well and the youth Myki. We are giving young people under 18 free transport and making public transport then half-price from June – that is

until the end of the year. That is around making sure that we are giving families a little bit of extra money back in their pockets.

Speaking of public transport, I was really pleased to see in this year's budget – and really pleased to advocate on behalf of the Bellarine community, who had identified and had been advocating for – a cross-Bellarine bus service, which now we will have from Drysdale to Ocean Grove and back. This is something that has been on my radar for a little while now. We conducted a review into the Bellarine bus services, and I also did a student survey with a student from Bellarine Secondary College. Indy was able to help me create a student survey, and students and young people were certainly telling me that they wanted to get across the Bellarine, not only just for social activities but also to go to maybe work after school or go to sports training on the weekends and to get around. This will alleviate the need now to go into Geelong and then back out to get across the Bellarine. Now we will be able to have a direct service, and I am really pleased that we have been able to secure that in this year's budget.

Also, around public transport, we have continued to fund and support the Portarlington ferry service, which is a really important service for my community, especially for those locals who like to travel to and from Melbourne on the ferry from Portarlington to Docklands, but also it is about our tourism economy. We have so many that travel on that service that come from Melbourne and come and experience our wineries, our shopping and all the things that the Bellarine offers, and that is a great economic boost for our community. I thank the Portarlington ferries for their commitment to our region as well.

Education is certainly a big central part of our budget, and that is why we are continuing the breakfast clubs and the Glasses for Kids program and ensuring that we have early childhood free kinder, all the way to free TAFE. But there were a really exciting couple of announcements in this budget for us and for the Bellarine. I am sure you could probably nearly hear the screams from Surfside Primary School students when they learned at their assembly that they were going to receive over \$11 million to build a new gymnasium. When they were told by their principal, there were big screams and big cheers, and I am really excited for them. They are a growing school and they are feeling those growth pressures. But they have to gather outside to do their assemblies – they cannot do them inside – so this new gym will be able to give them a really fantastic learning space. We also recently announced a new kindergarten for Ocean Grove, and work is underway for the new St Leonard's early learning centre as well. Drysdale Primary School have also received funding to upgrade and improve their toilet facilities, and that is going to make a huge difference to that school.

Investments in budgets are not just about buildings or capital works but also about investing into the future of our young people. I really want to mention the investment around the disability inclusion fund, because this is very dear to my heart as a former teacher and someone who has also worked in a specialist sense. Students will have the funding and schools will have the funding to support the kids who need it the most. Those who need some extra support are going to be able to have that support, and I am really pleased that we have seen that in this year's budget as well.

Health care is also a really strong part of this budget, and just locally I want to touch on a few of the things in the budget. We are going to continue to invest in the dedicated children's emergency department that is at the Geelong hospital. That has transformed the way we have emergency care at the hospital, and so we are going to improve specialist emergency care for those local children and families. This is fantastic. And we are going to continue the Victorian Virtual Emergency Department, our Chemist Care Now, Nurse-on-Call and the Virtual Women's Health Clinic. These initiatives are about giving people access to health care and health advice in their own homes or close to home, and that makes such a difference for Bellarine families.

We are obviously very much a coastline community, and we have several surf lifesaving clubs that absolutely do an incredible job of keeping our beaches safe. I just want to mention that there is extra support in the budget for Point Lonsdale Surf Life Saving Club, and that is really about supporting those volunteers. There is a project that will see a redevelopment of the patrol base that is up in the

dunes, and this is going to make sure that it is going to be delivered. It is a really complex site, so a little bit of extra funding will make sure that we keep that project on track, and I am really looking forward to seeing how that develops. I really thank the Point Lonsdale community and surf lifesaving community for keeping our beaches safe over summer.

There is so much to talk about in this budget. I am really pleased to be able to advocate for the Bellarine communities on the things that are going to matter and the things that are going to make a huge difference to Bellarine communities. I thank the Treasurer and the Premier for all their work. This is an incredible budget at a time when families are doing it tough, and we have been able to show our values through this budget in supporting families when they need it the most, and especially our Bellarine families.

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

**Motions agreed to.**

**Read second time.**

*Third reading*

**Motions agreed to.**

**Read third time.**

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

**Business interrupted under resolution of house of 1 April.**

*Adjournment*

**The SPEAKER:** The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

### **Renewable energy zones**

**Emma KEALY** (Lowan) (17:01): (1659) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Energy and Resources, and the action I seek is for the minister to join me to meet with communities who are very concerned about the impact of the south-west renewable energy zone and the western renewable energy zone. These are communities that in many instances you could consider to have been taken by surprise when it came to the rollout and the announcement of renewable energy zones, particularly for those captured in the south-west REZ. George Turner of Pigeon Ponds has specifically asked me to invite the minister to speak with the local community, and this is because it really was a surprise when this final plan was released. There was no indication to the Balmoral community and the surrounding area, the Coleraine community, that they were even being considered for a renewable energy zone, and therefore they did not provide submissions at that point in time. It was an enormous shock to see that actually they were going to be within a REZ, and they have got some points that they want to raise around this.

This is an area which is renowned for its beautiful red gum country and its rolling hills. There are some beautiful waterways through that region as well and of course some incredible agricultural land, so they want to make sure that this is not real. They cannot believe that anyone would think of putting in a criss-cross of distribution lines or how you could potentially even connect to transmission lines in that area, let alone with those beautiful red gums. How on earth are the turbines going to turn? How are they going to capture solar energy underneath a red gum? They want to speak to the minister and explain what their concerns are, but they want to do it face to face. Equally, those that live in the

western renewable energy zone were very, very surprised when the Grampians, Wimmera and Southern Mallee renewable energy zones were merged into one much, much bigger zone.

The thing that people do not understand is that in these local communities these pathways go through very important biodiversity links and they go through very important land, which is our reserves for very important flora and fauna. They want to make sure that these areas are protected. We also want to see what comes back to our region: where are the community benefits? At the moment all we see when we have renewables is that we get trucks coming in, ripping up the roads, and we get no money back into our communities. While we talk about jobs, they are not jobs for local people; they are coming in from Melbourne. No doubt they are staying in an Airbnb, which is putting pressure on our rental market. They are buying meals at the pub, which is fabulous, but they then leave town. Where are the legacy projects? This is what my people want to hear. They want to know: why our region, why are so many projects being approved outside of a REZ, why do you even have REZs if that is the case, and what is in it for our local community?

### **Monash Medical Centre**

**Tim RICHARDSON** (Mordialloc) (17:04): (1660) My adjournment this evening is to the Minister for Health Infrastructure, and the action I seek is for the minister to update my community on the progress of construction works at the Monash Medical Centre in Clayton. This goes along with a record of funding and delivering for our communities across the Kingston, Frankston and Greater Dandenong communities. Just this year we opened up the Frankston hospital, now Peninsula University Hospital, which has been a significant game changer for health care in our region. That \$1.1 billion investment will add substantial capacity to our peninsula, our Frankston council, our Greater Dandenong and our Kingston communities.

Monash Medical Centre has a storied history in our community. I have had the opportunity to be there and have that care when my girls have had temperatures of over 40 degrees, to go through there and be supported by some of the most compassionate and wonderful Victorians that exist. There is such an expansion of the facilities there, with more theatre capacity, updated maternity services doubling their capacity and also intensive care unit services. It also backs in our investment in Dandenong Hospital. A lot of the bobbies that are born in the eastern part of my community go through Dandenong Hospital, and it is a really great testament that there will be expanded theatre capacity and more support for our healthcare workers, because, you know what, Labor backs our healthcare workers – a 28.7 per cent increase in pay and conditions for our nurses, and nurse-to-patient ratios, opposed by those opposite and impacted by those opposite.

Remember those Liberal masters, the Baillieu family, who gave the middle finger to nurses and healthcare workers when they were campaigning for healthcare outcomes and better wages and conditions? That is the ethos. The raw soul of the coalition is to attack our healthcare workers. The proof is in this week's announcement, with a one-in-seven cutback of healthcare workers in our state coming under the \$40 billion of cuts that are on the way under the Shadow Treasurer, Leader of the Opposition and member for Kew – a cash surplus that will mean no projects like Dandenong Hospital or Monash Medical Centre would even exist if it was for the coalition.

The choice is clear: a Labor government that backs in healthcare workers, that builds the facilities for tomorrow and makes sure the first-class healthcare offering is backed up by first-class facilities, or no projects for the next 10 years, no investment in health, no additional healthcare workers and one in seven looking for a job in another state or being outsourced internationally because there will be no work under a Liberal coalition agenda. That is the 10 years ahead. I am really keen to hear how my community will benefit from an upgrade to the Monash Medical Centre's \$535 million investment.

### **Warrnambool rail line**

**Richard RIORDAN** (Polwarth) (17:07): (1661) My adjournment this evening is for the Minister for Public and Active Transport. The action I seek is the immediate addition of three extra carriages

to the Warrnambool train line service. The electorates of Polwarth and South-West Coast, two adjoining electorates to one of the best spots in the world, have been suffering now for the last 12 months, since the VLocity train system was brought into our region. We have been suffering because there has been a net loss of some 10,000 seats a week to and from Melbourne for the people of my community. What has that meant? That has meant that people can no longer book a seat. If you are on the train, you are not guaranteed a seat for the 3- to 4-hour journey, depending on where you are coming from. It means that when you are in Melbourne and you are wanting to come back you may miss a train. We have actually had situations where the train has physically been too full and people have not been able to get the return train journey. It is simply not good enough in this day and age, after having spent some \$459 million on an upgrade of the rail track, that we cannot run a train on it that is fit for purpose.

For 150 years the train service between Melbourne and Warrnambool ran efficiently. It ran with a refreshment service on board. It ran with seats that you could book. People felt safe on the service. The service could be relied on to get you to and from your destination. Fast-forward to today, and we have a situation where we have a train service that is simply not fit for purpose. It came as quite a shock to my electorate to hear that this week in the budget the government has decided to put extra carriage services on the Shepparton line – not that I for a minute think that the Shepparton people should not be looked after, but that rail service does not carry the same patronage that the Warrnambool line does, and yet it is getting extra train services, it is getting extra carriages and it is getting extended train platforms, all of which are also required on the Warrnambool line to provide a fit-for-purpose service. The Warrnambool train service must be improved immediately.

During COVID, when people chose to tree-change and sea-change – two options that they have through the lovely electorate of Polwarth – people made that decision based on the fact that they could commute to and from the metropolis for work and for home. Unfortunately now people cannot book a seat, they cannot get a tray table, they cannot get regular wi-fi and they cannot get a coffee in the morning. It is an appalling service. It is not fit for purpose. Again, I plead with the minister. I ask the minister to please provide the extra three carriages that are required to give my community the seats they deserve.

### **Workplace safety**

**Gary MAAS** (Narre Warren South) (17:10): (1662) The adjournment matter I wish to raise is for the Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC, and it concerns the recent announcement of additional funding to keep workers safe. The action that I seek is that the minister provide an update on how funding will improve protections for workers in my electorate of Narre Warren South. As the co-chair of WICC, the Workplace Incidents Consultative Committee, I have heard at first hand the ongoing impacts on families of workplace incidents. It is a privilege to be on this committee and to work with other members on this committee who have lived experience. I thank them all for their contributions in improving public policy.

As a former union leader, I know only too well the importance of protections for workers, and whilst every job does carry some level of risk, some industries, as we all know, carry more risk than others. In my electorate of Narre Warren South many of my constituents work in dangerous industries such as construction, manufacturing and even health care. This is important work which we could not do without, but it is incumbent on us as a government to do all that we can to ensure workplaces and workers are indeed protected. Any job can be dangerous without proper regulation and training.

Recently it was International Workers Memorial Day, and that saw the Allan Labor government announce \$13.7 million to deliver workplace injury prevention and better support for people to return to work. That was alongside \$1.4 million to expand supports for families grieving a loved one killed at work. I welcome any support and investment to keep workers safe and to help those left behind. I look forward to sharing the minister's response with my community.

### South-West Coast electorate roads

**Roma BRITNELL** (South-West Coast) (17:12): (1663) Before the house concludes tonight, I raise an urgent matter for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and the action I seek is simple: compensate every motorist and every business whose vehicle has been damaged by the government's incompetent road maintenance works at Illowa. Over the past few days my office has been absolutely inundated with reports from people whose vehicles have been smashed by loose stones and gravel sprayed across the road after road repairs. This incompetent Allan Labor government could not even ensure the road was properly swept before warning signs were removed. In just three days one local windscreen and panel repair business saw around 70 damaged vehicles, with smashed windscreens, chipped paint and body damage – and that is only one business, so the real figure is far likely worse.

I understand that on Wednesday, when this damage began, motorists alerted VicRoads to the danger and the extent of damage being caused by loose stones on the highway. Then on Sunday a vehicle lost control, skidded off the road and rolled onto its roof. Among the vehicles damaged were seven buses and even a Victoria Police highway patrol vehicle, a clear indication that this was not a matter of careless driving. When trained and highly experienced drivers cannot safely navigate these road conditions, it shows just how dangerous and unacceptable the situation has become.

The government directs affected drivers to go through the VicRoads compensation process, but what it does not tell people is it will not pay for any damage costing less than \$1682. Imagine being told you have to wear over \$1500 in costs because of the government's pure incompetence. No Victorian should be left out of pocket for damage caused by failures that were entirely preventable. Windscreens now contain cameras, sensors and safety technology that can cost thousands to replace. The Allan Labor government has a long history of failing to ensure road maintenance is done properly. Contracts lack meaningful accountability clauses. There are no supervision or basic quality assurance measures. This government caused this damage. This government must take responsibility. Motorists should not be left paying the price for substandard roads.

If your vehicle has been damaged on this stretch of road, I encourage you to contact my office with details of the damage and the repair quotes, and I will collate this information and forward it directly to the minister. At a time when families are already being crushed by cost-of-living pressures, they should not be forced to pay for damage caused by government negligence. The government must pay every cent owed to those motorists.

### Suburban Rail Loop

**John MULLAHY** (Glen Waverley) (17:15): (1664) I rise to raise an adjournment matter for the Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop regarding parking availability associated with the Suburban Rail Loop project in Glen Waverley. The Suburban Rail Loop is one of the most significant infrastructure investments our state has ever seen. It is not just about building rail lines; it is about reshaping how communities connect, how people move around Melbourne and how to plan for the future growth of our middle-ring suburbs. As this transformational project progresses, local residents and businesses rightly want to ensure that the supporting infrastructure keeps pace with the growth and change that will come with it.

One of the issues consistently raised with me by the community is parking availability around our transport hub of the Glen Waverley activity centre. For many residents in Glen Waverley, accessible parking is not a luxury, it is a necessity. Families dropping children at school, workers commuting each day, students travelling to university or older residents accessing local services all rely on practical and reliable parking options to connect with public transport and our local shopping precinct. I have been contacted by many constituents who strongly support the vision of the Suburban Rail Loop but who also want the reassurance that local amenity and accessibility will not be compromised during construction and into the future. They want confidence that commuters will continue to have practical transport options and that the surrounding residential streets will not face increased congestion and parking pressures. Importantly, this project also presents an opportunity to future-proof how people

access Glen Waverley. Integrated planning that considers parking alongside active transport links, improved bus connections and better pedestrian access can help create a more connected and accessible precinct for decades to come.

The action I seek from the minister is an update on how parking availability associated with the Suburban Rail Loop project in Glen Waverley is being planned and managed, including how community concerns regarding commuter access, residential parking pressures and local traffic impacts are being addressed.

### **Upfield rail line**

**Tim READ** (Brunswick) (17:17): (1665) My adjournment speech is for the Minister for Transport Infrastructure, and the action I seek is to duplicate the last section of single track on the Upfield line from Gowrie to Upfield stations without further delay. The Upfield line carries around three trains per hour in each direction, with a 16-minute wait between trains at peak hour, a 20-minute wait during the day and half an hour between trains after 7 pm. Nine trains run between 7 and 8 am on both the nearby Mernda and Craigieburn lines, compared to three on the Upfield. Despite this, high-density accommodation is being built along the line, perhaps on the assumption that it carries a similar number of people to other train lines. Recent planning changes will see buildings up to 16 and even 20 storeys built along the line. This would make sense for a line running nine trains per hour, but the Upfield is not offering that.

For a decade my constituents have been promised increased frequency on the Upfield line once the Metro Tunnel was complete. It is, and nothing has changed. In fact trains were more frequent a century ago. In 1924 trains ran every 10 minutes during peak hour from Coburg to the city. The single track from Gowrie to Upfield limits frequency on the whole line. For more frequent trains we are told we need either a turnback at Gowrie or duplication of the last leg of the track. The latter would give more public transport options for the northern suburbs, residents of which drive to Upfield to get into the city. Last week's state budget contains money for a final program business case, but this is not a new route. It is more akin to completing an unfinished project. The land is there; all that is required is the will to start it.

### **Madden House**

**Nina TAYLOR** (Albert Park) (17:18): (1666) My adjournment is for the Minister for Housing and Building. The action I seek is for the minister to join me at Madden House in St Kilda, which opened late last year in partnership with St Kilda Community Housing and the City of Port Phillip. Our Victorian government contributed \$6 million towards the construction and operating costs of Madden House over four years, and the site was officially opened in October last year with the goal to deliver permanent housing for people sleeping rough in the Port Phillip area and accommodate a range of support needs. Madden House is now fully occupied, with 26 locals residing in self-contained studio apartments with access to onsite support services provided by Ngwala Willumbong and VincentCare.

Madden House represents the significant difference that safe, stable and supportive housing can make in people's lives. Importantly, it demonstrates the value of collaboration between housing providers, support services, local organisations and residents themselves. Through this partnership approach, the project has helped improve wellbeing, strengthened social connection and created a more supportive living environment for tenants.

Projects such as Madden House provide a practical example of how investment in social and supportive housing can deliver meaningful outcomes for individuals and the broader community. It is important that successful models such as this are recognised, supported and considered as part of our state's broader housing response. I look forward to welcoming the minister to my electorate to see firsthand the success of projects like Madden House and the difference they can make to our local communities.

### Glamping regulation

**Rachel WESTAWAY** (Pahran) (17:20): (1667) My adjournment this evening is to the Minister for Housing and Building, and it concerns the long-delayed Victorian government glamping guidance note, for which the new minister has general order responsibilities. The action I seek is for the minister to urgently sign off on the guidance note, which has now been sitting at ministerial level since October of last year, more than 900 days since it was first flagged for development. This is not a new issue. It is not a complex policy reform requiring years of consultation. The work has also been done. The industry has engaged in good faith. Guidance has been prepared by the department. Yet despite this, the final sign-off has stalled, and the consequences are now being felt right across regional Victoria.

Last week I met with representatives from Caravan & Residential Parks Victoria, the peak body representing more than 380 parks across the state. They outlined in the clearest of terms that our tourist parks around the state are ready to invest. Glamping represents one of the most significant opportunities for low-impact, nature-based accommodation that aligns with modern visitor expectations. It is a product that attracts new markets, creates a length of stay and increases tourism activities for regional communities. But Victoria is the only state without clear regulatory guidance in this area, and as a result Victoria is the only state where investment projects are being delayed, scaled back or abandoned altogether due to the uncertainty and inconsistent interpretation across councils. Caravan & Residential Parks Victoria has identified that more than \$25 million in private investment has already been lost or stalled as a direct result of this delay. That is \$25 million not flowing into regional economies, that is construction activity not proceeding, that is local jobs not being created, and this is happening at a time when regional Victoria and tourism in this state need exactly the opposite.

The latest data shows caravan and camping contributes \$2.64 billion to the Victorian economy annually, with around 12 million visitor nights, accounting for nearly half of all regional holiday nights. This is not a niche sector, it is a cornerstone of regional tourism. Glamping across Victoria has the potential to build on that strength. It also supports year-round visitation, which is critical for smoothing seasonal demand and supporting local businesses outside of peak periods. What is particularly frustrating for tourist park operators is that the absence of guidance is not neutral. It is actively creating risk. Different councils are applying different interpretations. Some are treating glamping tents as buildings, others as temporary structures. Some require full planning permits, others do not. This inconsistency is creating delays and increasing costs and undermining investor confidence. The minister has an opportunity to unlock investments, support regional jobs and strengthen Victoria's tourism offering with a single decision.

### Pascoe Vale electorate schools

**Anthony CIANFLONE** (Pascoe Vale) (17:23): (1668) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Education, and the action I seek is for the minister to consider, support and invest in the proposals put forward by a number of my local school communities to continue improving learning infrastructure, facilities and resources across the Pascoe Vale electorate. Since 2014 the Victorian Labor government has continued to invest and modernise virtually all of our local schools, including in the most recent 2026 state budget, which allocated \$6.189 million towards upgrading Merri-bek Primary School. However, there of course remains more to do, beginning with Pascoe Vale South Primary, Pascoe Vale North Primary and Coburg Primary. Since 2015 we have invested \$5.1 million towards modernising Pascoe Vale South Primary School, but again, notwithstanding this good work, there remains more to do to support the growing Pascoe Vale South Primary School community as enrolments grow.

The petition I presented back in October 2024 bears 1517 signatures and calls for two priorities. One is upgrading the school's 70-year-old administration building, and secondly, delivering a new covered outdoor learning area, COLA. The current 1954 admin building continues to present significant operational accessibility and wellbeing challenges. Leadership and administration staff, I am told,

work in shared offices daily, making confidentiality and effective practice extremely challenging. Students are unable to access key spaces such as the sick bay and wellbeing room due to steps and the poor layout of the old building. Ageing infrastructure and the presence of asbestos present ongoing occupational health and safety concerns. The business manager manages sensitive HR matters as well in shared spaces. The staffroom cannot fully accommodate the 43 staff, limiting opportunities for connection and collaboration. The sick bay is out of sight and rarely used, with unwell students instead managed in the office, limiting the ability to isolate illness and meet child safety standards. The mental health and wellbeing leaders space is inaccessible, small and unsuitable, resulting in sessions often being held in shared areas and other parts of the staffroom. Students with mobility needs must take indirect routes through the car park to access the support, and temperature extremes across the building impact staff wellbeing and usability of the space. So upgrading the administration staff health and wellbeing building is essential for Pascoe Vale South Primary School, which the Premier and Minister for Education have previously visited and also inspected.

The addition of a covered COLA would also offer students increased shade and weather protection throughout the year as the school does not have a full-scale gymnasium. This space would be highly valuable for a range of student activities, including whole-school assemblies. While the school is situated in extensive outdoor grounds of approximately 2 hectares, with its buildings surrounded by a large playground area and ample spaces for active and passive play, the reality is that less than 10 per cent of the school's footprint consists of permanent shaded areas. That means much of the school's planned outdoor activity – assemblies and learning, physical and recreational activities – is largely weather-dependent, and whether it is extreme heat or heavy rain, the absence of a COLA, outdoor covered area, continues to impact the school's learning and wellbeing opportunities.

When it comes to Pascoe Vale North Primary School, ongoing opportunities are also warranted. Now home to 350 students and 40 staff, I welcome the school's development of a new concept master plan as well, which has three master plan options. Stage 1 is the need for a covered outdoor learning area as well, and I commend the school community – Deborah Crane, Bala Lange, Pete Van Buuren, Simeng Tan and Catherine Duniam, the school council advocates – on this project.

### Responses

**Anthony CARBINES** (Ivanhoe – Leader of the House, Minister for Police, Minister for Community Safety, Minister for Victims, Minister for Racing) (17:26): The member for Lowan raised a matter for the Minister for Energy and Resources, and the action she sought was for the minister to join her and her community in her electorate. The member for Mordialloc raised a matter for the Minister for Health Infrastructure, seeking the action of an update on the construction of the Monash hospital centre in Clayton. The member for Polwarth raised a matter for the Minister for Public and Active Transport, and the action he sought was the immediate addition of three extra carriages to the Warrnambool train line service, which I know many people used on their way to the Warrnambool jumps carnival, which was a great success last week.

The member for Narre Warren South raised a matter for the Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC, and the action he sought was for the minister to provide an update on how the extra funding that the Allan government has provided will improve conditions for workers in his Narre Warren South electorate. The member for South-West Coast, who is no longer with us, raised a matter for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and the action she sought was compensation for motorists regarding road repairs and their effects in a town in her electorate. The member for Glen Waverley raised a matter for the Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop, seeking the action of an update on public parking plans and how that will be managed. The member for Brunswick raised a matter for the Minister for Transport Infrastructure, seeking the duplication of the last section of the single track on the Upfield line between Gowrie and Upfield.

The member for Albert Park raised a matter for the Minister for Housing and Building, and the action she sought was that the minister join her at Madden House in St Kilda, where the Allan Labor

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government, under her advocacy, has supported an investment of some \$6 million to support rough sleepers. The member for Prahran raised a matter for the Minister for Housing and Building, and the action that she sought was the immediate signing off of guidance notes for glamping and other recreational activities which she outlined in her contribution. The member for Pascoe Vale, the Parliamentary Secretary for Community Safety, raised a matter for the Minister for Education, and the action he sought was the consideration of further support for and investment in projects put forward by hardworking schools in his electorate. I commend those matters for action.

**The SPEAKER:** Thank you, Leader of the House. Thank you, members. Can I also, as always at the end of the sitting week, thank our clerks and our parliamentary staff for their support. The house now stands adjourned.

**House adjourned 5:29 pm.**